

OCTOBER 2023

CHYK WEST

YOUTH POTENTIAL + DYNAMIC SPIRITUALITY

IN GURUDEV'S OWN WORDS

Are we free
to choose?

REFLECTIONS

Experiences from
camps and other
CHYK activities

EDITORIAL

The art of
the question

FEATURE

Launch of “The Woman Seeker”

Brahmacharini Shubani
Chaitanya explains the
inspiration behind the book that
guides seekers to walk the path
to enlightenment faster, stronger
and further than ever before



Join a CHYK
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pujya swamiji's message

THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON



In our lives, if anyone were asked who is the most important person in your life, the first thing that comes to our mind is mother - Ma. In moments of joy, whom do you remember?

Your first gratitude also goes to whom? Because our very existence, our very birth, is because of the pains that she has taken in our life. That is Ma. That is that *parashakti*.

As the mother of the universe, as our own mother, who has got all the powers. All the love of the cosmic mother.

SWAMI SWAROOPANANDA
Global Head, Chinmaya Mission

CHYK WEST

**Pujya Swami
Swaroopananda**
Global Head,
Chinmaya Mission

**Brahmacharini
Shubhani Chaitanya**
Eastern Zone
Coordinator

**Brahmachari
Soham Chaitanya**
Western Zone
Coordinator

**Brahmachari
Hari Chaitanya**
Central Zone
Coordinator

in gurudev's own words

ARE WE FREE TO CHOOSE?

(Excerpted from Pujya Gurudev's "Perform and Reform" - a text on the art of action)



As we look at the world around us, we observe the many differences between individuals and their lot in life. How can one explain the differences, the seeming injustices, that we see? If the explanation for one man being born as a leper's son and another as a king's son be the free will of God, then God becomes a power mad, lusty, partial Lord who blesses and curses according to His eccentric whims and fancies. This idea is against the observed rhythm and order that is existent in all of nature.

Not only is there a diversity in the situations a person meets in life, but there are differences in the manner with which people face life and its challenges. A strong, robust man may be a coward, while a small, thin person may be a gallant and courageous fellow.

The real difference between the two is the difference in their reactions to the challenges of life. Life can bring forth laughter for some but only sobs from others. Some feel submerged in the ocean of life, while others keep gracefully afloat. Some take fright and would fain run away from life, while others embrace it joyfully. For some people life is a burden, to others an opportunity. For some, life is an edifying sun; for others, it is a disgusting mess of a profitless dream. Thus, for every given set of external circumstances, individuals react differently and each comes to have his own experience. When a person sees such a variety of types, modes, kinds and classes of things and beings and observes that the experiences of life as lived by two individuals are never the same, he naturally seeks a cause for the diversity.

Just for argument's sake, let us suppose that we all have been just created afresh and pushed into this calamity called life; then we should not have such dissimilar schemes of life with each living his life of particular joys and woes. When we inquire into the differences of individual experiences in life, we find that the disparity does not rise from any visible cause. Therefore, we are driven to conclude that the differences must be the effect of some invisible previous cause or causes.

THE ROOTS OF INDIVIDUALITY

In their subjective studies, the ancient ṛṣis observed that every action is the fulfilment of a desire in the individual, while the desire itself is the manifestation of the subtler tendencies in him. Thus, when the nature of these subtle tendencies is to speculate and gamble, the individual entertains a desire to do so. In the medium of such tendencies, the desire soon crystallizes in the form of a thought, and the thought of gambling helplessly draws him to the gambling house where this particular desire can be fulfilled. These tendencies are the prime mover of all his desires, thoughts and subsequent actions. As long as the tendencies last, desires keep effervescing in his bosom, creating discontentment and mental agitations which compel him to act for the completion of the desires.

