

# *Nachiketanjali*

*an offering...*



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“Shivaji is one of the greatest national saviours who emancipated our society and our Hindu dharma when they were faced with the threat of total destruction. He was a peerless hero, a pious and God-fearing king and verily a manifestation of all the virtues of a born leader of men described in our ancient scriptures. He also embodied the deathless spirit of our land and stood as the light of hope for our future.” - **Swami Vivekananda**

*Chatrapati Shivaji Jayanti is celebrated on 19th February*

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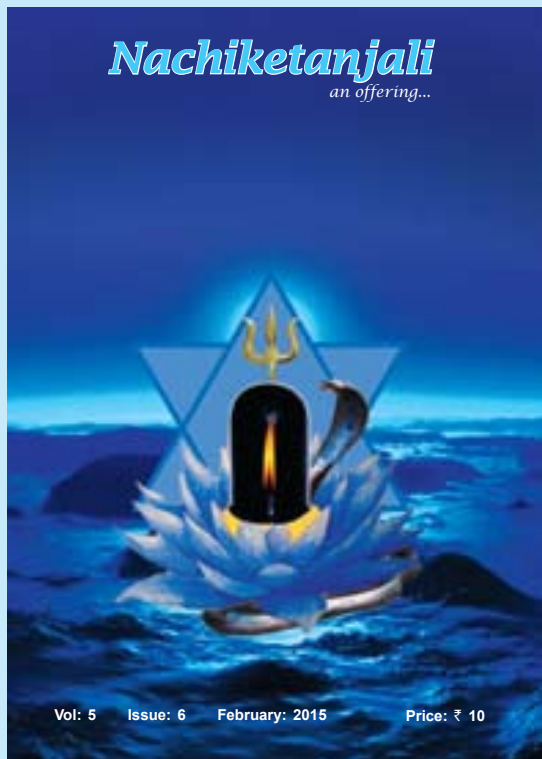
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*Brahma-MurAri-SurArchita-Lingam  
Nirmala-BhAsita-Shobhita-Lingam |*

*Janmaja-Duhkha-VinAshaka-Lingam  
Tat PranamAmi SadAshiva-Lingam ||*

*Deva-Muni-PravarArchita-Lingam  
KAma-Daham Karuna-Kara-Lingam |*

*RAvana-Darpa-VinAshana-Lingam  
Tat PranamAmi SadAshiva-Lingam ||*

#### Meaning:

1.1: (I Salute that Eternal Shiva Lingam) which is adored by Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and the Gods, which is Pure, Shining, and well-adorned.

1.2: And which destroys the sorrows associated with birth (and human life). I salute that eternal Shiva Lingam.

2.1: (I salute that eternal Shiva Lingam) which is worshipped by the Gods and the best of sages, which burns the desires, which is compassionate.

2.2: And which destroyed the pride of demon Ravana. I salute that eternal Shiva Lingam.

# BE CENTERED



A man lost all his wealth in a devastating fire. Initially he grieved, but one day out of the blue, he commented “Yes, I have lost everything but I found myself!” He was elated with his new finding. He encountered his soul which was buried beneath shrouds of ignorance all these days. But now when all these layers of Maya or illusion were removed, he became aware of his true self. He realized how he wandered out into the worldly wrappings, losing focus on the centre or his true essence.

His situation is akin to us. We are given another chance to realize ourselves when we take birth. But our childhood is spent in play and education. As we grow and settle down in our family life, we move further away from the centre and are beleaguered on all fronts by the perpetual onslaught of life’s demands, pressures and adversities. We are supposed to be an observer of our environs, not a part of them. But instead of being a spectator we have unconsciously jumped into the boxing ring. Let us return to our seats.

In reality, life is all about retracing our steps and coming back to the nucleus. But we feel that this inward trek is difficult and exploring the outside world is an easy alternative. We trace our steps outwards into this world trying to find happiness. For some it might take a short while, but for others it might take ages to realize that external happiness is ephemeral. After a frantic search and failure we are desperate to come back to our centre. We are fed up with the worldly glitter and try to find ways to take the solitary path to our effulgent centre stage.

We retrace our steps, turn around and initiate our inward journey. Initially the path might not be alluring but as we venture deep, we find the priceless treasure – not emeralds or diamonds but something far more attractive and infinitely more fascinating. Time comes to a standstill. It is an infinite ocean of light before which the luminescence of the entire universe appears as a mere flicker of a candle. We are flabbergasted. So close, yet so far!

Be centered. Stay anchored!

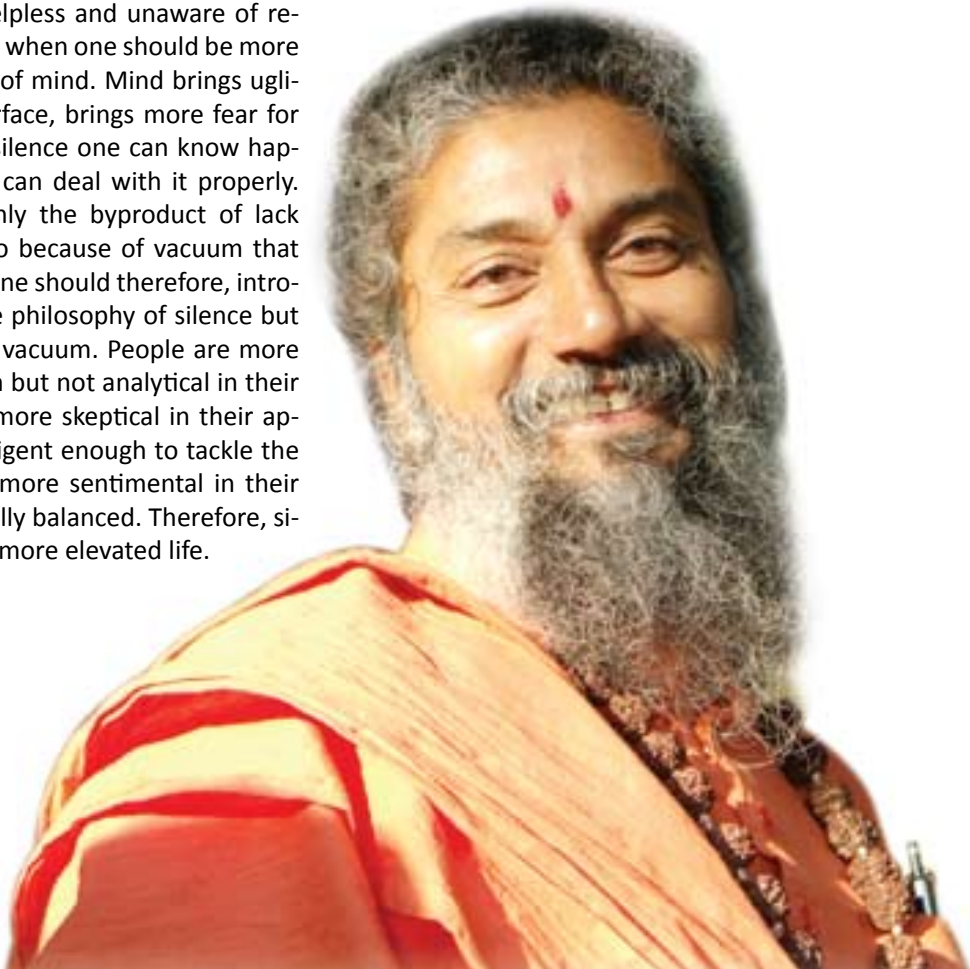
- Subhadra K.

# Spiritual Quest

**Question:** Is vacuum silence and silence vacuum?

**Answer:** Every Sadhak needs to understand the difference between vacuum and silence. Neither vacuum is silence nor silence is vacuum. Vacuum is a state of inertia whereas silence, the state of activity. Vacuum is an 'action in inaction' whereas silence is 'inaction in action'. Silence is like a filled glass of water and vacuum is an empty glass. Vacuum is emptiness of mind whereas silence is like a lake that is filled with water but without a single ripple. We should be in a position to hold on to silence rather than vacuum. In vacuum one is in sudden shock whereas in silence one is more balanced. One can sense or judge a situation in silence whereas in vacuum one is completely helpless and unaware of results. That is the time when one should be more aware of one's state of mind. Mind brings ugliest things on the surface, brings more fear for nothing whereas in silence one can know happenings around and can deal with it properly. Criminals are not only the byproduct of lack of education but also because of vacuum that they feel in the life. One should therefore, introduce everywhere the philosophy of silence but not the teachings of vacuum. People are more critical in the vacuum but not analytical in their approach. They are more skeptical in their approach but not intelligent enough to tackle the situations. They are more sentimental in their act but not emotionally balanced. Therefore, silence is the key for a more elevated life.

As we all know vacuum is something very scary. It may sometimes push a *sadhak* into chaotic situation whereas silence brings you back to life. The same space when filled with silence brings a wonderful change in one's perception and it is not only in perception but in life as well. If one wants to know what pristine beauty is all about then one needs to be in silence state rather than experiencing vacuum. Vacuum is something that makes one blind whereas silence brings clearer vision. It is as if one who is blind cannot see whereas one who has eyes can see. The difference is clear so is the idea about life. If one wants to know everything then silence is the ultimate. In vacuum one has forgotten what one has whereas in silence one





is aware of everything. In vacuum one is helpless whereas in silence one is self-reliant. Therefore beauty lies in silence not in vacuum.

Life that is full of silence can inspire a lot and has the capacity to take society to the next level whereas Vacuum is sudden and one who is constantly engaged in activity gets scared when he encounters it. Being in silence is phenomenal but one has to understand exactly what the silence is. It is like person is at peace, at ease even though activities are going on but in vacuum one is in sudden shock since everything gets ceased without notice. In silence though everything gets ceased one is completely aware of and there is no shock as such. One is constantly in awareness. Therefore when one wants to be in silence, awareness is the key to achieve it. Awareness and silence are interconnected. If one is aware of happenings in and around, one would be pushed into silence taking every decision properly.

