21st Century - Women's Century

21वीं सदी - नारी सदी

Saturday, January 09, 2016

- Embodiment of 'Sajal Shraddha'
- Yugrishi's spiritual consort and first disciple
- Manifestation of Courage and love
  - Compassion Personified
  - Epitome of Sacrifice

Mata Bhagwati Devi Sharma
(1926 to 1994)

नारी उठेगी, अवांछनीयताओं के बन्धनों से मुक्त होगी और
इस सदी को नारी सदी के नाम से प्रख्यात बनायेगी।
- भगवती देवी शर्मा

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Unleashing the power of 'Being a Woman'

Being a woman is a privilege; an opportunity to contribute to the world through her uniqueness. In Indian culture, a woman is an embodiment of the divine, and therefore highly regarded, respected and worshipped. She is tender yet powerful, soft yet strong, simple but courageous, and through her divine virtues, she creates and shapes the world. It is she, who through her motherhood, feeds the world; displays outstanding will and sacrifice, exemplifies the essence of dutifulness and an ever smiling attitude, without any expectations in return.

She has been regarded as the first Guru; even the Upanishads say- 'Matruvan, Pitruvan, Acharyavan'- education is received first from the mother, then from the father, and lastly from the teacher - this is the true order of education.
In the words of Swami Vivekanand “The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is the treatment of its women... There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved.”

Time has come, when a woman should unleash her true qualities at all fronts; time has come when in the name of empowerment she should not be portrayed as an object of consumption; time has come when she should be given an environment to walk freely without any fear from men; time has come that she breathes outside the womb and not breathe her last inside it.

**Women Empowerment (WE)**

This 21st Century - Women's Century Seminar is a an attempt to draw the attention of thinking minds, to provoke thought processes, inspire, expand and create a way forward for rebuilding a new society based on the naturalistic values like Love, Sacrifice, Kindness, Care, Compassion, Motherhood and Peace.

**All World Gayatri Parivar**, under the aegis of Shantikunj, has always worked on societal issues for the public, by involving them and bringing in a sense of ownership in the projects undertaken. These mass movements in various domains have transformed the mindset and lifestyle of masses throughout the country. Be it the Women Empowerment Programme (WE campaign) or the Youth Awakening Movement (DIYA), the Adarsh Gram Yojana, or the Vriksha Ganga Abhiyaan, the Gutka (Tobacco) free campaign or the Nirmal Ganga Abhiyan; all these projects are for the people, by the people and of the people. Each one of them encourages the **PPP model- Positive People Participation**.

The Women Empowerment Program (WE) of Shantikunj is not limited to the literacy of women, or them getting into the job sector and earn money. It holds it roots at a much deeper level. The spiritual and natural qualities of a woman which covers the likes of motherhood, care, love, nurturing capacity, holding and passing the value system (Sanskars) from the older generations to the next one, serving the country by giving valuable citizens, etc. Indian Women have been an epitome of sacrifice, empathy, reverence, endurance and many more such great qualities. Her glories as a mother, sister, companion, friends, administrator and a daughter has been endlessly sung in the form of **Draupadi, Panna Dai, Ahilya Bai, Rani Lakshmi Bai, Sarojini Naidu, Sister Nivedita, Mira Bai, Razia Sultan** and many more. But off late, she has been marginalized and ignored, brutally hurt and exploited, averted and left alone. She has been underestimated and abused as
well as killed before she can open her eyes to the world. The 'Nari Jagaran Andolan' of Shantikunj has actually focused on nurturing this value system by sensitizing not only women, but men too. The mind set and conditioning is such that, men are better and powerful which has been a main hurdle in holistic development of women. Over the last three decades, All World Gayatri Parivar has conducted numerous awareness programs, camps, hosted symposiums, talks and seminars on an array of topics like Women emancipation, female foeticide, equality issues, harassment at work places and many more. Rallies and street plays, door to door campaigns trying to raise consciousness of family members and changing their outlook towards this most admirable and valuable person in the family. The recent most initiative is involving the gynecologists to spread the awareness of creating a safe and sacred environment to welcome the young one. This is also to encourage the doctors and make them more socially responsible and not to practice general discrimination by conducting gender tests to satisfy their greeds.

