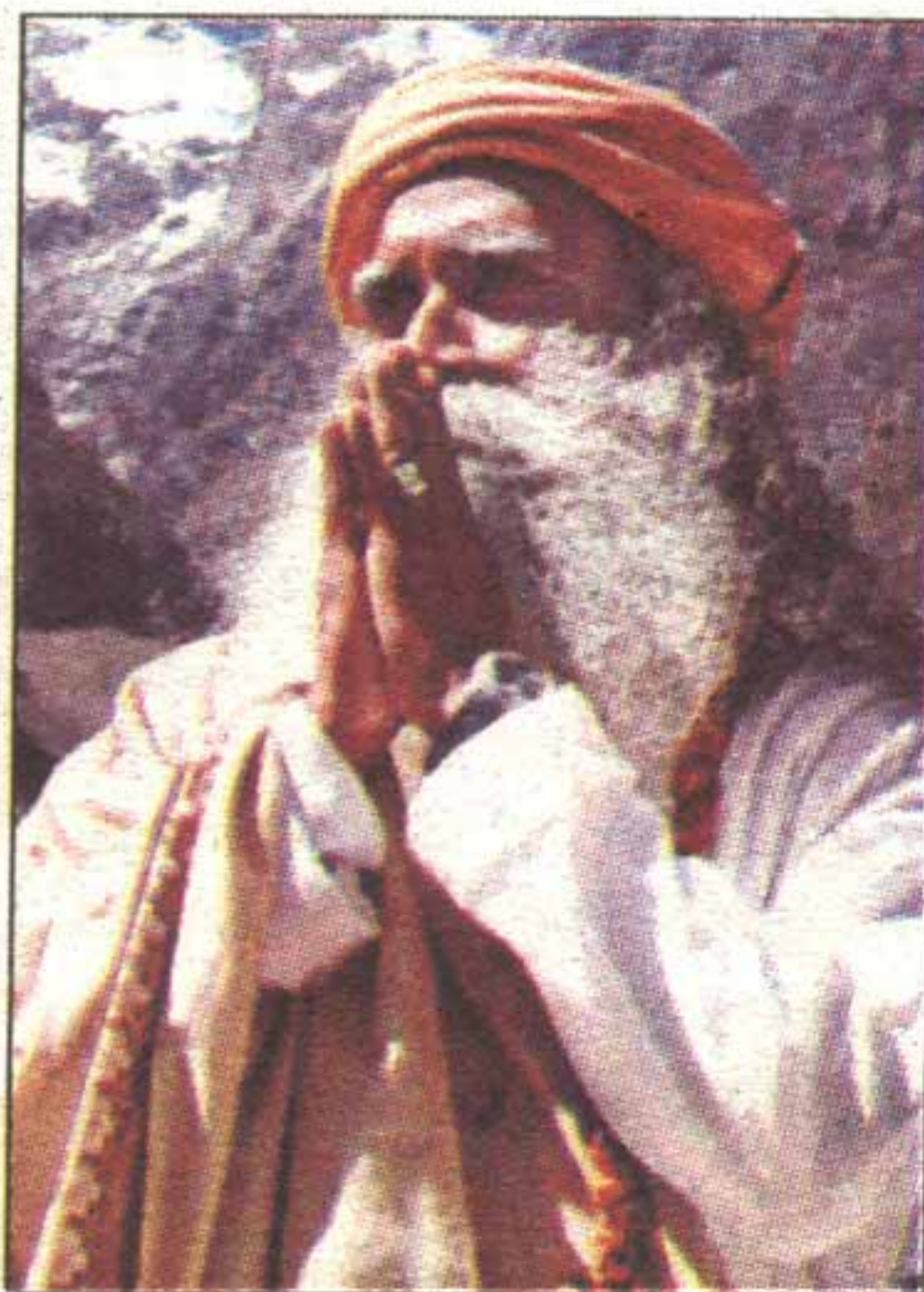
