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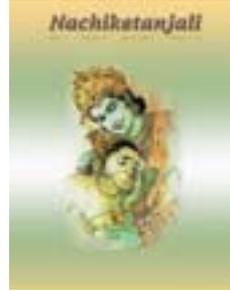
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Cover Story



Hanuman is not just a prodigious intellect or a practical mind; he is a virtual store-house of strength, valour, and versatility. Once he comes to know of his immense potential, he rises like a mountain of gold, resolves

to fulfill the mission assigned to him, and 'like the unfailing arrow from Rama's bow, shoots across the ocean', determined not to rest till his mission is accomplished. Single-handed, he devastates Ashokavana, decimates the demon-brigade, and kills their commander Aksha, the son of Ravana. Although blessed with Brahma's boon that his missiles would do him no harm, out of respect for the Creator, he allows himself to be chained by the Brahmastra thrown at him by Indrajit. Unfazed, he appears before Ravana in his court and interacts with him in the presence of his commanders and courtiers. Neither is he perturbed when his tail is set ablaze; instead, he 'breaks into laughter and roars as he touches the sky'. He earns the gratitude of practically all the major characters on Rama's side—Sugriva, Vibhishana, Lakshmana, and Vaidehi. Rama himself declared his indebtedness to him more than once: 'The task accomplished by you is difficult even for the mighty Gods to achieve. I do not know how to repay my debt to you. I offer you all that is mine'; saying so Rama held Hanuman in tight embrace.

Source: hindupedia

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Is it necessary to have an *Ishta*?

Several times this doubt has cropped up in my mind...about having an *Ishta* and now, it set me thinking seriously. I felt it is better to address it, by earnestly contemplating on it. Is it necessary to have an *Ishta*? It is said that we have to delve on the Inner self - the *Antaryami*. Then does this Inner self have a form? How can we concentrate on one form when God is all pervading? Isn't He outside as well as inside? Of course we have not yet evolved to that point in time where we can see God in all His creation, including fellow human beings.

I personally feel that though God is ONE, He manifests Himself in various forms for the sake of His devotees, depicting various aspects or *vibhuthies*. For instance, in Rama, we see Him as a personification of Dharma; in Mother we see Her as a personification of Love, Shiva as a personification of various *vibhuthies* and so on and so forth. It is not that a particular form does not have all of the said qualities. Maybe a particular quality is more predominant. But in all, we see a common thread, which binds us devotees and that is LOVE... love for HIS creation. All these qualities are essential. Then how can we pertain to only one form? I love Lord Narayana... I equally love Lord Shiva and Divine Mother. I love and worship the Bhagavad *tattva* which exists in all of them.

If Rama *nama* stirs my heart, Krishna *nama* elevates my spirits. If Shiva *nama* sends thrills down my spine then the name of Mother throws me out of gear. Then how can we just stick to one form and consider that form as an *Ishta*? For me, the Bhagavad *Tattva* is my *Ishta*, I feel so!

I would like to worship Rama, play with Krishna, embrace Shiva and sleep on the Mother's lap. I would like to soak in the divine essence of all these forms. Then whom should I consider as



my *Ishta*? I can't be separated from Rama, or Krishna or Shiva or the Mother for I am one with them. I am a speck in God's creation.

Conversely, it is only when I am totally aware that all of us are a part of His creation that the day will come when I can see Him everywhere. This can happen when my ego is purified and when my mind is tuned to the formless form alone. Until then I'll worship the BHAGAVAD TATTVA.

When I visit any temple, including Maa Yoga Shakthi Peetham at Nachiketa Tapovan Ashram, I yearn to see the Formless in the Form. I try to explore and enjoy the Divine Bliss. Whether we do *Abhishekam* or *Alankarana*, it is a display and offering of our love for the Divine not in one form but in many forms and to that ONE FORM - to that FORMLESS FORM...I surrender in totality.

- Subhadra K.



ALL THAT WE NEED

*A*ll that we need is simple living and nothing else. All that we are looking for is peace of mind and nothing else. But neither are our attempts appropriate nor our thinking wise enough to get peace of mind, whereas what we would want is to get noticed and nothing beyond. All that we seek for is attention and nothing else. The whole life goes back and forth in earning that which satiates our mundane thirst. No one in fact is looking at peace but pieces. Selfishness has taken the driver's seat and we happily get driven by our own state of driver-ness. It is that selfishness that kills one's own peace of mind. It is that mean-mindedness and lower understanding about life that stops our progress. It is that interference to do nothing that damages one's own life.

If we are seriously looking for something bigger and higher, more tangible and enlightening, one should get involved with our whole heart but without interfering with the natural flow. Life comes with a complete package for everybody, no matter who the person is and in what condition one is living in. The package of life is always complete but it becomes more and more incomplete when we do not look at it unconditionally. Life never comes with conditions whereas it is we who add conditions to life. That's where we lose the essence of life and everything else. Our battle with life begins there and it is more damaging than battle for life itself.

Life is like our partner and we should know how to deal with it. Best way is to get involved in it but without interference. Life knows what is better. In fact, life is there to get involved

fully. It is our unnecessary meddling with life that never allows us to go further or move ahead. One always goes through life no matter what condition one is placed in. It is therefore, for the one who is going through who should know how to make a beautiful life and not out of context. Life comes without context, as ever pure, in its most pristine form and reflects the most fascinating truth of one's own self.

If one asks to support, it is our primary responsibility to get involved whole-heartedly but at the same time we should make sure that we are not fussy about other's intelligence. There are many who are much superior in the field we think we are best. So, it is necessary for one to make a choice always, reciprocating that becomes more phenomenal in life. If one feels interference is necessary, then one should silently accept other's perception as well. It is the angle that makes difference and not the situation. Situation might be scary but not from all angles. In fact, it might be very pleasant from another angle. So it is better if we angle our angle and try to figure it out much before we try to take reigns in our hand or pretend to be smarter than anybody else.

If we are genuinely looking for peace of mind, then there cannot be a better understanding than looking at a situation from different angles rather from one alone. We get a very limited sight if we look at the situation from only one angle. If we want to change the whole perception and would want to go further, then getting involved in the situation is a must rather than simply being a spectator. It is the perception of the whole that brings more clarity. Then life appears more transparent, more clear. Then walking through life brings a light to life. It never becomes a burden. It always makes sense and not nonsense. Therefore, all that we need is to allow life to take the driver's seat. Dear One! Enjoy the drive and if you would want to enjoy driving then allow life to apply before you apply to life.



- *Swami Nachiketananda Puri*



Spirituality is the highest knowledge which makes life more beautiful and colourful. This is the only knowledge which helps in discovering the self.



- Paramahansa Swami Shivananda Puri

Open House

8th February - An Open House took place, where the cute young stars of LKG, UKG and 1st Standards, with the help of the volunteers, participated enthusiastically and took the visitors by storm.



14th February - This day again saw an Open House, now performed by the excited children of classes 2nd to 5th with the help of their class teachers. This added another feather to the cap of our school.





Ramlala

About the year 1864, there came to Dakshineswar a wandering Vaishnava monk, Jatadhari, whose Ideal Deity was Rama. He always carried with him a small metal image of the Deity, which he called by the endearing name of Ramlala, the Boy Rama. Toward this little image he displayed the tender affection of Kausalya for her divine Son, Rama. As a result of lifelong spiritual practice he had actually found in the metal image the presence of his Ideal. Ramlala was no longer for him a metal image, but the living God. He devoted himself to nursing Rama, feeding Rama, playing with Rama, taking Rama for a walk, and bathing Rama. And he found that the image responded to his love.

Sri Ramakrishna, much impressed with his devotion, requested Jatadhari to spend a few days at Dakshineswar. Soon Ramlala became the favourite companion of Sri Ramakrishna too. Later on he described to the devotees how the little image would dance gracefully before him, jump on his back, insist on being taken in his arms, run

to the fields in the sun, pluck flowers from the bushes, and play pranks like a naughty boy. A very sweet relationship sprang up between him and Ramlala, for whom he felt the love of a mother.

One day Jatadhari requested Sri Ramakrishna to keep the image and bade him adieu with tearful eyes. He declared that Ramlala had fulfilled his innermost prayer and that he now had no more need of formal worship. A few days later Sri Ramakrishna was blessed through Ramlala with a vision of Ramachandra, whereby he realized that the Rama of the *Ramayana*, the son of Dasaratha, pervades the whole universe as Spirit and Consciousness; that He is its Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer; that, in still another aspect, He is the transcendental Brahman, without form, attribute, or name.

While worshipping Ramlala as the Divine Child, Sri Ramakrishna's heart became filled with motherly tenderness, and he began to regard himself as a woman. His speech and gestures changed. He began to move freely with the ladies of Mathur's family, who now looked upon him as one of their own sex. During this time he worshipped the Divine Mother as Her companion or handmaid.

Source: The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna



Peer Pressure

*P*eer Pressure. The phrase is not an unfamiliar one. When you're influenced by your friends to make a particular decision, you are said to have experienced peer pressure. While peer pressure can be positive in certain cases, it may also have extremely negative consequences.



way to tackle situations in which you are faced with peer pressure is to weigh the pros and cons of the situation before you. Let's look at a few examples. Your

In an age where social media and technology have made our lives more public than ever before, we feel as though our every move is being scrutinised by our friends. We strive to be socially accepted and "fit in", and this is what often leads to us succumbing to peer pressure. Though peer pressure may exist amongst adults as well, it is more prominent amongst adolescents because it is at this age that we often struggle to decide what is right and what is wrong.