Thus, in the mechanism of human action, the propelling force behind our desires, thoughts and actions originates from our innate inclinations and tendencies. In Sanskrit the term for these tendencies is 'vāsanā', meaning, fragrance. Each individual has vāsanās that are distinct and peculiar to him. In fact, they constitute and define his individuality. In other words, an individual is nothing but a manifested form of his vāsanās. The heterogeneous pattern of human beings is explained by the variety and difference in the texture of vāsanās composing each individual. No one is exempt from the hold of his own vāsanās.

When we analyse carefully into the source of these vāsanās that are impelling our day-to-day actions and reactions, we have to conclude that they must have come from our own actions in the past. The effects experienced in the present life must have had their causes in the past life and the causes created in the present life shall grow into effects to be lived in the future lives. Therefore, the life we are now living is only one in a series of lives. We must have had many incarnations in the past, and probably many more will fall our lot in the future. From birth to death and from death to birth, the whirl goes on, but we do not appreciate it or understand it, because we are viewing life from a very limited point of view.

At the present, we think of our lives as the sum of our experiences gathered in the interval between our birth and death. But take an example - suppose there is a large painting on a wall. In order to be able to see the entire picture, we have to step back some distance. Only then do we get the entire view - the rhythm of the colours, the beauty of the lines, the harmony of the arrangement. Similarly, when life is viewed from a close perspective of one lifetime, we feel that it is illogical, that it is without reason or rhythm.

The intelligent way of looking at life to be able to assess it correctly is by viewing life as a concept of a flow of time. Anything that is now in the future must in time arrive to become the present and, ere long, will pass on to become the past. That is, the future, flowing through the present, is ever becoming the past.



LAUNCH OF “THE WOMAN SEEKER”

(Excerpted from Brahmacharini Shubhani Chaitanya's talk on the launch of an exciting new book)

How did this project come about? Once, we were sitting in a Devi group session and we were discussing the lives of saints and sages. Many had heard about male saints and they asked, “Well, what about women saints? Do we have any in our tradition?” I said, “Yes, of course we do!”

But I knew that I could count them on only one hand. I also didn't know much about them. So we all sat together and decided to research all of the women saints from different parts of Bharata - North, South, West, East, Central, and Northeast - and from different time periods, from the sixth century up until the twentieth century. These women saints came from various walks of life, from householders to ascetics to rshikas to mystics. Some were even orphans and widows.

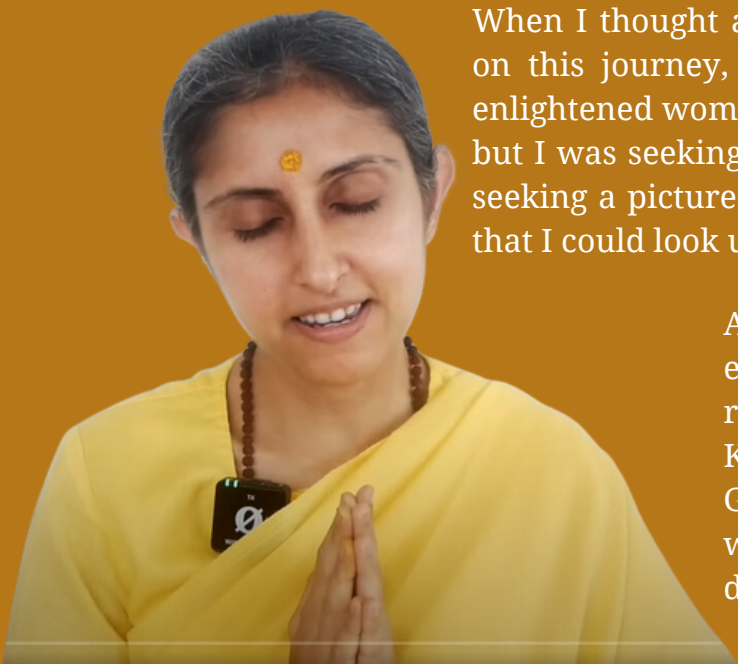
Some were just totally reveling in this divine knowledge. Some were sharing this message that everybody. Some wrote epics. And when we saw this variety, we were so amazed to see Devi Herself, as if coming to speak to us, telling us... I am here. I am here and this is who I am.

