

# Bhavan Australia

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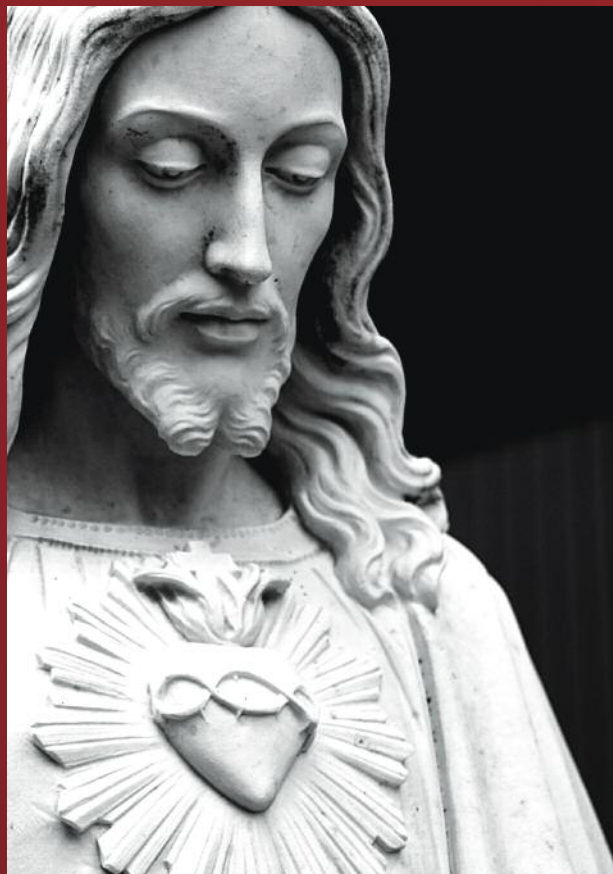
*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side - Rig Veda, 1-89-i*



*Religious Harmony*

Life | Literature | Culture

# Jesus Christ: Message of Peace



Jesus never advocated any form of violence or dominance. Instead, He commanded us to love, show mercy, and to forgive others. It is inconceivable that Jesus would support war.

**Non Violence:** Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for those who live by the sword, die by the sword. *Matt 26:52*.

**Meek, Merciful, and Peacemakers:** Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth... Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. *Matt 5:5-9*.

**Forgive Those Who sin Against Us:** Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven...” *Matt 18:21-22*

**Love your Enemies:** But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate

you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. *Luke 6:27-32*

**Love your Neighbor, But who is my Neighbor?:** And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.” But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” *Luke 10:25-37*

All of Jesus’s teachings center on love, humility, and mercy. The idea that we would fight a war in the name of Jesus is inconceivable, because Jesus taught us to love one another.

Early Church and New Testament Quotes for Peace

**No Evil for Evil:** Do not return evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give way to wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink: for in so doing you



shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. *Romans 12:17-21*

**Do Not Hate:** Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. *1 John 3:15*

**Do Not Hate:** If anyone says, I love God, but hates the brothers or sisters, he is a liar...Whoever loves God must also love the brothers and sisters. *1 John 3:20, 21*

**No Revenge:** See that none render evil for evil to any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. *1 Thessalonians 5:15*

**Do Not Fight:** I am a soldier of Christ; it is not lawful for me to fight. *Saint Martin of Tours*

**Do Not Fight:** When Christ disarmed Peter in the garden, he disarmed all Christians. *Tertullian*

I am a Christian and cannot fight. *Maximilian*

**Do Not Fight:** "We (Christians) no longer take up sword against nation, nor do we learn war any more, but we have become the children of peace."—*Origin, great Alexandrian theologian of the 3rd Century, A.D.*

**Children of Peace:** The test of the sincerity of one's prayer is the willingness to labor on its behalf. —St. John Chrysostom Christians no longer take up the sword against nation, not do we learn war any more, having become children of

peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader. *Origen*

**Weapons into Plows:** "We who were filled with war and mutual slaughter...changed our warlike weapons into plowshares and our spears into implements of tillage." —*Justin Martyr, 2nd Century church leader*

**State Does Not Have Authority Over Christians:** "If murder is committed privately, it is a crime, but if it happens with state authority, courage is the name for it. Christians are not allowed to kill, but they must be willing to be put to death." —*Cyprian, early Christian's leader in North Africa, who died for his faith*

**War is Unlawful:** It can never be lawful for a righteous man to go to war, since his warfare is in righteousness itself; nor to accuse anyone of a capital charge, since it makes no difference whether you put a man to death by word or by sword, since it is the act of putting to death which is prohibited. It is always unlawful to put a man to death. *Lacantius*

**Being the Oppressor:** Beginning with Constantine, Christianity triumphed at the level of the state and soon began to cloak with its authority persecutions similar to those in which the early Christians were victims. Like so many previous religions, ideological, and political enterprises, Christianity suffered persecution while it was weak and became the persecutor as soon as it gained strength. —*Rene Girard (The Scapegoat)*

**Source:** [www.christiansforpeace.org](http://www.christiansforpeace.org)

### *Mahatma Gandhi and Sermon on the Mount*

Gandhi's interest in Jesus began early in his life in England during his student days learning law in 1888. The Sermon on the Mount, he said, "went straight to my heart": "When I read in the Sermon on the Mount such passages as...'whoever smiteth thee on thy cheek turn to him the other also' I was simply overjoyed."

Later, during his struggles in South Africa, Gandhi called on the Indians of the Transvaal to "stagger humanity without shedding a drop of blood," by following the example of "Gentle Jesus, the greatest passive resister the world has seen." Though Jesus died, Gandhi said, "He lives in the memory of all true sons of God."

In the early 20th century, a favorite debate topic in at least one New England school was: Who is more important, Socrates or Jesus? Part of the question's appeal to lively Christian students may have been the danger of possible sacrilege. Similarly, it may seem sacrilege to some Christians to put Jesus and Gandhi on the same playing field. But would-be saints have always tried to imitate Christ, and Gandhi's aim "to live the Sermon on the Mount" puts him in that tradition, even to the point of martyrdom.

**Source:** [www.mkgandhi.org](http://www.mkgandhi.org)

*For this Month*

## *Religious Harmony for Peace*

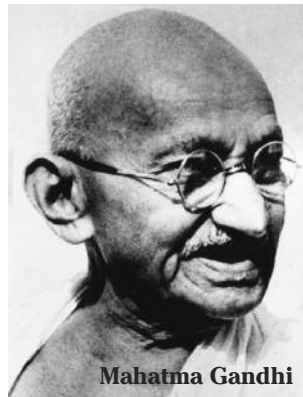
The very core of every religious tradition is gratefulness; and, if we have caught on to this basic unity of all religions, we will be grateful for the variety by which they express and celebrate their shared essence. This provides a firm basis for religious harmony.

As the mystical essence at the heart of every spiritual tradition, gratefulness unites different religions at their very centre. Each tradition flows from its source in the founder's own experience of communion with ultimate mystery. This experience wells up again and again in the hearts of all followers throughout the generations. It finds expression in the full response to life as gift, which is nothing other than grateful living.

We humans experience spiritual reality under three aspects: as the unfathomable mystery that surrounds and transcends our life, as our own innermost being, and as the life breath and love energy that flows through the universe and holds all things in harmony. Different traditions emphasize different aspects of this continuum. This alone creates a great diversity, within which historical, geographic, and cultural conditions make for amazingly rich variations. The closer we







are to the heart of our own tradition, the more freely we will appreciate the forms in which others celebrate the supreme mystery for which every human heart longs. Mahatma Gandhi pleaded for deep mutual understanding of the humanity to learn from each other. He said, "Religion must help humanity towards its ethical goals on earth."

Gandhi was a devoutly religious man. He had a deep understanding of the essentials of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Jainism. These religions shaped his spiritual outlook. Thinkers like Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy and Ruskin who greatly influenced him were also greatly religious people.

Optimism about human nature was the starting post of all Gandhi's activities; it sometimes made him sound naïve. His optimism sprang from a belief that 'man can change his temperament, can control it' although he 'cannot eradicate it. God has given him no such liberty'. Change and control, therefore, require constant effort.'

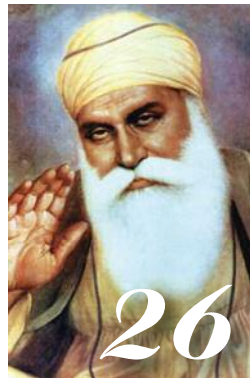
Gandhi's new kind of mass-yet-individual opposition to government unfairness which he named Satyagraha is based on truth (satya), which equals love and firmness or force (agraha). This became Gandhi's target: to be strong not with the strength of the brute but with the strength of the spark of God.

'My mission is to convert every Indian, whether he is a Hindu, Muslim or any other, even Englishmen and finally the world, to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economical, social or religious. If I am accused of being too ambitious, I should plead guilty.'

**Gambhir Watts OAM**  
Chairman, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia



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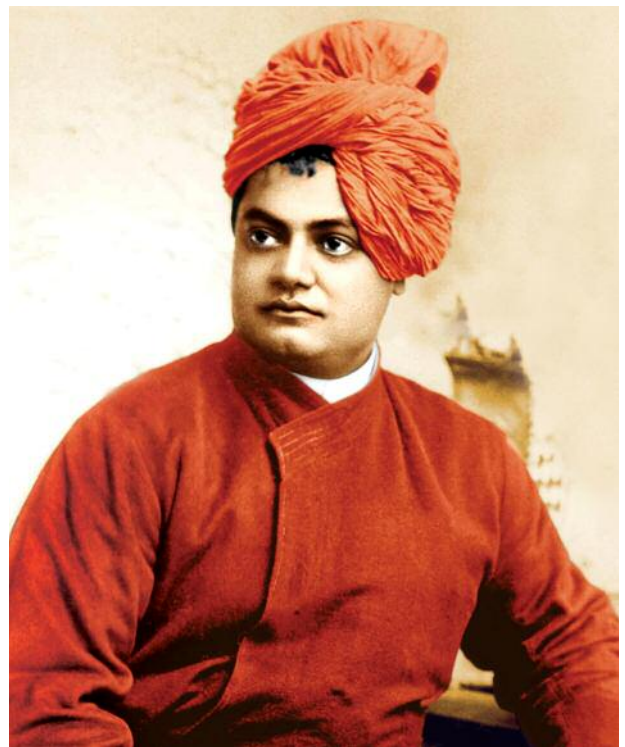
## *Swami Vivekananda's Poems*

### *To the Fourth of July*

Behold, the dark clouds melt away,  
That gathered thick at night, and hung  
So like a gloomy pall above the earth!  
Before thy magic touch, the world Awakes.  
The birds in chorus sing.  
The flowers raise their star-like crowns,  
Dew-set, and wave thee welcome fair.

The lakes are opening wide in love  
Their hundred thousand lotus-eyes  
To welcome thee, with all their depth.  
All hail to thee, thou Lord of Light!  
A welcome new to thee, today,  
O Sun! Today thou sheddest Liberty!

Bethink thee how the world did wait,  
And search for thee, through time and clime.  
Some gave up home and love of friends,  
And went in quest of thee, self-banished,  
Through dreary oceans, through primeval forests,  
Each step a struggle for their life or death;  
Then came the day when work bore fruit,  
And worship, love, and sacrifice,  
Fulfilled, accepted, and complete.  
Then thou, propitious, rose to shed  
The light of Freedom on mankind.  
Move on, O Lord, in thy resistless path!  
Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world,  
Till every land reflects thy light,



Till men and women, with uplifted head,  
Behold their shackles broken, and  
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed!

**Source: *In search of God and Other Poems* by  
Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama,  
Publication Department, Kolkata**



# Christmas

## Discovering God with us

*"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.  
Let your gentleness be known to everyone.  
The Lord is near." (Philippians 4.4-5)*

Christmas is a time to rejoice and look at the world with fresh eyes. We see signs all around that remind us how Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Nativity scenes are seen at community carol services, school plays and in churches. These signs help us discover God with us.

On December a joyful spirit embraces everybody; homes, offices, public places are decorated and people join together to celebrate Christmas, the Birthday of Jesus Christ. The Christmas feast is a festival full of joy. The word for Christmas in late Old English is Cristes Maesse, the Mass of Christ, first found in 1038. Christmas time begins on December 24 with the first Vespers of the feast and ends on the feast of the Baptism of Christ.

## Christmas Crib

The popular tradition of the Christmas crib or Nazareth scene was adopted by St. Francis of Assisi who conducted the first performance in Greccio, Italy, on Christmas 1225. Then Saint Clara spread it throughout Franciscan convents in Italy and then the order contributed to the extension of the living manger or represented by figures.

It is a concrete and vivid way of representing to ourselves the Incarnation and birth of Christ. It depicts in a striking manner the virtues of the newborn Savior, especially His humility, poverty, and charity.

During the middle Age and the Renaissance it was customary to depict scenes of Christmas in the churches. In both traditions started the current cribs with figures of wood, plaster, lead, clay or cardboard. It reached its peak in the kingdom of Naples in the eighteenth century and from there to Spain, where he was taken to Latin America.

## The Christmas Tree

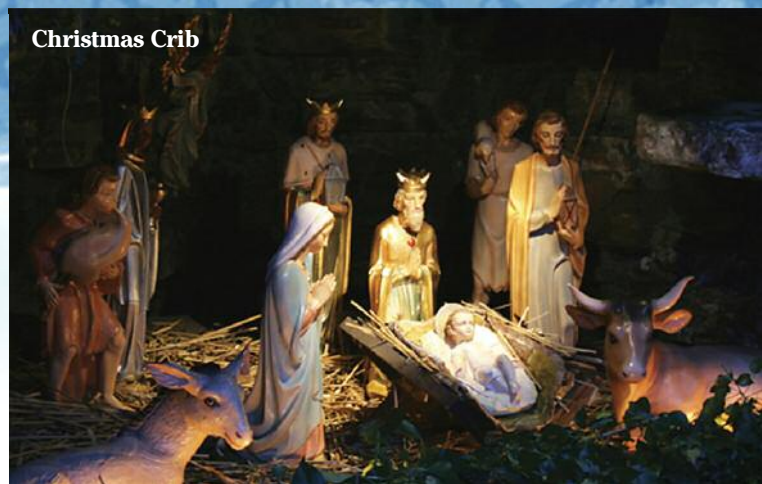
The ancient Germans believed that the world and all the stars were held hanging from the branches of a gigantic tree called the "divine Idrasil" or "God Odin", who worshiped it each year at the winter solstice, when they supposed life is renewed. The celebration of this day was an oak tree decorated with torches representing the stars, moon and sun. They danced and sang around this tree worshipping their God.

It is said that Saint Boniface, evangelist of Germany, shot down the tree that represented the God Odin, and at the same place he planted a pine tree, symbol of God's eternal love and decorated with apples and candles, giving it a Christian symbolism: the apples represented the temptations, original sin and the sins of men; the candles represented Christ, the world's light and grace given to men who accept Jesus as Savior. This custom spread throughout Europe during the Middle Age; with the conquests and migrations came to America. Gradually, the tradition has been evolving; the apples were replaced by spheres and lights by candles representing the joy and light that Jesus brought to the world.

## Carols

The carols encourage participation in the liturgy of Advent and Christmas. Caroling is a way to show our joy and gratitude to Jesus and hear during Advent helps prepare the heart for the Christmas.

## Christmas Crib





The first known Christmas carol is “Omnium Refulsit Iesus” (Jesus, Light of all nations) in IV century, and it is attributed to St. Hilary of Poitiers. In the thirteenth century, St. Francis of Assisi spread the tradition of Christmas songs. The best known, however is “Silent Night.” Its original title is “Stille nacht, heilige Yach” and was written by the Austrian priest Joseph Mohr in 1818. Now it is translated into 330 languages.

During the Christmas season there is an extensive exchange of greetings and good wishes among friends. These greetings are a reminder of those “good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Savior Who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11). They are a reminder, too, that all blessings and graces come to us from Christ: “Hath He not also with Him given us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). There is also an exchange of gifts. This custom should recall to us that on this day God Himself gave to us the greatest of all gifts, His beloved Son: “God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son” (John 3: 16).

### **Christmas Traditions and Symbols**

Christmas trees are part of a long tradition of greenery being taken into the home at Christmas to brighten the dreary winter. Mistletoe was popular with Druid priests because it remained green throughout winter. Holly placed over the doorway was believed to drive away evil. Placing branches from trees in the home was first recorded in 1494, and by the beginning of the 1600s there are records of fir trees being decorated with apples.

The story of Santa Claus has its origins in the legends surrounding the humble generosity of Saint Nicholas, whose feast day is celebrated on 6 December. Saint Nicholas was a 4th century Christian Bishop from Myra (in modern-day Turkey) who became the Patron Saint of Children. In Germany and Poland, boys dressed up as bishops begging alms for the poor. Later, the Christ child ‘Christkindlein’ was said to have accompanied Nicholas-like figures on their travels. The 1822 poem ‘Twas the Night before Christmas forged the link and Saint Nicholas (Father Christmas, Pere Noel, Christ Kind, Kriss Kringle or Sinter Klass) became known as Santa Claus.

### **The Celebrations**

Christmas is celebrated in many parts of the world on 25 December. Protestant and Roman Catholic churches hold Christmas Day services on 25 December. The Eastern churches—the Ethiopian Orthodox church, Russian Orthodox church and the Armenian church—celebrate Christmas on 6 or 7 January. There have been rituals, parties and celebrations at this time of year for thousands of years.

The main celebrations of Christmas take place on Christmas Eve, which is 24 December. That day, family and friends join together and go to Mass by midnight. Afterwards, the celebrations continue. The traditional midnight Mass is called Missa de Galo or Cock Crow as people take part of it into early hours of the morning. Cribs are very well decorated and displayed at parks, shops, etc. Most Christian families will also have a crib and a Christmas tree outside their homes. In addition, the sending of greeting cards is common.

People get together at home to share a variety of delicious Christmas dishes and all the churches are beautifully lit up and decorated, especially the Sacred Heart. Santa Claus can be found in public spaces. Hanging a Christmas star outside homes and shops is one of the most popular traditions. Usually the star is made from bamboo log pieces and covered with translucent color paper. A lighted lamp or oil-lamp is placed inside the star at night. In addition people prepare clay oil-burning lamps as Christmas decorations and place them outside the house along with the star.

It is a very common tradition that children join together to form local carol troops. They visit their neighborhood homes and perform in the courtyard. Traditionally the Casuarina tree was used and decorated as Christmas tree. There are some different Christmas celebrations around the world. Christians light clay oil-lamps on the rooftops and walls of their houses.

*Source: [www.australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au),  
[www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au), [www.aciprensa.com](http://www.aciprensa.com),  
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# ‘Deepasyaaavaliiti Deepavali’—The row of glowing lamps is Deepavali

Deepavali (when split up) is - deepasya aavali iti deepavali..

In Sanskrit, it means a row/ pattern of lights...

**Everyone knows that Bhagwan Krishna Killed Narakaasura, on the day preceding Deepavali.**

**In Yadavabhyudayam, (a kavya on the life of Lord Krishna), Vedanta Desika describes Narakasura;**

abhimAnodhithavyakthihahamkAraivaulbaNah  
mahathodhaithyanagarAthniragAthnarakAsurah  
(Yad.16-78)

Naraka looked like the manifestation of ahamkara rising out of arrogance emerging out of the great mahath, city of his, as the ahankarathathva evolving out of the mahaththathva, born out of prakrthi.

**The implication is that the destruction of Naraka is symbolic of the destruction of ahamkara, the impediment to realization of truth.**

The next sloka is also of the same texture of bhakthi and reminds the one in KamasikAshtaka by Desika himself.

Kasthavthangeekrthamhanth Akasthr

Athathvathjigh Amsitham

Nihanthip Athi cha ekasthvamsvenavi Svampare

Nav A (Yad.16-121).

**Who can kill the one who is accepted by You and who can protect one who is abandoned by You? You alone destroy as well as protect the universe yourself or through others.**

The parallel sloka in kAmAsikAshtakam (by Desika) is,

Thvayirakshathirakshakaihkimanyaih

Thvayi cha arakshathirakshakaihkimanyaih

IthinischithaDheehSrayAminithyam

NrharevegavattheethatASrayamthvAm

**Where is the need of other protectors when you are there protecting us and what is the use of other protectors when you forsake us. With this firm thought I resort to You, Oh Nrhari, who resides at the bank of Vegavathi River.**

**May Bhagwan Krishna destroy the Ahamkara within us and help to realize the truth.**

**HAPPY DEEPAVALI!**

Srinivasan Eltham, aPost-graduate from IIT Kanpur is a Director of Bhavan Australia. Settled in Melbourne over 3 decadesSrinivasan is proficient in Tamil Literature and believingin both Science & Spirituality has been passionately promotingBhavan’s values. P.S.: Special thanks to Sri. Dushyanth Sridhar, who mentioned “Yadavabhyudayam” in his Facebook page.







**MESSAGE FROM  
THE HON BARRY O'FARRELL MP  
PREMIER OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
MINISTER FOR WESTERN SYDNEY**

Deepavali is now a major annual event here in NSW.

This popular festival of lights finds expression in a number of community events around the state and the NSW Government is delighted to lend its support with this formal celebration here in the NSW Parliament.

There could be no stronger statement of acceptance and acknowledgement of a cultural festival, which has been introduced to Australia by an immigrant community, than to see it solemnly observed in Parliament.

In only a couple of decades immigrants from the Indian Sub-continent have made a big impact on NSW in many fields and at the same time we have embraced the cultural artifacts they have brought here and shared.

Deepavali has deep historic roots and embraces stories and practices that continue to delight both Indians and non-Indians alike.

It is thrilling to see the traditional lighting-of-the-lamp ceremony carried out in the presence of Hindu priests inside our Parliament House.

The NSW Government is proud to once again publicly acknowledge the growing significance of this festival.

Happy Deepavali!

**Barry O'Farrell MP  
Premier**



**MESSAGE FROM  
MR ARUN K. GOEL  
CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA,  
SYDNEY**

On the auspicious occasion of Diwali, I would like to extend my greetings and best wishes to all members of the Indian community in Australia. The festival of lights signifies the victory of good over evil and strengthens our resolve to follow true ethical values in our lives.

Diwali not only provides us an opportunity to come together and enjoy our cultural richness and diversity, it also allows us to share our joy and happiness with our friends from different cultures and provide an important link in fostering and strengthening bilateral cooperation between our two countries.

The Indian community in Australia is making their mark in their adopted motherland, and I would like to congratulate all of them for their hard work and contribution to Australian economic, social and cultural life.

I am very glad to learn that Diwali will be celebrated at the NSW Parliament on 30th October, and the Hon Barry O'Farrell MP, Premier of NSW will be joining the Indian community in the celebrations.

May the festival of lights dispel darkness and gloom and bring joy, happiness and prosperity to all of you.

HAPPY DIWAL

**Arun K. Goel  
October 2013**

# How will Posterity Judge us?

How will posterity view the present era? What will be their reference point? To them it will be the Age of Materialism and Consumerism. An age of rapid technological advancement and a time when people have been driven by an insatiable desire to buy, spend and consume.

In fact the fundamental economics of the present-day world are based on this principal.

It is a time when people at a frenetic pace keep buying and spending not stopping to wonder whether the things they buy are better than the ones they already have. And the more money they earn, the more they spend, and the more things they want.

People have lost their sense of priority of what they need and what they want. It is indeed a lifestyle obsession.

It is an era in which people are encouraged to discard rather than maintain, repair and reuse. And all this is because if people did not buy, production would slow down, and if production slowed down people would be out of livelihood and if people were out of livelihood they would spend less, and if they spent less it would lead to recession. A chain effect, a vicious cycle but a stark reality.

In this quagmire of consumerism, people are bound to feel little happiness. Because happiness is an emotion which can be felt only from relationships.

Inanimate objects like accumulating assets or a lifestyle of opulence cannot arouse emotions of

love, empathy, selfishness, kindness or even the sense of loss and pain.

What it does arouse is fear and jealousy—the fear of losing money, things and status to someone who is more deserving or enterprising and hence enviable.

And when you are in a state of fear and anxiety you cannot feel happy. Happiness is felt only when one is at peace with one's self and with people and things around them.

There are many people around us who we think should be unhappy but are actually not so. Some people who have nothing worth the name, yet, are very happy.

Sometimes the key to happiness lies in giving up certain egoistic perspectives and changing our behaviour. One of them is the constant effort to flaunt and impress people. We should learn to accept ourselves the way we are and not pretend to be what we are not. Another key to a placid mind is learning to be responsible for your actions. An admission to yourself that you, yourself is responsible even for failures will help to rectify and change the course of your future actions. If you want to be happy, you must have rational goals, rational expectations from life and have rational values. Moreover, you have to link your life with others. You cannot keep yourself isolated and expect to be happy. Our only chance for happiness lies in connecting with people, family and friends and by helping and assisting each other and sharing what you have.

The overpowering feeling of happiness is experienced only through empathy, fairness and compassion, and a concern for the community at large and not through self-centred isolation or egocentric insensitivity.

As Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote in *Brothers Karamazov*, "They have succeeded in accumulating a greater mass of objects but the joy in the world has grown less". Happiness is a positive emotion. It ceases to exist in negativity.

Unless we realise this and start the process of some damage control fast, chances are that posterity will only look back at the present era as the one in which all that was worthy and noble had been abandoned and replaced by a value system which was crass and without conscience, and also which inexorably destroyed the moral fabric without any retribution.

**Surendralal G Mehta**  
*President, Bharatiya Vidya  
Bhavan Worldwide*





# The Treasure Within all of us

Lebanese Poet, Philosopher and Prophet, Khalil Gibran wrote: “But let there be no scale to weigh our unknown treasure; And seek not the depths of your knowledge with staff or sounding line”. We human beings have a big treasure within and a very microscopic part is used during an entire life.

Sages in India have tried to remove the lock to release that treasure within by their utterances, writings, knowledge and wisdom which appeal to those who are willing to receive and appropriate them.

Perhaps, the greatest sage who lived only for 32 years is AdiSankara. He entered into sainthood by threatening his mother that if she did not give him permission to become a Sanyasin, the crocodile, which had caught his leg would not leave him but devour him.

Sir C. P. RamaswamiAiyer, ex-Dewan of Travancore State, who wrote a preface to the book: Sri Sankara’s Teachings authored by Swami Atmananda has this to say:

“JagadguruAdiSankaracharya was unique in the history of thought as he combined in himself the attributes of a poet, a logician, a devotee and a mystic and an architect of the monistic system of Philosophy. When a man follows the ways of the world, he cannot attain the knowledge of reality unless by the path he attains Gyana (illumination)”.

AdiSankaracharya journeyed throughout India, established four Dhams at Sringeri in Karnataka, Puri in Orissa, Joshimath in Uttar Pradesh and Dwaraka in Gujarat, in addition to the one at Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu.

Sankara’s commentaries on the Bhagawad Gita, the Upanishads and the Brahmasutras of Vyasa are his greatest contributions to the World of Philosophical thoughts.

Since it is not possible to refer to all the revered sages in one small narration, only a few are referred to here. SantJnaneshwar who lived in Alandi near Pune in Maharashtra, lived only for 21 years and after completing his mission took voluntary Samadhi. His greatest contribution “Jnaneshwari” is an interpretation and translation of Bhagawad Gita from Sanskrit to Marathi so that the common man could get access into the workings of the Divine.

His two brothers Nivrutti and Sopan were also learned divine souls like his sister Mukta who wrote Abhangs which the common man could

understand!

Another Saint whose name has remained in the hearts of humanity is Ramakrishna Paramahansa an illiterate devotee whose soul was enlightened due to blind devotion and deep faith at Dakshineshwar, Kolkata, whose famous disciple Swami Vivekananda shook the whole world at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, where he enunciated that true bhakti is in serving others in a selfless manner and where the youth of the country had an important role to play. Ramakrishna, unlike other sages did not move out of his domain where he felt that the whole world was available to him. ShriChandrasekharendraSaraswati, Shankaracharya of KanchiKamakotiPeetham was a learned soul who could interpret the Vedas in a new light enhancing that Satya and Rita (spoken Truth and Truth as it is) are the very nature of Dharma, the cosmic order. He did not perform any miracles but his very presence, radiating illuminating could be felt by disciples far and wide. This saint could bring the four Vedas— Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda and Atharvaveda nearer to the people by properly explaining to them exactly what is their essence.

SantTukaram was a poor man who could not even maintain a family and was always in debt.

From a young age Tukaram was filled with the idea of renunciation of the world. Being immersed in poverty, he wanted to give up life and retreated to a lonely place where his ancestors had built a temple for Panduranga. He worshipped Vithala there, every morning, regularly.

