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LIFE ... LITERATURE ... CULTURE

Words of Eternal Wisdom



When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won.

There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall... think of it, always.

-Mahatma Gandhi

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light

- Plato

Moral Philosophy is nothing else but the science of what is good, and evil, in the conversation, and society of mankind. Good and Evil are names that signify our appetites and aversions; which in different tempers, customs and doctrines of men, are different.

-Thomas Hobbes

When you see yourself in others, it is impossible to hurt anyone else.

-Buddha

Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be. Just be one.

- Marcus Aurelius

This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.

- Dalai Lama

We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live: they travel far.

- Swami Vivekananda

VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM

The whole world is but one family

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's ideal is: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam meaning "The whole world is but one family" and its motto says, "Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides" – Rg Veda.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is derived from the Sanskrit words – Vasudha meaning the Earth and "Iva" means "is" and Kutumbakam means the family. Thus vasudhaiva kutumbakam is a Sanskrit phrase which means that the whole world is one single family. It is a cosmic organisation. It is a group of the people for the people and by the people.

The idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is India's contribution to world peace, and it is based on the prayer "Lok samasta sukhino Bhavantra" Meaning let the entire world be happy.

Following are the fundamentals of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

- The vasudhaiva kutumbakam is a philosophy that inculcates an understanding that the whole of humanity is one family. It is social theory originating from a spiritual understanding that all of the humanity is made of one life energy.
- It is primarily a cultural and religious concept. It looks upon the whole world as one's family. The fundamental pillars of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam are love and harmony, co-operation and Mutual support, as in family.
- It is believed that the earth is the garden of God. Let us not spoil it. Let us not annoy God by destroying what he had built with love. Let us sow the seed of love and not to say or do anything that would create feelings of hatred.
- Why say this country is mine, and that country is yours? Why not just say that the entire universe is ours? that can help us to bring unity in the world.

The concept of vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is also reflected in the core teachings of all religions.

- In my view, to understand the whole meaning of this formula of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, we must dig inside of our consciousness. We all know that our planet earth is connected all through and is round. The consciousness is one such continuum.
- The Rishis in their deep meditation could see this eternal truth. This is important to understand. The Upanishadic Rishi does not see individual human beings as we see them. We see ourselves as islands of existence. The Rishi knows that we are not islands. This simple understanding is not a theory or a philosophy. The Rishi knows this as a matter of fact. He can see it and we can experience it too, if we want to.
- This experience is potentially available to all of us. And once this experience happens, it is impossible to do anything that may contaminate this consciousness. When you are angry, you are pouring anger to this pool of consciousness. And when you are happy you are pouring happiness to this pool.

• When a man kills another being out of hatred, he is contaminating this vast ocean of existence, the consciousness itself. And we in the east have called this Adharma. Any act that contaminates this consciousness is Adharma and anything that purifies it is Dharma.

I think that the Rishi, when he proclaims this statement of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,' is talking about the relationship that is happening at the level of this consciousness. Knowing this, a man becomes Dharmic. There is no possibility of performing any act that will contaminate this pool of consciousness, because this will ultimately contaminate the individual itself.

• If we dig deep in our past, we end up knowing that we are all related by blood. If we dig sideways in space, we find that we are related to the surrounding nature with environmental forces. And, if we dig deep inside of ourselves we find that we are related to each other by consciousness.

• In fact there is no two.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: World is One Family: Creating a New World Order in 21st Century we know, the world has been transformed into a global village. Globalization is having a major impact not only on the business world but also on the whole humanity. Global recession, Global warming, climate change, poverty, conflict and violence are the main challenges that have dominated the first decade of the 21st century.

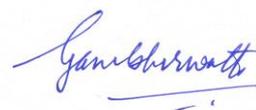
Humanity is facing a terrible challenge of its own existence. The 19th century was known as Industrial Revolution and 20th century – century of Globalization: population explosion, increasing poverty and 'Information Technology Revolution' and also century of Conflicts and Wars.

Human values are eroding at very fast rate resulting in declining the quality of life and people. At the dawn of the new millennium, there is greater need for Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: World is One Family' for the welfare of humankind in 21st century.

We have built a society, which is violent and explosive. We are living in extremely explosive times where the context of human life is changing every moment. Our society is crumbling; the wave of destruction is constantly taking over the way of life. The ecological crisis, population increase with increasing poverty, hunger and violence, economically unbalanced world, arm race and expenditure on armament are facing man to think and face the realities of destruction of humanity.

All great leaders, world over: scientists like Albert Einstein, humanitarian revolutionaries like Mahatma Gandhi, Leo Tolstoy and all those who followed them, Dalai Lama, the Pope, the top Muslim clerics and all great religious leaders believe/d and practise/d the core principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: the world is but one family.

Gambhir Watts OAM



*President, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia
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LET THERE BE LIGHT!

17-21 October



Diwali is popularly known as the festival of lights. It is undoubtedly an auspicious Hindu festival but is also celebrated by Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs. It marks the end of darkness, the triumph of good over evil and the celebration of knowledge. The tradition of celebrating this festival is age-old but the fervour and enthusiasm among young and old has not diminished. There is light all over — a symbol to ignite the inner light. There are all forms of colours and decorations to light up our lives. It also reminds us of the need to clean all the murk and dirt out of ourselves. The darkest night of autumn, lit with diyas, oil lamps, candles and lanterns, is the festival of light called Diwali. In the south, it's called Naraka Chaturdashi or Deepawali. People have oil bath, wear new clothes and invoke Goddess Lakshmi. It's the time to rejoice with friends and relatives over a grand spread of sweets and festive foods. The story dates back to the killing of Narakasura by Lord Krishna in the presence of Satyawama. Satyawama was incensed when Narakasura snatched away the earrings of Aditi, mother of the gods, leaving her with bleeding ears. She

confronted Krishna and demanded that he slay the demon. Narakasura had gained immense power and was terrorizing the inhabitants of the three worlds, secure in the knowledge that he could be killed only by his mother, the earth goddess. Krishna decided to put an end to Narakasura's misdeeds and contrived to bring about his death at the hands of Satyawama, avatar of Bhudevi, Narakasura's mother. As he lay dying, Narakasura repented on his evil deeds and expressed the wish that people should celebrate his demise with lights to signify that the shadow he had cast over the three worlds had been dispelled.

However, Diwali means different things to different people. It commemorates the advent of harvest, the beginning of a new year, the enlightenment of Mahavira and the arrival of Guru Gobind Singh to the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The celebration goes on for four or five days.

DAY ONE marks Dhanteras. By invoking goddess Lakshmi, who brings wealth and prosperity and Dhanwantri, who brings health and businessmen begin their new ventures after seeking Her blessings. Sages gave to wealth the status of a holy mother. Wealth is popularly regarded as fickle. A person may well be wealthy today and could be dispossessed tomorrow.

However, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth is not fickle. The fickleness lies in the human mind. The mental attitude of a wealthy person undergoes tremendous change. Wealth gives a feeling of power. When used properly, it can benefit humanity. If misused, it

could become a means of exploitation and a cause of misery. If one regards wealth only as a means of personal enjoyment, human morality will deteriorate due to unbridled indulgence. Rishis teach us to regard wealth as a pious gift from God and as such must be utilised with the utmost respect and discrimination. Shops are decorated, work places are festooned, and homes are colourfully lit.

DAY TWO marks Naraka Chaturdashi, where in many parts of India, bathing with fragrant oil and wearing new clothes mark the mood of Diwali. There is legend about a king of Prag-Jyotishpur, named Narkasur. A powerful king who misused power to harass his subjects. Sri Krishna destroyed this devilish and oppressive king on this day. Unjustly imprisoned people celebrated their freedom with friends and family. The citizens celebrated deliverance from Narkasur's reign by lighting lamps.

DAY THREE is especially for Lakshmi pooja. It is believed the goddess of wealth, prosperity and riches, walks on Earth on this day. The doors are kept open to welcome Her with open arms. Rangolis adorn courtyards. Lights and lamps are lit. Temples glitter with oil lamps. Children rejoice in fireworks.

DAY FOUR is called Bhaubeej, the celebration of sister-brother bonding. It is believed that in historic times, on this day in dark autumn,

brothers would travel far and near to meet their sisters. They would bring their sister's family overt^o their village homes in order with the bounty of seasonal harvests.

The spiritual significance of Diwali is to remove



evil and imbibe goodness. The festival of lights does not simply mean lighting lamps. Hearts must be enlightened with goodwill for peaceful co-existence with fellow human beings and the rest of creation. Enlightenment (light of knowledge) leads to the dispelling of spiritual ignorance. It also marks the obliteration of ignorance and ignition of knowledge within us.

It's undoubtedly a national holiday but the days preceding Diwali turn into a frenzy of shopping. Lamps and lanterns come in varied sizes and prices. There is joy amidst anxiety. Fireworks and crackers are exorbitantly priced. Those who can afford to buy provide a spectacle of sound and light to those whose pockets are empty. There is a sharing of joy all around. We are told that crackers cause pollution, so let us exercise moderation in our celebrations. Let Goddess Lakshmi come to our homes. Let the light dispel the darkness of ignorance in us. Let truth and goodness always triumph. Diwali is undoubtedly the celebration of this inner light over spiritual darkness. **HAPPY DIWALI TO YOU ALL!**

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Source: Bhavan's Journal, 31 October, 2017*

THE FIRST LAMPS THAT LIT THE HUMAN PATH



When we light lamps at the festival of Diwali, they may bring to mind other symbolic flames that illuminated the course of human existence. When were the first lamps of our humanness lit? The emergence of our first ancestors is the crowning point in our history, because all that we are today, all that we have achieved, and all that we hold dear, springs from them. A reconstructed version of our human saga is narrated in the text that follows and it is assumed that the theatre where it played out was South Asia.

Our first parents were probably a small, closely-knit tribe, since 99.9% of human genes today are identical, indicating how intimately related we all are. The cause of the ancestral population dropping to such a low is attributed to the super-eruption about 75,000 years ago of Toba, a volcano in present-day Sumatra, Indonesia. It was the largest eruption of the past 2.5 million years that almost wiped out several life forms. Its strongest effect was felt across the Indian Ocean in South Asia. The ash it spewed, driven by a mainly westward wind direction, drifted down like a feathery blanket over South Asia. (That

thousands-of-years-old ash is gathered today in baskets and taken for use in chemical factories in the state of Andhra Pradesh where it fell in abundance.)

Toba's ash blotted out the sun, reflecting back its rays, cooling the earth, and causing an almost ten-year-long 'volcanic winter'. Yet, despite air, land and water being perilously impacted, humans are thought to have survived in South Asia, although in sharply reduced numbers. These humans may have been that small ancestral tribe whose members desperately hung on at the brink of extinction. They rallied together with courage, overcame every challenge, and emerged winners. We are their descendants. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution holds that it is often a catastrophe which causes a life form to so respond that it undergoes major bodily change and transforms into a new sub-species. It is indeed around this time that the thick-boned robust body proportion of earlier human ancestors gives way to the lighter gracile body-frame of modern humans. Africa did not feel the effects of Toba as severely as south Asia did. This

would render South Asia, rather than Africa, the more likely crucible that produced the modern human.

How were those few surviving humans, our direct ancestors, moulded by Toba? They may have retreated below ground into underwater undercut caves with entry from both tunnels in



the earth and via abutting water bodies. They would have accessed fresh water from subterranean springs and spent a good part of their time in water channels, searching for fish, molluscs and aquatic vegetation. Even after the effects of Toba eased, they may have become accustomed to living in this way, spending an extended period in this part terrestrial, part water habitat before they returned above ground. Scientists have indeed proposed an aquatic phase in human evolution. For, like aquatic animals, we have a web-formation between our fingers, have lost most of our body hair, and possess impressive breath control and diving abilities. We also have features found in no other primate: a layer of fat under our skin which aids buoyancy in water, and fair palms which would have enabled better with early language when communicating in dim cavelight or in the faint glow of small campfires lit underground. And subsistence on Omega-3-rich aquatic foods is thought to have enhanced brain function, lighting in our lineage the lamp of high intelligence.