Silence soothes the body and mind, goes even deeper within to communicate with soul whereas vacuum jolts the body & mind and dances only on the surface making more noise. Silence sends very soothing and inspiring waves in the spine whereas vacuum sends shivering waves through the spine. Therefore it is important for one to know the difference. Silence is something more charging whereas vacuum drains all our energies. Vacuum sucks whereas silence fills. Therefore one should seek for silence not for vacuum. One should know how to fill our own lives with silence. There are many episodes in life that might have filled ourselves in silence and many when we must have encountered vacuum.

Remember, purity finds way in silence and silence in purity. Silence opens up directly to the grace whereas vacuum closes down. Silence happens and deepens the joy to the life but vacuum weakens and takes away joy out of life. Therefore, dear *sadhak*, it is up to you to choose what you want...!

Beauty can be  
expressed through different actions.  
Your very kind gesture or affectionate pat  
or loving hug will express that beauty. Your very  
thought to serve the needy, without seeing their  
external identities will bring that beauty in life. Your  
single step towards the society with selflessness will  
bring beauty. Your fine tuning with Divinity will make  
you encounter your self... that is the real beauty. The  
moment you get experience of yourself, that very  
beauty will start engulfing this entire universe.  
You will be able to see your own  
expansion.

- Swami Nachiketananda Puri





## Practise Spiritual Discipline!

It was Thursday evening, a few days after the Durga Puja. Sri Ramakrishna sat on his bed in his room on the second floor, with Dr. Sarkar, Ishan, and other devotees. A lamp was burning in the room. Moonlight illuminated the outside world.

Addressing Ishan, a householder devotee, the Master said: "Blessed indeed is the householder who performs his duties in the world at the same time cherishing love for the Lotus Feet of God. He is indeed a hero. He is like a man who carries a heavy load of two mounds on his head and at the same time watches a bridal procession. One cannot lead such a life without great spiritual power. Again, such a man is like the mudfish, which lives in the mud but is not stained by it. Further, such a householder may be compared to a waterfowl. It is constantly diving under water; yet, by fluttering its wings only once, it shakes off all trace of wet".

"But a man must practise some spiritual discipline in order to be able to lead a detached life in the world. It is necessary for him to spend some time in solitude- be it a year, six months, three months, or even one month. In that solitude he should fix his mind on God and pray with a long-ing heart for love of God. He should also say to himself: 'There is nobody in this world who is my own. Those whom I call my own are here only for two days. God alone is my own. He alone is my all in all. Alas, how shall I realize Him?'"

"One can live in the world after acquiring love of God. It is like breaking the jackfruit after rubbing your hands with oil; the sticky juice of the fruit will not smear them. The world is like water and the mind like milk. If you put milk in water it will mix with the water. But first keep the milk in a quiet place and let it turn into curd. Then from the curd extract butter. That butter you may keep in water; it will not mix with the water, but will float on it".

"Some members of the Brahmo Samaj said to me: 'Sir, our attitude towards the world is that of King Janaka. Like him, we want to enjoy the world in a detached spirit.' I said to them: 'To live in the world in a detached spirit is very difficult. By merely saying so you cannot be a King Janaka. How much austerity Janaka practised! How long he remained in one posture, with head down and feet up! You don't have to practise these extreme disciplines. But you need *sadhana*; you should live in solitude. You may lead the life of a householder after having attained divine knowledge and love in solitude. Milk turns into curd only when it is not disturbed. The curd does not set if the milk is often moved from place to place or is too much disturbed."

"On account of his detachment from the world Janaka was also known as the 'Videha', that is, one free from consciousness of the body. Though living in the world, he moved about as a *jivanmukta*, a free soul living in a body. But for most people, freedom from body-consciousness is something very far off. Intense spiritual discipline is necessary".

"Janaka was a great hero. He fenced with two swords, the one of Knowledge and the other of work".

Source: The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna





# Reflecting on our reflexes



The other day while waiting to get into my car, I was suddenly accosted by a gust of wind and my instinctive reaction was to shut my eyes. For some reason, this set me off on the road to reflection. I mentally started listing out the various simple protective reflex actions that we tend to engage in. We cough when an unwanted food particle or substance gets into our windpipe. Our tongue retreats automatically when it comes into contact with steaming hot coffee or soup. Our hand recoils the minute we touch a hot utensil or a sharp thorn. Similarly, our hands fly automatically to our ears to ward off high decibel sounds just as they stretch forward to cushion our fall, when we accidentally trip on something.

It is amazing how God has equipped us with so many wonderful instinctive mechanisms to ensure that our physical body doesn't come to harm. Ironically, we do not have any such instinctive mechanisms in place when it comes to ensuring that our soul doesn't come to harm. Gandhiji has given us simple guidelines to help us navigate this tricky spiritual road. "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil," he wisely said. Easier said than done!

Our everyday lives are replete with incidents where we not only witness but often become party to countless wrongdoings. We pretend not to see a wounded pedestrian, a victim of a hit and run accident, writhing in pain on the road. 'Not our business', we tell ourselves but change our stance and become involved parties the minute we come across an inconsequential roadside accident, where no one is hurt, often egging on the

warring sides to slander each other. We listen with rapt, undivided attention when a friend tears apart another friend in her absence, gleefully supplying some more additional lurid details to embellish her story. We often harbor malicious thoughts about people whom we dislike. We are envious of those who are better placed than us in life. We plot revenge on those who have slighted us. We make our hearts and minds breeding grounds for unbecoming thoughts, which in turn get reflected as negative speech and actions.

While we are blessed with reflexes that ensure our physical wellbeing, we do not possess similar natural instincts to ensure our spiritual wellbeing. Whereas our reflexes to physical threats are instinctive, our reflexes to spiritual threats have to be diligently cultivated and honed. Unlike other creatures, God has imbued human beings with the power to think, discern and sift through right and wrong choices. He has also gifted us with a tiny but potent weapon called a 'conscience' - that small voice inside our head that constantly raises an alarm when we are doing something wrong. Paying constant heed to this voice is what will help us hone our reflexes to spiritual casualties. Just as we have withdrawal reflexes to avoid unwanted circumstances, we also have conducive reflexes. When we come across food that is enticing, the mouth immediately starts to salivate - it is alerted to the treat that awaits it. Similarly at a spiritual level, we must learn to cultivate a judicious mix of reflexes - withdrawal reflexes that shun negativity and immoral behavior and conducive reflexes that embrace good company and right deeds.

- Swathi





# Significance of SHIVARATRI

*Shivaratri*, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is celebrated on the moonless night of the month of *Phalguna*, which is the fourteenth day in the *krishnapaksha* or dark half. Owing to a special planetary conjunction, spiritual practices done on this day are considered to be especially auspicious and beneficial. There is a reference to this in one of the Puranas, where Shiva himself tells Parvati Devi [the Divine Mother] that this day is particularly dear to him, and that those who perform the prescribed austerities on this day will be freed from all sins.

One popular story from the Puranas goes like this: There was once a poor hunter from Varanasi. His name was Suswara. He lived with his wife and child in a small hut. Theirs was a hand-to-mouth existence. Suswara would go to the forest and hunt whatever game came his way, and thus feed his family. One particular day, he caught many small animals and birds, which he put into a sack. Encouraged by the catch, he wandered deeper into the forest in search of more game. Soon darkness set in and he turned to go home. He was a little worried as the forest was infested with dangerous animals. He did not like the idea of spending the night there. Soon it became very dark. Unable to find his way back, Suswara climbed a tree to be safe from the wild animals.

Attracted by his scent, animals came lurking under the tree. Hoping to scare them away,

Suswara plucked some twigs from the tree and threw them at the animals, but to no avail. Throughout the night the animals kept prowling beneath the tree.

Suswara was unable to get even a wink of sleep. He kept vigil throughout the night. He plucked leaves from the tree, which happened to be a *bilva* tree, and dropped them on the ground. Unknown to Suswara, there was a *Shivalinga* at the foot of the tree; and so, although he was unaware of it, by dropping the sacred *bilva* leaves, Suswara was making a sacred offering to the *Shivalinga*. That night happened to be Shivaratri. So the hunter had unknowingly kept a night-long vigil and worshipped Shiva.

According to the Shiva Purana, the Mahashivaratri worship should incorporate six items: offering *bilva* leaves to the deity after giving it a ceremonial bath, which represents purification of the soul; applying vermilion paste on the *Linga* after bathing it, which represents virtue; offering food, which is conducive to longevity and the gratification of desires; lighting incense, which yields wealth; lighting an oil lamp, which signifies the attainment of knowledge; and offering betel leaves, which marks satisfaction with worldly pleasures. These six items form an indispensable part of the Mahashivaratri worship, be it a simple ceremony at home or grand temple worship.



## Significance of the Rituals

The story above is an allegory. Just as the hunter sought to kill wild animals, the spiritual seeker tries to overcome lust, anger, greed, infatuation, jealousy and hatred. The jungle is the mind where all these negativities roam about. A spiritual aspirant must kill these “animals” to be free.

The name of the hunter was Suswara, which means “one of melodious voice.” This indicates the purity of intent and speech, which, in turn, imply a level of mental purity.

The hunter was born in Varanasi. *Vara* refers to the forehead while *nasi* is the nose. The point where both meet is Varanasi, in other words, the point midway between the eyebrows. This point is also called the *ajna chakra* and is regarded as a nexus of the three nadis: *ida*, *pingala* and *sushumna*. A spiritual aspirant who concentrates his or her mind on this point gains concentration and gradual control over his senses. The killing of the animals thus indicates control over one’s *vasanas* [latent tendencies].

The *bilva* tree corresponds to the spinal column. The tree’s leaves are special: each stalk has three leaflets. The three leaflets represent the three nadis mentioned above. The climbing of the tree represents the ascent of the *kundalini shakti* from the *muladhara* to the *ajna chakra*.

Keeping awake is symbolic of the kind of awareness and oneness of purpose that a spiritual aspirant needs to reach the goal. He cannot afford to be slack even for a moment.