Peer pressure is often the major reason behind such a large number of adolescents falling victim to drug abuse and addiction. When young people are encouraged by their friends to "try" a harmful substance or engage in a potentially harmful activity, they may do so simply in an attempt to impress their friends, or be more like them. This however, is not the right thing to do.

Before doing anything that your friends suggest, it is important to question what you're about to do. It's important to look at what the long-term consequences of your actions could be. Impulsive decisions are the ones that are most often regretted. Even though it may seem like participating in a certain activity is the best way to make more friends, if deep down, you're not comfortable with it then you shouldn't do it. It's easy to be influenced by your friends- if they're people who are very close to you, you are most likely to trust their judgement. However, as difficult as it may seem, as an adolescent, it is extremely important to hold your own during such situations. The first person you listen to must be yourself.

On the other hand, what if your friends are giving you positive advice? Should you still put your opinions first? This is something that often confuses adolescents. Therefore, I think the best

friend Jessie suggested that you should start studying for the test a week earlier rather than the day before. This would mean that you would miss out on some of your free time and would have to work harder than normal. But on the other hand, your grades would be a lot better and as a consequence you wouldn't have to work as hard on your next test. So, you should probably listen to her! In this case the peer pressure is positive. Now, let's take a different example. Your friend Jett asked you to ride in his car despite the fact that he doesn't have a licensed driving permit. Even though riding with Jett might win his approval, doing so might result in serious injuries if you were to get into an accident. There could also be a very serious issue if you were to be stopped by the police. Hence, it would probably be best if you didn't get into his car. This is an example of negative peer pressure.

In summary, I believe that the best way to handle peer pressure is to follow the three rules below:

- 1) Stop. Don't be in a hurry to take a call on what you should do.
- 2) Think. Weigh out the advantages and disadvantages of the situation and work out whether it would be best to follow your friend's advice.
- 3) State. It's important to state what your opinion is in a firm manner, especially in the case of negative peer pressure. If you think something is wrong, don't be afraid to say it, regardless of what your friends may think of you.

Do not let peer pressure get to you. It's important to be yourself and do the right thing. You no longer need to fear peer pressure- because now you know what to do!

By Ria Thimmaiahgari

Grade 11,

Indus International school



FitSpirit - Spirituality tracker

Ever since I bought a Fitbit activity tracker for my wife, she has been religiously using it and would not call it a day until she achieves her daily goal of 10,000 steps. Taking inspiration from her, even I started using the activity tracker that is inbuilt in my mobile phone and there we go, now we have a healthy competition at home on our daily fitness goals.

While physical activity trackers like Fitbit have been doing their bit by tracking your all-day activity (exercise, sleep, heart rate and weight) and making you aware of the level of your physical fitness, I often wondered if there could be a spirituality tracker that tracks our spiritual activity and makes you aware of the level/mode of our spiritual fitness... for convenience sake, let's call our spirituality tracker as FitSpirit.

Well, little did I realize that our subjective scientists "Rishis" have already figured it out way back in Vedic period and have also left behind a complete manual on how to track spiritual activity. You can find this manual in Chapter 17 (verses 8-22) of Bhagavad Gita.

It's in the very first verse of 17th chapter that Arjuna too wondered how a spiritual seeker could track where he/she stands spiritually... how does one come to know if he/she is in the *Sattvic* mode (Pure and Noble), *Rajasic* mode (Passionate and ego centric) or *Tamasic* mode (Ignorant and Obstinate), to which Krishna so beautifully describes that being in any one of these modes, even the **food** preference of the person is according to that mode and hence serves as an indicator/sensor to the seeker. The same is true for the kind of **sacrifice**, **austerity** and **charity** they incline toward. Hence these four are considered as accurate indicators for tracking one's mode of mind or level of spiritual fitness.

āhāras tv api sarvasya tri-vidho bhavati priyah

yajñas tapas tathā dānam teshām bhedom imam śhrinu BG- 17.7

Fitbit shows the level of your physical fitness based on several wearable sensors like pedometer which records the number of steps taken, Heart Rate meter which monitors your pulse rate etc.. in the same way, with FitSpirit you can come to know your spiritual fitness level based on four spiritual sensors – *Ahar-o-meter* records the nature of food you have consumed, *Yagn-o-Meter* records the nature of sacrifice you have made, *Tapas-o-meter* records the nature of austerity you have practiced and *Dhaan-o-Meter* records the nature of charity you have done.

For e.g. as per the *Ahar-o-meter*,

Mode of a person is considered as *Sattvic* when he/she prefers food that promote the life span, and increase virtue, strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, succulent, nourishing, and naturally tasteful. - BG- 17.8

Mode of a person is considered as *Rajasic* when he/she prefers food that is too bitter, too sour, salty, very hot, pungent, dry, and spicy. Such foods produce pain, grief, and disease. - BG- 17.9

Mode of a person is considered as *Tamasic* when he/she prefers food that is overcooked, stale, putrid, polluted, and impure. - BG- 17.10

In the same way, Verses 11-22 specify in great detail the workings of other spiritual sensors *Yagn-o-Meter*, *Tapas-o-meter*, *Dhaan-o-Meter*. Each of them reflecting the mode/level of your spiritual fitness (*Sattvic* or *Rajasic* or *Tamasic*).

Whether I remember to check these meters/sensors or not, I am frequently reminded of the verse 17.22 (*Dhaan-o-Meter*) every month by a totally anonymous donation to an NGO supporting needy children with cancer. It's been almost three years that this NGO has started accepting online donations through a crowd sourcing platform called Global Giving and since then this anonymous donor whom none of us know donates every month without fail and does not even expect our thank-you note in return... I guess this is the true demonstration of *Sattvic Dhaana*.





dātavyam iti yad dānam dīyate 'nupakārine

*deśhe kāle cha pātre cha tad dānam sāttvikam
smritam - BG- 17.22*

Meaning : Charity given to a worthy cause/ person simply because it is right to give, without consideration of anything in return, at the proper time and in the proper place, is stated to be in the mode of *Sattvic*.

Now, coming back to our spirituality tracker - FitSpirit which has access to all these sophisticated meters/sensors that reflect the true mode of the spiritual seeker ... It's not a wrist band like FitBit that you wear around your wrist. FitSpirit is nothing but your mind in contemplation. It's only in contemplation that you can observe these spiritual sensors.

So just like fitness enthusiasts don't call it a day without checking their physical fitness goals with Fitbit, in the same way spiritual seekers should not call it a day without checking their spiritual fitness goals with FitSpirit which is to contemplate upon the nature of the food they consumed, nature of sacrifice they made, nature of austerity they practiced, and nature of charity they did... to be able to know their current mode and accordingly adjust their goals to rise from lower *Tamasic/Rajasic* levels of spiritual fitness to a higher *Sattvic* level of spiritual fitness.

Just like activity trackers can merely show the fitness level in terms of steps/beats/miles, and it's only with our determination and dedicated efforts that we can achieve our fitness goals. In the same

way spirituality trackers (contemplation) can only reveal the mode/level of our spiritual fitness and it's only with our determination and selfless efforts that we can achieve our spiritual goals.

But sometimes physical fitness is not the only solution for some complicated ailments and you need a medicine for direct intervention, in the same way in spite of determination and concerted efforts you may end up in *Rajasic/Tamasic* levels though you truly intend to be in a *Sattvic* state of mind. For such complex situations, Krishna proposes a simple solution which like a silver bullet is direct and effortless -Before every spiritual activity, just remember the words "*Om Tat Sat*" with deep understanding of its true meaning as explained in verses BG- 17.23 to 28 The words "*Om Tat Sat*" have been declared as symbolic representations of the Supreme Absolute Truth.

***Om Tat Sat iti nirdeśho brahmanas tri-vidhah
smritah - BG- 17.23***

So what are you waiting for? Get going with your FitSpirit today. Remember FitSpirit is not a gadget. It's your own mind in contemplation, wherein you can observe the spiritual sensors within and measure your spiritual fitness level. You can't improve what you can't measure, so Contemplate, Contemplate, Contemplate daily!

Om Tat Sat !