And so it's as if Devi Herself started this project telling us where to go, what to do, and whom to meet. From the far corners of Kashmir to Assam, we were able to find people who spoke the language of that area and could really talk to us about the saints of their places.

Therefore, this all started with Devi's divine grace...

When I thought about my personal life and my personal reflections on this journey, I also wondered what it would be like to be an enlightened woman on this path. I wasn't any more seeking the truth, but I was seeking how this truth could actually be manifested. I was seeking a picture and image - a role model and a figure of this truth that I could look up to as a woman.

And as I was reading the lives of these Devis, I saw everything that I needed to see. This brings me to reflect on the question that Arjuna asked Bhagavan Krishna in the second chapter of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita - what is the description of the one with steady wisdom? How does he speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?



I got my answer. There is not just one woman or a few women. There are many women, not just in Bharata, but in the entire world, from all walks of life and different time periods, who have journeyed and have become enlightened. They are the epitome of divinity, simplicity and purity.

How do they speak? They speak the scripture. In a way that is spontaneous and free, not caring about who is listening or recording or following.

How do they sit? They sit still absorbed in the Truth. So deep and so in tune with It.

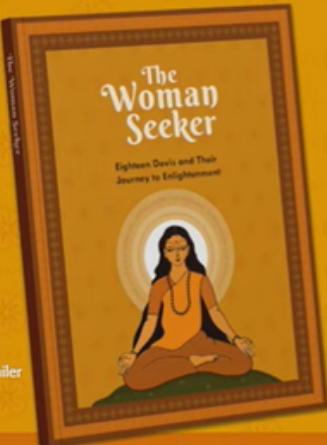
How do they walk? They serve humanity in all various ways with their every step being a blessing for life.

I got my answer and it is my sincere hope that all women seekers get their answer through this book. They can find role models that they can look up to walk this path.

We call this book The Woman Seeker because we want to capture their lives from seeker to saint. And we want their lives to speak to our lives in every way. For each saint, in the book we find a section that is on her story, a section on her teachings and a contemplative section with a question that will lead us to think deeply about how to transform into a Devi ourselves.

So, what happens from here? I don't know. But the only thing I know is this - because of the inspiration of these Devis, I am inspired to walk this path to enlightenment faster, stronger and further than ever before.

We invoke Devi's grace and Pujya Gurudev's blessings as we inaugurate "The Woman Seeker."



Trailer

THIS NAVARATRI
CHINMAYA MISSION PRESENTS

The Woman Seeker

A GLOBAL BOOK LAUNCH

Featuring 9 nights,
9 talks on Women Seekers
with special reflections from
the Woman Seeker Team

**SPECIAL BOOK RELEASE ON
VIJAYADASHAMI BY
SWAMI SWAROOPANANDA**

**OCTOBER 15 - 24, 2023
7:30-8:00PM IST**

**CHINMAYA CHANNEL
ON YOUTUBE**

DAY 1: OCTOBER 15, SUNDAY
INTRO TO THE WOMAN SEEKER -
Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya

DAY 2: OCTOBER 16, MONDAY
RISHIKA VAKDEVI - Brni. Akalka

DAY 3: OCTOBER 17, TUESDAY
AKKA MAHADEVI - Shashikala Dwarakanath
REFLECTIONS - Woman Seeker Team

DAY 4: OCTOBER 18, WEDNESDAY
GANGA SATI - Brni. Anupama Chaitanya

DAY 5: OCTOBER 19, THURSDAY
SANT JANABAI - Brni. Shripriya Chaitanya

DAY 6: OCTOBER 20, FRIDAY
SWAMINI SARADAPRIYANANDA -
Rani Rao and Shyamala Cheruvu