Shiva is the Supreme Consciousness that illuminates the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Offering the threefold *bilva* leaves to the *Shivalinga* heralds the return to a level of consciousness beyond the three states, which is the fourth state, *turiya*. The dawning of that state is consonant with the awakening of the individual.

It is very important to understand the true meaning of the *mantra*, *Om Namah Shivaya*. The *mantra* refers to your own “I”-awareness. Your “I”-awareness is called Krishna, Shiva, Shakti,

Allah, Jesus, Buddha, or the Absolute Reality. In other words, during the *mantra* repetition, you are calling your own name, which is the essential nature of your Supreme Reality. Truly, one who meditates upon one’s own inner Self is considered to have worshiped all the Gods and Goddesses. This is the secret of all secrets.

## Assurance of Lord Shiva

Swami Sivananda (1887-1963) of Rishikesh, one of the greatest spiritual masters of the 20th century, has narrated the following dialogue between Shiva and Parvati, revealing the sanctity of Shivaratri ritual. When creation had been completed, Shiva and Parvati went out to live on the top of Mount Kailas. Parvati asked, “O venerable Lord! Which of the many rituals observed in Thy honour doth please Thee most?” The Lord Shiva replied, “The 14th night of the new moon, in the dark fortnight during the month of *Phalgun*, is my most favourite day. The devotee observes strict spiritual discipline in the day and worships Me in four different forms during each of the four successive three-hour periods of the night. The offering of a few *Bilva* leaves is more precious to Me than the precious jewels and flowers. My devotee should bathe Me in milk at the first period, in curd (yogurt) at the second, in clarified butter (ghee) at the third, and in honey at the fourth and last. Next morning, he should feed the Brahmins first and, after performing the prescribed ceremonies, he can break his fast. O Parvati! There is no ritual which can compare with this simple routine in sanctity.”

Lord Shiva is easily pleased. One of the names of Shiva is Asutosh, which means “easily pleased.” May Lord Shiva be pleased with everyone through the following prayer:

*Om Namah Shivaya!* O Asutosh! You are my inner Self. My mind is Parvati. My ten states of *prana* (life force) are your servants. My body is your house. My actions in this world are your worship. My sleep is *Samadhi*. My walk is circumambulation (the act of walking around) of you. My speech is your prayer. Thus do I offer all that I am to you. *Om Namah Shivaya!*

- A Compilation







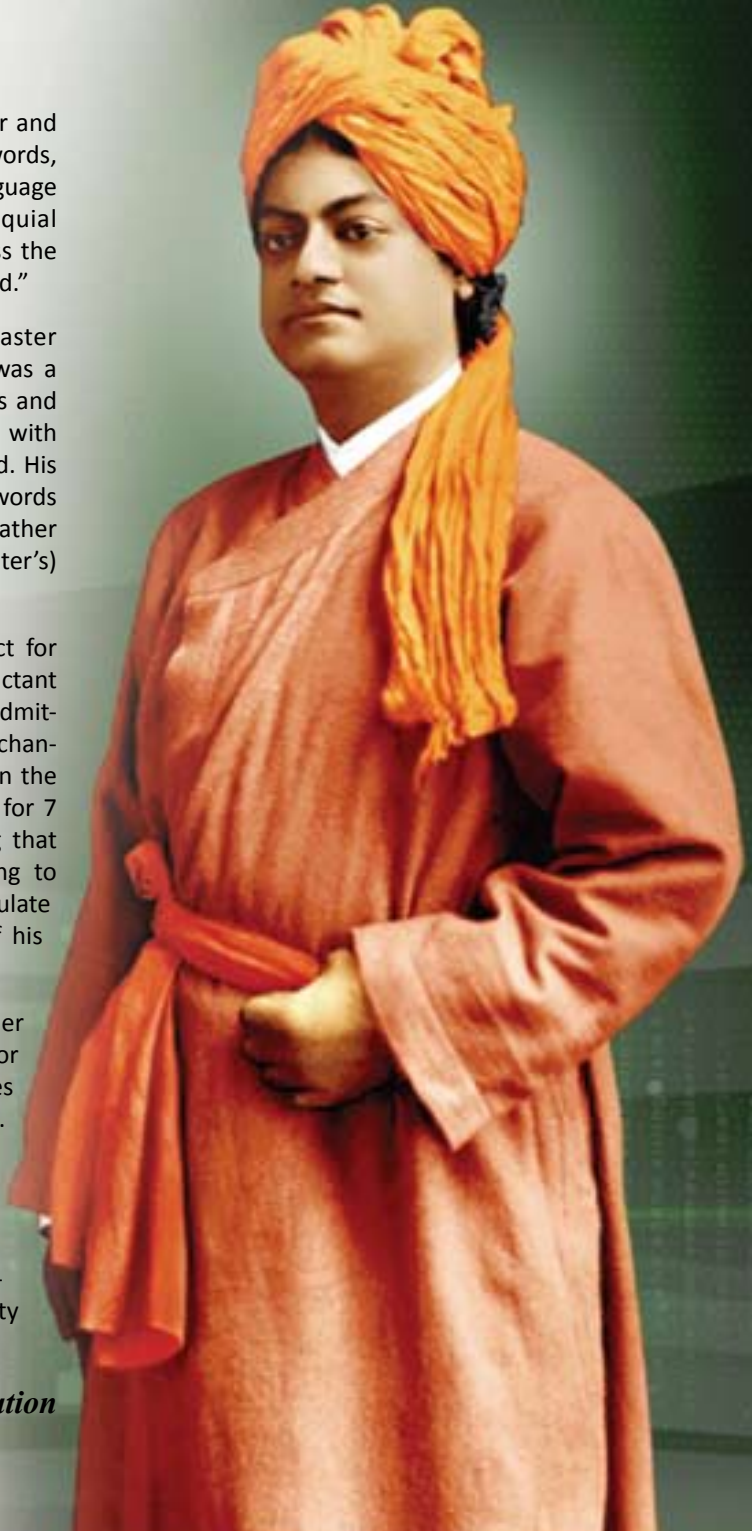
Vivekananda was a powerful orator and writer in English and Bengali. In His words, "Simplicity is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed."

"A singer, a painter, a wonderful master of language and a poet, Vivekananda was a complete artist", composing many songs and poems. Vivekananda blended humour with his teachings, and his language was lucid. His Bengali writings testify to his belief that words (spoken or written) should clarify ideas, rather than demonstrating the speaker's (or writer's) knowledge.

Swami Vivekananda had great respect for his mother tongue and as a child was reluctant to learn English. In 1870 when he was admitted to the school founded by Sri Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, he said, "I shall not learn the language of the white master." At least for 7 - 8 months he abstained from learning that language. Later he learnt English owing to compulsion. He stood first in his matriculate examination and added to the glory of his family and school.

Swamiji is of the opinion that mother tongue is the right medium for social or mass education. However, he prescribes the learning of English and Sanskrit also. While English is necessary for mastering Western science and technology, Sanskrit leads one into the depths of our vast store of classics. The implication is that if language does not remain the privilege of a small class of people, social unity will march forward unhampered.

*- A Compilation*



# Compromise

*It's* a tricky one and each relationship has its own crazy complications, depending on the people in it.

Now what I am about to write is not for any 'one' person in specific...it's me writing a note on compromises and still making you/ me / our questions a part of it.

Compromising is ok if it is not altering our intrinsic goodness/ self/ things that we value and are important to us as individuals. If it comes at our cost, where at the end of several years of relationship we are lost / broken / zilch confidence and end up being a negative and angry people, I would get out of the relationship today. At whatever cost.

But if we have found ourselves despite the lack of something in our relationship and then staying in the relationship doesn't kill us, then I would ask you to stay...even though it may be a very difficult balancing act on some days.

Then I would say, let's give it everything we have and not look at either convenience or comparisons. And even then, at the end of it, if it's not working, then at least we know, we gave it everything.

There are too many grey zones and too many things in any/ every relationship and hence, remember that the above isn't for one person alone...you may choose to take what you relate to and agree with, and rest you may trash, because it is not applicable to you.

I have known people, who were in very bad relationships and then something changed.

They decided to change their perspective, and realized that it wasn't half as bad as they/ we made it for themselves.



In this case, we are beginning to find ourselves, know ourselves, love ourselves and live / love life... the way it's meant to be. A point will come, when our happiness isn't dependent on others. Not me. Not the family. Not work. Not anyone else. All the above will be a very important part of us / our life but not the only reason for happiness.

**Happiness is. Happy you are. The outside is outside.** The inside is inside. We may not be able to control the outside beyond a certain point. The inside is totally our choice. Today we are living exactly in the opposite way...outside is controlled and nice, inside is lost and lonely. We are beginning to change that. I want each one of us to be steeped in it.

Are we thinking from the right perspective? Should we be thinking these things? Well if we weren't thinking, 'that' would be a problem. It's important to think these things, because it means we are listening to our inner voice. And it means that we are committed to being happy, committed to ourselves and have taken responsibility of ourselves. We aren't going to settle for blaming others and being unhappy and being in a comfort zone that our unhappiness is someone else's making and so we are ok being unhappy...we aren't doing that, and 'that' is where the magic begins to manifest.

And when we have gone deep enough, when we have become rooted enough in our own being and yet free from our thoughts and views and opinions...then there is really no outside...everything is inside...the whole creation is encompassed within us...and we cannot/ do not differentiate between ourselves and others, us and them, you and me... it is all the same...we have come from the same earth and unto the same earth shall we go back.

- Gautam Vir



# Signature of A TRUE KARMA YOGI

*T*oday we have all gathered here to celebrate a great man's birthday. It is Swami Ranganathanandaji's birthday. Let us try to have a glimpse into his life. Let us understand how this man has transformed our lives.