When he lost everything including the small business, money, cattle and lands he addressed Vithala and said: “Panduranga, nothing stands now between us TWO”.

His Guru gave him the mantra ‘Ramakrishna Hari’. Tukaram composed verses, sang kirtans and said: “When the mind is pure, fire does not burn, wild beasts of prey do not harm anyone, as man is at peace with the universe. All this will happen when one realises that the same infinite Being abides in all creatures.”

**-T.G.L. Iyer**

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## Oneness of Religions

*"...Though there is nothing that has brought man more blessing than religion, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. It has brought peace and love, at the same time, fierce hatred also. It has made the brotherhood of man more tangible, but created more bitter enmity between one man and another. It is the inspiration behind a number of charitable institutions like hospitals for animals too, at the same time there is nothing else that deluded the world with more bloodshed, starting with the crusades and the persecution of the Jews...."*

**-Swami Vivekananda**

What is 'Religion'? In Latin "re" means back, "ligare" to bind, to unite. Etymologically religion means that which binds one back to one's origin. So the goal of all religions is to bind man to God, to unveil your real self, to discover your true nature, to draw out the divinity in you. Religion is generally understood as the path for man's search for his destiny, search for God, search for the ultimate truth, the rites of man's communion with God.

Religion has been defined in different ways. According to Swami Vivekananda, "Religion is a question of fact, not of talk, we have to analyse our own souls, and find what there is. We have to understand it, and realise what we understand. That is religion. No amount of talk will make religion."....

Authentic religion is the clearest opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos can pour into human existence. -Hudson Smith—Religions of Man

Even an atheist like Bernard Shaw said, "Religion is the motive force for humanity." whereas Karl Max dismissed it as "the opium of the people".

Sree Narayana Guru, spiritual leader of Kerala, gives a very lucid definition. "The human mind went on trying to find answers to the mysteries of life, death and the universe. Answers to these spiritual problems evolved by great seers have become religions".

Various attempts have been made to trace the beginning of religions. Two theories have gained acceptance among modern scholars.

The spirit theory says that ancestor-worship is the beginning of religious ideas. Man wants to keep up the memory of his dead relatives and thinks that they are living even when the body is dissolved. And he wants to keep food for them, and in a certain sense to worship them. Out of that came the growth we call religion.

Studying the ancient religion of Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese and many other races in America and other region we find very clear traces of this ancestor worship being the beginning of religion.

Ancient Egyptians believed that every human body contained in it another being similar to it, a 'double' and when a man died this double went out of the body and lived on. But the life of the double lasted only as long as the dead body remained intact. That is why they built huge pyramids in which they preserved the bodies.

With the ancient Babylonians, the idea of the double was there, but it lost all love and affection even for their own wife and children. It frightened people to give it food and drinks.

Throughout China, ancestor worship is practised. To some extent this is found among Hindus also.

The second one of Theory of the Infinite, which holds that religion has its origin in the personification of the powers of nature. Although ancestor worship is seen in India, earliest Aryan literature, the Rigveda Samhitha does not mention it. What we find there is worship of nature.

These natural phenomena were endowed with personal attributes, giving them souls and bodies, beautiful or transcendent.

These abstractions became gods and goddesses.





People tried to appease these forces through appeals and propitiatory rites. The final outcome is priests, religion and philosophy. This happened in the case of ancient Greeks, Germans, Scandinavians, and wherever the Aryan race has spread. Thus religions came into existence and grew greater as human thinking grew.

Prof. Gavin Flood, in his book *An Introduction to Hinduism* divides all major religions of the world into two types: the tree type and the river type. The tree type starts with the teachings of one great seer, like the trunk of a tree and in course of time proliferates into a number of sects and spreads all over like the branches of a tree.

Religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism etc. belong to this category. The river type starts as a number of small canals which finally join together to form a mighty river. Hinduism, the beginning of which cannot be traced, started with a number of faiths and rituals like Vedic religion, Shaivism, Vaishnavism etc. and finally came to be joined together as one great religion.

India has the lofty tradition of bringing religions together. Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great, (1556-1605), who abjuring Islam, tried to found eclectic rationalism, which was to become the imperial religion, with the agreement of Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Muslims, Parsees, and even Christians.

The religions of the world met together for the first time at Chicago in USA. On Monday, Sep. 11, 1898, the first session of "The Parliament of Religions" opened with Cardinal Gibbons presiding. Swami Vivekananda went from India as an uninvited guest but returned as 'the man of the match'. Each of the other orators spoke of his God, the god of their sect, but Vivekananda alone spoke of all their gods, and embraced them all in the Universal Being and presented the thesis of a universal religion.

The Parliament proved that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any one religion, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.

The little Indian state of Kerala had the good fortune to host the second meeting of the religions of the world, which happens to be the first one in

Asia too and the architect was Sree Narayana Guru, the spiritual preceptor of the downtrodden people.

The function at his Advaithashram in Aluva, in February, 1924 had its motto displayed at the entrance, "We meet here not to argue and win, but to know and be known".

Shri T. Sadasivayyar, the Chief Justice of Madras High Court presided over the function.

Shri. K.K. Kuruvilla represented Christianity, Mohammad Moulavi spoke for Islam, A.B. Salem for Judaism, Pandit Rishiraj for Arya Samaj, Sadho Sivaprasad for Brahma Samaj, Bhikshu Dharma Skanda from Sri Lanka for Buddhism, Mancheri Rama Ayyar and Ramakrishna Ayyar for Theosophical Society. A scholar from Bahai Faith also spoke.

The function was convened with a specific objective. Kerala in those days was the hotbed of casteism.

The Avarnas bore the brunt of it. Indignities were being heaped upon them. Caste rules were so ridiculous that a Christian or a Muslim was allowed to walk through the road in front of a Hindu temple, but an Avarna, in spite of being a Hindu was denied this freedom. If an Avarna embraced Christianity or Islam, the embargo was lifted. All untouchability was washed away by baptism or circumcision. Naturally the Avarnas decided to take this shortcut to escape from the pincers of caste: a mass conversion. But they faced a problem. Which religion should they accept? Buddhism? Christianity? Islam? They approached their spiritual preceptor Narayana Guru with their problem.

The Guru understood their problem. They are ignorant about religions. They are like the blind men who went to see the elephant. They are contemplating religious conversion for the wrong reasons. They have to be taught the essentials of religions and help them to discover by themselves that all religions are good, but the followers are not always willing to accept this.

So he organised the All Religions Meet, and at the end of it passed a resolution to start



Brahmaavidyalayam at Sivagiri, where all religions are taught.

### Common Factors of Religions

A scientific study of religions reveal that all religions have certain common areas, the Religious Universals. These are Theology, Philosophy, Mythology and Rituals, which could be arranged in four concentrated rings in a pyramidal shape. These aspects are conceived and understood by people of varying intellectual levels.

Theology occupies the central and topmost position in these circles. It is the attempt to define the indefinable, what the primitive man felt as the superior power, which came to be defined as Godhead, Ultimate Truth, Reality, The Absolute, Universal Consciousness, Cosmic intelligence etc. A common factor of all religions is faith in God.

Theology means the science about God. It is an old word. It has been used from time immemorial. All the hopes, aspirations, and happiness of humanity has been centred on that word. But the same word embraces all possible ambiguities and is used oppressively to bandage the clear eyes of reason.

Words like these were first coined by great saints, who realised their import and understood their meaning. It is universal intelligence, and all the various forms of cosmic energy such as matter, thought, force, and intelligence are simply manifestations of that cosmic energy.

But as it became current in society, ignorant people use these words and the result is, it loses its spirit and glory. People speak of 'our god' and 'their god'. The word has to be cleansed of such superstitions and make people realise that this great ancient word means all that is lovable, rational, great and grand in human nature.

Philosophy makes the next lower peripheral ring. It is the

attempt to relate the personal world of matter with individual consciousness and a realm of imagination which is much beyond the mundane world of eating, sleeping and reproducing. Ethics and morals are hidden in this. Human beings have to know this not by inference, but by intuition.

Theology and philosophy of religions remain almost the same with varying degrees of stress on different aspects. These are grasped mostly by intellectuals, who may differ in their interpretations and indulge in dialectics.

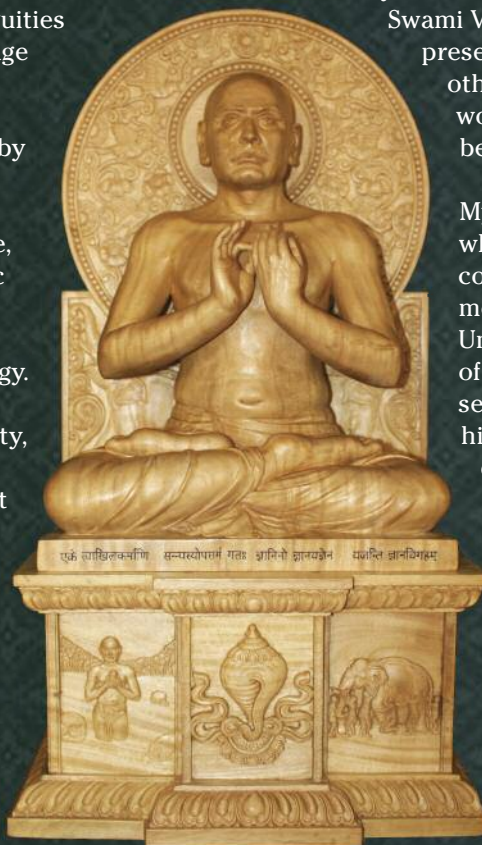
For example, Adi Shankara could say with confidence "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman) but Madhvacharya differed. There are some ancient Christian and Greek mystics who came very close to Advaita. Poets like Tagore saw eternity in a sand grain, and saw God 'where the tiller is tilling the hard ground, and where the path maker is breaking stones'.

American poet Walt Whitman and Narayana Guru saw God in the faces of men and women, "and in my own face in the glass" (Song of Myself).

Swami Vivekananda's last words are, "He is present in every being. There is no other God to seek for. He alone is worshipping God who serves all beings".

Mythology is the medium through which philosophy is brought to the common man, whose intellect is more practical than theoretical. Universally, mythology is the stories of human beings, divine beings, and semi-divine beings interacting in a highly imaginary realm, posing questions to humanity to ponder and find solutions to the esoteric human destiny. That is why there are some basic common factors in the mythologies of all religions: human characters with super human powers and divine characters with human frailties.

Prof. Joseph Campbell says in *The Myths We Live by*, "These holy tales and their images are



The first Jnana Vighram of Narayana Guru





messages to the conscious minds from the quarters of the spirit unknown to the daylight consciousness....They are telling us matters fundamental to ourselves.... They are not historical, they speak not of outside events, but of themes of imagination..." Narayana Guru explains the meaning of mythology as Stories of mythology are highly symbolic narrations to illustrate the search for meaning in spiritual matters, or parables and fables for codes of conduct. They are highly magnified through the lens of poetic imagination so that they look absurd to the modern minds. Mythologies are bound to differ because people think differently and differently...."

Rites and rituals make the outermost fringes of religious practices which are observed collectively by society and individually by the common man. Though many of the rites and rituals in human society are of sociological origins they are given a religious tone and considered external expressions of religious practice. The caste system is a perfect example.

If we examine human evolution through history and pre-history, two fundamental realisations emerge: man's desire to overcome death and his need for a social order.

Funeral rites are associated with the first realisation. Man refused to accept that death was the end of life. Perhaps new sprouts from rotting vegetation gave them the idea that death was the giver of new life. So the human mind imagined and believed in a life after death.

Many funeral rites of burials with supplies of food, clothing, cash, toys with children, weapons and servants with kings and queens (Egyptian) etc. can be attributed to this type of thinking.

Wedding rites and the rites of puberty for girls and for boys (in some African tribes) have a deeper meaning than mere festivities. These rites are meant for the orientation of the individuals in society. Puberty rites are the indication to the young adult that hereafter he/she is responsible for his/her actions and an assurance to society that as an adult he/she is an integral part of society. Wedding rites are the expressions of acceptance of society, the binding of two individuals to form a 'family', the fundamental unit of society.

There is a third type of ritual which is purely religious. Why do we enact Seetha Rama Kalyanam, Nativity play, and the Muharram procession? It is a reliving of the entire episode to establish and reassure the hope of higher values and righteousness, and the message of love and harmony to humanity.

Narayana Guru explained the structure of religions and analysed the meaning of conversions to his people. Genuine disbelief, the need to shed caste identity, expectation of material benefits and coercion are the reasons for religious conversions. If conversion is desired because of genuine disbelief in the principles the inner core of theology and philosophy—it is hypocrisy to continue in the same religion. Conversion will benefit both the individual and the religions. One religion gets rid of a non-believer and the other adds a believer.

But if the conversion is because of the outer crust of religion, namely rituals and traditions, it is cowardice to run away. They should stick to the religion and change the unhealthy and antisocial customs. The Avarnas of Kerala understood their mistake. They decided to remain Hindus and fight caste discriminations. The result is the famous Vaikom Sathyagraha (1924-25) and the eradication of untouchability from society of Kerala.

Of all the forces that have worked and are still working to mould the destinies of the human race, the most potent is religion, both positive and negative. All social organisations have the working of religion somewhere in the background. The power of religion has become a great cohesive force to bind together human units into groups.

In many cases the bonds of religion has proved stronger than the bonds of race, family relations or even national bondage. The division of into Hindustan and Pakistan is the perfect proof to the fact that persons believing in the same religion stand together. In Hindustan, the Aryan and Dravidian races come together in Hinduism.

On the negative side, is the narrow sense of spiritual imperialism. Each religion, even the sub-sects start interpreting that they are 'God's chosen people' and choose to be exclusive, implying that only their beliefs and traditions are the correct





ones and others who believe differently are infidels.

This religious disdain leads to dissents, conflicts, quarrels and wars too. Weren't the persecution of Jews and the Crusades precipitated by this spiritual imperialism? Some of them go one step further by convincing themselves that they have the right and duty to impose their own 'tightfitting cask' on others, so that their souls may be saved. This noble idea leads to forced conversions and complications arise.

Problems about religions arise out of human nature, imperfect understanding of religions and lack of comprehensive spirit to understand religions properly. Narayana Guru contends that it is the duty of religious preceptors to explain the meanings of cryptic statements and fictitious stories to the common man to suit their intelligence levels.

Sometimes rational explanations would be more acceptable to modern temperaments. He gives several examples in his discussions with his rationalist followers C.V. Kunjuraman and Sahodaran Ayyappan.

It is commonly said that the Vedas are words of God, *apourusheyam*, which means 'beyond human beings'. It only means that we do not know who composed the hymns of Vedas, or the passages contained in them are beyond common human understanding and need explanations by the preceptors, acceptable to the modern rational mind.

When the Old Testament says that the Ten Commandments are directly from God, or that God spoke directly to Prophet Mohammad, we have to understand that these words are the pearls of wisdom discovered by these wise thinkers to enforce an ethical code for the welfare of humanity.

Some people will follow them only if the words are directly from God. They have to be understood and followed in the proper spirit. It is extremely indecent to argue about these or make fun of them.

Swami Vivekananda gives more examples of demystifying religions. The Bible says, "Blessed are the pure in heart as they shall see God".

This statement is absurd in the literal sense. But it makes sense if one realises an identification of his soul with God. Similarly Jesus says, "The Kingdom of heaven is within you" and "Our father who is in heaven".

These two statements appear contradictory to the uneducated, but conciliatory to the wise. The latter who imagines a heaven in the skies and God occupying a throne there cannot accept the first statement. When a man develops a high sense of spirituality, he can understand that the kingdom of heaven is within himself, and God who is in heaven is within him, whereas the unenlightened fail to understand this.

Such apparent contradictions and perplexities are there in all religions. They mark different stages in the growth of religions, when forms and symbols were necessary. Priests and preceptors should analyse these properly.

What Narayana Guru did was to interpret religion at indifferent levels so that he could lead people to spirituality beyond the narrow confines of religions.

To quote Narayana Guru's words which would be a password for religious unity of all types, in all places and all times. "Religious texts are common human heritage. The human mind went on trying to find solutions to the mysteries of life and death and the universe. Answers to these spiritual problems evolved by great thinkers are found in the philosophy of all religions. This great inheritance belongs to the whole of humanity and no one has any exclusive rights on it.

Exclusiveness would be against the spirit of ancestors who acquired them for posterity. Just like the principles of science are considered the common inheritance of humanity and shared by all, books on spiritual matters should also be utilised by all for the common good. Each individual can select his own author..."

The forces eternally warring within us are the forces of reason and faith, the problem of science and religion. This problem started with the beginning of religion. The primitive man viewed the super power, which he named God, with awe, a complex feeling of love, respect, fear, anger, and





hatred. In the course of evolution of human thought, this complex feeling underwent a dichotomy. One set of people tried to impress these forces through appeals and propitiatory rites while another experimented with external means to control these. In course of time the first set developed rituals, religion, priests and philosophy. The second produced science, scientists and rational thinking.

Divisions of jnanam and vijnanam came to be established. Jnanam is wisdom, the direct spiritual enlightenment, which is clearly the field of religion. Vijnanam is detailed rational knowledge of the principles of existence, which the realm of science.

But we have to understand that science and religion are not contradictory; they are complementary. They are only two extreme wavelengths in the spectrum of human knowledge, which consists of the relationless.

Absolute at one end and the phenomenal world at the other end. The former is transpersonal experience while the latter is purely experimental. The task awaiting us today is to join these two forces for the perfect exploitation of the field of knowledge, which needs the unified efforts of science and religion.

“Cosmic intelligence” is tacitly implied in scientific reasoning, the chief difference is that with science it remains a piece of mechanism, while religion breathes life into it. “Pygmalion’s statue comes alive”.

It is said sometimes that religions and spiritual ideas are dying out from the world. No single great religion throughout the course of the 20 centuries has died out. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Laoism continue to grow in numbers and quality. Only Zoroastrianism has dwindled, but not died. It survives in the Sufis who are a mixture of Islam and Zoroastrianism.

The pure form of it is surviving in a handful of Parsees in India. The cult of Ahura Mazda in Asia Minor is a modification of Zoroastrianism. What humanity is facing is death of the spirit, absolute darkness, negation of thought, and absence of faith. So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few, or body of priests, it was in temples,

churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials and rituals. But only when we come to the universal spiritual concept, then and then alone will religion become real and living. It will come into our very nature, live in our every moment, penetrate every pore of the society, and be infinitely more a power for good than it has ever been before.

In every religion of the world a mighty reservoir of life is contained. Each has its own mission. Each has conceived its own splendid but incomplete ideal: Christianity, its dream of universal love and moral purity, Hinduism—spirituality, Islam—universal brotherhood and social equality etc. Each group is divided into families with a different temperament: rationalism, puritanism, scepticism, worship of the senses, or mind etc. They are all diverse and graded powers in the divine Economy of the Being as it ceaselessly advances. It is a matter of urgent necessity to re-establish a fellow feeling between different types of religious expressions coming from the study of mental phenomena.

Let us conclude with the words of Swami Vivekananda “...The end of all religions is the realisation of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion. If there is one Universal Truth in all religions, I place it here in realising God. ...one may pray in all temples, Churches and Mosques carry all the sacred books in his brain, if he has no perception of God, he is an atheist. Prophet Mohammad calls such a man ‘a donkey carrying books’.

A man who knows nothing of these, but if he feels God within him, he is a saint. ...When a man says that he is right, his religion is right and all other religions are wrong, we have to presume that something is wrong with the man....” Let us remember always Narayana Guru’s words, “Whatever be the religion, let man be virtuous”.

A well written life is almost as rare as a well-spent one

**-Thomas Carlyle**  
**-Satyabai Sivadas**

**Source: Bhavan’s Journal, April 30,  
May 15, 30 2013**



# *Kathopanishad: The Science of Life and Death*

Kathopanishad is one of the ten Principal Upanishads commented upon by Adi Shankara. As per western scholars this dates back to around 500 BC and precedes Baghavad Gita.

This Upanishad is revealed through a dialogue between Yama, the Lord of Death, and Nachiketa, a young Brahmin boy who is inquisitive about life after death. This is the state perturbing every intellectual, including NASA scientists and other astrophysicist atheists.

Well, this Upanishad answers all intriguing and religious minds. The entire Upanishad has two chapters consisting of six sections, totaling 119 verses and is a beauty, not only in philosophical-science, but also in literature. The semantics are of the highest order especially the state of intellectual superiority both in terms of understanding and analysis by these ancient Hindu sages when viewed from the stand point of those early times preceding 500 years of the Christian era, when much of the world lacked human understanding. The revelation that soul or Atman is the center of attention for humanity rather than the term of GOD is akin to modern science's serendipity of the energy mass equation ( $E = mc^2$ ) through Einstein.

Subsequently most contemporary medieval religions believed in the God being the Supreme, the one who judges humans on their sins and good work done, unmindful of the fact that such God Himself is responsible for the creation of

human bodies, with variations from autism to intelligence, blind, deaf and dumb, poverty to wealth etc. This concept of judgment by God, on humans who do not necessarily wish to be born at all, or in no way responsible for their genes which is the prime culprit in all actions, gave rise to atheism to question the very tenet of a Judgment by God and naturally His existence.

Kathopanishad appears to answer all these. The angered Brahmin rishi king Gautama sends (curses) his nine-year old boy, Nachiketa to go to death, when the boy noticing his father giving invalid presents, through filial anxiety asks his father to whom he was going to give him (Nachiketa) as present.

Taking the religious sacrifice of his father seriously, Nachiketa goes to Lord Yama's (death) abode, and waits for him for three days and three nights, as Yama had gone out. On seeing a young Brahmin boy at his abode for such a period without food, Yama felt he has committed a sin, and as atonement grants three boons to Nachiketa.

The first boon was a very simple one. The boy wanted to go back to his father's house and his father should not get angry with him once again, and his father should sleep peacefully, only reveals the concern the boy had for his father.

It is the next two boons from which the religious and scientific mystery deepens. Before asking for the second boon, Nachiketa apparently wanted to



go to heaven (finally). Nachiketa first describes heaven to Yama. "In Heaven there is no fear. You (Death) is not there. Old age is not there. Persons in heaven have crossed hunger and thirst and being above grief, rejoice".

He then asks for the second boon, in the next verse 13, which is wanting to know from Yama the fire that leads to heaven, since Yama is the only one who knows that "fire".

"Oh Yama, thou knowest the fire which leads to heaven, explain to me who am enthusiastic that "fire", by which those, whose world is heaven, attain immortality, I pray for this, through my second boon" (Chapter One, Section I, verse 13).

Young Nachiketa could have asked for a Vimana to go to heaven or other methods to go to heaven. But he asked only for "fire" that leads to heaven. This clearly shows that the ancients understood fire as light consisting of (modern) photons without any inequality. Photons are particles with same character of each other and thus are copycats with no difference between them. Photons are the only thing that passes through Higgsfield and does not get affected by it. In fact, they do not interact with Higgsfield at all. Photons do not obey the Pauli exclusion principle. They neither decay nor gain mass nor change their quantum state. They are stable. Photons are mass less and travel at the speed of light and are the particle in the light.

In all living species even of the same variety, we see difference in intelligence, physical appearance, wealth, health and so on. We can notice especially so in humans. But being a photon there is equality.

It is here we have to understand that "fire" is the Light we talk of in Physics, consisting of particles photons, wherein the atoms of photon being copycats of each other do not change their state. Therefore creation is the same and there is no difference. Once this light is attained by mortals then they find no difference between each of them and they do not decay, that is they are in the same quantum state. light has no rest mass. Photons in light do not decay, thus light is eternal and life in light is eternal. Thus heaven is this fire (light) and life in heaven is eternal.

In chapter II Sec IV verse 13, Varna declares that "the purusha (atma) is of the size of a thumb, is the (Jyoti) flame without smoke (adhuumakah), Lord of the past and future. He alone is even today and will verily be tomorrow. This is verily that."

One can easily comprehend that flame without smoke could be only light. Light is the only

element without any time, death (decay), and without any difference (copycats). The entire universe is made of fermions and bosons wherein they have birth and death cycle but light does not. Thus being a light particle, life is eternal without inequality.

Modern physics goes to the extent of vaporising a living being and store the genetic details in a computer and transport that being through the medium of light, say to far off galaxy, and reproducing the living being there through computer again.

Yama subsequently teaches Nachiketa about the Divine (mystery) fire to be raised in a Yaaga Kunda with some specific number of bricks (stated to about 720 by experts, that is 360 for the days in a year and 360 for the nights in a year), and the pattern that have to be laid out for the Yaaga.

Yama as a gift titles this fire as "Nachiketa fire". This fire sacrifice apparently helps the performer to reach the state of unborn and attain bliss. There are scientific evidences that leads us believe a person can reach the state of immortality never to be born again. That is to be one with the fire which is light. The secrets of Nachiketa fire could be "that" medium or wavelength that can transport a living being to the light itself for everlasting bliss. That is the reason Nachiketa wanted to learn that "Fire" which leads to heaven.

Yama was very reluctant to answer the third boon. He offers various tempting gifts in place of the third boon. But the boy was very tenacious. He refused all gifts offered by Yama. He (Nachiketa)' wanted to know about the state of soul after death. He insisted vehemently on his third boon and requested Yama to honour commitment. Seeing the boy's interest in knowing the secret of life and his profound enthusiasm, Yama finally accepts the boy's wish and reveals.

Nachiketa asks for the third boon, (Chapter I, Sec. I, verse 20), "There is that doubt when a man is dead, some say he is (dead) and some say he is not. This I would like to know, taught by thee. This is the third of my boons I ask."

Yama answers the above in Chapter II, Section V. verse 7. He explains, "Some souls enter the womb to have a body, others to immovable bodies, according to their work and knowledge".

Gita explains that after discarding the old body the soul enters a new body just like a man discards his old garment and wears a new one. Thus entering the process of cycle of birth and death is, just like a particles in Higgsfield, which



decay and change their quantum state.

All particles in the Higgsfield acquire mass and decay depending upon their nature. They obey the Exclusion Principle (Pauli). Higgs boson decay very fast, they live for  $1.67 \times 10^{-22}$  seconds (ten thousandth of a trillionth of a second) and change their state, (die and enter new bodies). They become Protons (2 out of 1000) (56.1% become still small quarks) and so on.

(Radioactive Uranium 235) takes 700 million years to naturally decay (die) and change their quantum state (enter new bodies). Similarly, in living species humans live for an average span of 80 years, Mosquitoes live for 7 days, some cells live for a second, some have their lives in nano seconds, some trees and mountains live for 1000 years or more and so on.

Therefore the only way to escape birth and death, as Yama explains, is to merge with the inner self (Atman) situated in the cavity of the heart just as any particle in order to be stable and eternal has to be a photon, to escape the Higgsfield of birth and decay.

Yama states in Chapter II, Section VI Verse 4, “If here (in this life) one is able to comprehend him (Atman) before the death of his body, he will be liberated from the bondage of the world, if one is not able to comprehend him, then he has to take a body again in creation.”

Further in Chapter II, Section V, Verse I, Yama explains, “the city of the unborn consists of eleven gates. In the string theory (M theory) they are now convinced that the entire universe has to be a multiverse with eleven dimensions instead of the three dimensions as thought earlier.

This string theory is the only one that can explain the



Yama

Universe before big bang since the standard model can explain the Universe only after the big bang.

This Upanishad and various Upanishads can explain the doubts of the physicists like Richard Dawkins and Lawrence Krauss, who explain the entire universe was created out of nothing.

This nothing is the “unborn” in this Upanishad. This has created the Universe with all its fermions and Bosons. This unborn flame situated in the cavity of the heart cannot be influenced nor does it influences. It has to be realised through deep meditation and “adhyatma yoga”.

On realisation it avoids the birth and death cycles. A person realising this flame (self) situated in the cavity of the heart, becomes a photon, failing which he gets pulled into the Higgsfield and can be any particle right from fermions or bosons, or neutrons or quarks or leptons etc. and would be constantly changing their state and decaying accordingly thus entering the cycle of birth and death.

This entire Upanishad does not talk of any God power, but like most of the Upanishads it speaks of merging the inner self with the atman the (Supreme Self) to avoid birth and death cycles, failing which these cycles can occur depending upon one’s actions and knowledge.

Thus God as atheists repel, is not God sitting on a golden throne judging people after they die. Neither should he be blamed for differences in living species and neither he could influence or be influenced.

It is our own Atman (smokeless flame), which has to be realised and merged with Light (Photons) through deep meditation to prevent birth and death cycles. This should answer atheists.