DAY 7: OCTOBER 21, SATURDAY
MIRABAI - Swamini Supriyananda
PADMAPRIYA - Brni. Satarupa

DAY 8: OCTOBER 22, SUNDAY
THE WOMAN SEEKER IN CHANGING TIMES -
Swamini Vimalananda

DAY 9: OCTOBER 23, MONDAY
FROM SEEKER TO SAINT - Swami Tejomayananda

DAY 10: OCTOBER 24, TUESDAY
THE WOMAN SEEKER BOOK RELEASE -
Swami Swaroopananda

THE ART OF THE QUESTION

Brahmachari Hari Chaitanya



Shri Goswami Tulasidasji's Ramacharitamahas was intended for the common sadhaka. It is steeped in profound Vedantic truths, but the text conveys this knowledge through sweet dialogue and tear-jerking accounts of Shri Rama's glory. Pithy maxims tell us the practical realities of life and detailed descriptions of events just appear before us if we close our eyes and listen.

No matter how well-versed we are in the Ramayana story, Tulasidasji's expertly builds the suspense in pivotal moments, leaving us hanging on every doha. Does Jatayu have a chance of rescuing Sita Devi? Will Hanumanji find the sanjeevani herb in time to save Lakshmana?

Before any exposition on the story of the Ramayana, Tulasidasji begins by saluting his guru: "I bow to the lotus feet of my Guru, who is an ocean of mercy and is no other than Shri Hari Himself in human form."

This is no embellishment from Tulasidasji. From Shvetashvatara Upanishad, we learn the result that awaits the one who sees his own guru as Bhagavan – the Upanishad mantras reveal their meaning to that sadhaka. The guru who teaches us about that Highest Reality is not like a teacher of any other subject. The guru who possesses the adhyatmik knowledge is the living embodiment of shastra. That esoteric shastra that requires the purest of minds and subtlest of intellects to understand.

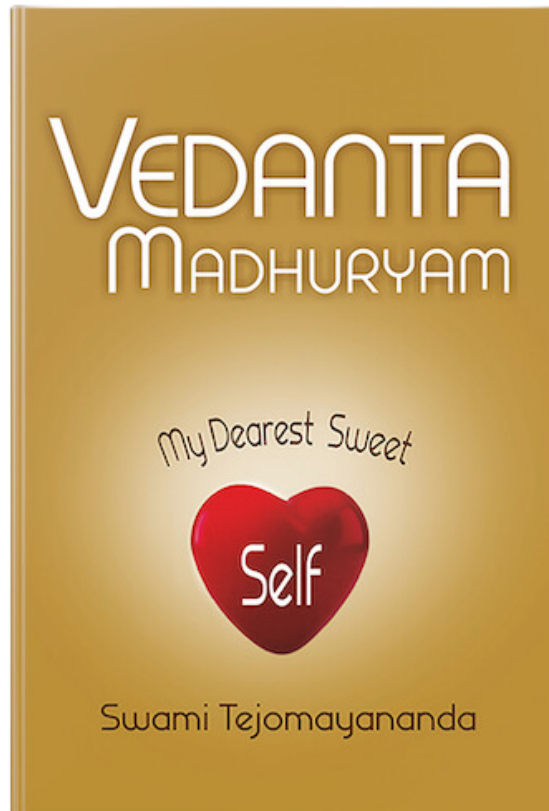
Passed on through the oral tradition of the guru parampara, this knowledge has been protected by countless generations of nameless masters. Despite violent invasions and rhetorical attacks, the essence of Bharata still remains this pristine knowledge.

How fortunate are we that we can learn the same knowledge that Shri Rama received from Vasishta Rshi? How blessed are we that we can revel in the same eternal message that Shri Krishna bestowed on Arjuna? We benefit from these valid means of knowledge today because the guru parampara protected them, often with their very lives.

