



Nachiketanjali

...an offering

A Journey Into The Spiritual Realm!



Happy Independence Day



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Contents

	Page No.
Editorial	2
Mission	3
The Eternal Freedom	4
Amrita Dhara	6
Spiritual Quest	7
Free Bird	8
Taming the Ego	9
Yuvanjali	10
My India	10
Life - A Mysterious Gift	12
Final Thought is the Guide	13
Freedom - My Choice	14
Living with a Divine Soul	16
Sri Rama Stuti	17
Smiles of Freedom	18
A Mother's Pride	20
Varalakshmi Vratam	21
Be Proud to be a Hindu	22
Mirror Mirror...	23
Sanskrit - Lesson Six	24
Onathappam	25
In the Path of Spirituality...Saawan	26
Naga Panchami	27
Sri Aurobindo	28
Vande Mataram	29
News and Events	30
Special Health Camp	31
Helping Hands	32
An Appeal	33
Invitation	34
Subscriptions	35

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EDITORIAL

When friends or relatives come home, we cordially welcome them, enquire after their well-being and make them feel comfortable. "Hi, how are you?" is how we greet someone on the phone. What is the underlying aspect in the question "How are you?" How does it affect us if they are not doing well? Let us understand the question in a better way.

This is a great social norm. Our happiness is hidden in other's well-being. Since ancient times our culture is to aspire and desire for other's prosperity. Every word that we speak should contain the desire that everyone should be happy and prosperous. 'Everyone' has a wide range of application. In that 'everyone' category come our relatives, friends and also enemies. In the broader perspective there is no selfishness, no jealousy, no enmity or hatred hidden in the word. 'Everyone' binds the entire society. Such feeling when expressed by the whole world results in prosperity of the entire universe. When we aspire for others well-being we'll definitely not harm them. We have to be happy and desire for other's happiness as well.

On the contrary there are people who encourage terrorism and derive happiness from it. They are not bothered about other's welfare. They have no proper understanding of life. They search for their happiness in harming others. They follow the demon's path. What is the reason for this? Where does the fault lie?

We get perturbed when someone falls sick in a close family. We pray for their speedy recovery and in the process we forget our own happiness. That is the true nature of a human being. We should find our happiness in other's happiness. Man tries to overlook this aspect and turns out to be demonic. He disturbs the peace of the society. This doesn't depict the true nature of a human being. Such feelings lead to loss of mental peace, insecurity and he is at a loss of his own happiness. In the final analysis one should refine his thinking pattern and dedicate himself to the welfare of the society.

Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavantu!

-Subhadra K.





Mission!

Dear Sadhakas!

We do have set goals in our lives. We do have every possible support to achieve them and even invisible hands to work for us. But, what is the use, if we do not have the longing to accomplish those goals? They say that ***"Goals can be many but mission in life is one."*** Then how to transform every goal into mission? What is a mission in life? Is it a vision in life? Is it a reality in life? Is it the Truth in life? Then what is really a mission called?

Dear Sadhakas!

They say that, "That which fulfills our desire is mission." Then is it true that 'desire is mission'? No, for me "Mission is desire but desire is not mission." Desire has limitations but mission is unlimited. Mission of life is life itself...Mission in life is life itself. Therefore mission is infinite. But to accomplish mission in life we have to have sincere desires, interest, clarity and inner strength. If we do not have those spiritual values, then we lose interest and ultimately the mission. I always feel that "Mission should be desired..."

Dear Sadhakas!

It is a wonderful thing to see, when people are talking to trees, animals and stones, playing hide and seek with wind and challenging sky to prove its infinity. But who can do this? Only those souls, who have accomplished their mission in life and understood life beyond life. Our mission should be inspiration for all. I am one among those who feel happy to get

associated with people who have clear mission in their lives. Paramhansa Ramakrishna visited this planet to accomplish His mission. There was perfect mission set for Swami Vivekananda. Ramanuja, Kabir, Tulasidas or Valmiki, they all have had mission in their lives. They played their role and simply vanished leaving behind the ocean of knowledge and wisdom.

Dear Sadhakas!

What a wonderful contribution! This is possible for those who have really understood the real mission in life. It is always possible to transform any desire into mission, but need tremendous understanding about life. Let us look at God's creation. He created life. We live in life. We talk about life. But we do not know what exactly life is. What a strange phenomenon! It is like: fish asking what the ocean is or bird asking what the sky is. Don't you think that, this strange phenomena needs to be understood?

Dear Sadhakas!

For me "Mission is life and life is mission." What I feel, the day when we encounter life, our mission is accomplished. But to know life we have to have courage to look within...we have to have a desireless mission in life...we have to have selfless motive in life...we have to have sincere desire to rise above all obstacles...and above all we have to have 'Shradda' in us...Hari Om Tat Sat...!

- Swami Nachiketananda

Goals can be many but mission in life is one!



The Eternal Freedom

***DHURLABHAM BHARATE JANMA,
MANUSHYAM TATRA DURLABHE,***

These words spoken by Jagath guru Adi shankaracharya mean that “to be born in India is rare and rarer still is to be born in human form.” We are very lucky to have procured human birth. Behind every birth, there is a purpose. Likewise, human birth also has some purpose, but how many of us are fulfilling the purpose of human birth?

What is the purpose of life? In spite of getting such a wonderful human birth, because of difficulties and problems, people feel that if they leave this body, then all problems will be resolved. That’s why we see every day in newspaper and TV that many people are committing suicides because they are not able to withstand the problems in life. And they commit suicide thinking that through death they get freedom from problems of the world. Many people try to escape from their duties and think that they will get freedom. If escapism and death brings final liberation, then this world would have been the biggest graveyard. Death is not the final liberation. It doesn’t give us immortal freedom. Freedom is the dream of everyone’s life and the purpose of life also is Freedom of the self or Liberation.

What can give you freedom?

Money, technology, status in society and power are not capable of giving eternal freedom. Economical freedom, Political freedom and Social freedom cannot give us eternal freedom. Beyond all these freedoms there is a superior freedom, which has to be discovered by every human being in the world. Nothing in the world can give us freedom except we ourselves.

What is Freedom?

When foreign invaders come and rule the country, we no longer have freedom. We lose our freedom. Our freedom is in other’s hands. Then we need to achieve our freedom. Social freedom cannot give individual freedom, but individual freedom has a capacity to bring social

freedom. The freedom given by others is not superior freedom, because it is limited. There is freedom which is superior, and it is neither given by others nor it is found outside. The true freedom lies very much within us. Dear Sadhakas, we have lost our permanent address; we do not know how to find out our right address. Some sadhakas are ignorant of the route. Some sadhakas know the route, but they do not want to walk on it. Some sadhakas don’t want to make an attempt to know the route. Some are completely drenched in desires and enjoyment of senses. From birth to death, we go through lot of sufferings and obstacles in life and it is just because we have lost the way to our destination, we lost our permanent address. How many days are we going to stay in a rented house? Every one wants to have an own house where one is free to live and enjoy the life. Whole day we work in the office and evening we come back home, why? Because we know very well that we can rest in the house and relax. In the same way God wants us to discover the true abode of the self, where we can have nectar instead of tea, where we find just not the enjoyment but the bliss and eternal freedom. As long as the ignorance is not shed there is fog in our path.

***Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam
Punarapi Jananee Jathare Shayanam***

Iha Samsare Bahu Dusthare

Krupaya Pare Pahi Murare

Unless we are free from the cycle of birth and death, we keep taking birth. When one becomes free from the cycle of birth and death, that very moment is called freedom. In subtle level it is a state, in which we experience the eternal freedom. Freedom destroys illusion; it breaks all the bondages and makes us aware of the real world. We need to know what is that which is taking us away from our destination. It is necessary to identify the enemies who are creating obstacles in finding out our permanent address.

Who are our enemies?

Please think for a while, who are our enemies? Throughout our life we see enemies around us. It is an irony that more than external enemies our internal enemies are stronger. We all are interested to know about external world, that's why there are many scientists in various fields, who are discovering and inventing many great things. But it is an unchanging truth that if we discover ourselves, we can discover the science of the universe. The body which we got is the biggest laboratory, in which the entire universe exists. Our sages have realized this truth. It is a surprising fact that, ***Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Pride, and Jealousy*** are the strongest enemies which always create obstacles in our path. With the help of right instruments all these shadaripus become powerful tools. We are ***Jivas***, and the ***supreme*** is called ***Shiva***. ***When jiva meets Shiva it is the ultimate event in one's life. This very event is our destiny and at that very moment our true abode or permanent address is discovered.*** Our powerful enemies are creating thick layers of ignorance around the self. Unless these layers are not removed, it is only day dreaming to discover the eternal freedom. We are completely immersed in the world. ***Then what is the powerful instrument which can help remove these layers of ignorance?***

1. **Burning desire:** First quality of a Sadhaka is to have a burning desire to know the true abode. There is a lot of difference between having a desire and having a burning desire. Every one has a desire to earn money in one's lifetime. But just by having desire it doesn't

work. In the same way, just having desire to discover the true freedom doesn't help. To realize the truth we need to have a burning desire.