**-Trichur S. Viswanathan**

**Source: Bhavan’s Journal, March 31, 2013**



# Philosophers—Spiritual Leaders— Cultural Ambassadors

Inspired philosophers and spiritual leaders in the East as well as in the West have played an important role in the moral, religious and spiritual evolution of man. Their lives more than their actions and words have inspired millions to rise above the sordid and vulgar animal existence and to walk the path of Godliness. The lives and salient teachings of the more important philosophers and spiritual leaders of India are presented in a summarised manner.

## AdiSankaracharya

AdiSankaracharya has written the Bhashyas of the three great scriptures, the Sruti (Vedas and the Upanishads), the Gita and the Brahmasutras. “These ancient scriptures taught that the goal of life was Liberation; freedom from the fetters of ever recurring birth and death and the misery flowing from this cycle. This goal can be attained through Bhakti, Jnana or Karma resulting from strict moral, spiritual, and physical discipline.”

The greatest exponent of Advaita philosophy, AdiSankaracharya was born in the village of Kalady in Kerala of a Nambudri family. The agreed date of birth is 788 A.D. during the month of April. It was at a time when moral and spiritual values had gone down considerably and it was an age of strife and unrest. Determined to become a Sanyasi, Sankara indirectly obtained the permission of his mother (the story of the crocodile is well known). He took to sanyasa after promising his mother that, wherever he may be, he would be by her side at the time of her death. He kept his promise and the story goes that the villagers refused to allow him to cremate the body since he had taken to Sanyasa and he was forced to cut the body to pieces and cremate it in the backyard of his house using plantain stems.

Sankaracharya travelled on foot towards the North and on reaching the banks of the Narmada became the disciple of GovindaAcharya who taught him the intricacies of the Vedas. Lord Siva appeared as a chandala and curbed his ego and asked him to write the Bhashya for the Brahmasutras and to establish the AdvaitaSiddhanta.

“The quintessence of the philosophy of Sankara as stated by himself in a half verse is thus: “The absolute spirit is the reality; the world of appearance is illusory. The so called individual soul is the absolute self, and no other”.

*“Brahma Satyam, JagatMithya  
Jivobrahmaivanaparah”.*

The Upanishadic terms ‘Brahman’ and ‘Atman’ indicate the highest reality which is non-dual. The supreme truth is that Brahman is non-dual and relationless. It is all one, there is nothing real besides it. But from our standpoint, which is the empirical, relative standpoint, Brahman appears as God, the cause of the world. There is no real causation. The world is but illusory even as the rope is mistaken for a snake.

Understanding the limitations of human beings, the great Acharya felt that the practical way for an ordinary mortal is bhakti or devotion. Hence he composed several devotional poems or slokas on the commonly worshipped deities, SaundaryaLahari on Goddess Shakthi and ShivanandaLahari on Lord Shiva. They are compositions of sublime devotion. BhajaGovindam is another. Vivekachudamani is a masterpiece on Advaita Vedanta.

Sankara’s commentaries on the principal Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita are well known.

Sankara established four important monastic institutions in the four directions; the Jyotir-matha at Badrikasrama, the Kalikapitha at Dvaraka, the Govardhanapitha at JagannathPuri, and the Saradapitha at Sringeri.

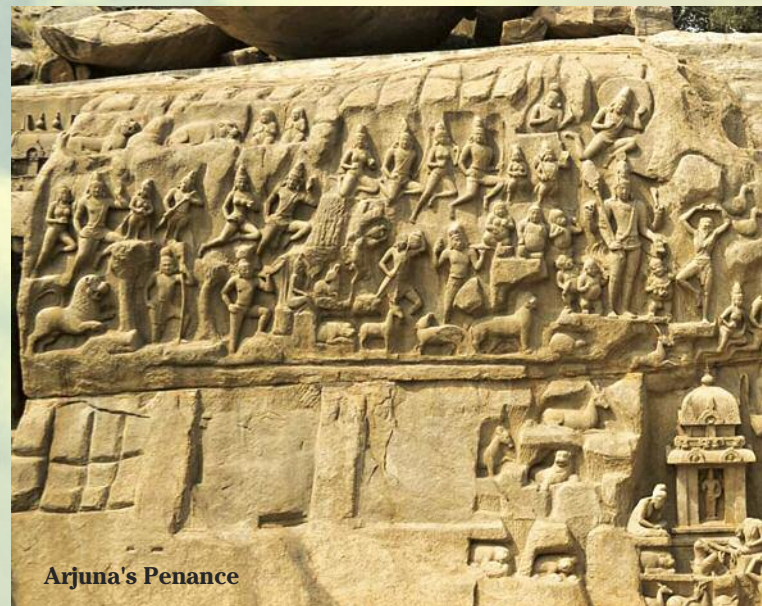
Sankara is considered the greatest philosopher—devotee the world has seen.

Some of the gems of his teachings are: “Human birth which is a means to reach the goal of life, is indeed very difficult to get”.

Man is truly man only when his mind is able to discriminate between right and wrong”.



*This goal can be attained  
through Bhakti, Jnana or  
Karma resulting from strict  
moral, spiritual, and  
physical discipline*



Arjuna's Penance

“The pure man is one who is endowed with both internal and external purity”.

“The able man is one who is able to decide rightly and promptly on the course of action in matters demanding immediate attention”.

“Perfection and enjoyment present themselves to men in such a tangled manner that the dull witted cannot discriminate between them. The wise, however, reflect on their relative value and gladly choose perfection as it is far superior to enjoyment”.

Sankara's description of the world as Maya has invited sharp criticism from critics at home and abroad. The theory formulated says that the world is neither categorisable as the real nor as the absolutely unreal. It exists but it is not real. “Unreal it is, illusory it is not”.

“The doctrine of Maya does not affect the world in any essential or epistemic matters. It only says that it is not ultimately real. The concept of the Nirguna Brahman is backed by a heavy and sound logic.”

“Sankara's philosophy is not a mere dry and dust system. He regards philosophy as the solution to end all our sorrows, strifes, tensions, disbelief and doubts. Sankara has effected the most magnificent synthesis between man and God. He was the first to affirm that moksha is native to the soul of man. It is for all, It can be realised here and now”.

To quote Munshi “Sankara's Vedanta postulated four central principles. First, Brahman, the Absolute is the only and all pervasive reality. Its nature is formed of Existence (Sat), Consciousness (Chit), and Bliss (Ananda). Secondly, the only way to attaining identity with Brahman is the way of Jnana

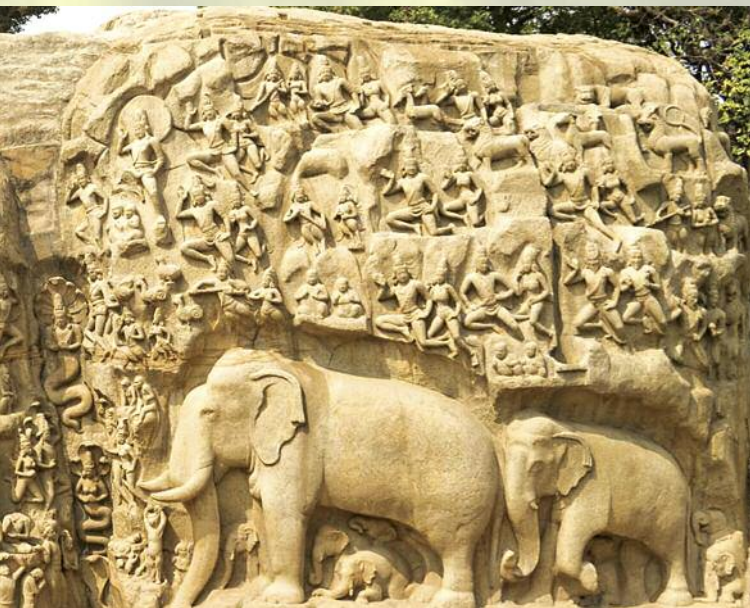
or the cognition of Reality. Thirdly, the way of Jnana or cognition can be reached through Viveka—right discrimination between the real and the unreal, Vairagya, Sama, Dama, Upavati, Titiksha, Samadhi, Shraddha, and Mumukshutva. Fourthly, both the way of Bhakti or devotion and the way of Karma or action are more steps to obliterate the distinction between the aspirant and God and to bring about purity of mind”.

The main background of Sankara's system is the Mandukopanishad on which he has composed his well-known commentary. The second verse of that Upanishad runs, “SarvamHyetat Brahma, ayamatmaBrahma, Soayamatma.”

Radhakrishnan writing about Sankara's philosophy mentions, “Supreme as a philosopher great as a man of calm judgement and wide toleration, Sankara taught us to love truth, respect reason and realise the purpose of life. Twelve centuries have passed and yet his influence is visible. He destroyed many an old dogma, not by violently attacking it but by quietly suggesting more reasonable theories which at the same time were more spiritual too. He put into general circulation a vast body of important knowledge and formative ideas which, though contained in the Upanishads were forgotten by the people; thus recreating for us the distant past”.

The irresistible appeal of monoism is mentioned briefly by Arthur Isenberg (Original not seen), “Advaita Vedanta proves a complete philosophical and conceptual framework within which the findings of advanced, modern, physical science can be placed without stress or tear. Monoism seemed unattractive as long as scientists had to believe in the separate nature of matter and energy. But now that matter and energy have been proved to be equivalent aspects of one underlying something,





**Mahabharata**

the appeal of monoism has become far greater, if not irresistible.”

Finally, to quote Swami Vivekananda “Sankaracharya had caught the rhythm of the Vedas, the national cadence. Indeed, I always imagine that he had some vision when he was young and recovered the ancient music that way. Anyway, his whole life’s work is nothing but that, the throbbing of the beauty of the Vedas and Upanishads. The greatest teacher of the Vedanta philosophy was Sankaracharya. By solid reasoning, he extracted from the Vedas truths of Vedanta and on them built up the wonderful system of Jnana that he taught in his commentaries. He unified all the conflicting descriptions of Brahman and showed that there is only one Infinite Reality”.

### **Madhvacharya**

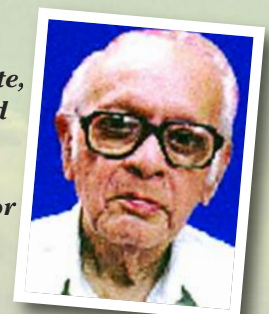
Madhvacharya (earlier Vasudeva) was born in the year 1199 AD in Udupi. His father, MadhyagehaBhatta was well versed in the Puranas and the Mahabharata. Vasudeva took to Sanyasa at the age of sixteen and his guru named him Anandathirtha. He established an idol of Sri Krishna at Udupi and founded eight ‘mutts’ whose pontiffs conducted the worship of the idol in rotation. He also established one big ‘mutt’, the Uttaradi mutt. Madhvacharya paid visits to Badri thrice and on the last occasion, it is said he disappeared. During the 80 years of his life, he established radical realism, pluralism and theism. His main emphasis was on Bhakti.

The fundamental points of his philosophy are summarised thus in a verse in Sanskrit.

1. Hari-Vishnu is the Supreme Over Lord of the Universe.
2. The world is radically and functionally real.

3. The souls are different from the Supreme Lord and from the matter and from one another.
4. All are consciously or unconsciously subject to Lord Vishnu.
5. There are various gradations among the souls. The cosmos consists of infinite varieties of souls and things. Their capacities are divergent and their functions are unlike.
6. Salvation exists in the realisation of ‘Bliss’ which constitutes the very essence of the individual self.
7. Singular devotion to the Supreme Lord is the radical means to secure salvation.
8. Sense-perception, inference and verbal testimony; scriptures are the three authoritative sources of correct knowledge.
9. Every Veda proclaims the supremacy of Vishnu. (To be continued...)

**-Dr. J. Thuljaram Rao, an Agricultural Scientist with Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore, was associated with The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan at Coimbatore as Honorary Vice Chairman for a period of 22 years till 2003. During the 22 years,**



**Dr. Rao had the unique opportunity to read the Bhavan’s Journal from 1956 for the last 50 years (the store house of the history of Indian culture) covering over 300 issues and books and understand the history of the culture of the country from Rig Vedic times to the present day with its ups and downs in relation to social conditions.**

**Source: Cultural Heritage of India by Dr. J. Thuljaram Rao, Impress, Coimbatore, India**



# Guru Nanak Jayanti

Guru Nanak Dev was the first Sikh Guru and the founder of the Sikh religion. He was born on the full moon day in the month of Kartik as per the Hindu calendar. His birthday is celebrated as Guru Nanak Jayanti. Guru Nanak was born in 1469 AD at Rai-Bhoi-di Talwandi, some 30 miles from Lahore, in the present Pakistan. The Sikhs visit Gurdwaras where special programs are arranged and kirtans (religious songs) are sung. Houses and Gurdwaras are decorated and lit up to add to the festivities.

Guru Nanak Dev's life served as a beacon light for his age. He was a great seer, saint and mystic. He was a prolific poet and a unique singer of God's laudation. A prophet of peace, love, truth and renaissance, he was centuries ahead of his times. His universal message is as fresh and true even today as it was in the past and Sikhs all over the world. Guru Nanak Jayanti in 2013 falls on the 17 November.

## Guru Nanak Dev

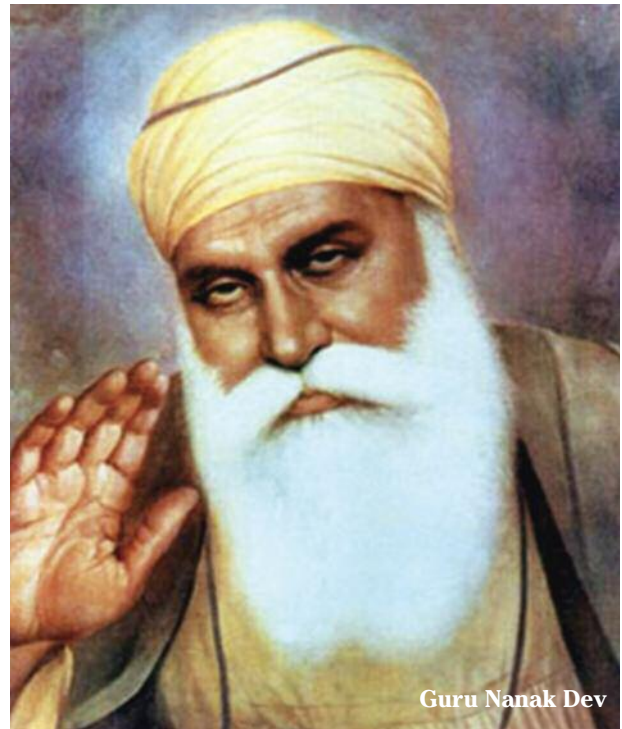
Guru Nanak Dev was born into a Kshatriya (warrior) family to Mehta Kalu Chand and Tripti Devi. Mehta Kalyan Das Bedi, better known as Mehta Kalu, was the accountant of the village and an agriculturist as well. Since childhood, Nanak had a mystic disposition and used to talk to Sadhus about God. He had a pious nature and a contemplative mind. He spent most of his time in meditation and spiritual practices.

## Early Life

Nanak got married to Sulakhani, daughter of Mula, resident of Batala in the district of Gurdaspur. He had two sons, Srichand and Lakshmichand. But he left his family and went to the forests and lonely places for meditation. Jai Ram, Nanak's brother-in-law, took him to Rai Bular, the Zamindar of Talwandi, who put Nanak in charge of his storehouse. Nanak received provisions as his salary for discharging his duties very satisfactorily. However, Nanak gave up his duty and distributed the goods among the poor. Disguised as a Fakir, he lived in the jungles singing inspiring songs. Mardana, a minstrel from Talwandi became Nanak's servant and faithful devotee.

## The Preacher

By the age of 34, Nanak became a public preacher. He preached "There is no Hindu, there is no Mussulman". His preachings highly impressed the public. He toured Northern India along with Mardana. He wandered from place to place. He travelled throughout India from Sayyidpur to



Guru Nanak Dev

Kurukshetra, Haridwar, Brindavan, Varanasi, Agra, Kanpur, Prayag, Patna, Rajgir, Gaya and Puri. He even made extensive tours to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Mecca, Medina, Turkey, Baghdad, Kabul, Kandahar and Siam.

Two great miracles are associated with Guru Nanak's life. One is connected with Nanak's visit to Mecca. One time, the Mohammedans found Nanak sleeping with his feet towards the Kaaba, the direction towards which the Muslims prostrate while performing their prayers. Kazi Rukan-ud-din observed this and got angry. On remarking why he turned his feet towards God, Nanak asked him to turn his feet where God is not present. Kazi angrily turned his feet to the opposite direction. To his surprise, even the mosque started moving. Kazi was shocked but recognized the glory of Guru Nanak.

The second incident mentions about the visit of Nanak to Hassan Abdal in the Attock district in the North Western Frontier in 1520 AD. Nanak sat under a peepal tree at the foot of a hillock. Mardana used to get water from a spring of water at the hilltop. A Mohammedan saint named Vali Quandhari lived on the hill and did not like this. He refused to give any water to Mardana. On informing about this to Nanak, he only said that God will help them. Soon, the spring on the hilltop dried and a spring rose at the foot of the hilltop. The saint got enraged and hurled a big rock from the hilltop down to the place where Nanak sat. Nanak stopped the rock with his open hand. This surprised the saint and he



immediately prostrated at the feet of Nanak for pardon.

Nanak preached purity, justice, goodness and love of God. He composed beautiful mystic poems, which are contained in 'Japji'. Today, every Sikh sings this at daybreak. Through 'Japji', Nanak has given a vivid and concise description of the stages that a man must pass through to reach the final resting place or abode of eternal bliss. Nanak spent the last days of his life in Khartarpur where his entire family resided together for the first time. His devotee, Mardana also lived with him. Guru Nanak died in 1538 AD at the age of 69. He was succeeded by Guru Angad.

### Significance

Guru Nanak Jayanti is the most sacred festivals of Sikhs, which commemorates the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev. The birth anniversaries are associated with the 10 Gurus of Sikhism. Guru Nanak was the first Sikh guru and the founder of Sikhism. The festival is celebrated with great religious fervour, dedication and devotion across India, chiefly in Punjab, Haryana and abroad. This holy occasion is observed on the full moon day in the month of Kartik as per the Hindu calendar. The celebrations for this day are spread across three days. Read through the following lines to know how Guru Nanak Jayanti is celebrated across India.

### Celebrations

The festive spirit of Guru Nanak Jayanti begins with the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs non-stop for 48 hours in the Gurudwara. This recitation of the Guru Granth is known as Akhand Path. The recitation ends on the day of the festival. A day prior to Guru Nanak Jayanti, a religious procession or Prabhat Pheri is carried out in the early morning that is lead by the Panj Pyares, the five armed guards. These guards head the procession carrying the Sikh flag known as the Nishan Sahib. They also carry the Guru Granth Sahib that is well set in a Palki (Palanquin) ornamented with flowers.

The procession starts from the gurudwaras and proceeds towards the localities. The guards are followed by local bands playing brass bands and a team of singers singing shabads (religious hymns). While the procession passes the local homes, the devotees sing the chorus and offer sweets and tea to the people in the procession. 'Gatka' teams (martial arts) display mock-battles with the traditional weapons. The route of the procession is decorated with flags, flowers and religious posters. Banners are also posted depicting various aspects of Sikhism.

On the day of Guru Nanak Jayanti, celebrations begin early in the morning at around 4 or 5 a.m. Morning hymns, known as Asa-di-Var, and hymns from the Sikh scriptures are sung, which are then followed by Katha, or the exposition of the scripture. This includes religious and historical lectures and recitation of poems to honor the Guru. The Gurudwara hall also conducts the Kirtan-Darbars and Amrit Sanchar ceremonies. A special community lunch, or Langar, follows next. This lunch is organized by the volunteers at the Gurudwara. The Sikhs consider distributing free sweets and lunch as a part of seva (service) and bhakti (devotion).

The food is served to all people irrespective of caste or religion. Special pious food or Prasad known as Kara Prasad is then offered to everyone present in the Gurudwara. The gurudwaras and the homes are decked with earthen lamps and candles in the evening. Religious music played by local bands, enthusiastic Bhangra dance (Punjabi dance form) and the colorful folk drum players add to the color of the festival. The guards perform fighting skills and martial arts. The golden Temple in Amritsar is the main attraction during this festival.

Preparations for the festival start well in advance. The festival is generally a three-day fair. It starts off with reciting the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs, in the gurudwaras. The holy book is read for 48 hours non-stop, known as Akhand Path. This ends on the day before Guru Nanak Jayanti. A day before the festival, a procession is carried out starting early in the morning, called the Prabhat Pheris. The procession starts from the gurudwara and moves ahead towards the localities. Five armed guards, representing the Panj Pyares lead the procession carrying the Sikh Flag called Nishan Sahibs. They even carry a Palki (palanquin) which holds the Guru Granth Sahib placed firm and decorated with flowers.

As the procession proceeds, the followers sing shabads (religious hymns) while the local bands play religious music. The day of Guru Nanak Jayanti begins at around 4 or 5 a.m. with singing Asa-di-Var (morning hymns) and hymns from the Sikh scriptures. This is followed by Katha which continues till noon. A lavish Langar or special community lunch is served to the people present at the gurudwara. People volunteer for this service as they consider it to be seva (service) and bhakti (devotion) towards Lord.

**Source:** <http://sgpc.net>,  
[www.festivals.iloveindia.com](http://www.festivals.iloveindia.com),  
[www.timeanddate.com](http://www.timeanddate.com)

# Ravana: Vilest of the Vile?

People have certain wrong notions about Ravana. Because of his valour and power, they think that he was a great hero. Again, since he was adept in the Vedas and a great scholar, people think that he is a great personality. Since a great Shiva bhakta, he was wont to chanting “Saama Veda” with the melody of his veena, sitting in front of his Ishta Deva viz. Lord Shiva. He was considered a great human being. Hefty, handsome, he was adept in dhanur-vidya i.e. archery. All these were spoken by many people in superlatives and people all over the world consider him a great, chivalrous and peerless king.

People do not know that Ravana was the forerunner of tyrant Aurangzeb who killed his elder brother Dhara and jailed his own parents! Lanka was originally a kingdom belonging to Kubera, Ravana's elder brother. He suddenly attacked Kubera, snatched away his kingdom and drove him out. That is how he became the king of Lanka.

But Aurangzeb was worse. Since Dhara, Aurangzeb's brother was dear to Emperor Shah Jahan and was his eldest son, Shah Jahan decided to announce him as the crown prince. For that very reason Aurangzeb killed him! Moreover Aurangzeb got his own parents jailed. He also starved them to death. Heartless, he did not even give them water!

The last couplet left by Shah Jahan who was tortured by Aurangzeb, read as follows:  
Look at Hindoos; Look at Hindoos

*They give water even to their dead parents!  
Look at my son! He is really my sin!  
He would not give water to his live parents.  
So cruel was Aurangzeb! Ravana was  
equally cruel and wicked.*

According to Valmiki's Ramayana, long long ago there was a king by name: Anaranya. He was Lord

Rama's ancestor. Ravana's greed to acquire other kingdoms could not succeed in those days as kingdoms like Anaranya's were far away from his kingdom in Lanka, to take over any of them physically or to govern them. But to show his superiority, he used to tease the Indian kings to a great extent. Once Anaranya got so annoyed by the tortures inflicted by Ravana that he cursed Ravana saying:

“Oh! Neech! (Abject) You think you can play havoc with anyone? Take it from me! A person born in our Ikshwaku dynasty, a mere man, by name Rama will kill you and completely annihilate you”.

Ravana was the worst womaniser in the history of mankind! People think that after kidnapping Sita, for 12 months, till he himself was vanquished by Rama, Ravana did not even touch Sita by his little finger and without her active consent he did not want to disturb her and that this showed that he was a thorough gentleman. So thinking, people even admire him!

What a pity? People do not know that Ravana had thousands of girl-friends. Most of them were molested by him and raped by him and thereafter, without their volition were forced to live in his harem willy-nilly. At least three of such ravishments or molestations are vividly recorded in Valmiki's Ramayana. They are:

Vedavati a beautiful girl, was doing Tapasya in the Himalayas for years with the only object of marrying Lord Vishnu. Ravana at that time had come to Mount Kailash to worship Lord Shiva since he was a great Shiva-devotee. He noticed Vedavati. Attracted by her, he went to her and molested her. She escaped from him. But while running away, she cursed Ravana, saying “I am going to be your end”. It was hundreds and hundreds of years later that Sita was born! When Ravana was in a defeatist mood and when he found that he was about to be completely annihilated, he himself cried:

*Once I ravished a woman called Vedavati. She cursed me “I am going to bring about your end.” I think it is that Vedavati who is reborn as Sita and because of her I am now put to this predicament.*

*Rambha:* Once Kubera's son Nalakubara was to



meet Rambha. Ravana knew Rambha was coming to meet his own nephew Nalakubara. Yet, bewitched by her extraordinary beauty, he shamelessly went to her and ravished her ignoring her protests. He left her on the road-side in torn clothes indicating the grave violence he had inflicted on her in his lust. She ran to Nalakubara and complained to Nalakubara who upset with his uncle, cursed him in the following words while addressing Rambha: How can he do it to you? He shall not do it to any other woman hereafter! If he attempts to molest any woman hereafter without her consent, that moment itself, his head will break into seven pieces!

It is said that because of this curse, Ravana was very careful for several decades. He would not touch any girl without her consent. But he started other methods to lure women cajole them, praise them and attract them with jewellery and other gifts and satisfy his lust.

Punjikasthala: About this young girl, Ravana himself is narrating his interaction with her just after hearing the information that Rama had constructed Rama-Sethu and that He had already crossed the sea. He was really afraid. He called his inner circle, consisting of his sons, his brothers, cousins etc. and told them:

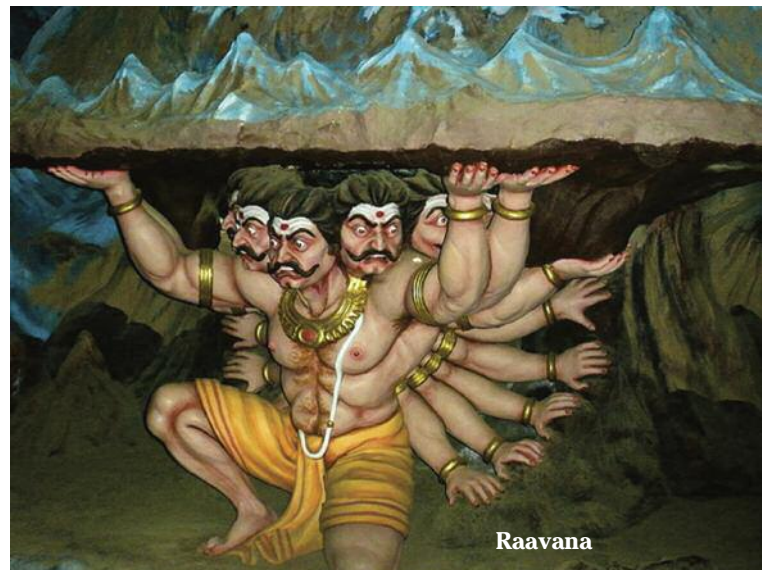
“You people do not know! Once, when a very pretty girl was walking towards Lord Brahma’s abode, lured by her bodily beauty, I lost my senses and there was an urge in me to ravish her. She was unwilling. I had to force her and I had disrobed her. She ran to Brahma’s darbar with her torn garments and cried. Brahma got angry. He immediately cursed me saying “Oh fool! How can you do this to a woman who is unwilling? Hereafter, if you ever touch a woman when she objects, then your head would immediately burst into one hundred pieces.”

Thereafter I never touched any woman who was unwilling. It is being afraid of this curse, I kept Sita in AshokaVana and I am trying my best to get her consent.

Why should he remember this curse at that juncture? Certainly, he was in panic. His mind was restless. Poet Kamban in his Ramayana in Tamil says:

*“Kadan-pattarnenjampol  
kalanginanllangaivendan”*

*Meaning:* Like a person in debts, so was Ravana. He was restless and his heart and mind were shaken.



But, after the Rambha incident, Ravana slowly reverted back to his rapist habits and heinous tendency. He would cajole and try to win over girls who were beautiful. Evidently, Nalakubara’s curse did not work on him then. The reason given for this is: Ravana had accumulated blessings because of his long tapasya. His own prayers and good deeds in the past were protecting him.