**Journey so far**

The concept of Women emancipation adopted by Shantikunj is different from the concept prevalent in Western societies. According to Vandaniya Mataji Smt. Bhagwati Devi Sharma, "**By Nari Jagaran, we mean the awakening of Samvedanas and Bhavanas and for these, the women need not claim equality with men in position; rather they must nurture the motherhood inherent in them.**"

The objectives of this movement are four fold:

1) Publication of literature
2) Training camps for women
3) Cultivation of power of organization
4) Creative activities

*The Nari Jagaran movement started by Mataji in Shantikunj has grown enormously and the 21st Century is certainly going to become 'The Century of Women'.*

“Wherever you find a great man, you will find a great mother or a great wife standing behind him — or so they used to say. It would be interesting to know how many great women have had great fathers and husbands behind them.” – Dorothy L. Sayers.
Though Gayatri Mantra, as a 'Savita Upasana' mantra, was in tradition and many methods to chant it were available; Gurudev and Vandaniya Mataji introduced Gayatri as Narishakti to promote reverence towards 'Matrushakti'. This was not an easy task in a conservative male dominated society and they had to face stiff opposition including life threats from all sections of fanatic orthodoxy. But they remained undaunted and undeterred.

The duo complemented each other and invited young girls to stay at Shantikunj as 'Dev Kanya' (God Daughters) and lead a pious life of 'Sadhika' (Pious Women) for few years before entering into worldly responsibilities. A lot of such women are now leading a successful family life and share their loving testimonies of the golden time they spent in the motherly shelter of Vandaniya Mataji and the protection of Param Pujya Gurudev.

Following this, in the 1980s, Shantikunj started training camps for women empowerment. The camps were not only meant for women; even male members of the society were invited to understand the need of empowering women. In the words of Swami Vivekanand, “Men should give way to women; she knows how to liberate herself”. The issues of male dominance in spheres of the society were addressed and it was made understood to millions of families that why women are so important for the survival of mankind.

Besides, various camps, workshops, seminars, sensitization programmes, street plays and symposiums have been organized under the aegis of Shantikunj that has created awareness on female foeticide from time to time. Dedicated efforts with other social organizations and NGOs yielded enthusiastic results.

Since last few years, Shantikunj has pulled in dedicated efforts to popularize 'Garbh Sanskar' (transmitting values to the baby in the womb) which has created awareness in numerous families in welcoming the new member. This project is helping families about the minute preparations that they need to look after along with the daily physical health care of the pregnant woman.

YOU ARE ALL CORDIALLY INVITED TO PARTICIPATE.
VANDANIYA MATAJI
BHAGWATI DEVI SHARMA

Endearingly known as Vandaniya Mataji, Mata Bhagwati Devi Sharma, the spiritual consort of Yugrishi Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya, complimented his role on this earth. The simple life which she led and the motherly love that she showered on all the parijans who came into her fold is only the tip of the iceberg. Only a few close associates knew her as Shaktiswaroopa (the incarnation of Shakti).

DIVINE BIRTH & PARENITAGE

Born in a Brahmin family of Shri Jaswant Rao and Smt. Rampyari, she was the youngest and the most beloved child in the family. Before the birth of Bhagwati, her mother Rampyari used to have many divine experiences which she shared with her husband. Jaswant Rao was a deeply religious person. Many a times, when he sat for ‘Japa’ (Meditation) and pranayam, he felt that Mother Bhagwati in the form of a child was sitting on his lap. Bhagwati was born on 20th September, 1926. One day Jaswant Rao was gazing at the baby sitting on his lap when a neighbor came and enquired, “What is so special about your baby that you are so enchanted by her?” To this Jaswant Rao replied, “This girl is very fortunate. She is going to feed thousands of people because she is the incarnation of Mother Bhagwati.” Thus was she named as Bhagwati.