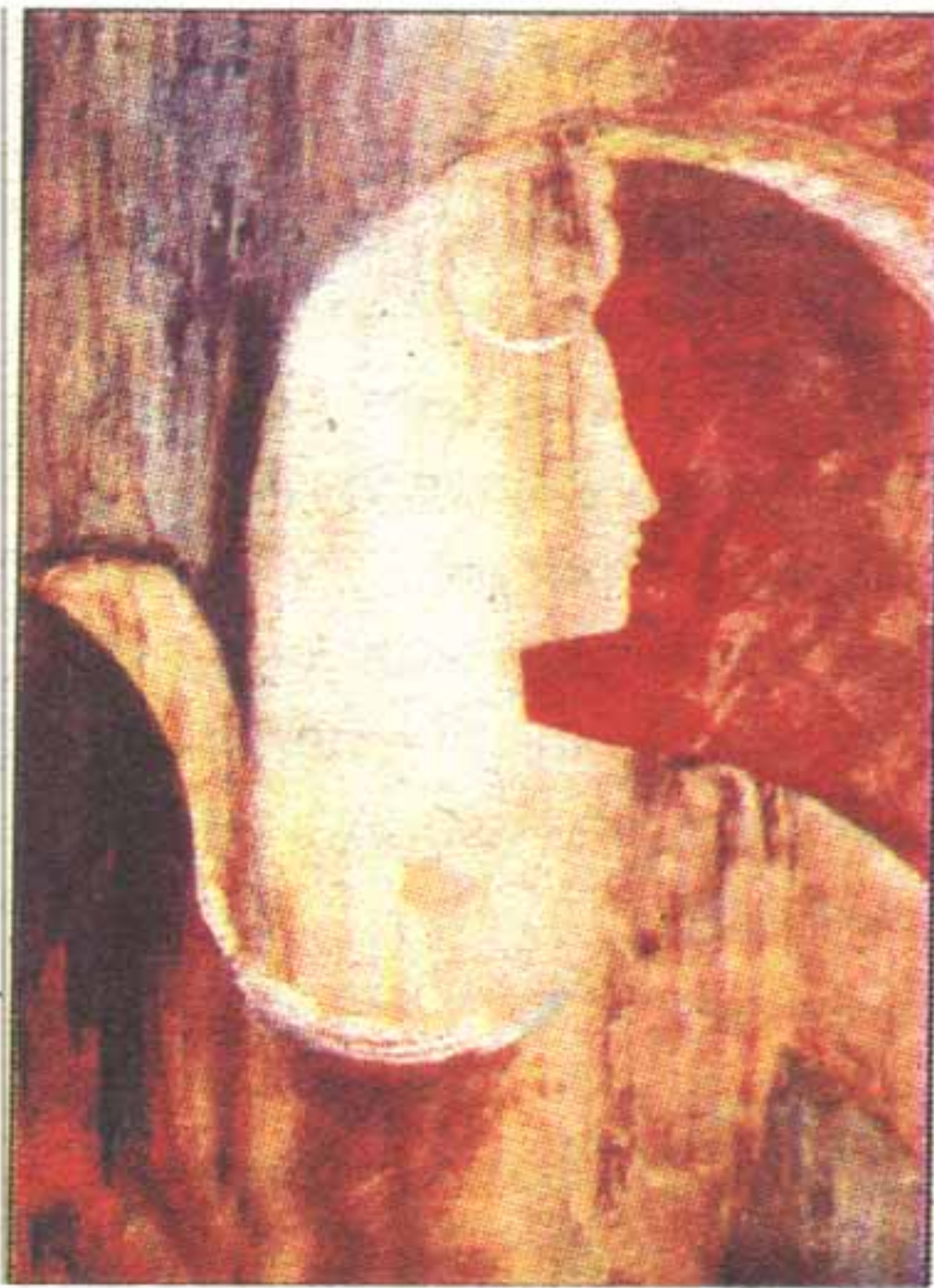