As he realised that Nalakubara’s curse was not working on him, Ravana became very arrogant and indulged in all misdeeds and ravishments repeatedly with impunity. It is recorded in Valmiki’s Ramayana that unable to tolerate his wickedness, the celestial girls and other women cursed him as follows:

Because the evil-doer (Ravana) does not care for the honour and modesty of other women, his misdeeds and cruelties inflicted on the opposite sex alone will punish him bringing about his end.” (As these words were spoken by these girls in their distress, their curse of Ravana was countenanced by the sounds of the dhundhubis of heaven.)

People praise him, thinking that he was chivalrous since he did not force Sita. But we have seen the reasons why he kept a distance from Sita and how only because of the curses he was afraid of nearing her. At the same time, he was cunning to the core. He was really a coward!

- I) Outwardly he was pretending as though he was courageous and as if he had sheer contempt for Rama, who was only a nara! Inwardly he had a lurking fear that his end was nearing and that his molesting of girls in the past was

perhaps the reason.

- II) If he was a hero he should have boldly challenged Rama and Lakshmana instead of conspiring with Mareecha to dupe and divert Rama and Lakshmana to go to a far away place. This trick played upon them does not behove a hero!
- III) It was dastardly conduct on his part in impersonating and posing as a sanyasi, duping Sita and abducting her in Rama's absence like a coward and a thief.
- IV) In the battle-field too he and his son did not behave like heroes. Indrajit using his illusory powers created a head of Sita with blood oozing from it falsely claiming that he had cut off her head so that Rama could be demoralised and made to fall in shock. Vibhishana saved Rama by pointing out that it was all Indrajit's illusory powers and that Sita was safe.

V) Ravana himself adopted another fraud of creating the like of Rama's head with blood dripping from the neck portion taking the help of one "Vidyujjva" who was an expert in such manipulations and then brought that counterfeit head of Rama and frightened Sita. Innocent Sita believed it to be her husband's and she was shocked and was about to collapse.

At that time, Vibhishana's wife Sarama told Sita that it was all maayajaal—a kind of trickery played by Ravana and that Rama was very much alive.

- VI) Again Ravana adopted trickery. When Indrajit struck Rama and Lakshmana with Nagastra, both of them became unconscious. They were lying on the ground. Vaanaras were worried. But the trickster Ravana in order to demoralise Sita told her that Rama had been killed. He quickly arranged his viman Pushpak, to take her to the battle-field and asked her to witness Rama and Lakshmana lying on the ground. Raakshasi Trijata told her in her ears that the two heroes were only unconscious and that they had not been killed. Sita realised the game played by Ravana to cheat her and she was relieved of her tension.
- VII) Ravana was so vile and wicked that he sent



emissaries to Sugreeva secretly offering to bribe him and thereby tried his best to wean away Sugreeva. He could not succeed in it. This conduct depicts his weakness and cowardice.

- VIII) Ravana was a shameless character. According to Ramayana, he was over 50,000 years old! By Tapasya and by getting boons, in those days some people were living for thousands of years. Of course, living thousands of years is not a great thing. It is sheer boredom and a curse to live so long. Ashwathama of Mahabharata was cursed by Lord Krishna to live long! The great Tamil poet Tirumular lived for over 3000 years. Again the great grand master of Swami Paramahansa Yogananda was a great yogi. He was known as "Mahaavatar Baba"! He lived for over 3000 years! Such an old person Ravana was madly in love with Sita a young girl of 30 years!

In his lust, he falls at her feet and says:

*"Never this Ravana had ever fallen at anyone's feet so far Now I am falling at your feet! I do it shamelessly."*

In chapter 22 (Sundara Kanda) verses 8-9 Ravana tells Sita:

*"I am giving you two months. Within that you should decide and tell me that you have taken a decision to accept me. If your answer is negative, I will direct my cooks to cut your body into pieces and make a breakfast of you for me."*

Can anyone have any regard for him after reading this? He had no love. It was lust. Else, how would one threaten this way any girl whom one really loves?



- X) After Indrajit's death Ravana was a dejected man. In that dejection, he declared that he would kill Sita by chopping her into pieces. While the fight with Rama was still going on, the coward wanted to kill Sita. Just at that time Suparsva advised Ravana not to kill Sita and that if he was a real hero, he should first vanquish and kill Rama. Ravana had to take this advice.

But see the character! This again shows that his was lust and not love.

- XI) Ravana used to pretend that he had great respect and love for Sita. He says in one context:

*When I see her feet I am simply attracted by them. Somehow, of all her limbs, I have great love and regard for her feet. If I look at her tenderfeet, I am not able to withdraw my sight from them.*

This is mere pretence and a farce. He had no such feelings at all in his heart.

Ravana was not a hero. He was a coward. He was given the right advice by everyone, including Kumbhakarna and Ravana's maternal uncle Maalyavan, besides Mandodhari and others. He refused to release Sita and surrender her to Rama. Maalyavan warned Ravana and told him:

A person who could build a bridge across the ocean—you must know him to be Divine. Therefore give up your ego and surrender Sita to Rama.

Ravana rejected this sound advice. Kumbhakarna told Ravana:

*You are not justified in keeping another man's wife in your custody. Your conduct is unrighteous. Still I would fight on your side if you choose war.*

Ravana sent his sons, his brothers and other near relatives to the battle-field. All of them were killed. Indrajit, his son was very dear to him. He died in battle. Yet, his lust would not abate. Just to have sex with a particular girl he was prepared to lose all his sons and brothers. Ravana was selfish, egoistic and lustful. He was wickedness personified.

Yuddha Kanda of Valmiki's Ramayana records in Section 100 (last sloka) that like a coward, he fled from the battlefield. Then, even as clouds disperse on being trampled by the Winds, Ravana, covered with showers of arrowy networks by that high souled one and reduced to sore straits by that one (Rama) of a glowing bow, fled away in fear.

In those days a person born in warrior caste, can not run away from the battle-field. But Ravana who was a Kshatriya by conduct though Brahmin by birth, left the battle-field on at least three occasions. On one such occasion Rama single-handedly removed all his weapons, his chariot and his steeds from him and he became nirrayudha. Standing weaponless, he thought that his end had come. But the Lord, to add more glory to His victory, told Ravana:

*Oh Ravana! I was happy to see your skills in the battle-field. But now you are weaponless. I can finish you off in a moment. However, I want to give you one more opportunity. Even now if you surrender and take refuge in Me, really repenting for your heinous conduct, I am prepared to forgive you. In any case, I am giving one more chance. You may equip yourself with your weapons tomorrow. Come back and fight with Me.*

After hearing Rama, Ravana quickly ran away from the battle-field. Only a coward could have done this—certainly not a hero.

Ravana acquired rare boons by doing long longtapasyas. But all powers acquired by him were mostly abused. His powers and his scholarships all only contributed to his ego and arrogance. He had scant respect for the women-folk. He had kept lacs of beautiful women as his captives. He molested them and raped several of them. He did not have a single good quality in him for which he could be praised. His mere scholarship and his mastery over the Vedas are not matters for praise. Swami Vivekananda says: What is the use of accumulating information and knowledge in your mind? If mere knowledge is to be worshipped or venerated, then we have to fall flat in front of libraries and universities. They are the real store-houses of knowledge.

**-M.N. Krishnamani, President of Supreme Court Bar Association, President of Delhi Tamil Sangam, has authored several books. He was conferred: "National Law Day Award" in 1998. "Paramacharya's Seva Ratna Award" in 2005 and is a "Doctorate in Law" (LLD) of North Orissa University in 2012.**

**Source: Bhavan's Journal, September 15, 2013**







Guru Gobind Singh

## Guru Gobind Singh

*"By perfect good karma, you shall meet the  
True Guru, and then the Dear Lord,  
by His Sweet Will, shall bless you with His Mercy."*  
-Guru Gobind Singh

The tenth and the last Guru/Prophet-teacher of the Sikh faith, was born as Gobind Rai Sodhi on 22 December 1666 at Patna, in Bihar. Gobind Singh became a Guru on 11th November, 1675 at the age of 9. He established the Khalsa, The Pure Ones, in 1699. He gave the name of Singh (lion) and Kaur (princess) to the Sikhs. He fought several battles with the Mughals and their alliances.

### Early Life

His early education included reading and writing of Punjabi, Braj, Sanskrit and Persian languages. He was barely nine years of age when a sudden turn came in his life as well as in the life of entire Sikh community, he was destined to lead. Early in 1675, a group of Kashmiri Brahmans, driven to desperation by the religious fanaticism of the Mughal General Iftikar Khan, visited Anandpur to seek Guru Tegh Bahadur's intercession. As the Guru sat reflecting what to do, young Gobind Rai, arriving there in company with his playmates, asked "Why he looked so preoccupied".

*"The greatest comforts and lasting peace are obtained,  
when one eradicates selfishness from within."*

The father replied, "Grave are the burdens the earth

bears. She will be redeemed only if a truly worthy person comes forward to lay down his head. Distress will then be expunged and happiness ushered in." "None could be worthier than yourself to make such a sacrifice," remarked Gobind Rai in his innocent manner. Guru Tegh Bahadur soon afterwards proceeded to the imperial capital, Delhi, and courted death on 11 November 1675.

### The Guru

Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed Guru on 11th Nov, 1675. In the midst of his engagement with the concerns of the community, he gave attention to the mastery of physical skills and literary accomplishment. He had grown into an energetic youth. He had a natural genius for poetic composition and his early years were assiduously given to this pursuit.

### Poems and the Sword

Poetry for him was also a means of revealing the divine principle and concretizing a personal vision of the Supreme Being that had been vouchsafed to him. The glorification of the sword itself which he eulogized as Bhaguati was to secure fulfilment of God's justice. The sword was the emblem of manliness and self-respect and was to be used only in self-defence, as a last resort.

### The Khalsa

*"O Nanak, as the Lord Himself engages him, so is he engaged, no one has any say in this matter."*

The institution of the Khalsa was given concrete form on 30 March 1699 when Sikhs had gathered at Anandpur in large numbers for the annual festival of Baisakhi. Guru Gobind Singh appeared before the assembly dramatically on that day with a naked sword in hand and spoke: "Is there present a true Sikh who would offer his head to the Guru as a sacrifice?" The words numbed the audience who looked on in awed silence.

The Guru repeated the call. At the third call Daya Ram, a Sobti Khatri of Lahore, arose and humbly walked behind the Guru to a tent nearby. The Guru returned with his sword dripping blood, and asked for another head. At this Daram Das, a Jatt from Hastinapur, came forward and was taken inside the enclosure. Guru Gobind Singh made three more calls. Muhkam Chand, a washerman from Dvarka, Himmat, a water-carrier from Jagannathpur, and Sahib Chand, a barber from Bidar (Karnataka) responded one after another and advanced to offer their heads.

### Panj Piare

All the five were led back from the tent dressed alike in saffron-coloured raiment topped over with neatly



tied turbans similarly dyed, with swords dangling by their sides. Those five Sikhs were the first to be initiated. Guru Gobind Singh called them Panj Piare, the five devoted spirits beloved of the Guru.

### **The Rajput Chiefs**

These developments alarmed the caste ridden Rajput chiefs of the Sivalik hills. They rallied under the leadership of the Raja of Bilaspur, in whose territory laid Anandpur, to forcibly evict Guru Gobind Singh from his hilly citadel. Their repeated expeditions during 1700-04 however proved abortive. They at last petitioned Emperor Aurangzeb for help and in concert marched upon Anandpur and laid a siege to the fort in May 1705.

Over the months, the Guru and his Sikhs firmly withstood their successive assaults. But in the end the besiegers offered, on solemn oaths of Quran, safe exit to the Sikhs if they quit Anandpur. At last, the town was evacuated during the night of 5-6 December 1705. But soon, as the Guru and his Sikhs came out, the hill monarchs and their Mughal allies set upon them in full fury. In the ensuing confusion many Sikhs were killed and all of the Guru's baggage, including most of the precious manuscripts, was lost. The Guru himself was barely able to make his way to Chamkaur, 40 km southwest of Anandpur.

Guru Gobind Singh continued his westward march until, finding the host close upon his heels, he took position astride the water pool of Khidrana. The fighting on 29 December 1705 was hard and desperate. In spite of their overwhelming numbers, the Mughal troops failed to capture the Guru and had to retire in defeat.

Finally Guru Gobind Singh arrived at Talvandi Sabo, now called Damdama Sahib, on 20 January 1706. During his stay there of over nine months, a number of Sikhs rejoined him. He prepared afresh the Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, with the celebrated scholar, Bhai Mani Singh, as his amanuensis. From the number of scholars who had rallied round Guru Gobind Singh and from the literary activity initiated, the place came to be known as the Guru's Kashi or seat of learning like Varanasi.

### **Aurangzeb**

The epistle Zafarnamah sent by Guru Gobind Singh from Dina seemed to have touched the heart of Emperor Aurangzeb. He forthwith invited him for a meeting and ordered to conciliate the Guru and make the required arrangements for his journey to the Deccan.

### **Bahadur Shah**

The Guru later decided to return to the Punjab, via Shahjahanabad (Delhi). The then Emperor Bahadur

Shah decided to move against the Kachhvaha Rajputs of Amber (Jaipur) and then to the Deccan where his youngest brother, Kam Baksh, had raised the standard of revolt. The Guru accompanied him. While Bahadur Shah proceeded further South, Guru Gobind Singh decided to stay awhile at Nanded.

### **The End**

Nawab Wazir Khan of Sirhind had felt concerned at the Emperor's conciliatory treatment of Guru Gobind Singh. Their marching together to the South made him jealous, and he charged two of his trusted men with murdering the Guru before his increasing friendship with the Emperor resulted in any harm to him. These two pathans Jamshed Khan and Wasil Beg pursued the Guru secretly and overtook him at Nanded, where one of them stabbed the Guru in the left side below the heart as he lay one evening in his chamber resting after the Rahras prayer.

Before he could deal another blow, Guru Gobind Singh struck him down with his sword, while his fleeing companion fell under the swords of Sikhs who had rushed in on hearing the noise. As the news reached Bahadur Shah's camp, he sent expert surgeons, including an Englishman, Cole by name, to attend on the Guru. The wound was stitched and appeared to have healed quickly but, as the Guru one day applied strength to pull a stiff bow, it broke out again and bled profusely. This weakened the Guru beyond cure and he passed away in Kattak 7 October 1708.

Before the end came, Guru Gobind Singh had asked for the Sacred Volume to be brought forth. Daya Singh brought Sri Granth Sahib. The Guru placed before it five pice and a coconut and bowed his head before it. He said to the sangat, "It is my commandment: Own Sri Granthji in my place. He who so acknowledges it will obtain his reward. The Guru will rescue him. Know this as the truth". On 3rd October, 1708, he appointed the holy Guru Granth Sahib as the next permanent Sikh Guru.

Guru Gobind Singh passed on the succession with due ceremony to the Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib, ending the line of personal Gurus. "The Guru's spirit," he said, "will henceforth be in the Granth and the Khalsa. Where the Granth is with any five Sikhs representing the Khalsa, there will the Guru be." The Word enshrined in the Holy Book was always revered by the Gurus as well as by their disciples as of Divine origin. The Guru was the revealer of the Word. One day the Word was to take the place of the Guru. It was only through the Word that the Guruship could be made everlasting. The Word as contained in the Guru Granth Sahib was henceforth, and for all time to come to be the Guru for the Sikhs.

**Source: [www.sgpc.net](http://www.sgpc.net)**



# Modern Versions of Ravana and His Brothers

Between telling the truth and saving a life, the former is lower and the latter higher dharma. The correct choice will be to choose the higher dharma. The choice is governed by what produces greater good. Our scriptures present many examples to help us in resolving the conflict when faced with two dharmic choices.

Sage Valmiki in Ramayana presents us with such an example which has its parallel in the episode concerning the suspension of Durga Shakti Nagpal, an IAS officer.

Ravana by abducting Rama's wife Sita, had violated samanya dharma. When Rama was marching to Lanka to free Sita, Ravana called a meeting of his councillors to discuss the situation. It was just a formality. He was not interested in their opinion. He was only interested in gaining their support for his adharmic action.

Kumbhakarna, Ravana's brother, expressed his opinion that what Ravana had done was adharmic and he should return Sita to Rama. But Ravana swayed Kumbhakarna to support him in his adharmic way by appealing to his brotherly duty. Kumbhakarna chose the lower duty of supporting a brother as opposed to the higher dharma of protecting the chastity of an innocent woman.

On the other hand, Vibhishana, another brother of Ravana, was not to be swayed. He opposed Ravana's adharmic act. For having opposed Ravana, Vibhishana was exiled. Faced with the same situation Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana made different choices based on their value system.

Durga Shakti Nagpal, an IAS officer, reportedly was recently ostensibly suspended for opposing the illegal activities of some corrupt politicians. The corrupt politicians holding positions of importance are comparable to Ravana. Just like Ravana, intoxicated by their power they engaged in adharmic acts. They go through the formality of following the

procedural protocol as Ravana did.

The situation of government officials is comparable to that of the councillors of Ravana's court. Some officials are swayed to support the adharmic activities of corrupt politicians by appealing to their sense of loyalty to the government. Such officials represent Kumbhakarna.

Officials like Durga Shakti Nagpal are comparable to Vibhishana. Officials belonging to the category of Vibhishana are punished by a transfer, denial of promotion, suspension or dismissal just as Vibhishana was exiled from his motherland.

Both Ravana and his followers who supported him in his adharmic action perished at the hands of Rama. The present day Ravana's seem resistant to learning. A society in which honesty is penalised and dishonesty rewarded cannot but perish. Everyone who is interested in the welfare of Mother India should become active like Rama to free her from the clutches of present day Ravana's.

Rama came prepared to fight Ravana. The preparation needed to fight present-day Ravana's include but not limited to:

## 1. A Shift from Colonial Mind Set of Bureaucracy:

Our government officials today are faced with difficult choices. Our bureaucracy is a legacy of colonialism. The rules were designed to benefit the colonisers at the expense of the colonised. For their benefit and safety colonial masters demanded absolute loyalty from officials.

Unfortunately, the concept did not change after the dawn of political freedom from the colonisers. Those positions of importance and influence vacated by colonial masters are being occupied by some present-day Ravana's. These Ravana's are demanding loyalty from government officials to cover up their adharmic acts forgetting that they are representatives of the people who are the ultimate sovereigns.





Ravan, Megnath  
and Kumbhkarna

A government official has duties to be discharged to the government as well as a citizen of the country. Conflict arises between these two roles when facing adharmic acts of present-day Ravanans. The conflict needs resolution. Some officials, if not supporting the adharmic activities turn a blind eye towards them. Governments are transient, but the country is permanent. Duty to the country is higher compared to duty to government.

Like Vibhishana Durga Shakti Nagpal chose the higher duty of opposing the adharmic act of present-day Ravanans. And like Vibhishana was penalised by suspension.

**2. Public Support:** The choice for a government official to side with public interest and oppose the vested interest of corrupt politicians is extremely difficult as it extracts a high price in the form of transfer, harassment, denial of promotion, suspension and even dismissal. The balance of power is too much skewed against the government official. A new balance has to be restored. The power of the politician to misuse his power must be curtailed and the position of honest official to safeguard his position should be enhanced.

This will not happen until and unless the public brings pressure on legislatures to formulate necessary changes in the laws. Government officials, especially the retired ones who are beyond penalisation can play a crucial role in educating the public to bring about the necessary desirable changes.



Durga Shakti Nagpal

**3. Comradely Behaviour:** There is a proverb which says that if you behave like a horse people will ride on you. Politicians could not take advantage of the officials if there is solidarity among

them in opposing vested interest of the corrupt politicians. Solidarity among government officials is an exception rather than a rule. In general, one official is jealous of another. In the downfall of a colleague a government official sees opportunities opening up for his own progress. Such an attitude of selfishness is short sighted and is responsible for the shoddy treatment government officials receive at the hands of unscrupulous corrupt politicians.

If government officials want to claim the dignity they deserve, they should forget their pettiness and come together as comrades in their fight against illegal activities of corrupt politicians.

It is worth reflecting on what Albert Einstein (1879-1955) had to say. He said, "The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of people who do not do anything about it."

**-Venkatachala I. Sreenivas**

**Source: Bhavan's Journal, 15 October, 2013**

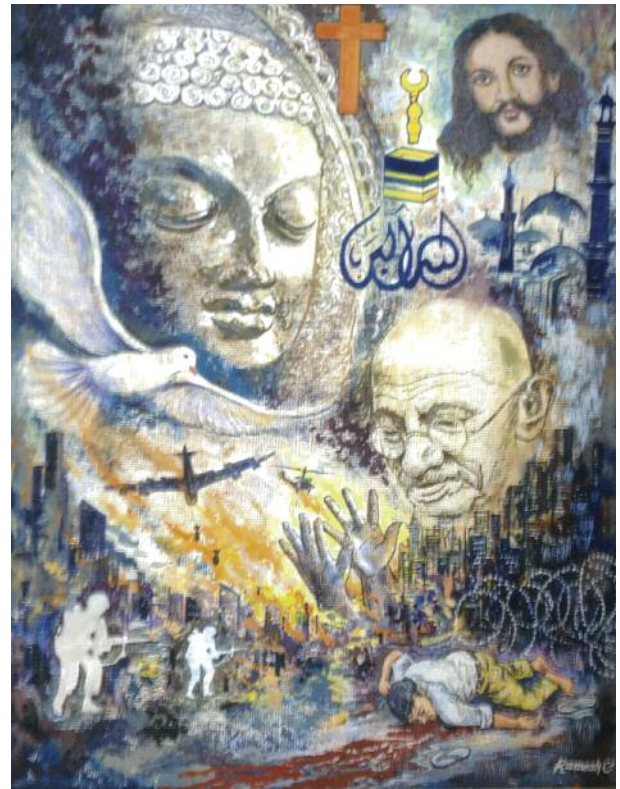


# *Ramesh Chandra Alandkar, Artist: A Proud Bhavanite and an Artist Extraordinaire*

Ramesh Chandra Alandkar was born in Gulbarga, Karnataka (India). With a diploma in Journalism and a diploma in Fine Arts at a time when they were not very popular vocations, he kept moving further and further in his world of art along with serving as Senior Technical Officer Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore, India. He worked in the Union Ministry of Community Development & Cooperation in New Delhi for 16 years and assisted in bringing various publications and extension material for community development. He is a master at painting on paper and silk medium in traditional styles. He has also organized painting exhibitions, Folk Art revival camps, Art and Craft exhibitions. His diversified talents include political and social cartoonist for leading newspapers in India. He has studied in India's best college for Arts J.J. School of Art in Mumbai and humbly stated that he was an artist since childhood.

Mr Alandkar moved to Australia with his wife and son's family in 2000. After migrating to Australia he has been actively involved with his art in Sydney. Apart from his exhibitions in Sydney including at the Art Gallery of NSW, he teaches pro bona art and holds workshops for children and for organizations working with disabled. He has raised donations for the Gujarat earthquake victims and tsunami victims in India through his creations. Australia to him is very peaceful and nice, a moderate and enjoyable country meeting the basic needs of life. People here are sober, helpful and more accepting of other communities than elsewhere in the world.

Now in Sydney the 81 year old energetic and enthusiastic Mr Alandkar feels the freedom and peace to work and is attempting to contribute to the society in his own "little ways". He is registered as a volunteer and teaches art at various places



voluntarily. The secret of his healthy and long life is "Being busy and active". He added that keeping busy makes mind more active and body more energetic. It gives more thrill and enjoyment in life.

Being very fond of reading, his contribution has been his collection of excellent quotations of great and famous people like Vivekananda, Paul Brenton and more. He has painted theme for each quotation and wants to have an exhibition using this collection. He painted and sketched the themes so that it would keep people's curiosity and people would read the works of learned people and then reach a conclusion for themselves.

Mr Alandkar was the first batch of journalists to pass out from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bangalore in 1971. He told us that regular journals which Bhavan used to publish (& continues to do so) were well read by people. He himself was a regular reader of those journals. There was no other organization that published such good literature and readings. R.R. Divakar and C. Rajgopalcharya had collected a lot of good people around them to publish good literature. He was always curious about Bhavan's activities.



Though he did not have any direct communication with Bhavan's leaders but had seen K.M Munshi from a distance when he (Munshi) was appointed as Agent General of Hyderabad.

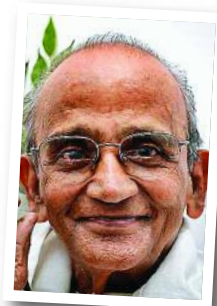
Mr Alandkar said that he never had a direct contact with Mahatma Gandhi but he used to hear him on the radio and had always tried follow his simplicity and other great principles. He had also worked at Gandhi Bhavan at Bangalore and Hyderabad as a social educationist before 1947. Mahatma Gandhi according to him "was a great influence" on him and many more people and his greatest contribution has been towards peace & his motto of Live and Let Live. The message this talented artist would like to give to the younger generation is Get Inspired- Inspiration for educative purpose. Inspiration is a must, everything else become self-propelling. Art should be useful, with a purpose & for education according to him. At an age when most people prefer to sit back and relax, here is a man who refuses to slow down despite his heart problem and now suffering from Lymphoma Leukemia (a type of Blood Cancer).

#### Some Past Glimpses of Ramesh Chandra Alandkar's Life

- \* The family of Ramesh Chandra Alandkar was a patriotic one and strict follower of Gandhian ideologies and the impact is still within the whole family.
- \* Ramesh Chandra was a congress volunteer since his school days, was in Sewa Dal and worked close to Swami RamanandTeerth the then President of Hyderabad state congress and participated in the fight for freedom from Nizam's government.
- \* He worked for "AryaSamajAndolan" with their prominent leaders like Narendraand also with VinayakRaoKoratkar and the activities of Samaj took him near to the "Daily Milap" familyand worked for their newspapers for several years as an artist and cartoonist.
- \* He worked for one "Struggle Weekly" started by his socialist friend Mr ShivramShastri and another weekly "Leader" and one Urdu Daily "Rahnumaye Deccan" at Hyderabad. (1952-54)
- \* He worked for 'Gandhi Bhavan' Bangalore for several years and had great respect for Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals and did work to picturisehis teachings and ideology. He made an elaborate pictorial exhibition on Gandhian ideology on "Nature Cure" at Gandhi Bhavan Bangalore which was specially inaugurated by the then Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai.

- \* He was with VinobaBhave during his "Bhoo Dan" campaign (Land through Love) and was witness to the first hand over of the land to VinobaBhave by one Ramchandra Reddy in Hyderabad. Ramesh wrote and illustrated a booklet on "Land through Love" which was later published by the Ministry of Community Development.
- \* Ramesh Chandra also made a booklet on "Panchshila", its history from Buddhist script to Bandung Conference (Principles of Co-existence) was sponsored by the trio Jawaharlal Nehru, Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia and Col. Nasser of Egypt.
- \* To make an on the spot studies and guidance for his desired Pictorial Exhibition on the subject "Meditation" Ramesh made a journey to the Himalayas and stayed at Rishikesh in the ParmarthNiketan Ashram and also at Swami Shivanand Ashram and got guidance from Swami Chidanand and Swami Krishnanand. He also got an opportunity to work for the voluminous work on "Hindi Encyclopaedia".
- \* During the freedom days, Ramesh got a great opportunity to be in Delhi in the company of several top leaders of the nation and Members of Parliament and had a chance to work for INTUC (Indian National Trade Union Congress) which inspired him in putting his best efforts in arts in propagating the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. In fact, he made a display elaborate exhibition on his "14 Point Principles" and did a lot of work for different social and political organisations at Delhi and even fully participated in organising the Centenary Celebrations of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Lala Lajpat Rai and Jawaharlal Nehru. He worked in Gandhi Bhavan and got encouragement from Kakasaheb Kalelkar also.

***Presently Ramesh Chandra Alandkar is serving Kulapati Dr K.M. Munshi's Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in propagating the high ideals in Sydney, Australia.***





# Chakravarti Rajagopalachari

*"Elections and their corruption, injustice and the power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration will make a hell of life."*

**-C. Rajagopalachari**

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari known as Rajaji or C.R., was an Indian lawyer, writer and statesman. He was the second Governor-General of independent India. Later he became the Chief Minister of Madras State, and was one of the first recipients of India's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna in 1954.

