

Nachiketanjali



Vol: 6

Issue: 8

April: 2016

Price: ₹ 10



*R*ama asked Hanuman, 'Hanuman, what attitude do you cherish toward Me when you worship Me?' Hanuman answered: 'Sometimes I see that You are the whole and I am a part; sometimes I see that You are the Master and I am Your servant. But Rama, when I have the Knowledge of Reality, then I find that You are I and I am You.'

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Design & Layout:

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SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Single copy	₹ 10
1 year	₹ 120
3 years	₹ 320
5 years	₹ 520

Bank details to transfer funds: State Bank of India, Jubilee Hills Branch, Hyderabad.
IFS Code - SBI N0011745,
Acct No. 30985314026.

Cheque/DD should be sent in the name of "Nachiketa Tapovan".

Please confirm wire transfer through email to nachiketanjali1@gmail.com

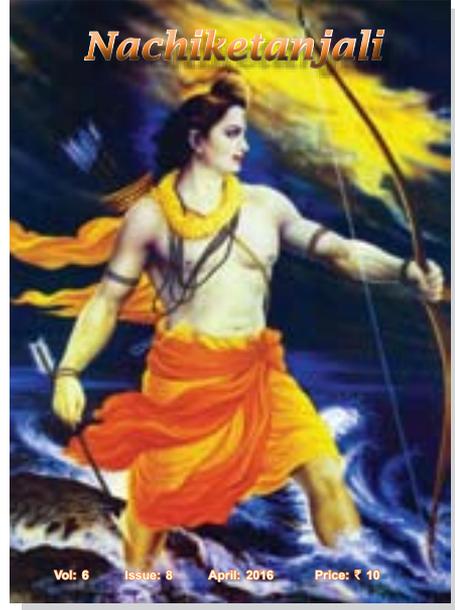
Editorial & Publication Office Nachiketa Tapovan

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Cover Story



Sita was abducted by Ravana. Sri Rama, his brother Lakshmana along with the Vanaras attempted to cross the ocean and reach Lanka in order to rescue Sita. They requested Samudra, the king of the ocean to give them access to cross the ocean.

When Samudra did not respond, Rama was enraged and targeted his arrows at the ocean. His eyes turned red with anger. There was great turbulence in the ocean. Lakshmana pacified Sri Rama and said anger was against his dharma. At the same time, Samudra emerged from the ocean and did pranams to Sri Rama and asked for forgiveness. With folded hands he said "Sri Rama, earth, sky, water, fire and air are part of nature. Dwelling in depth is my natural tendency. Water can never dry up in the ocean. Hence, I cannot part with this water but I can permit for a bridge to be built over me. Please do not be angry with me..."

Consequently he gave permission for the Vanaras to build a bridge across the ocean.



Are we growing spiritually?

Just as every flowing river merges in the sea, we human beings desire to merge and dwell in the ocean of happiness. But we are ignorant to the fact of how many hurdles and obstructions the river would have faced in reaching its goal. Life is not just an act of merging. It throws challenges to make us understand its true values and teaches us many lessons while chiseling us to perfection.

Happiness awaits us on the other shore. But to gain access, it is foremost to learn the art of swimming. The most challenging aspect is to learn the art of facing hurdles in the course of swimming. Our lives may get tossed as we swim amidst turbulent waves. But as long as the goal is fixed in our minds it is possible to face every hurdle with courage and dexterity. A word of caution though! The goal should be to experience the eternal true bliss and not the impermanent happiness filled with worldly desires.

There is a saying that 'Spirituality exists where science ends' and it is true to the core. Once we start treading on the path of spirituality the churning starts and goes on until we encounter the eternal, blissful, true SELF... This in fact is the true wealth that one always possesses but like the musk deer we are ignorant of its existence within our very own being. Once the truth is revealed we dwell in the light of truth and also ignite many other souls and haul them to the path of reality.

Spirituality is nothing but knowing your Self and all paths whether it is Bhakthi, Yoga, Karma or Jnana lead to the same source. Loving God is



Bhakthi and trying to understand God through Bhakthi is spirituality. However, it should be pure, unadulterated devotion and only then can God reveal Himself to His devotees.

When we share our love and kindness with others it is a sign that we are growing spiritually. Selfless service is a sign of our spiritual growth. When we tackle adversities in life with ease it means we are growing spiritually.

So let us keep questioning ourselves, "Are we growing spiritually"?

- Subhadra K.





Lost One...

It was a gathering of citizens of modern society. The flooring was mirror finished and very smooth. And people who were used to it were moving so swiftly. It was fear or age or something else but a mother was trying to hold the hand of her son. He feels uncomfortable and tries to avoid her. And this mother, who was never part of such programs, by seeing the extravaganza of things around, people around and their talk and walk, falls down. It was a hilarious time for the gathering whereas for this mother a painful moment and for her son an embarrassing one. He, without shouting at her but while crushing his jaws, murmurs “Don’t you know how to walk? I told you before as well, not to attend such programs. Look what happened now. You got me a bad name. See how people are laughing at me.” He calls his driver and asks him to take his mother home.

On the way, she recollects the many times when she would sense whether he needs her support or not. She thinks, “Quite often,

when he needed my hand I offered myself holding him tightly to the chest. When he was holding my hand, I could read him through his hand... a sense of security, a sense of love, a sense of pride, a sense of gratitude, a sense of belongingness... but today for small things he couldn’t understand me, my fear of falling down, my need... my touch... my feelings”.

Tears were rolling down for she knew, she is without any support in life. She enters the house but she feels that she left the home long ago and her son??? She had lost him in the crowd way back...



- Swami Nachiketananda Puri



PAUSE

There is magic in this word, Pause. There is life, in that 'Pause'. The entire truth of life and this creation, 'is' in that 'Pause'. But I will pause here, and come back to this aspect and this depth, a little later.

My best friend was winding herself up in a tizzy because of something and I was feeling a bit dizzy, just seeing her do this to herself.

I would have usually snapped at her for doing this to herself, but this time, I simply paused. And in that pause, I understood a completely new dimension and aspect of life.

Everyday, several times in a day, I see something bothering me, my family, my team, their families, something in our / their lives is amiss, and for that matter, in the lives of almost every person alive right now. Something is going wrong in our / their lives. Something isn't the way they / we want it to be and that causes so much chaos, confusion, anger, resentment, jealousy, envy, greed, hatred, etc.

All these negative emotions and energies keep piling up, keep adding to the stress, keep building up like a dam which can burst any time. And when we live like this, there is no question of 'choosing' a response, we are like a ticking time bomb, always in 'reaction' mode. There is absolutely no chance or possibility to press the pause button, because when in 'reaction mode', we act / react first, and then we may or may not think about it.

On the other hand, in 'response mode', there is time to 'pause' to make a 'conscious' choice of what we want to say and 'how' we want to go about our lives.

The day I experienced the magic of this 'pause', I experienced this enormous sense of freedom. Every conflict, every problem, every interaction, every difference of opinion, is an 'opportunity' to understand myself, to rediscover myself, to

understand the other, to see from where they are coming. This pause has allowed me a much deeper understanding of life and if I may use the word, experience 'compassion' for everyone around me. I have become a far gentler person.

And now I would like to go back to the first line of this note, **"There is magic in this word, Pause. There is life, in that 'Pause'. The entire truth of life and this creation, 'is' in that 'Pause'."** Understandably, I experienced the most superficial aspect of this pause to begin with. But the more I delved deeper into this aspect, I realized something far more enormous and sublime was happening in that pause, in that moment...

Many things I had read or heard, but not really understood became clear...for instance, while doing 'Japa', the 'pause' or 'gap' between chanting each *mantra* or turning the beads between my fingers, became so much more sublime. Or it was something I had even experienced but not clearly understood, that became even deeper in my experience...for instance, while breathing, the pause or gap between each inhalation and exhalation, this has become such a profound experience...something we do from the moment we are born till we die, but aren't aware of it...

There are many times when I remember to pause and do what is appropriate for the situation. Many more times, I forget and am stuck in the reaction mode. But having tasted this freedom, I want to make conscious effort that I can maintain this awareness in my every breath. As my Guru says, "Make conscious effort towards making something worthwhile happen to yourself and the world around you, keep doing this till this effort becomes effortless, after that, it will happen on its own accord".

- Gautam Vir





Ignorance Knowledge & Supreme Wisdom



“The *jiva* at first remains in a state of ignorance. He is not conscious of God, but of the multiplicity. He sees many things around him. On attaining Knowledge he becomes conscious that God dwells in all beings. Suppose a man has a thorn in the sole of his foot. He gets another thorn and takes out the first one. In other words, he removes the thorn of *ajnāna*, ignorance, by means of the thorn of *jnāna*, knowledge. But on attaining *vijnāna*, he discards both thorns, knowledge and ignorance. Then he talks intimately with God day and night. It is no mere vision of God.

“He who has merely heard of milk is ‘ignorant’. He who has seen milk has ‘knowledge’. But he who has drunk milk and been strengthened by it has attained *vijnāna*.”

Thus the Master described his own state of mind to the devotees. He was indeed a *vijnāni*.

MASTER (to the devotees): “There is a difference between, a *Sādhu* endowed with *jnāna* and one endowed with *vijnāna*. The *Jnāni Sādhu* has a certain way of sitting. He twirls his moustache and asks the visitor, ‘Well, sir! Have you any question to ask?’ But the man who always sees God and talks to Him intimately has an altogether different nature. He is sometimes like an inert thing, sometimes like a ghou, sometimes like a child, and sometimes like a madman.