2. **Right Sadhana:** Taking up a right Spiritual sadhana according to one's nature. The burning desire introduces us to our Guru, who prescribes us the right Sadhana, according to our nature. Many people take up a Sadhana which doesn't suit their nature. Finally they find themselves in chaos. The very aim of sadhana is to discover the truth. But if it is not suitable to us it may take more time in discovering our destination. The aim of Sadhana is purification. It purifies our mind and makes it one pointed.

3. **Karma Yoga:** Taking up a Karma (action, profession) which suits one's nature. Karma yoga is an expression of our Sadhana. The action which we perform in daily life, must be according to 'Swadharma'. It should not be against Dharma. Taking up a right profession or livelihood according to one's nature is the most important aspect. A Sadhaka should convert his mere action into Karmayoga. Karma also plays a major role in discovering eternal freedom. Offer all the selfless actions at the feet of the Lord, by renouncing the fruit of action. Freedom is like birds eye view; freedom brings clarity in life.

Freedom makes you experience the relation of the Self and the Supreme self. In freedom the self becomes one with the Supreme self. This is the only event which makes us free from illusion. Freedom is the ultimate event in life, in which we are one with the Lord or with the Supreme consciousness. So let us start discovering the eternal freedom which brings us bliss...bliss....and only bliss.

- Swami Shivanandamayi





On Freedom!

We all dream of freedom – we yearn to be free at least for a day when we can do as we please and not be regulated by any person or by any laws. But have we ever paused to think why we feel we are bound, bound by our family, by our work, by our country etc. As long as we are not in the spiritual path we can never be truly free.

Swami Ranganathananda said "We talk of freedom from hunger, freedom from starvation, as well as of freedom from illiteracy, ignorance, or political bondage; all these freedoms are wonderful but the supreme freedom is spiritual. Are you spiritually free? That is what we have to seek and attain. So, the highest freedom comes when we realise that infinite Divine which is our true nature beyond this world of relativity, beyond the world of manifestation."

Sri Ramakrishna said- "Under the spell of God's maya man forgets his true nature. He forgets that he is heir to the infinite glories of his Father. This divine maya is made up of three gunas. And all the three are robbers; for they rob man of all his treasures and make him forget his true nature. The three gunas are sattva, rajas and tamas. Of these, sattva alone points the way to God. But even sattva cannot take a man to God.

Listen to a story. Once a man was going through a forest, when three robbers fell upon him and robbed him of all his possessions. One of the robbers said, "What's the use of keeping this man alive?" So saying, he was about to kill him with his sword, when the second robber interrupted him, saying: "Oh, no! What is the use of killing him? Tie him hand and foot and leave him here." The robbers bound his feet and went away.

After a while the third robber returned and said to the man: "Ah, I am sorry. Are you hurt? I will release you from your bonds." After setting the man free, the thief said: "Come with me, I will take you to the public highway." After a long time they reached the road. Then the robber said: "Follow the road. Over there is your house." At this the man said "Sir, you have been very good to me. Come with me to my house." "Oh, no!" the robber replied. "I can't go there. The police will know it."

This world itself is the forest. The three robbers prowling here are sattva, rajas and tamas. It is they that rob a man of the Knowledge of Truth. Tamas wants to destroy him. Rajas binds him to the world. But sattva rescues him from the clutches of rajas and tamas. Under the protection of sattva, man is rescued from anger, passion and other evil effects of tamas. Further sattva loosens the bonds of the world. But sattva is also a robber. It cannot give him the ultimate Knowledge of Truth, though it shows him the road leading to the Supreme Abode of God. Setting him on the path, sattva tells him: "Look yonder. There is your home." Even sattva is far away from the Knowledge of Brahman.

We need not despair that we will not be liberated in this birth and there is hope for all of us as Sri Ramakrishna said: "All will surely realise God. All will be liberated. It may be that some get their meal in the morning, some at noon, some in the evening but none will go without food. All without exception will certainly know their real self." With His blessings let us strive to attain true freedom.

-Compiled by Geetha K.



SPIRITUAL QUEST

What is freedom?

Ans: Freedom means 'Heart'. It is like an identity of the soul. It is like a signature of the soul. It is like the innocence of the child...the purity of Ma Ganga...the sound of silence...the Omkar in the space...the depth of the spiritual person...the renunciation of the Sannyasi...the voice of the soul. Freedom is a higher state of mind and when our minds get purified, we experience the state of freedom. Then everything becomes more natural and spontaneous. The body loses its rigidity. Mind becomes still and the soul speaks. Then there is no journey and no achievements...no sorrow and no happiness...no pain and no pleasure...no ups and no downs...no life and no death...no within and no without.

Freedom cannot be borrowed or gotten from outside. It is very much deep within. Once the search is over, 'I' vanishes and 'We' springs, then 'We' vanishes and 'Soul' springs and lastly 'Soul' vanishes and the 'Supreme soul' springs. Then divinity becomes life and life becomes divinity.

Freedom means 'Choice'. Choice of everything from life to death and beyond it. Freedom means free will. Freedom means no bondage and no boundaries. And when we experience that freedom, frozen beauty comes to life. Dead becomes alive. Then the real phenomenon starts in life. Life travels into life. Soul travels into soul. Then utterances become mantras. Then the ultimate reality becomes journey. Then everything becomes meaningful and beautiful.

There are souls like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana who have demonstrated the highest state of freedom. They in fact breathed and lived that freedom. Just a glance of Sri Ramana and touch of Sri Ramakrishna could bring tremendous change in the society. Their very presence was so dynamic that without moving, they moved the entire Universe at their will. They lived by choice. And if we understand this phenomenon, then it is possible for all of us to get freed from everything.

Freedom means not running away from the world and sitting at one place without doing anything. Freedom makes us more active. Freedom brings clarity in life and motivates everything. Then we develop looking at ourselves as a witness. That is something, what we are looking for... Hari Om Tat Sat!

- Swami Nachiketananda

*Freedom brings clarity in life
and motivates everything.*



Free Bird

Have you ever wished you could fly like a free bird? Yes, as a child, I did. But it has been a long time since I quit imagining because I willfully tied down my wings to the invisible yet strong shackles of ignorance. While still some nations of the modern world were struggling to get independence from domineering super powers, I was happily getting intricately entangled in the locks of attachments and possessions. In the name of finding my identity, I was losing my freedom of love to attachments, freedom of speech to diplomacy, the freedom of simple living to pomp and prestige, the freedom of life to the fear of death. It took me almost half a century just to realize that the strong chains that were restricting me were being manufactured in my own mind and the hands that were tying me down were none other than my own notions. But here I was blaming my dear ones all this time for enslaving me with their affection.

Once a trader with his herd of camels carrying loads of inventory and an assistant who tended to the camels set out on a business trip. After travelling all day through a desert terrain they reached an oasis and decided to halt for the night. As they started settling down, the assistant came running to the trader sheepishly admitting that he forgot to bring the leash for tying down the camels for the night. The trader, after hearing the complaint calmly, advised his assistant, "Oh my friend, you know that you don't have the leash but the poor camels don't. Just pretend tying them down as you would with the leash and I assure you results!" The obedient assistant implemented his master's orders and

pretended to perform the routine of leashing the camels to poles and watched to his relief that they settled down to rest after a day long journey and slept all night. The next morning when they got ready to resume their journey, the care taker simply ushered them to move but they wouldn't, until he pretended to untie the strings from the poles. The 'poor' camels were totally unaware that they were as free as birds all night and could have walked their way royally into the expanse of the golden hued desert!

I was worse than the trader's 'poor' camels. At least the camels needed to be demonstrated that they were being tied down whereas I was spinning my own snare. My memories and opinions of myself and my expectations for myself were sufficient to cause the near loss of one-in-a-million opportunity called 'Life'. I consider myself fortunate that before it got too late I am able to identify the fine line between love and obsession, taste and addiction, dislike and hatred, saving for a rainy day and hoarding for a few generations! Now that the culprit has been identified I hope I can wiggle my way out of the chrysalis of entanglements and emerge as a free butterfly into this Beautiful World, slowly but steadily!



- Annapurna R.



Taming The Ego

'Ego' – one hears this word with increasing frequency as the world around us is suddenly flooded by this three lettered word. What accounts for this sudden increased awakening? I had no idea that such an entity existed in the human psyche- let alone my very own psyche. When I first heard the word Ego, in one of the spiritual discourses that I had attended, I just nodded and brushed it aside, giving it the least importance. Hardly did I realize that the word would haunt me throughout the rest of my life. It was only later when I was faced by my Guru, with the demand to make my choice - freedom or ego- that I started paying heed to the word. Pressure mounted to make a quick decision, to take sides and I made a deeper commitment to pay attention to my ego. The inner self demanded I empty my mind and then started the war. My heart wriggled for freedom, but my ego-ruled mind put up a stiff resistance. Years of siege followed and I lost the battle. But even in losing this FIRST big battle I made a commitment that I should never give up. The war can be won through surrender, which means to turn our minds over to our hearts. However, I found this to be quite a difficult task. But deep down I was aware that if I could surrender to my heart's cry and just let go, I could swim in the current which would take me into the truth, far beyond ego.