But the most intriguing clues hinting that our ancestors once lived underground are the myths that humans worldwide have preserved. The San

Bushmen of South Africa relate that their 'First People' came from under the earth; the Nooristani people of Afghanistan speak of siavos or underwater undercut caves where their forefathers used to live; Native Americans recall that their ancestors lived under a lake or that they came out from a subterranean region called

shipapu; in South Asia are legends of the early Naga people whose realm was hidden under water. Naga princess Uloopi takes Pandava Arjuna to her kingdom under the Ganga.

The Toba event may have left a bodily as well as an emotional imprint. We humans stand out in being highly family-oriented, with a deep attachment to one another, and also in being 'biophiles', lovers of living things in general. Did Toba plant these emotions in our ancestors as they painfully watched animal and plant life around them,

and their own species, die away? The flame of these emotions has been inherited by us.

Another flame that was lit within humans at that time would have been a matchless devotion to father and mother figures. For the child who entered the world helpless, and needed continuous care for many years after birth, parents became vital lifelines as providers of protection and sustenance. Those early ancestors are also remembered as having gifted us the knowledge of fire—use, language and music. The early literature preserved in South Asia contains many long-transmitted deep-time memories of how mastery over fire, speech and song was gained. They are recorded with a detail and clarity found nowhere else.

Down the generations, even after they spread out over the planet, humans have nurtured these memories, assigning the roles of protectors, providers and givers of knowledge to the deities that they hold dear.

Gayatri Madan Dutt

Source: Bhavan's Journal, 31 October, 2017

GOOD AND EVIL

*“Good and evil of this world of duality are unreal, are spoken of by words, and exist only in the mind.”
- Bhagavatam, XI, ch. XXII.*

In the voluminous writings of Hindu sages, there is no word that means creation out of nothing. The word, they use, literally means Projection and not creation, answering to the modern idea of evolution. Unlike the Western people of the present day, they had nothing to learn, as they had slowly and gradually discovered the true cause of good and evil, and afterwards explained their mutual relation as clearly as possible. They said that good and evil

are relative terms, one of which cannot exist without the other. What we call good depends upon the existence of what we call evil, and evil exists only in relation to good.

Being interdependent terms, they cannot be separated. In trying to separate them and to make each stand by itself as independent

of the other, we not only destroy their relative and interdependent nature, but also destroy the terms themselves. The moment we try to separate good from evil, we find this to be true. Evil cannot exist alone. If we try to make evil stand by itself as entirely separate from good, we can no longer recognize it as evil. Consequently, according to the Vedanta philosophers, the difference between good and evil is not one of kind, but of degree, like the difference between light and darkness.

Again the same thing can appear as good and evil under different circumstances. That which appears as good in one case, may appear as evil if the conditions change and the results be different. The same fire may be called a giver of life and comfort and a bestowal of happiness and a producer of good, when it saves the life of a half-frozen man, or when it gives us warmth in the

coldest days of winter, or when it cooks our food and guides our feet. But it will be called the producer of evil and a curse of God when it destroys life, or inflicts injury on man or on his property. Still the nature of fire is to burn, and this nature does not change. The Great London fire destroyed many lives, brought ruin and destruction to many families, but at the same time it destroyed the germs of a plague that could have done more evil. So it was both good and evil at the same time. The same force of gravitation is called good when it attracts atoms and molecules of our bodies and keeps together the atoms of our



clothes, gives shapes to our houses, bodies, and this earth where we are now living, but it is the producer of evil when it kills a man who falls from the roof of a house.

Electricity is good when it gives light, moves a streetcar, cures a pain, and relieves a disease, but it is evil when it crushes a man under the shock of its tremendous currents. As electricity, it is neither good nor evil, but their expressions may be called good or evil according to the results they produce. The forces of nature are running in the universe with tremendous activity and mad rush, like the currents of a mighty river which brings what we call good and blessings on one shore and evil and destruction on the other. As standing on one shore, where good prevails, we say the river is very good, it is the producer of good, etc., so, standing on the other shore, we call the same river a producer of evil, or a creator of destruction. Similarly, we say the forces of nature

are good or evil according to our standard, ideas and interests. On the one hand, the river fertilizes the country by depositing rich soil and helps the growth of vegetation and, on the other hand, the same river destroys villages and all that stands in its way.

GOOD AND EVIL EXISTS IN OUR MINDS.

That which fulfils our interests is called good, and that which brings to us misery or anything which we do not want, is called evil. When we look at

produce evil in one country and good in another. The famine in India killed millions by starvation, but it made the American farmers richer than ever before. The famine has done evil in India, but good in America. This is true in every case. Our life, which is a great blessing to us, depends upon the life of others. The maintenance of our life causes thousands to die. Millions of lower animals are killed every day for our food. Each stomach has become a cemetery and each tooth a tombstone. When one man murders another,



the phenomena of nature piecemeal, without recognising their connection, we do not get the proper explanation of events. If we look at the same phenomena as related to one another and to the whole universe, then we discover the true explanation and we are no longer puzzled. Then the proper cause of good and evil is understood. It is limitation, the inability to recognize the relation of the part to the whole.

“Good and evil of this world of duality are unreal, are spoken of by words, and exist only in the mind.”
- Bhagavatam, XI, ch. XXII.

According to the monistic philosophers of India, it is impossible to find anything absolutely good, or absolutely evil, in this world of relativity. That which we call good, is only one phase and the other is evil. When we ignore the one phase, we see the other phase all along. The same event may

his motive is to do good to himself, or to his family, or to society, or to fulfil some purpose, which he considers good. The murderer may believe that he does some good to somebody, but, as he takes a wrong course of action, he is called a murderer, and gets no sympathy from anybody, and is punished by society and the State.

When a big murderer, however, comes from the battlefield after committing hundreds of murders to possess another's territory, we praise him and call him the greatest hero, and reward him. But if we analyse the nature of the work he has done, we find that he has committed many murders to serve his country. As the murderer of multitude is supposed to do good to his country, so possibly the man who kills but one person, may do some good somewhere, although we may not recognise it as such. Our intellect is short-sighted, therefore, we cannot always see the true results of our actions. As we cannot draw a sharp line of

demarcation between the good and evil results of the physical forces of nature and cannot say that this is good and good alone, so we cannot separate the good and evil results of our moral acts. That which is morally good in one case, may be evil in another. As, for instance, the commandment of God is supposed to be a moral good and beneficial to all. Think of the command that God gave Saul:

“Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass.”

-(Samuel, XV, 3)

We call it a good act, because God did it, but if one man commands another to do such a horrible deed, what will you call him? Such is our judgment. We say many things without knowing why we say them. Let us open our eyes and see how far good goes and how it is mixed with evil. Each act that we do must be backed by a motive and that motive again is for the good of some, or for the evil of some. We may or may not understand it, but the results of our acts are always mixed with good and evil. Take, for instance, the nearest example. I am talking to you. Perhaps I am doing some good. At least, I intend to do so. But at the same time I am causing the death of millions of microbes. It may be good to me, to you, but the poor microbes would not call it good. When we see the results of this act from our standpoint we call it good, but if we were to look at it from the microbe's standpoint, it would appear quite different and they would doubtless call it evil.

If we judge everything from our standpoint, we can never know whether it is really good or evil, because our standard is limited and imperfect.

IF I JUDGE THE WHOLE UNIVERSE BY MY STANDARD, MY JUDGMENT WILL BE VERY POOR.

Those who do not recognize the results of acts from different standpoints are liable to all kinds of error. If I judge the whole universe by my standard, my judgment will be very poor. But when I look at things from the various standpoints, I can understand how the same event can produce good and evil in relation to

different conditions. Every mistake we make becomes a great teacher in the long run. Thus evil has its good side, and good has its evil side. Therefore good and evil go hand in hand. But ordinarily, wherever we find a preponderance of good over evil, we designate it good and the opposite as evil.

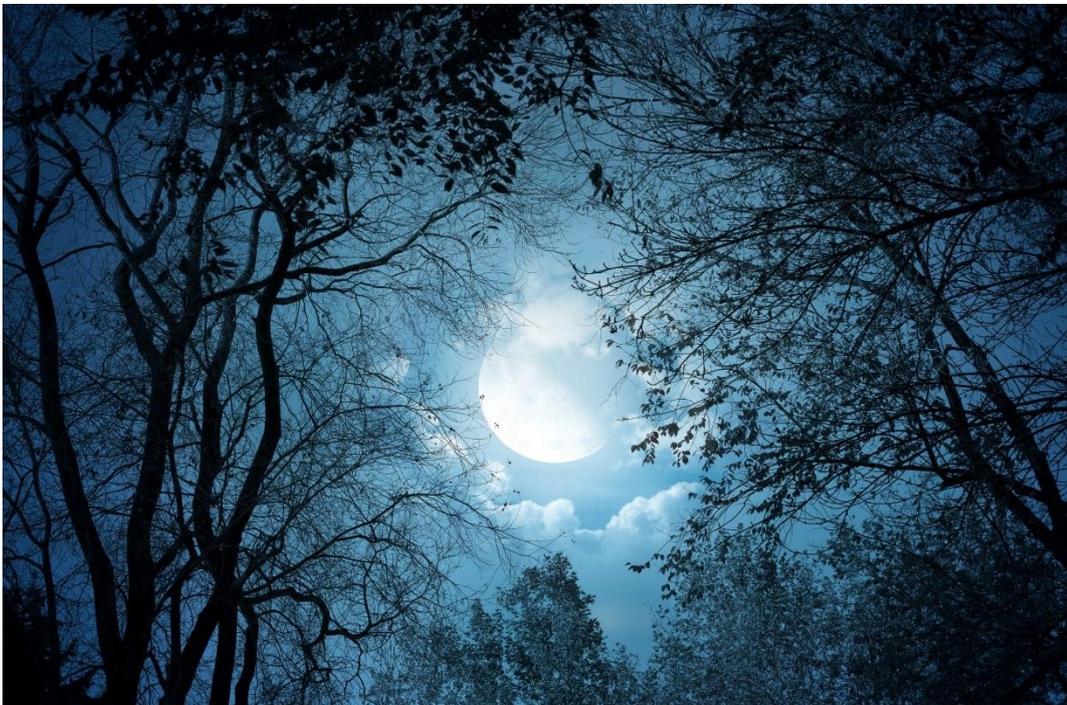
Again, that which is sinful to one may be virtuous to another. Consider the different standards of sin among the Mohammedans, the Mormons and the Christians. Compare the scriptures of the world and see how, what is a virtue in the Old Testament, is a vice to men who believe in other scriptures. If polygamy is a sin according to the Christians, it is virtue with the Mohammedans and the Mormons, and was such with the ancient Jews. That which is good for some persons, as inculcated by their religion, may be evil to others living under a different dispensation.

WE CANNOT DRAW A SHARP LINE OF DEMARCATION BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

Thus we cannot draw a sharp line of demarcation between good and evil. Punishment and reward, according to the Vedanta philosophy, are but the reactions of our own actions. It says that every action must have a similar reaction. If action were good, the reaction must be the same. The Vedanta philosophy says: “Every action, whether backed by good or bad motives, is covered with its opposite, as fire is enveloped with smoke.” If we examine our lives, we will notice that good often comes out of evil. If the greater numbers of personal misfortunes have their good side, hardly any good fortune ever befell any one that did not give, either to the same or to some other person, something to regret. The Vedanta philosophers try to explain the so-called punishment and reward by referring to the law of cause and sequence, or the law of action and reaction. Action and reaction are sometimes opposite and sometimes equal, says physical law. When we do certain acts, we are sure to reap certain results. But, if the results come before we have forgotten the causes that brought them, we call them either rewards, or punishments. If a good act is done today, the result may come at once, or after many years. God never punishes the wicked, nor rewards the virtuous. He shines like the impartial sun equally upon the heads of the sages and the sinners. It is our own acts that bring the results,

either in the form of reward, or punishment. When we understand clearly the law of cause and sequence, or of action and reaction, we cease to blame God, or any other extra-cosmic creator of evil. Then we do not say that evil has been interpolated from without. If we know that all the forces of nature, both physical and mental, are but so many expressions of one eternal Energy or

express themselves through the gigantic magnet of the phenomenal universe. If we realise that the eternal Energy, or the Divine will, appears as good or evil only as related to our minds and lives then we can say, as the great sages in India said: "God does not create good or evil, nor does He take the virtue or sin of anybody. He does not punish the wicked or reward the virtuous. Our



intelligence being covered, as it were, with the cloud of ignorance and relativity, deluded as we are, we imagine, on account of our imperfect understanding, that God creates good and evil, that His creation is good or evil, that He punishes or rewards."