“When he is in *samādhi*, he becomes unconscious of the outer world and appears inert. He sees everything to be full of Brahman-Consciousness; therefore he behaves like a ghou. He is not conscious of the holy and the unholy. He does not observe any formal purity. To him everything is Brahman. He is not aware of filth as such. Even rice and other cooked food after a few days become like filth.

“Again, he is like a madman. People notice his ways and actions and think of him as insane. Or sometimes he is like a child- no bondage, no shame, no hatred, no hesitation, or the like.

“One reaches this state of mind after having the vision of God. When a boat passes by a magnetic hill, its screws and nails become loose and drop out. Lust, anger, and the other passions cannot exist after the vision of God.

“Once a thunderbolt struck the Kāli temple. I noticed that it flattened the points of the screws.

“It is no longer possible for the man who has seen God to beget children and perpetuate the creation. When a grain of paddy is sown it grows into a plant; but a grain of boiled paddy does not germinate.

“He who has seen God retains his ‘I’ only in name. No evil can be done by that ‘I’. It is a mere appearance, like the mark left on the coconut tree by its branch. The branch has fallen off. Only the mark remains.

Source: The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
Translated into English by Swami Nikhilananda



An Appeal

Basic education is a distant dream for hundreds of underprivileged in and around the villages of Jadcherla Mandal. Education is the fundamental right of every child. Nachiketa Tapovan Vidya Mandir strives to make basic education an achievable goal for these children.

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Our Requirement, Our Request

Particulars	Specification	Amount	We need
Single Classroom accommodating 25 children	Outer Dimension 30'.0" x 30'.0" Construction area: 980 sq.ft	₹ 8 Lakhs per classroom.	8 classrooms

About How You Can Help:

- ◆ by contributing to our Building Fund
- ◆ by donating building materials (steel, cement, bricks, sand, electrical fittings, tiles, flooring, paint, window glass, etc.)
- ◆ by donating classroom requirements like desks, mats, blackboards, e-learning kit, stationery etc.
- ◆ help us raise Corpus Fund for projects to become self-sustainable.

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WHO IS A TRUE DEVOTEE?

A true devotee is beyond body, mind and world and he is drenched to the bone in the name of the Lord. That is the reason a true Bhakta sees his Beloved One everywhere. Being in the material world, he performs all worldly actions with an attitude of offering to the Lord, but mentally he is always in the world of devotion. That's how a true Bhakta is an ideal Karmayogi, ideal householder, ideal mother, father, son, daughter etc. His unconditional and immense love towards God brings clarity in life and he feels oneness with the people and universe. He doesn't have enemies; he is free from all wants and necessities of life. He is satisfied with whatever he has.



- Paramahansa Swami Shivananda Puri



Śrī Sāketa-Loka

The supreme abode of Godhead

In vedic-scriptures, Sri Saketa Loka is celebrated and eulogized as the original abode of the original supreme personality of Godhead, Lord Rama. It is beyond the material conception of all sensual organs and inexpressible in words. As rightly said by the Vashistha-Samhita that Rama's form (Rama-Rupa), Rama's name, Rama's pastimes and Rama's abode, all these four are supremely Divine and higher than the highest.

The original abode of Lord Rama, Sāketa-Loka is also known as Nitya-Ayodhyā (eternal Ayodhyā) and has been eulogized in Atharva-Veda, Taittiriya-Aranyaka as well as in various scriptures like PurāNas and Samhitās etc. Sāketa Loka also manifests itself when Lord Rama descends personally in the material world as the prince charming of Dasaratha and Kausalya, then it retains its name Ayodhya. The Ayodhya-puri in the material world never touches the earth and it remains always situated on the Sudarshan Chakra (disc) of Lord Vishnu.

Sri Rama is worshipped by *Nitya-Parashadas* (eternal retinue of God) in the 'core central region of Maha-Vaikuntha' which is also known as Rama-Puri (the Divine city of Rama) or Ayodhya. This Divine city in center of Maha-Vaikuntha, Ayodhya, is supremely glorified and described in detail in Padma-Purana, one of the main Vaishnava-Satvika-Puranas. In Padma Purāna, Lord Shiva also tells about the Sāket-Loka (Nitya-Ayodhya), the supreme abode of Lord Rāma in following verses:

दुर्लभं योगिनां नित्यम् स्थानं साकेत संज्ञकम् ।
सुखपूर्वं लभेत्तत्तु नाम संराधनात् प्रिये ॥ (पद्म पुराण)

Lord Shiva tells Parvati in Padma-Purana: 'my dear consort! Beyond all Vaikunthas, there is a Divine eternal abode called "Sāketa" which is unachievable even



for greatest Yogi-s. However, that eternal abode can be easily and pleasantly achieved by chanting name of Rama. [-Padma Purāna]

प्राण प्रयाण समये राम नाम सकृत्स्मरेत् ।
सभित्वा मंडलम् भानोः परम् धामभिगच्छति ॥ (पद्म पुराण)

Lord Shiva further tells Parvati: even if one remembers the name "Rāma" just once at the time of death (i.e. leaving of the soul from one's body), then the soul, after piercing entire material cosmos and passing through Archiradi-Marga, achieves the supreme abode of Rama, Saketa-Loka. [-Padma Purāna]

Thus the supreme abode Saketa-Loka (i.e. eternal Ayodhya) which is the original abode of the Paratpar-Brahman, is the topmost realm in spiritual sky and beyond all heavenly abodes (Divyatma-Lokas). All Divine Vaikunthas are in existence as mere the portions of the portion of Supreme abode Saketa-Loka. This is also in line with Vedas as in Vedas, Ayodhya has been called the abode of Brahman, the most superior Purusa (Sri Rama).



The cause of all causes, the most superior Sri Rama lives in the central region of that Saketa Loka with His Para-Shakti Sita, as like a prince lives with his princess in center of his kingdom. At the central part of that Saketa Loka, there is a Divine wish-yielding tree known as Kalpa-Vriksha which is very generous in fulfilling all the desires, under that tree there is supremely Divine arbor.

At the center of that supremely Divine arbor, there is a seat made of gold and gems. Then at very center of that seat, there is a throne highly decorated with gold and other Divine gems, in that throne there is a design of the great lotus having thousand petals (known as *Sahasraram*). In central part of that lotus having thousand petals, there are different kinds of highly effulgent incomparable materials. The light coming from just a particle of those materials of *Chhatrakam* and *Chaamaram* is more blissful than the bliss from the myriad of moons in sky at a time. Lord Rama the original personality of Godhead sits on that throne.

One should always contemplate on this form of Rama, who is sitting under the wish-yielding tree, which is very graceful, peaceful, exceedingly blissful and beautiful.

Source: Lord Ram



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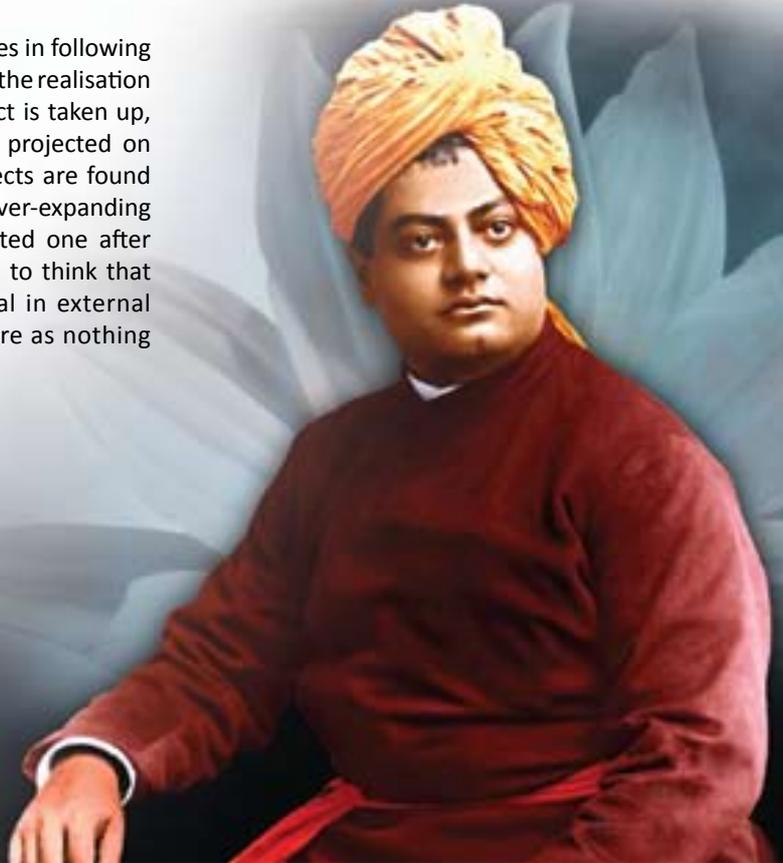


The god of love is his own proof

What is the ideal of the lover who has quite passed beyond the idea of selfishness, of bartering and bargaining, and who knows no fear? Even to the great God such a man will say, "I will give You my all, and I do not want anything from You; indeed there is nothing that I can call my own." When a man has acquired this conviction, his ideal becomes one of perfect love, one of perfect fearlessness of love. The highest ideal of such a person has no narrowness of particularity about it; it is love universal, love without limits and bonds, love itself, absolute love. This grand ideal of the religion of love is worshipped and loved absolutely as such without the aid of any symbols or suggestions. This is the highest form of Para-Bhakti — the worship of such an all-comprehending ideal as the ideal; all the other forms of Bhakti are only stages on the way to reach it.