The story of the Little bird and the Sea is proof enough to show that sincere attempts can always be successful in achieving our goals. As the story goes, once a small bird laid its eggs on the seashore and went in search of food. When it returned it was in for a shock as the sea had washed away the eggs. The bird demanded the sea to return its eggs and when the latter failed to do so, it started throwing grains of sand into the sea. The little bird was under the impression that all the grains would absorb the sea water and the eggs could be retrieved. It never gave up and

continued its struggle for days together. Garuda, the king of birds was informed about this and he immediately came to the rescue. He was amused to see the futile attempts of the tiny bird and was moved by its will power. He threatened the sea of dire consequences if the eggs were not returned. The sea, out of fear, immediately returned the eggs to the little bird. Our attempts to win over our ego should be unceasing like that of the bird in the story. We might face many obstacles in winning the war but we need to develop a strong will power to emerge victorious. When our faith is strong, the Guru comes to our rescue like the Garuda in the story and helps us reach the pinnacle of success.

We often mistake enlightenment as ego eradication, which is not true. Swamiji always says ego is essential but only when it is purified. Purified ego leads to purified actions, which is drastically needed in today's society. Sri Ramakrishna's example of mudfish is really relevant. Just like the mudfish which is never stained by the mud, certainly one can live a full fledged life among family members, attending and fulfilling their duties and yet remain untainted by attachments. It is indeed possible to maintain a sense of perfect freedom.

Ego can be conquered more effectively with knowledge of the inner self. But the human self can not remain complete without the existence of the ego. Ego is necessary and instead of trying to conquer it, we should use the same for positive, constructive purposes without an iota of selfishness. We are all fellow travelers in the spiritual journey. May the light of Truth shine in the hearts of all! If spirituality helps awaken our conscience and helps us reach where we meant to go, it would be wonderful if we all become actually very spiritual indeed!

- Subhadra K.





Look upon every man, woman, and every one as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve: serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege. If the Lord grants that you can help any one of His children, blessed you are; do not think too much of yourselves. Blessed you are that the privilege was given to you when others had it not. Do it only as a worship. I should see God in the poor, and it is for my salvation that I go and worship them. The poor and the miserable are for our salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the diseased, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper, and the sinner! Bold are my words; and let me repeat that it is the greatest privilege in our life that we are allowed to serve the Lord in all these shapes. Give up the idea that by ruling over others you can do any good to them. But you can do as much as you can in the case of the plant; you can supply the growing seed with the materials for making up of the body, bringing to it the earth, the water, the air, that it will assimilate and grow by its own nature.

Bring all the light into the world. Light, bring Light! Let light come unto every one; the task will not be finished till everyone has reached the Lord. Bring light to the poor; and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous! Thus bring light to all and leave the rest unto the Lord, for in words of the same Lord, "To work you have the right and not to the fruits thereof." "Let not your work produce results for *you*, and at the same time may you never be without work."

Source: *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*; Vol.3, pg 246



My India

India stinks. It's a wreck of a place.

It's nothing more than a lump of poor houses built with mud and plastered with cow dung.

It's nothing more than a bunch of filthy rich, power hungry, immoral creatures running the wheel of 'democracy'.

It's nothing more than a sad little chicken that has been trying to stand up on its feet for the past three fourths of a century, in vain.

In fact, it's nothing more than a sad excuse of a miserable piece of land in the name of a 'country'.

That's India.

It's a land that has mystified the world for centuries with its splendid tales of wealth and beauty. And when wide eyed tourists step onto the shores of this country, they are ripped off, robbed and raped. No other questions asked.

It's a land that has been 'poised' for the leap for decades now; it's been 'developing' for years now; it's been liberalized, privatized, globalized and in every way, thoroughly sanitized. Yet the streets of its financial capital, Mumbai, are choked with the stench of overflowing gutters, heaps of garbage, and sometimes, the remains of immobile 'citizens' themselves.

It's a land where the man and the woman who vote are nothing more than helpless, frustrated spectators of bomb blasts and terror attacks; justice just cries out silently for mercy from under the shackles of an omnipotent bureaucracy.

That's India.

I wish I could leave right now. I wish I could grow wings and fly away to some far-off country in the glorious west. Or that I could grow fins and swim to some nearer country in the east that is smaller but happier. But I can't.

I can't leave India.

Not after I've heard all the sounds on the streets- the mad honking, the screaming of drivers, the crying of hawkers, the mooing of cows, the barking of dogs and the cursing of fisherwomen.



For I know, that beneath all that, there is a child waiting to go back home from school into the open arms of his grandmother.

There is a husband who is going to make his wife's day unforgettable by giving her half a garland of small, white jasmines.

There is a working woman hurrying back home after buying vegetables for dinner that night.

There is a college student on her way to coaching classes for the next six and a half hours. She has to top the entrance examinations. It's her parents' dream.

I can't leave India.

Not after I've seen glimpses of life in the village- the half-starved bullocks tilling the land, a toddler suffering at home from malnutrition, the sweat gleaming on a farmer's forehead as he works in the field, an aged Brahmin marrying off a man and a woman who have never met each other in their life.

For I know, these folk still find happiness in the splashing of water in the muddy rivers. They still enjoy rolling a bicycle wheel with a thin stick because willow bats are too expensive.

In the age of the internet and computer, they gather around an 80 year old man around a bonfire on a starlit night to hear fantastic stories about 'those days'.

I can't leave India.

Not after I've seen the colors and sounds and lights of celebration all around me.

For I know, there is no other place in the world that would open its arms to a complete stranger and let him become a part of their life.

There is no other place where complete strangers become family after dancing with a *baraat* in the middle of a narrow gully, their feet jumping in tune with the sound of drums and the blowing of *shehnais*.

If there's such a land that breathes, throbs with life and feels emotions more humane than us humans, it's this land called India.

If there's such a land whose sons and daughters have willingly given away their lives for it, regretting only the fact that they had but one life to sacrifice at her altar, it's this land called India.



If there's such a land whose soil, whose water and whose air at first breath become a part of you, and make you an inseparable part of them, it's this land called India.

So go on. Go and choose to live your life in the 'glorious' west or the 'mystic' east, whichever seems more promising.

You may hate or love that distant land called India that seems to be wriggling in a puddle of mud of its own making. But you can't ignore it. You can't get it out of your system.

Because, ironically, it's only in these muddy puddles that the flowering of a 'thousand-petalled lotus' happens...the other places just grow flowers.

That's my India.

-Avinash Agarwal



Life - A Mysterious Gift



*God gave
me nothing
I wanted,
He gave me
everything
I needed!*

- Swami Vivekananda



Life....wonder what it means. Everyday I awake, I chalk out a plan to accomplish my chores, meet friends, go out for study and what not. But, did I ever wait and think what do I want to see myself as, at the end of the day? The answer is a big NO! I was so busy with living my future that I never thought of what I am doing today. Life is a gift indeed, a priceless one...Have we ever thought of it? Are we living it to the fullest? Mere survival doesn't make a beautiful life. We know how to achieve our goals, win wars and struggle for our livelihood but do we actually know how to live life?

In a small village lived an extremely poor woman who went begging from house to house for alms. Every morning she set out early to beg for food and living. People wondered why the old woman went begging everyday though she had enough food to eat. This continued for long. One sad day, the old woman died. People came to her hut to perform the ceremony. When they went in, they found the place to be smelling bad; they saw rats running from one corner of the hut to the other. They cleared the mess to see where the rats were running in and out. They saw 'rotis' piled in a corner. Then did the villagers realize that this woman went begging everyday, came home, piled food and ate little every day thinking "If I won't go begging for tomorrow due to illness, I can eat the food that I store." Seldom did she eat to heart's content in the worry about the next day.

Life is too short and unexpected. Plan for tomorrow but live today. Future has a reason to be the TOMORROW and not TODAY. Live the day as it goes. Today, once gone, never comes back and today is always a '*mysterious gift*' full of surprises. Enjoy every moment, everything that comes your way. If you keep yourself busy with future, today, then you will have nothing to live tomorrow. Life has to be lived the way it has to be. Live life, learn more, explore yourself, explore within you and thus make the right use of the priceless and mysterious gift you got from God above.

