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Nachiketanjali

...an offering

A Journey Into The Spiritual Realm!



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**Divya Darshan of Deities
at
MAA YOGA SHAKTI PEETAM**



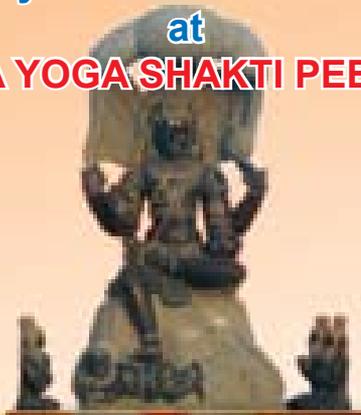
Siddhi Ganapathi



Sun God having darshan



Lotus feet of Sri Balaji



Kaivalya Venkateshwara



Dakshina Kali Yantra



Yoga Lingam



Maa Dakshina Kali



*Sri Ramakrishna
Paramahansa*



Sri Sitaramanjaneya



Sri Radhakrishna



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Path of Bhakti

In today's world, most of us are leading a very mechanical life. We work relentlessly to earn a living or to stay in the competitive field. But we do not realize that along with earning a livelihood, having a higher pursuit or goal in life is equally important. Money is important for our livelihood whereas *Bhakti* and *Shraddha* are important for achieving our goals.

God has given us mind, intellect and ego. These may not be visible but they perform many actions. Mind travels faster than the wind and it is our duty to divert that mind from worldly affairs to realizing the Divine. It is our mind that entangles us in worldly affairs. And it is the mind that gives us humans the necessary salvation. On the same note it is our mind that is responsible for our happiness and sorrow. So it is in our hands to mould the mind and let it travel in the right direction. Where there is a will there is a way!

In this mundane life it is not possible to do *Yagnas* or *Yagas* on a regular basis but it is possible to chant the Lord's name and remember Him incessantly. This need not be related to the time factor. Our every breath can silently chant the Divine name. In the course of time this *Nama japa* will become a habit and will lead us to the path of *Bhakti*. This will create devotion towards the Lord and ultimately gives us salvation. And this is what is most needed.

Bhakthi is love for God and it should be filled with *Shraddha*. *Bhakti* will ultimately lead us to the path of *Jnana*. However, all these are only the initial steps, the ultimate being Salvation. It is for this reason we should hold on to the Divine name at all times with *Bhakthi* and *Shraddha*.

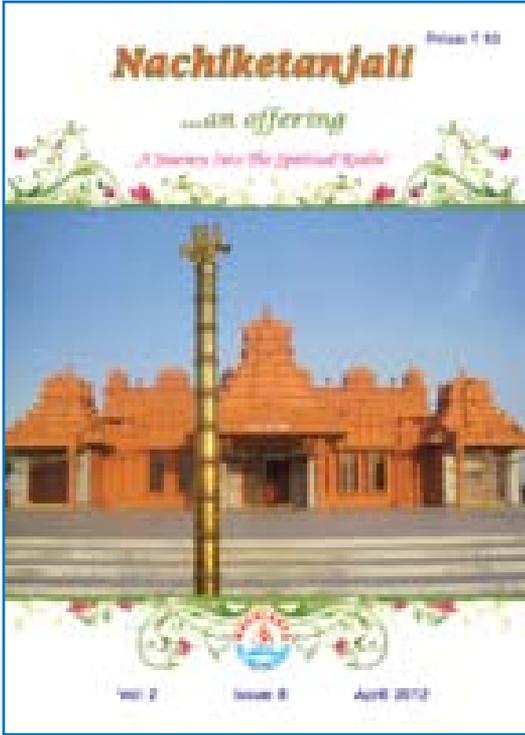
- **Subhadra K.**

“Having attained this rare human birth, my supreme need is to develop love
for the Lotus feet of God.”

- **Sri Rama Krishna**



Cover story



There are billions of human beings on the Earth and a few millions in our city, but of them all, only a few come close to our heart. In this land of temples, **Maa Yoga Shakti Peeth** is one temple that will occupy a special place in the heart of devotees. Ours is a land of temples- big and small, grand and simple, ancient and modern. Some are built as tokens of devotion, some to express gratitude, some to preserve culture and some to fulfill Divine orders. However a handful are built giving form to awakenings, visions and experiences that devoted seekers have, during their ethereal journey into the spiritual realms... And very few are the outcome of one-pointed *Sadhana* of exceptionally dedicated *Karmayogis* who's "I" and "mine" seamlessly and lovingly diffused into "Us" and "Ours". Maa Yoga Shakti Peeth is an elegant illustration of - "of the people by the people and for the people".

A quintessence of yogic principles

A haven for sincere sadhakas

An oasis for thirsty aspirants

A respite for dedicated *Grihasthas*

A *Mehfil* for intoxicated *Bhaktas*

A prayer wheel for Om chanters...

Indeed, Maa Yoga Shakti Peeth is

An embodiment of spiritual faith and fervor.

In this time and age when people don't think twice to grab credit for success and forsake blame for their own failure, it was so embalming and encouraging to hear a Soul say- "you participate with devotion and love, do not worry about procedures. If you are afraid of any banal outcome, I will accept it as mine happily." This was the love-filled, invisible and parental talisman the *Sadhakas* were united with, against superstition, on the occasion of consecration of the Deities and forever henceforth. Ma Yoga Shakti Peeth, an emblem of will power and determination, that emerged in the barren lands among the Lambadis of Gairan Tanda in Jadcherla Mandal of Mahboobnagar, welcomes you with open doors to connect you with your Self.

- *Annapurna R.*





Shiva

The living Yogini... the loving child...

I adore this tiny girl not for her sacrifice but for her elevation in the spiritual field. I love this simple girl not because of her ways of expression but because of her true expression of the inner depth in the form of simplicity. I admire her for taking up any work not because of her young age but because of a young mind that she carries throughout. I appreciate her passion for the society not because she is always immersed into social work but because of her compassion that flows flawlessly through work without any discrimination. I esteem her organizational skills not because she demonstrates at the right time in the right way but because of the way she gets involved and inspires others. I am not mesmerized by seeing her towering personality but because of the inner beauty that she exhibits within and without. I regard her as the best child not because she is my spiritual child but because she is a phenomenal, exceptional child, working passionately, compassionately, caringly and mesmerizingly without discriminating caste, creed, gender or religion and looking upon each one as a manifestation of the highest Divinity.

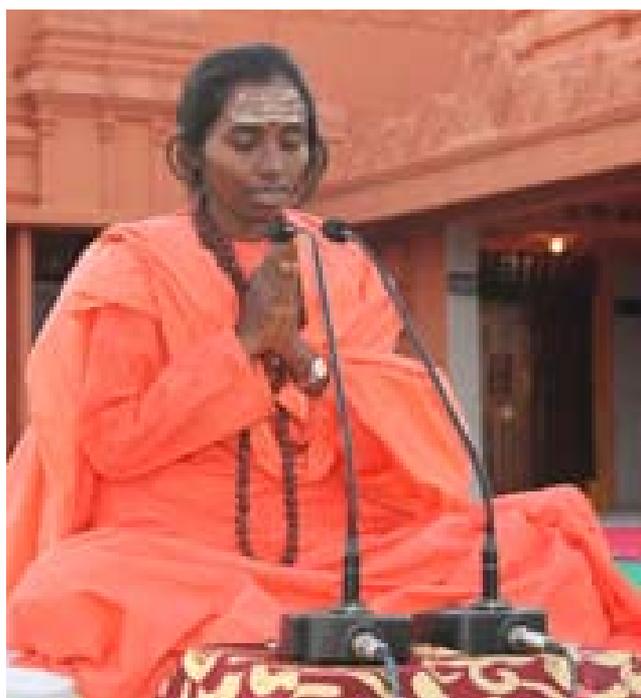
I always asked Ma Kali to give me somebody who can carry out Nachiketa Tapovan's activities spiritually and Mother gave me Shiva, the loving child... Today I feel honored to present her in this 'Global Village'. Though her educational qualification doesn't speak much, her inner voice is clearer than all the educational degrees put together. So far I have never seen her reading any book completely or even a couple of pages, yet the wisdom that springs forth from her heart conveys the highest beauty in such an amusing way that each one of us gets flabbergasted. Her ways of expressions are simple but unique... She is a wonderful child and a great Master by birth. Her accomplishments are incredible and so are the feats that she has achieved in the field of spirituality. The best part that I liked in her is the ability to withdraw herself from the world like how a tortoise withdraws its limbs and head.

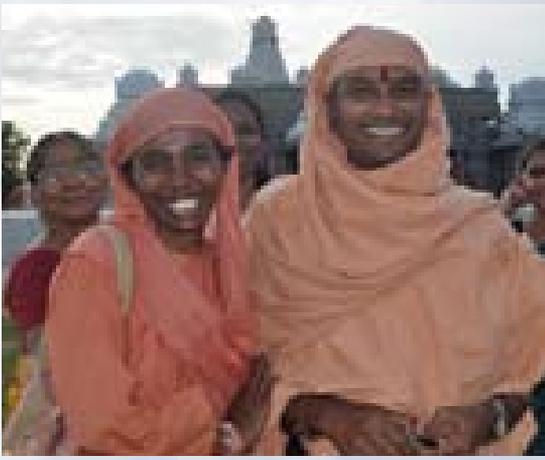
She is least bothered about her appearance. Worn out clothes are her best friends. Such is her charismatic personality!

I tempted her by providing many luxuries of life but very politely she rejected and kept all of them aside for the needy and downtrodden ones to make them stand on their own feet. Today few of them are enjoying what they might not have even dreamt of in the waking or dream state. It was all possible because of her kindness. She always felt this world was her own family.

I have seen great attributes in her and felt strongly that, that which cannot be given or taken should be expressed for the sake of society and she obeyed the command and hugged the outermost expression of *Sannyasa*...

It was not baptizing her by chanting some mantras and conferring any title or giving *Sannyasa*, but her very state of mind was purely tuned to the highest expression of Ma Kali. There are certain degrees of elevation or states of mind from where we do function and fluctuate, but rare ones always dwell in the ocean called spirituality.





She is one soul whom I have seen, perceived and experienced living in totality, enjoying bliss and at the same time striking balance between the inner and outer world without any disturbance... Truly like a **Paramahansa!**

Dear One! Her journey is simple. She took birth in a pious family. She is the fifth child to her parents and was named Bhavani. Her early period of life is full of spiritual experiences. Getting up early in the morning and doing *Sadhana* on her own without any guidance was her daily routine. Once one '*Pandit*' who had close proximity with her father predicted that she is going to be a great soul or a *Sannyasi* and advised him to keep her away from all evil energies, as the so called '*Vamacharis*' might misuse her energies. At the age of 16 she came into contact with Nachiketa Tapovan.