What do we want to get from this life? Today's young generation wants to have only pleasure but is that our only goal? Is there nothing else to achieve in this life? But please remember, pleasure is associated with one more thing and that is pain. Pleasure and pain are two sides of the same coin. If you seek only pleasure then you have to experience pain as well for it comes as a package. Animals also seek pleasure but we human beings are above animals. So what should be our goal of life? As our scriptures say, our goal should be of conquering pleasure and pain and go beyond that. That is what Nachiketa did. That should be our goal too and that is why we named our organization Nachiketa Tapovan.

Now let us understand how to conquer pleasure and pain. What is the solution for this? Where is the answer for this? Who is going to give us this answer? Some say it is Vedanta, Upanishads, scriptures...Yes, it is true. They have the answer. No doubt about it. But as long as we don't practice and experience them they remain as mere information. Our sages believed in experiencing the truth. Such experience is profound. So how are we going to gain this experience? Only the one who has transcended pain and pleasure can lead us on this path.

God himself has incarnated again and again to teach us this profound truth. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ma Sharada and Swami Vivekananda have demonstrated through their lives how to achieve our goal. Sri Ramakrishna has



adopted all religions. He is a great incarnation and his life is a living legacy. Even small parables of his have the capacity of teaching us the truth. He has practiced Vedanta. Swami Ranganathananda is another gigantic soul who has set a great example through his life. If we can follow their footsteps, our lives will surely get transformed. Those who have taken Mantra Dhiksha from him are really blessed.

'My Life is my Work' is a great book brought out by Nachiketa Tapovan. It is a masterpiece but to be honest, till date I haven't read the book. I want to experience Swami Ranganathananda directly rather than through the book. I seek inner transformation. Just sit in a place, close your eyes and think about him and wisdom and knowledge about him just flows in. He is a true Karma Yogi. He practiced what he preached. As Sri Krishna has said he performed selfless karma without expecting the fruit of his action.

Let us contemplate... Have we ever performed such karma. Even if we donate a rupee we expect something out of it. But Swami Ranganathananda is a great yogi who has demonstrated what true karma yoga is? What happens when you become a true karma yogi? You experience oneness with the universe. Selflessness springs from within. Karma yoga should be spontaneous. Swami Ranganathananda demonstrated that spontaneity. Let us analyse for ourselves if we are feeling that oneness. Can we love others the same way as we love our children? Love for this entire universe is the signature of a true





karma yogi. Swami Ranganathananda lives in our hearts even today because he is the signature of a true karmayogi.

I can feel his presence. I wasn't fortunate enough to meet him. But today when I was asked to speak about him, I wondered what I can speak about a person whom I have never met. So I just sat and closed my eyes and surprisingly wisdom about Swami Ranganathananda just dawned on me and here I am speaking about such a great stalwart. Even if I had read any book on him I wouldn't have enjoyed the same way as I did today for today I have experienced his profound presence. This great sage lived among us and we are blessed. He did not allow anyone to write books on him as long as he lived. Such was his simplicity. He was the 13th President of Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Wherever he travelled he left behind his signature of simplicity. He is a great vedantist, a true *sannyasi* and a great karma yogi.

We are here today and we will be here tomorrow as well in another birth due to our karmas. So let us not get stuck in the web of pain and pleasure. Instead let us transcend our sensory enjoyment and live the life of a true karma yogi. Let Karma yoga happen spontaneously. This can be achieved by practicing inner spiritual efficiency and outward social efficiency. Have a longing for liberation and seek a true guru who can guide you on this path.

Sincere sadhana can help you achieve your goals. Your output depends on your inputs. So prioritize your priorities.

I bow down at the feet of Swami Ranganathanandaji for granting me this wisdom.

***Paramahansa Swami Shivananda Puri***

(Mataji's talk on 15th December 2014 on the occasion of Swami Ranganathananda's Birthday)



## POWER OF SILENCE

On completing the last slokha of Mahabharata, Lord Ganesha put aside His writing instrument. Vyasa Maharshi, the architect of Mahabharata gave a smile and asked Ganesha compassionately, "Ganesha, so many *slokas* I have recited and in the midst there were many discourses too, but not once did you speak. May I know the reason for your silence?"

Ganesha replied, "Oh venerable sage, control over the mind and senses are very important while doing a great work. Only because of maintaining silence, I could complete the great task of writing the Mahabharata which you have requested me to write. Control over speech can work wonders and one can achieve success by maintaining silence".

# RAMESHWARAM

## *The Spiritual Paradise*

*R*amanathaswamy temple, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas is situated on the island of Rameshwaram in Tamilnadu. This is the southernmost Jyotirlinga. The island is connected to the main land by the awe-inspiring Pamban road bridge and a parallel rail bridge.

As the legend goes, Lord Rama installed the Shivalinga in this holy place and hence the Shivalinga derived the name Ramalinga. On his way to Lanka to attack Ravana, Sri Rama halted at this place and made a Shivalinga with sand, performed *puja* and sought Shiva's blessings. Lord Shiva bestows his blessings for Rama's mission and Sri Rama requested Mahadev to stay in that holy place and bless all the devotees. Lord Shiva granted Rama's wish and instilled his own energies in the Linga and henceforth this holy place was called Rameshwaram and the Shivalinga installed by Rama was called Ramalingeshwara.



According to yet another legend, Sri Rama while returning to Ayodhya from Lanka embarked on shore at this place which is now called

Dhanushkoti. He was advised by the *Rishis* to consecrate a temple for Lord Shiva and absolve his sin of killing Ravana who was a devotee of Lord Shiva, a *Brahmin* by birth and also the great-grandson of Lord Brahma. He sends Ha-

numan to Kailash to bring a Shivalinga but before he could return, the auspicious *muhurtam* was nearing and so Lord Rama consecrated the Linga made out of sand, by Mother Sita and performed *puja* within the stipulated time and named it Ramalingeshwara. Meanwhile Hanuman arrived with the Shivalinga from Kailash. He was disappointed to see a Shivalinga already consecrated. Sri Rama pacified him





and installed the Shivalinga brought by Hanuman to the left of Ramalinga, named it Vishweshwara Linga and ordained that this Linga should be worshipped prior to worshipping Ramalingeshwara. This practice is still in vogue.

Rama created a spring with his arrow and performed *abhisheka* to Lord Shiva with the sanctified water. This is called *Kotiteertha* and water from this *teertha* is used for *abhisheka* in the temple even today. There are 21 other *teerthas* inside the temple in the form of wells and every devotee first has a bath in the *Agni teertha* in the sea facing the temple on the eastern side and on entering the temple visits all the *teerthas* where water from the wells is poured over them by the temple staff. It is only after this holy bath that one enters the sanctum sanctorum and has the divine *darshan* of Lord Vishweshwara, Ramalingeshwara, Parvathavardhini, Visalakshi and all other *Devatas*. Thus Rameshwaram has a special sanctity attached to it because of the touch of Sri Rama's holy feet. Goddess Parvathi manifested as Parvathavardhini and a temple was constructed for her to the right of Ramalingeshwara.



Rameshwaram temple has an outstanding architecture. It is spread over an area of 15 acres and has lofty *gopurams*, 4000 ft long ornate corridors with over 1200 pillars which is the longest corridor in India, massive walls and a colossal Nandi. The eastern *Rajagopuram* towers to a height of 126 ft and has nine levels.



One has to visit Rameshwaram to not only have a soul-purifying experience of this spiritual paradise but also enjoy the tranquil and picturesque beauty of the place. As you stand facing the incredible ocean, the salty breeze brushes against your body and the confluence of Bay of Bengal and Indian ocean leaves you in awe and makes you realize how utterly puny you are in front of the mighty ocean!

As such Rameshwaram is a sacred place for both Vaishnavites and Shaivites and it is said that a pilgrimage to Benaras is incomplete without a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram. Such is the sanctity of Rameshwaram.

**- Subhadra K.**

(Fact Source: History of Rameshwaram)





# GOD HELPS THOSE, WHO HELP THEMSELVES



People always tell me that I write good stories, but though I always wanted to write a poem, I never had the opportunity or the confidence to do so. For our internals in

school, we had to do a project on a single topic in all subjects, and the worst part was that we had only one day to submit it. Most of it was finished and the English subject was left to me. Usually, I would write a story, but something made me write a poem that day. I don't know whether it was because we had less time or because I finally got a chance to write a poem. Yet, write a poem, I did, and a good poem at that. Even I didn't think I could write something like that. I was wondering how I actually managed it and then yesterday I was watching a movie, in which God, disguised as a common man, asks a person, "When you ask God for courage, do you think he gives you courage? Or does he give you an opportunity to be courageous? When you ask for patience, does God give you patience or does he give you an opportunity to be patient?"

The statement is self explanatory. Now you must be thinking back to all those times when you asked God, "Please, just a little help?" And all he did was to make your job more difficult. God did a very smart thing, because he knows that the only way of teaching humans is by making them learn things the hard way, because none of us will learn anything if it is served to us on a silver platter. As I have told you in my previous articles, we don't realize the value of something until we need it or lose it, but the other angle of it is that we realize the value of it when we work hard for it.

Another example from my own life is this. From class 3, I have asked God for only one thing relating to academics- Speed. I was always a slow writer and this made me unable to finish exams on time. I thought my writing speed will increase as I grow older, but it didn't and to make matters worse, the exams just kept on getting more and more difficult. What did I do? Well, to be honest,

it didn't matter much in the beginning because we got extra time. Then in my higher classes, which is now; when people are having high hopes in me, I look at it as an opportunity to show them that I can really score well. I practiced solving sums before the exams. I slogged by continuously solving papers just before the exams, while my friends enjoyed their time. At times I felt that I was working so hard for no reason. Then when our marks were announced, I realized that my hard work paid off and that I had used the opportunity to prove myself well.

There is a quote by Swami Vivekananda, that reads, "God helps them that help themselves." This means that when you ask God for help without putting in any effort of your own, he will not help you. He will give you the opportunity to help yourself and that is his form of help. What we must learn is to grab opportunities which we feel are difficult, so as to overcome the difficulty.

When we want to shape gold, we don't will it into a shape. Nor can we just wish for it to be shaped. We must put it in the fire and mould it to perfection and then it comes out shining.