Divine will, which is far beyond the relative good and evil, then we do not see good and evil in the universe. On the contrary, we find everywhere the expression of that Divine will. The nature of an effect must be the same as that of a cause, because effect is nothing but the manifested state of the cause, and if the cause of the universe be one eternal, divine Energy, then the universe, as a whole, can be neither good nor evil.

We can throw aside the narrow and limited (looking) glass of our relative standard, through which now looking at the events of life and put on our mental eye the (looking)) glass of divine energy, or universal will, then we no longer see good and evil, or virtue and vice, or reward and punishment. But we see the expression of one law of causation everywhere. Then we do not blame our parents, or the Satan, or God, or anybody, but understand that all our misery is but the result of our own acts which we did in this life or in a past incarnation. If we understand that as electricity is neither positive nor negative, but appears as positive or negative when manifested through a magnet, we apprehend that the laws of nature only appear to us as good or evil when they

It is through our ignorance of truth that we do not recognise the Divinity that pervades the universe, standing high above the reach of our conception of good and evil.

However, let us strive to see the Divinity, by going behind the phenomenal appearance of good and evil. Let us go to the eternal source of all the phenomena. Let us first reach the highest plane of spiritual oneness, and standing on that Divine will, let us understand that good and evil are two aspects of one eternal substance which is neither good nor evil, but is the Absolute or the Brahman. Then and then alone, we shall transcend good and evil and enjoy the eternal Bliss in this life. It should be remembered that relativity created by the categories of time and space is nescience (ajnana or ignorance) and when we dispel the darkness of nescience, the ever shining light of the Atman, or the Brahman, is manifested. The light of the Brahman is self-revealing (svayam-prakasha) and it exists within us and within the phenomena all the time.

Source: <http://www.hinduism.co.za>

Picture credit: <https://www.pexels.com>

THE TRIDEVI

(THREE GODDESSES)

The Tridevi is a concept in Hinduism joining a triad of eminent goddesses either as a feminine version of the Trimurti or as consorts of a masculine Trimurti, depending on the denomination. This triad is typically personified by the Hindu goddesses Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Parvati (Kali). In Shaktism, these triune goddesses are the manifestations of Mahashakti, the supreme divinity.

SRI MAHALAKSHMI - THE GODDESS OF WEALTH

Lakshmi - the Goddess of Wealth, auspiciousness, purity, prosperity and generosity. She also embodies charm, beauty and grace. The name "Lakshmi" is derived from the Sanskrit elemental form "lakS," meaning to observe or perceive. This is also synonymous with "lakSya," meaning aim, goal or objective.

Lakshmi is thus a Goddess who is regarded as the means to achieving several goals, importantly, becoming prosperous. Hindus mostly worship Goddess Lakshmi on Diwali. They light small diyas (earthen oil lamps) all around the periphery of and inside their house, in order to welcome her into their homes. In West Bengal, she is worshiped during a full moon night in Autumn, as they believe she showers wealth on this night.

It is said that she comes on her mount, the Owl, and takes away the darkness with her, leaving light and joy with her devotees.

Lakshmi's four hands represent four spiritual virtues. The fully bloomed lotus she is seated on, represents the seat of Divine Truth. The aura of joy surrounding her depicts mental and spiritual balance. Peace and prosperity always exist around her.

Sri Mahalakshmi is also depicted as being seated



on the Adishesha (bed of snakes), along with her Consort, Vishnu. Vishnu lies in the Ananta Shayan (reclining) position and Lakshmi is seen pressing his feet. The Adishesha is a huge, gigantic snake, depicted with a massive form that floats coiled in space, or on the universal ocean, to form the bed on which Vishnu lies. According to Hindu Vedic tradition, the Shesha is the king of all the Nagas (or serpents) and is one of the

primal beings in creation itself. The Bhagavata Purana quotes him as an avatar of the Supreme God, known as Sankarshan. The Puranas relate how Adishesha (the First Snake) holds all the planets of the Universe on his hundred hoods and always sings the glories of Sri Mahavishnu from all his mouths. The Shesha Naag is sometimes

also referred to as "Ananta-Shesha" which means "Endless Shesha".

Legends

The Devas (Gods) and Asuras (demons) both sought the immortality that the Devamruta (Divine Nectar) could give them. They decided to join hands to churn the ocean of milk, thereby retrieving the pot of Nectar. This is when Vishnu incarnated as "Kurma" (the Divine Tortoise), on whose back was placed the huge mountain, Mandara. A great venom-spewing serpent, Vasuki, was wrapped around it, in order to churn the ocean.

The churning of the mighty oceans led to the manifestation of many celestial beings. The Devas and the Asuras were to share the spoils jointly. Among the first to appear was Goddess Lakshmi, the daughter of the King of the milky ocean. Among the others were the Chandra (moon), the Kamadhenu (the wish-fulfilling cow) and the Kalpavriksha (the wish-fulfilling tree).

The Amrit or the "nectar of immortality" was the last one to surface on the ocean. This also marked the end of Lord Vishnu's Kurma Avatar. In a bid to retain the Amrit, Vishnu then took up form of the beautiful maiden, Mohini, to distract the rakshasas (demons), took away the pot of Amrit and gave immortality to the Devas. Sri Lakshmi later went on to marry Shri Vishnu. The term "Shri" still continues to be used as an honorific address and is used till date for males all over India. The equivalent for females is "Srimati", in case she is married.

According to the Vishnu Purana, Lakshmi is born to Bhrigu Muni and Khyaati. She resided in Heaven (Swarga), but due to a curse of the ill-tempered sage, Durvasa, she had to leave Swarga and made Ksheersagara (the ocean of milk) her home. Lakshmi personifies riches, wealth, loveliness, grace, beauty, charm, splendour and lustre in Mahabharata. Strangely, she is also regarded as a wife of Surya, wife of Praja-pati, wife of Dharma and mother of Kama (God of Love), wife of Dattatreya and sister or mother or Dhat and Vidhat. Lakshmi is also said to be one of the Nine Saktis of Vishnu, as a manifestation of Prakriti (Mother Nature).

Mahalakshmi is considered as the presiding deity of the Middle episode of the Devi Mahatmyam. Here, she is depicted as a universal form, as the Divine Shakti. Parvati takes her manifestation as

Shakti in order to kill Mahishasura (the half-man-half-bull demon). Her energy is derived from the effulgences of all the gods. The Goddess appears with eighteen arms, bearing string of beads, mace, battle axe, thunderbolt, cudgel, arrow, lotus, bow, water-pot, sword, lance, shield, bell, conch, wine-cup, trident, noose and the discus the Sudarshan Chakra. This manifestation with a stunning countenance and glowing complexion, is shown seated on a lotus. This manifestation is also known as Ashta Dasa Bhuj Mahalakshmi.

The lotus remains completely uncontaminated, even though rooted in the dirtiest, muddiest waters. This teaches us to go beyond the surface of worldly contamination and proceed deep into life, to learn precious spiritual truths from it. The lotus also embodies purity, fertility and the growth of organic life - the lotus also grows from out of Vishnu's navel.

Lakshmi's vahana (vehicle), the Owl (or the Ulooka in Sanskrit) is a bird that signifies wisdom and that sleeps through the day and prowls through the night. This is because it can only see in the dark, and goes blind in the day.

Lakshmi as Bhoodevi and Sridevi

Sri Mahalakshmi appears in two forms, Bhoodevi and Sridevi, on either side of Sri Venkateshwara or Sri Mahavishnu. Bhudevi denotes the complete representation of the Material World and is an energy called the Aparam Prakriti, Mother Earth Herself. Sridevi, on the other hand, constitutes the Spiritual World or energy called the Param Prakriti. Both Bhoodevi and Sridevi are but two manifestation of a single deity, Sri Lakshmi. In fact, some legends of Sri Lakshmi state that the different goddesses in the Hindu pantheon are but manifestations of Sri Mahalakshmi.

Ashta Lakshmi

The Ashta Lakshmis are eight manifestations of the goddess Lakshmi and preside over eight sources of wealth and thus represent the powers of Sri Mahalakshmi. They are as follows:

1. Aadi Lakshmi - The First Lakshmi
2. Dhaanya Lakshmi - Granary wealth
3. Dhairya Lakshmi - Wealth of courage
4. Gaja Lakshmi - Elephants, symbolizing wealth and prosperity
5. Santana Lakshmi - Wealth of fertility and progeny
6. Vijaya Lakshmi - Wealth of victory

7. Vidya Lakshmi - Wealth of knowledge and education
8. Dhana Lakshmi - Wealth in monetary terms

SRI PARVATI - THE GODDESS OF POWER

Parvati devi, in Hindu mythology, is a representation of the ultimate female divinity, the Shakti. In spite of her being a gentle mother goddess, she is known for unleashing her true power and strength in times of crisis. The Shaktas consider her the ultimate Divine Shakti, the embodiment of the total energy in the universe. Parvati, the daughter of Himavan, the king of the Himalayas, is an incarnation of Sati, the first consort of Lord Shiva, and is the mother of Ganesha, the Elephant-Headed Lord and Kartikeya (Muruga or Skanda). The Devi is usually portrayed with two arms, seated on a lion or tiger. Generally benign, this goddess is also known to take on more powerful and fearful aspects such as Kali, Durga, Chandi and the Mahavidyas.

Legends

Though Parvati does not make an appearance in Vedic literature, the Kena Upanishad talks about Uma-Haimavati, who manifests as Shakti, the feminine energy of the Supreme Brahman. She reveals the knowledge of Brahman to the Vedic trinity of Agni, Vayu, and Indra. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata talk of Parvati as Shiva's consort. Kalidasa (5th century) and the Puranas (4th through the 13th centuries) relate in detail

stories of Sati-Parvati and Shiva with comprehensive details.

Parvati's earlier incarnation, Sati, self-immolates at her father, Daksha's, Yagna (sacrificial ritual). Daksha not only refuses to accept Shiva as his son-in-law, but also insults Sati when she goes to visit the Yagna against her husband's wishes. Shiva is furious when he learns about Sati's death. Grief-stricken, he loses interest in worldly affairs and undertakes severe penance in the Himalayas. Sati is reborn as Parvati.

Parvati falls for Shiva and wishes to reunite with him. She regularly visits the cave where he sits

deep in penance, cleans up the place and offers puja to him everyday. When he does not even open his eyes to glance at her, however, she is terribly saddened and decides to undergo severe penance herself, in order to please him. She sheds her clothes, refuses food and water and proceeds to do penance in the harsh climate of the Himalayas. Shiva is pleased by her devotion to him and agrees to marry her. They move on from there to mount Kailas, Shiva's abode.

Kalidasa's epic,

Kumarasambhavam, talks about Parvati's matchless beauty, her devotion to Shiva, their divine union resulting in the birth of Kumara (Muruga) and the eventual resurrection of Kamadeva (the God of Love) who had been killed when he tried to disturb Shiva out of his penance and get him attracted to Parvati.



The Ardhanarishvara concept

The highlight of the Shiva-Parvati union is the Ardhanarishvara concept, wherein Shiva and Parvati fuse to become One Deity. Shiva becomes the right side and Parvati, the left side. Together, they symbolize the power of renunciation and asceticism and the blessings of marital felicity. The Shaktas consider Parvati as the Ultimate Power. The Saundaryalahari, a famous literary work on the goddess by Adi Sankara, relates how Shakti is the source of all power in this universe and how, because of her, Lord Shiva gets all his powers.

Shiva and Parvati perfectly complement each other. Shakti, though a fierce energy herself, is perfectly capable of taming Shiva's famous temper. While Shiva performs his vigorous and destructive Tandava (celestial dance), Parvati performs the Lasya, a much more graceful and lighter version, to slow down the process.

Worship of Parvati

Lakshmi and Saraswati are propitiated in their original forms, but that is not so in Parvati's case. More popular than Parvati herself, are her other aspects of Durga, Kali, Gauri and so on. There are not many temples where you can see Parvati being worshipped as an idol.

Durga is universally venerated as the Warrior Goddess, who manifested in order to destroy the demon, Durg, who appeared in the form of a buffalo (Skanda Purana). Again, Durga took the form of Mahishasura Mardhini to kill the terrible demon, Mahisha. Her vahana (vehicle) is either a tiger or lion. Some cults consider the vahana to be a lioness too.