All our failures and all our successes in following the religion of love are on the road to the realisation of that one ideal. Object after object is taken up, and the inner ideal is successively projected on them all; and all such external objects are found inadequate as exponents of the ever-expanding inner ideal and are naturally rejected one after another. At last the aspirant begins to think that it is vain to try to realise the ideal in external objects, that all external objects are as nothing

when compared with the ideal itself; and, in course of time, he acquires the power of realising the highest and the most generalised abstract ideal entirely as an abstraction that is to him quite alive and real. When the devotee has reached this point, he is no more impelled to ask whether God can be demonstrated or not, whether He is omnipotent and omniscient or not. To him He is only the God of Love; He is the highest ideal of love, and that is sufficient for all his purposes. He, as love, is self-evident. It requires no proofs to demonstrate the existence of the beloved to the lover. The magistrate-Gods of other forms of religion may require a good deal of proof to prove them, but the *Bhakta* does not and cannot think of such Gods at all. To him God exists entirely as love. "None, O beloved, loves the husband for



the husband's sake, but it is for the sake of the Self who is in the husband that the husband is loved; none, O beloved, loves the wife for the wife's sake, but it is for the sake of the Self who is in the wife that the wife is loved."

It is said by some that selfishness is the only motive power in regard to all human activities. That also is love lowered by being particularised. When I think of myself as comprehending the Universal, there can surely be no selfishness in me; but when I, by mistake, think that I am a little something, my love becomes particularized and narrowed. The mistake consists in making the sphere of love narrow and contracted. All things in the universe are of divine origin and deserve to be loved; it has, however, to be borne in mind that the love of the whole includes the love of the parts. This whole is the God of the Bhaktas, and all the other Gods, Fathers in Heaven, or Rulers, or Creators, and all theories and doctrines and books have no purpose and no meaning for them, seeing that they have through their supreme love and devotion risen above those things altogether. When the heart is purified and cleansed and filled to the brim with the divine nectar of love, all other ideas of God become simply puerile and are rejected as being inadequate or unworthy. Such is indeed the power of Para-Bhakti or Supreme Love; and the perfected Bhakta no more goes to see God in temples and churches; he knows no place where he will not find Him. He finds Him in the temple as well as out of the temple, he finds Him in the saint's saintliness as well as in the wicked man's wickedness, because he has Him already seated in glory in his own heart as the one Almighty inextinguishable Light of Love which is ever shining and eternally present.

Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda
(Chapter 8)

Nachiketa देवा वहिनी

...infusing values

Do you wish to bring a change around you?

Help yourself! Help the people around you!

Nachiketa Seva Vahini is a wing of Nachiketa Tapovan to spread the moral, spiritual and cultural values through samskaravargas and service activities.

Nachiketa Tapovan invites eager minds

- who wish to make a difference in the world around them
- who are passionate to serve the society irrespective of age
- who think this change is vital in creating a positive impact at a larger level

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You can be a member of Nachiketa Seva Vahini



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When we practice
loving kindness and compassion
we are the first ones to profit.

Discover your Aura
~ Rumi

Kindness

&

Compassion

Sometimes, a simple incident or a seemingly normal sight affects us and makes us think, if we care to introspect. The other morning, as I was on the way to my office, I saw a woman graciously clad in a saree serving food to a man on the roadside. The man was in tattered clothes, with unkempt hair and was extremely dirty in appearance. He seemed to be the kind we abhor to have in our surroundings, the kind we assume to be wrongdoers, the kind from whom we try to shield children. While the woman was carefully serving the food to make sure that not even a grain gets wasted, the man had a child-like joy on his face. He looked at the woman with gratitude and had his first meal (probably, the only meal) of the day. The woman kindly smiled and went away.

My thoughts raced back to the old man who sleeps everyday on the pavement at some distance away from my house. His belongings are packed into three or four polythene bags. He probably takes bath or washes his limbs at the public tap nearby. He sleeps at the same place every single day and is unmindful of his surroundings. I have rarely seen him talking. Or perhaps no body made an attempt to speak with him. I always wanted to ask him why he was living like that, but could never gather

the courage because he always seemed to be angry. If I make an attempt, will he share his thoughts with me? What am I to do if he asks for help?

Kindness is something we all love. We yearn for someone to listen to us and understand us. We love to be treated with kindness. We look forward to reassuring words and warm smiles when we are faced with trouble. This is what we expect from others. But, does it remain the same when we are on the other side? Do we treat others with compassion? Do we respect people for what they are, and not for what they possess or how they look?

Life is a work in progress, probably till the moment we die. It is better if we learn something everyday to make our world a nicer place to live in. We may be busy and not even aware of who lives next door. But, people are our true wealth and if there are no people, the world will not remain the same. Rich people may be respected, but compassionate ones are adored and loved. As someone rightly remarked, "Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage."

- Neetika Gogula

An advocate and has passion for writing on social issues.



Sound of Water

As I went deep down into you
There was a valley of
Peace, joy, ecstasy and resonance
Everything outside was silenced
It was just you and me
Deep longing of being life
Eco of love, joy and peace
You caressed me like a mother
Held me in your arms like a child
You took me to the Abode of divine
And I immersed into you fearlessly
Knowing not of what it is
I found myself in the lap of the divine
unlearning to know the mystism
And let life flow
Oh Shambho..!!
As you immersed yourself half into the
water
And as I got you closer to my being
Deep inside
I let myself to dissolve in the radiance of
your light

- *Suruchi*



Nachiketa

इन्द्र-इशक्ति

...a spiritual calling

Is Streeshakti a mere title? Come, let's break the stereotype! Welcoming woman power that moulds, nurtures and transforms the world. Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram is a sanctuary where our most beloved Adhyatmik Praneta, Paramahansa Swami Shivananda Puri, is here to guide and initiate women

- ◆ who are passionate towards serving the needy
- ◆ who are deeply rooted in moral and spiritual values
- ◆ who look forward for Spiritual awakening

We are looking for...

- ◆ **Sevakas:** Women who are willing to work at the Ashram receiving basic salary
- ◆ **Sevavratris:** Women who prefer to offer voluntary services with or without honorarium for a duration of their choice
- ◆ **Sadhakas:** Seekers of Truth who are willing to receive Sadhana or various initiations like Yog Shakti Deeksha, Mantra Deeksha, Kriyayog and Chaturashram Deekshas like Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa Deeksha etc to explore the inner world and express inner beauty by way of Karmayoga or service to humanity

Note:

- The power of discretion and autonomy in selecting candidates and decision making lies with the Ashram Management
- Food and Accommodation with basic amenities will be provided at the Ashram
- Our gentle appeal is not to consider Ashram as an orphanage or old age home

For further details please contact:

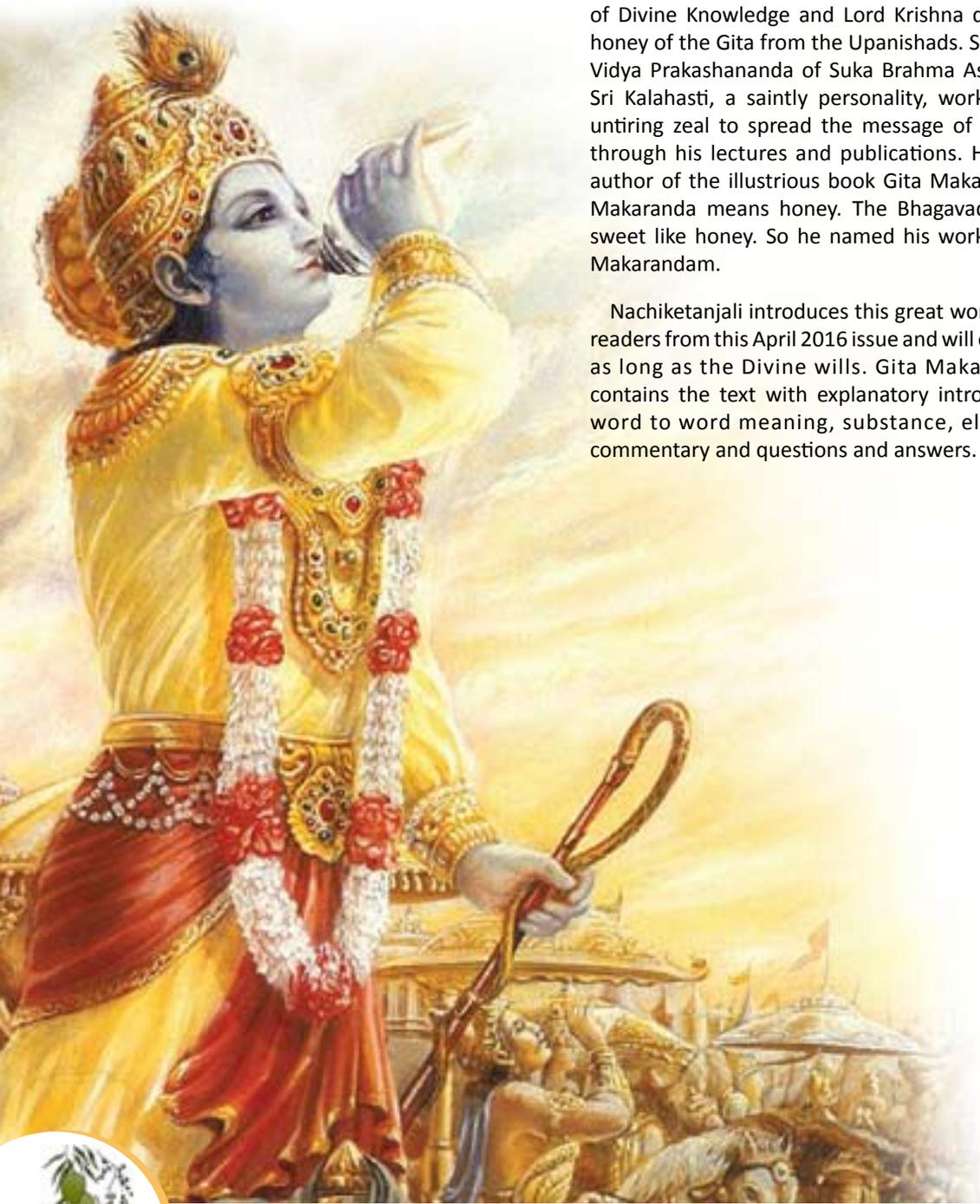
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Gita Makarandam

The Upanishads are the most beautiful flowers of Divine Knowledge and Lord Krishna drew the honey of the Gita from the Upanishads. Sri Swami Vidya Prakashananda of Suka Brahma Ashram in Sri Kalahasti, a saintly personality, worked with untiring zeal to spread the message of the Gita through his lectures and publications. He is the author of the illustrious book Gita Makarandam. Makaranda means honey. The Bhagavad Gita is sweet like honey. So he named his work as Gita Makarandam.