- Ramya Manasa



Final thought is the Guide

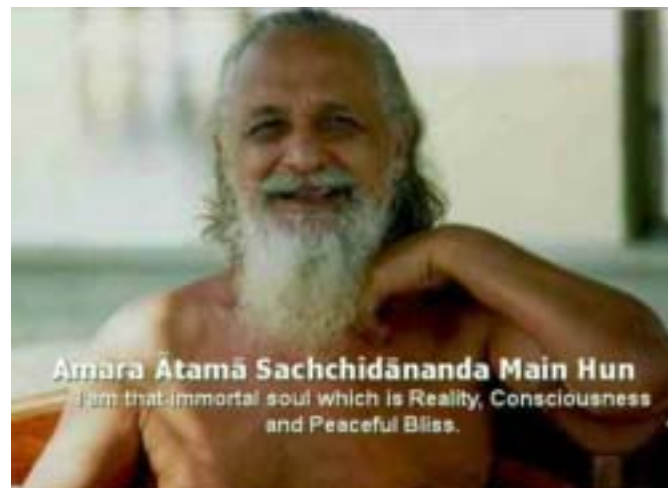


How nice it would be if our last thought was, "If I had been a renunciate, I would be living in mountain cave now. I would be meditating on God, without interacting with anybody." This is precisely why, in the evening of my life, I left Munger and came here to Rikhia. Now I pray all the time, "Oh God may no doctor or nurse attend me when I die. I do not want a drip or a bedpan. I do not want to see my disciple crying for me. Let there be just one image in my mind of Lord Shiva, besmeared with ashes and adorned with matted locks, crescent moon and serpent, and with the third eye closed, of course." This is my sankalpa- that I should see his form at the time of death. I did not come here to start an institution, to become a great man or to fulfill any other ambitions. Whatever I do here is because I have been told to do it by somebody whom you don't know, whom I have never seen and whose telephone number I don't have. He has asked me to do it.


So at the time of death, the last thought becomes the guiding principle for your next birth. In this life you may be a wretched person, hopeless in every sense, but during the last moments before your departure, you may think of very high spiritual things. This is nearly impossible, but if it happens, your next birth will be directed by that last thought. You will incarnate according to that last thought in your previous life. However, all the other karmas of your previous life will also follow you into that incarnation, even with that great sankalpa. You may be a good person, but there will also be suffering because you have to suffer, you have to enjoy, you have to face and confront the karma. You can escape anything in life, you can cheat God in every sense, but you cannot cheat your karma, because karma is within you, is there all the time, making notes in his computer. Every thing is being computerized.

Therefore, this matter of transmigration, relating to the journey of the soul from ignorance to light, from mortality to immortality, should be understood in the light of karma, in the light of the nature of the soul. At the same time, you should remember one point. The wise men in India, regardless of their tradition, whether they were from the north, south, east or west, were inspired by the philosophy, by the approach, but they were never satisfied with the final answer because the final answer is with God, not with man. We have to be open minded all the time. The wise men, whether Shankaracharya or any other saint, have explained very clearly how the soul moves from one body to enter another. However, no matter which body it adopts, the soul has to face and experience the karma that it has reaped. This is eternal process until the day we are emancipated.


*By Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati,
(Bhakti Yoga Sagar Vol.5)*



Freedom - My Choice!



One of these days I received a message from Swamiji that the topic for the August issue is Freedom- Freedom in every sense. The last word caught my attention. For a while I couldn't perceive. I was not that free to catch the concept in a jiffy. After thinking for a moment it occurred to me- is Swamiji testing me? Because, for the last issue also he asked me to write on Guru Purnima. Though writing on a spiritual topic was not my cup of tea, I could manage to write purely with the confidence he reposed in me in attempting the topic. Before I could take a free long breath I am asked to write on this intricate topic and I realized how important it is to be free to conceive anything. The topic is "Freedom"- the problem is if I take more liberty I may go overboard or if I restrict myself it loses its beauty - because the topic is freedom. As I was penning down I understood how difficult it is to enter into a phase called FREEDOM. A man with much curiosity once asked Swami Vivekananda, "Swamiji, being a great patriot why can't you make this country, India free?" Swamiji candidly replied, "My friend, I can make you all free, but can you retain that freedom?" What Swamiji was referring to was about the purest form of Freedom which Gandhiji dreamt of and which even today we could not achieve. Freedom in every sense means and includes almost everything under the sun, where progress or change is inevitable. Freedom may be taken in a different sense, in a different context but the very meaning remains the same. It is reaching a stage where it is better than before, having a better clarity than before, having progressed from stagnation, more dynamic than static, having a better idea than before, having a better understanding than before, having more space of your own than before. Freedom for a nation is different from individual freedom, spiritual freedom is different from worldly freedom, freedom from responsibility is different from freedom from irresponsibility and child-like freedom is different from childish freedom. Freedom is like a two edged sword which has to be handled carefully.



Feeling free is different from really being free. But nothing is ever superior to a free mind and soul. The soul of freedom is always like a fresh

water stream where you can see its bottom or a beautiful smile on the face of a child. A free nation is that which is free from poverty, illiteracy and insecurity. Mahatma Gandhiji said, "A nation is that, that provides peace and prosperity to its citizens." The nation alone survives when it ceases the slavish attitude. We as a nation were united before independence and are dividing ourselves in the name of religion, caste and creed. Firstly we need to be free from these dogmas. Can't we evolve a concept called 'INDIAN' wherein a person is recognized by his skills and intellect and not by any religion or caste? A personal or an individual freedom is that which is free from anger, fear, weakness, jealousy and greed. Without relinquishing these tendencies how could individual freedom be achieved? Being your true self under all circumstances and having a stoic attitude is the only easiest way to attain such freedom. To make others free we need not lose our freedom. Bal Gangadhar Tilak said: 'a slave with a free mind is better than a person enjoying freedom but having a dependent mind.' Coming to Spiritual freedom, once a guru along with his disciple was about to cross a stream. They had the power of walking on water. Having known this, a lady requested the monks to carry her across the stream. The disciple hesitated, but his guru carried her across and left her. After a while the disciple started discussing about that lady. The guru says 'I left her after crossing the stream but you seem to be still carrying her.' This is the true spiritual freedom- doing deeds with a free mind. Once Swami Turiyananda was about to be operated upon for an ailment and the doctors were to give him sedatives. Swamiji simply requested them to inform the time when they are exactly going to operate upon him and when they informed, he simply withdrew the sense of his body in that area where operation was to be done- this is also a freedom where you withdraw your sense and make your body free. A man strives hard throughout his life to amass huge wealth for his family and himself and thinks that he is free from all the hardships- the stage is Worldly Freedom but where is the free time for him to enjoy those fruits. The freedom may allow him to think that he had made a niche of his own, but unfortunately he left no room for himself. Freedom from responsibility is that where the man had reached a stage, where he





had accomplished all his duties: what he was supposed to do as a son to his parents, as a husband to his wife, as a father to his children. He had done all including his responsibility towards his nation like paying taxes and helped the needy the way best possible for him. Best example is Nagamahasay, a household disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who has not only done his duties as a householder but reached a pinnacle in the spiritual line. Sri Ramakrishna would say, "Hold work with one hand and with the other God. After completion of the work hold God with both hands." Nagamahasay had done exactly the same and attained freedom from responsibilities. Some people resist discharging their responsibilities but speak of rights; one who has not realized one's responsibility has no right to demand his rights. Freedom from irresponsibility is a stage where the person has to realize that the freedom lies in taking up the responsibility but not shying away from it.

Child like freedom is a great state of mind. A child accepts people as they are and loves to mingle with them without any attachments or attributes. The acceptance levels are such that the child enjoys irrespective of the experience the child had on the day the mother scolded or beat up her baby. If we look at the child, it never carries yesterday with it but lives in the present always. The child is free from those feelings, but being adults we ignore to follow this simple rule. We maintain relations depending on our positive experience with them; if anything goes awry we carry with us the same impression about them for the remaining time of our lives. Knowing fully and having failed to notice our weakness we try to build a comfort zone of our own and never try to break the shell and still pretend to be free. This is feeling free but not really free. We are not free unless we make our mind a duster to wipe off all our bad experiences and learn to begin with clean slates. It is said that 'for a wise man, everyday is a new beginning'. The secret lies in not carrying over any mental baggage but freeing the mind by the end of the day which will create a whole new atmosphere and can enjoy his freedom. A successful businessman was once asked what the secret of his success was to which he replied that everyday before going to bed he empties all the papers and currency from his pants and

shirt pockets and sleeps peacefully. Similarly if we practice to unload all our worries or tensions by the end of the day we can lead a peaceful life. At least we can start our day with a new hope. Once we reach that stage we can call ourselves free.

A calm and peaceful mind or soul is the best among all the freedoms and the trailblazer for all freedoms. Mahatma Gandhi is still remembered and revered as father of our nation for his noble qualities. He could attain these qualities only through a calm and cool mind. He was actively calm and calmly active. A free mind has detachment. Whenever anything is done in a detached manner, it becomes what is called NISHKAMA SEVA whose result will benefit people at large. Similarly a cool headed person can bring success in his field and lead by example for his colleagues.