Tibetans venerated a type of lioness, called Sengge-dkar-mi-g.yu-ral-can. The idea of this animal being Parvati's mount probably came up due to overlap between the tribal religions of India and the Tibetan Bon Religion, particularly in the Himalayan region. Some sects such as the Mahagauri sect depict her riding Shiva's mount, the Sacred Bull, Nandi.

Though a calm and serene goddess, the dark side of Parvati is worshipped more often. Though known as a formidable warrior goddess, people also venerate her as the Queen of the Pariyan. Men are actually forbidden from entering the sanctum sanctorum of many of her temples. She is considered to be an ascetic and mystic. During

the Chola period, she was often shown as wearing her hair in a severe top knot, much like sanyasis (ascetics).

Festivals

The Gauri Festival is celebrated on the seventh, eighth and ninth of Bhadrapada Shukla. She is worshipped as the goddess of harvest and the protecting force behind women. This is also why this festival, mainly observed by women, is also closely related with Ganesh Chaturthi as well. The Gauri festival is popular both in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

In Rajasthan, Gauri is worshipped during the Gangaur festival, which commences on the first day of Chaitra, just the day following Holi. This festival continues for a period of 18 days. Images of Issar and Gauri are made from clay and worshipped during the festival.

Yet another very popular festival is Navratri, a ten-day festival, during which all of the Devi's manifestations are worshiped for a period nine days. The festival is mostly to celebrate Her warrior appearance as Mother Durga, with her nine forms i.e. Shailaputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kashmunda, Skandmata, Katyani, Kalratri, Mahagauri, Siddhidaatri. The 10th day, Vijayadashami, marks her victory over the terrible demon, Mahishasura.

The Gauri tritaya is celebrated from Chaitra shukla third to Vaishakha shukla third. It is said that Parvati spends a month at her parent's home at this time. This festival is popular in Maharashtra, less observed in North India and is virtually unheard of in Bengal. This is a festival mostly conducted by married women and is somewhat similar to the Indian haldi-kumkum ceremony, where girls and women are invited to households and gifted flowers and fruits, coconuts, small gifts and packets of turmeric and saffron.

Temples of Parvati

The most famous temples of Parvati are the 51 Shakti Peeths; the Kamakshi Amman temple at Kanchipuram, Tamilnadu; the Meenakshi temple at Madurai, Tamilnadu, the Akhilandeswari Temple at Thiruvanaikaval, Tamilnadu; the Devipuram temple at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh; and the Visalakshi temple at Banaras.

SRI SARASWATI - THE GODDESS OF LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Saraswati is the Hindu goddess of learning, knowledge, music and the Arts. Saraswati has also been identified with and likened to the Vedic Saraswati River. She is the consort of Brahma, the Hindu god of creation. Thus, with the goddesses Parvati and Lakshmi, she completes the set of the divine Tridevi. According to Hinduism, Saraswati's offspring are the Vedas. Saraswati is propitiated to attain knowledge and wisdom.

Devi Saraswati is often portrayed as a beautiful, white-skinned woman, attired in pure white, seated on a white Nelumbo nucifera lotus. Her vahana or vehicle is the swan, which symbolizes that she is founded in the experience of the Absolute Truth. Thus, she not only has the knowledge but also the experience of the Highest Reality. Saraswati is mostly associated with the color white, which signifies

purity of true knowledge. Occasionally, however, she is also associated with the colour yellow, the colour of the flowers of the mustard plant, that bloom at the time of her festival in the spring. Unlike the goddess Lakshmi, Saraswati is not adorned heavily with jewels, gold and heavy silks, but is shown as attired very modestly, maybe symbolizing her preference of knowledge over worldly material pursuits.

Saraswati is generally shown having four arms, which represent the four aspects of human

personality in learning: mind, intellect, alertness, and ego. Alternatively, these four arms also represent the 4 vedas, the primary sacred books for Hindus. The vedas, in turn, represent the 3 forms of literature: Poetry - the Rigveda containing hymns and representing poetry; Prose - the Yajurveda containing prose; Music - the Samaveda representing music. Prose is represented by the book in one hand, poetry by the rosary of crystals, music by the veena. The pot

of sacred water represents purity in all of these three, or their power to purify human thought.

A white swan is often located next to her feet. The sacred swan, if offered a mixture of milk and water, is said to be able to drink the milk alone. The swan thus symbolizes

discrimination between the good and the bad or the eternal and the evanescent. Due to her association with the swan,

Goddess Saraswati is also referred to as Hamsa-vahini, which means

"she who has a swan as her vehicle".

Sometimes a peacock is shown beside the goddess. The peacock represents arrogance and pride over its beauty, and by having a peacock as her mount, the Goddess teaches Hindus not to be concerned with external appearance and to be wise regarding the eternal truth.

Sri Maha Saraswati, in Indian mythology, is the presiding Goddess of the Final episode of Devi Mahatmya. Here she features as part of the trinity of Maha Kali, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Saraswati.



She is also depicted in a way she is never otherwise shown, with eight arms. Legend has it that Sri Maha Saraswati is born from the body of Devi Gauri (one of Parvati's forms) and manifests in order to destroy Sumbha and other demons. In Tantrasara, she is also worshipped as Mahavidya Nila Saraswati.

Though we know Saraswati as a peaceful, benevolent deity, there is also another forceful, powerful aspect of the Devi which is lesser known. The RigVeda talks about Saraswati, manifesting in association with Indra, to destroy Vritraasura, the Serpentine One, a demon who hoarded all of the earth's water, bringing on severe drought and famine. She is also commonly associated with and seen as equivalent to other powerful Vedic goddesses such as Vak, Savitri, and Gayatri. Saraswati represents intelligence, cosmic knowledge, consciousness, creativity, enlightenment, education, music and the Arts. She is not only worshipped for secular knowledge, but also for the true divine knowledge essential to achieve moksha or liberation. She is additionally referred to as Shonapunya, meaning 'the One purified of blood'.

According to Vedanta, goddess Saraswati is revered as the feminine energy and knowledge aspect (shakti) of the Ultimate Brahman, as one of many aspects of Adi Shakti.

Accompanied by Goddess Lakshmi and other associates, the catur-vyuha expansions headed by Lord Vasudeva (an aspect of Vishnu) are manifest in the eight directions, beginning with the east. In the directions beginning with the southeast, the palaces of Lakshmi, Saraswati, Rati (Kamadeva's consort), and Kanti respectively are situated.

Saraswati as a river

The hymns of the Rigveda (the first of the four vedas. The others are Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvana veda) on Saraswati, liken her to a giant river with purifying, nourishing, fertile and creative properties. This theory propounds that the river Saraswati was created from the present headwaters of the Yamuna River. In the times of yore, the waters of the Yamuna, after leaving the Himalayan foothills, turned west instead of east and emerged as Paonta Saheb.

This Saraswati river also flowed southwest across Punjab and Haryana, following the course of the now Ghaggar-Hakra River in a pathway, roughly parallel to the smaller Indus River to its west. Furthermore, the Sutlej, then, is said to have flowed further east than it does today, and merged into the Saraswati somewhere near Bahawalpur. Eventually, the giant Mother river, with all her tributaries, joined into the Rann of Kutch, which, then, was a more integral part of the Arabian Sea.

It is also said that the Harappan Civilization developed along the course of this very Saraswati river. Now that waterway remains dried up. According to some scholars, goddess Saraswati personified communication and the giver of knowledge due to the role of the Saraswati River in the development of written language in ancient India.

Festivals

The Saraswati Puja is performed on the 5th day of the Magha Month of the Hindu Almanac. This is also commonly known as Basant Panchami.

In many provinces of India, especially in the South, Saraswati Puja is conducted on the 9th day of Navratri, a 10-day festival that celebrates the power of the Sacred Feminine. The last three days of Navaratri, beginning from the Mahalaya Amavasya (or the New Moon day), are dedicated to the worship of this goddess. Further, south Indians refrain from learning anything new on this day, as it is believed that the Saraswati Puja day has to be spent in complete contemplation of the Goddess of Knowledge and Wisdom.

Books, musical instruments, ghungroos (dancing bells) are placed before the deity on this blessed day of Mahanavami and are taken out only on the Vijayadashami or the Vidyarambham (literally, the "start of learning anew") Day (the 10th and final day of the festival). On Vijayadashami day, students seek the blessings of their teachers, considering them to be the embodiments of Devi Saraswati herself.

Source: <https://www.dollsofindia.com>

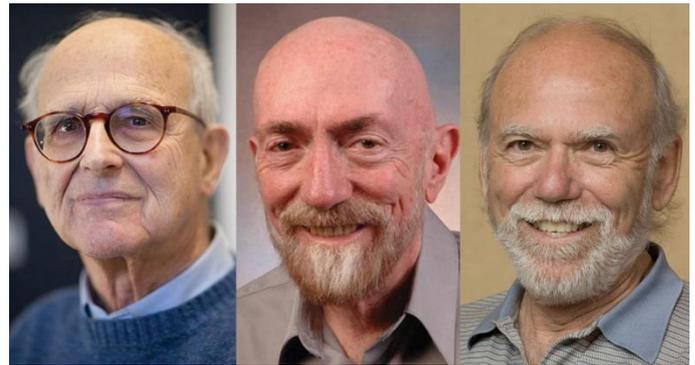
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RIPPLES IN SPACETIME WINS 2017 NOBEL PHYSICS PRIZE

The 2017 Nobel Prize for Physics has gone to three scientists who helped detect gravitational waves. Half of the \$1.1 million award will go to Dr. Rainer Weiss (85) of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The other half will be shared by Barry Barish (81) and Kip Thorne (77) of Caltech. They were the founding fathers of the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO), which detected the Gravitational (G) waves for the first time in 2015. The Nobel Committee acknowledged that the discovery was a huge collaborative effort of over 1000 scientists. This is the second Nobel prize that has gravitated to gravitational waves. In 1993, Russell Alan Hulse and Joseph Hooton Taylor were awarded the physics prize for their work that provided indirect evidence for the warping of space.

FAMILIAR WAVES

Of all the waves, the most tantalizing and inscrutable are the G-waves. Compare them with electromagnetic (EM) waves. Michael Faraday transformed our understanding of the knowable physical world when he realized that EM forces are carried by a field permeating the whole of space. James Clerk-Maxwell conceptualized it and constructed a unified theory of EM. Beams of light are undulations in the EM. Visible light is just one part of that spectrum. Heinrich Hertz confirmed this experimentally by generating and detecting radio waves. The invention of radio was followed by television, radar, mobile phones and many other applications. EM waves are emitted whenever electrically charged objects are shaken. This is now a familiar phenomenon. Detection of EM waves is fairly easy. We do it when we open our eyes, turn on our television, use Wifi, or heat a cup of coffee in a microwave oven. Electromagnetism, one of the famous five fundamental forces of nature, involves electric and magnetic forces which pull and push particles that carry electric charge and holds atoms together. It is associated with electric and magnetic fields and with the particle of light, the photon.



Kip Thorne Dr. Rainer Weiss Barry Barish

EINSTEINIAN WAVES

Ask any science journalist what G-waves are. You will get an instant flippant response. They are fine ripples in the fabric of space time.

Einstein's general theory of relativity is one of the towering achievements of 20th-century physics. It explains that what we perceive as the force of gravity arises from the curvature of space-time. This has far-reaching consequences. It explains the motion of the planets. It describes the history and expansion of the universe and the physics of black holes. He explained it as a theory of fields in which a fourth dimension known as space-time can be stretched and compressed by collisions of massive objects in the universe. He predicted that such a massive collision would distort the fabric of space time. Like a stone dropped into a pond, the cataclysmic disturbance would ripple outward at the speed of light, stuffing the universe with G-waves. He was skeptical about their experimental detection. That became possible. But physicists have long speculated the theory is not complete, as it does not gel well with quantum mechanics. G-waves could help physicists put the theory to harder, harder and harsher tests to see where it fails. In general theory of relativity, space-time is similar to the EM field as mass is to electric charge.