In a book that I read called 'Divergent', the protagonist has to go through a series of simulations which make her face her fears. The only way in which she can conquer her fear is by embracing it. She will have to plunge headlong into the fear for her to beat it. In the same way, God gives us opportunities to overcome our fears. He keeps pushing us through hurdles to make us stronger human beings.

When a child is scared of water, his parents join him in a swimming class. Why? So that he would overcome his fear of water. So if you try to overcome your fears on your own without whimpering at the sight of them, then God himself will help you overcome them.

Opportunities are rare,  
Especially ones from God.

Make the most of them,  
For they are the greatest gifts of God.

**N. Rohan C. Govind**  
Class 10,

GT Aloha Vidya Mandir, Chennai



# WHAT IS THE HINDU BELIEF ABOUT THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE WORLD?

According to Hindu religious thought, the life cycle of this world is divided into four definite eras, or *yugs*. It is believed that when mankind was created it was totally pure. With time, life degenerated. This degeneration can be seen in the four eras.

The first era, *Satyayug* or *Krityug*, was the golden age during which all the Gods lived. It lasted 4,800 divine years or 1,728,000 human years.

The second era, *Tretayug*, was the silver age during which incarnations came to this world and rid it of evil people. Parshuram and Ram were born in this period. This lasted 3600 divine years or 1,296,000 human years.

The third era, *Dvaparyug*, was the copper age when the later incarnations and religious leaders lived. This lasted 2,400 divine years, or 864,000 human years.

The fourth era, *Kaliyug*, is the iron age, or the era of the machine. In this era mankind has degenerated very rapidly, as can be evidenced in everyday life. This era is said to have started in the year 3,102 B.C. Lesser incarnations and religious leaders have influenced mankind. It is expected to last 1,200 divine years or 432,000 human years.

Just as there is much sin and degeneration in this era, it is equally possible to attain God realization. One just needs to remember Him in whatever way is suitable. This is what the average householder needs to know and follow. God can be realized.

At the end of this era the world will come to an end. There will be a new beginning. Then there will be a new cycle of four eras- beginning with the golden age.

**Source: HINDU Rites, Rituals, Customs & Traditions by Prem P Bhalla**

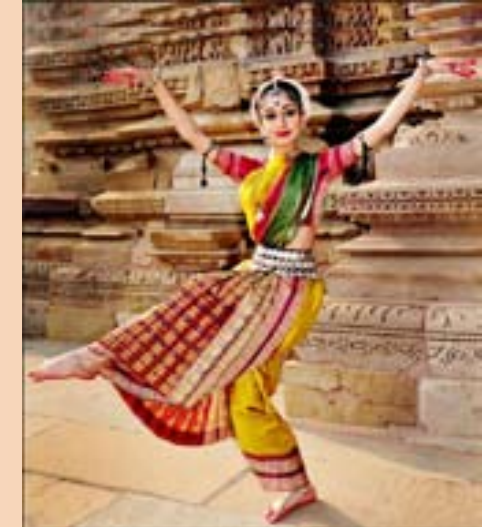






## Konark Dance & Music Festival

See Orissa's cultural canvas unfold itself at the Konark Festival, held every year from February 19 to 23. The dance and music feast is held on an open-air stage, against the backdrop of the grandiose World Heritage Site, the Sun Temple of Konark. If there's an ideal festival venue, this one surely is. The stage and the atmosphere is magnified by the spiritual and aesthetic flavor, in the natural ambience of casuarinas and cashew trees. The aim of the four-day event is to preserve, promote and reinterpret the rich cultural heritage of Orissa and to raise cultural awareness. During the festival, talented dancers and their troupes descend on Konark to display their skill and mastery over age-old dance forms ranging from the classic Bharatanatyam, the graceful Odissi and Manipuri, to the expressive Kathakali and Sattriya dance styles amongst others. Dance lovers have a treat over these five days and enjoy watching the skilful renditions of these highly trained dancers.



Besides the dance performances, the visitors will be treated to a *Jugalbandi* of painting and music which is held daily. A Crafts Mela is also organized alongside the Konark Festival so that visitors can also be exposed to the master craftsmen of the region and on display are sculptures and other handicrafts which are often described as poetry transcribed on stone. Sand Art exhibition will be yet another attraction for tourists.

Source: Orissa Tourism





## THE QUIZZICAL BROW

### *Point of Contention:*



*A*t the end of every story session Ammamma (my grandmother) always had a question awaiting us. “Who is Vinoba Bhawe?” There was fierce competition to answer the question first. The right answer was always rewarded with an extra *laddu*. That afternoon I had to forfeit my *laddu* for learning a new word ‘social reformer’.

Fixed notions are inculcated in our minds from school going age that a doctor treats diseases, an engineer builds bridges, an entrepreneur takes on financial risks in hopes of economic profits. As I grew up my impression of social reformers and activists was marred by Gandhian esthetics. They were noble minds who gave up worldly pleasures striving for the betterment of the society. When I came across the name Harish Hande in the newspapers, it reversed my dynamics on social workers and professionals.

Hande co-founded SELCO INDIA, a profit-social enterprise that provides sustainable energies to poor in India. Regional Rural Banks refused loan because lighting by itself will not aid income generation activity. It only improves the quality of life. Convincing banks of the viability of solar electricity SELCO crafted financial packages where the amount charged ranged from Rs 10 to Rs 350 a month. Two thirds of its customers survive on less than \$3-4 per day.

SELCO has created solar battery entrepreneurs who use solar panels to charge batteries for street vendors. This has boosted their monthly income from Rs 4500 to Rs 13000. Rose pickers in Bangalore earlier used one hand to hold the lamp and the other to pick flowers. Using solar head lamps, with both the hands being free, the productivity of workers doubled directly improving their income. Installing solar systems in more than 125,000 homes SELCO dispelled the myth that social ventures cannot be run as commercial enterprises.

Isn't it high time people stop assuming that social welfare is the sole responsibility of public sectors or tax exempt donations from corporate houses? Nations are not built on charities and donations alone. Vinoba's Land Gift Movement redistributed more than 7 million acres to the landless. But how many peasants have risen above poverty and impoverishment? For every Kailash Satyarthi, India needs hundreds of Harish Handes and Verghese Kurien to address the staggering social divide. Social work is no separate cult or religion. A little change in our outlook will set the pace for many a thing.

Dear citizen,

Every time we read passages such as these, our senses are momentarily motivated. Once we turn the page, the mind conveniently forgets the issue. All I'm trying to say is that you needn't always be the benevolent donor to a needy recipient. Sustaining social values have the power to heal their lives along with ours.

Yours sincerely,

**An observer**

“The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved;

loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.”

- Victor Hugo



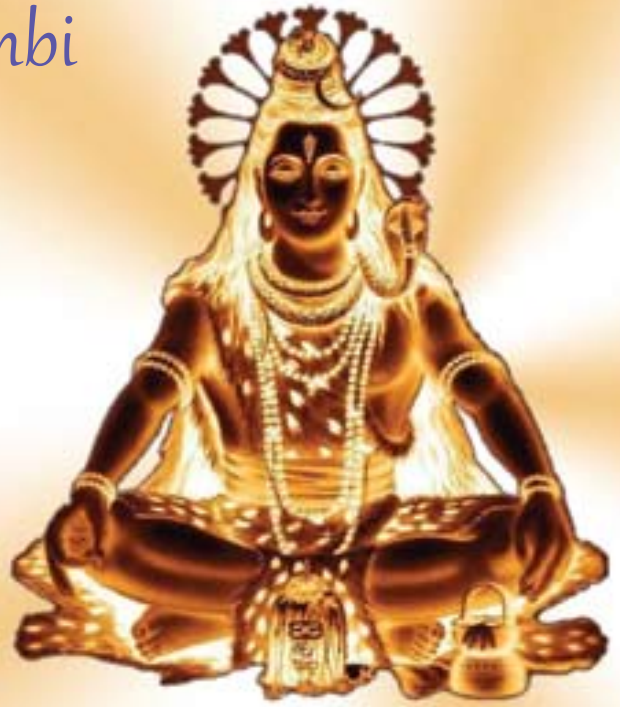
# Chiruthondanambi

There are many *Shivabhaktas* who have adopted the path of *Bhakti*, *Jnana* or *Vairagya* and attained liberation. It is said even if one thinks of a *Shivabhakta* on the day of Shivaratri, it will fetch him great merits.

Chiruthondanambi is one among the great *Shivabhaktas*. He was a *Vaishya* and lived in the holy town Kanchipuram or Kanchi in Tamilnadu. Once, Goddess Parvathi expressed her desire to meet this great *bhakta*. Shiva agreed with a smile. Suddenly there was a thunder storm in Kanchi. The entire town was flooded with rains and people started to migrate to other places. But Chiruthondanambi stopped them and gave them food and shelter for 21 days. Everyone praised Chiruthondanambi, his wife Thiruvenganachi and son Siriyalu for their hospitality. Chiruthondanambi had the habit of feeding at least one *Shivabhakta* before having his own meal and if he couldn't find one he would fast on that day. That day when the rain stopped and everyone left, Chiruthondanambi went in search of a *Shivabhakta* but surprisingly he couldn't find even a single one. He continued his search and reached an old dilapidated temple. He saw an old couple taking shelter on the temple platform. The old man with *vibhuthi* smeared all over his body was lying down shivering, while the old lady who was blind was pressing his feet.

Chiruthondanambi approached the old couple and invited them to come home and receive his hospitality. They agreed but with their own conditions. "Are you a *Shivabhakta*? Does your wife obey you? Do you have children? We are observing an *Aghora vrat* and are on a fast. To break the fast we have to offer a child who is also a *Shivabhakta* to Lord Shiva. Not only that, that child should belong to a Brahmin, Vaishya or Kshatriya clan and his thread ceremony should have been over. Can you fulfill all our demands? Can you kill your son and cook him for *naivedhya* to our Lord?" Chiruthondanambi did not hesitate. He instantly agreed to the old man's demands but the old man asked him to go home and take permission from his wife and son.