In the learning process, students ask questions for various reason – to clarify a point, to troll the teacher, to introduce another angle of inquiry, or to simply show that they are paying attention. In many religions, questioning scripture can be seen as disrespectful and irreverent, but not in Sanatana Dharma. In fact, Shri Krishna declares in the Bhagavad Gita that the wise learn the Truth by questioning.

We see the art of questioning in our shastra. The queries do not center around mundane topics that afflict the average person. These questions are refined and only deal with understanding one's True Nature. For example, in Mundakopanishad, Shaunakji approaches Angirasa Rshi with a profound inquiry – “what is that knowledge by which everything is known?” This seemingly simple question sparks the entire Upanishad, taking the sadhaka on a journey of understanding from creation theory to the nuances of upasana, to methods of understanding Brahman, to beautiful analogies that capture the essence of this knowledge.

As comprehensive as the Upanishads are, we need inspiration to even appreciate why we must study this knowledge. This is where a beautiful exposition like “Vedanta Madhuryam” comes in. Pujya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji's original composition puts an apprehensive sadhaka at ease, explaining why the study of Vedanta is not only for renunciates, but the source of everlasting joy. We do not need to lament that the days of the strong guru parampara are gone. Pujya Guruji's exposition is proof that we are blessed with gurus who present us with this knowledge – meeting us where we are.



reflections



Chinmaya Mission Chicago Yamunotri joyfully hosted the 2023 Annual Divya Shakti Retreat in person led by Smt. Vilasini Balakrishnan (Chinmaya Mission Jacksonville, Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center, Chinmaya Mission West) and Shri Vivek Gupta (Chinmaya Mission Niagara, Chinmaya Mission Cleveland) from Oct 6 - 8. Seventy-five devis aged 18 and above from across North America registered for the event centered around the theme "Finding Your Roots," aiming to reignite their inner Divya Shakti.

The enriching weekend included insightful discourses on Gayatri Mantra and Rama Gita, complemented by activities like personal reflection, yoga asana, meditation, yoga nidra, small group discussions (covering topics like environment and individual life journey stages), outdoor games, team dance performances, kitchen seva, and engaging question & answer sessions.

The diverse range of activities was carefully curated to stimulate and invigorate the body, mind, and intellect, challenging women to venture outside their comfort zones. Reflection was promoted throughout the weekend, including moments of maunam (silence), even during meal times.

Devis gained practical insights for dispelling negativities such as stress, anxiety, and dejection while fostering positive values like compassion, kindness, and forgiveness. The weekend emphasized overcoming obstacles with a smile and instilled lessons about placing faith in Samhara (Divinity), Shastra (Scripture), Sadguru (Guide), Shishya (Student), and Sadhana (Discipline). The empowering message that change is unavoidable, yet "willpower is greater than world power," served as a source of encouragement.

Looking ahead, the 2024 Divya Shakti Retreat is planned for Oct 17 - 20 at Chinmaya Mission Niagara.