Dear One! Gautama didn't get transformed into Buddha because of the Bodhisattva tree or a lady who gave him '*Payasam*' or when He saw an old person or a dead body. They all might have played some role in His awakening but certainly realization sprouted from within when He abandoned all His thoughts. Though Bhavani came into contact with Nachiketa Tapovan or noble souls around, she got transformed into '**Shivaswaroopini**' because of her surrender to the Divine Mother.

Dear One! You are all getting experiences in bits and pieces, here and there, in waking or in dream state... Just bring them together and try to find out the missing links. Be sincere in your search and see what happens. That very moment you will feel that something is passing through you, soothing your entire being... you will feel that within and without something is pulsating with full of life... you will experience the brightest side of the darkest moment... you will see your journey from one body to another, watching them silently... that very moment you will know that everything exists within and without... that very moment your palms will come together to pray... that very moment your inner eye will open to see the cosmic dance by Ma Kali and Shiva... that very moment you will find your own forgotten identity... that very moment you will experience oneness... that very moment you will get completely disintegrated to get integrated with '*Shivashakti*'...

Dear One! If you want to enjoy like Shiva, the living Yogini, the Divine child... flying in the sky, swaying with the wind, singing with the birds, swimming with the current of Ganga and igniting the inner fire, then look within and you shall... till then Masters like Shiva will keep knocking the doors of your inner being to awaken the sleeping beauty!!!



- Swami Nachiketananda Puri

Sri Ramakrishna's Amrita Dhara

Ramakrishna as Radha

Her, as did the Gopis to the Goddess Katyayani, begging Her to give Him Krishna as His spiritual husband."

Swami Saradananda continued: "Knowing that the vision of Krishna was not possible without Radha's grace, the Master began to worship her with His one-pointed mind. He remained absorbed in meditation on her loving form and prayed to her unceasingly with a longing heart. As a result He was soon blessed with the vision of Radha. Her form merged into Him like the forms of other Gods and Goddesses whose visions He had previously realized. He said: 'It is impossible to describe the incomparable, pure, heavenly beauty and sweetness of Radha, who renounced everything out of her passionate love for Krishna. Her complexion was light yellow like the stamens of the Nagakeshara (Mesuaferria) flower.'

"For sometime following that vision, the Master felt that He was Radha. This happened as a result of deep meditation on Radha's form and character. He completely lost His sense of a separate identity".

- **Compiled by Geeta K.**

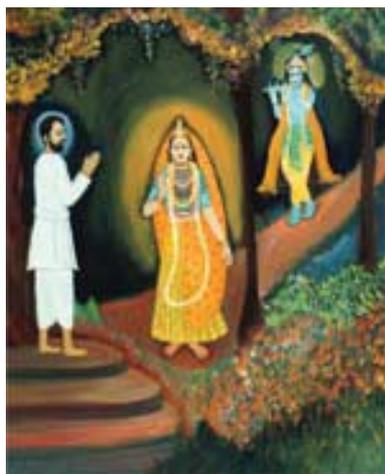
Source: How to live with God

- **Swami Chetananda**

Sri Ramakrishna during His *Sadhana* of 'Madhura Bhava', became immersed in the sea of love and bliss. His role-playing was so intense that He even acquired clothing and other accessories to become the beloved of Sri Krishna.

Swami Saradananda wrote: "When the Master started to practice Mathura Bhava, He was eager to wear women's clothing and jewellery. Knowing the Master's desire, the devoted Mathur provided Him with a beautiful and expensive sari from Varanasi, a skirt, a bodice and a scarf. To complete the transformation, Mathur brought Him a wig with curly hair and a set of gold jewellery. It is no wonder that under the influence of women's attire, His feminine traits were aroused. But no one could have ever imagined that while immersed in that mood His movements, speech, smile, glance, gestures and other actions, as well as His thoughts, would become completely feminine".

Hriday said: "During that period at Dakshineswar, every morning uncle would take a basket and pick flowers from the garden. As we watched Him, we noticed that He always stepped out with His left foot first, as a woman does. The Brahmini said, 'when I saw Him picking flowers I often mistook Him for Radha.' Every day after collecting flowers He would make beautiful garlands and decorate the images of Radha and Krishna. Sometimes He adorned the image of the Divine Mother and prayed piteously to





Turn around their future!

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I am Anuradha, studying 7th class in vidyamandir of Nachiketa Tapovan and my brother also studies here. I have been a happy member of Nachiketa Tapovan family for 5 years. My father works as a watchman and my mother is a housemaid. I want to become an engineer, take care of my family and serve poor people. - **Anuradha, VIIth grade**



My name is Basavaraju, studying 10th grade. My parents do farming in village. I have been studying in Nachiketa Tapovan since it started in a hut. I consider myself the world's luckiest person to be studying in Tapovan and growing among all the good hearted people. I want to become an Ayurvedic doctor and serve the needy. I thank all the well-wishers of Tapovan who help educate 200 other students like me. - **Basavaraju, Xth grade**

Appeal for Sponsor-a-Child Corpus Fund

Nachiketa Tapovan runs a free school for 205 children from poor families. They receive all-round, holistic academic education in English medium (LKG to 10th Std.), including, arts, crafts, spiritual and culture lessons.

Sponsoring a child is a great opportunity to help protect a child in need whilst seeing in return the real effect that your support has. Make a difference in a child's life- the chance to form a lasting, meaningful relationship with a child. All your kindness will add up to a bright future.

- ✓ Nachiketa Tapovan is working hard to build a CORPUS fund to meet the ongoing expenses and expansion needs at a consistent pace. Donating to a Corpus Fund is a great way to sustain our efforts.
- ✓ Interest accruing from the investment made out of the Corpus donations, is only used without touching the principal itself. This way your DONATION remains forever, strengthening the cause and the organization.

- ✓ Being a charitable institution, we earn an interest of 9.25% annually from a Govt Bank. The annual interest on 1Lakh will fully support one child's education for one year.
- ✓ Your donation will come a long way by meeting our expenses that include Teacher's Salaries, Uniforms, Educational material, Building Maintenance and Housekeeping, Salaries for support and administration staff, Field trips and Excursions, Celebrations and Extra Curricular activities.
- ✓ At present, we only have 13 corpus sponsorships...help us reach all of our 205 children!
- ✓ Bring hope and light into their lives – as a group or individual or in the name of a loved one.
- ✓ Donors receive annual report card and are welcome to interact with our children.
- ✓ **We express our thanks to Corpus Donors by permanently inscribing their names on our recognition board in the school.**





SRI SITARAMA *Kalyanam*



Sri Rama Navami is celebrated as Lord Rama's birthday and also as the day of His celestial wedding with Goddess Sita. Let us understand the ritualistic meaning in depth and dive deep as we witness the celestial wedding performed all over India on April 1st 2012.

Vedic mantras carry a hidden meaning for marriage rituals. Rishi Apasthamba and Rishi Ashwalayana have revealed them to mankind. Apart from their *Sutras*, certain regional rituals are in vogue. One among them is '*Jeelakarra Bellum*' (a paste made of cumin and jaggery) which is mostly practiced in the state of Andhra Pradesh. During the wedding, the bride sits facing east and the groom faces west. At the auspicious moment the bride and groom place the *Jeelakarra Bellum* on each other's head in the location of *Brahmarandhra*. It is said that the mixture of cumin and jaggery is very energizing and the bride and groom develop a new bond with each other. During Sita Rama Kalyanam, *Panigrahanam* was done in the actual *subha muhurtham* but it slowly gave place to *Jeelakarra bellam*.



Saptapadhi: *Saptapadhi* or the Seven steps is an important wedding ritual. Only after this are the newly weds considered as man and wife. The groom holds the bride's hand and leads her around the holy fire facing east or north. Each and every step has its own significance.

1st step: Praying to the Lord to bless them with food in abundance

2nd step: For health

3rd step: For deriving resources to perform vedic rituals

4th step: For wealth and Happiness

5th step: For cattle

6th step: For blessings of all the *Panchabhutas* or five elements

7th step: To enable them to perform their familial duties without any hassles

Saptapadi is considered to be very important in Hindu *dharma* and it is only after this ritual that the bride takes the name and *Gotra* of her husband's family.

Apart from this, *Mangalyadharana* (tying the wedlock), applying *Sindhoor* by the groom on the bride's forehead or hair line, the bride wearing *Mattelu* or toe rings are considered to be very important wedding rituals. *Wedlock*, *Sindhoor*, toe

rings, black beads and glass bangles are called the *Pancha Mangalyas* and are considered to be the main symbols, which give a new status to the married woman. However these practices may vary from state to state.

Mangalasutra: Two sutras strung on a single thread signify the union of the bride and groom. The shapes might vary but it is very significant all over India.

Black beads: It protects the bride from any evil eye or negative forces and when the groom



ties it around the bride's neck, it is said that their relationship is safeguarded from the evil eye.

Sindhoor: This is a very significant symbol that reveals the status of the married woman. The red colour of the *Sindhoor* is a symbol of fertility. Some adorn it as a *tilak* on their *Ajna chakra* and this activates the third eye and bestows knowledge.

Toe rings: Married women wear toe rings on their second toe and this is connected with the *nAdis*. The slight pressure activates the *nAdis* and enhances fertility.

Glass bangles: The word bangle is derived from the hindi word 'Bangri' or 'Bangali'. Bangles are acknowledged by all religions because of their social, cultural and religious significance. Bangles have been in vogue even during the Sindhu civilization as the sculptures have proved. Bangles are auspicious symbols for a married woman.

Certain marriage rituals are ignored in the modern weddings but one should never forget the significance of these rituals. We should not ridicule the rituals which have been set by the *Rishis* based on their spiritual knowledge.

Spiritual significance of the Celestial wedding:

Maharshi Valmiki has presented to the *Sadhakas* a beautiful picture of Yogic sadhana through Sita Rama Kalyanam. Along with Lord Sri Rama, His brothers also got



married at the Divine moment. Lakshmana married Urmila, Bharata married Mandavi and Shatrughna married Srutakirti. On the dais were seated Kings Dasaratha, Janaka and Maharshis Vishwamitra and Vasishta along with other great Rishis. All of them were *Karma yogis* and great philosophers. The venue was Mithila Nagara or Vidheha which means one who has overcome *Dehabhimanam* (attachment with the body). Hence the wedding had great spiritual significance. Meditating on the *Pranava* is Sita Rama Kalyanam.

So let us witness Sita Rama Kalyanam in all its splendor with a newer vision. Let us get drenched in the glorious shower of Sri Rama Nama, Ramayana Katha and Harikatha Gana. As *Mula Prakruthi* (Goddess Sita) merges with *Paramatma* (Lord Sri Rama) this Sri Rama Navami, let us witness the Celestial wedding and get blessed. Let the *Jivatma* unite with *Paramatma*.

