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MADHYA PRADESH

Vedic Fire

Seeking peace through ancient ritual

According to legend, the first Virat Rajsuya Yagna was conducted by Lord Krishna some 5,000 years ago at the end of a vast span of time called the Dwapara Yuga. The purpose of that great fire ceremony was to protect mankind from the impending calamities of the coming Kali Yuga, the "age of darkness " in which we now live. It has been said that the Rajsuya Yagna was continually practiced into the Kali Yuga. However, Sri Swami Pragyanand, President, Delhi Sant Mahal Mandal, Pragma Mission International, New Delhi, is the only one doing it today. And he is doing it in a very big way. His massive, multifaceted, seven-day extravaganzas take place in the village of Katangi near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, a two-day train ride southeast of New Delhi. They have been performed annually now for six years consecutively, and are a marvel to behold. During these yagnas, a notable variety of enjoyments are provided to counterbalance the inherent austerity of long fire ceremonies, solemn prayers and serious proclamations. These include plenty of food, entertainment, games and ferris wheel rides for the kids. Swami also distributes blankets, wheel chairs and hearing aids to the disabled and needy.

During the most recent yagna, which occurred from November 4 through 10, 2003, and was attended by thousands, Swami inaugurated an eye hospital for the poor and a school for local tribal girls. One hundred sadhus from all over India attended the event as featured guests. Among these, two distinguished holy men were honored: Kannuaj Peethadhishwar Swami Ananda Teertha, 96, and Swami Lakshman Sharan Sakhi Baba, 92. Famous bhajana singers Tripti Shakya and Shri Jagdish Dewan provided high-quality musical entertainment.

"The world faces problems of air and water pollution, " Swami Pragyananda exclaimed during his keynote address. "But what about pollution of the mind? This is the main challenge we face, and no one seems to have a solution. This is why I

have decided to perform these mahayagnas. They will purify the minds of people worldwide. Purity of mind brings up the inclination to serve. A lot of energy has been generated through this yagna. This energy can be used to help the poor and serve mankind."