A real freedom will bring a confidence and assures individual happiness and peace. A positive thought about tomorrow will make people more free. A man with non-violence as his weapon had freed the nation from slavery. This is the best example for true freedom; he was individually free and had dreamt of the same for his compatriots at large. His dream of independence was realized only through that thought called Freedom- Freedom at any cost. A mind which is free would alone bring change; similarly a nation which is free from poverty and illiteracy would flourish. A free atmosphere would enable the child to grow. A spiritual seeker free from the worldly desires would progress in the line of self-realization.

On this August occasion let us rededicate ourselves and resolve to make ourselves free from one of our bad qualities. Help a child labourer in becoming free and send him to school, try to be free from bad thoughts, try to do work on hand with a free mind, try to avoid carrying mental baggage with you wherever you go by doing which you will make others also free. Dream and sustain enthusiasm to attain freedom from all the forces that act as hindrances in your advancement in the path to the stage called FREEDOM.



- M. Koti Rajasekhar

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Living with A Divine Soul

Very few people are blessed to live with divine souls. When we are blessed, we should utilize every moment to imbibe the essence of their teachings. Each of us is aware that God is residing in our hearts and the real Guru is within us. But can we feel and experience Him? We know we are ever free. But are we really experiencing the freedom? The answer is a big NO. We are all bound by our own body and mind and desires. Then what is the way to freedom? Here comes External Guru's help. A baby in the womb derives all energy from the mother through the umbilical cord; similarly with spiritual bond we can also imbibe the qualities of the Guru.

I wanted to narrate a small but significant incident which happened a few years back. Swami Nachiketananda desired to bring up two Doberman puppies and His desire was fulfilled when they were gifted by a devotee. He exhibited the happiness of a child when He received them. He made a room for them downstairs and He made provision for them to come to His room through the mesh door with His carpentry skills. The puppies adored Swamiji and they always wanted to be with Him whether He was in the office or doing His sadhana. But He was never disturbed by them. Who will not be attracted to such a pure, loving soul? The



inmates of the Ashram were amused to see their pranks.

Unfortunately, this did not last long. Suddenly one of the puppies had fallen sick and the other followed suit. Swamiji took them to the hospital and the doctor advised they should be kept in the hospital for 3-4 days. It was peak summer and the rooms were too small with tinned roofs. Swamiji decided to stay back with the puppies and watched silently as drip was

administered. He took extreme care of them, though they did not survive. Though He knew of their fate when they were brought to Him, He did not fail in attending to them. He showered on them all His love and the puppies were really blessed to be liberated in His presence. This was something to watch and learn. In the present day scenario if we come to know what is going to happen our thinking and behavioral patterns would immediately change. We do our work expecting results. But I have never seen Him function with any expectations. I personally feel there is no need for listening to big lectures on detachment or freedom. The above incident teaches us many subtle things if we want to learn. Some will preach, some will teach, some will only demonstrate. Swamiji belongs to the latter category. I thank Him for revealing to me the true meaning of FREEDOM.

- Vasundhara P.

Detachment does not mean becoming apathetic to things around you. That is not the meaning of detachment. 'I don't care. Children are weeping there, I don't care. I have no attachment.' That is not detachment. Love is there, but no attachment is there. Pure love can flow from you when you are truly detached.

- Swami Ranganathananda

Sri Rama Stuti



*Shri Ramachandra kripalu bhaja mana
harana bhava bhaya darunam
Nava kanja lochana kanja mukha kara
kanja pada kanjarunam*

*O mind! Worship the compassionate Shree
Ramachandra,*

*Who destroys fear of the
phenomenal world.*

His eyes are like fresh lotuses.

He is lotus faced.

His hands are like lotuses,

His feet are like lotuses.

The Power and Divinity of Rama nam have been acclaimed time and again by Gods and Saints including Lord Shiva Himself. Goswami Sant Tulasidas through Rama nam Kirtan brought a dead man back to life proving that His Divine name is as powerful or even greater than the Lord Himself. "Rama" is a mantra, the repetition of which leads to higher states of consciousness. Rama itself means the one which is present in every atom of this universe- "*Raam Nam so hi jaaniye jo ramta sakal jahan, ghut ghut me jo ram raha usko Raam Pechchan.*"

Tulsidas is regarded as the kaliyug reincarnation of Valmiki as proclaimed by Shiva in Bhavishyottara purana and his Ramcharitmanas as Tulasi-krit Ramayan. Ramcharitmanas was written in Devnagari script, Awadhi language in seven kandas encompassing three folds of God realization: Sublime Bhakti, Divine Knowledge and Mukti or Salvation. Ramcharitmanas considered as the best work on Devotion by Mahatma Gandhi was completed by Tulsidas in a short time of 2 years 7 months and 26 days. Goswami Tulsidas begins each chapter of this work with an invocation of God, as he believed that reading and writing of the story of Lord Rama requires the right frame of mind and the Divine

assistance of God. Tulsidas ends every chapter in the same manner.

Tulsidas follows an eclectic approach to realization of God. Like Sri Ramanuja He believes in a supreme personal God, possessing all gracious qualities (saguna), as well as like Sankaracharya in the quality-less (nirguna) impersonal Brahman. The fact that Lord Himself takes human form, and becomes incarnate, Rama, Krishna and so on, this body is to be honored, not despised. The Lord is to be approached by faith, devotion and surrender of self in perfect love, and all actions are to be purified of self-interest in contemplation of Him. He is all in all. Therefore loving all creatures is, loving God and therefore the surest way to happiness. According to Tulsidas, Rama is Satchitananda, the all pervading Brahman, a sun who dispels the darkness of ignorance and as Shiva says 'the story of Rama is an axe which fells the tree of Kaliyuga.' In the Uttarakanda of Ramcharitmanas, the Bhakti in all its glory echoes advaitism.

Tulsidas at one time surrenders, "I am the servant and He my master, hold fast to this doctrine and worship the lotus feet of Rama" and at the other merges, "I am That - this unbroken mental state is the flame which burns away the ignorance. No distinction is possible at this state." The loss of individual is the only way to attain the Supreme Bliss according to Tulsidas.

Iti vadati tulasidasa

shankara-sesha-muni-mana-ranjanam

Mama hridai kanja-nivaasa kuru,

kaamaadi khala-dala-ganjanam

Thus says Tulsidas, worship Him who pleases Shankara and all the sages,

Reside in the lotus of my heart, destroying evil feelings like lust.

(Tulsidas Jayanti-16th of August 2010)



"Ramayan is the sublime shadow of the tree of Divinity. One who seeks it, or comes near it, leaves his miseries far and behind."

- Goswami Sant Tulasidas



Smiles of



Freedom



A Mother's Pride

As a Telugu poem from Sumathi Shatakam goes, the joy of parenting is not experienced as much at the time of the birth of a child as when the child is recognized for his/her success by the world! This has been very true in my case. Virtues of my children have been sources of such pride that my heart bursts into sprays of jasmines and lotuses, veins gurgle joyously as the waters of Ganga and Godavari and my hair sways with happiness as paddy and wheat grasses. Indeed I have been the proudest mother ever. I have, like anyone else on this earth gone through ups and downs. Taking in a stride, from the glory of the golden rule of Sri Rama, the honor of witnessing the Gitopadesha I traveled a long road into the Kali yuga. My children who have cherished the good times thrived in the difficult times too with the help of patience, hope and tenacity which they inherited from me. Every family has to have a hero to lead it on the Road to Glory. It is not by sustaining but only by outperforming his legacy does one win accolades of the world. And I am proud to claim that I bore innumerable such heroes from my golden womb, who for my honour and freedom have laid their lives with iron wills and lotus hearts. Today I wish to pay homage especially to those children who sacrificed themselves to give me a new life so that rest of their family shall live in dignity.

"Atithi devobhava" has been a value of our culture since times immemorial. Having assimilated the same we welcomed the Portuguese ship San Gabriel led by Vasco da Gama in 1498 that sailed around the Cape of Good Hope to finally dock at Calicut on the Malabar Coast. Around this time India was eyed by the rest of the world for its wealth and spices. In the footsteps of Portuguese, Dutch, English and French also entered India to establish trade relationships under the banner of East India Company. However, the English by initiating successful diplomatic relations with the Mughal court gained in the process not only friends in the Mughal court but also the



Emperor's permission to establish a British East India Company trading post at Surat by 1618. British East India Company generated more than ten percent of England's revenue so their trading interests took the form of political ambition and gradually like the fabled camel; they exploited a gesture of welcome into gaining governance of our country. India became British India and my own sons and daughters had to pay compensation to the Queen of England. In a move to establish

their rule permanently in India British introduced the railways, telegraph and postal service in India. But due to number of factors my children started to grow increasingly resentful of Britain's political and cultural motives in India. As a culmination of which my patriotic sons and daughters unceasingly confronted the British starting from the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 to the Swadeshi movement to The Quit India movement in 1942, adapting diverse means from Violence to Non-violence; adhering to the mantra "Do or die" until the midnight of **August 15th 1947** and restored my freedom. My brave soldiers met with all the disruptions, brutal beatings, humiliating punishments, and even death sentences with great poise and dignity for my independence. Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mangal Pandey, Tantia Tope, Rani of Jhansi, Madam Bhikaji Cama, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Sukhdev, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Chandrashekhar Azad, Sarojini Naidu, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sucheta Kriplani and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Aruna Asaf Ali, Durgabai Deshmukh are just a few names and forms to mention, of my valiant children whose footsteps today's generations can follow.