'Sri Sita Ramula Kalyanamu Chutam Rarandi...'

(Come, let us witness the wedding of Sri Sita Rama)

JAI SRI RAM

-A Compilation





Christ the Messenger

There is no power on Earth which can be kept long confined within a narrow limit. It cannot be kept compressed too long to allow of expansion at a subsequent period.

This concentrated energy amongst the Jewish race found its expression at the next period in the rise of Christianity. The gathered streams collected into a body. Gradually, all the little streams joined together, and became a surging wave on top of which we find standing out, the character of Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus, every Prophet is a creation of his own times, the creation of the past of his race; he himself is the creator of the future. The cause of today is the effect of the past and the cause for the future. In this position stands the Messenger. In Him is embodied all that is the best and greatest in His own race, the meaning, the life, for which that race has struggled for ages; and He Himself is the impetus for the future, not only to His own race but to unnumbered other races of the world.

Note the Common Prayer He taught: "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name," and so on- a simple prayer, a child's prayer. Mark you, it is the "Common Prayer" because it is intended for the uneducated masses. To a higher circle, to those who had advanced a little more, He gave a more elevated teaching: "I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

...This (renunciation) is the one ideal He preaches, and this has been the ideal preached by all the great Prophets of the world: renunciation. What is meant by renunciation? That there is only one ideal in morality: unselfishness. Be selfless. The ideal is perfect unselfishness. When a man is struck on the right cheek, He turns the left also. When a man's coat is carried off, he gives away his cloak also.

We should work in the best way we can, without dragging the ideal down. Here is the ideal. When a man has no more self in Him, no possession, nothing to call "me" or "mine", has given himself up entirely, destroyed himself as it were- in that man is God himself; for in him self-will is gone, crushed out, annihilated. That is the ideal man.

Our salutations go to all the past Prophets whose teachings and lives we have inherited, whatever might have been their race, clime, or creed! Our salutations go to all those Godlike men and women who are working to help humanity, whatever be their birth, colour, or race! Our salutations to those who are coming in the future- living Gods- to work unselfishly for our descendants.

- Excerpted from *Swami Vivekananda's The Complete Text from the booklet Christ the Messenger (Delivered at Los Angeles, California, 1900)*



Hanuman Jayanti



In Hindu mythology, Sri Hanuman is regarded as the God of power, strength and knowledge. This year Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated on April 6th, Friday.

He was born to Kesari and Anjana on the Chaitra Shukla Purnima. However, it is said that Hanuman was born to the Wind God (*Vayuh*). The story behind this goes as follows - when Anjana and her husband Kesari were performing penance to bear a son who, they desired to be the incarnation of Lord Shiva, God of wind made a fruit fall in the hands of Anjana. Anjana ate the fruit and conceived immediately and gave birth to Hanuman. The philosophy of the epic Ramayana is incomplete without the understanding of the unfathomable devotion of Lord Hanuman for Sri Rama.

Lord Hanuman is worshipped all over India with various names like Anjaneya, Hanumanji, Maruti, Bajrang Bali, Mahavir, Kesarinandan, Pavan Kumar. He is one of the seven *Chiranjeevis* (immortal ones). The Sun God, Surya is considered as His Guru. The Valmiki Ramayana has a separate section called *Sundara Kandam*, which describes in detail the *Leelas* of Lord Hanuman in His search for Sita.

We all know His greatness and selfless service towards Rama and Sita in Ramayana. Very few people know that Hanuman has five faces (Pancha Mukha) and ten weapons. According to

Hanumath Prakaranam in Sri *Vidyarnavatantram*, the five faces are that of Lord Hanuman, Lord Narasimha, Lord Adivaraha, Lord Hayagriva, and Lord Garuda. There is a belief that one of the faces is that of Sri Vinayaka. The idol of Adyanta Maha Prabhu depicts a figure of half Anjaneya and half Vinayaka.

Origin of Sri Panchamukha Hanuman:

The origin of Sri Panchamukha Hanuman can be traced to a story in the Ramayana. During the war between Lord Ram and Ravana, Ravana took the help of Mahiravana who was the king of Pathala. Lord Hanuman in order to protect Lord Ram and Lakshman formed a fortress with His tail. But Mahiravana took the form of Vibeeshana and took Lord Ram and Lakshman to Pthalaloka.

Hanuman entered Pthalaloka in search of Rama and Lakshmana. He found out that to kill Mahiravana, He had to extinguish 5 lamps at the same time. In mystic meditation, Hanuman meditated upon the Pranesvar (Vishnu) and understood that His service could only be done by Vishnu's (Rama's) mercy. He asked the Lord to manifest through Him to perform the service that was needed to be done. So He took the Panchamukha form with Hanuman, Hayagriva, Narasimha, Garuda and Varaha faces and extinguished the lamps. Mahiravana was killed immediately.

Hanuman is a great yogi (mystic) having transcended the five senses (Pancha Indriyas). Also, the universe is made of five elements (Panchabhutas) namely wind, water, space (sky), land and fire (light). In Kamba Ramayanam (in Tamil), the significance of number five with Hanuman is beautifully narrated as follows:

- ★ The son of one of the five elements (son of **wind** - Pavana Thanaya)
- ★ Crossed one of the five elements (**water** - the ocean), through one of the five elements (**sky**)
- ★ Met the daughter of one of the five elements (daughter of **Earth** - Sita Devi)
- ★ Burnt down Lanka with one of the five elements (**fire**)

Panchamukhi, located on the south bank of river Tungabhadra near Manchala, now known as Mantralayam (Karnataka), is where Raghavendra Swamy performed penance for 12 long years in a cave. Lord Anjaneya is said to have appeared before Raghavendra Swamy in a unique way, amalgamating within Him the *Avatars* of "Varaha, Garuda, Anjaneya, Narasimha and Hayagreeva", thus five-headed.

Sundara Kandam, which highlights the heroic exploits of Lord Hanuman in Lanka, is the fifth canto in the Ramayana. Therefore, it is considered auspicious to go around His idol 5 times, 14 times, 23 times, 32 times or with such numbers the digits of which add to five.

- Shanthi Deepti, Software Engineer, HYD.



The Big Elephant, the Small Elephant

Once, an Inspector was doing the rounds of a circus ground, where the animals and birds were tied up in cages. After checking the food and sanitation conditions, he was about to leave when he noticed a big elephant and a small elephant tied up in a very peculiar way.

The small elephant was chained by the legs to heavy iron and metal bars. It was struggling, pulling and squealing, trying to break free, but in vain. The chains were too strong. The small elephant would try for a while, give up, sit down to rest, then try again in some time.

Just beside it was a big elephant, probably the mother or father of the small elephant. It was tied with a thin rope to a weak bamboo stick plugged into the ground. Surprisingly, the big elephant stood calmly, making no attempt to pull at the rope.

Seeing this, the Inspector immediately called the Head of the Circus, the Circus-Master, and pointed out the situation apprehensively. "What is the meaning of this?!" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean, sir?" replied the Circus-Master, looking at the elephants, unperturbed.

"You have tied the small elephant with such thick chains and it's struggling to break free. But what about the big elephant? Such a thin piece of rope...? One tug or pull and the big elephant will break scot-free! What will you do when you have the best rampaging around the circus grounds?!"

"Oh, don't worry sir," replied the Circus-Master. "This small elephant is just a baby, about 2-3 years of age. Of course it will try to break free! But wait till it gets a little older. It'll give up."

The Inspector was still puzzled. Looking at him, the Circus-Master continued.

"You see that big elephant there? When it was young, it used to tug and pull and try to break free like this one. After years of painful scars and bruises, it learnt its lesson the hard way. Now, even if it's tied to a string, it will not attempt to break free. So don't worry sir, we're all safe!"

On hearing this, comprehension dawned on the Inspector and he sighed in relief. Taking a last look at the elephants, he turned and walked away.



When the moral of this story dawned on me, it got me thinking deeply. You've probably got it by now.

When we were children, life was full of possibilities. The world was our oyster! We could stand up on a wall and be a pilot, army general, mountaineer, anything! We could hide in a cave and be a dinosaur, a hunter, a policeman, anything! Life was a game to be played for the fun of it- not to win or lose!

But something very wrong happened. We began to grow older. And we stopped dreaming, stopped fantasizing, and stopped imagining. Life became a mundane rut of daily schedules, to get done and over with.

We were all the small elephants that tried and tried to break free before we turned into the big elephants. But now we even stopped trying.

Of course, growing up is inevitable. It's a biological process, a way of life. And that's how it's supposed to be. But we don't have to grow old!

Nothing stops us from being carefree and silly and funny once again! Why not? Just try it out! Do something just for the heck of it! Surprise someone! Stand behind a door and scare someone! Make a water balloon and throw it at a friend! Go to the amusement park with your family, have an unplanned ice-cream party or a pajama party, 'bunk' office just for a day and go watch a movie or dance in the rain, take out that old box of crayons and painting brushes and use them!

Our problem is we begin to take life very seriously. DON'T! There's too much fun to be had- one childhood wasn't enough, that's why we must do it as adults- now we have the money and the freedom to do what we want, but we don't- how 'big elephant-ty' is that!

Growing up is inevitable, but growing old is a choice!

What's your choice?

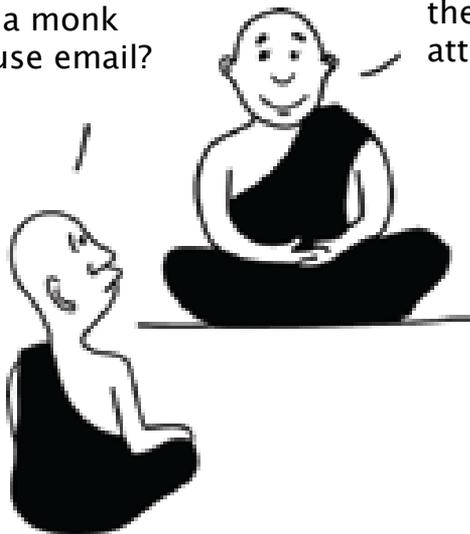
- Avinash Agarwal

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He is a Writer by profession and passion.
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O Master,
is it proper
for a monk
to use email?

Sure,
as long as
there are no
attachments!