active chyk west study groups

| Region | Hosting Center | Date & Time | Format | Facilitator | Contact Email | CHYK or CSK | Current Text |
|---------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| West | San Jose, CA | Thursdays 7:30-8:45 pm PT | Online | Br. Soham Chaitanya | chyk@cmsj.org | CHYKs & CSKs | Bhagavad Gita – Ch 18 |
| West | San Diego, CA | Biweekly, Saturdays 5:00-6:30pm PT | Online | Srinivas Sukumar | mihirpandya123@yahoo.com | CHYKs & CSKs | Storm to Perform |
| West | Seattle, WA | Wednesdays 7:00-8:30pm PT | In-Person | Prachiti Dhamankar | dhamankar.prachiti@gmail.com | CHYKs | Self-Unfoldment |
| West | Vancouver, BC, Canada | Sundays 10:00-11:00am PT | In-Person | Sheetal Gupta | sheetalgupta99@gmail.com | CHYKs | Yaksha Prashna |
| Central | Chicago, IL | Wednesdays 7:30-8:30pm CT | Online | Dhiren Khatri | anuraag.aekka@gmail.com | CHYKs & CSKs | Bhagavad Gita – Ch 7 |
| Central | Dallas, TX | Mondays 7:00-8:00pm CT | Online | Br. Hari Chaitanya | br.harichaitanya@gmail.com | CHYKs | Bhagavad Gita - Ch 2 |
| Central | Austin, TX | Fridays 12:00-1:00pm CT | In-person | Priya Kumar | priyak1010@gmail.com | CHYKs | Kindle Life |
| East | Atlanta, GA | Saturdays 10:00-11:00am ET | Online | Brni. Jyoti Chaitanya | jyoti@chinmayamission.org | CHYKs | Tattvabodha |
| East | Boston, MA | Monthly, Sundays 6:00-7:00pm ET | In-person | Sapna Rao | bostonchyks@gmail.com | CHYKs & CSKs | Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living) |
| East | Branchburg, NJ | Tuesdays 7:30-8:45pm ET | Online | Brni. Akalka | akalkab@gmail.com | CHYKs & CSKs | Kindle Life |
| East | Buffalo, NY | Sundays 5:00-6:00pm ET | Online | Murali Osuraman | balvihaar@gmail.com | CHYKs | Self Unfoldment |
| East | New York, NY | Thursdays 7:00-8:15pm ET | Hybrid | Brni. Shubhani Chaitanya | chyk.nyc@gmail.com | CHYKs & CSKs | Meditation and Life |
| East | Pittsburgh, PA | Thursdays 9:00-10:00pm ET | Hybrid | Shankar Rajupet | shankarrajupet@yahoo.com | CHYKs & CSKs | Yaksha Prashna |
| East | Washington D.C. | Sundays 4pm – 6pm | In-person | Swami Dheerananda | chyk@chinmayadc.org | CHYKs & CSKs | Informal Satsang |
| East | Niagara, ON, Canada | Mondays 9:00-10:00pm ET | Online | Vivek Gupta | lifeseva@gmail.com | CHYKs | Vibhishana Gita |
| East | Toronto, ON, Canada | Tuesdays 7:30-9:00pm ET | Online | Dev and Gina Singh | devandgina@chinmayatoronto.org | CHYKs & CSKs | Vision of Bhagavad Gita |
| East | Trinidad | Saturday 7pm to 8pm AT | In-person | Motiram Boodoo | boodoo15700@gmail.com | CHYKs & CSKs | Art of Man Making Part 1 |