## Early Life

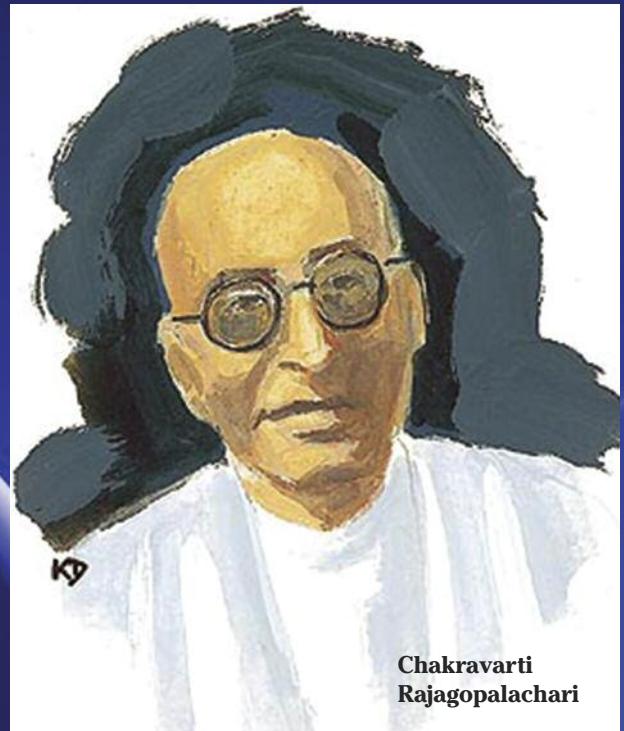
Rajagopalachari was born in a small village called Thorapalli of the then Salem District on 10 December 1878. He had his school education at Hosur and college education at Madras (Chennai) and Bangalore. He was married to Alamelu Mangamma. They had five children. His wife died when he was 37.

## Academic Career

Rajaji studied law in Bangalore and started his practice at Salem. He was even elected as the Municipal Chairman of Salem and he held that post for two years. Rajaji started to take part in the politics of the nation at the beginning of the 1900s. At first he was drawn towards Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In the year 1919 Rajaji chose to follow Mahatma Gandhi, who had just returned from South Africa.

## Mahatma Gandhi

After Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa in 1919, Rajaji made up his mind to follow him. C. Rajagopalachari was appointed the general-secretary of the Congress in 1921 and thus, got opportunity to gain acquaintance with other



leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Azad, Rajendra Prasad. Rajaji steadily rose in rank and even came to be regarded as Mahatma Gandhi's successor. He shared close kinship with Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel too, despite the difference in their viewpoints. Rajaji developed differences with Nehru later, but still both respected one another tremendously. Nehru wrote about Rajaji in his autobiography of how Rajaji's "brilliant intellect, selfless character, and penetrating powers of analysis have been a tremendous asset to our cause".

## Indian National Congress

Being among the five most important leaders in the

*As a founder of the Swatantra party in the fifties, he attacked the 'permit-license Raj' fearing its potential for corruption and stagnation, even while the tide was in favour of Nehru's socialistic pattern*

Indian National Congress, C. Rajagopalachari played a pivotal role in the life history of this party. Rajaji was the member of its Working Committee from 1919 to 1942 and then again from time period 1950 to 1955. Rajaji was active in Congress for about half a century. In the year 1932, he was chosen as the acting president of the Congress and played crucial role in formulating the Poona Pact with Ambedkar. Later when he was asked by Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru to head the Congress a couple of times, he refused.

#### **Man of Principles**

Rajaji was the earliest Congress leader in the forties to admit to the likelihood of Partition. As a founder of the Swatantra party in the fifties, he attacked the 'permit-license Raj' fearing its potential for corruption and stagnation, even while the tide was in favour of Nehru's socialistic pattern. Rajaji was amongst the initial Congress leaders during 1940s to accept the right of Muslims to self-determination.

He even worked out a solution by which there could be common defense and communications between the two nations. But this idea was discarded by Ali Jinnah and also some Congress leaders. Rajaji was always known to be a staunch protector of his

political principles and never hesitated to disagree with his closest allies even in front of the public.

#### **Profound thinker**

Rajaji was also a profound thinker in matters of spirituality and religion. A popular anecdote recalls his encounter with the Hindu spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda, during his student days. Swami was visiting a student hostel where Rajaji was staying, and he drew the attention of the inmates of the hostel to a painting of Lord Vishnu hanging over the wall and asked them as to why Vishnu in all his images, was always depicted blue in colour? Rajaji showed some amazing intellect by answering that the Lord has been ascribed the colour of the infinite sky and the unlimited sea, which were both blue in colour. Rajaji received rich praises from the immensely pleased spiritual leader, for his profound understanding of the Hindu spiritual philosophy.

#### **A writer**

As a writer, besides his own material, he published English translations of many important Indian and Hindu works: Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Bhaja Govindam. He also translated the Ramayana into Tamil.

Kurai Onrum illai, I have no unfulfilled desires left, oh! God, is a very famous song in the semi-Carnatic music genre written by Rajaji. The most popular version, (widely acknowledged as soul-stirring) was been rendered by MS Subbulakshmi.

Rajaji died on December 25, 1972 after a short illness. The nonagenarian's public life, spanning nearly eighty years are perhaps best recognized by Mahatma Gandhi's rich tribute to him praising him as the: "the keeper of my conscience".

**Source:** [www.biographybase.com](http://www.biographybase.com),  
[www.iloveindia.com](http://www.iloveindia.com), [www.indiainfolibrary.com](http://www.indiainfolibrary.com)





## *Born-again Family Physicians*

The recent Supreme Court judgment has been a breath of fresh air injected into the system of professional education scenario in India which is, at the moment, in the intensive care unit on oxygen with everything wrong about it (multi-system failure). I have not been able to get the original judgment. The ideal of the tax payer funding higher education in toto is only a mirage what with the government not having enough to cater to compulsory primary education where, at the present, the government spends around: ₹ 500,000 crore. Those who know the state of primary education in many states would understand how this money is not reaching the target, the kids, in many instances. If the reader does not know he/she should consult the recent PROBE report. The worst scenario in the field of higher education is the uncertainty that students face almost up to the time they join the colleges about their fate.

The Central and the State governments vie with one another to have as many rules and regulations as they could think of to keep their fingers in the pie. Every single rule thus formulated, is the source of further corruption and denial of justice to students. While the powers-that-be are not able to give good primary education to the future generation, why should they dabble in higher education is something that misses logic. Which country in the world could really afford to give universal higher education free to all the students?

To cap it, the demographic figures for India in the next half a century paint a very gloomy picture in the area of higher education. Our population in the next fifty years would be around 70% below the age of twenty years! That means a mind-boggling 700 to 800 million young men and women would be knocking at the door of higher education.

In this background even the most radical socialist would concede that NGOs will have to take this burden on themselves. Private initiatives in higher education in India are not only necessary, they would be the saviors. Vote bank politics of governmental help will remain a lip service only during the election times.

That said, we must put our heads together to find out how these disparate elements, the private managements, could be supervised and made to walk their talk. The reality today is that every one, from the underworld down to the greedy businessman, wants to get respectability by getting into this very lucrative business called education. Then no society recognises them as philanthropic “educationists.” They are eyeing everything from “international” primary schools to professional colleges.

This seems to be the easiest way to make money; thanks to the license raj that prevails even today in the field of education, whereas the government in its wisdom seems to have got rid of the license raj in big business, may be for reasons that are not very clear to the common man.

In this business of education the raw material is available in plenty. There is hardly any labour trouble; the marketing is not a problem and the returns come as soon as the business starts. One does not have to wait for any incubation period. There are no risks involved. The million dollar question is to find out how should the government, if at all, control these institutions? The present complicated system of control through the multitude of watch dog bodies, nearly a dozen of them in all, in every conceivable field of higher education, has been the biggest impediment for innovation.

Most of these, if not all, are filled with educational



politicians, who get there because of their affinity to the powers- that-be, have no idea as to what education is all about.

I am not going into the devious methods used by these bodies to keep the managements under their control as I have no concrete evidence, but suggest that the reader refers to some of the milestone judgments of the High Courts and the Supreme Court in this area.

While corruption has become a way of life in this country, to believe that these watch dog bodies would have divine individuals, who will be above suspicion, is the greatest joke of the century!

That being the case, one wonders why we should have these licensing bodies in the first place. Even today, if one does not confer Indian degrees, one need not be under the clutches of any of these bodies. Now that we have opened the higher education field to outside players, with Indian's proclivity for foreign degrees, this kind of licensing will eventually kill the non-governmental efforts in higher education, leaving it to the foreign sharks to mop up the loot and get away with it. There are business schools charging up to ₹ ten lakh and more fees per year, while the government wants a good medical college charge not more than a lakh or so!

There are the periodic inspections by the watch dog bodies in every field in addition to the initial inspection every year. I have been in teaching for more than four decades and have not been able to understand what these inspections do other than helping the watch dog bodies to have control over the institutions for reasons best known to them and their masters in the government. The inspection teams look for the length of the class room and the proximity of the dead body dissection room to the local cemetery etcetera - details that have no relevance to standards of teaching and learning. These bodies are counterproductive, to say the least.

When it comes to admissions, the plethora of

entrance examinations all over the country around the same time baffles me. The plight of the hapless student and his/her parents to go from place to place to appear for examinations is a sight for the Gods. Poor students are taken for a ride and ultimately admissions are done based on these multiple examinations by the managements. Many of the latter know how to get the students of their choice into their institutions. Every judgment proclaims that merit alone should be the criterion.

Fine, but in reality merit is the first casualty except in some of these common entrance tests. Even they are not 100% pure! In the present world of computers I can not understand why the government or the courts not order a single all India computer based examination which the student could take at his/her own sweet convenience? The admissions for all colleges could be made based on those ranks with the ranks published in newspapers for all to see and keep a watch. These examinations could be 100% safe and authentic.

Government could punish institutions which do not go by the merit list of these common entrance tests and if repeated could attract the clause of closure of the college. There could be one examination for each stream e.g.: medical related field, technology, management etc. Even the IITs could take from the same merit list.

This would put an end to the menace of the tutorial colleges that rob students these days. All higher educational institutions should have only one yardstick for excellence. Let us not have some institutions holier than others- educational caste system. All are equal and some are not more equal than others.





*Long live Indian education that showed the way to the whole world for “times out of mind” when our present role models in the west were only hunter-gatherers living in the forests. Let us get back that pre-eminence*

The one, and the only area where there should be strict control is the area of admission based on merit alone. Rest of the management of the institutions could be left to the managements. Even the fee structure could be their own, based on their own constraints and the availability of buyers. This could curb black money economy to a certain extent. Society could keep a watch. If the fees are too high and if the institution not good they will die a natural death in this era of buyer's market.

The honorable courts have pronounced time and again that capitation fees should be banned. On paper they are but, in reality, they have only escalated under the table. In a manner of speaking, capitation has become a government undertaking (taking under the table), resulting in a large parallel economy in the educational field like in real estate business. Prohibition only encourages alternate methods to get what one wants to get. Laws do not deter human emotions.

Take the example of rape in India. Under the very nose of the law makers and the courts in Delhi the incidence of rapes have quadrupled in the last three years in that city, forget about the far-flung villages where God alone save the honour of young girls and vulnerable women!

Why don't we learn our lessons from our own observations? Relaxing all controls will make the market in education to have its own in-built controls. Institutions that are substandard and that are indulging in nefarious activities will eventually be shunned by the buyers (students) and they will have to per force, perish.

I could site some historical evidence here. Before 1956 the US had more than 250 medical colleges, good, bad, and the ugly. The Flexner Commission

report in that year graded those colleges from one to two fifty. All that the government did was to publish this list everyday in New York Times for a year for all to read. The report did say that the first 72 were good and the rest were dangerous. Only 72 survived and the rest died in the next year or two as no student got admitted there.

This method is better and could be applied here also should the need arise. In the interim period the students who come out of those ugly institutions could be assessed by the common licensing examination conducted by the government.

Good and honest managements, of which there are many in India, would want to run excellent professional schools in this scenario, as their honour depends on the standards of the institutions. Bad ones today could get round the watch dog bodies and have flying professors, that too, only for the inspection times, fill their teaching hospitals with “fake” patients on those days of inspection and get round every rule to cheat the students. That will automatically disappear when the ball is put in their own court Vis-à-vis standards of education with the Damocles Sword of the licensing examination hanging on their necks.

If their end products do not get licensed they will be in serious trouble as their future admissions and their business will be in danger. One could have an analogy in the automobile trade. The old Ambassadors and Padminis are not on the road today with Mercedes and Toyotas around, but the good Tata Indicas are not only sold in plenty but are being exported. This will happen in the educational field if the present controls are removed.

In this model how could one keep the standards of the end products if the institutions are not

periodically inspected by the watch dog bodies? It is very simple. The end product of any institution should be filtered by an all India licensing examination before the graduates and postgraduates are let loose on the gullible public.

This examination must be computer based like the entrance examination. We could also introduce recertification at five yearly intervals to keep the professionals on their toes to keep up with the advances in their respective fields. Knowledge advances so fast today that a graduate needs to be reevaluated once in five years.

That said, I must hasten to add that the reservation system should continue for some more time to come. The reasons are not far to seek. More than 70% of our children today have less than 50% haemoglobin in their blood, thanks to the hookworms rampant all over. One example would suffice. In the state of Bihar only 5% of the population has toilets, rest defecate in the open to spread hookworms. This is not a rare site even in our metropolises.

Hookworms eat what little iron the poor child and its mother get in their depleted diet. Iron pigment is vital for the growth of that part of the human brain that looks after memory and intelligence—the hippocampus major, both in the foetus and the child after birth.

In our poor children the iron pigment being very low they have less well developed hippocampus majors. They must, then, have the handicap race for admissions till such time that we get every one in this country three square meals a day uncontaminated by human and/ or animal excreta, clean drinking water, a toilet for every house and a roof on their head in place of the star lit sky with economic and educational empowerment of our poor women.

The good versus bad student is only a myth. Given an opportunity an industrious student catches up very fast. Indifferent students, with or without reservations, fall out of the main stream anyway. That is their funeral, but society should give a helping hand to the less fortunate. The reservations should not be caste based, but based only on economic status. Even a student with low marks, if given the right encouragement and motivation, could come up and do very well. This is proven scientifically now.

In conclusion, educational field requires both emergency surgery to get rid of the shackles of the license raj and should have the long term plans to rejuvenate the system to be authentic. Only the market forces would do the latter in the present world of intense competition. The best only will survive. The private players, to preserve



their rice bowls, would want their institutions to be anything but the best. Hope the powers that be are listening to this clarion call. If they do not, they will be responsible for destroying Indian higher education for all times and sell the field to foreign players. Our future generations will never forgive us for this sin.

Bad politicians and corrupt officials will come and go, but this great country should go on for ever. Every new generation is better than the previous generation is a genetic truth. The elders have a responsibility to give children a level playing ground with equal opportunities to prosper, rest is their own making, either to keep it or throw it away.

Long live Indian education that showed the way to the whole world for “times out of mind” when our present role models in the west were only hunter-gatherers living in the forests. Let us get back that pre-eminence.

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**Source: Bhavan's Journal, September 15, 2013**



# Yoga as Expounded in Bhagavad Gita

Brahma Vidya, the supreme Knowledge, touches and transforms life and also is intensely practical. When applied to life, this science is called Yoga Sastra, which is one of the appellations by which the Bhagavad Gita is known.

“All the eighteen chapters in the Gita are designated, each as a type of yoga. The function of the yoga is to train the body and mind. A sense of frustration had overtaken Arjuna on the eve of the war. Still the first chapter, called Arjuna Vishada Yoga (Yoga of Arjuna’s dejection), is treated as a system of yoga, because the spiritual anguish suffered by him is considered as a kind of distress, which is a prelude to spiritual enlightenment.

“All the eighteen yogas contained in the Gita, though they all are eminently worthy of learning and adoption in our lives, may be mainly reduced to four yogas, namely, Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Sri Krishna handles all these four yogas with equal importance, like the manner in which he reined, with great expertise, the four white horses yoked to the chariot.

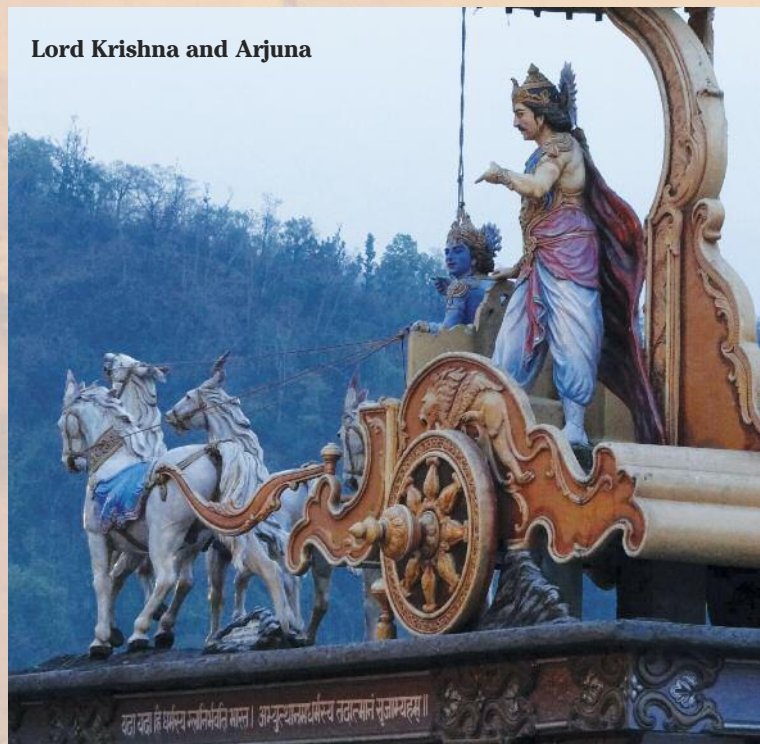
The development of the subject in a chapter in the Gita leads to the theme of the next. Thus Arjuna gradually traversed his spiritual journey through the Gita from a state of confusion and distress to that of steady wisdom and bliss”.

The above extract is taken from the introduction section of the masterly commentary on The Bhagavad Gita, along with a lucid English rendering, by Swami Chidbhavanandaji Maharaj and published by Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tirupparaithurai, Tiruchirappalli Dt. Tamilnadu.

Commonly one finds that a person undertakes to do a work either for some personal gain or to get rid of an unwanted object. One feels that there is no necessity for doing a work, unless one of the above two motives exists. But Lord Krishna asks Arjuna to perform his duty perfectly, not at all minding the results thereof.

*“Your right is only for doing your duty and not to its fruit. Your motive should not be to gain the fruit of action, nor should you allow your mind to take recourse to inaction.” - (Gita, chapter 2, verse 47).*

Lord Krishna and Arjuna



Doing one’s duty, called Karma by itself is not an evil to be avoided, nor does its fruit bind a man, if it is done with proper attitude. Karma as such binds man to the wheel of life and death, only if it is performed with a desire for a result. If it is done very efficiently, considering it as one’s duty without any regard for its result, not only it does not bind, but it leads one to the path of freedom from the circle of worldly life, called samsara.

The Karma Yogi is ever in the state of equanimity, free from likes and dislikes and from attachment and aversion.

The wise person, with evenness of mind, renounces the fruits of all his actions and thus transcends the illusion, which confers the feeling of doership of his actions and ownership of all his possessions. He realises that Prakriti, Nature, constituted of the three gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, performs all actions and there is no Karma at all in Purusha, the Atman, which he is in reality.

It is not possible for any one to remain actionless even for a moment, since he is helplessly driven to



action by the gunas of Nature. All bodily functions are actions of one kind or the other and since Karma is inherent in Prakriti, the wise man engages himself in his obligatory works, duly restraining the senses by the mind. One's duty, done ungrudgingly and efficiently, without any desire for personal gain becomes a subtle and high sacrifice called Yajna.

The Vedas have come from the Imperishable and they are centred on Yajna. This Yajna born of Karma produces rains, which in turn produce food. Beings come from food. Thus the Karma forms the basis for the functioning of the ever revolving Wheel of Nature, set up by the Lord for the evolution of all beings.

Any person desirous of achieving the fulfillment of the purpose of life should execute all his actions as Yajna, free from all attachments. Those who disregard this principle of the divine law of evolution and lead a sinful life, rejoicing in the senses are actually living in vain. Firmly bound to the system of result-oriented aspect of Karma, such ignorant persons lead a long series of lives, laden with misery and sufferings, until they fall in line with the above evolutionary process.

The Lord, emphasises in verse no. 26 of the third chapter of the Gita, that a wise man should not unsettle the mind of the ignorant person attached to performance of karma with expectation of fruits. The performance of duty with a desire for personal benefit is far superior to non-performance of any work due to laziness, born of inertia. The common man, who is habituated to do selfish activities is likely to follow in due course the examples set up by the wise people. Who work always considering their work as yajna.

*"The wise man sees inaction in action and action in inaction and he is aa yogi and performer of all actions."-(Gita, chapter 4,verse 18).*

The verse indicates that only a wise man is aware of the true characteristics of action and inaction. Action is the mode of Prakriti and inaction the very nature of Atman. The ignorant man imposes the characteristics of Prakriti on Atman and egoistically assumes that he himself is doing all the works.

His Holiness Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj Founder of Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, stated thus on the different yogas, described in the Gita : The Lord through the Gita aimed at the perfection of man in order to become the Divine. The life of Krishna himself is the best example of the Gita Ideal of Life.

To realise the Absolute is to become the Absolute, which is the All. One has to be Infinite, for which he has to develop the entire being. He has to be a devotee, a philosopher and a man of action at the same time. He may begin by becoming the one

among them, which corresponds to his predominant nature and then simultaneously develop his skill in the remaining fields.

The four yogas are interdependent and an integral development of them as a synthetic yoga facilitates a simultaneous growth of all faculties in a person. To behold the one Self in all beings is jnana (wisdom); to love the Self is bhakti (devotion) and to serve the Self in all is Karma (path of selfless action). As such, it will be found that no path excludes the others."

The Gita, being a text book for the entire humanity, is filled by Lord Krishna with instructions of universal nature, suitable for a wide variety of people with different temperaments and capabilities and placed at varying stages of mental evolutions and the divine directions are valid for eternity. As such the commentaries and clarifications furnished by the self-realised sages past and present, are a great blessing to the sincere spiritual aspirants, who resort to this immortal Divine text for attaining the goal of human life.

His Holiness Swami Chinmayanandaji Maharaj, who had conducted hundreds of Gita Jnana Yajnas, throughout the country and enlightened a vast number of devotees on the teachings of the Song Celestial, explained about the relation between Karma and Jnana as following: "The path of action and path of knowledge, being complimentary, are to be practised serially, one after the other. Selfless activity gives a chance to the mind to exhaust many of its existing mental impressions. Thus purified, the mind gains such a flight and ethereal poise that it can steadily soar into the subtlest realms of meditation and finally come to gain the experience of the transcendental Absolute. Lord Krishna clearly mentions that the twofold path of self-development was prescribed for the world and this prescription has been in existence from the beginning of creation, the path of knowledge to the meditative and the path of action to the active.

The path of action is a means to an end, not directly, but only as a preparation to the path of knowledge; whereas the latter, which is attained by means of the path of action, leads to the goal directly without extraneous help."

Let me conclude by quoting another revealing verse from the Gita, and with prayers to Lord Krishna for His gracious blessings for all:

*"But the man who rejoices in the Self is satisfied with the Self and is centred in the Self, for him verily there is no obligatory duty".*

*(Gita, chapter 3, verse 17).*

**-Methil Prabhakaran**

**Source: Bhavan's Journal, 15 October, 2013**



# *India Embraces the Welfare State*

*New Delhi:* In recent weeks, India's parliament, often justifiably derided for the frequent disruptions that mar its work, has surprised its detractors by passing two crucial pieces of legislation that could transform the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

The first, the Food Security Act, grants 67% of India's population a right to 35 kilograms of rice or wheat for three rupees (less than five US cents) per kilo. Together with related provisions that would provide meals to infants and expectant mothers, and subsidized pulses to supplement cheaply available food grains, the law will add \$6 billion to India's annual fiscal deficit. But it would also abolish the risk of starvation and malnutrition in a land where too many have gone hungry for too long.

The second law assures fair—indeed generous—compensation to people, often small-scale farmers, whose land is acquired by the state for development purposes. In a country where two-thirds of the population is still dependent on agriculture and small holdings are all that a majority of Indians live on, the new law helps those who have often felt exploited and deprived of their livelihoods by the state's power of eminent domain.

The new law requires the consent of 80% of a major tract's landowners before the state can acquire it, and includes exacting provisions for the rehabilitation and resettlement of those affected. It will even compensate tenant farmers for their loss of livelihoods and require that those displaced by land acquisition be offered employment in the institutions that displace them.

Taken together, the new food-security and land-acquisition laws underscore the Indian government's gradual but firm move toward making the world's largest democracy a society in which citizens' welfare is based on rights and entitlements rather than ephemeral charity. Detractors on the

right insist that the new laws will break the budget and undermine economic growth, while opponents on the left argue that they do not go far enough in covering all of India's poor and vulnerable. The government believes that criticism from both sides suggests that the laws strike an appropriate balance.

At a time when democracies are struggling with various models of welfarism, seeking to balance the imperative of fiscal retrenchment with alleviating the insecurity of vulnerable populations, India has moved in a direction that few thought possible for a developing country. From the Right to Information Act, which has empowered citizens and boosted government accountability and transparency, to the Right to Education Act, which has led to record-high school enrollment and pumped resources into moribund classrooms, the current government's reforms have changed the face of Indian society.

One in five rural households benefit from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which provides employment mostly to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and women in villages (in my own state, Kerala, 92% of the beneficiaries are women, whose lives have been transformed by their new income). By raising the bargaining power of agricultural labor, the act's passage has led to higher farm wages, greater purchasing power for the rural poor, and lower distress migration. And sustained government investment in public health is reflected in steady improvement in India's infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, and life expectancy.

These measures cost money, but they also enable the poor to break free of poverty. When government policies keep India's telecom rates among the lowest in the world, it ensures that the poor can have access to a technology that increases their autonomy. When the government promotes food security, it is part of a bold effort to strengthen agriculture, which has led to record-high



production of food grains.

At the same time, economic reform has not been abandoned. Controversial budget provisions that had earlier deterred investors are being reviewed. The decision to permit foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail and civil aviation has been pursued, even at the cost of losing a recalcitrant coalition ally. Subsidies on diesel and cooking gas have been reduced in the face of vociferous opposition. Pension reforms have been passed, and insurance reforms are on the anvil.

India has suffered, like most developing countries, from declining foreign investment, poor export performance, and a depreciating currency. But even pessimistic estimates project 5% growth in the coming fiscal year, and a good monsoon should ensure a bumper harvest.

The measures that India should take to get its economic narrative back on track are the stuff of heated debate among economists and pundits. But for the aam aadmi—the common man in whose name every party claims to speak—these debates pale in significance beside the major steps taken to build a social safety net in a country where everyone had been expected to fend for himself.

Cynics say the new measures are motivated by political considerations alone: the next general election is due by May 2014. Before it was passed, one wit joked that the Food Security Bill meant “food for the poor, security for the ruling party, and the bill for the taxpayer.” But it should be no surprise in a democracy that the government should pursue policies that are popular with a majority of voters. The fiscal costs of such measures are high, but the average Indian is better off now than he or she was nine years ago. Any government would feel vindicated by that record.

***Shashi Tharoor, a Minister of State for Human Resource Development and a former UN Under-Secretary General, is the Author of a dozen books, including India from Midnight to the Millennium and Nehru: the Invention of India and his most recent, Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century.***



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## *Maha Kavi Bharatiyar*

Subramanya Bharatiyar's poems kindled the souls of millions during the country's fight for freedom. It was thought, they will lose flavour after independence. But this has not happened. Because most of what Bharati has said, even before freedom is of a fundamental nature.

Bharati's patriotic poems emphasise the essential nature of freedom, the need to strive fearlessly for it, the need for unity, need to overcome barriers of caste and religion for a common cause, need to eliminate economic inequalities. Love of one's mother-tongue and one's own region is dove-tailed into the love of the entire country. Bharati belongs to one and all.

As late as 1936, even in Tamil Nadu there were scholars who refused to concede the status of a "Great Poet" (MahaKavi) to Bharati! Now the UNESCO takes pride in bringing out a translation of his poems. His centenary was observed by literary men in the Soviet Union. Truly, time has proved Bharati right.

Bharatiyar's assessment of his works is perfect, and time has shown how his poems and prose works have inspired the people of Tamil Nadu. The time has come for a wider appreciation. He is already well-known in the Soviet Union, Germany, U.S.A., Czechoslovakia. Like Valmiki, Vyasa, Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe, Pushkin, Shelley and Tagore. Bharati too is a common property of all mankind.

"He is entitled," says Sarojini Naidu, "by his genius and his work, to rank among those who have transcended all limitations of race, language and continent and have become the universal possession of mankind."