Entha ichharanta? (How much did they give?) This is the most common question doing the rounds among jewel-bedecked women at marriages. They keep talking about the virtues of the families of the bride and the groom, then compare the arrangements with those at their relatives' marriage, point out faults in the food and yet, give the best of compliments to the organizers. All this apart, my focus shall be on the question that they ask – **how much did they give?**

Radha is a girl of marriageable age. Both her parents are working and she too earns, altogether sufficient to support their family. Her parents' colleagues, who think that they are affluent enough to perform a marriage keep asking them as to when they would marry off their child. But, the situation is that the parents do not have enough money to get her married. Add to this the fact that they have two more girl children. All this leads me to ask a question – will any amount of money be enough for a marriage? Let us back-seat this question and proceed.

A few days ago, I was returning from my relatives' home along with my father. There was a wedding going on, on the way. Such display of splendor would have been seen only by people living during monarchy. Crores must have been spent in the decorations alone. My father then lamented for the poor who would have been better off with at least a part of the money spent in the extravagance. I then argued marriage is once in a lifetime occasion, and one had every right to spend his earnings in the way he wished. What my father replied struck me. He said, "Child, we always remember our rights but not duties. I do not say that they should not spend, but just that they should not spend this much unnecessarily."

Marriages are the best occasions to get together, recollect memories, hug one another and show the other people that they are loved and valued as priceless. But these days, marriages also have become a sort of competition. How much did Mr. A spend? Rs.5 lakhs. Is it so? Then Mr. B will be hell bent upon spending at least Rs.6 lakhs. One more obsession with the people is 'America'. Mr. A or Mr. B will be way beyond happy to say that their son-in-law is settled in the US!

Now, coming straight to the point, it is a known fact that dowry is prohibited under the law (Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, the Indian Penal Code, 1860) and demanding the same is an offence. But we have internalized the social evil into our 'marriage rhetoric'. Most of us have chosen to ignore that the happiness of a marriage lies in the acceptability of each other, of the two parties, and not the amount of money that the girl brings. Despite education, awareness and progress (to the extent of the boy settling in America!!), brides are still burnt, and women are still harassed for dowry. It is a shame upon us.

Every programme to increase sensitivity and awareness regarding the evil will go down the drain if we fail to internalize its purpose. The day Radha's parents feel that they can marry off their child when they find a suitable boy, without being concerned about 'how much to give', the day every boy stops his parents from talking about 'gifts' from the girl and the day every girl stands her ground and becomes self-dependent, a new dawn will come over our society. Is it not sufficient that the girl is leaving behind her home, her family and her parents to take care of an entirely new home and family which she is ready to accept as her own?



Neetika Gogula, 4th year
Student of Law has passion for
writing articles on social issues.





Nachiketa Tapovan Ashrama

“The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted- let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion.”

– Swami Vivekananda

An Appeal

Dear Patron,

Mahboobnagar District, the second largest district in Andhra Pradesh, is situated within a 2 hr drive from Hyderabad. It is known to be one of the most backward areas in education and health in the state. In an effort to change the lives of the rural population, largely comprising of tribal communities in this region, Nachiketa Ashrama project in Kodgal village has been undertaken.

Our efforts are towards making the rural people self-reliant.

- ❖ We want to realize this by providing
 - ✓ Free vocational training
 - ✓ Free basic education
 - ✓ Free medical dispensaries
- ❖ The ashram will also be home to spiritual activities
- ❖ It will also serve as a retreat to all those who seek spiritual rejuvenation

To work towards our endeavor, we need your help in the form of generous donations towards the following projects:

- ❖ Drip irrigation
- ❖ Solar Power project
- ❖ Laying of roads
- ❖ Rain-water harvesting
- ❖ Herb garden
- ❖ Construction of Vidya Mandir-Free School

We look forward to your generous and valuable support and contribution.

Yours in the service of Motherland


Swami Shivananda Puri



Dyeing the Mind

Our minds can well be compared to an artist's canvas. Whatever the mind experiences through the senses, imagination, or emotions, makes an impression, which colours the mind. Some impressions remain and we can recall them as memories. The same holds true of our experience of sound, touch, taste and smell. The canvas of the mind is extremely elastic. There is no limit to its expansion; stretching farther and farther, it can receive millions of impressions. Every day, every moment, these impressions, or *Samskaras* are being added to the mind's canvas.

When we come to spiritual life it is necessary to re-dye our minds, blotting our past impressions. Just as when we buy a house painted in a colour we do not like and have to paint the rooms according to our taste, we do a similar thing when we begin a serious spiritual life.

The undesirable colours of the mind have to be eliminated and new colours must be brought in. *Samskaras* of faith, devotion, discrimination, detachment and other spiritual qualities have to be painted over their opposites. This is a difficult but not impossible task.

A particular face may create a disturbance in your mind, but if you feel that God is shining in all faces you will begin to see that all faces are really God's. If there is beauty, it is God's beauty; if there is ugliness, that too is God's manifestation, because God is the indwelling Spirit in every living being. Anything that comes to the devotees' mind comes through the light of God and that light re-dyes his or her mind.



The spiritual seeker has to set up a studio with all the spiritual colours and the wonderful brushes of creative imagination. The impressions of lust, greed, pride, jealousy, hate and attachment have to be transformed into a magnificent picture of God's beauty, power, love, sweetness and knowledge.

When the mind has been transformed and given new spiritual colours, it becomes our great teacher. The mind guides us at every step. It has acquired the power of discrimination and protects us from the thrusts of *Maya*.

**Source : *Seeing God every where*
By Swami Shraddananda**



In the lap of God... Enveloped by Grace...

I am aware that it is not possible to capture in words, the enormity of what happened at the Nachiketa Ashram between the 2nd to the 5th of March... because some things can only be 'experienced', they cannot be explained.

The hectic activity in the past few months at the Nachiketa Ashram and particularly in the lives of Swamiji and Maa was for making the dream of consecrating the '**Maa Yoga Shakti Peetham**', into a reality. This dream, was realized between the 2nd and 5th of March and in the most Divine and magical way.

The formal process of consecration started on the morning of 2nd March with a *Homam* at the *Nachiketagni Yagnashaala* and continued through various processes and stages in the days that followed.

Consecration is the process of pouring 'life' into the idols by various Yogic processes of Tantra, Mantra and Yantra. It is almost like giving 'Birth' to a '*Devi*' or '*Devata*'. Neither am I qualified nor equipped to make a comment on the process but just being part of this process made me aware of the magic and energy that was at play during those days and will perhaps continue to weave its magic into the many many years to come.

If the earlier articles that I have written for Nachiketanjali were because of the 'moments' and 'drops' of bliss or grace, then being part of the consecration of the Maa Yoga Shakti Peetham was the culmination of these drops and moments coming together to form an ocean of bliss and grace.

Being part of this consecration has been one of the most fulfilling, enlightening, exhilarating and above all the most humbling experience for me. I saw things happen... which are not only difficult for me to explain but also make me look back in awe and gratitude that I was a part of all this. The energy of the place was something that I had not experienced before.



Everyone who was there for the consecration used to be up in the wee hours of morning and stay up till very late into night and yet, they kept saying the same thing- 'we don't feel tired at all', 'we are not hungry at all'... The energy of the place was driving us and making us do things we didn't think physically possible for us! Each individual had an experience to share which corroborated this statement. It was as though, the energy situation created by Swamiji and Maa was 'feeding' all of us and was keeping our minds focused only on one thing and that was to help in any small and insignificant way we could, to

make the consecration happen as beautifully and smoothly as possible. And we were all drenched and enveloped by this grace in the 4 days of the consecration.

For me personally, the most touching aspect of the consecration was to see Swamiji and Maa... the dedication, devotion, enthusiasm and humility with which they performed each and every activity- whether it was the most mundane activity of organizing the daily chores of the Ashram or the most powerful and enchanting consecration of each idol in the temple.

After each consecration, when the *Abhishekam* of the idol was being performed, the love and devotion with which they applied the milk, ghee, honey, *vibhuti*, *chandan*, etc, to idols was so moving...so sincere...so full of devotion...that **it was difficult to know whether it was a mother taking care of her child or a devotee making an offering to 'God'**...I guess, it was both, in equal measure...

I didn't know whether to keep looking at Swamiji and Maa or to look at the idol, because it was difficult to say which one was Divine! Perhaps, the answer to the question is- "Both are Divine!"

Om Namah Shivaya.

- *Gautam Vir*



Prana Pratishtha

Maa Yoga Shakthi Peetam



Ashtadigbandanam being performed for Siddhi Ganapathi



First pooja after the holy bath



Ksheerabhishekam for Lord Hanuman



Curd applied to Yogalingam



Radhakrishna getting ready for Alankarana



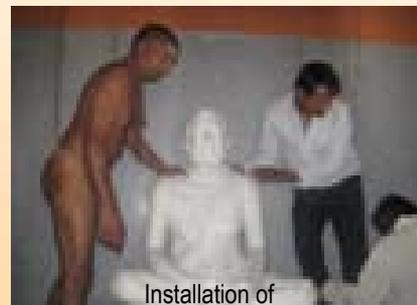
Mataji doing Netronmilinam to Lord Dakshinamurthy



"Murttika Snan" (Mud bath) for Maa Dakshina Kali



Installation of Kaivalya Venkateshwara



Installation of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

Inauguration of Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram at Gairan Thanda - Jadcherla



Sri Prasad garu unveiling
Swami Vivekananda's Statue



Swamiji and Mataji inaugurating Ramakrishna Sadhanalaya



Sri Vijay Kumar garu inaugurating
Veda Vyasa Vidyalaya



Smt. Ramadevi inaugurating Nachiketagni Yagnashala



Mataji performing Yaga



'Swagatham' dance by Vidya Mandir children



The much awaited debut



We were driving to Nachiketa Ashrama for the inauguration, with our bunch of restless kids when one of them asked – ‘Why couldn’t Swamiji build the Ashram closer to or in Hyderabad’. The barren, dust-filled scenery hardly kept them amused or delighted. Although aware that the gripes were merely a reaction to the summer heat beating down at the car, I couldn’t wait to respond. It was nothing but boundless compassion that chose a setting, in the suburbs of the city that was most backward and distraught - to bring about a social, cultural and spiritual renaissance.

On March 10th 2012, the inauguration of the Nachiketa Ashrama and Maa Yoga Shakti Peetham in Gairan Thanda, Kodgal village, Mahboobnagar Dist, was the culmination of years of perseverance, faith and hard-work as well as the dawn of a new spiritual action.

Swami Vivekananda’s statue was unveiled and garlanded by Sri Y.V.S.S. Prasad

Ramakrishna Sadhanalaya: A Dhyana Mandir established for the purpose of meditation and other spiritual programs was inaugurated by Swamiji and Mataji on behalf of Sri Ashok Vir.

Veda Vyasa Vidyalaya: The Vidya Mandir at the Ashram was inaugurated by Sri K. Vijay kumar of KVK group.