- Ajith Nallari





The powers of the mind

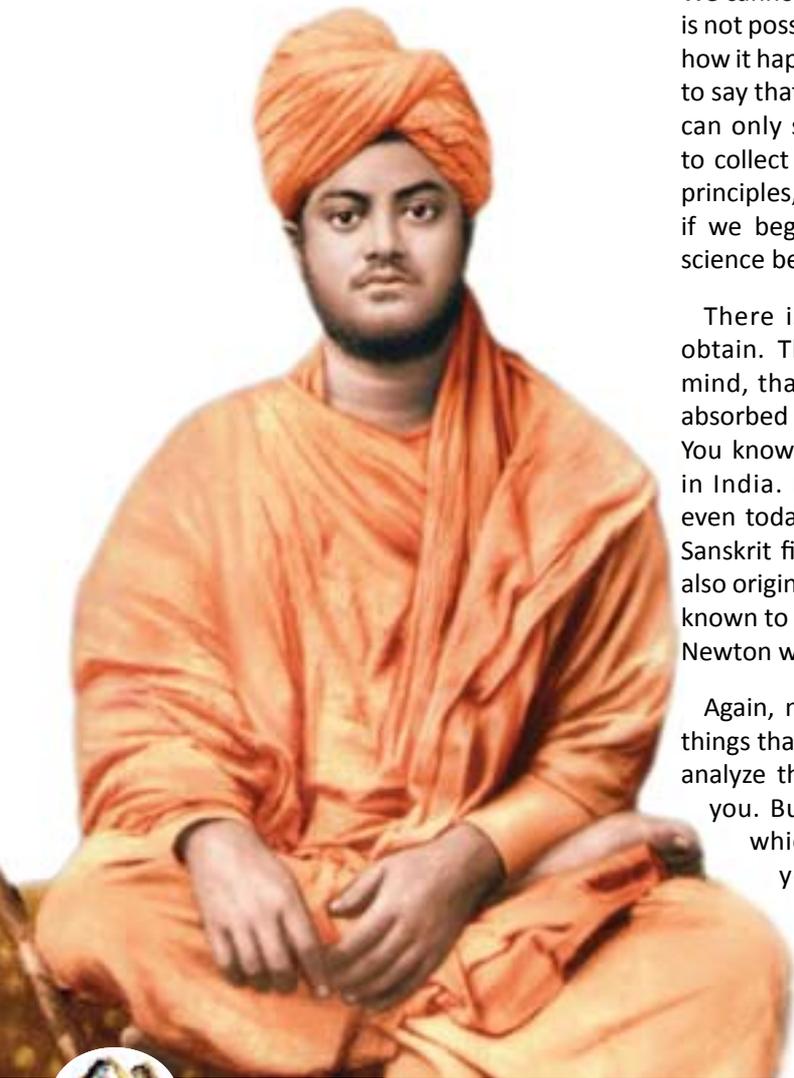
*M*an is growing in knowledge, in power, in happiness. Continuously, we are growing as a race. We see that is true, perfectly true. Is it true of individuals? To a certain extent, yes. But yet, again comes the question: Where do you fix the limit? I can see only at a distance of so many feet. But I have seen a man close his eyes and see what is happening in another room. If you say you do not believe it, perhaps in three

weeks that man can make you do the same. It can be taught to anybody. Some persons, in five minutes even, can be made to read what is happening in another man's mind. These facts can be demonstrated.

Now, if these things are true, where can we put a limit? If a man can read what is happening in another's mind in the corner of this room, why not in the next room? Why not anywhere? We cannot say, why not. We dare not say that it is not possible. We can only say, we do not know how it happens. Material scientists have no right to say that things like this are not possible; they can only say, "We do not know." Science has to collect facts, generalize upon them, deduce principles, and state the truth — that is all. But if we begin by denying the facts, how can a science be?

There is no end to the power a man can obtain. This is the peculiarity of the Indian mind, that when anything interests it, it gets absorbed in it and other things are neglected. You know how many sciences had their origin in India. Mathematics began there. You are even today counting 1, 2, 3, etc. to zero, after Sanskrit figures, and you all know that algebra also originated in India, and that gravitation was known to the Indians thousands of years before Newton was born...

Again, most of the other sciences deal with things that do not move; that are fixed. You can analyze the chair, the chair does not fly from you. But this science deals with the mind, which moves all the time; the moment you want to study it, it slips. Now the mind is in one mood, the next moment, perhaps, it is different, changing, changing all the time. In the midst of all this change it has to



be studied, understood, grasped, and controlled. How much more difficult, then, is this science! It requires rigorous training. People ask me why I do not give them practical lessons. Why, it is no joke. I stand upon this platform talking to you and you go home and find no benefit; nor do I. Then you say, "It is all bosh." It is because you wanted to make a bosh of it. I know very little of this science, but the little that I gained I worked for thirty years of my life, and for six years I have been telling people the little that I know. It took me thirty years to learn it; thirty years of hard struggle. Sometimes I worked at it twenty hours during the twenty-four; sometimes I slept only one hour in the night; sometimes I worked whole nights; sometimes I lived in places where there was hardly a sound, hardly a breath; sometimes I had to live in caves. Think of that. And yet I know little or nothing; I have barely touched the hem of the garment of this science. But I can understand that it is true and vast and wonderful.

Now, if there is any one amongst you who really wants to study this science, he will have to start with that sort of determination, the same as, nay even more than, that which he puts into any business of life.

And what an amount of attention does business require, and what a rigorous taskmaster it is! Even if the father, the mother, the wife, or the child dies, business cannot stop! Even if the heart is breaking, we still have to go to our place of business, when every hour of work is a pang. That is business, and we think that it is just, that it is right.

This science calls for more application than any business can ever require. Many men can succeed in business; very few in this. Because so much depends upon the particular constitution of the person studying it. As in business all may not make a fortune, but everyone can make something, so in the study of this science each one can get a glimpse which will convince him of its truth and of the fact that there have been men who realized it fully.

This is the outline of the science. It stands upon its own feet and in its own light, and challenges comparison with any other science. There have been charlatans, there have been magicians, there have been cheats, and more here than in any other field. Why? For the same reason, that the more profitable the business, the greater the number of charlatans and cheats. But that is no reason why the business should not be good. And one thing more; it may be good intellectual gymnastics to listen to all the arguments and an intellectual satisfaction to hear of wonderful things. But, if any one of you really wants to learn something beyond that, merely attending lectures will not do. That cannot be taught in lectures, for it is life; and life can only convey life. If there are any amongst you who are really determined to learn it, I shall be very glad to help them.

Excerpts from Swami Vivekananda's Talk

(Delivered at Los Angeles, California, January 8, 1900)

Source: Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol: 2

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Birthday celebrations

On 18th February, Birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa took place. All of us got to see the skits performed by our children on topics - Religious tolerance and Practice before Preaching.



Ramaswamy Temple



Ramaswamy temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Rama, located in Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu, India.

In Ramaswamy temple, Sri Rama appears with all his brothers and his companion Goddess Sita Devi, while Sri Hanuman appears with his club in all Vaishnava temples, he is holding a *Veena* here.

Legend

Dasaratha, King of Ayodhya was sad as he had no issues to look after the kingdom after him. As advised by Guru Vasishtha, he conducted a *yajna* called *Putrakameshti Yajna* seeking child boon. To establish *Dharma* on Earth, Lord Vishnu was born to him as Rama from his first queen Kausalya. Vishnu's Adishesha and conch were born as Lakshmana and Shatrugna to his second queen Sumitra. Bharatha representing Vishnu's discus was born to the third queen Kaikeyi and was a symbol of *Dharma* himself. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Shatrugna were born on very auspicious days with *Punarvasu*, *Pushya*, *Aslesha* as their

birth stars respectively. All the four brothers were a living and practical example in human forms of the rule of Vedas. Rama and Lakshmana were close to each other while Shatrugna was close to Bharatha.

Bharatha, an outstanding example of the political *dharma* of the days, ruled Ayodhya as its acting Governor of Rama from the Nandhi Grama placing Rama's sandals on the throne. He ruled till the return of Rama from his exile after 14 years.

Their wives excelled their husbands in upholding *dharmas*. No power on earth could separate the brothers. They were united by soul and mind. Lord Sri Rama in the temple appears as on the Coronation Day in Ayodhya with His consort Mother Sita who suffered untold suffering during their exile, Lakshmana who was only happy to share the hardships of jungle life along with his brother, Bharatha and Shatrugna whose sacrifice deserves all praise and Sri Anjaneya who was the soul of Rama in deciding His final victory over Ravana.

Here Lord Rama has been consecrated in His coronation robes. Both Sri Rama and Sita are seated on the same *Peeta* and Hanuman is depicted as singing in praise of the Lord with the help of a *Veena*.

This temple, known as the southern Ayodhya, has beautiful idols of Rama and Sita depicted in coronation posture. Lakshmana stands next to Rama, holding a bow and arrows; they are flanked by Bharatha holding an Umbrella and Shatrughna holding a fan. This is the only temple where we can see idols of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana along with Bharatha and Shatrughna.

The 62 pillars in the front *mandapam* are great works of art. Scenes from Ramayana are painted on the walls of the *prakaram*.

The walls of the temple are decorated with beautiful paintings depicting the Ramayana. Every scene is painted, right from the birth of Rama to his coronation.





The temple town of Kumbakonam is the abode of several deities each unique and distinct. The temple of Lord Rama situated in the centre of the town is a connoisseurs' delight. The temple is replete with *puranic* lore.

Temple History

King Raghunayak ruled Tanjore from 1614-1640. He was an ardent devotee of Rama. His lieutenant Govinda Dikshitar called Govinda Ayyan was also devout and looked after the temple works.

King Raghunayak dug a holy tank in Darasuram near Kumbakonam. While the work was in progress they found icons of Rama and Sita in the tank. The King's joy knew no bounds. Thus he built a temple for Rama and called it Ramaswamy temple.

This temple is unique as Rama and Sita are in a *Pattabishekam* posture - Coronation scene. Rama and Sita are surrounded by Lakshmana, Shatrugna, Bharatha and the ever obedient Hanuman with *Veena* in one hand and the holy book of Ramayana in the other hand in a sitting posture. This coronation scene attracts people from far off places who are awe struck at the divine sight of the celestial confluence.