Nachiketanjali introduces this great work to our readers from this April 2016 issue and will continue as long as the Divine wills. Gita Makarandam contains the text with explanatory introduction, word to word meaning, substance, elaborate commentary and questions and answers.



O mind, like the bee seeking honey,
Why do you wander
In the arid sands of Samsara,
Which like the mirage
Draws you away into dry deserts
Drink, drink,
The honey of Gita,
Flowing from the Lotus-face
Of Lord Sri Krishna!

Every sloka of Bhagavad Gita is a *Mantra*. Just as the repetition of a *Mantra* bestows beneficial results so also the repetition of the verses of Bhagavad Gita produces wonderful effects.

Salutation to Gita

*Gita Kalpatarum bhaje bhagavata Krishnena
samropitam*

*Vedavyasa vivardhitam sruti sirobeejam
prabhodhankuram*

*Nanasastra rahasyasakham aratikshanti
pravalankitam*

*Krishnaghridvaya bhakti pushpa surabhim
mokshapradam jnaninam*

I worship the Gita, the wish-yielding plant of Heaven, planted by Lord Krishna. This heavenly plant is nourished by Veda Vyasa; the Upanishads are its seed; Knowledge is its sprout; the secrets of all *Sastras* are its branches; renunciation and forbearance are its blossom; devotion to Lord Krishna is its fragrant flower; and on the knowers of truth, it confers Liberation.

Gita in one verse

*Yatra yogesvarah krisno yatra partho
dhanurdharah*

Tatra srivijayo bhutir dhruva nitir matir mama

Wherever is Sri Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, wherever is Partha, the wielder of the bow, there are prosperity, victory, expansion and sound policy; such is my conviction.

Meditation on Sri Krishna

Salutation to Sri Krishna, the milker of Gita-nectar, who like the heavenly plant fulfills all the wishes of those who take refuge in Him; who holds the cowherd cane in the hand and whose hand is poised as the symbol of knowledge.

There is no book in world-literature so full of meaning and significance for mankind as the Gita. All other literature is human creation. The Gita is the word of God. What comparison can there be between the work of man deluded by Maya and the work of God who is the ruler of all good qualities. The Master is *Paramatma* and the disciple is a *Mahatma*. The teacher is the Supreme *Purusha* and the taught is the best of men. Thus from the interaction of a Master and disciple of wonder power, the Gita takes its origin. It is the blessed fruit of the *Tapasya* of man and God, of Nara and Narayana. It is the product of the intimate contact of thought between Lord Krishna and warrior Arjuna. The world-famous sage-poet Veda Vyasa, out of infinite compassion for suffering humanity, rendered into rhyme this spiritual conversation between the Lord and His chosen devotee and offered it to the world. So by the grace of this Trinity - The Lord, his devotee and the Sage - the Gita has come into the world for the spiritual benefit of mankind.

Whoever is fortunate could take shelter with the Gita and cross the endless stream of *Samsara*. In fact, it is only when the good done by mankind ripens and comes to fruition that a wonderful book like the Gita comes into the world. The uncommon genius behind the work, its limitless power and its miraculous character, will naturally inspire any reader with devotion and attention to the great book. Therefore it is our duty to know something about its origin, its form and nature and the mystic power that is revealed through every word and phrase of the Divine utterance.

Compiled from - **Gita Makarandam**

(to continue in the next issue)





Shimla – The City with a Pulsating Past!

A sudden unplanned trip to the mountains is the best that could happen to a sombre and scuffy life. This time the trip was directed to the south-western range of the Himalayas – to the capital city of Himachal Pradesh – to Shimla, the city with a pulsating past.

A favourite destination of the British, the charm and cheer of the city continues to marvel the various visitors flocking to the happening Himalayas. Preferred during summers and loved during winters, the city has witnessed drastic changes over the years and yet continues to preserve the legacies and the stories of the times that are gone.

A ride in the 'toy train' presented the gorgeous highs and lows which the Himalayas are made of; the lush green mountains inhabiting wild, big, ferocious animals; all a pleasure to the eyes and soul of a starved-for-serenity individual. A few hours of gearing up for a long day ahead and then climbing up and down the hills witnessing the remnants of the past and beholding the remains of tomorrow.

The tiresome climb to the tracks that led to the Jakhoo temple which could not be reached for there were monkeys abound – some swayed, some jumped to hither sides, few others just stared – and a little lack of will-power. A promise to the strong God whose idol placed at the peak of a mountain seems to be keeping a watch over the city, of returning again someday – someday not so far from now. A

faithful friend on the way who played along and posed for pictures – a Sussex Spaniel from the neighbourhood.

Walking down the winding terrain brought us to the wonder that was 'Rothney Castle'. So many thoughts – wonderful and scary flashed in the mind. Old buildings – uninhabited ones – have a mystic aura surrounding them. You love them and yet you are scared to feel them, to go close to them. The pitiable dilapidated condition of the entrance is the first picture that the 'history house' presents to the wretched traveller. With 'Rothney Castle' engraved on one side and the name 'Rajender Mohan' on the other, a grim picture of a haunted house appears before the eyes. Many who would not visit the place would never get to know that the Rothney Castle was the home to Allan Octavian Hume who founded the Congress in 1885. The locals say his spirit haunts the castle and the traveller is left at the mercy of that which stands in front of the eyes and relate it to that which creeps into the ears.

A halt at the Christ Church brought back the wandering veins of the mind to peace. The Church with a silent soothing atmosphere stands a spectator to the crowd that flocks to the Ridge each day. The first corner stone of the Church was laid down in 1844 – just 169 years back – whoa! Soulful prayer songs being played in the background, the withered and wronged heart can rest well in the peace the abode of the Lord offers.



And then the Ridge, the 'Iron Lady' stands smiling there. You witness the '3 idiots' shooting location where Chatur spoke of the 'home-made cookies from San Francisco' and laugh all by yourself. Whichever direction you look at, all you find is pleasure. 'Jab We Met' and many other movies, they start playing back in the mind of the movie-buff.

The beautiful buildings which house the Municipal Corporation, the Court of the Judicial Magistrate, the BSNL office and the Police Headquarters – taste to the soul like old charming delightful wine. Old wines, old bottles, new beholders. Heritage walks, homes to Maharajahs, howling dogs, screeching monkeys lead you to Kali Bari where you hear the chants and bells – and see devotion through closed praying eyes. Monks with latest gadgets, beggars wishing you good day, starved yet sturdy men carrying heavy loads on their backs climbing up and down the hills – no stigma, no scorn – this city presents various wonders.

Then the visit to Fagu, with a majestic view of the snow-laden Kinnar Kailash; the 'knight-like' ride in Kufri; the glorious greens of Naldehra; the colourful roof-tops in Sanjauli; the apple orchards that breathe life into the purses of many mountain residents; the happy assistance



of the Himachal Tourism office; the 'hpmc Ditto' – the taste of goodness; the mouth-watering momos; the apple pie with vanilla ice cream at the Embassy Café – the letters written, the books arranged, the appealing ambience; and the local old man who claimed with pride "Apna Himachal toh swarg hai madam, swarg!"

This is the soul of Shimla – panoramic, picturesque, and priceless!

Respect for the cadaver

I do remember the initial days of my medical college when we students were only worried about the dissection. I had been gifted a new dissection kit. I hardly knew anything about human body. I still remember the first day in the dissection hall. Every Student was very excited. Nervousness was dominating that excitement. As soon as I stepped in, I could only inhale formalin. A few minutes later, a cadaver was placed on the table. My eyes were a bit hesitant to have a look and no one was brave enough to touch it. One daring student could shake his hand. That was a great achievement then.

Now, four months later, the story is completely different. The excitement is not lost, instead enhanced with great respect. We are not afraid anymore! We only respect them more!

We are now looking at the cadaver's heart. It is very beautiful and kind enough to make us understand. We are now looking at the feet, which is making us walk for a better future. We are now looking at the brain, which is actually making us think. This is the only profession where "DEAD" teaches the "LIVING". I am proud to be a medico.

- Harathi





Foods to beat the summer heat

Here are some foods to protect you from the scorching summer heat.

Pumpkin



Pumpkin possesses great cooling and diuretic properties. It is also good for improper digestion and eliminating intestinal worms from the digestive system. Pumpkin contains potassium and fiber. It also controls blood pressure and sugar. It helps in curing skin diseases. It regulates blood sugar levels and help stimulate the pancreas — thus diabetics are advised to eat pumpkin.