Chiruthondanambi went home and narrated what had happened to his wife. Thiruvenganachi



accepted and said "We owe our existence to Lord Shiva, hence, why not offer ourselves as *naivedhya* to our Lord? Please bring them home."

Meanwhile the old man secretly approached Siriyalu who was chanting *Shiva stuthi*. "Your father is planning to kill you. Run away and save your life" he warned. "Why should I fear, I shall abide by my father's wishes. It is my duty as a son" replied Siriyalu.

The news spread like wildfire and some villagers rebuked Chiruthondanambi and his wife for this dastardly act. To this they replied, "Is there any difference between Shiva and his *bhaktas*? Then how can we refuse his request. Are we not fortunate to offer to him what he has given us?"

Siriyalu was given a bath and his father asked him to close his eyes and chant the *Panchakshari* while he severed his head, cooked the flesh and offered as *naivedhya* to Shiva.

The old couple resumed their original form as Shiva and Parvathi and blessed Chiruthondanambi, Thiruvenganachi and Siriyalu. All three were liberated. Such was the devotion of these great *Shivabhaktas*. Total faith and surrender to the Lord liberated them from the cycle of birth and death.

- Siri



# The Secret Cavern

*I*t is dark all around...pitch dark. I feel I am in a cave. It is very scary though it is warm. A soothing voice is comforting me now and then. Suddenly there is light but again I am enveloped in darkness. I can hear loud voices and at times only whispers. Someone is talking about me expressing sweet dreams of how I should look. Fair... Dark... Skinny... Chubby... the discussion outside would go on every day. It was a routine. Who am I? In any case how did I land in this cavern? I was tired thinking about this. I slept off. Suddenly I was seeing many weird scenes. Memories came in a flash and faded away and again and again they haunted. Voices which sounded familiar were ringing in my ears. People whom I knew stood close to me but not within reach. How I longed to feel their touch! I stretched my hand but could touch only the dark wall around me. I woke up with a jerk. Now I can hear another voice comforting me. 'Sleep my darling, sleep. Time is nearing... I am waiting for that day when I can hold you in my arms...' How sweet the voice is sounding! Where is it coming from? I drifted into a slumber...into darkness again.

And finally the day dawned. Something was pushing me out with force...out of the cavern. I could hear someone screaming in pain. What is happening...it is petrifying. More voices are heard. Voices comforting the one who is screaming... And after a great deal of pushing I

was thrown out...out of the darkness and into the light which was blinding. Oh! Where am I? I don't like this. I want to go back into the darkness... into the cavern... I started crying. And just then something wonderful happened. A pair of hands started caressing me, hugging me...gently kissing me and saying 'My darling baby, mamma is here, don't cry'. Now wait... This is the voice I have been hearing every day. The voice which was whispering sweetly, comforting me whenever I woke up, got scared and started kicking from inside... I stopped crying and looked up. I was wonder struck. Love showered from a pair of eyes...smiling...soothing...cheering...cajoling. How beautiful she is! Who is she? Whoever it is, I instantly fell in love with her as her lips gently brushed against my cheeks and her loving hands hugged me. I snuggled close to her bosom and enjoyed the warmth...the same warmth which I experienced inside the cavern. I didn't bother anymore from where I came. There was no need. Here is my mom ...my sweet mom! That's how people around introduced her to me.

After 50 years, I longed to be in her womb again... and experience that warmth which can protect me from this world...the world which has made me tired...which made me dread life... I looked around for her, but she was gone. Oh! How I long to go back and take shelter in that secret cavern!

- Kavya







# The Mother of Indian Cooking

*They* say that the path to the heart passes through the stomach. No wonder good food soothes us when we are sad, becomes the medium of celebration when we are happy and gladly witnesses all our discussions, settling many disputes! While everyone likes to eat varieties of yummy food, cooking is a hobby for many too. Recent newspaper reports indicate that baking (which can be considered akin to cooking, within the larger framework of preparing food) is now doing the task of de-stressing our over-worked women. Through this piece, we pay homage to a woman par excellence, who stood as being synonymous with Indian food.

When it comes to Indian cooking, my mind goes to a charming lady who sweetly and affectionately taught many of us the art of cooking and spread the pleasure of vegetarian cooking. With her motherly demeanour, she endeared Indian food to us. She is none other than the wonderful Tarla Dalal. November 6 marked the first anniversary of her death.

Born on June 3, 1936 in Pune, Maharashtra, she finished her B.A. in Economics in 1956. She took to cooking after she got married to Mr. Nalin Dalal, who was doing his M.S. in Chemical Engineering in the United States of America. Mr. Dalal who loved multi-cuisine food encouraged her to try out her hand at new dishes. Her husband was her staunchest critic and ardent admirer as well. As she perfected the art and they returned to India, many urged her to take up classes in cookery. She believed that good things should be shared and started teaching

the art to a modest group of six young women. At that time, it used to be said in Bombay that if one wanted to marry their daughter, they should first send her to Ms. Tarla's classes.

She authored a number of books and was honoured with the Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2007. Each work of hers was a hit. Why not – she did every bit with immense love and dedication. Present day cookery shows definitely teach us how to make many dishes. But what makes Ms. Tarla stand out is the ease with which she delineates the procedure. She always has a substitute for fancy ingredients and this makes even the least-endowed try out her recipes. Not being limited to the print medium, she also made videos when someone requested her to. This was in an age when the craze for YouTube and Dailymotion had not caught on.



As the team trained by her continues to work day and night to keep her legacy alive, we fondly remember her and pay our sincere respects to her. She continues to live on – not just as Tarla Ma'am but as Tarla Ma for millions!

*(Her recipes are available at [www.tarladalal.com](http://www.tarladalal.com) and her videos can be viewed on YouTube.)*

**- Neetika Gogula**

An advocate and has passion for writing on social issues.





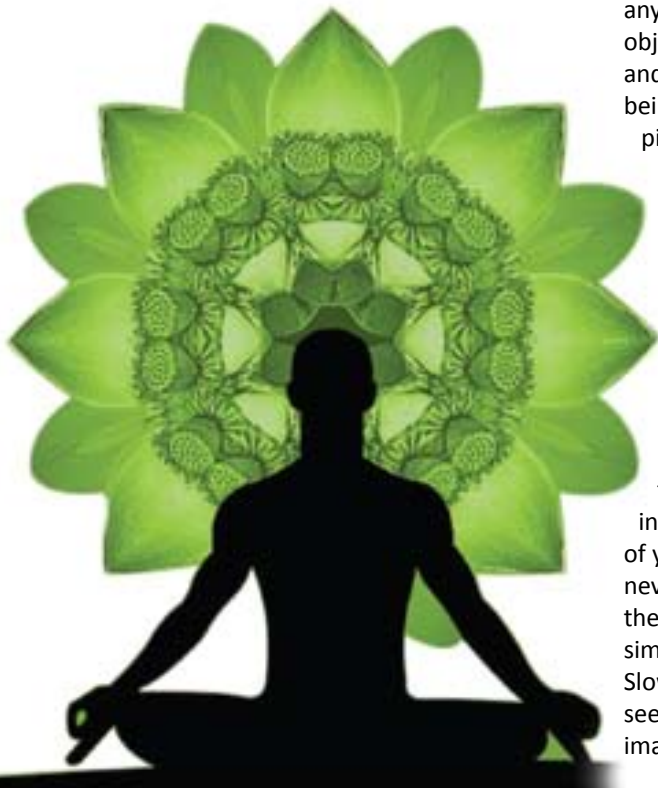
## Imagination plus Visualization

In the primitive stage of seekers, imagination plays a greater role. People may think it is all fantasy but it has a certain role to play in one's life. Similarly, visualization also has a tremendous impact on one's meditation. Without visualization one cannot achieve a proper meditative state. How imagination plays a vital role in one's life similarly visualization plays a pivotal role in one's meditation. If one is found progressive in one's life then credit goes to imagination and visualization to the maximum extent. Visualization and imagination are two different sides of the same coin. It is like when we strengthen imagination, visualization becomes more clear and multicolored. No matter whether it is a fantasy or true happening, one can surely touch the subconscious mind dramatically if one practices it sincerely without fail. It is that touch that brings many unknown things to the fore.

It is visualization that makes one's attention one-pointed. Holding an image that we try to visualize on the mind's screen is not that easy, that too if we try it in multicolor, it demands more attention, one pointedness, strong will-power and a burning desire. The more perfect visualization, the more one becomes attentive and when one becomes more attentive, one becomes more meditative. Once that state is achieved one can then easily try out the best method that one loves. Therefore it is all about testing the power of imagination and perfecting the visualization. We do not need mastery over anything but what we need is to have a burning desire to know that which lies beyond, not simply because someone has said but because we want to know.

### How to practice...

Take any picture, or image, or idol or any object that pleases you most. Keep at least 1 to 2 meter away from the body. If it is a bigger object then we can even have 2 to 3 meter distance. But at any cost we should not strain our eyes, so the object that we have chosen should be more clear and also at a proper distance. Once the object is being decided, then we should start gazing at the picture without blinking eyes. Remember, one should not try to calculate or analyze or try to understand or read the object. Keep looking at it for a longer time till your eyes start getting tears. Once you start feeling heaviness in the eyes, then slowly close the eyes and simply observe what is happening on the mind's screen. Don't try to hold the image, or try to intensify it even if you get it clearly. In the initial stage, we may get grayish color image falling on the mind's screen or only outline of the object or some color dancing and emerging out from each other effortlessly or just a ball of yellow gold color or something strange that we never expected even in our wildest dreams. Let the time pass into time effortlessly but you keep simply observing the image...be just a witness! Slowly with constant practice you would be able to see the same image for a longer time. Though the image is still outside but one can certainly develop





the awareness of body and object. Body gets used to this practice and the *sadhaka* may start developing an *asanasiddhi* as well. Eyes become more pure and powerful. Once that state is achieved then one can proceed to the next step.