Today my family comprises of 1,150,000,000 (1.15 billion) members. Even if half of us demonstrate an iota of the exemplary spirit of responsibility, selflessness, courage, perseverance, determination and patriotism of our gallant heroes, our family would lead rest of the nations of this world. Let us march on to make this fact a verity of today!

- Annapurna R.



Varalakshmi Vratam

Goddess Lakshmi is one of the most important figures in the Hindu pantheon. Tradition tells us to pray to the Goddess first, because with Her kind and benevolent heart, She will intercede with the Lord for the granting of any boon. There are many festivals in the year dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi. Among them, Varalakshmi Vratam is unique because it is marked by strict observance of certain practices and austerities.



their homes full of riches. From then on, women started performing this vratam every year seeking wealth and prosperity in their families.

On the day of the puja, houses are cleaned and shrines decorated. The main puja begins by worshipping Lord Ganesha to remove all obstacles and evil forces. Later, Goddess Lakshmi is invoked into a kalasha filled with water and

Varalakshmi puja is observed by married women in Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and other parts of South India. The Friday before the full moon or Pournima day of the month of Shravan (August) is chosen to perform Varalakshmi puja. Worshipping Goddess Lakshmi on this day is equivalent to worshipping Ashtalakshmi- the eight Goddesses of Wealth, Earth, Learning, Love, Fame, Peace, Pleasure and Strength.

decorated with mango leaves and a coconut smeared with turmeric and vermillion. Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped by chanting Ashtottara satanama (108 names) and offered nine varieties of delicacies as naivedhyam. Toram, a bunch of nine threads, is tied to the right hand wrist of the person performing the puja. In conclusion of the vratam hymns are sung in praise of Goddess Lakshmi and married women are invited to receive tamboolam (an offering of betel leaves, betel nuts, Fruits, vermillion, turmeric and dakshina) which signifies prosperity.

The legend behind the Varalakshmi puja and vratam is fascinating. It was a game of dice which caused a small tiff between Lord Shiva and Parvathi as to who was the victor. An honest gana, Chitrnemi, was asked to arbitrate and he decided in Shiva's favour. An angry Parvati cursed him to suffer from leprosy. When Shiva pleaded with her, She gave in and said, the day women in the world observed Varalakshmi puja, Chitrnemi would get deliverance. Chitrnemi got relief when he observed some women performing the puja. Ever since then, this vratam has been observed. This vratam is mentioned in the Skanda purana.

In 2010, the puja date is August 20th, Friday. Those who cannot perform it on that day can do it on any other Friday in the month of Shravan. More than the religious aspect let us derive spiritual benefits by staying tuned to Goddess Varalakshmi on the auspicious day.

- Source: Festivals of India

There is also another legend that tells us the story of a very pious lady Charumathi who was asked by Goddess Lakshmi, in her dream, to do the vratam along with other ladies in her village. Charumati followed the instructions and was amazed to find her body decked with jewels and



Be Proud To Be A Hindu



This is not a fanatic outburst of a staunch religious believer. In fact, this article has nothing, absolutely nothing to do with a religion. So, what does "Hindu" mean? Who is a Hindu? What is Hinduism??? Answers to these questions can be profoundly given in the words of Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev of ISHA foundation, Coimbatore, one of



the most enlightened spiritual masters living on earth today. "The word 'HINDU' comes from the word 'Sindhu' which is a river. The civilization that was on the banks of this river was called the Sindhu civilization. When the Persians came they could not pronounce Sindhu, so called it Indu. Over a period of time it became Hindu. So Hindu is a geographical identity and to some extent a cultural identity not a religious identity at all. Hindu was never an 'ism'. It is only when hugely aggressive religions came that the Hindus tried to organize themselves into a religion but without success. Because, there is no one belief system. In fact, there is no belief system at all. You can believe God as a man or a woman and be a good Hindu, you can worship a snake or a tree or a monkey and be a good Hindu. You need not believe in God and still be a good Hindu."

"This culture, which grew in this particular part of the planet, focused its whole attention on the ultimate well-being of a human being. The immediate well-being was not too important. Generally, it is said that 'Hindu' means in your life there is only one goal – 'Mukti' which means liberation. The ultimate liberation is the only goal a Hindu has. Everything else is secondary. Even God is just one more device for him to attain mukti. Generally, in every religion, God is the ultimate goal. But this is a culture where we do not see God as the ultimate thing, because we know we created Him. And we can

create any number of Gods and any kind we want. We can turn a rock into God and we created this whole art and science of consecration. Nobody else on this planet looks at it this way. If you explore the deeper dimensions of this culture, nowhere else has humanity ever invested that much time and energy to look at the inner

well-being of a human being. It is absolutely incredible. Here this doesn't come from a belief system. It happens as a science. Because of this you cannot call Hinduism a religion. It is a way of life, a culture which gives freedom to everybody to have their own religion, to worship anything they can relate to or not worship if they don't need to but still be a good Hindu. I think this is the freedom and sense that we need in the world today. In this world, conflict has always been projected as good versus bad. But the truth is, conflict is always between one man's belief versus another man's belief. Belief might give you confidence but confidence without clarity is highly dangerous."

To sum up, the word 'Hindu' is synonymous to 'Indian' geographically. It is an identity to a culture which knew the true sense of freedom, a freedom from the limitations of the mind and ego, from the bondages of attachments and compulsions, a freedom to even go beyond the limitations of **nationality and culture** and to be an infinite blissful Self. So, anybody who is walking towards 'Ultimate liberation' is a Hindu irrespective of not only his religion but also nationality. I am very proud to be a Hindu and I would like to be born again on this sacred soil if not as a human in any form possible for this is the only land on earth where even a stone can be transformed into Shiva – God.

JAI HIND 'U' - Uma M.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL...

Do You Ever Crave For Freedom At All?

- Not Really!

COCOON- A caterpillar, for sure knows it will become a butterfly with nature's help.

A great freedom fighter when travelling through the mountains found a cocoon of a butterfly. When a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the opening without making any progress. Being a great freedom fighter that he was, he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly that emerged out of the cocoon had a swollen body and small shriveled wings. In fact the butterfly was never able to fly. What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were nature's way of forcing fluid in the body of the butterfly into its wing, so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved freedom from the cocoon. That night among his group of caravans he saw a beautiful parrot in a cage, continually repeating the word "Freedom, Freedom" and it would go on echoing in the valleys and mountains. Being a great freedom fighter that he was, in the middle of the night, he opened the cage and asked the parrot to fly out. He was surprised that the parrot was clinging and refused to move. He pulled the parrot out and threw him into the sky, satisfied. In the morning as he was waking up he heard the parrot shouting "Freedom, Freedom", still sitting in the cage with the door open.

The freedom fighter realized that sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life and if we were allowed through our lives without obstacles it would cripple us and we would not be as strong as we could have been to fly. The freedom fighter realized that he was a slave to his own idea of freedom and realized the value of waiting right upon time, as the caterpillar and parrot were clear about their purpose in life. Freedom to be yourself, know yourself, to explore your own nature brings much more bliss. Finally it is not freedom from something or somebody that matters, but liberation for one's own existence that does.

- Dr Surendra





sanskrit - Lesson Six

lÉ±ÉÉ lÉÉqÉ ÌMuqÉ? nadyAH nAma kim?

lÉ±ÉÉ lÉÉqÉ aÉ...| nadyAH nAma ga~ggA.

What is the name of the river? River's name is Ganga.

pÉÉUíÉxRé UÉÉKÉÉlRéÉÉ lÉÉqÉ ÌMuqÉ? bhAratasya rAjadhAnyAH nAma kim?

pÉÉUíÉxRé UÉÉKÉÉlRéÉÉ SñvisÉ| bhAratasya rAjadhAnl dehall.

What is the name of Bharat's capital? Bharat's capital is Delhi.

Here are more examples:

eÉlÉlÉlÉ	–	eÉlÉlRéÉÉ	jananl – jananyAH	:	Mother – Mother's
pÉUíÉlÉlÉ	–	pÉUíRéÉÉ	bhavatl – bhavayAH	:	(Feminine) You - Your
sÉZÉlÉlÉ	–	sÉZÉlRéÉÉ	lekhanl – lekhanAH	:	Pen – Pen's
MuíÉUí	–	MuíÉRéÉÉ	kartarl – kartaryAH	:	Scissors – Scissors'

Now we will look at neutral gender.

UÉsqÉlÌMuÉ MuÉ? vAlmikiH kaH?

UÉsqÉlÌMuÉ UÉqÉÉhÉxRé MuíÉÉ| vAlmikiH rAmAyaNasya kartA.