A separate sanctum sanctorum is dedicated to Srinivasa with Sreedevi and Bhoodevi.

There are separate shrines for Azhwars and *acharyas*. The temple looks majestic with a mammoth *Gopuram* which seem to beckon the devotees to propitiate the Lord inside.

Source: Tamilnadu Temple Tourism



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Snakes and Ladders

The other day, I was walking by the play area of my apartments when my attention was drawn towards a bunch of kids playing Snakes and Ladders. It has been really long since I last played that game. I went up to them and sat down to watch the game. Snakes and ladders was one of my favourites and frequently played games in my childhood. I still remember how we all dreaded that one huge, longest snake on the board, positioned just a few steps away from the finishing point. God forbid, if unfortunately our coin fell into its domain, the deadly anaconda would gulp us down to almost the starting point. Lo! We had to start our ascent all over again. At times when luck was by our side we could still make it to the goal but sometimes we would lose. Hmm...so frustrating. After watching the game for a while, I got up and resumed my evening walk contemplating on the game.

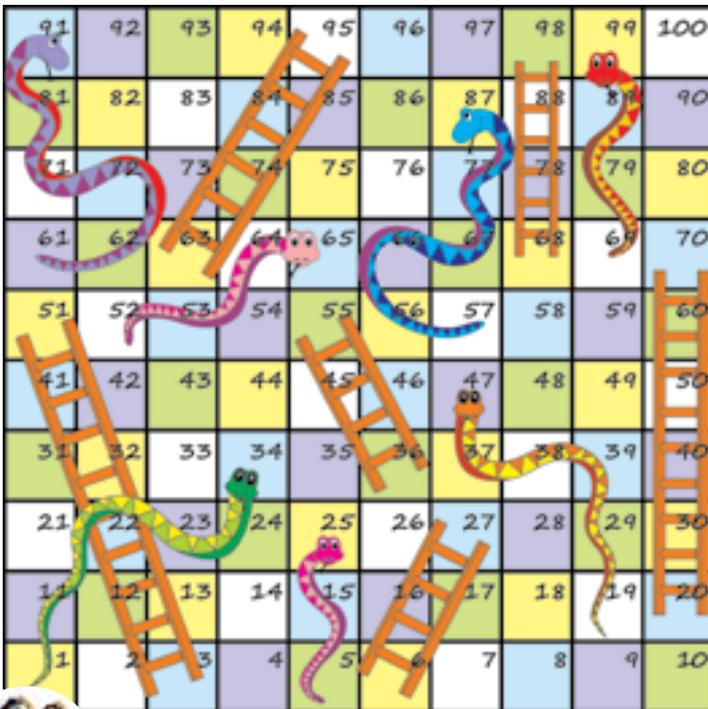
Suddenly, I had a distinction! Isn't the spiritual journey a game of Snakes and Ladders??? Are we not frequently rising and falling in the course

of our inward journey towards Self Realization? Those little deaths we die whenever we are pulled down by our tendencies, obsessions and deeply engraved karmic impressions. One moment up the ladders of love, compassion and forbearance and the next bitten down by the snakes of hatred, jealousy and revenge. Once up by discipline and devotion only to fall due to pride and arrogance. A constant roller coaster ride indeed! Sometimes a rise in itself can be an obstacle for spiritual progress. A ladder is a two way tool. It can take one up and at the same time can also bring one down. Ego is the biggest obstacle for a seeker of truth. Progress and success in spiritual *Sadhana* can empower a *Sadhak* with intense experiences, visions and *Siddhis* (miraculous powers). Here at this juncture when enlightenment is just a few steps away, there is a danger of one falling prey to the deadly snake of inflated ego thereby causing a downfall so bad that years and lifetimes of *Sadhana* goes down the drain leaving the seeker back at square one. Hence a seeker should always be alert and tread the path of spirituality very cautiously.

But there is a silver lining to the cloud. With the guidance of a Guru and Grace of God, one can turn the failures into success, breakdowns into breakthroughs and like a snake charmer tame the snakes and use them as stepping stones to reach the goal. So dear seekers, are you in for the game?

Wish you all the best and happy Snake laddering!

- A Snakeladderer



Karmayoga in the Gita

No one should commit the mistake of consigning the Gita as a study fit only for *Sannyasins* who live in solitary caves and hills. It is the most beneficent contribution towards the peace and happiness of house-holders also. It regulates practical life according to the highest laws of spirituality and *Karma yoga* enunciates the principle and practice of action in the everyday life of the common man. The Gita points out that supreme liberation can be attained while taking part in the activities of earthly life. People think that *Vedanta* and practical life are different things, like parallel lines which never meet. It is not so. It is a grievous error to imagine that *Vedanta* is somewhere in the sky, which is sought for by *Sannyasins* who practice renunciation. The Gita stands like a bridge across the vast gulf between worldly life and Godliness. It reveals the secret of complete renunciation in the midst of all the duties, obligations and responsibilities of a householder's life. Lord Krishna taught the supreme skill (*karmasu kausalam*) to remain perfectly actionless in the midst of tremendous action.

The man who has mastered this skill is in a state of absolute calmness while performing momentous work in the world. The limbs are active, the senses do their functions, the mind exercises its diverse powers, the whole man is apparently in a state of flux and motion, but at the same time, the real inner man stays unaffected by any of those activities. The real man is just like the axle of a wheel. The wheel might rotate at infinite speed but the axle is firm and fixed. So is the real man behind the functions of the physical body and mind. This knowledge and this skill is what is termed as *karma yoga*.

Yogastah kuru karmani – 'With the mind 'firmly fixed in the *Atman*, do your work'. 'Surrender the fruits of action to God, and then perform work. Such work does not bind you.' This is the teaching



of Lord Krishna. On the other hand, work that is done for the sake of personal enjoyment, forgetful of the Supreme Lord, binds man eternally to the wheel of birth and death. 'Work divorced from spirituality is like an artificial flower which has neither life nor fragrance'. So work in itself is not great. The method of work is really great.

The Gita does not say what man should do. It does not limit the field of man's activity in the world. It tells us how to work. The 'how' is of the greatest importance to the *karma yogi*. The Gita exhorts all men to pursue their prescribed duties. Men passing through the different phases of life could carry on their duties uninterrupted. But there is only one condition – *mamanusmara* – 'Remember Me'.

The Gita teaches that even after attaining *jnana*, one need not give up his prescribed duty.

Source: Gita Makarandam
by Swami Vidyaprakashananda

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*Mrutyunjayaaya Rudraaya
Neelakantaaya Shambhave
Amriteshaaya Sarvaaya
Mahadevaaya Te Namaha*

Meaning: I pray to Lord Mahadeva who has conquered death, who is the destroyer of the universe, who has a blue neck and who gives happiness to all.

**Festivals
&
Events of
APRIL
2017**

5



Sri Rama Navami

9



Mahavir Swami Jayanti

11



Hanuman Jayanti

14



Ambedkar Jayanti & Good Friday

28



Akshaya Tritiya

30



Shankaracharya Jayanti & Sadas Jayanti

Business and Human Rights

A few days back, I got an opportunity to attend a conference on business and human rights. Organized by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in association with Confederation of Indian Industry, the conference was attended by officials from State Government and the CEOs of different companies. The conference afforded me a chance to look at business from a different perspective. Till then, I never thought of due diligence of a business from the human rights angle.

Speaking of responsibility of the State to foster an ecosystem where human rights are revered and observed, the Chairperson of NHRC said businesses which also benefit from society should shoulder the responsibility of the State. Referring to Harvard Kennedy School of Governance's Professor John Ruggie's framework of 'protect, respect and remedy' for business and human rights, he urged the companies to undertake due diligence of their entire logistics chain to ensure that there is no violation of human rights due to their operations.

Different speakers stressed upon human rights springing from the Preamble of our Constitution, which gives importance to the 'dignity of the individual'. One of the speakers, the CEO of a renowned company, observed that big businesses are the first ones to seek various kinds of exemptions from the Government and

hence, they should also take full responsibility for their impact on society. In his opinion, human rights are non-negotiable and should be respected by all. Business, he said, should aim not just at the absence of exploitative conditions, but be facilitative for the achievement of a dignified way of life. Another speaker made a very pertinent comment. While a few institutions do observe all rules and even go beyond the prescriptions, they incur higher costs which are passed on to the end consumers. He questioned if we, as consumers, are ready to pay the higher price.

Human rights, simply stated, are rights essential for human beings to lead a life of dignity and inherent in all human beings by virtue of their being human. They are broadly classified as civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, which states the follows in its preamble, "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". The other kinds of rights have been listed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the UN in 1966.

Our Government has enacted a plethora of legislations for safeguarding the rights of our citizens. The fundamental rights in our Constitution are nothing but human rights. Human rights are definitely important, but their selective application by the activists and advocates is not correct. Human rights, in my view, should not be entwined with politics. Equal application to all is something we must aim for.

- Neetika Gogula

An advocate and has passion for writing on social issues.