Next step is to feel the presence of mind and also feel the mind very much inside the body. Then naturally we can feel as if the image is inside, falling on the mind's screen. This will strengthen the very thought of one's perception and also awareness of the inner world would increase to the maximum extent. Sometimes, one can feel that the body is expanding and encompassing everything around. In the first step we have created a greater awareness about body, now in the second step on body, mind and mind's screen.

When this step becomes firm then we can go to the next step, that of 'witnessing the observer than the object'. It is simple yet very difficult to follow. In the initial stage when we try to observe the observer, mind plays and retention would be just a fraction of a second but with practice one can even achieve it for a longer time. That's when one can experience one's existence. One can even feel there is nothing except the witnesser without any attribute, size and shape.

#### Quick recap:

First step: Body and object are intact. One can feel everything happening on the mind's screen but outside. Develops *Asanasiddhi* and increases the power of eyes.

Second step: Develops awareness of mind, mind's screen and one can push oneself within, through this simple technique. One develops to look within or see mind and mind's screen within.

Third step: One develops the power to divert attention from object to witnesser.

Imagination plus visualization is a master stroke... so through right amount of guidance and sincere practice one can easily achieve that which cannot be achieved even after many years of *sadhana*.

Guidance: One should therefore, look for proper guidance from one who has practiced it. It is better to have a positive object that shall then get very well blended with your creation to produce the best. Positive or spiritual thought, or an object is just the right amount of balanced diet to our mind.



## Oh Man!

Once, man told the nightingale...

You would have been beautiful if you were not black!

To the sea he said...

How nice it would have been if you were not salty!

To the Rose he said...

How nice it would have been if you had no thorns!

To this all three replied in unison...

Oh man! You would have been a better human being if you did not have this quality of finding fault with others!!!





# Hridayam

## for Healthy Heart Beats



William Harvey, (1628AD) a British scientist, had found that heart is essential for blood circulation, but could not describe how blood reaches the heart and flows from it. In the year 1669 a scientist named Marcello Malphigi clearly described how blood flows into Heart and comes out of it.

Now, let us hear the echoes of ancient Indian heartbeats and its hearty revelations. Satapatha Brahmana of Yajur Veda, had defined *Hridayam* (the heart) as under,

“Hru” means “harinay” (that receives)

“Da” means “daanay” (that gives)

“Ya” means “enngathow” (that circulates)

That which receives (blood), gives and circulates is called *Hridayam*.

*Niruktha sastra* had defined *Hridayam* as follows

**Haraterdadaterayaterhrdayasabdah** (*Niruktham*)

Sushruta says,

**Kaphapittavaruddhastumaruto rasa murcitah**

**Hrdisthahkurutesulamuccvasarodhakamparam**

“Heart diseases are caused because of “*kapha*” and “*Pitta*” *doshas* (defects) and thus thickening and narrowing of coronary arteries resulting in acute pain in the Chest and difficulty in breathing.”

Charaka says,

**Tanmahattamahamulahtaccaujahpariraksata**

**Pariharyavisesenamanasoduhkhahetavah**

(*Charaka Samhita Sutrasthanam 30/13*)



**Hrdyamyatsyadyadaujasyam  
stotasamyatprasadanam**

**Tattatsevyamprayatnenaprasamojnanameva ca**

(*Charaka Samhita Sutrasthanam 30/14*)

“Those who want to preserve “*Ojas*” and maintain heart in good condition should be away from mental worries and should exhibit self-restraint in diet and should consume the medicines that increase vital principles (*ojas*) and blood circulation. For healthy Heartbeats, meticulous efforts are to be made to obtain tranquility with awareness & wisdom.

Indian traditional medical knowledge had rightly recognized the preventive measures for the Heart diseases ages ago and advised suitably to exercise self-restraint and adopt moderate food habits and a composed mindset. If these suggestions are followed today, one can avoid heart surgeries and expenditure.

The *Rasa* is the energy produced from well-digested food. It is stored in the Heart. From the heart entering through the 24 arteries, 10 going upward 10 going downward and four horizontal, it satisfies, grows and maintains the entire body every day by an invisible force or cause. Blood is carried from heart to the entire body through them. (Ref: *Sushruta Samhita, Sutrasthanam, 14/3*)

It has been mentioned in the book, “*Nighantu Ratnakara*”, that “*Vrinda*” medicinal plant *Terminalia arjuna* (Arjuna tree) is used to cure heart diseases.

**Source: Eternally Talented India – 108 Facts**





# इवलङ्कारोद्दिष्टम् = तिप्पु द्योक्ते yaditarhi

(Continued from last issue)

## The Number Game

There is more to numbers in Samskritam (like in any other language). Firstly, you should remember that the initial 4 numbers are लिङ्ग-dependent in Samskrit. What we have seen long ago are in नपुंसकलिङ्गम् only. While counting anything, we don't worry about the lingam and we simply use the नपुंसकलिङ्ग-ones. However, look at the following examples to know gender-dependency:

दशरथस्य तिस्रः भार्याः। तस्य चत्वारः पुत्राः -

Dasaratha's wives are 3. His are 4 sons. (Is this Tinglesh? A meaningful English translation could be 'Dasaratha has 3 wives. He has 4 sons.')

अस्माकं देशे एकः रामः, एका सीता, एकं रामायणम्। - In our country, there is only one Rama, one Sita and one Ramayanam.

मम द्वे अपत्ये। द्वौ अपि पुत्रौ। - I have 2 children. Both are sons.

मुख्याः दिशाः चतस्रः। - Important directions (like east and west) are 4.

तानि चत्वारि पुस्तकानि मम एव! - Those 4 books are mine!

अत्र पञ्च पुरुषाः, पञ्च महिलाः च सन्ति। पञ्च आसनानि कथं पर्याप्तानि? - There are 5 men and 5 women here. How can 5 chairs/seats suffice?

In case, you didn't get it clearly by these examples, here are the 3 sets for the first 5 numbers. The last line indicates that Samskrit does not follow लिङ्गम् after the first four.

पुंलिङ्गम्	स्त्रीलिङ्गम्	नपुंसकलिङ्गम्
एकः	एका	एकम्
द्वौ	द्वे	द्वे
त्रयः	तिस्रः	त्रीणि
चत्वारः	चतस्रः	चत्वारि

While some of the following lines are so known to you, I still list them to interpret the gender aspect of numbers in the sentences above:

भार्या (स्त्री.), पुत्रः (पुं.), रामः (पुं.), सीता (स्त्री.), रामायणम् (न.), अपत्यम् (न.), दिशा (स्त्री), पुस्तकम् (न.), पुरुषः (पुं.), महिला (स्त्री), आसनम् (न.)

This can be initially quite confusing, but slowly you will get over it and use the proper term naturally. In order to avoid the complexity of dual-number in Samskritam initially, we can always use simpler forms using द्वयम्, as in the following. Notice that द्वयम् means a 'pair' and accordingly is singular only, that too in neutral gender.

(To be continued in the next issue)

- Krupalu Ogeti

Samskrit Bharati, Hyderabad, okrupalu@samskritam.net,  
Ph : 73962 49650



## WHY DO WE WORSHIP IDOLS?

In Hindu Dharma idol worship has a lot of significance. The question might arise, as to why God is worshipped in form when He is formless and omnipresent. Here is a simple answer. To reach God is the ultimate goal of a devotee. *Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga* and *Raja yoga* are the four paths to reach God. Idol worship comes under *Bhakti yoga*. Worshipping God without form is not an easy task. One-pointed concentration, patience, a strong will power, a congenial atmosphere and above all a Guru is needed to experience the formless God and everyone is not fortunate enough to possess these. In our day to day lives, it is easier to adopt the path of *Bhakti*. A householder has many priorities. Earning for the family and taking care of his kith and kin takes up most of the time. Then where is the time to think of the formless God? Hence idol worship came into existence.



photograph on the wall, garland the picture and burn incense, don't we? It is because we visualize the deceased in the photograph and do not consider it as a mere piece of paper. Similarly it is God we perceive in the idol and not the stone which is used in making the idol. Moreover when God is all-pervading then He should exist in that stone as well, isn't it?

However a devotee should not get stuck only in idol worship. Slowly one should realize that the omnipresent God resides in him as well and every part of the body is filled with the energy of the formless God and in our inner chambers exists, the invisible *Atma* or soul. The four *Mahavakyas* in our Upanishads convey this essential

truth: AHAM BRAHMASMI- (I am Brahman), TAT TVAMASI- (That Thou Art), AYAM ATMA BRAHMA- (This Self is Brahman), PRAJNANAM BRAHMA- (Consciousness is Brahman).

Devotees have constructed many temples and given God different names and derive great joy in singing His praise and worshipping Him in form. In fact idol worship is the preliminary step to experience the formless God. A devotee is totally aware that the idol is made of stone or wood. Yet when one stands in front of an idol it is not the stone that he sees but tries to visualize God in the stone. Idols are made according to *Shilpashastra* and the energies of the formless God are invited into the idol during consecration as per *Agama Shastra*. If it is not done the proper way then it will become just another showpiece. Such idols can't be worshipped.

Some might question if all this is necessary. Let us give it a thought! When we lose our parents or elders or someone dear to us we put up their



Consciousness that is everywhere is also within us, and what is within us is everywhere. So what exists in the idol exists in us too.

- Lakshmi





# Sweet as Honey-TELUGU



International Mother Language Day

is an observance held annually on 21 February worldwide.

*Telugu talanachu deshambu Telanganyamu*

-Sri Krishna Devaraya

Tributes to Telugu the Mother language of our region

## TELUGU NUMERALS

౧ ౨ ౩ ౪ ౫ ౬ ౭ ౮ ౯ ౧౦

ఒకటి రెండు మూడు నాలుగు ఐదు ఆరు ఏడు ఎనిమిది తొమ్మిది పది

Telugu is the language of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Well over 75 million people, the world over, speak Telugu, and it stands second only to Hindi in India as to the number of native speakers. According to linguists, Telugu is a Dravidian language. That is to say, it does not belong to the Indo-Aryan family to which Hindi, Sanskrit, Latin and Greek belong. Linguists also determined that the four major southern Indian languages, namely Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam belong to the Dravidian family of languages. Telugu split from Proto-Dravidian between 1500-1000 BC. So, Telugu became a distinct language by the time any literary activity began to appear in the Tamil land.