Bottle gourd



As Bottle gourd is mostly made of water, it helps you deal with heat and is also useful for stomach problems like acidity, which mostly occurs in summer. Bottle Gourd prevents extreme loss of sodium, satisfies thirst and helps in preventing exhaustion.

Mint



Mint is a simple, easily available, inexpensive herb which you can add to your curd to make pudina raita or have it in the form of chutneys besides using it in dips.

Cucumber



Cucumber has 96% water content, which helps in keeping the body hydrated and in regulating body temperature. Cucumber also contains a lot of potassium, magnesium and fiber that work effectively for regulating blood pressure. The high water content in cucumber is very effective in flushing away the toxins from the digestive system and hence aids digestion. Regular intake of cucumber helps to dissolve bladder or kidney stones.

Lime water



The simple lime water or *nimboo pani* is not only refreshing; it also has health benefits for you. You can have it sweet, salted or add a dash of black salt and cumin powder to it. Have it chilled and beat the heat.

Coconut water



An inexpensive coconut is full of health benefits and has wonderful cooling properties. It is laden with simple sugars, electrolytes and essential minerals which help keep the body well hydrated. In addition to that, there is evidence to suggest that coconut water has cancer fighting and anti-ageing properties as well.

Curd/ Yogurt



Curd is a delicious coolant. You can make delicious - chilled spicy buttermilk, a glass of lassi or chachh and raita. You can also add fruits to the curds to make a lip-smacking and wholesome dessert or prepare dips during the summer season.

Melons



This is another fruit which is nearly 90% water. Have lots of it in summers to stay cool and well hydrated.

Watermelon



Another fruit that can help you keep cool. We are not suggesting you to buy the chopped watermelon slices sold by the roadside vendors. In fact, they should never be consumed if you want to avoid the risk of a diarrhoea infection. Bring home a watermelon, cool it and have lots of it to benefit from the antioxidants present in this delicious fruit.

Green veggies



Though green vegetables are good to have round the year, it is good to have lots of them during the summer months because they have a high water content. Avoid overcooking them because that can cause a loss of water contained therein.

Source: Healthmeup





Vivekachudamani

*Sarva-vedanta-siddhanta-gocharam
tamagocharam;*

*Govindam paramanandam sadgurum
pranatosmyaham (1)*

Sri Adi Shankaracharya's Vivekachudamani itself does not need any introduction. It has always occupied the highest position among books dealing with the science of Self-realization. Even from a purely literary standpoint, its charm has always been irresistible and captivating. Added to all this, Swami Ranganathananda's commentary on this profound work in the light of modern thought and modern needs is both fascinating and inspiring. In placing excerpts from the book 'The Message of Vivekachudamani' by Swami Ranganathananda (published by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati) before our readers, we fervently hope that spiritual aspirants throughout the world will be enriched and illumined by the ideas they find within.

Out of the 580 verses of Vivekachudamani, Swami Ranganathananda has commented only on 309 verses. His choice seems to be strategic as through these verses he has placed before us a clean picture of spiritual life- its basics, different steps, as well as the culminating experience and related ideas, all with a reference to the betterment of human society.

We shall reproduce one verse per issue in Nachiketanjali so that the reader grasps and assimilates the essence of the great spiritual truths at his own pace.

Sri Shankaracharya begins his work with a humble salutation to his guru and God:

I bow to Govinda, whose nature is Bliss Supreme, who is the sadguru, who can be known only from the import of all Vedanta and who is beyond the reach of speech and mind.

"I bow to Govinda" is the main clause in this verse. All other words are adjectives of the word "Govinda". Govinda is one of the names of God and so also of Shankara's guru. Shankara is offering salutations to both. God alone is the Supreme Guru (sadguru)... He is the bridge between the disciple and God... Shankara is seeking their blessings.

God is beyond the reach of speech and mind. Our sense organs and the mind cannot reveal this truth. It is beyond sensory verification... We shall never be able to see or touch our mind, because it is through the mind that we see and touch. When the mind itself is intangible, what to speak of the Atman! Atman is beyond even the mind. It is beyond the sensory grasp. It can be realized only from the import of all Vedanta. It is through Vedanta that we get the information about Atman and also about the means to realize it. The main concern of whole of Vedanta is to put forth the science of unity of Atman and this Atman is of the nature of supreme bliss. Shankara thus salutes his teacher as well as the Supreme Teacher, God. Before beginning his exposition he seeks their blessings to be able to clearly expound this great science of spirituality.

Source: The Message of Vivekachudamani
By Swami Ranganathananda



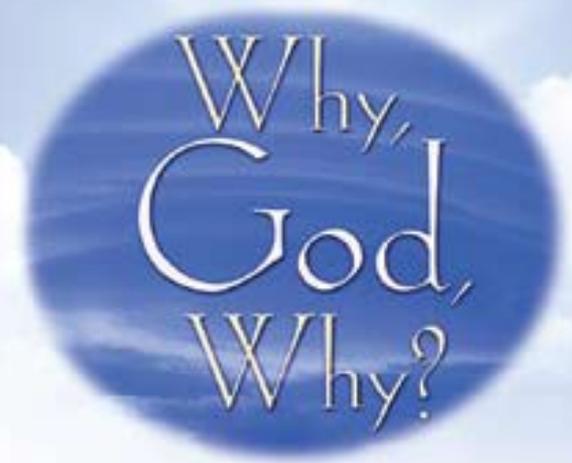


How many times have you visited the temple to ask God for something that you want? It might have been success, good marks, good health and what not! But think back and try to remember how many times you have gone to the temple just for the sake of thanking God for everything that he has done for you? I will give you two situations which are, in fact very true for teens.

During sports day, there is one event you have been wanting to win a prize in. You train hard and you pray to God for it. On the d-day you win the prize. You come rushing home and declare that you have won, and your parents are extremely happy. At that time do you think of the God that you prayed to for help. Even if you see it in a more mundane sense, when you ask someone for some help and your work gets done, don't you go thank them first?

Similarly, many of us face that moment during an exam-which we hadn't taken seriously- where we realize that we might not even pass. At that moment when realization dawns upon us, we turn to God and ask him, "Please God, just pass is also enough, a little help would be nice!" After the results are announced and you got much above pass, all your friends want a party or something, where is the God that you prayed to? He doesn't even want a party like those friends who didn't (and are not supposed to) help you during the exam. He doesn't expect anything from you. All he wants is for you to be grateful. Take a moment to thank him. If you're feeling even more grateful, go to the temple and thank him.

I read an article by a tennis player, whose name I am unable to recollect. It went like this. "Recently I was injured in an accident. The doctors told me that I wouldn't be able to get up and walk around, much less play, for a few months. Everyday people would visit me in the hospital and say, "Why did God do this to you?", and other such things. One day when someone asked me the same question, I asked them, "When I was a champion of the game and when I was enjoying life in the limelight, did I ask God why? When people around me suffered



but I prospered, did I ask God why? When I was holding up the most important trophy that I had won in my career, in front of millions of flashing cameras and audiences and the whole world, did I ask God why? Then why should I ask Him that question now?"

You know the value of something when it is lost, and that is when you start questioning Him. Don't.

Have faith, for if He was with you through all your success, He will not forsake you in the hour that you need Him the most. If He has done good to you, and you have accepted it without pondering the reason, have faith that there is a reason behind His actions when they are not so favorable too.

So firstly, don't use God as a wishing well. Remember Him and thank Him for every moment that you live on this earth. And secondly do not question God when you suffer. It is a trial set by Him to check your faith in Him.

Have faith. Unquestioning faith in Him, and in His actions. Know that there is good waiting to happen to you around the corner of that bad road!

Let me end with a phrase from the (King James Version) Holy Bible, which goes,

"If God be for us, who can ever be against us?"

N. Rohan C. Govind
Class 11,
GT Aloha Vidya Mandir, Chennai



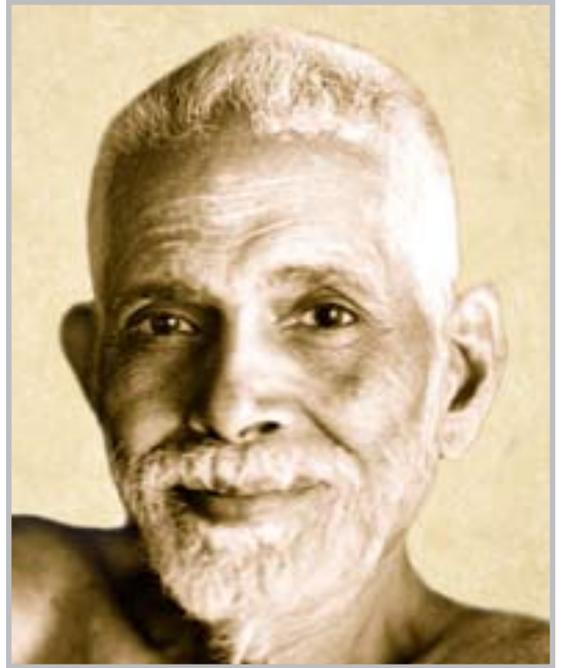
Self-realization

as taught by Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi

The experience of the sages is that self-realization is one, whether a glimpse or ultimate. The only difference is that it remains a glimpse when the mind is not pure enough to hold it. After such a flash, *sadhana* may begin in true earnest to still the mind so that thoughts, desires, *vasanas*, etc., whatever one may call it, do not hide our true nature which is ever present.