PASSION TESTS PATIENCE

We live in an amazing world of gravity. Existentially and experientially we labour under the illusion that the force of gravity is strong. It is easy to pick up metal objects with a small magnet defying the gravitational attraction of the entire Earth. It takes a planet-sized amount of matter pulling together for gravity to have a significant effect. Gravity is so weak that even shaking huge

masses generates barely the tiniest G-ripple. Only cataclysmic cosmic events such as black hole merger or supernova explosion produce waves that could conceivably be detected. Detection of G-waves is incredibly more difficult than that of EM waves. The earth shaking event was recorded by the painstaking efforts of over 1000 scientists over 40 years. 40,000 scientist-years have been dedicated to this historic detection. It is a majestic achievement of human ingenuity, passion and patience. 2017 Nobelists designed and perfected the most sensitive detector on Earth today, the LIGO. It is a dream come true. Weiss and Thorne folded, unfolded and refolded their majestic dream to detect G-waves in the 70s. Barish later took over as science team leader of the project. After four decades of sustained and solid work, it was first turned on in 2002 and it took a great global effort to detect and confirm the waves. The original hyperauthorship research paper of the discovery of G-waves has 1004 names including those of 35 Indian scientists from 9 research centres.

LIGO consists of two facilities 3000 km apart in the United States, at Hanford, Washington, and Livingston, Louisiana. Two well-separated detectors are essential to distinguish real G-wave events from the fake false positives of background noise. The facilities are L-shaped with two perpendicular 4-km long arms housed within a special chamber. Inside each arm cocooned in layers of concrete and steel are the largest bottles of absolute nothingness, an ultra high vacuum chamber of ten million litre capacity—a marvel of technical physics.

A laser is directed at a beam-splitter sending half the beam down each arm. The light travels 1600 km, bouncing back and forth 400 times between two mirrors in each arm. Then the two half-beams are recombined. The apparatus is skillfully designed so that the recombined half-beams completely cancel. No light passes to the light detector. Whenever a passing G-wave ripples through the apparatus, the lengths of the arms change slightly. So the distances travelled by the half-beams change. Complete cancellation earlier ensured breaks down and some light hits the detector. The change is infinitesimally tiny, as tiny as one-thousandth of a diameter of a proton, a sub atomic particle that cannot be seen by the most sensitive microscope. Ultrahyperensitivity, thy name is LIGO! Cosmic Fusion Dance.

Correcting minor hiccups, LIGO was all set to start on 18 September 2015. Four days before the formal green signal to the system, serendipity appeared, an unmistakable signature was recorded by the detectors in Hanford and Livingston within a few milliseconds of each other. That was on Sept. 14, 2015 in the centenary year of Einstein's general relativity. Weiss commented, "If Einstein were alive today, he would have been really pleased but also flabbergasted."

That small signature set off a big bang of information from LIGO. The ripples in space-time came from a pair of two humungous black holes that spiralled into each other. In the dim distant past around 1.3 billion years ago in a far flung location in the dark big universe this happened. A black hole is a place in space where gravity pulls so much that even light cannot get out. The intensity of gravity squeezes matter into a tiny space to its weirdly densest form. One of the participating black holes was 36 times as massive as the sun and the other 29. In the grand finale of cosmic dance at half the speed of light, they were circling each other 250 times per second! Ultimately they became one with the mass of 62 suns. During the tumultuous merger, mass equivalent to that of three suns disappeared for the pure energy avatar of gravitational waves! As visible light, that energy would be equivalent to the brightness of a billion trillion suns!

INDIAN INITIATIVES AND INTERESTS

G-waves stirred up ripples of joy among Indian G-physicists. Shortly after the announcement of discovery, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "Hope to move forward to make even bigger contribution with an advanced gravitational wave detector in the country." Thus was born INDIGO, (Indian Initiative in Gravitational-wave Observations) expected to be functional by 2020 Funding to the tune of 21200 crores has been secured. The international consortium has 61 Indian scientists from nine institutions.

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Vice Chairman, National Centre for Science
Communications*

-Source: Bhavan's Journal, 31 October, 2017

CANCER AND SUGAR: DOES CHANGING YOUR DIET STARVE CANCEROUS CELLS?



You may have heard that 'sugar feeds cancer cells', fuelling their rapid growth. Or that eliminating sugar from our diet can starve or stymie cancer growth.

But is there any truth to these beliefs?

Well, the oft-repeated claim that sugar feeds cancer cells is true in a strict sense — and that may seem scary. But of course, it's not the whole story. The reality is that alongside cancer, sugar feeds most cells in the body and is vital to our everyday function.

The most simple forms of sugar are single molecule sugars, like glucose and fructose. These can combine to form more complex sugars like table sugar (sucrose).

All carbohydrates are sugars too, meaning foods you wouldn't think of as sugary — like potatoes, pasta and grains — do eventually break down to simple sugars in the body. And sugar plays a critical role in fuelling the body's cells. Glucose, either eaten directly or broken down from carbohydrates, is critical to cell functioning.

This is the grain of truth at the heart of the concern around sugar and cancer — yes, sugar feeds cancer cells. But it fuels them in exactly the same way it feeds all other cells in the body. And our body can't dictate which cells it sends energy to and which it doesn't.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE ELIMINATE SUGAR?

"Stopping sugar getting to cancer cells would also mean that your body's healthy cells get starved of necessary sugars," says the CEO of Cancer Council Australia, Professor Sanchia Aranda.

"I think that would make you lose weight, and would make your immune system less efficient and more likely that a cancer would progress."

What's more, our bodies are clever — they have other ways of getting glucose. Even if you do try and cut it out, the body will just convert fat and protein stores into glucose where necessary.

HOW DO CANCER CELLS GROW?

While sugar does feed cancer, the true picture of how cancer cells grow is a "lot more complicated than that," says University of New South Wales cancer biologist Dr Darren Saunders. He says there's strong evidence some cancer cells also feed on amino acids (the building blocks of proteins) or lipids (substances including fats and oils). These sources are used as metabolic fuel to power the cell's necessary processes, and as raw materials for building new cells, in much the same way sugar might be used. But they also have a secondary purpose — helping cancer cells protect themselves against chemical damage.

It's a complex picture — different cancer cell types using different fuel sources at different

times. But that mirrors the direction cancer diagnosis and treatment is heading in, Dr Saunders says.

"We're looking more and more at differences within individual cancers between patients, rather than trying to treat them all with a blunt instrument."

TOO MUCH SUGAR IS STILL BAD, RIGHT?

Though we needn't be worried about sugar feeding cancer, that doesn't mean you shouldn't pay attention to your overall sugar consumption. An excessive sweet tooth can lead to a whole host of health problems, including a greater risk of developing certain cancers. Just as fat can be converted to sugar when it's needed, the reverse can also happen — sugar being stored as fat when the body doesn't require it. Professor Aranda says people with higher sugar intakes are more likely to be overweight or obese, which is a contributing factor to cancer.

"We've estimated that just over 3 per cent of the total number of cancers diagnosed in Australia are related to obesity or being overweight," she says.

Evidence suggests being overweight or obese is a risk factor for 10 different cancers — including bowel, breast and liver cancer. And while limiting your sugar intake won't starve cancer cells, it can help decrease the risk of you developing certain cancers, Professor Aranda says.

"It's actually not the sugar that's evil, it's the volume in which it's eaten and that link to obesity."

Dr Saunders agrees.

"Obesity is a risk factor, and eating too much sugar is a risk factor for obesity, so there's no doubt a link there, but you can't make the jump then to saying 'Stop eating sugar to starve a tumour'," he says. *"It really comes down to an individual basis. It's impossible to make a blanket statement."*

A NEW WAY FORWARD?

Eliminating sugar from your diet won't help you, because you'll be depriving other cells of a valuable fuel source too. But what if cancer cells could selectively be starved of glucose? This is a growing focus of research for oncologists.

In 2015, research published in the journal *Nature Communications* found the over-production of a particular protein, PARP14, let cancer cells accelerate their growth via glucose consumption. Reducing levels of that protein in cells starved and killed them.

"There's a few different ways of approaching it, but they're all usually based on either blocking the ways that cells can access the fuel, or the way they can use the fuel and convert it into other things that they need to grow," Dr Saunders says. And he stresses that it's not as simple as shutting off the supply of sugar to cancer cells.

"There are some cancer cells you can kill by blocking their supply to sugar, and some you can kill by blocking their supply to lipids, and some by blocking amino acids. It's impossible to oversimplify."



Source: <http://www.abc.net.au>

NATURE OF MIND:

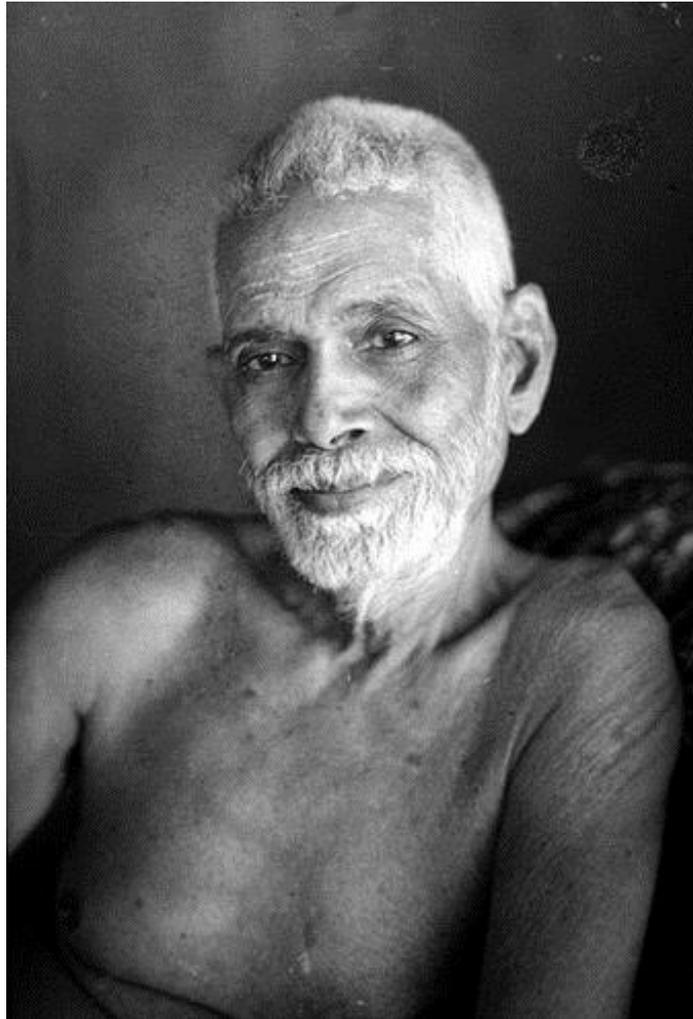
THE TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

THE NATURE OF INDIVIDUAL SELF AND OF LIBERATION

These were the instructions written down by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in the days of his silence about the year 1901 for his disciple Gambhiram Seshayya.

Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India

1. According to the Hindu scriptures there is an entity known as the 'mind', which is derived from the subtle essence of the food consumed; which flourishes as love, hatred, lust, anger, and so on; which is the totality of mind, intellect, memory, will and ego; which, although it has such diverse aspects, bears the generic name 'mind', which is objectified as insentient objects cognized by us; which, though itself insentient, appears sentient, being associated with Consciousness, like a red-hot iron appearing as fire; in which the principle of differentiation is inherent; which is transient and is possessed of parts capable of being moulded into any shape like lac, gold or wax; which is the basis of all root-principles (tattwas); which is located in the Heart like sight in the eye, hearing in the ear; which gives its character to the individual self and which, on thinking of the object already associated with the consciousness reflected on the brain, assumes a thought form and is in contact with that object through the five senses operated by the brain, appropriates such cognizance to itself with the feeling "I am cognizant of such and such", enjoys the object and is finally satisfied.



To think whether a certain thing may be eaten is a thought-form of the mind; "It is good. It is not good. It can be eaten. It cannot be eaten", discriminating notions like these constitute the discriminative intellect. Because the mind alone constitutes the root-principle manifesting as the individual, God and the world, its absorption or

submergence and dissolution in the Self as pure Consciousness is the final emancipation known as Kaivalya and in the Supreme Spirit, the Brahman

2. The senses being located externally as aids for the cognition of objects are exterior; the mind being internal is the inner sense. 'Within' and 'without' are relative to the body; they have no significance in the Absolute. For the purpose of pointing out that the whole objective world is within, and not without, the scriptures have described the cosmos as being shaped like the lotus of the

Heart. But that is no other than the Self. Just as the goldsmith's wax ball, although hiding minute specks of gold, still looks like a simple lump of wax, so too all the individuals merged in dark ignorance (avidya) or the universal veiling (maya) are only aware of nescience in their sleep. In deep sleep the physical and subtle bodies, though entering in the dark veiling, still lie merged in the Self. From ignorance sprang the ego- the subtle body. The mind must be metamorphosed into the Self.