BETROTHAL

Bhagwati Devi got engrossed in sadhana (penance) at the age of 11-12 years. In the state of ‘Samadhi’ she often used to see a young man, whom she named “Maha Yogi, Shiv”. She could not figure out this person. But one thing she was certain of that he was a manifestation of Shiva. At times during the state of Samadhi she used to see glimpses of Kabir’s and Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's lives. In the state of ‘Samadhi’, she realized that somehow, she was related to Loi, the life partner of Kabir and also to Sarada Mata, the soul mate of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. On 18 February 1945, she was married to Shriram Sharma (Gurudev) in a simple ceremony.
AT AKHAND JYOTI SANSTHAN, MATHURA

After her marriage she came to Akhand Jyoti Sansthan, Mathura where she got transformed into "Mataji". From the very beginning, at Akhand Jyoti Sansthan, she had to shoulder the responsibility of looking after three children in the family, Akhand Jyoti and the countless parijans visiting their place. Later, she had to take the responsibility of assisting Gurudev in his multifold activities, especially Akhand Jyoti magazine work and writing letters to Parijans.

It was also the time when the construction of Gayatri Tapobhumi at Mathura was in full swing. After buying the land there was no money. Knowing that asking others for financial help was against the principles of Gurudev's life, Mataji gave away all her jewellery for the project. Gurudev firmly believed that the beauty of women lay in their character and not in ornaments and expensive clothing. In later years, she had to shoulder heavy responsibilities of the fast growing Gayatri Parivar and its multiple activities. Mataji's life had been wholeheartedly surrendered at the feet of her Aradhya Dev. Although she was a highly advanced spiritual 'sadhika' (practitioner) in her own right; she preferred to be called the first disciple of Acharyashree.

ANNAPURNA MATA

There were never enough grains or utensils in her kitchen but she still managed to feed everyone. Even if Gurudev brought anyone, at any odd time of the day; Mataji had food in her kitchen to feed. Perhaps she had something like the 'Akhshayapatra' (Infinite food bowl- that is never empty of food) of Draupadi. Those helping her in the kitchen very well knew that she had an iron 'tasala' (griddle), which was given to her by Gurudev as a wedding gift, which she kept with her till the very end.

THE FORCE BEHIND PROJECT 'WE'

Mataji was the initiator of "Nari Shakti Jagaran" campaign. Gurudev had declared that 21st century will be the Century of Women and that women empowerment will be initiated by Mataji. Mataji's life stands as a testimony of that prediction. Mataji's compassionate 'antahkaran' (Inner self) could well understand the helplessness of women around her. This inspired her to work for women's upliftment. Initially, when she started giving shelter to a few helpless women, she realized that this would not solve the problems of countless women and what was required was to equip them with 'Atmabal' (self-confidence) with which they could fight adversities. Women were granted the right to chant Gayatri Mantra. Mataji was the first woman to take the revolutionary step of receiving 'Gayatri mantra deeksha' (Gayatri mantra initiation), which was later extended to other women in other parts of the country.

According to Gurudev, "One of the fundamental objectives of establishing Shantikunj was to start a movement for women's liberation under the guidance of Mataji and make it a world-wide movement."
Vedmoorti Taponishtha
Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya,
Founder, All World Gayatri Parivar, Shantikunj, Haridwar

- **Yugrishi** - A sage who rekindled, reinforced and revived the spirit of the ancient sages like Rishi Vishwamitra, Bhagirathi, Yagyavalkya, Valmiki, Parshuram, Charak, Kanaad, etc.

- **Yugvyas** - Translated the oldest scriptures, the Vedas followed by 108 Upanishads, Shad Darshan, 24 Geetas, 20 Smritis, 18 Puranas and made it available to the common man.