Nachiketagni Yagnashala: This Yagashala was inaugurated by Smt K. Ramadevi and a homam was performed by Mataji, igniting the spirit of spiritual yaga in the hearts of devotees.

Maa Yoga Shakti Peetham: The inauguration of the temple commenced with a wonderful cultural program by children from Tapovan’s Vidya Mandir and by children from Tapovan family. Devotional songs, classical music, welcome dances and yoga feats by Vidya Mandir children, were a feast all in all, to the gathered audience.

As the mood of dusk slowly weaved into the evening, Mataji was requested to share a few words with those present. She gently reminded us as to how we humans succumb to bondages of several kinds. The one and only remedy to all of that is developing ‘Vairagya’ through devotion to the Lord. Maa Yoga Shakti Peetham is the crystallization of Mataji’s visions and experiences as a result of her intense *Sadhana*.

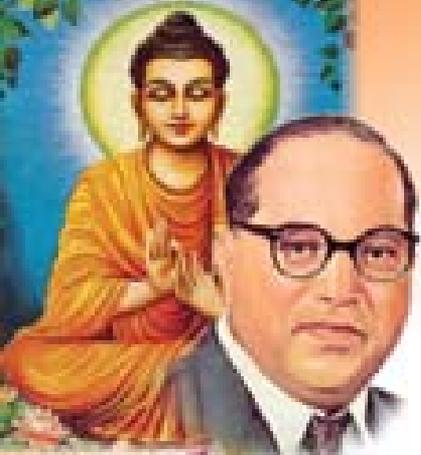
Temples were built in India and around the world, not as just places for prayer, but as vortices of energy where people could transform themselves in a very deep way. In this temple, Mataji reminds, worship will not be done by breaking coconuts and burning camphor but *seva* to the deity should be done with silent and soulful acts of worship like Surrender, Japa and Dhyana. In this temple there is no need for daily *Archanas* and *Alankaras*. No necessity for *Nityasevas* and *Arjithasevas*. The deities were energized in the *Yoga, Tantra, Mantra* and *Yantra* traditions by Swamiji and Mataji. Swamiji says that just sitting in silence in the temple, with an open heart, is enough to allow a deep and lasting spiritual transformation in the self. Mataji explained the significance of the *Chakras* or energy centers in the body, how they affect individual disposition, and that each deity in the temple is the presiding deity of each of these *Chakras*. The associated ‘Beej Mantra’ and the imagery of the *Chakra* are depicted near each of the deities.

It was touching to hear Swamiji come on the dais and call out names of individuals from all levels, who endeavored wholeheartedly to help make this vision a reality. Swamiji then invited all who were present to enter the temple and have *Darshan* of the deities. The event concluded with ‘prasadam’ served as dinner to all.

Words fall short, but we express our deep gratitude to Swamiji, Mataji, P.S. Reddy Garu, Vasundhara Ma and countless others who have made this spiritual haven available, to be enjoyed and experienced by all!

- *Harini N.*





Jewel of India

Ambedkar was born as the 14th son of Ramji at Ambavade Village in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. Born on 14th April 1891, his full name was Bhimrao Sakpal Ambavadekar. Even while studying in school, he happened to know the feelings of being “high” and “low” - which were deep-rooted in society and felt very bad about them. His teacher, Mahadev Ambedkar, who was impressed by Bheemrao’s brilliance, gave his surname to him and told him: “henceforth your name is Bheemrao Ramji Ambedkar”. From that day, Bheemrao Ambavadekar became Bheemrao Ambedkar. Ambedkar studied at the Elphinstone College, Bombay and obtained his B.A., degree. He secured a job under the Maharaja of Baroda, went to America and returned to India in 1917 with his Ph.D. He secured a top job. Later, he went to London and returned as a barrister.

Ambedkar had decided to abolish “Untouchability”, which had thrived for centuries. It was said, “Untouchables” should not use water from a tank in Colaba district, Maharashtra. Ambedkar used that water himself first and propagated the principle that all are equal. His sharp mind had begun to exert itself from the time he was not allowed to sit along with other students in the class in his childhood, as he was born a *Mehar*. After some days, in defiance of a prohibition to enter a temple, he entered Veereswara temple and said that those who are called as “untouchables” can enter the temple and also drink

the tank water. A case was filed against Ambedkar in the court, which ruled that tanks and wells are public properties.

Participating in the Round Table Conference in 1931, he spoke for the “untouchables” who were called *Harijans* and argued that they should also be allowed to exercise franchise and the right to elect their own leader.

When India gained freedom on 15th August 1947, Ambedkar became the first Law Minister. He assisted in formulating the Constitution of India. He served as Chairman of the Constituent Assembly. On 1st November 1949, the government accepted the draft of the Constitution and called him the “Modern Man of India”. Ambedkar devoted his life for the emancipation of Harijans.

Ambedkar became a Buddhist for peace of mind and participated in the Buddhist conference in Sri Lanka in 1950. He was fond of books. Once he bought 2000 books in New York. He also wrote some books. People affectionately called him “Baba Saheb”. Ambedkar who strove to banish the caste system was conferred several honours. He passed away on 6th December 1956. The nation celebrated his birth centenary on a grand scale. The Government of India conferred on him “Bharat Ratna”. His birthday is being celebrated with enthusiasm all over the country every year.

- *Koti Rajasekhar M.*

SANKARA, THE SPIRITUAL GENERAL

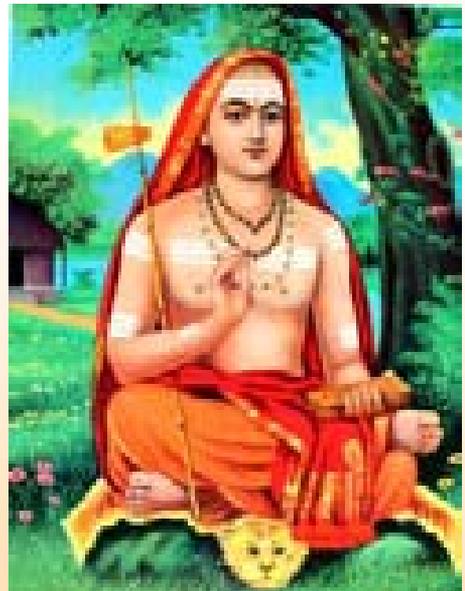
Bhagavadpada Acharya Sankara was not only a great thinker and the noblest of Advaitic philosophers, but He was essentially an inspired champion of Hinduism and one of the most vigorous missionaries in our country. Such a powerful leader was needed at that time when Hinduism had been almost smothered within the enticing entanglements of the Buddhistic philosophy, and consequently the decadent Hindu society came to be disunited and broken up into numberless sects and denominations, each championing a different viewpoint and engaged in mutual quarrels and endless argumentations. Each Pundit, as it were, had his own followers, his own philosophy, his own interpretation; each one was a vehement and powerful opponent of all other views. This intellectual disintegration, especially in the scriptural field, was never before so serious and so dangerously calamitous as in the times of Sankara.

It had been at a similar time, when our society was fertile for any ideal thought or practical philosophy to thrive, that the beautiful values of non-injury, self-control, love and affection of the Buddha had come to enchant alike the kings and their subjects of this country. But the general decadence of the age did not spare the Buddhists either. They, among themselves, precipitated different viewpoints, and by the time Sankara appeared on the horizon of Hindu history, the atheistic school of Buddhists (Asadvadis) had enticed away large sections of the Hindu folk.

It was into such a chaotic intellectual atmosphere that Sankara brought His life-giving philosophy of the Non-dual Brahman of the Upanishads. In His missionary work of propagating the great philosophical truths of the Upanishads and of rediscovering through them the true cultural basis of our nation, Acharya Sankara had a variety of efficient weapons in His resourceful armory. He was indeed pre-eminently the fittest genius who could have

undertaken this self-appointed task as the sole guardian angel of the Rishi culture. An exquisite thinker, a brilliant intellect, a personality scintillating with the vision of Truth, a heart throbbing with industrious faith and ardent desire to serve the nation, sweetly emotional and relentlessly logical, in Sankara the Upanishads discovered the fittest spiritual general. It was indeed a vast programme that Sankara had to accomplish within the short span of about twenty effective years: for at the age of thirty-two He had finished His work and had folded up His manifestation among the mortals of the world.

He brought into His work His literary dexterity—from masculine prose to soft feminine songs, from marching militant verses to dancing songful words, be He in the halls of the Upanishad commentaries or in the temple of the Brahma-sutra expositions, in the amphitheatre of His Bhagavad-gita discourses, or in the open flowery fields of His devotional songs, His was a pen that danced to the rhythm of His heart and to the swing of His thoughts.



But pen alone would not have won the war of culture for our country. He showed Himself to be a great organizer, a farsighted diplomat, a courageous hero and a tireless servant of the country. Selfless and unassuming, this mighty angel strode up and down the length and breadth of the country, serving His motherland and teaching His countrymen to live up to the dignity and glory of Bharat. Such a vast programme can neither be accomplished by an individual nor sustained without institutions of great discipline and perfect organisation. Establishing the mutts, opening temples, organizing halls of education, and even prescribing certain ecclesiastical codes, this mighty master left nothing undone in maintaining what He achieved.

The life and work of Adi Sankara are indeed an inspiration to this country to relive the glorious Hindu Culture. The Acharyas of old never found leisure in their lifetime to write their autobiography or celebrate their birthdays: self-effacement was the very spirit that governed their life and activities. Therefore, all that we know about our great rishis and mystic scholars are but traditions clothed in exaggeration, together describing an adorable creature fleeting across history, an ethereal light that flashes across in its own blinding glory.

Today, there is throughout the country a great enthusiasm in Sankara; the signs of revival are everywhere around us. On Sri Sankara Jayanthi day, 26th April we find celebrations everywhere. Unfortunately none of the thundering platforms successfully brings out the personality of this great Master from Kalady. A lot is known of Adi Sankara, but very few know of 'The Sankara'. The more we learn to adore Him, not as a divine incarnation but as a sincere man inspired to serve the country and reconquer the nation from its slavery to alien ideologies, the more we shall successfully pay our tribute to our own culture.