The mind is no other than the 'I-thought'. The mind and the ego are one and the same. Intellect, will, ego and individuality are collectively the

same mind. It is like a man being variously described according to his different activities. The individual is no other than the ego, which again, is only the mind. Simultaneously with the rise of the ego the mind appears, associated with the reflected nature of the Self, like the red-hot iron in the example. How is the fire in the red-hot iron to be understood? As being one with it? Because the individual is no other than the ego, inseparable from the Self as the fire and the red-hot iron are, there is no other self known as the witness of the individual than the individual himself functioning as the ego, which after all is the mind associated with reflected consciousness. The very same Self does not only shine unaffected in the Heart, like the fire in the iron, but is also infinite like space.

It is self-luminous in the Heart as pure Consciousness, as the one without a second; and manifesting universally as the same in all individuals, it is known as the Supreme Spirit. 'Heart' is merely another name for the Supreme Spirit, because He is in all Hearts.

Thus the red-hot iron is the individual, the fiery heat is the witnessing Self, the iron is the ego. Pure fire is the all-immanent and all-knowing Supreme Spirit.

3. The individual self resides in the eye during the waking state, in the neck during the dream state, and in the heart during deep sleep; but the Heart is the chief among these places, and therefore the individual self never entirely leaves the Heart.

Although it is variously said that the neck is the seat of the mind, the brain of the intellect, and the Heart or the whole body of the ego, still the scriptures state conclusively that the Heart is the seat of the totality of the interior senses, which is again called the mind.

The sages, having investigated all the different versions of the innumerable scriptures, rightly and briefly stated the whole truth in the following manner, that it is the experience of every one, that the Heart is primarily the seat of the 'I'.

4. The veil of ignorance can never really hide the individual self. For how can it do so? Even the ignorant do not fail to speak of the 'I'. All the same, the veil hides the Reality, "I-am-the Self" or "I" as pure Consciousness, and confounds the "I" with the body; but still it cannot completely hide the Self from being known.

5. Mind is, in reality, only consciousness, because it is pure and transparent by nature; in that pure state, however, it cannot be called mind. The wrong identification of one thing with another is the work of the contaminated mind.

'The contaminated mind', that is to say, the pure, uncontaminated mind being absolute Consciousness, on becoming oblivious of its primary nature, is overpowered by the quality of the darkness (tamas) and manifests as the physical world; similarly, overpowered by activity (rajas) it identifies itself with the body and appearing in the manifested world as the 'I', mistakes it to be real; thus, swayed by love and hatred, performs good and bad actions, and is as the result, caught up in the cycle of births and deaths. Because the quality of purity (sattva) is the real nature of the mind, clearness like that of the sky is the characteristic of the mind-expanse. Being stirred up by activity (rajas) the mind becomes restless and influenced by darkness (tamas) manifests as the physical world. The mind thus becoming restless on the one hand, and being precipitated as solid matter on the other, the Real is not discerned as such. Just as fine silk threads cannot be woven with the use of a heavy iron shuttle, or the delicate shades of a piece of art be distinguished in the light of a lamp agitated by the wind, so is Realisation of Truth impossible with the mind rendered gross and obtuse by darkness (tamas) and restless and unsteady by activity (rajas), because Truth is exceedingly subtle and serene.

Mind will be cleared of its impurities only by a desireless performance of a man's duties during several births, getting a worthy Master, learning from Him and incessantly practising meditation on the Supreme. The metamorphosis of the mind into the world of inert matter due to the quality of darkness (tamas) and its restlessness due to the quality of activity (rajas) will cease. Then the mind regains its subtlety and composure. The Bliss of the pure Self can manifest only in a mind that has become subtle and steady through assiduous practice of meditation. The one who experiences that Bliss is the one who is liberated even while still alive.

6. On divesting the mind of the qualities of darkness and activity by constant meditation, the Bliss of the Self will clearly manifest within the subtle mind. The Yogis gain omniscience by means of such mind-expanse. He alone who has

achieved such subtlety of mind and by that means has gained the Realisation of the Self is liberated while still alive. The same state has been described in Rama Gita as Brahman beyond attributes, the one universal undifferentiated Spirit.

The one who has attained the unbroken eternal State beyond that, transcending mind and speech, is called Videha Mukta; that is, when even the aforesaid subtle mind is destroyed, the experience of Bliss by the individual subject as such also ceases. He is drowned and dissolved in the fathomless Ocean of Bliss, one with it and unaware of anything apart. This is Videha Mukti. There is nothing beyond that State. It is the finality.

As one continues to abide as the Self, the experience "I am the Supreme Spirit" grows and becomes natural, the restlessness of the mind and the thought of the world will in due course become extinct. Because experience is not possible without the mind. Realisation happens with the subtle mind. Since Videhamukti connotes the entire dissolution of even the subtle mind in the fathomless Ocean of pure Bliss, this State is beyond experience. It is the transcendental State, "I am not the body. I am the pure Spirit" is the clear and indubitable experience of the Jivanmukta, one who is liberated while yet alive. Nevertheless, if the mind is not totally destroyed, there is the possibility of his being apparently unhappy on account of incidental association with objects according to his destiny.



MIND Q & A

Question: "What is the nature of the mind?"

Sri Ramana Maharshi: "What is called mind is a wondrous power residing in the Self. It causes all

thoughts to arise. Apart from thoughts, there is no such thing as mind. Therefore, thought is the nature of mind. Apart from thought, there is no independent entity called the world.

In deep sleep there are no thoughts, and there is no world. In the states of waking and dream, there are thoughts and there is a world also. Just as the spider emits the thread (of the web) out of itself and again withdraws it into itself, likewise the mind projects the world out of itself and again resolves it into itself.

When the mind comes out of the Self, the world appears. Therefore, when the world appears (to be real), the Self does not appear; and when the Self appears (shines), the world does not appear. When one persistently inquires into the nature of the mind, the mind will end leaving the Self. What is referred to as the Self is the Atman. The mind always exists always only in dependence on something gross; it cannot stay alone. It is the mind that is called the subtle body or the soul (embodied soul or jiva)."

Question: "Are there no other means for making the mind quiescent?"

Sri Ramana: "Other than inquiry, there is no adequate means. If through other means it is sought to control the mind, the mind will appear to be controlled, but will again go forth. Through the control of breath also, the mind will become quiescent; but it will be quiescent only so long as the breath remains controlled, and when the breath resumes, the mind also will again start moving and will wander as impelled by residual impressions. The source is the same for both mind and breath. Thought, indeed, is the nature of the mind. The thought "I" is the first thought of the mind; and that is egoity.

It is from that whence egoity originates that breath also originates. Therefore, when the mind becomes quiescent, the breath is controlled, and when the breath is controlled the mind becomes quiescent. But in deep sleep, although the mind becomes quiescent, the breath does not stop.

This is because of the will of God, so that the body may be preserved and other people may not be under the impression that it is dead. In the state of waking and in samadhi, when the mind becomes quiescent the breath is controlled. Breath is the gross form of mind. Till the time of death, the mind keeps the breath in the body; and when the body dies the mind takes the breath

along with it. Therefore, the exercise of breath control is only an aid for rendering the mind quiescent (manonigraha);

it will not destroy the mind (manonaashaa).

Like the practice of breath control, meditation on the forms of God, repetition of mantras, restriction on food, etc., are but aids for rendering the mind quiescent.

Through meditation on the forms of God and through repetition of mantras, the mind becomes one-pointed. The mind will always be wandering. Just as when the chain is given to an elephant to hold in its trunk it will go along grasping the chain and nothing else, so also when the mind is occupied with a name or form it will grasp that alone. When the mind expands in the form of countless thoughts, each thought becomes weak; but as thoughts get resolved the mind becomes one-pointed and strong; for such a mind Self-inquiry will become easy. Of all the restrictive rules, that relating to the taking of sattvic food in moderate quantities is best; by observing this rule, the sattvic quality of mind will increase, and that will be helpful to Self-inquiry."

Question: "Why should Self-inquiry alone be considered the direct means to jnana?"

Sri Ramana: "Because every kind of sadhana except that of Atma Vichara presupposes the retention of the mind as the instrument for carrying on the sadhana, and without the mind it cannot be practised. The ego may take different and subtler forms at the different stages of one's practice, but is itself never destroyed.

When King Janaka exclaimed, "Now I have discovered the thief who has been ruining me all along. He should be dealt with summarily," the king was really referring to the ego or the mind."

Question: "But the thief may well be apprehended by the other sadhanas as well."

Sri Ramana: "The attempt to destroy the ego or the mind through sadhanas other than Atma - Vichara is just like the thief turning out a policeman to catch the thief, that is, himself. Atma-Vichara alone can reveal the truth that neither the ego nor the mind really exists, and enables one to realise the pure, undifferentiated Being of the Self or the Absolute. Having realised the Self, nothing remains to be known, because it is perfect Bliss; it is the All."

Question: "But is it not funny that the "I" should be searching for the "I" ? Does not the inquiry "Who am I?" turn out in the end an empty formula? Or am I to put the question to myself endlessly, repeating it like some mantra?"

Sri Ramana: "Self-inquiry is certainly not an empty formula; it is more than the repetition of any mantra. If the inquiry "Who am I?" were a mere mental questioning, it would not be of much value. The very purpose of Self-inquiry is to focus the entire mind at its Source. It is not, therefore, a case of one ' I ' searching for another ' I ' ".

Question: "How can I control the mind?"

Sri Ramana: "There is no mind to control if the Self is realised. The Self shines forth when the mind vanishes. In the realised man the mind may be active or inactive; the Self alone exists. For the mind, body, and world are not separate from the Self; and they cannot remain apart from the Self. Can they be other than the Self? When aware of the Self, why should one worry about these shadows? How do they affect the Self?"

Question: "Why do thoughts of many objects arise in the mind even when there is no contact with external objects?"

Sri Ramana: "All such thoughts are due to latent tendencies (purva sanskaras). They appear only to the individual consciousness (jiva) which has forgotten its real nature and becomes externalised. Whenever particular things are perceived, the inquiry "Who is it that sees them?" should be made; they will then disappear at once."

Question: "What is the relation between jnana and bhakti?" (between knowledge and devotion)"

Sri Ramana: "The eternal, unbroken, natural state of abiding in the Self is jnana (knowledge). To abide in the Self you must love the Self. Since God is verily the Self, love of the Self is love of God; and that is Bhakti (devotion). Jnana and Bhakti are thus one and the same."

Question: "Should we read the Bhagavad Gita now and then?"

Sri Ramana: "Always"

Question: "How should I carry on nama-japa?"

Sri Ramana: "One should not use the Name of God mechanically and superficially without the feeling of devotion. To use the Name of God one must call upon Him with yearning and unreservedly surrender oneself to Him. Only after such surrender is the Name of God constantly with the man."

Question: "Where, then, is the need for inquiry or Vichara?"

Sri Ramana: "Surrender can take effect only when it is done with full knowledge as to what real surrender means. Such knowledge comes after inquiry and reflection and ends invariably in self-surrender."

There is no difference between Jnana and absolute surrender to the Lord, that is, in thought, word and deed. To be complete, surrender must be unquestioning; the devotee cannot bargain with the Lord or demand favours at His hands. Such entire surrender comprises all: it is Jnana and Vairagya, Devotion and Love."

Question: "What is the highest goal of spiritual experience for man?"

Sri Ramana: "Self-realisation."

Question: "A salt-doll diving into the sea will not be protected by a waterproof coat. This world in which we have to toil day in and day out is like the ocean."

Sri Ramana: "Yes, the mind is the waterproof coat."

Question: "What is the nature of the heart?"

Sri Ramana: "The meaning of the word heart (hrdayam) is the Self (Atman). As it is denoted by the terms Existence, Consciousness, Bliss eternal and plenum (sat, Chit, Anandam, Nityam, Puranam) it has no differences such as exterior and interior or up and down. That tranquil state in which all thoughts come to an end is called the state of the Self."

When it is realised as it is, there is no scope for discussions about its location inside the body or outside."