In 1920 Poet SubramaniaBharati, who had returned to British India after long exile in Pondicherry, planned to bring out a collected edition of his works. His works were sensational, and at the same time, classical, very easy, lucid, clear, luminous and popular in style and diction, yet, chaste, pure, correct, epical and time-defying. He was sure his works would sell because of their historic necessity for the uplift of the Tamil land.

Bharatiyar's poetry falls into four categories: patriotic poems, devotional and philosophical poems, miscellaneous poems and long narrative verses. Among the long poems, 'PanchaliSabatham' and 'Kuyil' are lyrical stories, and 'Kannan Pattu'- 23 short poems comprise a single theme.

Belonging to the golden years of India's political and cultural resurgence, Bharati was able to link the past to the present and prophetically project into the future. Reminding the people of their noble ancestry, he shook them out of their lethargy to build a glorious India of the future. His poems were at once paeans of praise and call to action.

The heroes of Indian mythology and history helped to inspire them. Bharati's



*Bharati's patriotic poems emphasise the essential nature of freedom, the need to strive fearlessly for it, the need for unity, need to overcome barriers of caste and religion for a common cause, need to eliminate economic inequalities*

devotional and philosophical poems reflected his all-embracing cosmopolitan outlook. He was a devout Hindu, but respected all religions alike.

Although Bharati is primarily known as a poet of renown, he is a master prose writer too. As a matter of fact, he has perhaps more prose to his credit than poetry, judged by its volume. When he planned to bring out his collected edition, he set great store by his prose works, which contain several sketches of contemporary life portrayed with fidelity and humour.

Bharati freed Tamil poetry from the dry-bed of the grammarian's clutch; in the case of Tamil prose, he gave it width as well as depth. His prose works, of which "GnanaRatham" is the most notable, are like commentaries to the succinct statements in his forceful poems. The deceptively simple style in his prose writings is so natural and so homely, that it amazes one when he considers the innumerable new ideas familiarised by him.

His political comments spanning events in remote Russia or Belgium or Ireland or Africa, his appreciation of distant poets like Walt Whitman or Yone Naguchi, his understanding of world movements like communism, socialism and democracy—the breadth of his interest is awe-inspiring.

In prose and verse, Bharati revealed the universality of his thoughts. Subramania Bharati's songs in Tamil have almost a Shakespearean grace in freshness, spontaneity, and suggestive power of the lyrical outbursts.

They herald a new epoch in our lives. Bharati is not a summer cloud, but the first expression and descent of the monsoon itself, scattering its plenty over land, river, over hill and dale.

The passage of time only reveals the timelessness of his works. He belongs to the ages and to all humanity.

He is entitled by his genius and his works, to rank among those who have transcended all limitations of race, language and have become the universal possession of mankind.

The high point of Bharati's journalistic career was as de-facto editor of the nationalist Tamil weekly 'India'. When Bharati assumed the editorship of 'India' in mid-1906, he was barely 24 years old.

He was sharply critical of the colonial government and made stinging criticism of the imperial policy as well as bureaucratic action. He gave vent to his anger over the non-availability of food, even to a single person, threatening destruction of the universe.

**S. Srinidhi**

**Source: Bhavan's Journal, July 31, 2013**



# Asia's Game Without Frontiers

*New Delhi:* Nowadays, many people seem to be more relaxed than ever about nationality, with the Internet enabling them to forge close connections with distant cultures and people. But states remain extremely sensitive about their borders' inviolability. After all, territory—including land, oceans, air space, rivers, and seabeds—is central to a country's identity, and shapes its security and foreign policy.

States can respond to territorial disputes either by surrendering some aspects of sovereignty, thus weakening their power and influence, or by adopting a more robust national-defense strategy aimed at fending off current challenges and precluding future threats. Today, many Asian countries are choosing the latter option.

Consider the territorial disputes roiling the Indian Ocean and other East Asian regions, sparked by China's repeated—and increasingly assertive—efforts to claim sovereignty over vast maritime areas. As China's incursions reignite long-smoldering disagreements and threaten to destabilize the regional status quo, countries throughout Asia are reconsidering their strategic positions.

For example, the Philippines is revamping its security strategy by enhancing cooperation with the United States—China's counterweight in the region—only two decades after it closed two major American military installations, the naval base at Subic Bay and Clark Air Base. Vietnam, too, has strengthened its ties with the US. And, after decades of absence, America has resumed training

programs for Indonesia's military.

More significant, Japan's leaders are now openly debating ways to transform the country's post-World War II pacifism into a much more assertive nationalism. In fact, in August, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force unveiled the helicopter destroyer Izumo, whose structure and capabilities resemble those of an aircraft carrier, with possible offensive applications. This emerging strategic shift will likely have far-reaching consequences, raising the stakes of Sino-Japanese sparring over islands in the East China Sea.

But, while Japan's tense relationship with China dominates headlines worldwide, the strategic rivalry between China and India is more likely to shape Asian power dynamics in the coming decades. And recent events suggest that China knows it.

In April, a platoon of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) border-security personnel crossed the so-called "line of actual control" into India's Depsang Valley in Ladakh to erect an encampment, where they remained for almost three weeks. China's leaders have yet to explain what prompted the incursion—but there is no shortage of speculation.

Some claim that the local PLA commander initiated the "stand-off," while others contend that China's new president, Xi Jinping, was using the transgression to assert his authority over the PLA. The incursion has even been linked to the scandal surrounding Chongqing's disgraced former Communist Party chief, Bo Xilai, who had close ties



with high-ranking PLA and security-services officers. But the most likely explanation is the simplest one: China was deliberately asserting its authority over the disputed border.

As it stands, India and China are openly competing for influence in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bangladesh. So far, they have largely relied on economic and commercial mechanisms—especially rival port and pipeline projects—to secure their positions.

China is not allowing its economic slowdown to derail its efforts to enlarge and modernize its navy and expand its commercial interests around Eurasia's southern rim. It has been investing or demonstrating interest in deep-water port projects in Kenya, Tanzania, and Bangladesh, and it has been directly involved in financing and constructing Indian Ocean ports in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

Just as China is helping to develop Pakistan's port of Gwadar, India is helping to develop Iran's Chabahar port 70 kilometers (43.5 miles) away. Chabahar is not useful only to counter China; it will serve as a vital link for India to transport goods to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and beyond. India could even develop a major communication hub with the port as its nexus.

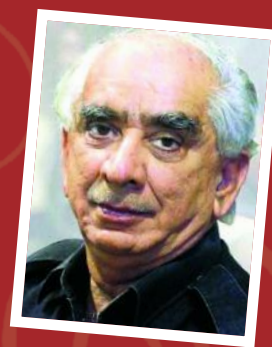
Moreover, India is working to safeguard its naval superiority over China. In August, the reactor aboard India's first indigenously built nuclear submarine, INS Arihant, was activated, bringing the country one step closer to realizing its long-sought goal of a "nuclear triad"—the capability to

launch nuclear weapons from land, air, and sea. Just three days later, India launched the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

But, as *The Economist* observed, "rarely does nemesis follow hubris so quickly." Indeed, just two days after the Vikrant's launch, explosions at the naval dockyard in Mumbai sank INS Sindhurakshak—one of the ten Kilo-class submarines that form the backbone of India's aging conventional-submarine fleet—killing 18 crew members.

Perhaps China's apparent economic, strategic, and military advantages will prove less significant than many believe—especially given continuing uncertainty over the terms of America's strategic "pivot" toward Asia. Indeed, with the US on their side, either Japan or India could conceivably tip the scales in its own favor. But one thing is clear: a great game is beginning among Asia's great powers, and there are scant rules in place to manage how it will be played.

***Jaswant Singh, a former Foreign Minister, Finance Minister, and Defense Minister of India, is a member of the opposition in India's Parliament. He is the Author of *Jinnah: India—Partition—Independence*.***



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# *Ethics in Vedanta*

The Central idea of Ethics in Vedanta is that, if we harm, cheat or hate others, we harm, cheat and hate ourselves. This is just the opposite of what Christianity states that God punishes the wicked with damnation. However, the Western Science conforms to the Vedantic view. Newton's third law, 'action and reaction are equal and opposite' applies to all walks of life and good begets good as evil begets evil. This concept is understood easily if we accept the law of Karma and transmigration of souls. The sectarian religions believe in the one birth theory but they cannot explain life as we see and experience it. Plato, Pythagoras and others accepted the principle of transmigration of souls that was essentially taken from the Vedic Tradition. But they too did not include the law of Karma or Causality which is scientifically demonstrated to be true even by Western science. As we sow, so we reap and this is evidenced in every aspect of our life, including agriculture.

Vedanta explains cohesively the principle of Karma, which includes the law of causation, action and retribution. By clear reasoning it explains the diverse nature of life, inequalities and answers to puzzles of nature. For instance, if a rich family has five sons, each must have an identical nature and success in life. But actually it is never so. While one is very intelligent and successful, another is debauched, and yet another is mentally less developed. All of them have different types of physique though resemblance to parents may be there. How do we explain this? They are all children to the same parents, and were brought up identically with the same food, education and so on. Yet how is it one of them is successful and virtuous and another debauched or debilitated? The answer is the effect of past action, which includes action in previous lives.

If we understand that, then it will be clear that we will take another life on our death whose nature will depend on how we live in this life. It is clear, therefore, that man evolves with every birth and it may take hundreds of such lives to reach a level of evolution where one can attain salvation. Hence our future and salvation depends on our action in the present life starting with the immediate present. We see, therefore, that:

1. Man's action produces an equal and opposite reaction.

2. His action will, therefore, have an impact on his future including the next life.
3. He can attain salvation by good and virtuous action in the present.
4. That the cycle of births and deaths will continue indefinitely unless we stop doing action with a view to enjoying the benefits of such action.
5. That from the lowest levels of life, man rises to higher and higher levels with every birth cycle.
6. That action is motivated by desires and for sense gratification.

Once we see the above facts the answers present themselves. These are:

- a) Actions without desires will not create any Karma.
- b) Such desire-less action requires a virtuous life and the understanding of the consequences of our action.
- c) When no Karma is created we shall live out our past Karma, without creating fresh Karma, and hence will attain salvation viz., freedom from the cycle of births and deaths.

According to the Vedas, each man is bound by four kinds of duties at four stages of his life. These are:

1. Debt to Humanity: This is paid by being a good citizen, being charitable to all fellow beings and doing good works for the good of all.
2. Debt to Rishis and Great Sages: Learning the Laws and truths that these sages discovered pays this off, and living up to the highest ideals of spirituality they practised.
3. To be a good husband and bringing up children in the path of morality and spirituality.
4. Debt to Devas or Spirits: This is repaid by worshipping.

In order to fulfil these duties, a man from a high caste passes through four or three stages (the fourth being optional).





- a) Brahmacharya: Learn the Vedas and Shastras, have moral & spiritual training and discipline. He lives with his Guru during this period. (This is till the age of 24 years).
- b) Grahasthashrama or House Holder: He will get married and perform the duties of a good husband and a true father (This will be from 25 to 60 years).
- c) Vanaprastha: After fulfilling duties and responsibilities of a householder, he relinquishes the household to his children & proceeds to visit holy places and lives a simple life with his wife. His only possessions will be some clothes and some vessels for cooking. (This will be from 61 years to about 75 years).
- d) Sanyasa (optional): A Life of complete renunciation without attachment to anything.

The greatest ethical law taught by the Vedas is the law of universal love. This includes love of all living creatures, human, animal and others, and this love should be without prejudice of race, or creed, and coming from the bottom of our Soul. This love is based on the principle of 'tatvamasi' or thou art that. This means that the life principle in all living beings is the same and the difference if any, is only in the form and not content. Christ said, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' without giving reasons for this love. But Vedas gave the reason convincingly. This law is the basis of Buddha's teachings. He said: "Do not hate those who hate you, but love them because the eternal ethical law is the law of mercy

for all. Never is wrath stilled by wrath, but by reconciliation, never is hatred conquered by hatred, but by love and this is an everlasting law. Forsake all evil like envy, jealousy, malice and hatred. Bring forth good, master thy own thought, and avarice by generosity and falsehood by truth. Let boundless goodwill prevail among mankind".

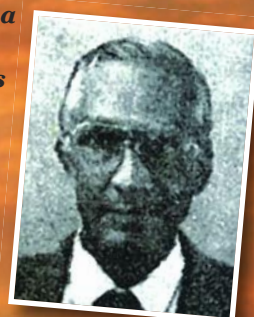
When Buddha was asked what was evil, He replied: 'Killing, my friends, is evil; stealing is evil'. He considered sexual passion, lying, slandering, abuse, gossip, envy, hatred and false doctrine as evil.

His five commandments are:

1. Do not kill any living being.
2. Do not take what is not given to you.
3. Do not speak falsehood.
4. Do not drink intoxicating drinks.
5. Do not commit adultery.

Ethics has been the eternal theme of epics like Ramayana & Mahabharata, and the ethical teachings of the Vedic texts are embodied in the Bhagwad Gita. Ethics is the starting point for morality and forms the basis for spirituality. What is very significant is that the teachings of Jesus are followed & practised in India more than in the West. This is mainly due to consumerism and materialism in the West, which has overshadowed human values to the detriment of spiritual development.

**-Ramakrishnan Srinivasan, a practising chemical and environmental engineer, has been a student of Vedanta for more than four decades. A voracious reader since childhood, he has attended many lectures of Swami Ranganathananda, Swami Chinmayananda and other godmen of the Bhagwad Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavata and the Upanishads. He has travelled extensively in Europe, the Americas and the Far East. He has to his credit four volumes of poems (1958-1999) on morality, religion, love and contemporary society.**



**Source: Vedic Tradition in the New Millenium by Ramakrishnan Srinivasan, Bhavan's Book University, Mumbai**



# *The Case for India*

New Delhi: Indian cricket fans are manic-depressive in their treatment of their favorite teams. They elevate players to god-like status when their team performs well, ignoring obvious weaknesses; but when it loses, as any team must, the fall is equally steep and every weakness is dissected. In fact, the team is never as good as fans make it out to be when it wins, nor as bad as it is made out to be when it loses. Its weaknesses existed in victory, too, but were overlooked.

Such bipolar behavior seems to apply to assessments of India's economy as well, with foreign analysts joining Indians in swings between over-exuberance and self-flagellation. A few years ago, India could do no wrong. Commentators talked of "Chindia," elevating India's performance to that of its northern neighbor. Today, India can do no right.

India does have serious problems. Annual GDP growth slowed significantly in the last quarter, to 4.4%, consumer price inflation is high, and the current-account and budget deficits last year were too large. Every commentator today highlights India's poor infrastructure, excessive regulation, small manufacturing sector, and a workforce that lacks adequate education and skills.

These are indeed deficiencies, and they must be addressed if India is to grow strongly and stably. But the same deficiencies existed when India was growing rapidly. To appreciate what needs to be done in the short run, we must understand what dampened the Indian success story.

In part, India's slowdown paradoxically reflects the substantial fiscal and monetary stimulus that its policymakers, like those in all major emerging markets, injected into its economy in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. The resulting growth spurt led to inflation, especially because the world did not slide into a second Great Depression, as was originally feared. So monetary policy has since remained tight, with high interest rates contributing

to slowing investment and consumption.

Moreover, India's institutions for allocating natural resources, granting clearances, and acquiring land were overwhelmed during the period of strong growth. India's investigative agencies, judiciary, and press began examining allegations of large-scale corruption. As bureaucratic decision-making became more risk-averse, many large projects ground to a halt.

Only now, as the government creates new institutions to accelerate decision-making and implement transparent processes, are these projects being cleared to proceed. Once restarted, it will take time for these projects to be completed, at which point output will increase significantly.

Finally, export growth slowed, not primarily because Indian goods suddenly became uncompetitive, but because growth in the country's traditional export markets decelerated.

The consequences have been high internal and external deficits. The post-crisis fiscal-stimulus packages sent the government budget deficit soaring from what had been a very responsible level in 2007-2008. Similarly, as large mining projects stalled, India had to resort to higher imports of coal and scrap iron, while its exports of iron ore dwindled.

An increase in gold imports placed further pressure on the current-account balance. Newly rich consumers in rural areas increasingly put their savings into gold, a familiar store of value, while wealthy urban consumers, worried about inflation, also turned to buying gold. Ironically, had they bought Apple shares, rather than a commodity (no matter how fungible, liquid, and investible it is), their purchases would have been treated as a foreign investment rather than as imports that add to the external deficit.





For the most part, India's current growth slowdown and its fiscal and current-account deficits are not structural problems. They can all be fixed by means of modest reforms. This is not to say that ambitious reform is not good, or is not warranted to sustain growth for the next decade. But India does not need to become a manufacturing giant overnight to fix its current problems.

The immediate tasks are more mundane, but they are also more feasible: clearing projects, reducing poorly targeted subsidies, and finding more ways to narrow the current-account deficit and ease its financing. Over the last year, the government has been pursuing this agenda, which is already showing some early results. For example, the external deficit is narrowing sharply on the back of higher exports and lower imports.

Every small step helps, and the combination of small steps adds up to large strides. But, while the government certainly should have acted faster and earlier, the public mood is turning to depression amid a cacophony of criticism and self-doubt that has obscured the forward movement.

Indeed, despite its shortcomings, India's GDP will probably grow by 5-5.5% this year—not great, but certainly not bad for what is likely to be a low point in economic performance. The monsoon has been good and will spur consumption, especially in rural areas, which are already growing strongly, owing to improvements in road transport and communications connectivity.

The banking sector has undoubtedly experienced an increase in bad loans; but this has often resulted from delays in investment projects that are otherwise viable. As these projects come onstream, they will generate the revenue needed to repay loans. In the meantime, India's banks have enough capital to absorb losses.

Likewise, India's public finances are stronger than

they are in most emerging-market countries, let alone emerging-market countries in crisis. India's overall public debt/GDP ratio has been on a declining trend, from 73.2% in 2006-07 to 66% in 2012-13 (and the central government's debt/GDP ratio is only 46%). Moreover, the debt is denominated in rupees and has an average maturity of more than nine years.

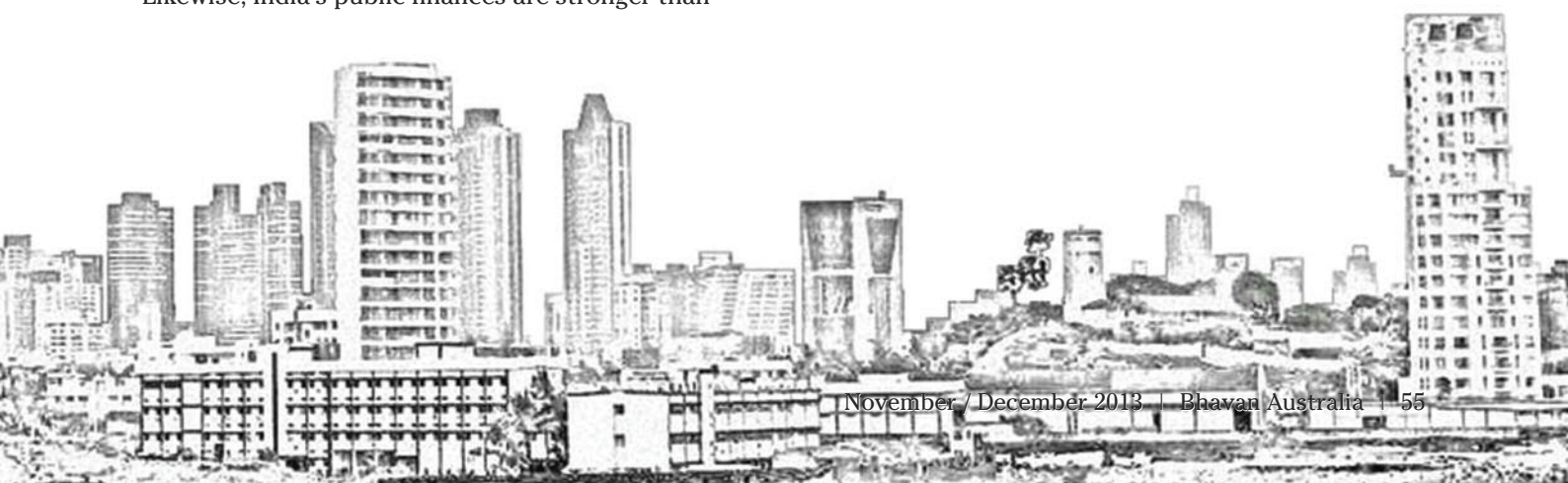
India's external debt burden is even more favorable, at only 21.2% of GDP (much of it owed by the private sector), while short-term external debt is only 5.2% of GDP. India's foreign-exchange reserves stand at \$278 billion (about 15% of GDP), enough to finance the entire current-account deficit for several years.

That said, India can do better—much better. The path to a more open, competitive, efficient, and humane economy will surely be bumpy in the years to come. But, in the short term, there is much low-hanging fruit to be plucked. Stripping out both the euphoria and the despair from what is said about India—and from what we Indians say about ourselves—will probably bring us closer to the truth.

**Raghuram Rajan, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), a Professor of Finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and the chief economic adviser in India's finance ministry, served as the International Monetary Fund's youngest-ever chief economist and was Chairman of India's Committee on Financial Sector Reforms. He is the author of *Fault Lines: How Hidden Fractures Still Threaten the World Economy*, the *Financial Times Business Book of the Year*.**



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**The Taste Festival**



**Grafton Jacaranda Festival**



**Melbourne Cup**



**Corinbank Festival**

## *Festivals of the Month—Australia*

**Grafton Jacaranda Festival—New South Wales—19 October – 3 November 2013**

Grafton Jacaranda Festival is first of Australia's folk festivals and is based upon the Jacaranda magnificent spectacle of the hundreds of lilac-blossomed trees which grow in Grafton's broad tree lined avenues.

**Melbourne Cup 2013—5 November 2013**

One of Australia's most famous sporting trophies, the Melbourne Cup has a colourful and creative history and the current design of the Loving Cup, which is presented to the owners of the Cup winner, made its debut in 1919. Fiorente, the horse ridden by Damien Oliver won the first Melbourne Cup victory.

**Westcoast Songfest—Joondalup, Western Australia—14 – 15 November 2013**

The Westcoast Songfest is staged each year and over the past 12 years the event has grown from six schools and 450 students in 2000 to 56 schools and 3000 children in 2012. The Westcoast Songfest is now one of the largest massed choir events in Australia.

**Corinbank Festival—Brindabella Mountains, Canberra—30 November – 2 December 2013**

Corinbank is an annual 3-day, all-ages celebration of art, music, culture and people featuring a range of art displays, performance art, and activities ranging from the adrenaline-pumping to the artistic, from the exciting to the sublime.

**The Taste Festival—Hobart's Waterfront Celebration—28 December 2013 to 3 January 2014**

Celebrated in and around Hobart's waterfront for seven days and nights, the Taste Festival showcases the uniqueness and diversity of Tasmania's produce and gourmet food and wine to approximately 250,000 people.

**Source: [www.festivalaustralia.com.au](http://www.festivalaustralia.com.au)**



**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**

*"The Whole world is but one family"*



# *Festivals of the Month—India*



Chatt Puja



Tulasi Vivah



Lord Krishna



Vivah Panchami



Dattatreya Jayanti

## **Narak Chaturdashi—2 November 2013**

Lord Krishna killed Demon Narkasur on this day so Lord Shri Krishana is worshipped with garland, incense sticks, deeps and rice.

## **Chhath Puja—9 November 2013**

The Sun God, Surya, the god of energy and of the life-force, is worshiped during the Chhath Puja to promote well-being, prosperity and progress.

## **Tulasi Vivah—14 November 2013**

Tulasi Vivah is the ceremonial marriage of the Tulsi plant (holy basil) to the Hindu god Vishnu or His Avatar Krishna.

## **Vivah Panchami —7 December 2013**

On Vivah Panchami day Lord Rama and Goddess Sita were married and this day is celebrated as

marriage anniversary of Rama and Sita.

## **Gita Jayanti—13 December 2013**

Gita Jayanti day symbolizes the birth of Srimad Bhagavad-Gita, the sacred text of the Hindus.

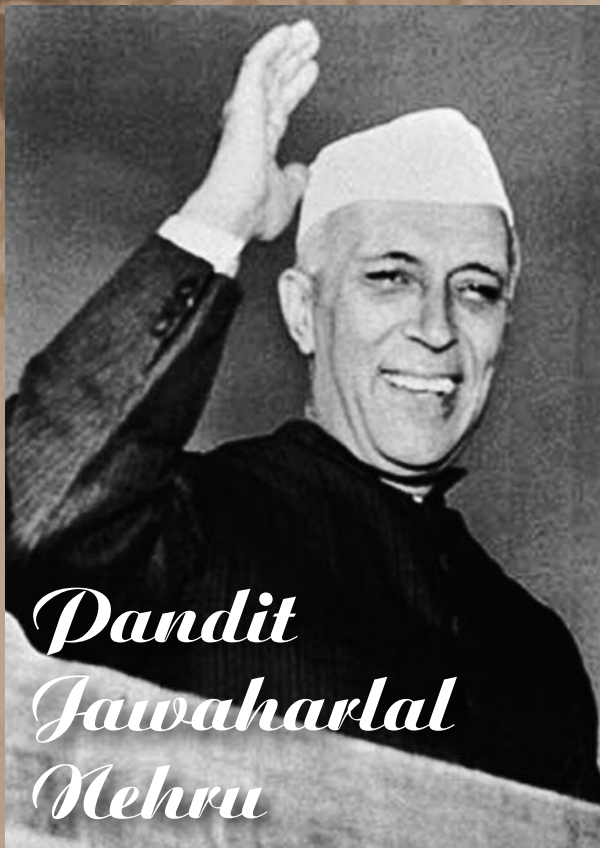
## **Dattatreya Jayanti—17 December 2013**

Dattatreya Jayanti is the birth anniversary of Hindu deity encompassing the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, collectively known as Trimurti.

**Source:** [www.drikpanchang.com](http://www.drikpanchang.com),  
[www.panchangam.org](http://www.panchangam.org),  
[www.hindudevotionalblog.com](http://www.hindudevotionalblog.com),  
[www.drikpanchang.com](http://www.drikpanchang.com)

**Incredible India**  
*India Tourism Sydney*





In a few moments, India was to become independent after centuries of colonial invasion and rule:

*"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."*

**–Jawaharlal Nehru in his speech,  
"Tryst with Destiny" address to the Constituent  
Assembly of India in New Delhi on the night  
of August 14 and 15, 1947.**

Jawaharlal Nehru also known as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was one of the foremost leaders of Indian freedom struggle. He was the favourite disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and later on went on to become the first Prime Minister of India. Jawahar Lal Nehru is widely regarded as the architect of modern India. He was very fond of children and children used to affectionately call him Chacha Nehru. He was true to his words:

*Time is not measured by the passing of years  
but by what one does, what one feels, and  
what one achieves.*

## Early Life

Jawahar Lal Nehru was born on November 14, 1889. His father Motilal Nehru was a famous Allahabad based Barrister. His mother's name was Swaroop Rani. Jawaharlal Nehru was the only son of Motilal Nehru. Motilal Nehru had three daughters apart from Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehrus were Saraswat Brahmin of Kashmiri lineage. Nehru received education in some of the best schools and universities of the world. He did his schooling from Harrow and completed his Law degree from Trinity College, Cambridge.

## Pandit Nehru with Mahatma Gandhi

Jawaharlal Nehru returned to India in 1912 and started legal practice. He married Kamala Nehru in 1916. Jawahar Lal Nehru joined Home Rule League in 1917. His real initiation into politics came two years later when he came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi in 1919. At that time Mahatma Gandhi had launched a campaign against Rowlatt Act. Nehru was instantly attracted to Gandhi's commitment for active but peaceful, civil disobedience. Gandhi himself saw promise and India's future in the young Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru family changed its family according to Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. Jawaharlal and Motilal Nehru abandoned western clothes and tastes for expensive possessions and pastimes. They now wore a Khadi Kurta and Gandhi cap. Jawaharlal Nehru took active part in the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920-1922) and was arrested for the first time during the movement. He was released after few months.

## The Indian Freedom Struggle

In 1916, Nehru participated in the Lucknow Session of the Congress. There, after a very long time, member of both the extremist and moderate factions of the Congress party had come. All the members equivocally agreed to the demand for "Swaraj" (self rule). Although the means of the two sections were different, the motive was "common"—freedom.

In 1921 Nehru was imprisoned for participating in the first civil disobedience campaign as General Secretary of the United Provinces Congress Committee. The life in the jail helped him in understanding the philosophy followed by Gandhi and others associated with the movement. He was moved by Gandhi's approach of dealing with caste and "untouchability". With the passing of every minute, Nehru was emerging as a popular leader, particularly in Northern India.