- Swami Chinmayananda

Founder Chinmaya International Foundation

Adi Sankara's Works



The great Master has many works to His credit and listed here are a few of them:

- » Viveka chudamani
- » Atma Bodha
- » Vakya Sudha
- » Vakya Vritti
- » Bhaja Govindam
- » Shivananda Lahari
- » Sadhana Panchakam
- » Nirvana Shatakam
- » Nirguna Manasa Puja
- » Upadesa Sahasri
- » Gita Bhashya
- » Tattva Bodha
- » Panchikaranam
- » Bhavani Ashtakam
- » Soundarya Lahari
- » Aparokshanubhuti
- » Shiva Manasa Pooja
- » SidhantaTatva Vindu
- » Kanakadhara Stotram
- » Brahma Sutra Bhashya - I
- » Brahma Sutra Bhashya - II



Sabitha Dey

“There is not great talent without great will power.”
- *Honore de Balzac*

Dressed in a crisp white cotton saree with grey flowers, one sees her walking near her handloom stall with such confidence, poise and élan. This was the first impression of her as I watched her from the neighbouring stall. Andhra Crafts Council had its annual exhibition and Mrs Sabita Dey would come across as any other modern woman. Her stall called ‘Sabita’ was probably the best selling stall in the entire exhibition. Vibrant as her stall is, her boutique showcases all Bengal sarees – silk, cotton and cussat. This is the 8th year since she has been setting up her stall at Andhra Crafts Council Exhibition and as they say, it has been just as popular as it is this year.

Inquisitive with all the nearby activity and upon enquiring, Mrs. Sabita as we were all surprised to know is 72 years old and runs her business being 80% blind. Astonished?! Wait till you read ahead. Mrs. Sabita Dey was diagnosed with a disease causing fading eye sight about 40 years back, she could not read and write since 25 years. Undeterred by her handicap she started her own boutique “Sabita”, 18 years back. These facts would immediately get you calculating and ultimately amaze you to realize she started her own business when she had almost lost all her sight. She is so self-reliant in her mannerisms that it is an onlooker’s disbelief when they know she cannot see wholly.

This will seem unapparent when you see her just like other women around sipping coffee on her own or checking out other stalls like any other fully capable person. While speaking to her she comes across as humble, grounded and very courteous. Having graduated in Bengali literature and won prizes in elocution, she loves reciting and writing poetry. Upon asking about her handloom saree business, she briefed me about her utmost passion-designing. At present she only designs Katha sarees due to her sight, while her daughter Sona Murarka takes care of printed sarees and designs.

Nothing stops her from enjoying the better in this world. Her will power to conquer her disability allows Mrs. Sabita travel to Bangladesh twice every year, all alone to select handloom materials for her sarees and dresses, Shantiniketan being the next place she visits often. She is determined in her noble cause of patronizing handloom and its weavers in Daniyakhali District in Hoogly, in Bengal.

Adding to our marvel at her zest for life, we were also told that she has travelled around the world-alone. All she had to say for her accomplishments was “willpower in her mind”. So rightly said!! You are a living proof and inspiration to all of us to accomplish great feats.

- **Purvvi B.**

A ‘go green’ enthusiast who is part of Nachiketa’s Go Green Club. She created a special curriculum called ‘Keiki’ for kids.

Festivals of April 2012



Sri Rama Navami



Hanuman Jayanti



Baisakhi



Akshaya Tritiya



Mahavir jayanti



Good Friday



Vishu Festival in Kerala



Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti





Q. Rituals occupy a very important place in our culture. In fact, our culture breathes through them. But, in certain cases, they do

seem to be wasteful and rigid. Is it necessary that one adheres to them tooth and nail? Should one not give up unnecessary spending in 'pleasing the Gods' and pay more attention to please the living Gods, our less fortunate brothers and sisters?

A. Rituals are prescribed, established set of rites. They vary with each culture and geographical area. Why? Because, they are generally based on the time, place and context when they were formulated. They have been laid out to provide a pattern, uniformity, structure and basic guidance to carry out a particular procedure. They are like vocabulary to language. In order to convey an idea, you can speak in a simple dialect, or somewhat bookish or highly rhetoric. Same logic holds good for rituals. Sincere intent can substitute for material things at all times. Twenty years ago in a place where I had no access to neem flower, I'd improvise with fenugreek seeds in *Ugadi pacchadi* (a *prasadam* holding all the tastes- sweet, sour, bitter etc.) to add the bitter taste. Ganesha was only pleased at my using local colored leaves for *patri* and *pushpam* on *chavithi*. We are totally allowed to draw municipal water from tap and with mere *sankalpam* elevate its status to that of *Ganga*. There has always been place for flexibility in our *Dharma*. "Tooth and nail" adherence is individual's insistence, has nothing to do with Gods.

For a better understanding we can divide a ritual into three elements- **Shraddha, procedure and degree or scale**. **Shraddha** or faithful attention is the principle element or foundation to a ritual while **procedure** merely refers to the process one chooses, to perform a ritual; **degree or scale** is an accessory that enhances it. The procedure can vary from basic to elaborately detailed depending on one's time and resources; and as for the scale- it is a personal choice to go anywhere from simple to grand and pompous. However, coming to *Shraddha*- there are no two ways about *Shraddha*, because it itself means giving your 100%. To me, *Shraddha* is all that matters. When you perform a ritual with utmost *Shraddha*, understanding the purpose and essence of the actions involved, the contentment you derive has an embalming soothing, and therapeutic effect.

Rituals

Ritual done with *Shraddha* is whole in itself whereas a ritual done following the right protocol and great pomp but without *Shraddha* is like a well adorned *Homakund* with no *Agni* or a beautiful *veena* with no strings.

Coming to the second part of your question- ours' being a democratic country, how much one wants to spend is one's own preference. If someone has enough money to do charity for living Gods as well as elaborate rituals, that too out of his own will and capacity, I am in no place to put a tab on it. But if someone is making a ritual a grand affair out of peer pressure, borrowing money, succumbing to societal expectations and putting their own future at stake- that I wouldn't call a very wise thing to do nor a good example to set to their young.

Rituals, when done in the right sense are the common strings that pull a culture together. They serve the purpose of helping us-

1. evoke the spirit within
2. invoke and tune with Universal power
3. prepare ourselves mentally for the ensuing task
4. generate positive vibes within and around
5. spread gaiety and share blessings
6. revive peace and harmony

Many great people have illustrated simplicity in their actions and life as a whole. They stressed on fulfilling needs and underplaying wants. Following their example, rituals like marriages, birthdays, *pujas* etc. can abound in cornucopia of love, wishes and blessings from the bottom of hearts rather than grandeur of power consuming lights, pollution causing fireworks, disturbing loud music, extravagant but very short lasting decorations and so on. Personally, I stand for simple affairs, serious intentions, sustainable celebrations, money spent on long-term benefits and deserving reasons. **Tomorrow belongs to 'you'th.** By insisting on simpler celebrations, youth can definitely change the borrowed trend of credit-based, want-driven, and materialistic society to need-based, values-ridden, culturally rich, spiritually empowered society that reigned just a few decades ago.

- *Annapurna R.*



Everyday

Every day, as I leave for work or as I return home from work, I see two sets of contrasting images juxtaposed...and please note that I say 'Everyday'...

One picture is that of people carrying vessels of water for their daily use. These 'needs' are very basic, necessary for survival - for cooking, drinking, ablutions, etc. and the other picture is of endless trails of water overflowing onto the streets from homes which have just washed their driveways or their car. Thousands of liters of water- just gone waste, not used to quench their thirst, not used for cooking, not to feed hungry stomachs, not into the roots of plants and trees to sustain them...this water is simply wasted and not just wasted, but adds to problems related to basic sanitation and hygiene.

Now let us examine for a moment, who are the people who need this water most and who are the people who are wasting this water? Amazingly, it's the same people!!! It is people who help at our homes or offices, who are thoughtlessly throwing away this water because there is a bore-well or in many cases their owners afford to buy tankers of water.

So, does this absolve us of our responsibility or taking ownership of this criminal and unpardonable wastage taking place in our homes, in our offices and in our country? The answer is a resounding 'No'! We are responsible because the buck stops at us!

If we know that water is being wasted in our homes and offices and we have not done anything about it, we have no excuse and must take full responsibility of the problems we are creating for ourselves, the future generations, for our planet and everything that inhabits our Mother Earth. Even if we are not aware of this wastage in our homes and our offices, we are still responsible because we are not doing justice to the education we have received and the awareness with which we must lead our lives.

A few days back, I was driving in the afternoon and I passed home after home, building after building where rivulets of water were flowing out, completely wasted. In that afternoon light and the way the sun light fell on these wasted trails, it seemed as if blood was flowing through the streets. I stared aghast at it because I realized the irony and the truth in this image that my mind had created.

If we continue to waste limited natural resources like 'water' at this rate, soon within the next 15 to 20 years, there will be no water for basic needs, there will be no water for survival. The poor will perish first but nobody will be spared because money can only buy so much water. After a while, the disparity between the 'haves' and 'have nots' will be so great that it will lead to social unrest, looting, rioting...and then, blood will indeed flow through the streets.

Now, is this an over-exaggeration? Another doomsday theory? No, it isn't. Over the past thousands of years, civilizations after civilizations have disappeared, vanished- as if overnight, because they did not maintain a balance between the environment and consumption and there is no reason to believe that it will be any different for us.



The only hope is that this unhappy, not to mention scary, situation can be reversed. It will take time, but amends can be made. And Amends 'MUST' be made. Judicious use of water is the only hope. Planting as many trees as possible to have green cover so that the rains come in on time. Rain water harvesting and adequate replenishment and recharging of ground water sources is imperative.

In many countries, lands which were ever green forest covers and very fertile lands have become wastelands and deserts in the last 25 years because there has been over urbanization in the surrounding area without care or thought for the balance that needs to be maintained with nature.

In many countries, approvals and sanction of plans for construction of apartment building are not given if they are unable to prove a regular / sustainable source of drinking water for the next 25 years!!!

With folded hands, I make a plea and request each and every one who reads this article to make a small (and big) contribution to ensure that we do not create a situation which leads to such kind of death and destruction.

- *GautamVir*

SAVE WATER THIS SUMMER!

A compilation of tips from Nachiketa's Go-Green Club

- Turn off the faucet while scrubbing dishes.
- Turn off the water when brushing, flossing teeth and shaving. Better if we use a tumbler or a mug of water.
- Keep a bucket handy near the kitchen sink, collect water from washing vegetables, fruits, rice, *dals* etc. and use it to water your garden. A small kitchen garden can thrive on it. Reuse water from washing rice for the first wash of Green vegetables which we need to wash 2-3 times to get rid of pesticides.
- Try to use waste of dish /clothes washing for gardening and cleaning the garden floor.
- Do not hose down to wash your car.
- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily; install water saving toilets. There are companies that manufacture the 'Dual Flush Mechanism' which has two knobs / buttons which allows us to selectively flush 3 or 6 liters or 4 and 8 liters based on the usage.
- Don't use big bath tubs in bathrooms. Apply a water-saving shower head.
- Operate automatic washing machine only when it is fully loaded. Don't use extra detergent in washing clothes because it uses up more water.
- Repair dripping taps promptly by replacing washers even if you are only renting the place. Do it for the sake of Earth and mankind.
- Avoid fertilizing. Do not over fertilize your lawns (requires more water).
- Water the lawns during early morning hours when temperature and wind speeds are the lowest. This reduces losses from evaporation.
- Minimize grass lawns in your yard because less grass means less water demand. Landscaping with drought resistant plants, desert plants, dry rivers etc., saves water and money.
- Use drip irrigation systems because they are more water efficient.
- Go vegetarian or reduce intake of meat. A totally vegetarian diet requires only 300 gallons (1134 Litres) of water per day, while a non-vegetarian diet requires more than 4,000 gallons (15,120 Litres) of water per day.