Question: What is the difference between the mind and the Self?

Sri Ramana: There is no difference. The mind turned inwards is the Self; turned outwards, it becomes the ego and all the world. Cotton made into various clothes we call by various names. Gold made into various ornaments, we call by various names. But all the clothes are cotton and all the ornaments gold. The one is real, the many are mere names and forms."

The Mahabharata

Santi Parva, Section CCXCIX

Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli

Source: <http://www.hinduism.co.za>

Picture credit: <https://www.pexels.com>



LIVING IN HARMONY

There has been great deal of discussion in the media of late regarding the 'true' nature of Hinduism. Hinduism, the oldest continuing religion in the world, now has almost one billion followers around the globe. It is, therefore, necessary to understand some basic features that underline the multiple sects, gurus, philosophies that have flourished under the umbrella of Hinduism. Unlike the Semitic 'Religions of the book', Hinduism has multiple religious texts which have come down through the millennia and which have been open to re-interpretation from time to time. Indeed one of the special features of Hinduism is that the eternal truths articulated in the Upanishads, which are the supreme texts of Hinduism, are open to creative re-interpretation as society changes.

We live in an age of great turmoil and tumult with the old collapsing and the new struggling to be born, and at a time like this we need a creative interpretation of our great spiritual texts. This task has been undertaken by social reformers down through the ages from Adi Shankaracharya

Basavappa, all the way through modern age when the Hindu social reform movement began in Bengal with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, in Maharashtra with Ranade and Bhandarkar, in Punjab Swami Dayanand Saraswati, in Kerala with Narayana Guru and most dramatically with Swami Vivekananda. His articulation represented a Vedantic interpretation of Hinduism sharply setting aside the many beliefs, superstitions that had flourished due to many centuries of foreign dominance. In this context I would like to highlight three sutras, cryptic statements compressing a wealth of meaning, based essentially on the Vedantic philosophy, which between them give us a roadmap for addressing the multiple problems that humanity faces today. In my view, a philosophy is really valid only if it

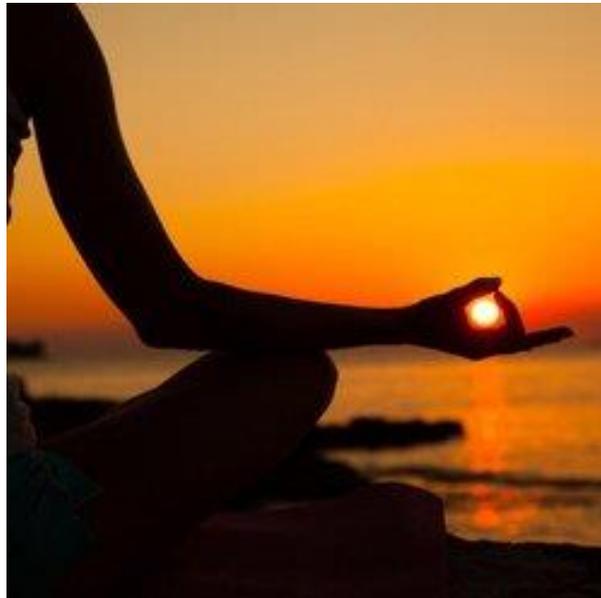
helps us here and now to cope with the multiple challenges of life, otherwise it becomes merely an academic and archival exercise for students and research scholars.

First is the well-known sutra from the Upanishads which describes the human race as a single family — Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. It is only in our lifetimes that science and technology have actually given us the capacity to break out of the confines of our own Earth, reach the moon and explore the planets and stars beyond. They have given us instant communications, the internet, television and a vast array of technological instruments which have indeed made the world potentially a single unit.

However, it is astonishing that thousands of years ago our seers had realised that, in the final analysis, the human race must be looked upon as a single family. The Upanishads describe the human race as Amritasya Putraha — children of immortality. Unfortunately, despite these great concepts and the recent technological breakthroughs, our minds are still mired in pre-global concepts, and this tension

is, in fact, the cause of much of the turmoil that we see in the world around us.

Towards the end of the last century, it appeared as if we were beginning to move towards a global society. Recently, however, the trend seems to have been reversed with such developments as Brexit and Trump. However, the logic of human survival itself will ultimately push us towards globalism unless, as the European philosopher Arthur Koestler said, the human race is one programmed for self-destruction. None of the great challenges facing us such as global warming, environmental destruction, international terrorism or poverty alleviation can really be overcome by individual countries alone. In the final analysis, therefore, the human race has to become a global family or face extinction.



The next is a remarkable statement from the Rig Veda Ekam sad viprah bahudha vadanti, the born in India. Truth is one, the wise call it by many names. If Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is the keynote of the global society, this sutra is the keynote of the, Interfaith movement which began in 1893 with the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago, where Swami Vivekananda made such a dramatic impact. The sutra points out that there are many paths to the divine articulated from time to time and from place to place by great seers, prophets and avatars. For anyone to claim that there is only one path to the divine is unacceptable. Who are we, creatures on a tiny speck of dust in the universe, to lay down that the illimitable splendour of the Divine can appear only in one form, at one place and at one time? There are billions of planets in our own galaxy and billions of galaxies in the infinite universe around us. How do we know when and where and in what form the divine force of has revealed itself?

For us in India particularly, with our long history of intercultural and inter religious interactions, the concept of the essential unity of all religions is central. Four of the world's great religions — Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism – were born in India. Five others have come to us from West Asia — Christianity, Zarathustrianism, Judaism (we are the only nation that has never persecuted the Jews), Islam (with the advent of Sufism which represents the gentler, humane and integrating aspects of Islam), and finally the Baha'i faith.

It is significant that the sacred shrines of all these religions are to be found in India, whether it is the great Hindu temples in South India, the Buddhist caves and historic landmarks, the superb Jain architecture at Ranakpur and Mt. Abu in Rajasthan, the Darbar Sahib, Anandpur Sahib and other Sikh places of worship, the shrines of the great Sufi saints such as Khawaja Moin-ud-din Chisti in Ajmer, Khawaja Nizam-ud-din Kashmir, Sheikh Nuru-ud-din Duranni in Chare-e-Sharif, which draw millions of pilgrims every year cutting across barriers of race, creed, cast or religion. They are part of India's proud heritage, and if we are to flourish as a nation, it is essential that inter religion' as well as inter-caste harmony prevail. History shows us that whenever fanaticism and fundamentalism rises anywhere in the world, it always ends in massive disaster.

The third is another powerful concept Bahujana Sukhaya, Bahujana Hitaya Cha — the Welfare of the many, the Happiness of the many. There is a general misconception that Vedanta involves only a quest for personal salvation without concern for the larger social well-being. In fact, the sutras that I have mentioned are directly concerned with the welfare of humanity at large. This one in particular is of great importance, because it stresses that apart from continuing our inner efforts to join the Atman and the Brahman it is also important that we should be working for the welfare of society. When Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897, he gave them one simple motto — Aatmano Mokshartham fagot Hitaya Cha' — work for your inner salvation but also for the welfare of the world. There have been many definitions of socialism, ranging from Fabian Socialism to Marxism-Leninism, but it seems to me that the five words Bahujana Sukhaya, Bahujana Hitaya Cha beautifully express the basic ideal that every individual everywhere should be happy. In fact, our prayers are very often dedicated to the general welfare such as the famous one, "May all beings be happy, may all be without disease, may all perceive auspicious sights, may no one have to undergo suffering."

Why is it that despite such great ideals, we remain one of the most cluttered and polluted nations in the world? The main reason is that although as individuals we try to keep ourselves as clean and neat as possible, collectively there is a lack of social awareness, as a result of which we throw our kachra on to the streets and expect other people to clean it up. This attitude must change if we are to overcome the increasing pollution caused by carbon emissions as well as the growth of our population. While looking after our own welfare, we must repay our debt to society by helping the less fortunate and working in harmony with the community in which we happen to live. At present, we are way down in the happiness index below to even our neighbours and certainly far below Bhutan. To become a really great nation, we have to integrate our society and learn the art of living harmoniously and creatively together.

Source: Bhavan's Journal, 30 September, 2017
Picture credit: <https://www.pexels.com>

CHRISTMAS DAY AROUND THE WORLD

25 DECEMBER - CHRISTMAS DAY

On 25 December each year, over 2 billion people (over a third of the world's population) will celebrate the birth of Christ. The bible didn't give any specific details on the exact date or year that Christ was born and many have speculated when the actual date was. By the fourth century, the early church had plumped for 6 January but as the religion gained popularity across the Roman Empire, they realised that Christmas Day was be competing with the existing Roman festival of 'Sol Invictus'. As is the case with many of our holidays, the Christians decided the best course of action was to switch Christmas day to 25 December, so that both holidays would be celebrated on the same day and eventually Christmas Day would outlast Sol Invictus. To keep 6 January as a holy date, Epiphany was then celebrated on 6 January.

In 2017, one more country was added to the long list that celebrate Christmas Day on 25 December when Ukraine decided to make Catholic Christmas a national holiday in addition to Orthodox Christmas on 6 January.

6 JANUARY - ARMENIAN CHRISTMAS

Observed in: Armenia, Lebanon (by Armenian Lebanese)

In regions outside the influence of the Roman Empire, such as Armenia, there was no competing holiday such as Sol Invictus. This meant that the Christian church had no reason to move the date of Christmas, so the original date of 6 January stayed as it was.

Armenian Christmas is a culmination of celebrations of events related to the birth and baptism of Christ.

In Lebanon, Christmas is celebrated twice; first on 25 December and then as a holiday on 6 January for the Armenian Lebanese community who celebrate Christmas on the the same date as Epiphany.

The reason for the different date is that until the fourth century, Christ's birth was celebrated by the Christian church on 6 January. Two of the Gospels in the Bible mention the birth of Christ but neither give any details as to the date. This lack of detail also combined with the celebration

of birthdays not being a big Christian tradition and Easter being seen as the more important date.

As Christianity expanded into Western Europe, the people there had been celebrating a Roman holiday ('Solis Invicti') on 25 December. Rather than compete with an already popular holiday, the church simply decided to move Christmas Day to 25 December and celebrate 6 January as the Feast of the Epiphany. Undoubtedly, Solis Invicti itself was a holiday created to overwrite previous Pagan winter solstice celebrations.

In Armenia however, there was no such solstice tradition and Armenian Christians didn't feel bound to move their Christmas from 6 January.

The day of this major feast in the Armenian Church is January 6th. A ceremony called "Blessing of Water" is conducted in the Armenian Church to commemorate Christ's Baptism. It is frequently asked as to why Armenians do not celebrate Christmas on December 25th with the rest of the world. However, historically, all Christian churches celebrated Christ's birth on January 6th until the fourth century.

7 JANUARY - ORTHODOX CHRISTMAS

Observed in: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine

The Orthodox Church recognises 7 January as the day that Jesus was born. The different date from the western tradition of 25 December is twofold. Firstly, in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII, ruled that the Catholic Church should follow a new calendar – called the Gregorian calendar rather than the Julian calendar which had been established by Julius Caesar in 46BC. This meant the dates differed by 10 days with Gregorian Christmas on 4 January. Secondly, due to the way that leap years differ between the two calendars, Orthodox Christmas has moved forward by another 3 days since 1582 and is now on 7 January. By 2100 AD, Orthodox Christmas will be celebrated on 8 January.

In the post soviet era, Orthodox Christmas has become a new holiday in some countries with an Orthodox community. To encourage adoption, it often forms the end part of an extended winter holiday that starts with New Years Day.

Elsewhere in the world, Christmas is celebrated on 25 December.

The difference in the timing of the Christmas celebrations stretches back to 1582, when Pope Gregory XIII, ruled that the Catholic Church should follow a new calendar – called the Gregorian calendar, as it was closer to the solar calendar than the Julian calendar.

The Julian calendar had been established by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.

Because it was the catholic pope who ruled on the adoption of the new calendar, many churches not aligned to the papacy ignored it, such as Protestants and the Eastern Orthodox church. Protestants accepted the new calendar in the early 1700s.

In 1922, the patriarch of Constantinople decided that the Gregorian calendar should be followed for the observance of Christmas, but not for Easter, and this edict was followed by many of the other Orthodox churches.

The only Orthodox churches that still observe the 7 January date are the Russian Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian churches, the Serbs and the Mount Athos monks in Greece.