Who is Valmiki? Valmiki is Ramayana's author.

aÉlÉqÉxRé UÉaÉÉ E'ÉqÉÉ| gltasya rAgaH uttamAH.

The tune of the song is good.

pÉUíÉxRé AÉæÉlRéqÉÉ AÍKÉMuqÉÉ bhavanasya aunnatyam adhikam.

The height of the building is more. (The building is very high.)

MüfjúÉxRé uÉhÉÉ lÉlsÉÉ| ka~gkatasya varNaH nllaH.

The colour of the comb is blue.

The 'akArAnta' neutral words have 'm' in its noun form. A 'sya' appears in the word expressing relationships – as in the case of 'akArAnta' masculine nouns – but in the place of 'm' at the end.

aÉlÉqÉÉ	–	aÉlÉxRé	gltam – gltasya	:	Song – Song's
pÉUíÉqÉÉ	–	pÉUíÉxRé	bhavanam – bhavanasya	:	Building – Building's
MüfjúÉqÉÉ	–	MüfjúÉxRé	ka~gkatam – ka~gkatasya	:	Comb – Comb's

- Krupalu Ogeti, Secretary, Sanskrit Bharati, Hyderabad
okrupalu@sanskritam.net

ONATHAPPAN

Onam is undoubtedly the most spectacular festival of Kerala. It falls during the first month of Malayalee calendar which is Chingam (August-September) and marks the home coming of the legendary King Mahabali or Onathappan as fondly called by the Keralites. But there is a lot more to Onam than being just a festival. Onam reflects the faith of the people of Kerala, a belief in their legendary past, religion and power of worship.

The legend of King Mahabali is the most popular and the most fascinating of all legends behind Onam. Kerala witnessed its golden era during the reign of king Mahabali. The king was considered to be wise, judicious and extremely generous. It is said that people never locked their houses, as dharma prevailed in his reign. There was no poverty, sorrow or disease and the king was highly respected by his citizens. Apart from all his virtues, the king had one shortcoming. He was egoistic. However, for all the good deeds done by him, Lord Vishnu granted the boon when Mahabali requested that he be allowed to visit Kerala once in a year. It is the day of the visit of king Mahabali to Kerala that is celebrated as Onam every year. People make elaborate preparations to welcome their dear king and wish to please his spirit by depicting that his people are happy and wish him well.

People are in best form and spirit during the ten day long festival, starting from the first day Atham and continuing till the tenth and biggest called 'Thiru Onam.' The most impressive part of Onam celebration is the grand feast called 'Onasadya' prepared on Thiru Onam. It is a nine course meal consisting of 11 to 13 essential dishes. The grand meal is served on banana leaves and people sit on a mat laid on the floor to have the meal. Another enchanting feature of Onam is Vallamkali, the Snake boat race, held on the river Pampa. There is also a tradition to play games, collectively called Onakalikal. Men go for rigorous sports while women indulge in cultural activities. They make intricately designed flower mats called, Pookalam in the front courtyard of their houses to welcome Onathappan.

Let us participate in their festivities and share their joy in seeking the blessings of King Mahabali on Onam, August 23rd 2010 in 'God's own country.'



In The Path of Spirituality... Saawan

It is a discernible fact that religion paves way to spirituality. When followed in the right sense, religion predisposes oneself towards spirituality. It is unquestionable that Hindus are the most opportune in this respect that their religion, like a loving parent walks its child into the enlightening school of spirituality. Each and every element of Hinduism is conducive to the healthy growth of her child and observation of vratams and celebration of festivals is one of them. Another salient angle of Hinduism: Worship of animals, echoes the underlying as well as distinguishing principle of our religion that all creation of His is sentient. The month of Shravan is considered to be one of the auspicious of the 12 and the most auspicious of the Chaturmasa and it heralds the onset of a stretch of festivities ending the lull of Ashadam. Let us reiterate the significance of a few of the less known Shravan festivals here.

Hayagriva Jayanti

The Teacher of Goddess Saraswati

Hayagreeva Avatar, the God of Vidya, is the foremost of Vishnu avatars and dates back to the very beginning of the Srushti (projection) of the universe. 'Haya' means horse and 'greeva' means neck. The horse-faced incarnation of Vishnu with His crystal-hued, luminous form descended for the redemption of souls from samsara, up into His realm of blissfulness.

At the time of Creation Vishnu through His breath of Vedas, taught Brahma the Creation. But Brahma became conceited about the possession of Vedas and the status of 'Shruti karta'. Maha Vishnu wanted to regain Brahma's humility and created two Asuras named Madhu and Kaitabha who stole Vedas from Brahma and hid them in Paatala. On realizing his folly Brahma came running to Vishnu for help in retrieving Vedas from asuras. Maha Vishnu incarnated Himself as Sri Hayagreeva, who declared a war on Paatala loka, triumphed over Madhu(tamo guna)and Kaitabha(rajo guna)and restored Vedas from Asuras and handed them over to Brahma.

Hayagreeva Jayanthi falls on the full moon day of the month 'Shravana' which happens on the 23rd of August in 2010. As the protector of the Vedas, Hayagreeva was born on this day. Upakarma (change of the sacred thread) is also performed on this day in South Indian States – Andhra Pradesh (Jandhyala Purnima), Karnataka (Yajur Upakarma or Rig Upakarma), Tamilnadu and Kerala (Avani Avittam). According to scriptures Hayagreeva was the first person to offer Aksharabhyasam and teach knowledge to Goddess Saraswati. Hence it is believed that if Vidyabhyasam of a child is performed in the closeness of Hayagreeva, the child will flourish in education. Students worship Lord Hayagreeva on this day seeking knowledge and wisdom. On Hayagreeva Jayanthi, married women perform Tulasi pooja seeking prosperity and happiness of family and rest of the family joins in to get the blessings of Lord Sri Hayagreeva.

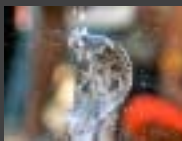
Hayagreeva Stotram, written and compiled by the great saint, poet and logician Venkatanatha also known as Swamy Vedanta Desikan in 13th century, comprises of 33 slokas. Chanting His stotram is the ultimate way to attain fluency over words, true knowledge and wisdom along with self-confidence and courage to face challenges in life. The first two stanzas of the stotram are given below:

*Jnyana nadamayam devam
Nirmala spatikakrutim!
Aadharam sarvavidyanam
Hayagriva Mupasmahe!!*

Meaning:

We meditate upon that Supreme One, who has the neck and face of a horse and who is the embodiment of Jnyana (divine Knowledge) and Ananda (Bliss). He has a Thirumeni (body) like a radiant, blemish less Spatikam (Crystal) and is the abode of all Vidyas (branches of Learning).





Naga Panchami

Whether it is because Lord Vishnu chose Shesha Nag symbolizing eternity to recline or Lord Shiva adorns His neck with cobras or Lord Subramanya offered refuge to Vasuki and other serpents, honoring snakes has been a part of the Hindu religion from Vedic times. Snakes carved or painted on the walls of many Hindu temples testifies this. Also it is believed that a Cobra saved the life of Buddha and another protected the Jain Muni Parshwanath. The fifth day of the Shravan is celebrated as Naga Panchami in many parts of India. No doubt there is an element of fear among human beings for Snakes owing to their poisonous bite but Hinduism has prescribed peace and propitiation of snakes rather than violence and annihilation in accordance with its core principle that God is omnipresent and can be reached only through love. Also praying to snakes in snake pits and temples helps people in overcoming the fears they have for these fascinating, sinuous species. This time of the year serpents come out of their holes that get drowned in rain-water to seek shelter in gardens and many times in houses. Thus it is logical that Nag Panchami, one of the most ancient fasts is observed on the fifth day of the waxing lunar cycle of Shravan. However as legend explains, it was on this day that Lord Krishna as child's play tamed the evil Kaliya living in Yamuna harassing the townsfolk of Repalle and it is this triumph of Little Krishna that we celebrate on Nag Panchami. Devotees fast on the Panchami day and take food only in the evening. To propitiate snakes they are bathed with milk; haldi-kumkum is sprinkled on their heads and milk and rice are offered as "naivedya". Hindus believe in the immortality of a snake because of its habit of sloughing its skin. As such Eternity in Hinduism is often represented by a serpent eating its own tail. The prominent Cobra snakes mentioned in the Puranas are Anant, Vasuki, Shesh, Padma, Kanwal, Karkotak, Kalia, Aswatar, Takshak, Sankhpal, Dhritarashtra and Pingal

Naga Panchami falls on 14th August in 2010.