Krupalu Ogeti, Secretary, Samskrit Bharati, Hyd.
email:okrupalu@samskritam.net

(Continued from lesson 24 on LakArA)

Please write down these sentences in Samskritam following in the example:

Ex – Please place this on the table. भवान् कृपया एतत् उत्पीठिकायां स्थापयतु।

1. Please remember this (to a male)
2. Play in the playground. Not here! (addressing a group of children)
3. Do puja tomorrow (addressing a female)
4. Be a good man
5. Speak loudly (to a male)
6. Let him go slowly
7. Let her be a doctor (Note that she will become a 'female' doctor)
8. Let there be peace in the country
9. Do this work well (addressing a group of students)
10. Send this money (to a female)
11. Bring my shirt ('yutakam')
12. Tell your name (facing a male)
13. Speak softly (to a quarreling wife)
14. Don't go fast (a girl to a boy)
15. Speak Samskritam well (teacher to students)

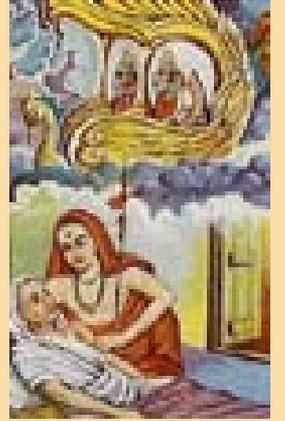
(Answers are in page 36)

* * * * *



MOKSHA PRAPTHI

Life and death are neither the beginning nor the end. They are just transitions to another form and this is the eternal truth. Sri Shankaracharya was a believer of this philosophy. Before leaving home on His spiritual quest, Shankaracharya promised His mother to be with her at the time of her death and perform her last rites. When Shankaracharya was at Sringeri, He realized with His divine powers that His mother was on the deathbed. He immediately reached Kalady, His birth place, to pay His last respects and also to keep His promise. Aryamba was very happy to see her son and died peacefully. None of the villagers attended the funeral. The reasons they quoted were many. They were angry with Shankaracharya for denying all Vedic Karmas, for taking *Sannyasa* and for not abiding by the caste system. They felt that He had no right to do the funeral rites to His mother. Hence they boycotted the funeral.



Sri Shankaracharya was beyond arguments. He was a Mouni. He was undeterred and decided to cremate His mother in His own way. He did not seek anyone's help. He ignored the protests of the orthodox Namboodri Brahmins in the neighbourhood. He cut His mother's body into pieces and placed them on a pyre in His own backyard. The pyre was made of plantain stems and He lit the pyre with the fire that manifested from His Divine energy and completed His mother's cremation. He gave *Moksha* to His mother and fulfilled His promise.



THE STORY OF A PENCIL



A boy was watching his grandmother write a letter. At one point, he asked: 'Are you writing a story about what we have done? Is it a story about me?' His grandmother stopped writing her letter and said to him: 'I am writing about you, actually, but important than the words is the pencil I am using. I hope you will be like this pencil when you grow up.'

Intrigued, the boy looked at the pencil. It didn't seem very special. 'But it's just like any other pencil I have ever seen'.

'That depends on how you look at things. It has five qualities which, if you manage to hang on to them, will make you a person who is always at peace with the world'.

First quality: You are capable of great things, but you must never forget that there is a hand guiding your steps. We call that God, and He always guides us according to His will.

Second quality: Now and then, I have to stop writing and use a sharpener. That makes the pencil suffer a little, but afterwards, he is much sharper. So you, too, must learn to bear certain pains and sorrows, because they will make you a better person.

Third quality: The pencil always allows us to use an eraser to rub out any mistakes. This means that accepting and correcting something we did is not necessarily a bad thing; it helps us on the road to justice.

Fourth quality: What really matters in a pencil is not its wooden exterior, but the graphite inside. So always pay attention to what is happening inside you.

Finally, the pencil's fifth quality: It always leaves a mark. In just the same way, you should know that everything you do in life will leave a mark, so try to be conscious of that in your every action.'

Source: "Like the Flowing River" by Paulo Coelho

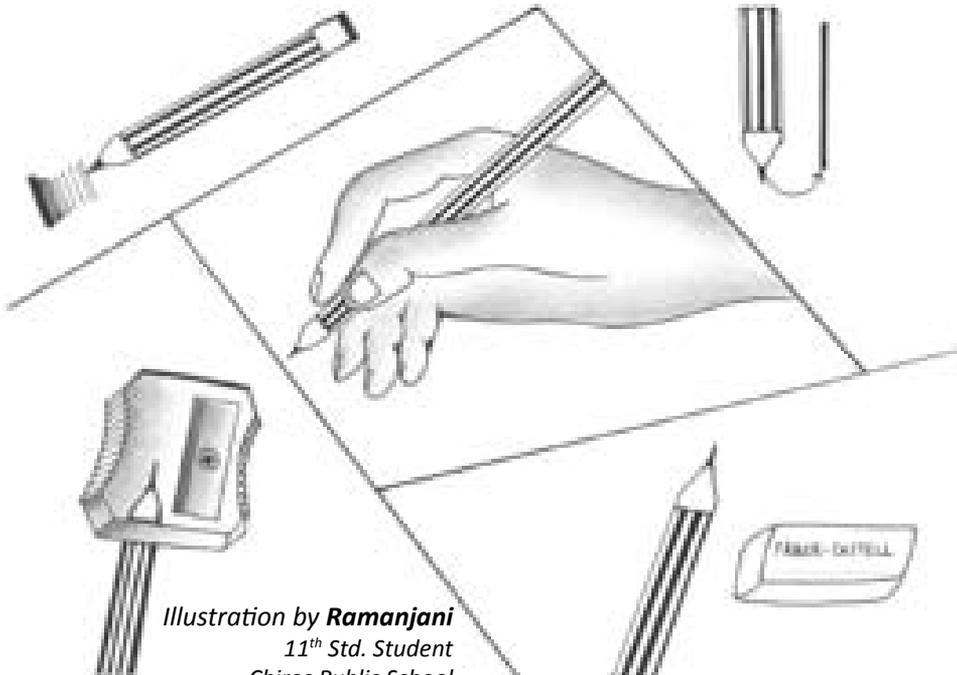


Illustration by **Ramanjani**
11th Std. Student
Chirec Public School



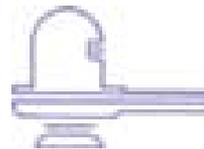
Free eye camp:

On 10th February, doctors from L.V. Prasad Eye Hospital conducted a free eye camp for Vidya Mandir children. Eye tests were performed for all the children and those with vision problems were identified. They were later taken for a free consultation with the specialists in the hospital for further treatment. Our grateful appreciation to Ms Lalitha Raghuram, for making this happen through the Mohan Foundation.



Shivaratri celebrations:

Senior students of Vidya Mandir, some of the staff and volunteers participated in the Shivaratri celebrations in Nachiketa Tapovan on 20th February. Devotional *bhajans* filled the air until midnight in Dhyana Mandir. This was followed by *Rudrabhishekam* and Vedic chants, performed by the priest. The *puja* went on till 2:00am, after which many who were present, broke their fast with sacred *Prasadam*.



Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Jayanthi:

On 18th February, a beautiful cultural program was conducted by the children of Vidya Mandir to commemorate the birthday of one of the greatest spiritual giants of our country. Children performed dances and sang devotional songs on this occasion. A few children recalled the many inspirational stories that adorned the life of this great saint. Prizes were given away to children who won the art competition conducted for this event.



Free dental camp:

Nachiketa Tapovan thanks the doctors of the KIMS clinic for conducting a free dental camp for children on 23rd February 2012.

Children with dental problems were identified and corrective measures were planned. The doctors also spoke to the children about steps to maintain proper oral hygiene.

Holi celebrations :

It was a time for fun and fervour as children and staff came together to celebrate Holi, the festival of colors, on Thursday 7th March. The event started with the *Holika Dahan* as children made the bonfire. Metaphorically the fire is meant to signify the destruction of evil - the



burning of the 'Holika' - a mythological character and the triumph of good as symbolised by Prahlad. Our dear Vasundhara Ma explained to the children, the significance of the celebrations and also emphasized on the use of eco-friendly colors and material for the celebrations.

Nachiketa's Go Green club...

We convey our thanks to all the participants of WOW initiative. You helped us earn Rs 7,351 in the month of February and saved the Mother Earth by recycling about 1727 kg of plastic and paper waste material.

**Thanks to Sri P.Srinivasa Rao
from Gurgaon for his generous
donation of Rs. 1 lakh
towards corpus fund.**



THE SPIRIT BEHIND THAT MATTERS

Visiting 'Haridwar' once again with the "phool"
of a recently passed relative –
I observe the rituals,
sitting beside the relative's son.

The pundit guides him gently helping him
on the right way to give 'Pind'
on the banks of the 'Gau ghat'
of the sacred 'Ganga mai'
an offering to the departed souls
of the generations that had passed
this way, long before us.

He was helping tie up the loose ends
in the onward voyage of the poor souls,
cajoling them in the right direction
in their journey to the other world.

It is a ritual that is long and tiring
as it is to be done on an empty stomach
at the crack of the dawn after a ritual holy dip
in the ice cold waters of the Ganges.

We come out of the ordeal
tired to the bones-
knees, joints and back aching,
groaning after the long hours of
back breaking 'Havan' and offering of 'Jal'
to the 'Pithru devatas'.

Our empty famished stomachs
were growling for their quota
of a soul satisfying breakfast
of maybe 'Poori and Halwa'.

Having had a bird's eye view
of the karmic cycle of birth and death
and the fear of being born again
in a God alone form of 'Prarabdha karma'
by the kind courtesy of the pundit,
we feel we are lucky to be alive and kicking
prone to the weaknesses of the flesh.

After paying the ritual fees
we rush to the nearest 'Halwai' shop
to quieten our rebellious stomachs.

But lo! And behold!