THE 16TH ANNUAL GLOBAL CHYK CAMP

RAMAYANA

THE TALE CONTINUES



IN PERSON WITH
SWAMI SWAROOPANANDAJI
GLOBAL HEAD OF CHINMAYA MISSION

17-25 DECEMBER 2023
CIRS, INDIA
AGES 18-35

Registration Link: www.globalchycamp.com

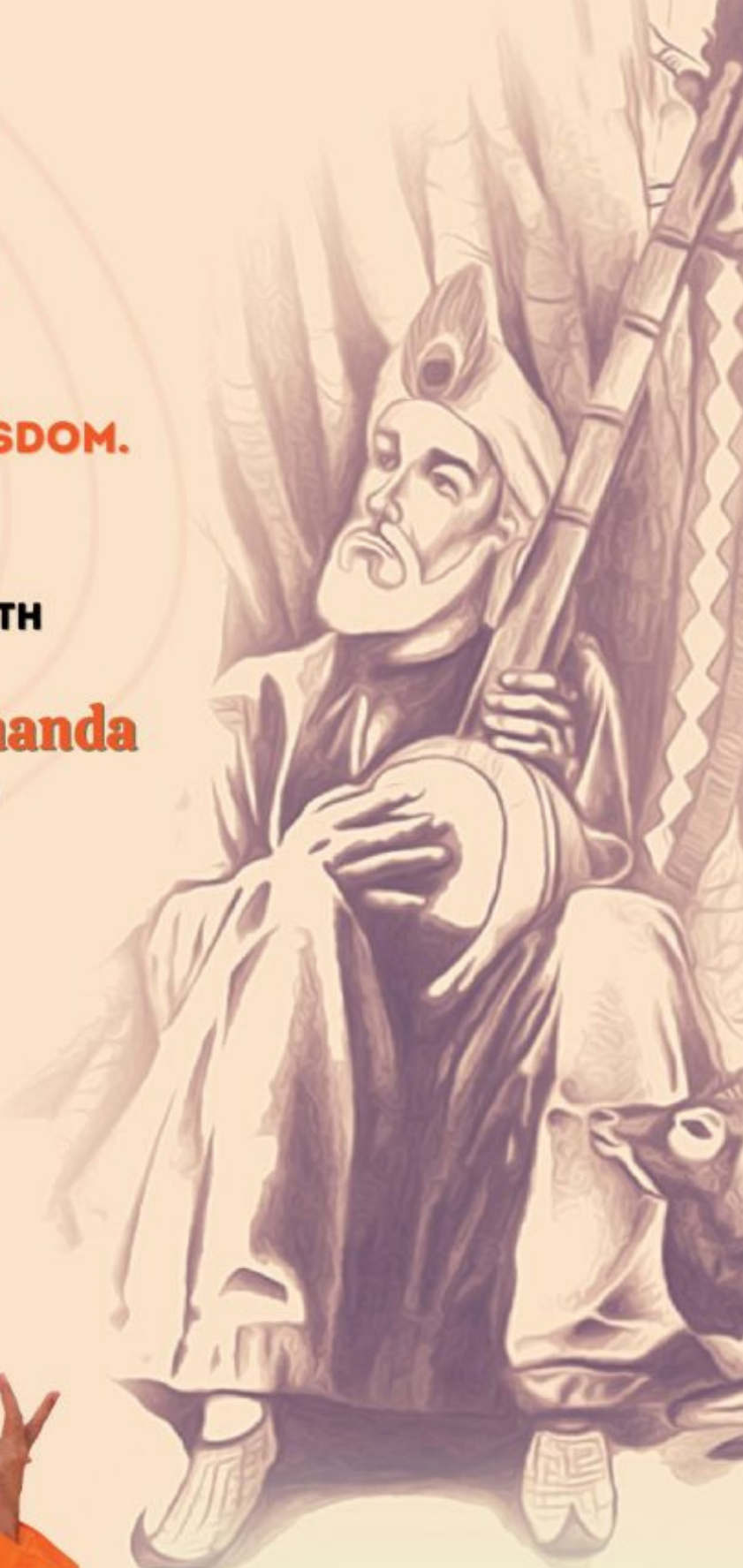
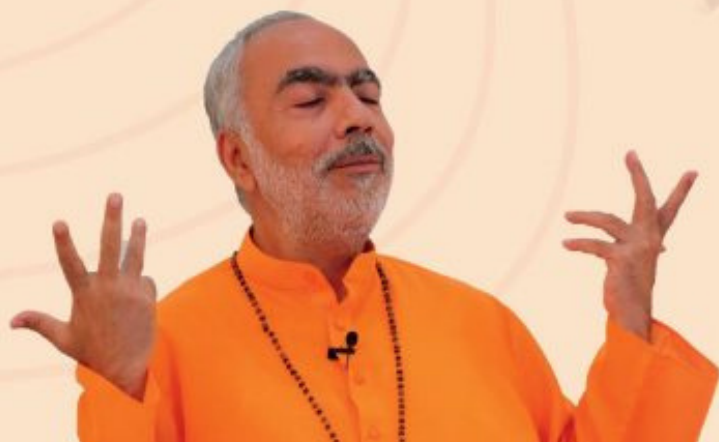
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Kabir

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