Sri Bhagavan says that in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* the mind is temporarily immersed in the Self, like a bucket immersed in water, which is drawn out again by the rope of mental activity. In *Sahaja Samadhi* the mind is merged like a drop of water in the limitless sea. The drop, in essence the same as the sea, has only lost its limitation, having become the sea.

These distinctions in Realization are from the standpoint of the others who look at them; in reality, however, there are no distinctions in release gained through *jnana*. One should enquire into one's true nature. The Consciousness of 'I' is the subject of all our actions. Enquiring into the true nature of that Consciousness and remaining as oneself is the way to understand through enquiry one's true nature. Then there would shine in the Heart a kind of wordless illumination of 'I-I'. That is, there would shine of its own accord the pure consciousness which is unlimited and one, the limited and the many thoughts having disappeared. If one remains quiescent without abandoning that (experience), the individual sense of the form I-am-the-body, will be totally destroyed and at the end the final thoughts, viz., the 'I'-form also will be quenched like the fire that burns camphor. The great sages and scriptures declare that this alone is Realization.



“The meditation on the Self which is oneself is the greatest of all meditations. All other meditations are included in this. So if this is gained the others are not necessary.”

Sri Bhagavan wrote with the authority of full spiritual knowledge. Even so he would add: “Thus say the sages.” Like all his expositions, Self-enquiry is concerned with practical questions of the path to Self-Realization. In reply to questions such paths as meditation on one's identity with the Self and breath-control are described but he himself prescribes only Self-enquiry or submission to the Guru. He would say: “There are two ways: ‘Ask yourself– Who am I?’ or ‘Submit and I will strike down the ego’.”

Adapted from: *Be Still, It Is The Wind That Sings*
by Arthur Osborne

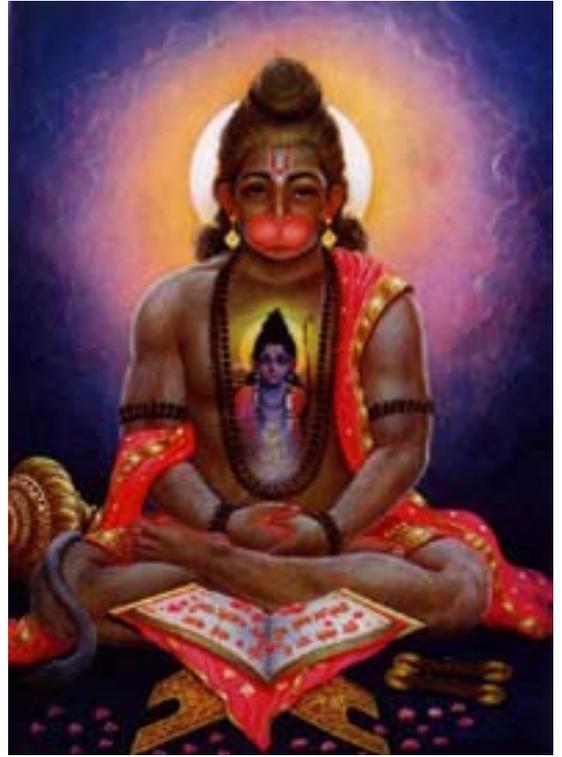


Pride Vanquished

Those were the days when Lord Anjaneya was doing a severe penance on the great Gandhamadhana mountain. He sat in meditation chanting Ramanama for several thousands of years. The entire atmosphere on the mountain changed with the intense vibrations of his penance. Listening to the Taraka *mantra* the various species of animals and birds forgot their enmity and lived joyfully.

One day Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu flew that way and at the same time the King of Serpents also happened to land on the same mountain. While the Serpent King rested under a tree, Garuda was perched atop the same tree. Seeing the Serpent King, Garuda was overjoyed that he found his prey and flying down caught him in his beak and was about to leave. Though the Serpent King pleaded with Garuda it fell on deaf ears. As Garuda was flying back he spotted Anjaneya, deeply absorbed in penance. When he came closer to him, Garuda found he could not fly anymore. His efforts to fly went in vain. He was surprised that a mere monkey had the power to halt his flight. His ego was hurt. At the same time the Serpent King shouted for help.

Anjaneya was deep in meditation and did not notice Garuda. His pride hurt, Garuda shouted at Anjaneya, "Are you so great that you are not even



opening your eyes to look at me? I am the vehicle of Lord Vishnu and you are insulting me by ignoring my presence." There was no reply from Anjaneya. He sat still and Garuda was infuriated. He uprooted a tree and declared war on Anjaneya. At that very moment he heard a divine voice reprimanding him. "Stop Garuda! Do you know what you are doing? You are declaring war on Anjaneya, the greatest *bhaktha* of Sri Rama. Beware!"

Garuda looked closely at Anjaneya and found his Lord Vishnu in Rama's form seated in Anjaneya's heart. Garuda was stupefied. He realized his crime and begged for forgiveness. Anjaneya came out of his penance and said "Oh Garuda, both of us are devotees of Lord Narayana. Please release the Serpent King. There is no place for sin on this holy mountain. Learn to live in peace with your fellow beings. Resort to the divine name and sing his praise forever."

Garuda realized he was no match to Anjaneya's devotion and felt humiliated. He sought Anjaneya's blessings and flew away to his abode, having learnt his lesson.

A story retold



Vontimitta Sri Kodanda Rama Swamy Temple

Vontimitta is a mandal in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh. It is located at a distance of about 25 kilometers from Kadapa and is close to Rajampet. Vontimitta is a place of historical and spiritual importance. It is home to a temple of Bhagawan Sri Rama. The temple is some 450 years old and the presiding Lord is known as Kodanda Rama Swamy. Legend is that two disciples of lord Rama, Vontudu and Mittudu, had constructed the temple in one single day. After constructing it, they reportedly sacrificed their lives in the name of the Lord and turned into statues. We can still find these statues as you enter the temple. This temple is the only shrine in the country where Sri Seeta Rama kalyanam is held in the night.

Vontimitta has a high significance as the place where the Kishkinda Khanda, one among the seven *Khandas* of Ramayana happened. The town is gifted with the Kodanda Rama Swamy temple. A French traveler called Tavernier, had visited this town in 1652 and described the temple as one of the most beautiful temples in India. He was amazed by the devotion and dedication of the people here.

The Vontimitta Kodanda Rama Swamy temple, which is constructed with some 32 pillars, is extremely high. The temple is also known as Madhya Ranga Mandapam. You can reach this temple town by train or bus.

Annamacharya, the great devotee of Lord Sri Rama, is related to this temple. It is also said that the idol of Lord Sri Rama has been established by Jambavantha. The archaeological survey of India has notified this temple as an Ancient Monument. The temple's *Garbhagudi* has the idols of Lord Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Goddess Sita engraved from one rock. You can also find an Anjaneya temple in the premises. We can see the idol of Vigneshwara in a dancing posture in the main *mandapam* of the temple. The *mandapam* was designed by Vijayanagar rulers. The Vontimitta temple is also the only Rama temple in India where the idol of Sri Rama is without Anjaneya Swamy at his side.

Source: Andhra Pradesh Tourism





Nachiketa Seva Vahini Workshop

On 21st February 2016, a motivational workshop was conducted by Mataji and Muralidhar for parents and youth of nearby Tandas at Nachiketa Tapovan, Kodgal. Response was overwhelming. A mini agenda was prepared and shared with them.



Construction Work



Construction work of Toilets and Septic Tank is in progress



Nachiketa's GO GREEN CLUB

*We convey our thanks to all the participants of the WOW initiative. You helped us earn **Rs. 19,380/-** in the month of February and helped in keeping Mother Earth cleaner by recycling about **2768 kg** of plastic and paper waste material.*





मूर्खः अनुचरः - एका पञ्चतन्त्र-कथा Foolish Companion - A Pancha Tantra story

कश्चन महाराजः आसीत्। There was a Maharaja. तस्य प्रासादे, कश्चन वानरः आसीत्। In his palace, there was a monkey. सः वानरः महाराजस्य अतीव विश्वासपात्रम् अनुचरः। That monkey was Maharaja's extremely trusted companion. अतः राजभवने सर्वत्र अपि, तस्य प्रवेशः अनुमतः आसीत्। Therefore everywhere in the palace, his entry was permitted.

एकदा महाराजः अन्तःपुरे निद्राति स्म। Once Maharaja was sleeping in the Antahpuram. तदा सः वानरः तत्र आगतवान्। Then that monkey came there. सः निद्रां गतस्य महाराजस्य समीपं गत्वा, व्यजनेन वीजनम् आरब्धवान्। He, having gone near Maharaja who was sleeping, started fanning with a fan.

अत्रान्तरे महाराजस्य वक्षस्थले एका मक्षिका उपविष्टवती। In the meanwhile, a fly sat on the chest of Maharaja. वानरः व्यजनेन तां दूरीकर्तुं पुनः पुनः प्रयत्नं कृतवान्। The monkey tried to send him away with the fan again and again. तथापि मक्षिका ततः दूरं न गतवती। Even then the fly did not go away. तदा सः स्वभावचपलः मूर्खः वानरः कुपितः सन् तीक्ष्णं खड्गं गृहीत्वा मक्षिकायाः उपरि प्रहारं कृतवान्। मक्षिका उड्डीय ततः गतवती। Then the monkey foolish and wavering by nature, having become angry, hit on Maharaja's chest with a sharp sword. खड्गप्रहारेण महाराजस्य वक्षस्थलं विदीर्णं जातम्। By the sword's hit, Maharaja's chest was torn apart. तेन महाराजः मृतः अभवत्। Due to that, Maharaja was dead.