In 1922, some of the prominent members including his father Motilal Nehru had left the congress and launched the "Swaraj Party". The decision upset Jawahar but he rejected the possibility of leaving



the Congress party. He was also elected as the President of the Allahabad municipal corporation in 1920.

### Political Life

Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President of the Allahabad Municipal Corporation in 1924, and served for two years as the city's Chief Executive. This proved to be a valuable administrative experience for stood him in good stead later on when he became the Prime Minister of the country. He used his tenure to expand public education, health care and sanitation.

### Civil Disobedience Movement

*Peace is not a relationship of nations. It is a condition of mind brought about by a serenity of soul. Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is also a state of mind. Lasting peace can come only to peaceful people.*

In December 1929, Congress's annual session was held in Lahore and Jawaharlal Nehru was elected as the President of the Congress Party. During those sessions a resolution demanding India's independence was passed and on January 26, 1930 in Lahore, Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled free India's flag. Gandhiji gave a call for Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. The movement was a great success and forced British Government to acknowledge the need for major political reforms.

When the British promulgated the Government of India Act 1935, the Congress Party decided to contest elections. Nehru stayed out of the elections, but campaigned vigorously nationwide for the party. The Congress formed governments in almost every province, and won the largest number of seats in the Central Assembly. Nehru was elected to the Congress presidency in 1936, 1937, and 1946, and came to occupy a position in the nationalist movement second only to that of Gandhi. Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested in 1942 during Quit India Movement. Released in 1945, he took a leading part in the negotiations that culminated in the emergence of the dominions of India and Pakistan in August 1947.

### Jawaharlal Nehru, the First Prime Minister

In 1947, he became the first Prime Minister of independent India. He effectively coped with the formidable challenges of those times: the disorders and mass exodus of minorities across the new border with Pakistan, the integration of 500-odd princely states into the Indian Union, the framing of a new constitution, and the establishment of the political and administrative infrastructure for a parliamentary democracy.

### Architect of Modern India

Jawaharlal Nehru played a key role in building modern India. He set up a Planning Commission, encouraged development of science and technology, and launched three successive five-year plans. His policies led to a sizable growth in agricultural and industrial production. Nehru also played a major role in developing independent India's foreign policy. He called for liquidation of colonialism in Asia and Africa and along with Tito and Nasser, was one of the chief architects of the non-aligned movement. He played a constructive, mediatory role in bringing the Korean War to an end and in resolving other international crises, such as those over the Suez Canal and the Congo, offering India's services for conciliation and international policing. He contributed behind the scenes toward the solution of several other explosive issues, such as those of West Berlin, Austria, and Laos.

### Panch Shila

Nehru attained international prestige during his first decade in office, but after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956—when New Delhi tilted toward Moscow—criticisms grew against his inconsistency in condemning Western but not communist aggression. In dealing with Pakistan, Nehru couldn't formulate a consistent policy and was critical of the improving ties between Pakistan and the United States; mutual hostility and suspicion persisted as a result. Despite attempts at improving relations with China, based on his five principles (Panch Shila—territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality and cooperation, and peaceful coexistence)—war with China erupted in 1962.

### Final Days

The war with China was a rude awakening for Nehru, as India proved ill-equipped and unprepared to defend its northern borders. At the conclusion of the conflict, the Chinese forces were partially withdrawn and an unofficial demilitarized zone was established, but India's prestige and self-esteem had suffered. Physically debilitated and mentally exhausted, Nehru suffered a stroke and died in May 1964. Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy of a democratic, federal, and secular India continues to present even today.

*A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends; and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance.*

**Source:** [www.culturalindia.net](http://www.culturalindia.net),  
[www.harappa.com](http://www.harappa.com), [www.iloveindia.com](http://www.iloveindia.com),  
[www.indianchild.com](http://www.indianchild.com)





## Judaism and Vedanta

In his concluding address to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, on 27 September 1893, Swami Vivekananda no doubt shocked some in attendance by asserting:

*...if anyone here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, "Brother yours is an impossible hope. Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid..." The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.*

In his own gentle way, Vivekananda was issuing a rebuke of sorts to the overwhelming Euro-American, Protestant Christian ethos of this otherwise laudable gathering. For the vast majority of those assembled, it would be quite right for him to assert that the Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, particularly with the expository "God forbid." But to turn things around and proclaim that the Hindu or a Buddhist is not to become a Christian, particularly with the expository "God forbid," would be to their ears something akin to blasphemy.

To their minds, while there might be some good to be found in the other religions of humanity, Christianity subsumed them all because it was the pinnacle of human faith. Consider the words of Rev. Dr. Barrows, the Presbyterian convener of the Parliament:

*Swami Vivekananda, citing the Gita, proposed that "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me"*

*"The Parliament has shown that Christianity is still the great quickener of humanity, that it is now educating those who do not accept its doctrines, that there is no teacher to be compared with Christ, and no Saviour excepting Christ. ..The non-Christian world may give us valuable criticism and confirm scriptural truths and make excellent suggestions as to Christian improvement, but it has nothing to add to the Christian creed."*

This attitude towards other faiths is the traditional Christian perspective that the only way to God is through Jesus and the church established in His name.

In contrast to this exclusivist point of view, Swami Vivekananda, citing the Gita, proposed that "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me."



*Swami Vivekananda, whose focus was on the spiritual, any path that a person took in search of the divine was legitimate; for the rabbis, whose attention was on practice, any person who followed basic ethical behaviour merited the same heavenly rewards as did a pious Jew*



One might have thought that, since the Jewish religion is both the mother and sister faith of Christianity, it would share the traditional Christian perspective on other religions, but this is hardly the case. Judaism's point of view is more accepting of other religions than either Christianity or Islam, its sibling faiths.

The prophets of ancient Israel were unequivocal in their denunciation of the worship of false gods and their images, especially when it came to the practices of the Children of Israel, who were expected to remain true to their god, YHWH (or Yahweh, as scholars speculate the name was pronounced). However, by the beginning of the Common Era (i.e. time according to the Christian counting), the Jewish faith was interpreted and transmitted by the rabbis. From the time of the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem down through to the present day, rabbis were, and are, the Jewish people's communal and spiritual leaders authorised to teach and judge halacha, or Jewish law, the all-encompassing Jewish way of life.

When it came to the issue of relating to other religions, the rabbis held a point of view radically different both from their prophetic antecedents and from their Christian counterparts.

The rabbis defined the divine-human relationship in terms of a covenant (brit in Hebrew). Just as

there exists the Mosaic Covenant with the people of Israel, so too there exists an Abrahamic Covenant with both the children of Ishmael, the Arab nation; and the children of Isaac and Jacob, the Jewish nation. But the rabbis also envisioned a third, more universal covenant, called the Noachide Covenant named for Noah, who, after the Flood, became the father of all humanity. This covenant was their attempt at stating a universal code of morality, a measure by which all humanity could be judged regardless of what they believed.

The Noachide Covenant consists of seven commandments: to establish a legal system, and to refrain from blasphemy, idolatry, sexual immorality, bloodshed, theft and eating the flesh from a living animal (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 56a).

How non-Jews behaved according to the Noachide Covenant was the crucial factor for the rabbis as it was taught in the Yalkut Shimon: "the Divine Spirit rests upon a non-Jew as well as upon a Jew, upon a woman as well as upon a man, upon a maidservant as well as a manservant. All depends on the deeds of the particular individual."

So, for Swami Vivekananda, whose focus was on the spiritual, any path that a person took in search of the divine was legitimate; for the rabbis, whose attention was on practice, any person who followed basic ethical behaviour merited the same heavenly rewards as did a pious Jew. In the end, however, the rabbis would have agreed completely with the Swami's parting words,

*If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything in the world, it is this. It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.*

Over a hundred years later, the people of our world still struggle to realise this essential human truth. Courtesy: Global Vedanta

**-Rabbi Anson Laytner**

**Source: Bhavan's Journal, September 15, 2013**



# Indira Gandhi

*Even if I died in the service of the nation,  
I would be proud of it. Every drop of my blood... will  
contribute to the growth of this nation and  
to make it strong and dynamic.*

**-Indira Gandhi**

Indira Gandhi was one of the greatest political leaders of India. She was the first and only woman to be elected as the Prime Minister. She is also regarded as the leader who imposed a state of emergency in the country. She was also known for carrying out the Operation Blue-Star in Punjab that led to her assassination. Indira Gandhi was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize (for 1983-84).

## Early Life

Indira Gandhi was born in an aristocratic family of Nehru on 19 November 1917, in Allahabad. Her father, Jawaharlal Nehru was a lawyer and also leader of the Indian Nationalist Movement. Indira's mother, Kamala, was a religious lady. It was reported that there was a huge difference between the lifestyle of Jawaharlal Nehru and his wife Kamala. The Nehrus, for traditions, followed a more-western and sophisticated lifestyle.

*People tend to forget their duties but  
remember their rights.*

Indira's grandfather, Motilal Nehru was a renowned barrister of that period. He was also a prominent member of the Indian National Congress Party. Due to this, lot of noted leaders and party activists would visit the Nehru House. Mahatma Gandhi was one of them. Therefore, since childhood, Indira Gandhi had developed an interest in the affairs of country's politics. Indira Gandhi attended prominent schools including Shantiniketan, Badminton School and Oxford. In 1936, her mother, Kamala Nehru succumbed to tuberculosis after a long struggle. She was eighteen at the time. Jawaharlal Nehru was languishing in the Indian jails that time.

## Political Life

*A nation's strength ultimately consists in  
what it can do on its own, and not in what it  
can borrow from others.*

After returning from Oxford University, Indira started participating enthusiastically in the national movement. In 1941, Indira married Feroze Gandhi, a journalist and key member of the Youth

Congress. Nehru raised objection to the marriage of his daughter with a Parsi. In 1944, Indira gave birth to Rajiv Gandhi followed two years later by Sanjay Gandhi.

## Post Independence

After the independence Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India. Indira Gandhi decided to shift to Delhi to assist his father. Her two sons remained with her but Feroze decided to stay back in Allahabad. He was working as an editor of 'The National Herald' newspaper founded by Motilal Nehru. During the 1951-52 Parliamentary Elections, Indira Gandhi handled the campaigns of her husband, Feroze, who was contesting from Rae Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. After being elected as MP, Feroze opted to live in a separate house in Delhi. On 8 September 1960, Feroze died after a major cardiac arrest.

## Congress President

*Forgiveness is a virtue of the brave.*

Indira Gandhi was a devoted partisan of the Congress Party and became one of the political advisors of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1959, she was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress Party. After Jawaharlal Nehru passed away on 27 May 1964, Indira Gandhi contested elections and eventually elected. She was appointed as the Information and Broadcasting Minister during Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri.

At that time, people in southern parts of India were protesting over Hindi being considered as the national language. With each day, the situation was worsening in the region. In order to pacify the anger of community leaders, Indira Gandhi visited Madras (now Chennai). During the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, Indira Gandhi was on a holiday trip to Srinagar. Despite repeated warnings by the security forces that Pakistani insurgents had entered very close to the hotel, she was staying, Gandhi refused to move. The incident fetched her huge national and international media attention.

## Prime Minister

Following the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri on 11 January 1966, in Tashkent, the party countered a serious trouble, as, some of the senior leaders of the Congress party desired to contest. Unable to



reach at a consensus, the high-command led by K Kamaraj picked Indira as their contender. Senior Congress leader Morarji Desai opposed Indira's nomination for the coveted throne and decided to contest against her. During voting, Desai gained only 169 votes as compared to Indira's 355 votes. The virtual reason behind Indira's selection for the post was the belief that "Indira is not so competent in taking decisions and thus she would, indirectly be controlled by the top leadership." But Indira Gandhi, in contrast to the high-command, showed extraordinary political skills and elbowed the Congress stalwarts out of power.

### The Emergency

During 1975, the Opposition parties joined by local groups and NGOs staged regular demonstrations in almost all the states of the country protesting against the rising inflation and unchecked corruption in the government. The intensity of protest was increasing day by day. The government failed to pacify them and contain the movement. At the same time, Allahabad High Court ordered her to vacate the seat, immediately. The ruling helped in adding fuel to the ongoing political fire. The agitation and anger of the people amplified. Realizing the consequences, Indira Gandhi, on 26 June, 1975, declared "a state of emergency, due to the turbulent political situation in the country". Now, the political baton came into the hands of Indira Gandhi, which she used very tactfully. All her political rivals were imprisoned, constitutional rights of the citizens were abrogated, and the press placed under strict censorship.

### Post Emergency Period

In the next elections, Indira Gandhi was defeated by the Janata Dal, led by Morarji Desai and Jai Prakash Narayan. Congress managed to win only 153 Lok Sabha seats, as compared to 350 seats it grabbed in the previous Lok Sabha. During the electoral campaign, Janata Dal leaders urged the people to choose between "democracy and dictatorship". Though the Janata Dal emerged victorious by a huge margin it could not keep the coalition intact for longer. The allies were concentrated more on the self-development. They would fight almost on all the issue and every ally threatened to quit if their interest is not served. The internal strife became evident within months of taking charge. To divert the attention of the people from their failure the Janata Dal ordered to



arrest Indira Gandhi. However, the strategy crashed disastrously and gained Indira Gandhi, a great sympathy.

### Operation Blue Star

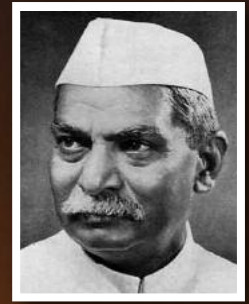
*If I die a violent death, as some fear and a few are plotting, I know that the violence will be in the thought and the action of the assassins, not in my dying.*

In September 1981, a Sikh militant group demanding "Khalistan" entered into the premises of the Golden Temple, Amritsar. Despite the presence of thousands of civilians in the Temple complex, Indira Gandhi ordered the Army to barge into the holy shrine. The operation was carried out with tanks and armoured vehicles. The act was viewed as an unparalleled tragedy in the Indian political history. The impact of the onslaught increased the communal tensions in the country. Many Sikhs resigned from the armed and civil administrative office and also returned their government awards. On 31 October 1984, Indira Gandhi's bodyguards Satwant Singh and Beant Singh, as a revenge of the Golden Temple assault, assassinated the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

*Martyrdom does not end something, it only a beginning.*

Source: [www.thefamouspeople.com](http://www.thefamouspeople.com),  
[www.culturalindia.net](http://www.culturalindia.net)





Dr Rajendra Prasad

# Dr Rajendra Prasad

*Now I am careful about the kind of roles that I do.*  
-Dr Rajendra Prasad

Dr Rajendra Prasad was the first President of independent India and the President of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Constitution. He also served as a Cabinet Minister in the first Government of independent India. Dr Rajendra Prasad was one of the foremost disciples of Mahatma Gandhi and played a crucial role in Indian freedom struggle.

## Early Life

Dr Rajendra Prasad was born on 3 December 1884 in Ziradei village in Siwan district of Bihar. His father's name was Mahadev Sahay and his mother's name was Kamleshwari Devi. Rajendra Prasad was youngest among his siblings. Mahadev Sahay was a Persian and Sanskrit language scholar. Dr Rajendra Prasad was greatly attached to his mother and elder brother Mahendra.

When Rajendra Prasad was five years old, his parents put him under a Maulavi to learn Persian language followed by Hindi and arithmetic. After the completion of traditional elementary education, Rajendra Prasad was sent to the Chhapra District School. At the age of 12, Rajendra Prasad was married to Rajavanshi Devi. He, along with his elder brother Mahendra Prasad, then went on to study at R.K. Ghosh's Academy in Patna. Mahendra was eight years older than him. He said:

*More importantly, I also understand my age and am in a better position to appreciate it.*

## Academic Career

Dr Rajendra Prasad was a brilliant student. He stood first in the entrance examination to the

University of Calcutta, and was awarded a monthly scholarship of Rs 30. He joined the famous Calcutta Presidency College in 1902. Here his teachers included the great Scientist Jagdish Chandra Bose and the highly respected Prafulla Chandra Roy. Later on he switched from Science to Arts and completed his M.A. and Masters in Law. Meanwhile, in 1905, Doctor, Rajendra Prasad was initiated into the Swadeshi Movement by his elder brother Mahendra. Dr Rajendra Prasad was instrumental in the formation of the Bihari Students' Conference in 1908. It was the first organization of its kind in the whole of India. The move produced the entire political leadership of the twenties in Bihar. He also joined the Dawn Society run by Satish Chandra Mukherjee, and Sister Nivedita. He observed about himself:

*I know I cannot do all the stuff that I did ten years ago.*

## Nationalist Movement

In 1911, during his stay in Calcutta (now Kolkata) as a legal practitioner, Rajendra Prasad joined the Indian National Congress Party and was subsequently elected to the AICC. In 1915, Rajendra Prasad passed with a Gold medal in Masters in Law examination with honors. He then went on to complete his Doctorate in Law. Rajendra Prasad used to practice his Law & studies at Bhagalpur in Bihar and eventually emerged as a popular and eminent figure of the entire region. In 1916, Rajendra Prasad joined the High Court of Bihar and Orissa. Such was his intellect and his integrity, that often when his adversary failed to cite a precedent, the judges asked Rajendra Prasad to cite a precedent against himself.

## Mahatma Gandhi

The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian national





scene greatly influenced Dr Rajendra Prasad. While Mahatma Gandhi was on a fact-finding mission in Champaran district of Bihar, he called on Rajendra Prasad to come to Champaran with volunteers. Dr Rajendra Prasad was greatly impressed by the dedication, conviction and courage that Mahatma Gandhi displayed. Mahatma Gandhi's influence greatly altered Dr Rajendra Prasad's outlook.

Rajendra Prasad also responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi to boycott Western education. He asked his son Mrityunjaya Prasad, a brilliant student to leave the University and enroll himself in Bihar Vidyapeeth. He would write articles for magazines like "Searchlight" and "Desh". When the earthquake of Bihar occurred on January 15, 1934, Rajendra Prasad was in jail. He was released two days later. He set himself for the task of raising funds and collected over Rs 38 Lakhs. Nationalist India expressed its admiration by electing Rajendra Prasad as the President of the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress Party in October 1934.

He sought ways to simplify his life and reduced the number of servants he had to one. He started doing his daily chores such as sweeping the floor, washing the utensils—the tasks he had all along assumed others would do for him.

### **Freedom Struggle**

After coming into contact with Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Rajendra Prasad, immersed himself fully into the freedom struggle. He played active role during Non-Cooperation Movement. Dr Rajendra Prasad was arrested in 1930 while participating in Salt Satyagraha. Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected as the President of the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress. He was elected as Congress President again in 1939 in the following the resignation of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose.

### **First President of India**

In July 1946, when the Constituent Assembly was established to frame the Constitution of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected its President. Two and a half years after independence, on 26 January, 1950, the Constitution of independent India was ratified and Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected as India's first President. As a President, he used his moderating influence silently and unobtrusively and set a healthy precedent for others to follow.

During his tenure as President he visited many countries on missions of goodwill and sought to establish and nourish new relationships. He never worried about what people said about him. He never looked into the mirror of history. There were occasions when he differed from the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. But that was nothing new. They had differed for almost three decades and yet worked together in the Congress. The differences never embittered their personal relations. Perhaps, both realized that they arose out of their differing backgrounds, beliefs, approaches and attitudes.

It was in 1960 that he announced his intention to retire, and though there were many regrets and many tried to persuade him to continue for a third term, his mind was made up.

### **Final Days**

In 1962, after 12 years as President, Dr Rajendra Prasad retired, and was subsequently awarded the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian award. He spent the last few months of his life in retirement at the Sadaqat Ashram in Patna. Dr Rajendra Prasad died on February 28, 1963.

**Source:** [www.iloveindia.com](http://www.iloveindia.com),  
[www.culturalindia.net](http://www.culturalindia.net), [www.maxabout.com](http://www.maxabout.com)



# *Bipin Chandra Pal*

Bipin Chandra Pal was one of the mightiest prophets of nationalism who fought bravely for a noble cause of India's independence. He was a noted politician, journalist, an eminent orator and one of the three famous patriots, known as the trilogy of Lal Bal Pal. The other two were Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He was one of the main architects of the Swadeshi movement. He stood against the partition of Bengal.

## **Early Life**

Pal was born on 7 November 1858 at Sylhet (now in Bangladesh). He came to Calcutta (Kolkata) and got admitted in the Presidency college but left studies before graduating. However he had remarkable literacy competence and studied various books extensively. He started his career as school master and worked as a librarian in the Calcutta Public Library.

Pal became attracted to the Brahma movement after coming into contact with Keshab Chandra Sen, Shibnath Shastri, Bijoy Krishna Goswami, and other prominent Brahma leaders. Their influence attracted him to join active politics. Soon he got inspired by the extremist patriotism of Tilak, Lala and Aurobindo. In 1898 he went to England to study comparative theology but came back to preach ideal of Swadeshi through himself in the Non-Cooperation Movement due to his difference of viewpoints with other leaders of the movement.

## **The Academician**

Bipin Chandra Pal was a teacher, journalist, orator, writer and librarian. Pal used his profession in



**Bipin Chandra Pal**

spreading patriotic feelings and social awareness. He was the editor of the 'Democrat', the 'Independent' and many other journals and newspapers. He published a biography of Queen Victoria in Bangla. 'Swaraj and the Present Situation' and 'The Soul of India' are the two of his many books.

He wrote a series of studies on the makers of modern India such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab





## *Dal became attracted to the Brahma movement after coming into contact with Keshab Chandra Sen, Shibnath Shastri, Bijoy Krishna Goswami, and other prominent Brahma leaders*

Chandra Sen, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, Ashutosh Mukerjee and Annie Besant. He preached a “composite patriotism” that implied a universal outlook. “Paridarsak” (1886-Bengali weekly), “New India: (1902-English weekly) and “Bande Mataram” (1906-Bengali daily) are some of the journals started by him.

### **The Trio—Lal Bal Pal**

But above all, he was the one of the three famous leaders called “Lal Bal Pal” who comprised the extremist wing of the Indian National Congress (INC). It was these three leaders who started the first popular upsurge against British colonial policy in the 1905 partition of Bengal. Pal’s notoriety grew dramatically following the 1905 partition of Bengal, which Pal claimed was a British move to split the Bengalis and thus break their growing political influence. Described as “one of the mightiest prophets of nationalism”, Bipin Chandra Pal was associated with India’s political history during its phase of the struggle for freedom with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai.

The trio was termed the “extremists” as they stood for the ideal of Swaraj or complete political freedom to be achieved through courage, self-help and self-sacrifice. With Lala Lajpat Rai and Bal Gangadhar Tilak from the Lal Bal Pal team, Bipin Chandra Pal doled out a number of extremist measures like boycotting goods made by British, burning Western clothes and lockouts in the British owned businesses and industrial concerns to get their message across to the foreign rulers. Later on during the course of his life history, Bipin Chandra Pal came in contact with prominent Bengali leaders like Keshab Chandra Sen and Sibnath Sastri.

### **The Revolutionary**

Pal had a ‘never say die’ attitude and he lived by his Principle. He revolted against the evils and ill practices of Hinduism. He believed in the equality of men and women. He encouraged widow marriages and female education. Bipin Chandra Pal started as a supporter of Brahmo Samaj, turned to Vedanta and ended up as an upholder of the Vaishnava Philosophy of Sri Chaitanya. He was ardent social reformer. He married a widow of a higher caste twice and gave his powerful support to the Age of Consent Bill of 1891. Pal was a staunch radical in both public and private life. He was imprisoned for six months on the grounds of his refusal to give evidence against Sri Aurobindo in the Bande Mataram sedition case.

### **Final Days**

Pal virtually retired from politics from 1920 though he expressed his views on national questions till his death. India lost one of its most ardent patriots when Pal passed away on 20 May 1932.

**Source:** [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com),  
[www.iloveindia.com](http://www.iloveindia.com), [www.swarajyparty.org](http://www.swarajyparty.org),  
[www.indianetzone.com](http://www.indianetzone.com),  
[www.robinsonlibrary.com](http://www.robinsonlibrary.com),  
[www.indianfreedomfighters.in](http://www.indianfreedomfighters.in)



## *Ramayana in a Nutshell*

The great sage Valmiki addressed the divine seer Narada thus: “Oh! celebrated sage, you are always steeped in penance, prayers and Vedic lore. You are endowed with a rare vision and you can see and know all that takes place in this vast universe. You are the foremost in eloquence. I request you to enlighten me on this question: Who is there living in the world at present endowed with all the noble virtues that go to make a man divine; a real hero; who is always true in thought, word and deed; who is firm and fast in pursuing his vows and ideals; who is immensely grateful; who is most skilful and efficient in the execution of all tasks; who is most sweet to look at and graceful of speech; who is mighty, noble-hearted and of unflinching courage; who has conquered his passions and keeps anger at his command; whose wrath strikes terror even in the hearts of Gods; who is free from jealousy; who is firm in his resolve; who is singularly charming as to attract even his enemies by his lovable appearance; who is a well-wisher of all the living beings and strives hard to do good to all in the universe; who knows dharma in all its manifold aspects; who is of untiring zeal and energy; and who never swerves from the loftiest code of ethics in his conduct and family morals? Breathes there a man with soul so divine and if one such exists, you alone can know and tell about him because you possess divine vision. I long to know if such a divinity in human form dwells on earth now. I request you to kindly tell me about him.”

Elated by the query of sage Valmiki, saint Narada who is gifted with the celestial knowledge to know everything that takes place in all the three worlds and from whom time never hides to its secrets of the past, the present and the future, made answer: “Oh Valmiki, sage of rare austerities, many and rare are the virtues enumerated by you and they are seldom found united in a single person. Yet such a rare and noble person lives to-day on earth and you shall hear of him now. Descended from the illustrious family of Ikshvakus, he is known as Rama to all the world. He is a hero of great might and valour. He is bright and brilliant and attracts all to him by his lustre. He is gifted with great powers of speech; he is the personification of justice and dharma. He is the destroyer of the wicked and the protector of the good and the just. He is wise, virtuous and is endowed with all forms of riches. He is sweet in speech and very sweet to look at. With broad shoulders and mighty arms touching the knees, with

a stately neck and lordly steps and all limbs in fair proportion set, with a bright forehead and blue lotus hue, he is the mould of form and model of virtue. He has a majestic gait, noble mien and fine deportment. He knows well dharma in all its various aspects. He is firm in his resolve and true to his vows. He is a well-wisher of all beings in this world. With pity and compassion for the weak and the helpless, he is easily tied down by love and devotion. Immensely wise and pure in his dealings he is a man of self-control and concentrated mind. He is powerful, radiant and resolute and has brought his senses under control. He is intelligent, sagacious, eloquent and glorious in his speech. He is the supporter of creation like Lord Brahma.

“He is deeply versed in Vedic lore and is a master of all sciences and the arts of warfare. Majestic as the ocean, he is equal to the supreme God Vishnu in valour. In his rich possessions he is comparable to Kubera, the God of Wealth. With auspicious marks on his body, with wide and lustrous eyes, ever pure and wise, he is the protector of dharma and his people. Just as rivers fulfil themselves by reaching the ocean, all good men fulfil themselves by approaching him. In majesty he is like the Himalayas; in endurance and patience, he is like Mother Earth; in giving away gifts he is like Kubera, the lord of riches. In personal charm and grace he is like Chandra, the Moon-God, the Lord of the night; in righteous anger he is fierce as the world-destroying fire. He is the personification of justice and truth. He is the eldest born of king Dasaratha of Ayodhya.

Attracted by his great qualities and noble virtues, his father, noble king Dasaratha, ever eager to do good to his people and his country, desired to make him the Yuvaraja, the regent-heir and made preparations for the same.

When Dasaratha’s youngest queen Kaikeyi saw the pomp and splendour of the preparations for the coronation of Rama, she felt envious and asked Dasaratha to bestow on her the two boons he had promised her long ago—one that Rama should be banished to the forest for fourteen years and the other that her son Bharata should be crowned as the Yuvaraja. By chains of truth and dharma firmly tied, the wretched king had to comply with her requests. To make his father’s words true and to gratify Kaikeyi, Rama retired to the forest cheerfully. Lakshmana, his noble brother born to Queen





**Lord Rama with Sita and Lakshmana**



**Sage Valmiki**

Sumitra, followed him out of true love and devotion. Rama's darling wife, soft and sweet Sita, daughter of the great King Janaka, looking like a divine damsel followed her lord to the forest just as Rohini always follows her lord Chandra, the moon-God. The loving king and the people of Ayodhya followed Rama's chariot.