Although the roots of Proto-Dravidian languages can be traced back to several millennia before Christ, Telugu itself has a recorded history from the 6th century A. D. and a fine literary record dating back to the 11th century A. D. Much of the Telugu written literature, up to the end of the nineteenth century was in highly formal "literary style." It is only in the twentieth century that colloquial spoken language began to earn the literary mantle. Nowadays almost all the language used in the media (print, radio, television, movies) is the colloquial style.

Telugu is a very expressive and one of the most regular languages of the world. Telugu Script is derived from Bhattiprolu script, which is itself a variant of Brahmi Script. Telugu alphabet is known as 'onamalu'. Its grammar is simple and structurally neat. Because of its vowel ending sounds, it

has been the language of choice for lyrical compositions in Carnatic music – one of the two music schools of India. Due to this reason, nineteenth century Europeans dubbed this language, "the Italian of the East."

Telugu accepts foreign words with comfort and ease. Sanskrit and its vocabulary heavily influenced Telugu literature; no other language has as much of an influence on Telugu as Sanskrit has. Indeed a large fraction of the characters of the Telugu alphabet – such as many of the aspirated consonants - were created especially to facilitate the writing and pronunciation of Sanskrit words. It is, therefore no exaggeration to boast that some of the best Sanskrit pronunciation can be heard from scholars residing in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Just as Sanskrit found a permanent niche for itself in Telugu literary circles, Arabic, Persian and Urdu words also found their way into the administrative jargon of Telugu.

In Telugu, pronouns and verbs play a key role. The more you learn about verbs and the declensions of pronouns, the better your command will be. If you cannot recall the correct verb form for a thought you have in mind, do not hesitate to use the English verb and the chances are the other person will understand. In fact, Telugu is so forgiving and accommodating that you can insert entire English phrases in the middle of a Telugu sentence and it will pass as Telugu.

Source- an excerpt from  
An Introduction to Telugu by Prof. Vemuri





## *Sri Sarada Devi Birthday Celebrations*

Sri Sarada Devi's Birthday was celebrated at Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram, Kodgal on 13th December 2014 as per *thiti*. Vedavyasa Vidyalyaya children performed a skit on Sarada Ma and had *prasad*.



## *Under the piece marriage in Divine abode*

Two youth from Chinnarevally chose the Ashram for their marriage rites. On 20th December 2014 they arrived at the Ashram along with their relatives and their marriage happened in Nachiketagni Yagnashala at the auspicious moment. Mataji explained to the newlyweds the significance of marriage and advised them to be loyal to each other. They sought blessings of Yogalingeshwara at Maa Yoga Shakthi Peetham and received double blessings from Swamiji and Mataji.



## NATCO Workshop

The children of NATCO School attended a Spiritual Value-oriented workshop at the Ashram. Nearly 120 children attended the workshop and got benefitted. Swamiji emphasized on value-based education which can avoid dreadful incidents like Peshawar, 26/11 etc. Mataji taught them how to be relaxed in the face of adversities. Children were served *prasadam*.



### Welcome

The Gir cow Kali delivered a calf on 24th December 2014. It was amusing to see all the other cows of our kamadhenu Goshala, welcoming the new calf.

*We are extremely thankful to*



**Smt. T. Pavani**, Nellore  
for her kind donation of  
₹ 1 lakh Corpus Fund - Sponsor a Child Education

**Sri Chennupaty S. Murali**, Hyderabad  
for his kind donation of ₹ 2,11,116  
Corpus Fund - Sponsor a Child Education



## Nachiketa's GO GREEN CLUB

*We convey our thanks to all the participants of the WOW initiative. You helped us earn Rs. 29,184/- in the month of December and saved Mother Earth by recycling about 3838 kg of plastic and paper waste material.*







# Events & Celebrations



## Satsang

Swami Ranganathananda's birthday was celebrated at Smt. Vasundhara's house on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2014. The program started with *Bhajans* and *Kritis* sung by Vishnu, a young volunteer of Tapovan. Swamiji and Mataji enlightened the audience with their spiritual discourse. Swami Ranganathananda's spiritual essence was highlighted in

their discourse. The program ended with melodious *kritis* sung by Ramya, another young volunteer of Tapovan. *Pushpanjali* was offered to Swami Ranganathananda and *prasad* was served.



## A Kind Gesture

The chilly winter nights turned warm by the blankets provided by Amazon to our Nachiketa Tapovan students on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014. Thanks Amazon for visiting their homes and distributing blankets. It was a beautiful gesture.



## Sharada Ma's Birthday Celebrations

Sharada Ma's Birthday was celebrated on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 at Nachiketa Tapovan, Hyderabad. The program began by lighting of the lamp by class 10 children. Children of various classes performed different programs with lot of vigour in remembrance of Sharada Ma. Lunch was served at the end of the program.



## Workshop and Satsanga at NICE

A three-day workshop and Satsanga was held at NICE, (Needy Illiterate Children's Education organization) that is run by Sri Purnachandra Rao and his trust board. Children were divided into two groups. Chalapathi one of our volunteers engaged 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade children into various activities whereas 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students were given important tips on life by Mataji. The whole campus was very vibrant and charged with divine spirit on all the three days. On 28<sup>th</sup> December, nearly 300 students from Krishnaveni College, 215 from Nice and other invitees from different walks of life have attended the wonderful *satsanga*. Chalapathi explained about the importance of having qualification to achieve something in life whereas Mataji was as usual interacting with children and slowly making them understand how important life is and should be taken care of properly. Her expressions were simple yet the profundity that she was carrying in her every word had a kind of impact on everyone present over there. She was able to connect with everyone with her wits and wisdom.







**Turn around their future!**

**For ₹ 1 Lakh**

**Your donation will last a lifetime**

***Appeal for Sponsor-a-Child Corpus Fund***

**Nachiketa Tapovan runs a Vidya Mandir, a free Home Schooling for underprivileged children:**

Nachiketa Tapovan aims at imparting, man-making education rather than bread-winning academics, so the syllabus is designed in such a way that it can suffice SSC/CBSE/NIOS curriculum. 250 children receive education in English as medium of language offering levels 1-10. Apart from education Yoga, Arts & Crafts, Vocational Training, Music, Dance, Sanskrit and Computer classes are also part of the curriculum. All these services are rendered by 50 volunteers and 12 coordinators.

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% annually from a Govt Bank. The annual interest on 1 Lakh will fully support one child's education for one year.*

✓ *Your donation will come a long way by meeting our expenses that include Coordinators' Honorarium, Uniforms, Educational material, Building Maintenance and Housekeeping, Field trips, Excursions, Celebrations and Extra Curricular activities.*

✓ *At present, we only have 67 corpus sponsorships, help us reach all of our 250 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 at Nachiketa Tapovan.**





# Only Because of YOU...



Only because of kind-hearted well wishers like you Nachiketa Tapovan is able to provide free education, stationery and nourishing milk-n-meals to 250 children attending Nachiketa Tapovan's Vidya Mandir - a free home school organized with the help of 12 Coordinators, 50 volunteers and community participation.

**anna dAnam mahA dAnam; vidyA dAnam mahattaram**

**Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, festivals and special occasions with children at Tapovan by sponsoring:**

## Donations towards operation costs

Vidya Daanam (Education)	₹ 6500/year/child
Anna Daanam (Mid-day Meals)	₹ 5500/day
Alpa Aharam (Snacks)	₹ 800/day
Vastra Daanam (Uniforms)	₹ 900/2 pairs
Stationery Supplies (Copier Paper)	₹ 5000/term
Medicines (For needy people)	₹ 5000/month
Sponsor any Festival at Ma Yogashakti Peetham	₹ 20000

## \*Corpus Fund Options

Sponsor a child	₹ 1 Lakh
Anna Daanam (Mid-day Meals)	₹ 60000/-
Alpa Aharam (Snacks)	₹ 10000/-
* With the accrued annual interest the following will be achieved every year, respectively.	
- One child's education annually.	
- Mid-day Meals for children for one day annually.	
- Snacks for children for one day annually.	

## Donations within India- 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. PAN No. AAATN2406K

Donations can be also directed through bank account as below

Bank Name	: Bank of Baroda
Branch Name	: Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad
A/c Name	: Nachiketa Tapovan
A/c No	: 18090100004093

IFSC Code : BARBOJUBILE

(Note: IFSC code contains the number "zero" not letter "O")

## Overseas Donations- Details

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

### Bank Information

Bank Name	: State Bank of India
Branch Name & Code	: Kavuri Hills-12655
A/c Name	: Nachiketa Tapovan
A/c No	: 30953215793
IFSC Code	: SBIN0012655
SWIFT Code	: SBININBB214

(Note: IFSC code contains the number "zeros" not letters "O")



*"Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man."*

- Swami Vivekananda



# Invitation



*We cordially invite you to attend our celebrations*



## **MAHA SHIVARATRI**

*Night long celebrations*

*17<sup>th</sup> February 2015*

at Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram,  
Kodgal Village, Jadcherla.



## **SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHAMSA JAYANTI**

*18<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at 10 am.*

at Nachiketa Tapovan, Kavuri Hills, Hyd.

*&*

*20<sup>th</sup> February 2015 (Tithi)*

at Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram,  
Kodgal Village, Jadcherla.

3



**Magha Purnima**

13



**Kumbha Sankranti**

15



**Vijaya Ekadashi**

17



**Maha Shivaratri**

## ***Festivals & Events of FEBRUARY 2015***





# Nachiketanjali

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❖ Date of Publication: 20/1/2015 ❖ Date of Posting: 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2015

Today you have a choice, tomorrow may be too late...

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There is no life without water. It is high time we realize & accept this truth.*

*– Gautam Vir*