- **Author** - As an unparalleled author, Pt. Shriram Sharma has authored more than 3,200 books covering all the aspects of human life and offered solutions to a vast spectrum of problems which haunt mankind.

- **Freedom Fighter** - Famously known as **Shriram Matta**, Acharya Shriram Sharma played a critical role in the freedom movement of India and shared prison space with Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Rabindranath Tagore.

- **Spiritual Scientist** - Pt. Shriram Sharma is the pioneer of Scientific Spirituality. Way back in 1946, he coined the term **Vaigyanik Adhyatmvid** (Scientific Spirituality) and has offered scientific validation of spiritual practices. His supreme work, **Super Science of Gayatri** is a marvelous piece of introduction for all those who wish to investigate the science behind spiritual practices. In the year 1979, he institutionalized a laboratory for conducting investigations on spiritual practices, named as **Brahmavarchas Shod Sansthan**.

- **A brave revolutionary who pioneered a Great Spiritual Revolution - 'Thought Transformation'** – A brave and compassionate spiritual thinker who challenged mankind that he would transform the entire era and defined the divine plan as **Yug Nirman Yojana** (Creation of a new eon planning). His humble attempts, full of courageous conviction has touched more than 11 million people, across 80 countries. The **Yug Nirman Yojna** is involved in bring a revolutionary change and has touched countless lives, families and societies.

- **Yugdrashta** - **Drashta** is one who can envision the future. Yugrishi could envision the dawn of a new era and through his penance and austerities, he strongly proposed the arrival of golden age and gave the slogan of- **“21st Century, A Bright Future”**.

For more details please visit:
www.awgp.org/about_us/patron_founder

‘Empowering women means trusting them.’
DR. PRANAV PANDYA MD (Medicine)

Close & Direct Disciple of
Vedmoorti Taponishta Shriram Sharma Acharya &
Shakti Swaroopa Mata Bhagwati Devi Sharma

Head All World Gayatri Pariwar
Chancellor Dev Sanskriti University, Haridwar
Director Brahmavarchas Research Institute, Haridwar
Editor Akhand Jyoti Magazine
Patron Founder Divine India Youth Association “DIYA”

Conferences & Workshops:
• Between 1990 and 2005, he undertook extensive tours in India & abroad to
organize large-scale programs to disseminate knowledge on spiritual aspects of
Indian Culture with scientific reasons. He established branches of the Gayatri
Pariwar abroad in USA, Canada, UK, Japan, Denmark, Norway, Australia, Fiji
Islands, New Zealand, South Africa and Kenya.
• Addressed a joint session of the House of Lords & the House of Commons in
• Presented scientific aspects of Indian Culture to the World Parliament of Religions
held in Chicago (USA) in 1993 and in Cape Town (Republic of South Africa) in
1999.

Honors and Accolades:
• Honored by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the world
famous American Space Centre in 1996 as a distinguished scientist and reformer
for worldwide dissemination of scientific aspects of Indian Culture.
• Conferred the "Gyan Bharati" award in 1998 by Prabhu Premi Sangh, Ambala, for
distinguished services to the society.
• Achieved the "Hindu of the Year" award in 1999 by Federation of Indian
Association and Federation of Hindu Association for dissemination of Indian
Culture abroad.
• Awarded with "Bhai Shri Hanuman Prasad Rashtra Seva Samman" by Bara Bazar
• Won "Life Time Achievement Award" at the National Symposium on Science of
Holistic Living by Sevagram, Wardha.
• Exalted with the "Devi Ahilyabai Rastriya Samman" award in 2011 by Ahilya
Utsav Samiti-Indore for distinguished services to the society.
• Honoured as National Icon for Youth and conferred the “Tarun Kranti Puruskar -
2013” at Jaipur.
• Nominated as ‘Swachh Bharat Ambassador’ by Govt. of India in 2015.
• 'Pride of India award' was bestowed for his contribution to the filed of
spirituality, social service, disaster relief aid and education at British
Parliament in 2015

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