Sri Rama's calm repose while breaking the Shiva Dhanassu. (Bala Kandam)



Sita asks for the Golden Deer she loves at first sight (Aranya Kandam)



Rama finally kills Ravana, the Demon King of Lanka (Yuddha Kandam)



Sita is asked to prove her purity with an Agnipariksha. She emerges unscathed from the ordeal (Yuddha Kandam)



Sri Rama's coronation as the King of Ayodhya. He would lead the kingdom to peace and prosperity thereafter.



Bapu a Legendary (on Ramayana)

Stunning Paintings by the Legendary Bapu

that portray the Ramayana in all its vividness!

Sattiraju Lakshmi Narayana, lovingly known as Bapu, was a man of many talents. Born on 15 December, 1933 in Narsapuram, West Godavari, he was an eminent painter, cartoonist, film director, writer, and journalist. He had a uniquely personalized style blending classical Telugu lines and modern techniques to perfection.

Without a shade of doubt, it can be said that Bapu has left an enormous impact on contemporary Telugu arts and films. He recently passed away, leaving behind a legacy of great art and memorable films.

Ramayanam is a story that exemplifies how a man should lead his life. The ideal man, Sri Rama, and the beautiful Sita became embodiments of perfection in Bapu's brilliant imagination. Here are those heroic episodes portrayed in his paintings!



Vali gets shot by Rama while in a fierce battle with Sugriva, his blood-brother (Kishkindha Kandam)



Have You Met YOURSELF!



Every one of us began life when we were not aware of what life is all about. The little acts that we did every day, the thoughts that we got and the people we met have formed the early years of our lives. It is said 'what motivates you to get up from your bed daily in the morning, plays a major role in shaping your life'. It is true that for a Spiritual Seeker, to wake up early in the morning for *Sadhana* is the motivating factor. Similarly for a fitness freak, it is to stay fitter that motivates to wake up. Even for a housewife, to get things ready for her family in time is the motivating factor to wake up early. In pursuance of our goals in today's life we are finding time for every activity except for our own selves.

In order to impress others of our career growth or to make a mark among our relatives or to win some brownie points from friends, we tend to spend time with them, though we have nothing to gain. At the end of the day we feel annoyed having been exploited or being ignored by the people around us. Root cause for such frustration is the expectation of appreciation from them. We are

not mature enough to gauge the situations and its outcome before-hand. Our maturity is always a leg below the reality. Life is a celebration for a few and it is a burden for few. Both are right in their own way. For the people who make such a comment, it is their point of view. The problem crops up when we try to adopt their procedures in our lives. To understand what suits us to grow in our selected field is the real litmus test for every one of us to pass through, in search of that eluding success or contentment. The talks like "we are born to become great" and "we have potential to make it big" is all mere parrot talk until we start believing in ourselves. To make it happen, we need to spend time on our own selves. Someone else's success will never be our success. At the most, you may be part of their success's celebration but not part of their achievement. Achievers we will be if we attain something worthy on our own. Anything can deteriorate or disappear but achievement remains.

When success happens, no explanation is required. It is the beauty of success that in itself speaks. No spokesperson or promotion is required.



We get inspired from the lives of great people. We get surprised at the humble beginnings they made.

A small seed holds the potential of becoming a huge tree. Small creeks become mighty rivers. Persistent effort and perseverance will take us places. There is no success formula available to become better and achieve. Just have belief in one self. To meet our own self at the end of the day, every day, honestly holds the key to open the door to success. Who else can be a better judge than our own self to weed out our shortcomings and weaknesses? To hone our skills the best tool is to explore the possibilities of correcting our mistakes. We are afraid of committing mistakes but in fact it is the breeding ground for success. Mistakes give us opportunity to correct ourselves and help in achieving success. If we treat our mistakes as our experiences, it will keep us in a better frame of mind to stay optimistic.

As Swami Vivekananda said, 'the history of the world is the history of the few people who had faith in themselves'. With faith comes the strength. With strength comes the success. Success makes us meet the new person already in us. Let our endeavor be to meet that new person who is striving inside to unfold himself and introduce us to this world which had not seen our factual form. Let us start exploring self. Let us meet our own true selves. Let today be the first day to begin the sojourn called self-discovery.

- M. Koti Rajasekhar



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Science Fair at Nachiketa Tapovan

Excellent, marvelous, awesome, extraordinary, superb, fantastic were the repeated words ringing in our ears, articulated by the guests who had come to visit our Science Fair on 1st February 2017 at the Nachiketa Tapovan, Vidya Mandir premises.



All the hard work from the starting of the New Year by our precious children, dear teachers and the helpful volunteers was exhibited. Mrs. Val Leivers, along with Vasundhara amma inaugurated the Science Fair by cutting the ribbon and lighting the lamp. They went around the room accompanied by other volunteers, watching each and every experiment, listening with rapt attention to the explanation given by the students. All of us could see the glow on their faces and a gleam in their eyes while coming out of the room. Mrs. Val was spell bound and Vasundhara amma came out of the room as a proud mother. It was a second chance for her in a week to be proud of her children (one – emerging as winners in a football match and two – most impressive show of the Science Fair by her dear students whom she treats as her own children).



Science has helped mankind to rise to incredible heights. Scientific discoveries and inventions nourish and sustain life on earth. The Fair proved to be of great educational value to the students of Rockwell, Orchids, Shaikpet International and Pioneer World Schools.



The Fair consisted of different sections where children from class 5-10 participated. It started with 'The production of Paddy' where the guests were shown how paddy is produced. It was followed by 'Global Warming', 'Model of an Atom', 'Dangerous plastic' (which made the guests realize the extent of damage that plastic can cause to nature). Next came 'Chemical chameleon', 'Life cycle of frog' followed by the most colourful and impressive section of the Fair, 'Eat Well Plate' (balanced diet). It was 'Waste Water treatment plant' and 'Electroplating' that ensued.



Two girls in their white lab coats were ready to explain the circulatory system which glowed with red and blue LED lights distinguishing between the 'arteries and veins'. Rest of the round was started by 'Hydraulic Jack', 'The Skeleton', 'Green Power' (which caught the attention of the guests) and 'Endocrine Glands'. 'Volcano', 'Refraction' and the circuits followed. Towards the end stood students of class 7 to explain the 'Types of soil', 'How oxygen helps in Burning', 'Separation of substances' and finally 'How gas is produced with yeast and dry ice'. The last one which caught everyone's attention was the 'Handmade Projector' set up on the stage.

Standing at the doorway and watching the appreciative glances of the guests who made repeated rounds, made me feel elated and my respect for our school Nachiketa Tapovan and students was amplified. Each and every child with their respective class teachers and science volunteers felt magnificent and majestic with innumerable compliments coming their way.

Our beloved Mataji was left speechless seeing the children's effort, not finding enough words to praise. The day ended at 4pm with the distribution of Participation Certificates to each and every student and special cash prizes was given by Mrs. Val personally to two of the exhibits which impressed her very much, 'The Eat Well Plate' and 'The Projector'.

HAPPINESS SHARED IS HAPPINESS MULTIPLIED!

- *Mrudula*



Vivekachudamani

Arthasya niscayo drsto vicarena hitoktitah;

Na snanena na danena pranayama-satena va – 13

The conviction of the Truth is seen to proceed from reasoning upon the salutary counsel of the wise, and not by bathing in the sacred waters, nor by gifts, nor by a hundred *pranayamas* (control of the vital force).

In this verse Shankara says that the conviction of the Truth is seen to proceed from reasoning upon the salutary counsel of the wise (*Arthasya niscayo drsto vicarena hitoktitah*). The nature of Reality is realized when we deeply think on the advice of a wise teacher. Clear, rational thinking is stressed here. We first hear about the nature of reality from a realized teacher or from the *sruti*. Based on that, we reason out the veracity of our psychophysical experiences and go deep into ourselves. Then alone we gain the strong conviction about the true nature of ourselves. Thereby we become awakened to our true nature. We can attain this by mechanical rituals, says Shankara emphatically: such a conviction is never to be gained merely by bathing in the sacred waters, by gifts, or even by a hundred rounds of *pranayamas* (*Na snanena na danena pranayama-satena va*). Mere blind mechanical adherence to external rituals like bathing in holy rivers, going on pilgrimage, doing charities, or even endless *pranayamas* will not cause the awakening of the strong conviction about our true nature. This is so because the mind behind such actions has not become illumined. Mental illumination is a phenomenon of a higher level, coming out of a stern process of conscious investigation into the verity of all our experiences. This conscious reasoning, and not merely the external mechanical acts of piety, is the stress in this verse.

A great soul like Mirabai sings: "If God-realization could be attained by merely bathing in a river, all fishes would have realized God." God is never attained through rituals and ceremonies. Their value is secondary. Our success in spiritual endeavor depends on the degree of stress we lay on the primary factor.

- *Swami Ranganathananda*



THUS SPAKE LORD MAHAVIR

Live and let live. Love all - Serve all.

Where there is Love there is Life. Violence is Suicide.

All living beings long to live. No one wants to die.

Have compassion towards all living beings. Hatred leads to destruction.

Silence and Self-control is non-violence.

Just as I dislike pain, so all other beings dislike pain.

A wise person does not kill, nor cause others to kill, nor consent to the killings by others.

Respect for all living beings is non-violence.

Non-violence is the highest religion.

All human beings are miserable because of their own ignorance, and they themselves can be happy by acquiring proper knowledge.