- Krupalu Ogeti

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How To Achieve Your GOAL ?

Life is full of distractions. Hundreds of objects dance before our eyes luring us towards themselves.

Innocent beings engulfed by such temptations, spend their lives chasing these numerous goals. They achieve some, but in this mad pursuit, they lose sight of numerous others that may be more important than those achieved.

It is therefore necessary to set your priorities, make them the focus of your lives and then create a system, an action plan for reaching your goal.

List your values and goals, list your skills and attributes. Be honest with yourself and see whether they fit your dreams. Goals that you achieve and those that are difficult to achieve provide a challenge and fill you with immeasurable energy.

There are many things you need to take into account while setting goals and striving to achieve them. Frame your goals positively and make them specific and measurable.

Challenges, including setbacks and disappointments, benefit us in numerous ways. Mistakes for instance teach us about ourselves. Setbacks to our plans are often growth opportunities in disguise. They stimulate creative thinking and resourcefulness.

Identify what you want and go after it. Do not eliminate all stress from your life. You need it to help you meet deadlines and make personal bests.

To achieve happiness, we should make certain that we are never without an important goal.

Last but not the least don't forget to have fun on the journey to goal achievement. It may be the best part.

- *Mrudula*



Thrissur Pooram

The Thrissur Pooram is considered to be the Mother of all Poorams, a culture highlight that towers above all other festivals. Thrissur Pooram is a festival unique in its pageantry, magnitude and participation. It is not a mere temple festival in its strict sense but at the same time it is the festival of festivals of Kerala.

The Thrissur Pooram, celebrated in the Malayalam month of Medom (April-May) is a grand assembly of Gods and Goddesses in and around Thrissur. These Gods and Goddesses make their visit to the Vadakumnathan Temple premises on caparisoned elephants accompanied by grand ensembles of Chenda melam and Pancha vadyam.

The Ten participants of the Pooram are the Thiruvambady Bhagavathi and Paramekkavu Bhagavathi, Nethilakkavu Bhagavathi, Karamukku Bhagavathi, Ayyanthole Bhagavathi, Laloor Bhagavathi, Choorakkattukavu Bhagavathi, Chembukkavu Bhagavathi, Panamukkumpally Sastha, Kanimangalam Sastha. The processions and rituals of each of these deities follow a very strict itinerary, scheduled in such a way that the tempo of the Pooram celebrations - 36 hrs non-stop - is maintained without any loss of energy.

History

Very many stories are told and retold about the origin of Thrissur Pooram. Thrissur Pooram is 200 plus years young and before that the "Arattupuzha Pooram" conducted at Arattupuzha, some 16 km away from Vadakumnathan was the biggest temple festival of Kerala. All the temples participating in Thrissur Pooram and Kuttanellore Pooram are the regular participants of "Arattupuzha pooram". Once

these temples were delayed to attend the festival due to heavy rains and then chief of Peruvanam Gramam denied them entry. As an act of reprisal Thrissur Naduvazhi, the chief of Vadakumnathan, known as Yogadiripad and Kuttanellur Naduvazhi started the Pooram in Thrissur. Later due to some reasons the Kuttanellur Naduvazhi disassociated the celebration at Thrissur. Since the withdrawal of Kuttanellur Naduvazhi the glamour of the Pooram was lost and the two 'Naduvazhies' began to treat each other as enemies. It was at



this juncture the former ruler of Cochin, His Highness Ramavarma Raja, popularly known as Sakthan Thampuran (1751-1805 AD) became the Maharaja of Kochi. Sakthan Thampuran unified the 10 temples situated around Vadakumnathan temple and took steps to celebrate Thrissur Pooram as a mass festival. Sakthan Thampuran classified the participants into two groups the western and the Eastern. The western group consists of Thiruvambady, Kanimangalam, Laloor, Ayyanthole, and Nethilakkavu temples. Paramekkavu, Karamukku, Chembukavu. Choorakottukavu and Panamukkampilly come



under eastern group. The Maharaja re-organized the annual festival in its present form in front of Vadakumnathan. Sakthan Thampuran also directed the main temples at Thrissur, Paramakkavu and Thiruvambady to extend all support and help to other Poorams which are coming from 2 to 10 Km away from Vadakumnathan temple. Recently the Kanimangalam changed to eastern side. The event management of the whole Pooram was chalked out by His Highness Sakthan Thamburan and followed iota till now.

There is an epilogue to the “Arattupuzha” Pooram participation. While the Arattupuzha Pooram has a history of more than 1000 years, Paramakkavu



temple is 600 years old and Thiruvambady is still younger. Further Thiruvambady Bhagavathy, Paramakkavu Bhagavathy and Neithalkavu Bhagavathy are “Bhadra kali” deities. Only Sasthas or Durgas are the participants of Arattupuzha Pooram. The other seven participants of Thrissur Pooram whose origin dates back to early 8th century A.D and are Sastha or Durga cult, may be regulars to Arattupuzha.

The Curtain Raisers

The city is in jubilant mood since the opening of the Thrissur Pooram Exhibition. The exhibition is an

excellent platform to educate, promote, advertise and sell the products. Informative stalls, pavilions, play stations and with active participation of both central and state governments the Thrissur Pooram exhibition is conducted without interruption since 1964. The tempo starts with the flag hosting and is in full spirit even prior to the Pooram day. It is on this day the sample fireworks are displayed in the Vadakumnathan maidan. This is the curtain raiser to the real display of pyrotechnics of the Pooram. Started as a sample testing of the fire works for alternation/modification, it has turned to an event attracting very huge crowds. Both Paramakkavu & Thiruvambady started to arrange their respective Parasols, Ornaments etc neatly in their stores which started to attract people in a large scale. Now it turned out to be another curtain raiser to Thrissur Pooram. This “chamayakazcha” (Viewing the display of decorations & ornaments) is another amazing experience of Pooram which is open for 36 hours.

There is another curtain raiser to Thrissur Pooram. The one among the Constituent Poorams Neithilkavu Bhagavathy is privileged to announce that the Thrissur Pooram is ON. The previous day of the Pooram, Devi enters the Vadakkumnathan temple with all accompaniments, pays her salutation to Vadakkumnathan and opens the southern *gopuram* which was closed on the previous Pooram day after the “Kudamattom”. Devi moves to western *gopuram* through *maidan* to *Sreemoolasthanam*. Devi is received by the Cochin Devasom board representative and escorted to Nilappaduthara. Here the Pooram is announced by play of conch thrice.

The Day

The Pooram starts with the ceremonial entrance of “Kanimangalam Sastha” Pooram through the southern *gopuram* at 7 am. This is followed by the arrival of Panamukkampilly Sathavu, Chembookavu Karthiayani Devi, Karamukku Karthiyani Devi, Choorakkottukavu Durga Devi, Ayyanthole Karthiayani Devi, and Naithalakavu Bhagavathy. Paramakkavu Bhagavathy and Thiruambady Bhagavathy escorted by Krishna.

Source: thrissurpooramfestival.com



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TULASI

The Wonder Herb

Tulasi and Indian families have symbiotic relationship. A house without Tulasi plant is like a temple without deity.

Since ancient times in every Indian household, Tulasi occupies a prominent place. Every backyard of the Indian house is adorned with a Tulasi Fort. (Structure that is built around a Tulasi plant). Indians believe Tulasi is an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi. Indians worship the holy Basil (Tulasi) every day at a prescribed time.

There are many varieties of Tulasi. The popularly known Tulasi plants are (1) Krishna Tulasi (2) Rama Tulasi (3) Lakshmi Tulasi.

Krishna Tulasi is widely used in preparing medicines. Tulasi and pepper powder are used to cure malarial fever. Tulasi and Ginger are made into juice and are used to alleviate the knee joint pains.

Vomitings can be avoided by consuming curd or honey mixed with Tulasi seeds.

For curing Asthmatic problems, the essence of Krishna tulasi leaf and black pepper combination works wonders.

For skin disorders, paste made of Tulasi and Lemon can be applied externally.

For sore throat, water is boiled along with Tulasi leaves and is consumed. Tulasi juice reduces *Kapha dosha* and re-energizes the body.

Modern research:

1. It reduces glucose levels and is being used to cure Diabetics.
2. It reduces cholesterol levels



3. As a Cox-2 Inhibitor, it is being used as a pain reliever in cancer treatment
4. Tulasi leaves help in storing food grains

Certain Vishnu devotees do not use Tulasi as a medicinal herb and consider it as a sacred plant. They consume Tulasi water (*Tirtha*) for purification of sins.

Tulasi beads are used in Japa and Meditation. Garlands of fresh Tulasi leaves are offered to deities in temples every day. In Hindu temples, holy Tulasi water is given to devotees as *Tirtha*.

During the month of Kartika, Tulasi Vivaha (Wedding of Tulasi) is grandly celebrated. Hindus consider that day as a very auspicious day.

In Agastya Samhita it is said that, by planting Tulasi, watering Tulasi, worshipping Tulasi, rather touching Tulasi, one obtains moksha, the enlightenment.

Hindus believe that Tulasi plant contains all the holy rivers, all the Vedas and all the deities. Persons on the deathbed are watered with "Tulasi *Tirtha*" by pouring a few drops into the mouth. It is believed that, Tulasi purifies them from sins and gives them better positions (circumstances) in the next life.

Tulasi, the holy plant, the wonder herb, the sin redeemer is always with us from our birth to death, as an eternal companion.