Things to do during the month of Shravan

- ◆ Chant *Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra*.
- ◆ Offer *Bilva Patra and Panchamrut* (mixture of milk, curd, ghee, honey & sugar) on *Shiva Linga*.
- ◆ Offer *Tambul* to Lord Shiva and get good results.
- ◆ Wear *Rudraksh* and use a *Rudraksh mala* for chanting.
- ◆ Offer *darbh* (a kind of grass) mixed in water and get rid of diseases.
- ◆ Make *ablution* to Lord Shiva to make your soul pure.
- ◆ Coronate Lord Shiva with the holy water of river Ganges, to attain salvation.
- ◆ Offer honey, ghee and sugarcane and attain wealth.
- ◆ Offer *Naivedya* and get blessed with a long and satisfied life.

- Annapurna R.





Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo born on 15th August 1872 was a revolutionary, poet, philosopher, writer and Spiritual Master. He wished

to bring the divine into all aspects of life. When he was studying in Cambridge University he became aware of the plight of his country, at the time under the rule of the British Empire. He returned to India at the age of 21 and was committed to working for Indian independence. On his return to Indian soil he was overwhelmed with a feeling of intense inner peace. Through his journal *Bande Mataram*, Sri Aurobindo was the first leader to call for the full independence of India.

He once received an 'inner command' that henceforth he should not worry about politics and India would gain independence in due course but this would be achieved by others. His task was the renewal of "Sanathana dharma, the eternal religion." This made him leave the political arena. In his own words "We must return and seek the sources of life and strength within ourselves...It is the spiritual revolution we foresee and the material is only its shadow and reflex."

He delivered a lecture in the Grand Square of the National school, Amraoti, Berar, on January 29th 1908. The meeting commenced with the singing of *Bande Mataram* a song in Bengali of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee which he translated. He said that he was exceedingly pleased to know that the song had become so popular in all parts of India and that it was being so repeatedly sung. The song, he said, was not only a national anthem, but one replete with mighty power, being a sacred mantra, revealed to us by the author of 'Ananda Math,' who might be called an inspired Rishi. He further described the manner in which the mantra had been revealed to Bankim Chandra, probably by

a sannyasi under whose teaching he was. He said the mantra was not an invention, but a revivification of the old mantra which had become extinct. The mantra of Bankim Chandra was not appreciated in his own days and he predicted that there would come a time when the whole of India would resound with the singing of the song and the word of the prophet was miraculously fulfilled.

The meaning of the song was not understood then because there was no patriotism except such as consisted in making India the shadow of England and other countries which dazzled the sight of the sons of this our Motherland with their glory and opulence. The so called patriots of that time might have been the well-wishers of India but not men who loved her. One who loved his mother never looked to her defects, never disregarded her as an ignorant, superstitious and degraded woman.

Sri Aurobindo then unfolded the meaning of the song. As with the individual, so with the nation, there were three bodies or koshas. The audience sat before him like dumb statues, not knowing where they were or whether they were listening to a prophet revealing to them the higher mysteries of life. He then concluded with a most pathetic appeal to true patriotism and exhorted the audience to love the Motherland and sacrifice everything to bring about her salvation.

- Source: Biography of Sri Aurobindo





Vande Mataram

*Song in Bengali of Bankim Chandra
Chatterjee (Translation by Sri Aurobindo)*

Mother, I bow to thee
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.

Glory of moonlight dreams
Over thy branches and lordly streams,
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother given of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak
in thy lands,
When the swords flash out in twice seventy
million hands,
And seventy millions voices roar,
Thy dreadful name from
shore to shore?
With many strengths who art
mighty and stored,
To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
Thou who savest, arise and save!
To her I cry who ever her
foemen drave,
Back from plain and sea,
And shook herself free.



Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
With her hands that strike and
her swords of sheen,
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,
Pure and perfect without peer,
Mother, lend thine ear.

Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Dark of hue, O candid-fair,
In thy soul, with jeweled hair,
And thy glorious smile divine,
Loveliest of all earthly lands,
Showering wealth from
well-stored hands!
Mother, mother mine!
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free.

*First published in "Bande Mataram,"
January 29, 1908*



Plantation Tree



Sri Gurumurthy Garu, Forest Dept and Swamiji



With the help of Forest Department, we have taken up plantation work in Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram, Gairan Tanda, Kodgal Village, Jadcherla Mandal. Near about 5000 plants are being planted. We the family of Nachiketa Tapovan, thank the Forest Department and special thanks to Sri Nageshwar Rao Garu and Sri Vijay Garu for providing plants and taking personal care.



Kodgal Village people are planting trees

Chaitanya Arts Theatre presenting
“Guardians of Goodwill” award to Nachiketa Tapovan
Organisation for selfless service to the mankind.



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Anna daanam maha daanam; vidya daanam mahattaram.

Annena kshanika trupthihi yaavajjeevanthu vidyaya.

Vidya Mandir at Nachiketa Tapovan is currently able to accommodate a family of about 150 children who receive all-round nourishment from man-making education to milk-n-meals and basic health-aid in an atmosphere of genuine love. Kind-hearted Well wishers have been the unseen force behind this offering to God. We thank you for your continued support.

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Celebrate your Special Days with the Children at Nachiketa Tapovan!

PUBLICATION

A set of 8 'Yogic CDs' were released on 1st April 2007.



Cost of each CD is Rs.35/-

The CDs comprise instructions given on different yogic techniques based on an extensive research done by Swami Nachiketananda and assisted by other Swamis and volunteers. 'Om' - A divine melody is first of the series. All the CDs are available at the Nachiketa Tapovan premises at Kavuri Hills, and also in leading bookstores.

AN APPEAL

Dear Atman,

Nachiketa Tapovan has launched a massive Ashram project in Kodgal village, Jadcherla Mandal in Mahboobnagar district with a noble vision of providing Free Education, Medical aid, Vocational training and Spiritual upliftment for the underprivileged. Temples, Dhyana mandir, Residential Campus, Vidya Mandir and Dispensary are given priority in the 1st Phase of construction. With the grace of the Almighty we have been moving forward towards the completion of some of these projects.

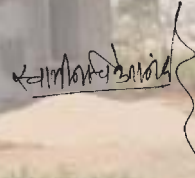
First we want to thank our supporters and well wishers for accomplishing our goals of constructing a Dhyana Mandir and Residential Campus at the Ashram. Your support was essential for meeting the substantial expenses of this Humanitarian work for which we are deeply grateful. At present our top priority is the major Temple Project and Vidya Mandir which are under construction. The total cost for these projects is estimated at **Rs 2.9 Crores**. Currently we have collected **Rs 1.19 Crores**. The rest of the funds have to be raised to inaugurate the Ashram. For the coming year, our goal

is to continue reaching out to more and more souls with our basic spiritual services, programs and publications and also to accomplish a number of smaller projects at Nachiketa Tapovan, Kavuri hills and Ashram at Jadcherla.

We hereby make a fervent appeal for generous donations. You can contribute to the project in any manner possible. Please participate in this noble task so that our cultural heritage and religious traditions will be safeguarded for the coming generations.

It may kindly be noted that donations to Nachiketa Tapovan are exempted from Income Tax U/S 80 G of IT Act, 1961 of Govt of India. Donations in the form of cheques/ Demand drafts may please be drawn in favour of Nachiketa Tapovan.

Yours in the service of Motherland



Swami Nachiketnanda

Deepshikha Mela

Nachiketa Tapovan is taking part in the Deepshikha mela.

Date:

6th to 8th of August, 2010

Venue:

Jewel Gardens, Sikh Village.

Our stall will have beautiful Rakhis and handmade gifts made by volunteers and the children of Nachiketa Tapovan. All proceeds will be used for the needy children of Nachiketa Tapovan's Vidya Mandir.

We hope to see you there to support and encourage us.

Invitation



Nachiketa Tapovan cordially invites you to the Independence Day Celebrations.

Date:

15th August 2010.

Time:

9.30 am

Venue:

**Nachiketa Tapovan Vidya Mandir
#70, Phase I, Kavuri Hills,
Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.
500 033**

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A NOTE TO WRITERS:

- a) You can send articles by email to nachiketanjali1@gmail.com or by post to Nachiketanjali, Nachiketa Tapovan, Plot No.70, Phase I, Kavuri Hills, Madhapur, Guttalabegumpet, Serilingampally, Ranga Reddy District. A.P., with your full name, address and contact details.
- b) No article is returned.
- c) Your article should be reader friendly with a positive view point.
- d) No controversial or political issues are published.
- e) Word limit for an article varies from 250 (one column) to 1000 words (four columns). Writers can contact the editorial team for further details.
- f) The styles of references should be as per the 'Documentation of Sources' given at the end of the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.
- g) Editor reserves the right to accept/ reject articles and edit the selected articles.
- h) Unsolicited articles are not acknowledged.
- i) The Editor does not accept responsibility for the author's views.
- j) Articles received will be published in one of the forthcoming issues.

BOOK REVIEW

We request Publishers to send two copies of their Spiritual, Philosophical and Religious books for publishing a Book Review in our "Nachiketanjali" - monthly Magazine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Nachiketa Tapovan is indebted to all the well-wishers, donors, patrons and advisors whose immense help and cooperation in multiple ways has helped us accomplish our goals.

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