The greatest mistake of a soul is non-recognition of its real self and can only be corrected by recognizing itself.

Every soul is in itself absolutely omniscient and blissful. The bliss does not come from outside.

All Souls are alike and potentially divine. None is Superior or Inferior.

There is no separate existence of God. Everybody can attain God-hood by making supreme efforts in the right direction.

Know thyself, recognize thyself, be immersed by thyself - you will attain God-hood.

God is neither the creator nor the destroyer of the universe. He is merely a silent observer and omniscient.

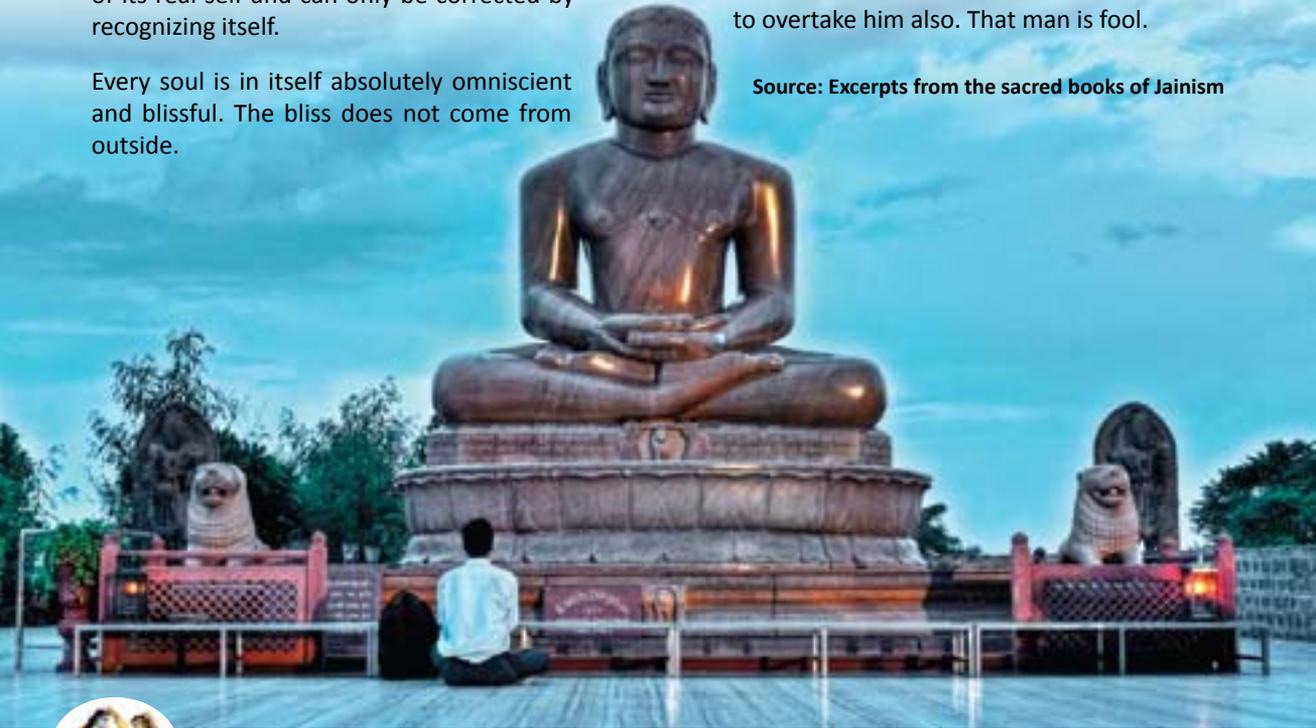
One who, even after knowing the whole universe, can remain unaffected and unattached is God.

Every soul is independent. None depends on another.

Fight with yourself, why fight with external foes? He, who conquers himself through himself, will obtain happiness.

A man is seated on top of a tree in the midst of a burning forest. He sees all living beings perish. But he doesn't realize that the same fate is soon to overtake him also. That man is fool.

Source: Excerpts from the sacred books of Jainism



Shri Ram - Quiz



1. How was the shadow of Hanuman looking while he was crossing the ocean to reach Lanka?
2. What did the Divyavani tell to king Janaka when he found a baby in the *Yagna bhoomi*?
3. Who is the guardian of the direction West?
4. Who performed the last rites to Ravana?
5. What is the name of the garden that Angada, Hanuman and other Vanaras saw after coming back (after Hanuman saw Sita at Lanka) and proceeding to the king Sugreeva?
6. After looking at the jewelry that was dropped down by Sita (while she was taken away by Ravana), what did Lakshmana say to Sri Rama?
7. After coming from Suteeksha Mahamuni's *ashram*, what is the lake that Sri Rama saw and who made it?
8. What is the name of the city in which Bharata and Satrugna were encamped in the kingdom of Kekaya?
9. Whose son is 'Vrushyasrunga'?
10. Who is the king of Angarajya?

By Dr. Kalluri Venkateshwar Rao, MA Ph.D
Translated by Manjula

1. The shadow of Hanuman was gigantic and alluring with ten *yojanas* in length and thirty *yojanas* in width.
2. "This child is not an ordinary child she is a spiritual child and really your daughter".
3. "Varuna" - he is the guardian of the West and is particularly associated with oceans and waters. (www.britannica.com)
4. Vibhishana
5. Garden called Madhuvana (this is the favorite garden of king Sugreeva and this garden is guarded by Dadimukha, brother in law of Sugreeva) (www.Hindupedia.com)
6. "These bracelets and other ear rings are not known to me but these anklets seem to be Sita's. Whenever I give salutations to her lotus feet I see these anklets".
7. Lake called "Panchapsaramu" and was built by sage Mandakarni.
8. Bharata and Satrugna encamped in the beautiful house of their maternal uncle in the city of "Rajagruha".
9. Vibhandaka
10. Romapada

ANSWERS:



Panchabhuta facet of MAHASHIVARATRI

Just the day before *Mahashivaratri*, I happened to watch a brilliant video on whatsapp, so scientifically explaining that on the night of *Mahashivaratri* there is a phenomenal upsurge of energy on our planet, a particular centrifugal force that works in an upward movement and hence our spine should be in a vertical position to make use of this upsurge in energy to reach higher. It may be true, it may be as true as the latest scientific discovery of seven new Exoplanets (planets which orbits a star outside the solar system) for which the scientists at NASA got all excited and got the whole world intrigued. The reason of excitement being that these newly discovered Exoplanets are seemingly **Earth-like** planets, only impediment though is that they are about 40 light years from Earth. That means, using today's advance rocket science, it would probably take about 11,500 years to reach them.

It's remarkable that all that we needed are just a couple of seemingly remotely similar aspects, to call 40 light-years away planet - **Earth-like**. But on the other hand we can draw a circle around us with a 40 miles radius and come up with more than 40 differences (colour, creed, race, caste, community, religion, gender, nationality, region, social status, language, dialects, disabilities etc.) to unscientifically segregate fellow humans around us and call them different. Haven't you heard someone or yourself saying "They're not like us"? I wonder why we tend to seek similarities in



macrocosmic world of planets but see differences in the microcosmic world of humans... Let's park that thought for the time being.

Coming back to the scientific explanation of upsurge of external energy and outward centrifugal force on *Mahashivaratri*, it may be true but I would like to believe that *Mahashivaratri* is more to do with energies and forces within than without.

This is the exact philosophy espoused by Nachiketa Ashram : *Mahashivaratri* is not merely a celebration of a festival but it's an opportunity to embark on an inward voyage to self-discover and realize the interplay of the Spirit (Shiva) in and through the Matter (*Shakthi*) within us. It's a day to channelize our spiritual energy and the draw inward through meditation in order to realize that the entire macrocosm and microcosm is mere play of the one true self (Spirit/Shiva/*Purusha*) in and through the non-self (Matter/*Shakthi/Prakriti*).

It is just like the whole of WWW (World Wide Web) and IoT (Internet of Things) is mere play of the one Internet in and through all the connected devices in the universe (Satellites/Systems/Servers/PC/Laptop/Mobiles/Tablets/Gadgets... etc.).

The flow of *Mahashivaratri* program at Nachiketa Ashram is absolutely one of a kind, essentially because it acknowledges and incorporates the





eternal fact that the intensity of divinity within is expressed based on the level of involvement of spirit with matter (Space, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth), hence creating an ideal platform and atmosphere for different kinds of *sadhaks* to experience the divinity at different levels and intensities based on one's own spirit-matter combination.

As usual the program started with *Bhajans*. For seekers who were touched by the soulful *Bhajans* and *Bhakti kirtans*, Shiva expressed His divinity within them through the elemental medium of **Space** as *Eswara*.

Cultural and Moral based skits and dances by children to lively music in the **air**, provided the required condition for Shiva to express His divinity as *Sadashiva* within the ecstatic parents and audience.

An elaborate arrangement was made for *Yagna* in order to extend the surreal experience to larger number of *sadhakas*. The entire temple platform was transformed into a huge *yagnashala* with five *yagnakundams* arranged with all required material and offerings. It was a magnificent sight to watch. With our young *sadhaka*, Maheswari's unstinting assistance, Mataji initiated and supervised the *Yagna* and set up the perfect conditions with reverberating Vedic chants coupled with crackling sound of fire wood, the warm touch of *yagna* fire and the unexplainable divine forms as fire crackled and flared up ...more than perfect conditions for

Shiva to express His divinity through **fire** as Rudra within the transcended and sublimed seekers sitting around. Leveraging this meditative state of nothingness as a Launchpad, Mataji further drove home the message of true *Bhakti* with a soul-stirring story of a great Shiva *Bhakt*. For me this was the peak of Mahashivaratri ... You may call this a phenomenal upsurge of spiritual energy if you will.

