

NARENDRA BISHT

Yagnas are quick and short

Made-to-Order Spiritual Rituals

In the past, a yagna meant an elaborate purifying ritual involving a holy place, sadhus chanting mantras and unconditional belief. Now, in this fast world, people have shortened the entire practice,” frets Acharya Vidyut Vidya Alankar, the head priest of the Arya Samaj in Old Delhi. Audio cds, readymade *prasad* and quickly organised family functions have replaced what is considered the supreme of all activities (*uttam karya*) in the Vedas. “Sixteen *sanskars* are recommended for each human being between birth and death, but most now opt for only two—the wedding rituals and the death rites.” According to him, engaging in a yagna can help relieve tension and provide peace of mind.

A yagna is supposed to invoke and purify all the five elements—air, water, space, earth and fire, considered the *panchmahadev* (five primal divine energies). “The human body is also made up of these elements, so it is essential to balance the five energies in our homes, office and earth,” says Alankar. He also explains the significance behind *bhumi puja*. Earth being thousands of years old, traps past energies, cycles of births and deaths and a spectrum of good and bad influences. It must be purified before anything is built on it.

“But it is the personal yagna that makes a difference, otherwise blessings get dispersed and divided,” says Alankar, insisting that the gains from individual prayers and yagnas are unimaginable. A private spiritual venture that involves a scholarly pandit, a space of one’s own and undisclosed faces might really be a new New-Age idea. It is right time now. The month of the Simhashta Kumbha Mela has auspicious dates, especially ideal for made-to-order personal yagnas.

DISCOURSE

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!” LUKE 24: 5-6

Easter is a message of new life. Like a seed that dies in the ground and sprouts to new life, Jesus’ resurrection symbolises new life amid hopelessness. It is an occasion for expressing our sense of hope and promise in a language that affirms the beauty of new flowers. Are we able to unite with the clarion, triumphant Easter declaration in the classic Christian phrases, “Where, O Grave, is thy victory? Where, O Death, is thy sting?” Easter’s is a message that “we shall overcome” death. That death is not the final word. Cruelty and degradation do not subsume life. Nor do any of the other negative “principalities and powers”.

■ Compiled by **Shefalee Vasudev**

GEM THERAPY

The Stone Age

Whatever else she may do, a gem therapist will certainly trim down your guilt. It was the Rig Veda that first advised human beings to use seven gems of as many colours to gather the rays of sun into the body. Now with some reflexologists, aromatherapists, healers and alternative health practitioners using gem therapy, it has become a sought-after practice. Pleasure, play, pain or protest, gems can influence everything, says veteran Delhi astrologer and gemologist Geeta Sen. “The cosmic rays of the stone passing into the body

TANMOY CHAKRABORTY



have beneficial results. An expert must give advise only after carefully examining the horoscope,” adds Sen, claiming that many practitioners take her advice to identify gems. Some healers ask their clients to lie down while they place stones of specific colour, pattern, or type around the body or on specific energy centres, depending on the ailment.

“Rings are the best way to wear gems because all the nerves leading to the brain pass through the fingers.” Metal inhibits the process, so a gem must not be encased at the bottom where it directly touches the skin. Stones should be of clear lustre, colour and purity. Pearls heal hypertension, amber brings happiness, amethyst cures stomach problems, emerald controls emotions, jade brings peace and diamonds ward off negativity. Time to treat those precious stones as pills for all our ills.