Source: Eternally Talented India-108 Facts



Essence of Dharma

We often hear people lamenting that Dharma is on the downtrend. In this background let us try to understand what exactly is Dharma. In fact our scriptures Ramayana and Mahabharata have focused on Dharma as quoted by our Vedas.

We are given this human body to realize God, but unfortunately most of us do not know that God exists within us in the form of *Atma* or soul. We spend our time in material pursuits and it is only on our death bed that we realize that a precious birth has been wasted. But then it is like crying over spilt milk.

It is not wrong to pursue our desires but we should also know the limitations. Earning for our livelihood is a must but craving to earn money even for our future generations by resorting to corrupt means is wrong. Once we step into the threshold of desires we are swept away unawares in the strong current.

If we abide by the do's as stated by our shastras we can buy our own happiness, but if we prefer to practice the dont's then we have to dwell in sorrow. That is clearly evident if we give a moment to reflect on our lives' miseries.

So let us try to understand Dharma. It can be classified into two: Ordinary Dharma and Extraordinary or *Vishesha* Dharma. A house-

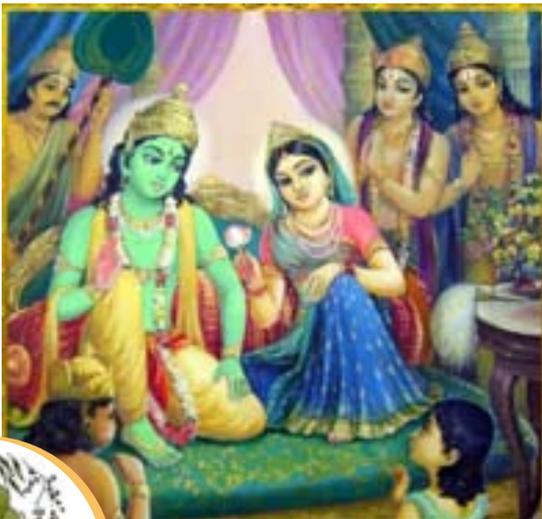
holder's Dharma is ordinary Dharma. One has to be dutiful to one's own family and make them happy. Understanding the divine principle that we are not just the body and mind but something beyond that and embarking on the spiritual pursuit while simultaneously leading a dharmic house-holder life is *Vishesha* Dharma.

A question might arise as to which of these is best. Definitely *Vishesha* Dharma should take the priority. Ramayana is a perfect example of Dharma. Ravana's brother Vibhishana opted for extraordinary or *Vishesha* Dharma. Though his duty was to follow his elder brother Ravana's footsteps as per a house-holder's Dharma, knowing the consequences, he opted for the second. Yet he never failed to warn his brother about his adharma in abducting Mother Sita and pleaded with him to make peace with Lord Rama. But as is evident it fell on deaf ears. Vibhishana left his brother and took the shelter of Sri Rama- the embodiment of Dharma. He understood the divine principle that *Atma* should merge in *Paramatma*.

Sri Rama went into exile for 14 years to abide by the Dharma that a son has to obey his father. That was a householder's Dharma. On the other hand his brother Lakshmana preferred to leave his mother and wife and stay with Rama. He followed the principle of *Vishesha* Dharma.

This assessment of Dharma might be ridiculed by this generation for they believe in science where human mind has advanced to a great extent. They have belief in their own strength and lose focus on the divine principle. In that case why are calamities like earthquakes, Tsunamis and catastrophes happening? Why are they not able to stop them? They might be capable of stopping birth from taking place but is it in their capacity to stop death? Somewhere they have understood that there is an unseen force not visible to human eye who is far superior to us humans. Then is it not wise to follow the dharmic principles set by the supreme and lead a life free of miseries? What do you think?

- Sarayu





Sri Ram

Quiz

Questions:

1. Sage Vishwamithra, for the protection of "yoga" requested king Dasaratha to send Sri Rama and Lakshmana with him for a duration of how many days?
2. Whose name did "Samudra" suggest Sri Rama for the construction of bridge across the ocean?
3. What is the weapon of Kumbhakarna and what is its weight?
4. From whom did the secret knowledge "Bala" and "Atibala" originally evolve?
5. What did Sri Rama give Hanuman, who was about to go in search of Sita?
6. In how much time span did Sri Rama kill 14,000 Rakshasas, Khara, Dhushana etc?
7. What is the name of the tree on which Hanuman sat at Ashoka Vanam?
8. On which mountain peak is Lanka situated?
9. Who is the wife of Vali?
10. What are the two other names of "Shrimad Ramayanam" quoted by sage Valmiki to Lava and Kusha?

By Dr. Kalluri Venkateshwar Rao, MA Ph.D

1. 10 Days
2. Nala
3. "Sulamu", Weight: 1000 Baruvas i.e., 2,24,000 kgs
4. Lord Brahma
5. Signet ring of Sri Rama
6. 72 minutes ("Three Ghadiyas")
7. Sinsupa Tree
8. Trikuta mountain
9. Tara
10. Sita Charitramu, Poulasthya Vadhamu

Answers:

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BENEFITS OF PARIKRAMA



Parikrama of Mount Kailash

Parikrama is the devout perambulation or *Pradakshina* around a sacred and holy spot. This is either a mountain peak, a sacred *Tirtha*, a place of pilgrimage or an entire area regarded as holy and sanctified by tradition. This practice of making a circuit is ordinarily done at any time, and especially undertaken by devotees en masse at particular periods during the year.

When done on a smaller scale within a small ambit as round a *Murti* installed in a shrine, round the sacred Tulsi plant or Pipal tree, the perambulation is in common parlance termed '*Pradakshina*.' A *Parikrama* also doubtless constitutes *Pradakshina*, but by convention, it is come to refer mainly to big circuit.

More difficult forms of *Parikrama* are in vogue. Additional measures involving greater physical exertion and strain are combined with *Parikrama*. Some lay themselves fully stretched upon the ground and roll along over the entire route. Some others proceed slowly prostrating full length at every three or ten steps; still others walk step by

step, placing one foot in close proximity to the other and cover the whole distance of *Parikrama*; and others do the circuit themselves gyrating in a continuous *Atma-Pradakshina*. All these difficult features are adopted by devotees at times as special penance, or in accordance with some vow previously made, or as spontaneous expression of their zeal or fervour. Your mental attitude and motive will bestow on you the highest, maximum spiritual good.

Undaunted *Yatris* in the icy Himalayas do the difficult *Parikrama* of Mount Kailas and even longer circuit of Lake Manasarovar. Other *Yatris* complete a round of entire Uttarakhand, in doing the Kedar-Badri-Yatra by going via one route and returning via another, after circling the Chardham.

Far off in the South, pious devotees make *Pradakshina* of the holy Arunachala at Tiruvannamalai. Rama *Bhaktas* and Krishna *Premis* go round Chitrakuta Parvata, Ayodhya, Brij, Brindavan, Govardhana and Badrinath.



The deep significance of *Parikrama* lies in the fact that the devotee considers not the physical aspect of the place, hill or *Tirtha*, but the spiritual power it symbolises and the Divine Presence that is manifested and felt through it. Through the Lord's revelation in the tenth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita, you will understand how much special places are saturated with the Divine Presence. By the fervent attitude of faith and veneration, you make yourself fully receptive to the inflow of the spiritual vibrations of the holy place. These powerful spiritual currents enter and purify all the sheaths, gross and subtle, destroying bad *Vasanas* and *Samskaras*. *Tamas* and *Rajas* are reduced. The concentrated influence of *Sattva* awakens the dormant spiritual tendencies. By *Parikrama*, the devotee drinks deep the Divine atmosphere pervading the place and comes out of this spiritual path steeped in *Sattvic* vibrations. This is the inner working and significance of doing *Parikrama*.

Being a great purifier, it is enjoined on all devotees as a method of penance or *Tapascharya* by wise tradition and convention. It is an act of great spiritual benefit and religious merit too. The devotee takes bath, wears clean clothes, smears *Tilak* or sacred ash and wears Tulsi or Rudraksha Mala and starts with God's name on his lips. On the *Parikrama* route, you gain valuable Satsanga by meeting *Sadhus* and *Sannyasins* living there.

Your sins are destroyed by taking bath in sacred rivers (on big *Parikramas*) or ponds and *Kunds*. You are elevated and blessed by *Darsana* of many holy shrines situated on the way. You develop patience and endurance putting up with various discomforts in the sun or rain or cold. Difficult *Parikramas* mean giving up many dear articles to which the mind is attached. You have your mind freed from all thoughts and you are absorbed in the one idea of the Divine presence.

A devoutly conducted *Parikrama* constitutes in one single act a triple *Sadhana* elevating your body, mind and spirit. The spiritual vibrations of the holy places of pilgrimage and shrines purify your base *Asuric Vrittis* and fill you with *Sattva* and purity. You need not go in for *Satsanga*. *Mahapurushas* come to you of their own accord. They are always in search of real and sincere *Sadhakas*. Therefore, they also remain in holy places like Badri, Kedar, Kailas, Haridwar, Brindavan, Mathura, etc.

Blessed indeed are those who take part in *Parikrama*, because they will soon attain peace, bliss and immortality! Glory to Lord Rama, the Lord of Ayodhya! Glory to Krishna the Indweller of all hearts, whose special seat is Brindavan! Glory to *Bhaktas*! May their blessings be upon you all!

Source: Lord Siva and His Worship
By Sri Swami Sivananda



Invitation

We cordially invite you to attend our celebrations



SRIRAMA NAVAMI

15th April 2016 from 10 a.m. onwards
at Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram, Kodgal Village, Jadcherla.

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– Gautam Vir