It is just past midnight and the next program to follow was *Lingodhbava* and *Abhishekam*, the most awaited one, especially for the local *thanda* people who just love pouring out their devotional emotions by pouring water on the formless form of *Lingodhbhava* while also chanting *mantras* thereby creating an optimal condition for Shiva to express His divinity through **water** within the immersed seekers.

And then it was time for the grand finale of *Mahashivaratri - Alankarana* and *Harathi*. After a long wait, Swamiji blew the *Om* emanating conch, harbingering the opening of doors for the devotees to feast their eyes on the spectacular revealing of yet another divine form of Shiva –The *Ardhanareeswara*, symbolizing the profound realization that the entire macrocosm and microcosm is mere play of the **Shiva Spirit** in and through the **Shakthi Matter** and that the combination of *Shiva-Shakti* is the source of all creation within and without.

All through the night, the *Ma Yoga Shaktipeetam* was brought to life by Maheshwari's melodious and soul stirring Vedic chants/*Stotrams* and the exquisitely laid bed of *diyas* in the heart of *Yoga Shaktipeetam*, enriched and enhanced the Shiva *Tattva* experience of each and every seeker present.

- *Ajith Nallari*





HOW SURRENDER TO GOD IS STRENGTH ?

I am sharing my recent experience and insights with Nachiketanjali readers. It was a very important day for me. I have travelled from Chennai to Coimbatore to meet the Director for my PhD synopsis approval. It was a long wait for 6 hours. I somehow managed to pass the time enduring. At one point of time I began to lose my patience. I was anxious as I had to leave the university in another thirty minutes to catch the evening flight. I felt all seem lost. Psychologically, physically, emotionally thought patterns of stress, worry and helplessness gushed in, thinking of the futility of the trip. I started questioning myself, 'Is my money and time going to go waste?' Somehow in those testing painful moments, I could bring shift to my mind and change my direction of thinking and connect with God deeply within with bold faith. I just remembered to pray and completely surrender to God and silently uttered my Guru's words, "Let Thy will be done ". Gradually I could observe myself feeling relaxed and calming down. In that lesser state of agitation in the mind, I was in the state of awareness that God is my guide now. From my own experience, I realized this for myself 'surrendering to the grace of God is the strength for the soul during struggling moments'.

There are many benefits of surrender. It is often said that surrender is strength. It is the easiest thing yet it is difficult. The egoistic mind resists and does not allow surrender. Most of the time we are caught in that excessively confident state of mind that we forget the grand scheme of things, the essential truth that we are the

instruments in the hands of God. By saying this, I don't mean one should not be confident or one should not act. Both are essential and surrender is not inaction. What I am saying is in those surrendering moments, I could open the doors to wonderful realizations. I created a space. As the diameter of heart's space to surrender increased, I could feel instant lightness. I felt peace and strength. And in that harsh moments of turmoil, as I allowed surrender for Grace to descend upon me, the Director walked in. What a transforming blessing moment!

I gladly walked into the room and could get all formalities done successfully within that significant thirty minutes time. Some insights dawned upon me after this experience. How true, we realise the presence of God during the testing moments in our lives. Probably, as a spiritual seeker it is God's kind way of teaching me a lesson and bring me to the truth and it dawned upon me that "we are the instruments in the hands of God ". From this experience, I am thinking and exploring about surrender. Can we boldly allow 'Faith and Complete surrender to God' to act as a catalyst that will propel us to move forward with more confidence in the wonderful journey of life? How beautiful are these self-discovering learning moments! I wish and hope for many more such moments! Surrender! Trip to heart anyone?

- Srikala Ganapathy

PhD Research scholar
Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.



Inspiration Galore

INDIAN WOMEN

"If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman."

Beginning with this issue, we will attempt to present the life of an extraordinary woman, who went ahead of her times and scripted history.

This month, we take a glance into the life of **Rassundari Devi**, the first Indian woman to write an autobiography.

Born in 1810
in Pabna,
West Bengal

Father died
when she was
young, was raised
by her mother and
other relatives

Limited formal
schooling, married
at the age of 12

Book also
speaks about
her own views on
changes in society



Keen desire
to read Chaitanya
Bhagvata, so went
on to learn how to
read

Book
portrays the
plight of women
in the early 19th
century

1868 –
published her
autobiography
"Amar Jiban"

Self-taught-
learnt to read and
write by secretly
seeing her husband's
manuscripts



Single Universe and Single God

God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He is infinite. The Cosmos is the Universe as an embodiment of order and harmony. He is a physicist, zoologist, chemist, geologist, mathematician, botanist, physician, an architect and what not? He created in the Universe, universities with natural laboratories. He framed the laws with a purpose and sees that everything goes smooth according to the laws. He has no ministers, administrators, officers, police officers etc. to share his work. He himself cannot break the laws because he cares for everything to go as per his commands. He selects by preference guides for research work.

Nature had chosen Leonardo da Vinci, to bestow lavishly all her gifts and graces and it may be said that the world has not produced another man to equal him who combined in himself a brilliant mathematician, a profound philosopher, a keen astronomer, an experimental physicist, biologist, anatomist besides being a charming musician and a painter.

Leonardo was born in 1452 in Vinci near Florence (Italy). He concluded from his experiments on falling bodies that they fall with accelerated velocities. He had a correct concept of force and he had anticipated many important principles of physics which were later perfected by Galileo and Newton. He had suggested the use of hot air in balloons and analysing the flight of birds, he prepared drawings of designs for aviators. This kind-hearted and generous Leonardo was a prince among men and a man among princes.



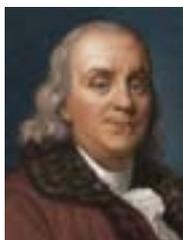
Stephen Hawking - a scientist with an Einstein rated intellect, world's most famous quantum physicist and cosmologist, was born in 1942. He joined the university college, Oxford, where he exhibited an astonishing ability to visualise solutions to complex problems, without

calculation or experiment, a talent that proved invaluable in his later life. Gaining a first in Physics in 1962, he moved to Cambridge. As ill luck would have it, here he showed signs of the deadly 'Motor Neurone disease'. Soon he was robbed of all powers of movement except for two fingers of one hand and was confined to a wheelchair, his body fitted with a number of hi-tech electronic equipment to keep him alive. Hawking concentrated on the Geometry of the universe, which he could picture in his mind. By the early seventies, he became a legend in Physics by producing a series of papers of increasing elegance which successfully combined the previously irreconcilable branches of physics: Relativity and quantum mechanics. He worked on a model of the universe that had no boundaries in space and in which time could be measured in 'Imaginary Numbers'. Baffling to all but a few, his ideas are highly significant and influential. The story of Hawking reveals that man's greatest glory lies not in never falling but in rising up every time he falls.

Volta was born on February 18, 1745 at Como in Italy. He read the experiments of Luigi Galvani who observed a frog's muscle twitching violently when a sharp brass hook he forced into the spinal cord of the frog touched the iron fence. Volta started where Galvani left. Lack of equipment did not deter him and he used his tongue as a piece of apparatus. He covered the tip of his tongue with a thin strip of tin. He kept one end of a silver spoon on the tongue farther from the tip, the other end touching the strip of tin. He experienced a sour taste. He concluded that when two different metal plates in a liquid medium are joined together, a current passes. He constructed a pile known as Volta's pile to give continuous electric current. This discovery opened the new field of electrical and chemical research. Napoleon presented a gold medal to Volta. Volta died in 1827, still lives with us because the unit of potential difference 'Volt' is with us now.



Anteus accidentally stepped on an electric eel and was immediately cured of the disease gout. (Eel – a fish characterised by its shiny serpent like elongated body, by the absence of ventral fins, and the continuity of the dorsal and anal fin round the extremity of the tail. Some species are marine and some fresh water. All are remarkable for their voracity and tenacity of life. Many are considered excellent food). He was the first man to receive one of the various benefits of electricity already there in nature. It was used as a tool in laboratory to develop electricity. This Anteus was not that Anteus who was a giant invincible so long as he touched the earth but killed by Hercules who held him up and crushed him. Anteus does not find a place in the history of electricity. Dr. William Gilbert in 1601 rubbed a glass rod with silk cloth and it acquired a new property of attracting light substances like pith, paper, cotton, cork etc. The rod was said to be electrified. It was later found to exhibit a similar property. It is found to have a negative charge. A deficit of electrons leads to positive charge and a surplus of electrons leads to a negative charge. These charges were static and so the subject electrostatics was developed. In those days electricity meant electrostatics.



Benjamin Franklin was a renowned American scientist. He contributed a lot in ship-design and in tracking the paths of cyclonic storms. His famous ‘kite experiment’ in which he flew a kite with the wire attached to a key during a thunder storm established

beyond doubt that the electricity associated with clouds is in no way different from the static electricity produced in a laboratory. Thus Franklin helped us in wiping out the superstition from our minds that lightning and thunder are mysterious terrifying natural phenomena used as destructive weapons by angered Gods to punish evil-doers. When the lightning rods invented by him stood on all the tall buildings of America and Europe to protect them, he became world famous. In addition to being a famous scientist, Franklin was a good statesman, industrialist and author. He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth.