MAHASHIVARATHRI

Opening the third eye



By Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev
Founder, Isha Foundation

In the Indian culture, at one time, there used to be 365 festivals in a year. In other words, they just needed an excuse to celebrate everyday of the year. These 365 festivals were ascribed to different reasons, and for different purposes of life. They were to celebrate various historical events, victories, or certain situations in life, like harvesting, planting, reaping. For every situation there was a festival. But Mahashivarathri is of a different significance.

The 14th day of every lunar month or the day before the new moon is known as Shivarathri. **Among all the twelve Shivarathris that occur in a calendar year, Mahashivarathri, the one that occurs in February-March is of most spiritual significance.**

On this night, the northern hemisphere of the planet is positioned in such a way that there is a **natural upsurge of energy in a human being. This is a day when nature is pushing one towards one's spiritual peak.** It is to make use of this, that in this tradition, we establish a certain festival which is night-long. One of the fundamentals of this night-long festival is to ensure that — to allow this natural upsurge of energies to find their way — you remain with your spine vertical, or you stay awake.

Mahashivarathri is very significant for people who are on the spiritual path. It is also very significant for people who are in family situations, and also for the ambitious in the world. **People who live in family situations, observe Mahashivarathri as Shiva's wedding anniversary.** Those with worldly ambitions see that day as the day Shiva conquered all his enemies. But, for the ascetics, however, it is the day he became one with the Kailash, because he became like a mountain — still, absolutely still.

In the yogic tradition, Shiva is not worshipped as God but considered as Adi Guru, the first Guru from whom the

knowledge originated. After many millennia in meditation, one day he became absolutely still; that day is Mahashivarathri. All movement in him stopped and he became utterly still, so ascetics see Mahashivarathri as the day of stillness.

Legends apart, why is this day and this night held in so much importance in the yogic traditions is because of the possibilities it presents to a spiritual seeker. Modern science has gone through many phases and arrived at a point today where they're out to prove to you that everything that you know as life, everything that you know as matter and existence, everything that you know as the cosmos, as galaxies, is just one energy, which manifests itself in millions and millions of ways.

This scientific fact is an experiential reality in every yogi. **The word "yogi" means one who has realised the oneness of the existence.** When I say "yoga," I'm not referring to any one particular practice or system; all longing to know the unbounded, all longing to know the oneness in the existence is yoga. The night of *Mahashivarathri* offers a person such an opportunity to experience this.

People who are on the spiritual path have special *sadhanas* on those days, because on that day in the month, there is a natural upsurge of energies in the human body. The *puranas* say, "Blessed are those whose

spines are erect." If you were still a creature whose spine was horizontal, you could not make use of it. **But blessed are those who have an erect spine, because on the Mahashivarathri day, effortlessly their energies can move heavenward.**

The sages and seers of the past recognised this, so they made it a part of the tradition to make use of this day as a day of *sadhana*, as a day of intensifying the spiritual processes.

Moreover, Shiva has always been referred to as Triambaka — the one with three eyes. The third eye is the eye of vision. Your two eyes are sensory organs; they feed the mind with all nonsense because what you see is not the truth. These two eyes don't see the truth so another eye, an eye of deeper penetration, has to be opened up.

In this country, in this tradition, knowing does not mean reading books, knowing does not mean listening to someone, knowing does not mean getting information from here and there. **Knowing always meant opening up a new vision into life. So true knowing means your third eye has to open up.** Any amount of thinking, any amount of philosophising, will not bring clarity into your mind. The logical clarity you create, anybody can distort it. Only when vision opens, only then there is clarity. Nobody, no situation, can distort this clarity within you. On the night of *Maha-shivarathri*, nature is bringing that possibility very close to us.

One of the prescriptions for *Shivarathri* is you do not lie down in horizontal positions; remain in a vertical position. Remaining vertical alone is not sufficient; we will have to be in such position where we are not ourselves. Shiva means 'that which is not.' On this night, allow him to be; you are not. Then there is a possibility of opening up new vision into life, looking at life with clarity that cannot be distorted ■

Nightlong Satsang

Isha volunteers in Mysore have organised *Mahashivarathri* celebrations on Feb. 23 at Vivekananda Hall of Mahajana PU College in Jayalakshimpuram.

Mahashivarathri celebrations will commence at 6 pm on 23rd and conclude at 6 am on 24th. This nightlong satsang will involve discourses and powerful meditations from Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev

intermingled with cultural programmes being held at Isha Yoga Centre, Coimbatore.

Isha Foundation is a non-profit voluntary organisation that addresses all aspects of human well-being. From its yoga programmes for inner transformation to its inspiring outreach projects, Isha activities are designed to create an inclusive culture as a basis for global peace and development.