Outside the row of 'Halwai' shops,
we saw a horde of beggars –
lean, haggard and scrawny –
with unkempt matted hair,

and dirty unwashed clothes,
reeking of days and nights of endless ennui,
looking up with beseeching eyes
at every passer-by for stray morsels of food

At least on this day –
"Bahut din se bhooke hain, babuji"
they beg with pleading eyes,
frightened to behold what fate
had decreed for them for days on end.

My heart overflowed with pity
and compassion for the poor souls:
We are in a sacred and holy place,
have missed only the lone,
single meal of the morning
and here are people
who God alone knows when
they last had a fully satisfying one,
and when and where their next meal
would come from.

How very sad, I ruminate philosophically,
as though detached from the
present reality before me.

I forget the hunger that I felt
a few moments before – the basic one,
that fuels existence and survival –
to be replaced by a thirst
of knowing the riddle of life,
birth, existence and fate,
why people are born, where they are born –
some in a state of bliss and others
in forlorn desperate environs.

Why and when people give up
on living life on their own terms –
to lead a life that yields nothing
but shame and embarrassment, to beg,
for a few morsels of food
or yearning for a night's shelter
from vagaries of the weather.

One can understand the blind,
the limbless beggars who
cannot earn their daily bread.
But, perfectly normal people
who could earn their livelihood
by the sweat of their body or brains –
why did they choose this path
of least resistance to their 'Karmic Dharma?'



I am brought back to the earthly life
of day to day living by the sounds
of shooing away made by my cousin –
“chalo hato! Jaao yahaan se!!”
“pareyshan mat karo!”
He was scolding them.
But all they were doing was
pleading with moist eyes
“Sahib! Do din se bhookhey hain”
“thodi roti sabji khilado”

I try to move away from the halwai shop,
shuddering to think of having even a single bite,
with so many eyes watching
our every single movement.
What right do we well fed ones have,
to eat our fill, when such a large
multitude have cramps
in their empty stomachs for days on end?

I try to prod my cousin
to awaken his miserly, dormant conscience,
which has come to this holy place to pay
obseance to his dear departed ‘Pithrus’ souls
in the direct line of succession.

“A full meal given to a single
famished beggar would earn
more ‘punya’ points to his soul
than feeding a well fed pundit,”
I advise him, cajoling him
to feed at least one single
downtrodden soul to help levitate
his father’s dear departed soul
to rise to the pearly gates of heaven!

But all my proddings were
of no avail to a man,
who had decided before hand
to spend only so much and not a penny more,
for the journey he had undertaken.

Seeing his hardened attitude,
I turned away from him
to look at the pleading, beseeching
eyes of a lone, squatting old man
sitting away from the maddening crowd.
My hand went instinctively
to my trouser pocket, gingerly,
hesitantly toying with the last few
tens and twenties left in them,



at the fag end of the journey.
I took out two tens and gently held them out
to the old geezer, asking him
to go have his fill of ‘roti sabzi.’

Seeing his guest and companion
handing out charity at the funeral
rites of his father, my cousin was shamed
and tried to cover up his earlier misdeed.
He held out a fifty rupee note to the beggar
“jaao pet bharke khana khalo”
he said in an admonishing tone.

The beggar looked at him with disdainful eyes –
and refused the bait offered
that my cousin thought
would atone for his sins.
“Aap ki dakshina nahin chahiye”,
he retorted, “I see the milk of
human kindness in this man’s eyes”, he said.
“His donation is like a balm on my wounded soul,
whereas your bigger donation is
like rubbing salt on my wounds.”
So saying, the beggar blessed me and
went towards the Halwai’s shop
for a thanksgiving meal to
his starved but self respected soul.

My eyes beheld the sight
of enlightening knowledge,
that each man’s destiny
may be written before – hand
yet he still had a choice of
either live a life of hopeless existence
or one of self respecting sustenance.
“Hari Om”

- Mr. Arjun Kumar Pamnani



HOW YOU CAN HELP

*Anna daanam maha daanam; vidya daanam mahattaram.
Annena kshanika trupthihi yaavajeevanthu vidyaya.*

Vidya Mandir at Nachiketa Tapovan is currently able to accommodate a family of about 205 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.

Donations towards operation costs		*Corpus Fund Options	
Sponsor a Teacher (Dance & Music)	₹ 5,000/Month	Sponsor a child	₹ 1 Lakh
Vidya Daanam (Education)	₹ 5200/year/child	Anna Daanam (Mid-day Meals)	₹ 50,000/-
Anna Daanam (Mid-day Meals)	₹ 4200/day	Alpa Aharam (Snacks)	₹ 10,000/-
Alpa Aharam (Snacks)	₹ 700/day	* With the accrued annual interest the following will be achieved every year, respectively.	
Vastra Daanam (Uniforms)	₹ 800/2 pairs	- One child's education annually.	
Stationery Supplies (Copier Paper)	₹ 5000/term	- Mid-day Meals for the whole school for one day annually.	
Medicines (For needy people)	₹ 5000/month	- Snacks for the whole school for one day annually.	

Donations within India- Details	Overseas Donations- Details
Donations can be made directly by cheque or DD in favor of "Nachiketa Tapovan". The donations in India are exempt under the U/s 80G of IT Act, 1961.	Donations can be made directly by cheque or DD in favor of "Nachiketa Tapovan". Nachiketa Tapovan has permission to receive donations from abroad under FCRA act
Donations can be also directed through bank account as below	Bank Information
Bank Name : Bank of Baroda	Bank Name : SBI
Branch Name : Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad	A/c Name : Nachiketa Tapovan
A/c Name : Nachiketa Tapovan	A/c No : 30953215793
A/c No : 18090100004093	SWIFT Code : SBININBB214
IFSC Code : BARBOJUBILE	
(Note: IFSC code contains the number "zero" not letter "O")	

As a child of God, I am greater than anything that can happen to me.

- Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Griha Constructions, Chennai



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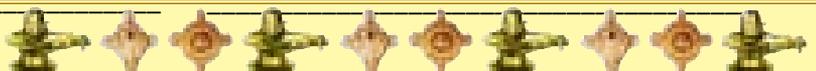
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FREE SUMMER CAMP

Character Development Camp for Children



Nachiketa Tapovan's Summer Camp will be held from 6-13th May, 2012 for the 13th year.

This popular annual event is for new applicants of 12-15 years age group.

This program helps your children learn:



★ Positive Thinking

★ Self Confidence

★ Creativity

★ Decision Making

★ Yogasana

★ Pranayama

★ Meditation

★ Power of Prayer

★ Values

First come First serve

Registration forms are now available at

Nachiketa Tapovan Vidya Mandir Kavuri Hills, Madhapur, Hyderabad

For details call : **8008882828, 9849168937**

Invitation

*We cordially invite you to attend
Sri Sitarama Kalyanam Celebrations
at Maa Yoga Shakti Peetham*



1st April 2012 at 10 a.m.

@ Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram,

Gairan Thanda, Kodgal Village, Jadcherla Mandal, Mahboobnagar Dist.

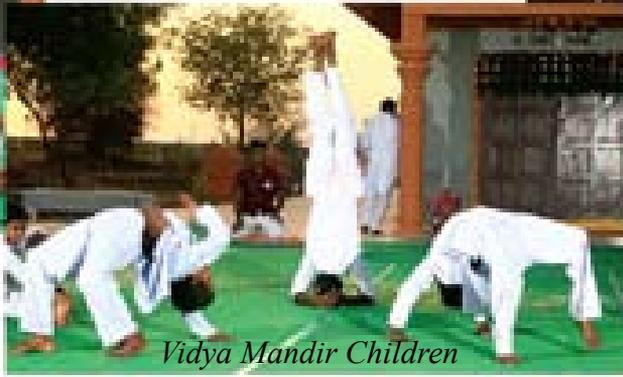
ANSWERS FOR SAMSKRIT LESSON

१. कृपया भवान् एतत् स्मरतु।
२. क्रीडाङ्गणे भवन्तः क्रीडन्तु।
- अत्र मास्तु। ३. भवती पूजां श्वः करोतु।
४. भवान् उत्तमः भवतु।
५. भवान् उच्चैः वदतु।
६. सः मन्दं गच्छतु।
७. सा वैद्या भवतु।
८. देशे शान्तिः भवतु।
९. भवन्तः एतत् कार्यं सम्यक् कुर्वन्तु।
१०. भवती एतत् धनं प्रेषयतु।
११. मम युतकं आनयतु।
१२. भवतः नाम वदतु।
१३. नीचैः वदतु भवती।
१४. भवान् शीघ्रं मा गच्छतु।
१५. भवन्तः संस्कृतं सम्यक् वदन्तु।





Anjali & Vishnu



Vidya Mandir Children



Rohit

Cultural Programs on the Inaugural day on 10th March 2012



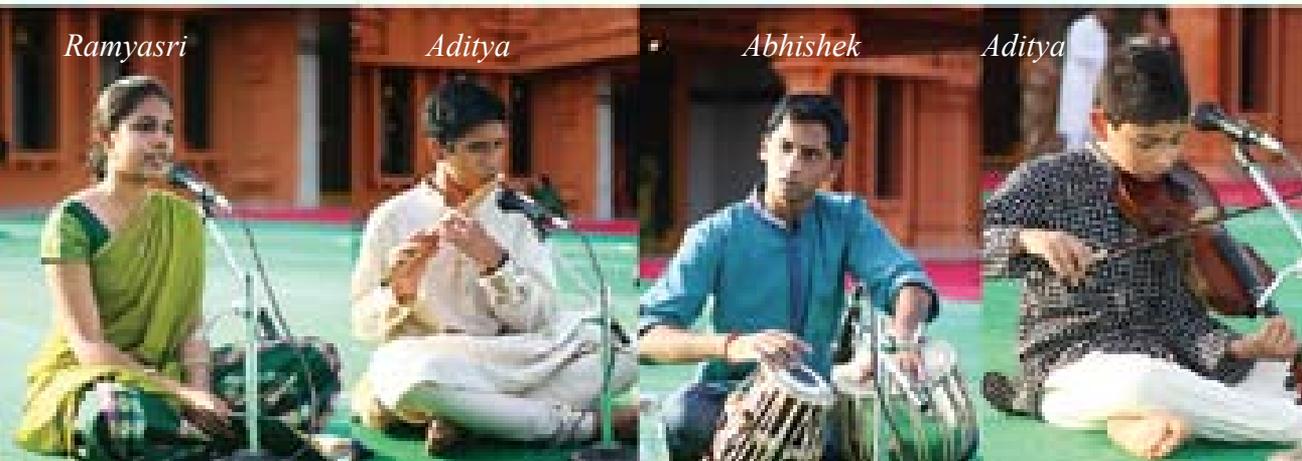
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Abhishek

Aditya



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*“Rama for you should mean the Path He trod,
the ideal He held aloft, and the Ordinance He laid down.*

They are eternal and timeless.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



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