Young children possess a wonderful faculty of acquiring knowledge by the simplest means. They exhibit latent talents spontaneously and if parents look at them as searchingly and encourage them instead of condemning them, they blaze forth as Stars. Remind Thomas Gray’s line: Many a gem of purest ray serene.

When young Robert Boyle, the father of Iatrochemistry, was playing on the ground, he found a damaged exhaust pump in the garbage on the road. He took it home, washed it with water, cleaned and looked seriously the defects in the pump. He repaired it and brought it in good condition. He placed mice and alarm clock in the receiver. He found that mice died; the clock was visible throughout; the intensity of sound decreased gradually and finally no sound was heard. He enunciated the laws.

- i. Mice required oxygen (or air) for life.
- ii. The clock is visible throughout but the sound intensity gradually decreases and finally sound cannot be heard or sound cannot travel in vacuum. The results of simple childish experiments turned out to be the Universal truths.

As Madeline Bridges points out “Give to the world the best that you have, and the best will come back to you.”

- K.V. Ramakrishna Sastry

Thank you Donors!



We are extremely thankful to
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Corpus Fund - Sponsor a Child Education
Nachiketa Tapovan, Hyderabad



The Chavara Family

Architects of Organic village in Kerala



On the beautiful banks of Bharatpuzha River, a self-built tree house lies shrouded by a canopy of lush green trees. Inside, Mohan Chavara and his family prepare a meal with the fresh produce from their sprawling organic garden. Mohan Chavara and his family are the first residents of the emerging organic village in Kerala's Palakkad district.

Conceptualized and founded by Chavara, this village is nestled amidst two-and-a-half acres of scenic countryside and is just a short walk away from the Mannannur railway station.

Here's the story of how Mohan Chavara, a talented sculptor, is building a unique organic village based on the principles of sustainability, simple living and harmony with nature.

Chavara and his wife, Rukmini (former principal of a nursing college) had long cherished a dream of creating a community of people committed to green living. In 2013, they talked to 14 like-minded families about building a self-sustainable organic village for themselves. All of them wanted to leave behind the pollution, the processed foods and the chaos of the city to begin a new, healthier life in the lap of nature. When they came across a beautiful, two-and-a-half acre patch of land on the banks of the Bharathpuzha River, they knew it



was the perfect place to build their organic village. Pooling their funds, they bought the land that was previously a rubber plantation. The group began by chopping and removing the rubber trees on the land as they were unhealthy for the soil. Next, they built their tree house with their own hands before planting fruit trees and vegetable gardens. In 2015, Mohan, Rukmini and their two daughters – 18-year-old Surya and 11-year-old Sreya – shift into the upcoming village, the first to do so. The layout of the organic village has been planned keeping the principle of sharing and togetherness in mind. Since its very inception, the organic village has had many appreciative visitors, so the Chavaras and the other families plan to build a guest house and a large community kitchen where everybody can cook and eat together. The families are also planning to invite artists, activists and people from neighbouring villages for weekly art meets that will be held at the village.

Recently, the Chavaras have started building a simple mud house for themselves, with a little outside help for the roofing. Other than growing fruits, vegetables and pulses, the Chavaras also rear poultry, goats and cows. Every guest to the village is welcome with a delicious meal prepared by Rukmini who uses fresh produce from their organic garden. The evening meals at the village are often accompanied by melodious local songs and enthusiastic art discussions. The Chavaras also believe that one can learn much more love, humanity and compassion while living amidst nature in comparison to regular schools. This is why Sreya and Surya have dropped out of school to lead the natural way of life. Though Surya was a class topper till she dropped out in the eighth grade, she is much more comfortable and happier learning through this alternative, informal mode of education. Sreya, on the other hand, is dyslexic. Her teachers were often unable to understand and work with her abilities; however, she is





thriving now, with the organic village opening up a world of opportunities for her. Both the sisters love observing the beautiful vagaries of nature, hearing the birds serenade them as they work, and savouring the refreshingly cool breeze as they lounge around in their tree house.

Surya and Sreya also travel frequently to learn more about the cultural and social diversity of their state. In 2013, they led a children’s brigade to Aranmula and symbolically planted paddy saplings to raise awareness about a proposed project that would damage the rich biodiversity of the region. Taught by their father, Surya and Sreya have also become quite proficient at sculpturing and other art forms. With their parents encouraging their creativity, the sisters have made many sculptures and paintings that adorn the walls and pillars of the quaint mud house. A quiet place away from the chaos of the city, their efforts have transformed the village into a fetching fusion of traditional jungle living and artistic design. Having seen the positive effect of sustainable living on their kids, the Chavaras and the other families now plan to design their own education system (including art and craft workshops, gardening classes etc) that encourages children to live together, rather than to compete with each other. With their beautiful story of adventure, sustainability and lots of love, the Chavaras have set a unique example of organic living that is sure to inspire many people across India to return to their roots.

Source: The better India
Source for all photos: Mohan Chavara

Essay Writing Competition

On 19th February, 7th and 8th class girls of Nachiketa Tapovan Vidya Mandir, returned proudly after winning all the prizes in Essay Writing Competition, conducted by “Pioneer, the world school”.



Swami Archanananda Visit

On 27th February - Swami Archanananda sanctified our school with his presence and conducted a session on “Who is God”? “Our innerself”.



NACHIKETA TAPOVAN

Kodgal



Annadhata Sukhibhava!

We thank our sponsors for their Annadanam to our Vidya Mandir children at Nachiketa Tapovan, Kodgal. The children are greatly benefited by your contribution.

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Swamiji 99 08 23 45 45
nachiketananda@gmail.com

Contact for further assistance

Ashram: 8008882828 Tapovan: 9849168937

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Only Because of YOU...

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

Donations towards operation costs

Vidya Daanam (Education)	₹ 7000/year/child
Anna Daanam (Mid-day Meals)	₹ 6000/day
Alpa Aharam (Snacks)	₹ 1200/day
Vastra Daanam (Uniforms)	₹ 900/2 pairs
Stationery Supplies (Copier Paper)	₹ 5000/term
Medicines (For needy people)	₹ 5000/month
Festival at Ma Yogashakti Peetham	₹ 20000

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Sponsor a child ₹ 1 Lakh

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For further details please contact:

Nachiketa Tapovan, Kodgal: 8008882828,

Nachiketa Tapovan, Hyderabad: 9849168937

SMS to Swamiji: 9908234545

nachiketananda@gmail.com; admin@nachiketatapovan.org

Website: www.nachiketatapovan.org

Before you speak,
let your words pass
through three gates:



Is it true?

Is it necessary?

Is it kind?



NACHIKETA'S GO GREEN CLUB...

We convey our thanks to all the participants of the WOW initiative. You helped us earn Rs. 11,130 in the month of January and helped in keeping Mother Earth cleaner by recycling about 1855 kg of plastic and paper waste material.





Invitation



We cordially invite you to attend our celebrations

Srirama Navami

5th April 2017



Venue:

Nachiketa Tapovan,
Kodgal Village,
Jadcherla.

Hanuman Jayanthi

11th April 2017





Sri Adi Shankara Bhagavadpada has composed the Bhaja Govindam during his famous pilgrimage to Kashi (Benares). The story goes that when he was walking along the streets of Kashi, he was pained to observe an elderly man trying hard to learn Sanskrit grammar. At his advanced age, the remaining valuable little time of his life should have been used for worshipping the God, instead of wasting on learning a language. This prompted Sri Sankara to burst out a composition, a sort of rebuke to foolish way of living.

The Acharya urges the man to turn towards God and sing His glory instead of wasting on mundane things. A censure is implied when the Acharya calls the man a fool (Moodhamathe). It may be added here that the tone of Bhajagovindam is somewhat striking, in spite of its exotic poetic beauty and perfection of composition. This is no wonder, because such a treatment is required to wake up man from his slumber. A milder approach would delay the matter. The matter is urgent, as the Acharya explains for, when the hour of death approaches without any forewarning; the hard-learned verses of grammar are not going to save the poor soul. Hence the song rightly starts without any preamble:

*bhajagovindaM bhajagovindaM
govindaM bhajamuuDhamate .
saMpraapte sannihite kaale
nahi nahi rakshati DukRiJNkaraNe .. (1)*

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

By the year 2025, 2.8 billion people, one third of the world's population will experience water scarcity. About 25 to 30% of the population in Gujarat, Rajasthan, the Gangetic Plains, West Bengal and the North Eastern Areas will have practically no water.

Consequently the water crisis will dwarf the oil crisis.

Ignore the crisis and be a part of the problem, evaluate your option and be a part of the solution. The choice is simple, so is our contribution, a **Dual Flush**.

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A Dual Flush is a valve, which gives you the flexibility to discharge varying amounts of water depending on the usage.

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Use a dual flush; be a part of the drive – a drive to save the most precious resource of our planet...
water!

Water is the very core of life, It is life's mother (source) and medium. There is no life without water. It is high time we realize this fact and do something sensible about it.

– Gautam Vir