When Rama reached the town of Sringeripuram on the banks of the river Ganga and saw Guha, the king of the hunters, he bade farewell to his charioteer and sent back the chariot. With the help of Guha, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita crossed the holy Ganga and reached the southern bank where there was a thick forest. There lived the great sage Bharadwaja. As directed by the sage, Rama had a pleasant little cottage built for him by Lakshmana on the top of the Chitrakuta Hill and lived there in penance and contentment with his wife and his brother.

Unable to bear the separation from his dearest and eldest born, King Dasaratha died in great sorrow and reached the abode of the Gods. Then the wise brahmins led by the great Vasishta, the royal purohita, the ancient preceptor of the family, urged Bharata, the son of Kaikeyi, to rule the kingdom. But he firmly refused to take the crown and resolved to get back Sri Rama from the forest to rule the land. Along with his councillors and royal mothers, Bharata repaired to the forest and begged at the feet of Sri Rama to return and be king. The great and magnanimous Rama was firm in his resolve to spend fourteen years in the forest as a hermit in obedience to his father's decree. He bade his brother return and gave him his sandals as a pledge and a promise of his return to the kingdom after his period of exile. Bharata placed the sandals on the throne as a symbol of Sri Rama's authority, and ruled the kingdom in the name of Sri Rama. Leading the life of a hermit like his brother in the forest, he stayed at Nandigramam eagerly awaiting his brother's return.

After the departure of Bharata, Rama decided to leave Chitrakuta Hill, as it happened to be near to his people who might repeat the visit. So he entered the fierce and formidable forest known as Dandakaranya. Here, he had an encounter with a terrific rakshasa called Virata. After killing him, he met the great sages, Sarabanga, Sudeekshana as well as Agastya and his brother. Agastya presented him with the divine bow of Indra and two inexhaustible quivers of arrows. Sri Rama gave the sages and hermits dwelling in the forest a solemn promise that he would destroy the evil rakshasas and thus free Dandakaranya of the demons. (To be continued....)

***-Prof. N.S. Mani learnt Sanskrit, at the feet of his revered father, a great scholar, well versed in our ancient lore. Of all the ancient texts, Valmiki Ramayana fascinated him and he translated Ramayana and Sundara Kanda into English. Bala Kanda, the first book of***



***Srimad Ramayana, describes in detail the birth of Sri Rama, his boyhood, his superlative prowess, his benevolence to all, his training under the great sage Viswamitra, his magnificent feat of breaking the mighty bow of Lord Siva at Janaka's Court, his marriage with Sita and Parasurama's challenge and Sri Rama's victory. The book also describes vividly sage Viswamitra's incredible adventure and dedicated endeavour to rise to the spiritual status of Vasishta thus demonstrating by his example to what celestial heights human soul can rise.***

***Source: Sri Valmiki Ramayana Bala Kanda (Childhood Episode) by Prof. N.S. Mani, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay (Mumbai), India***



# Why only in this Country

The question arises: “What about countries other than India? And what about the religions practised there? They do not have a system of jatis nor do they have in force any division of labour based on heredity. Why should we alone have such an arrangement?”

It will be conceded that even such countries as do not have any social division based on vocations have produced wise men who have contributed to the growth of knowledge and also statesmen, administrators, warriors, agriculturists, traders and labourers. But if you look at the matter impartially—and not necessarily as a proud patriot—you will realise that no other country has had such a great civilization as we have had. It is true that great civilizations flourished in other lands too, but they did not last thousands of years like ours. To say this is not to blow our own trumpet. From the time of Alexander until today—when we seem to have fallen into an abyss from the heights of glory—foreigners have been filled with wonder for the Hindu civilization.

Other countries, it is true, have given birth to great men, to men of God, to philanthropists, to men of sacrifice. But if you take a census of all nations, you will see that no other nation would have given birth, generation after generation for thousands of years in an uninterrupted manner, to such a large number of great men, saintly men, wise men, philosophers, devotees and philanthropists. They will outnumber all such men produced in other countries put together. Foreigners refer to India as the “land of saints”, as “the land of sages”. They express their profound admiration for our Vedanta, for our metaphysics, and all our ancient works.

The whole world acknowledges our unparalleled contributions to art, sculpture, music, poetry, astronomy, mathematics, medicine. It never ceases to wonder at our great works of philosophy and literature like the Upanisads, the Bhagavadgita, the Ramayana, the Sakuntalam, etc. Scholars abroad are of the opinion that there are hardly any devotional works outside India like the Tamil Tevaram and Divyaprabandham. They note the Kural, in the same language, to be an astonishingly profound and lucid ethical work that is yet so brief. Foreigners come to our land, leaving their home and hearth, to find out all about our gopurams, our sculptures, our dances like Bharatantya all of which have cast a spell over them. Europeans enslaved us, ascribed all kinds of faults to us and held us in bondage with their policy of divide and rule. But, all the same, out of admiration for our culture they have sought out our

*It would not have  
taken the strides it did  
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slave country or a country  
ruled by despots. People  
here never lamented  
before others that they  
were kept suppressed*

sastras, our ancient texts, conducted research into them and translated them into their own languages.

To what special factors are we to attribute the existence of such a great and unique civilization? In looking for an answer you will discover that there was something in our social structure that was not shared by other countries, that is varna dharma. According to our reformers all our ills are due to the caste system. But it is this land with this unique system—varnasrama—that has excelled all other nations in metaphysics, in the arts, in social values and in wisdom. Stability in society and peace go hand in hand. Without them, without art atmosphere conducive to creative work, no arts, no philosophy, no culture could have flourished generation after generation. Philosophers and sages and geniuses in the field of arts would not have otherwise been thrown up in such amazingly large numbers.

The religions that governed life in other countries did not evolve a social structure capable of creating this kind of stability. One might say that the question of creating a sociological foundation was overlooked in them. They did not lay down rules for orderly social life and had but general interdictions and injunctions like “Do not steal”; “Do not tell lies”; “Do not commit adultery”; “Live a life of sacrifice”. In Buddhism and Christianity the institutionalised system is meant only for the monks. Unlike in Hinduism in none of these religions was attention directed towards weaving together the entire society into a fabric in which one member formed a support to another.





One does not deny that there was scientific advancement in other nations. They had a system of defence and they carried on trade and commerce. But the spirit of rivalry vitiated all walks of life in these lands. No community had an occupation entirely to itself. Everyone could compete with everyone else for every kind of job. In our country people had their own hereditary callings and they were assured of their livelihood. This meant peace and stability in society. We must remember that it was because our people were bound together in the unique varna system that they excelled in culture and character, not to mention the fact that the stability afforded by the system facilitated the birth of countless numbers of individuals who exemplified all that is noble in mankind. In contrast, in the absence of a similar institution, jealousy and rivalry became disturbing factors in the life of other countries.

Our nation should have witnessed many a revolution if, as claimed by our social reformers, the people were kept suppressed in the varna system. However, the term “social revolution” was new to us until recently. It is only after reading about the French Revolution, the American Revolution and the Soviet Revolution that we have known that compulsions would arise for great masses of people to be plunged in unrest. The common people in other countries were again and again involved thus in revolutionary movements. But we note—and this is important—that no revolution has achieved anything of permanent value. If there is an upsurge today there is another fifty or a hundred years later.

We have to conclude from this that people abroad have remained discontented most of the time. Today’s situation is all too obvious to be stated. The whole world is in turmoil. Indiscipline, strikes, social upsets and savage orgies of violence have become the order of the day. It is only in a country like the Soviet Union where there is a dictatorship that comes down heavily on those who voice any opposition to it that there is hardly any unrest. However, it is said that the volcano of unrest might erupt any time there. Now and then an intellectual or writer escapes from that land to tell us about the tyranny from which people suffer there. Obviously in the Soviet Union too people are not happy and contented.

India has seldom had an autocracy or dictatorship of this type. It would not have taken the strides it did in the sciences and arts had it been a slave country or a country ruled by despots. People here never lamented before others that they were kept suppressed. All our works of knowledge and wisdom, all our arts and all our temples would not have been possible if the mind was not enabled to unfold itself in an atmosphere of freedom. It would also be preposterous to suggest that a majority of the common people were victims of superstition and delusion and lived in fear of priestcraft. You could speak thus of the tribes living in the forests of Africa or South America. In these places the priest was like a king. He would be fearsome even to look at and he was able to impress his tribesmen that he could do anything with his utterances (his mantra—like formulae). He had also the power to punish people. Such was not the case in our country. People here



were fairly knowledgeable irrespective of the jatis to which they belonged and they were devoted and advanced in matters pertaining to the Self.

If you go through the Puranas (including the Tamil Periyapuranam) you will learn that there were great men in all jatis. Imperial rulers like Candragupta and ministers like Sekkizhar belonged to the fourth varna. Our priests had no authority to punish anyone. According to the canonical texts the priest must be a man of spotless character and, if he commits a wrong, he must punish himself. If a white man happens to come into physical contact with a Negro, the latter is taken to task. But if a priest in our country comes into similar contact with an untouchable, it is he (the priest) who is enjoined to have a bath. Let us leave aside for the moment the question of untouchability. The point to note is that it was not by inspiring fear, by the threat of punishment or by suppression, that such customs were practised.

A civilization like ours that is glorified all over the world could not have flourished if some sections of the people were suppressed or were victims of deception. It is only when the dharmasastras are advantageous to all that there will be no cause for any section of the people to revolt.

When the ancient varna system was in force, our civilization grew steadily without giving any cause for revolt or discontent among the people. But, that apart, look at the state of India after it broke with the old system of division of labour and took to the new path adopted by other countries on the pretext of “progress” and “equality”. Everywhere you see immorality, dishonesty, corruption and prostitution. Agitations, strikes, demonstrations, hartals, curfew, etc, have become the order of the day.

Is it not obvious from this that there is much discontent among the people? In matters of trade we have come to such a pass that we are the target of attack and ridicule of other nations for our dishonest practices. The time is past when everyone had nothing but praise for India. Even a small country like Pakistan drags us into war. Does this not show that our spiritual strength has diminished so much?

How did we lose our inner vitality? By giving up what have we become weak? What was it that nurtured our civilization and kept it growing for thousands of years? By parting with what have we descended so low as to be ashamed of calling ourselves heirs to this civilization?

The fact is that, so long as we practised varna dharma that is unique to our country, our civilization stood like a rock arousing the admiration of all the world. But after this dharma began to decline we have been on the descent day by day.

Why should this country alone practise varna dharma? Because this dharma is necessary if we want to sustain a civilization that can promote the growth of philosophy, nourish our arts and culture, inspire us more and more in our inward search and help us in the realisation of the Godhead. If the varna system is followed at least in this country, it will be an example to the rest of the world.

If there is no varna dharma, it means at once the growth of social disharmony, the rise of jealousies and discontent among the people. Men will compete with one another for the jobs they like or are convenient to them. There will be competition for education on the same lines. Since all will not succeed in their efforts or in their desire or ambition being satisfied, the result will be hatred and resentment everywhere. Look at what is happening now in India. When educated unemployment is on the increase, it is suggested that admissions to colleges must be restricted, that there are too many engineers already in the country and that some engineering colleges must be closed down.

Here we see that the theory of throwing open everything to everybody does not work; imposing some restrictions on people is seen to be inevitable. In the old days a man's work, whatever it was, became second nature to him and he had a sense of pride in it as an “asset”, a legacy that had come to him from his forefathers, indeed a prized family “possession”. He also did his job efficiently and sincerely. Money was a secondary consideration then. Since everything was done on the basis of trust and with a high degree of personal involvement—the worker was always conscious that he was doing his work—there were no problems. The whole society prospered.

No civilization can flourish in the absence of a system that brings fulfilment to all. Varna dharma brought fulfilment and satisfaction to all.

Is it possible to bring varna dharma back to life? Whether we fail in doing all we can in reviving the system or whether we abandon our efforts finding them to be futile, we must at least recognise that it is this system that for thousands of years brought well-being to all communities of our religion and to our country and through them to the whole world outside. Again, we must at least have the good sense not to find fault with such a system.

*Note: These words spoken many years before the break-up of the Soviet Union have proved prophetic.*

*Candrasekharendra Saraswati*

**Source: Hindu Dharma The Universal Way of Life, Bhavan's Book University, Mumbai**



## Charter of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Bhavan) is a non-profit, non-religious, non-political Non Government Organisation (NGO). Bhavan has been playing a crucial role in educational and cultural interactions in the world, holding aloft the best of Indian traditions and at the same time meeting the needs of modernity and multiculturalism. Bhavan's ideal 'is the whole world is but one family' and its motto: 'let noble thoughts come to us from all sides'.

Like Bhavan's other centres around the world, Bhavan Australia facilitates intercultural activities and provides a forum for true understanding of Indian culture, multiculturalism and foster closer cultural ties among individuals, Governments and cultural institutions in Australia.

Bhavan Australia Charter derived from its constitution is:

- To advance the education of the public in:
  - a) the cultures (both spiritual and temporal) of the world,
  - b) literature, music, the dance,
  - c) the arts,
  - d) languages of the world,
  - e) philosophies of the world.
- To foster awareness of the contribution of a diversity of cultures to the continuing development of multicultural society of Australia.
- To foster understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Australian people of widely diverse heritages.
- To edit, publish and issue books, journals and periodicals, documentaries in Sanskrit, English and other languages, to promote the objects of the Bhavan or to impart or further education as authorized.
- To foster and undertake research studies in the areas of interest to Bhavan and to print and publish the results of any research which is undertaken.

[www.bhavanaaustralia.org](http://www.bhavanaaustralia.org)

### The Test of Bhavan's Right to Exist

The test of Bhavan's right to exist is whether those who work for it in different spheres and in different places and those who study in its many institutions can develop a sense of mission as would enable them to translate the fundamental values, even in a small measure, into their individual life.

Creative vitality of a culture consists in this: whether the 'best' among those who belong to it, however small their number, find self-fulfilment by living up to the fundamental values of our ageless culture.

It must be realized that the history of the world is a story of men who had faith in themselves and in their mission. When an age does not produce men of such faith, its culture is on its way to extinction. The real strength of the Bhavan, therefore, would lie not so much in the number of its buildings or institutions it conducts, nor in the volume of its assets and budgets, nor even in its growing publication, culture and educational activities. It would lie in the character, humility, selflessness and dedicated work of its devoted workers, honorary and stipendiary. They alone can release the regenerative influences, bringing into play the invisible pressure which alone can transform human nature.





## *Untold Stories of King Bhoja*

### *Madanarekha's Doser*

Finding that the time had come when she could no longer keep silent, she wanted to open her mouth and somehow blurt out her problem to him, but the woman in her prevented her from doing so. She felt afraid that her husband would become angry. The next moment she felt that it was not a matter for another man's ears, much less her husband's. Again she would be tempted to tell him, but would hesitate how to begin. Thus, amidst doubt, fear and shyness, she felt like a drop of water in boiling oil.

Finally, she cast off all her doubts, and falling at the feet of her husband, shed copious tears which practically washed his feet.

When he raised her up, Madanarekha addressed him: "My lord, I shall now address a prayer to you. Whatever its nature, you must grant me my prayer."

She then related to him cogently all that had happened between her and her guru's son ending in her promise to the latter.

As soon as the bridegroom heard this, he became choked with emotion and fell down unconscious while Madanarekha stood by completely nonplussed.

When she did all she could by way of first-aid, the prince regained consciousness. When he was well enough, he drew her near him again to embrace her. At that time, Madanarekha said: "My lord, on that fateful day when my virginity was about to be violated by my preceptor's son, I gave him the promise for saving a life in the hope that my husband would approve of it for two reasons: one was that by my act the reputation of my family and that of my clan could be kept unbesmirched; secondly, that any act done with the concurrence of one's husband will get the assent of Dharma.

You will thus see that if I go back on my word I shall draw on my head the great sin of untruth. My lord is no doubt aware that whatever sin falls to the lot of one's wife will fall to the lot of the husband too. Bearing these things in mind, I beg of you permission to fulfil my promise. I have nothing more to add than to say that I shall abide by your decision, whatever that be."

Hearing this, the bridegroom reflected: "It is true, as I now have learned, that women are extremely clever.

It is impossible to beat them at their game. Having known the nature of the contract, my mind, for my

part, refuses to permit her to fulfil her promise. At the same time, it is quite on the cards that failure to do so would cover her with the sin of loss of faith or of untruth. It is a pity that there is none here who can advise me."

Guessing what was passing in his mind, Madanarekha continued: "My lord! Why should you cogitate thus? As far as you are concerned, the problem is a simple one. Tell me that I can go or that I can't. That is all you have to do. And I shall certainly abide by your wishes. But before doing so, I shall tell you this much. Not that you don't know, but I take the liberty of reminding you that no amount of tapas is equivalent to adherence to truth. Don't you know that Harischandra, for the purpose of fulfilling his word, lost everything in life—even his wife and child—and suffered untold misery? I may also tell you this: do not for a moment belittle the abilities of women.

They can cheat their husbands easily point-blank if they want to. Women, who are devoted to their husbands, by the mere fact of their devotion, do not do so thinking of their husbands as their personal gods. But if they want to hoodwink their husbands, nothing can stop them. Dutiful wives, as a result of their devotion, attain heaven; unfaithful ones who abuse their husbands' trust or transgress their injunctions, go astray, visit forbidden places, overtly drive away those guests whom their husbands may bring; those women who fill their stomach but make others go without food, or those that proclaim poverty before others, or speak ill of their husbands openly; those women who do not help their husbands in the performance of worship of gods and guests—they are denied not only the gifts of heaven for themselves and their husbands in this life, but in after-life too.

In short, women are the mainspring of both dharma and adharma. If I have been telling all these things, it is because of my deep-felt anxiety not to make you share the sins to which I shall become liable. Please tell me what I should do."

*-To be continued...*

**V.A.K. Ayer**

**Source: *Untold Stories of King Bhoja*, Bhavan's Book University, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan**



# M. K. Gandhi

He wrote her a tender letter of his deep love saying "I have offered my all to the Satyagraha. My struggle is not merely political. It is religious and therefore quite pure." In spite of all these terrible experiences, he still trusted British fair play!

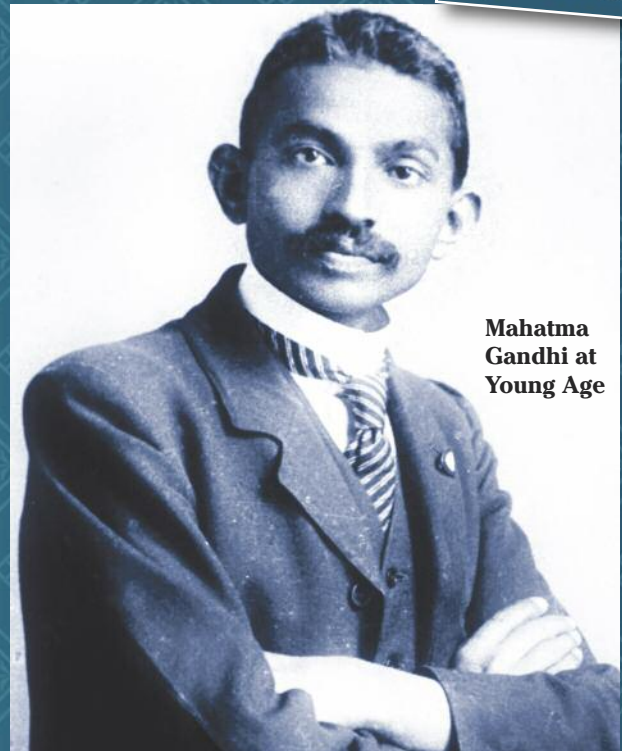
When finally he was released, he, along with some others went to England, on a delegation, hoping to negotiate for fair play and justice. Sadly the British government did not respond and lost a good friend.

Gandhi, however, did not lack friends in England. He found the women most courageous in fighting for equality. He felt that he had really learnt the art of passive resistance from women. His wife was one of his first "gurus" who would not allow her husband to compel her to do anything that she was not willing to accept as correct. As he said, "she just passively resists me and I am helpless!"

Gandhi always respected women and his sense of humour was often shared with them. Sarojini Naidu who later became the President of the Congress, wrote about this. The first time she went to meet Gandhi in London, he was eating his dinner seated on an old blanket, from a wooden bowl! She laughed and said he looked more like Mickey Mouse than the leader of Indians. He laughed too and they became the dearest of friends. She named him 'The Father of the Nation.' Another time when he met King George the journalists were surprised at his simple attire. And he replied, "His Majesty was dressed enough for both of us." Once the crowd even called out, "Hey Gandhi, where are your trousers?" and he replied, "You people wear plus fours, mine are minus fours."

Gandhi literally held court at his hotel in London. He enjoyed the huge number of visitors and shared with them English tea and buttered toast. Dressed in an English suit, he was fashionable with his silk hat, morning coat and smart shoes. In South Africa, he dressed more informally and later, as all Indians think of him, in the barest of necessities, a loincloth, a shawl, sandals and a stick.

In London, he found young Indian revolutionaries who believed in violence as the only solution to win freedom. A British official had been shot dead by a man called Madanlal Dhingra, who called himself a patriot, and made a fervent, eloquent speech in court, praised even by Winston Churchill. But Gandhi condemned the act. "It is not merely wine or bhang that makes one drunk, a mad idea also can do so. He acted like a coward for the man had been an invited guest at an Indian social gathering, and then was killed.



**Mahatma  
Gandhi at  
Young Age**

He was appalled at the misguided patriotism of young Indians and wrote, "No act of treachery can ever profit a nation. India can gain nothing from the rule of murderers, be they Black or White."

These acts of violence set him thinking of how to free his own country. "If a man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him."

-To be continued...

***Mrinalini Sarabhai, an internationally recognized dancer and choreographer is a director as well as an author of scholarly books, novels and children's books. She was Chairperson of the Gujarat State Handicrafts and Handloom Development***

***Corporation Ltd and is one of the trustees of the Sarvodaya International Trust, an organization dedicated to promoting the Gandhian ideals of Truth, Non Violence, Peace, Universal Brotherhood and Humanitarian Service. She is closely associated with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for the past more than three decades. The Bhavan has published her book 'Sacred Dance of India', 'The Mahatma and the Poetess', a selection of letters exchanged between Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu edited by Mrinalini Sarabhai.***



***Source: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi by Mrinalini Sarabhai, Bhavan's Book University, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, India***





*From Bhavan's Journal October 13, 1963  
Reprinted in Bhavan's Journal October 15, 2013*

## *Social Function of the Press*

In the newspapers which were read by the older generation, there was some notice taken of events taking place outside the domain of politics. Very little space is now devoted to non-controversial and non-political topic excepting in the sports columns and stock exchange reports.

Intellectually stimulating or generally instructive topics of world interest are hardly touched upon except in the telegraphic news columns. A newspaper too often concentrates on constant denunciation of Government personages and parties and periodic suggestions of corruption or misdemeanour. On the other side another group furnishes a continuous record of propagandist views and news in which facts are subordinated to rhetoric. In the result, newspapers, as such, are losing their place as creators of public opinion. They are becoming the chroniclers of partisan views.

Moreover, comparing a paper like The Times of London or the Guardian or the New York Times or the Herald Tribune with any but a very few of our Indian newspapers, we see what a disproportionate amount of space is accorded in India to matters of purely incidental or accidental nature.

To such an extent has this development proceeded, that paid advertisements of unimportant foreign travels undertaken by graduates of universities share newspaper space along with many irrelevant details regarding infinitesimally important squabbles.

The result, of course, is that people are getting into the habit of not taking newspapers and journals seriously so that if a real grievance is put forward or a genuine public demand is voiced, it is too often taken for granted in advance that is of a partisan character.

*—Dr. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer*

## *The Supreme State of Peace*

The approach to the Ultimate Reality is possible of a twofold classification. One is, to ignore the forms and concentrate the mind on the formless reality. The other is to accept the form as a symbol of the Absolute.

When the sense-mind is attracted by the enchantment of the form, the substratum of the form is lost sight of. When the gaze is directed towards the fundamental reality, all forms will be realised as expressions of the formless Truth.

The seeker after Truth should always fix his gaze upon the abiding reality.

Attractiveness is inherent in the Reality alone. But, the form continues to hold its way on the mind so long as the mind mistakes appearance for the reality.

To a consciousness illumined by the divine knowledge, the real nature of a thing shines forth without being distorted by the mind.

So long as the objects are perceived as things other than Consciousness, there is need for discrimination between the Eternal and the ephemeral. When the process of discrimination ends in profound silence of the Soul, the mind gains a vision of its own inherent perfection.

*—H.H. Sadguru Sree Rama Devi*

◀ ◀ ◀ *Flashback*



## *Holy & Wise*

### ***Ekam Sad vipra bahuda vadanti***

One alone exists, Sages call it by various names.

*Time was with most of us, when Christmas Day, encircling all our limited world like a magic ring, left nothing out for us to miss or seek; bound together all our home enjoyments, affections, and hopes; grouped everything and everyone round the Christ.*

**-Charles Dickens**

*The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.*

**-Rabindranath Tagore**

*The highest art is always the most religious, and the greatest artist is always a devout person.*

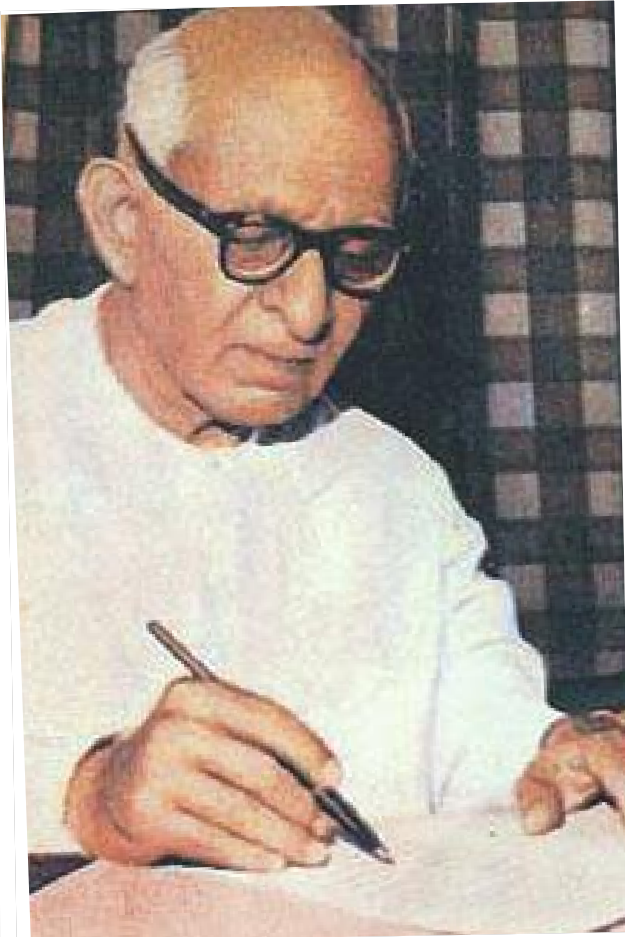
**-Abraham Lincoln**

*Always aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed. Always aim at purifying your thoughts and everything will be well.*

**-Mahatma Gandhi**

*A religious person is devout in the sense that he has no doubt about the significance of those superpersonal objects and goals which neither require nor are capable of rational foundation.*

**-Albert Einstein**



## *Kulapatiwani*

### *Forests*

The cause of forestry, as you know, has always been upper-most in my mind. The Vedic culture which we have inherited was nurtured in the forests which our Aryan ancestors found covering the length and breadth of the country of their adoption. It was in our forests that sages sang the Vedic hymns and saints preached their message. In our Puranas there are constant references to the merit earned by planting trees. Manu, the law-giver, laid down a heavy penalty for those who destroyed forests. Our entire religious background is composed of forest scenes: the Vrindavana of Lord Krishna, the Ashokavana of Sita, the Naimisharanya of the Rishis and the Dandakaranya of Rama's exile.

**Dr K.M. Munshi**  
**Founder, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan**





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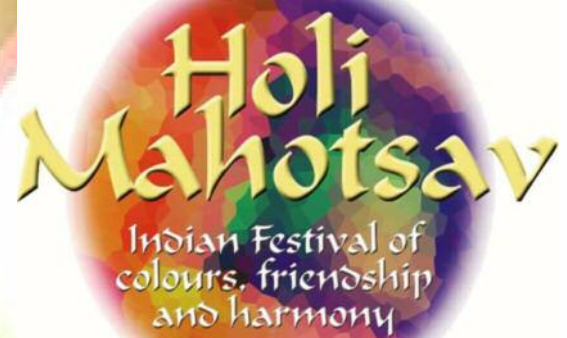
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