Our guide to which countries celebrate Christmas on days other than 25 December
Orthodox Christmas in Russia

Despite having the world's biggest Orthodox Christian community, during the period of the Soviet Union,

Christmas was effectively banned as it was not officially recognised by the atheist Soviets.

Since its official reinstatement in 1992, the holiday has not proved to be overwhelmingly popular. In fact, many Russians may not celebrate the day at all, while others will just have a small family dinner. Very few Russians will exchange gifts.

7 JANUARY - COPTIC CHRISTMAS

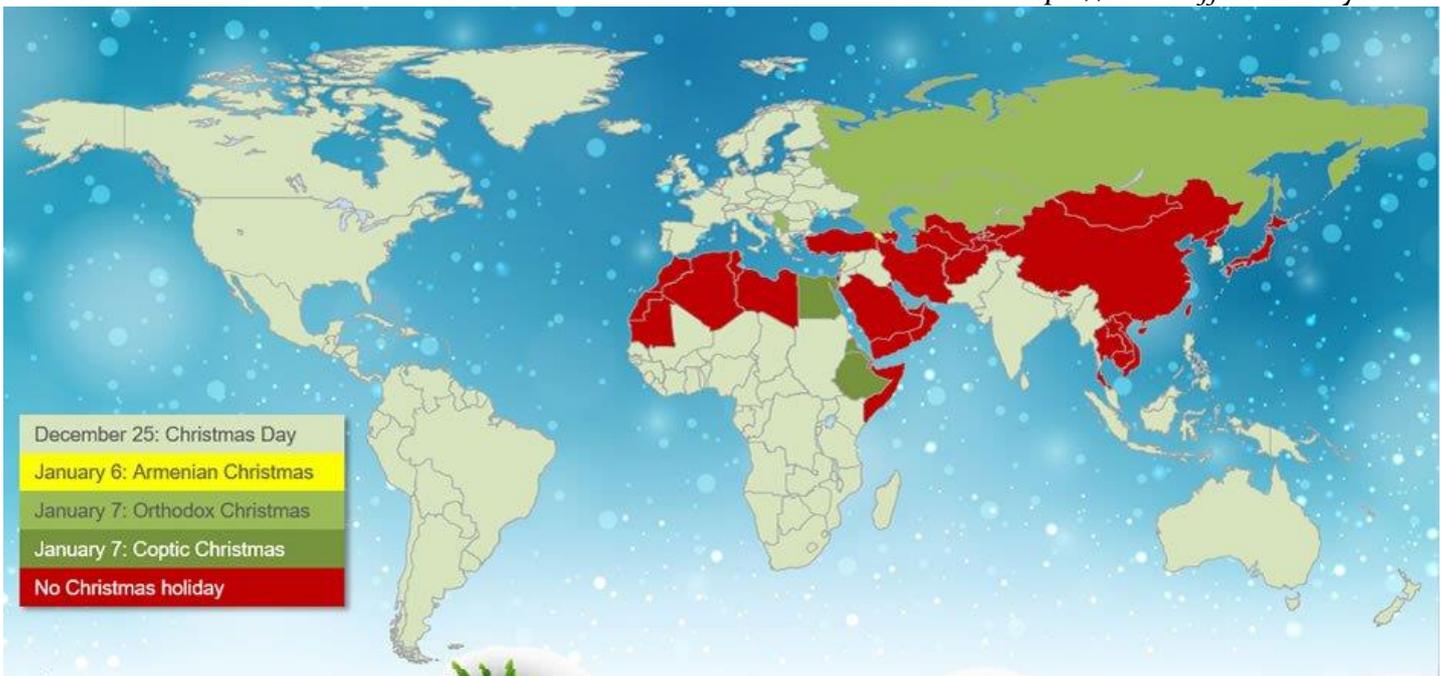
Observed in: Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea (by Coptic community)

The Coptic calendar, also called the Alexandrian calendar, is used by the Coptic Orthodox Church. This calendar is based on the ancient Egyptian calendar and similar to the Julian Calendar used by the Orthodox Church.

WHICH COUNTRIES DON'T CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS DAY?

The following is a list of countries that don't observe a public holiday for Christmas: Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Comoros, Djibouti, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Laos, Libya, Mauritania, Mongolia, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.

Source: <https://www.officeholidays.com>



CHRISTMAS IN INDIA

One of the best things about growing up in India was all the holidays we celebrated. As a multicultural country, all festivals are celebrated with lots of joy and gusto. Some of the popular festivals are Diwali, Holi, and Eid, but you may be surprised to know that India is home to a considerable population of Christians, who, along with the rest of the country, celebrate Christmas with their own rituals and traditions. Here are some of my memories of celebrating Christmas in India.

daughter noticed about Christmas in India last year was the brightness of it all. For Indians, festivals are always celebrated with lights and colors, and Christmas is no exception. Churches are decorated using stunning light shows and look spectacular in the night.

Most families put up a Christmas tree. Snow is in short supply, but that does not deter enterprising children from draping cotton wool all over their trees to imitate snow-covered evergreens. A lot of decorations and ornaments are handmade, and



A CATHOLIC CHRISTMAS IN INDIA

I grew up in a Catholic family in India, and as children, we always looked forward to the Christmas break. Christmas in India is particularly religious, with church services playing a huge role in celebrating this festival. The preparations start — as in Western countries — on Advent Sunday. Churches start planning their celebrations and masses, and households start planning their food, sweets, and decorations.

BRIGHT COLOR & LIGHTS

It is a colorful festival — as are most in India — and local stores, markets, and malls are draped in multicolored twinkling fairy lights, paper streamers, and flowers. One of the things that my

stars are everywhere. My dad put up Christmas stars all over the house and out on the roads to welcome friends, neighbors, and family to our home at Christmastime.

CHRISTMAS FOOD IN INDIA

Christmas cooking also starts early. Christmas sweets — mainly originating from Goa and adapted in the rest of the country — are traditionally called "kuswar," and they range from deeply delicious dense Christmas fruitcakes to rose cookies and "kidiyo" (literally translating as worms, but these are deep-fried curly dough balls, dusted in icing sugar). We also make sweet dumplings called "newrio," stuffed with palm sugar, sweet grated coconut, and sesame seeds. Savoury banana chips, crisp chaklis (a round, deep-fried savoury made with lentils), and

cardamom and cashew macaroons round up a versatile collection of Christmas goodies.

Making these sweets is a family affair, as all the women in our extended family get together and make them over a weekend or two. It was an exciting time to be a child, as scraps were always plentiful, and we were also allowed to stay up late with our cousins and friends while our mothers gossiped around the kitchen.

I love all the cultural influences that go into these sweets. Fruitcakes, for example, are heavily influenced by British plum puddings, and indeed, are also occasionally called plum cakes in India. Rose cookies are a result of the Dutch occupation, and a lot of the other sweets are the result of Portuguese and French cuisines. Our Christmas is, therefore, a true melting pot of all the cultures that were part of India during colonial times.

THE CHRISTMAS CRIB

Along with food, the nativity scenes — we call them Christmas cribs — are an important part of our Christmas traditions. We planned our cribs early in the month, as there was always (not-so) friendly competition in the neighborhoods and between churches as to whose crib was the most elaborate. My sister and I spent hours planning our own. We grew paddy plants in small trays, and we collected bricks and sand. We could hardly wait for the day our schools closed for the Christmas break, as that is when we would pull out all our nativity statues and go about creating beautiful, detailed cribs, resplendent with lights, fields, bridges, and waterfalls.

At midnight on Christmas Eve, we would reverently place the baby Jesus statue in the scene, and then admire our handiwork all through the season.

CHRISTMAS EVE

By the time Christmas Eve rolled around, we would be delirious with excitement. All that week, preparations for the day were being made. The pork (dukra maas) and chicken curries — staples of our Christmas dinners — were made in advance and left to mature. Batter was ground for sannas (steamed rice cakes) and left to ferment overnight for soft, fluffy breads, perfect to soak up all those curries. Last-minute alterations were made to our Christmas clothes and there was a lot of excitement in the air.

One of our most enduring Christmas traditions is that of the midnight mass. Churches start their

services with carol singing, after which the Christmas mass is held. We were all dressed up in our best finery and after the service, we milled around the church, socializing and wishing everybody Merry Christmas. It was hot and dusty, and the smells of cooking permeated the air. After church, we usually went to visit family or friends, and shared a piece of rich fruitcake and small glasses of port wine. Us kids were allowed small sips from the grownups' wine glasses. We were also allowed to have a small taste of that pork curry, deliciously spicy and fragrant, and we would then head back home, tired but still excited for Christmas day to arrive.

CHRISTMAS MORNING

We don't do Christmas presents in India. Instead, we would wake up to a hot, spicy breakfast, and then we would gather up the boxes of dark fruitcakes and homemade kuswar and head over to all our neighbors', family, and friends' homes. It didn't matter if they were Hindu, Christian, or Muslim — all neighbors got some goodies, and we wished them a Happy Christmas. We would finish our sweet errands by noon, after which it was time to savor a spicy Indian Christmas lunch. Lunch done, and pleasantly satiated, we would make up for our late night with a siesta, after which it was time to head to the Christmas dance with our friends. We danced the night away, and when the sun rose on Boxing Day, we all piled into cars and headed to the beach to watch the sun rise. Then it was breakfast in a small roadside café, and home to celebrate the end of another wonderful year and look forward to the new year. In recent times, I have spent more Christmases away from my home in India, and while we celebrate it with presents, Santa Claus, and baking, my old Christmas traditions in India will always have a special place in my heart. I try to recreate some of them for my daughter and family, and for us, it is a celebration that encompasses all our cultures. After all, Christmas is a time for family, friends, and food. And one cannot ask for anything more than to be surrounded by tradition, love, and happiness during this most joyous of seasons.

Michelle Peters-Jones

Source: <https://www.thekitchn.com>

CHRISTMAS IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, Christmas comes in the towards the beginning of the summer holidays! Children have their summer holidays from mid December to early February, so some people might even be camping at Christmas.

Australians hang wreaths on their front doors and sometimes go out Christmas carol singing on Christmas eve. People also decorate their houses and gardens with Christmas Trees and Christmas lights. Neighbors sometimes have little competitions to see who has got the best light display. The neighbors often visit each other to look at the light displays at night. Sometimes the displays are put out as early as December 1st. One street in Sydney raises over \$(AUS)35,000 every year for charity with their co-ordinated street display!

Australians also decorate their houses with bunches of 'Christmas Bush', a native Australian tree with small green leaves and cream colored flowers. In summer the flowers turn a deep shiny red over a period of weeks (generally by the week of Christmas in Sydney).

In each State capital city there is a large Carols by Candlelight service. Famous Australian singers like The Wiggles, John Farnham, Anthony Warlow, Colin Gery, Niki Webster and many more help to sing the carols. These carol services, held in different cities, are broadcast on TV across Australia. There are also huge Christmas pageants in each state capital city, that are also broadcast across the country. Most towns and cities have festivals and parades. In some places, there is a fireworks display at the local park.

Many towns, cities and schools also hold their own Carols by Candlelight services, with local bands and choirs sometimes helping to perform the Christmas Carols and songs. As it is the middle of Summer in Australia

at Christmas time, the words to the Carols about snow and the cold winter are sometimes changed to special Australian words! There are also some original Australian Carols.

When he gets to Australia, Santa gives the reindeer a rest and uses kangaroos or 'six white boomers' (a popular Australian Christmas song). He also changes his clothes for less 'hot' ones!

On Boxing Day most people go and visit their friends and often have barbecues at the beach. A famous Yacht race from Sydney to Hobart in Tasmania is also held on Boxing Day.

The Flying Doctor Service has to work all through-out Christmas. On Christmas Day the people who live in the outback send Christmas greetings to each other over the radio network.

Most families try to be home together for Christmas and the main meal is normally eaten at lunch time. Most people now have a cold Christmas dinner, or a barbecue with seafood such as prawns and lobsters along with the 'traditional english' food. On Christmas Eve, fish-markets are often full of people queuing to buy their fresh seafood for Christmas day.



Source: <https://www.whychristmas.com>
Picture credit: <https://www.shutterstock.com>

SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

SRI MA ANANDAMAYI today is widely recognized as a personality of great spiritual eminence. She was born in 1896 and she took samadhi at the age of 86 ; these limitations, however, cannot be said to have conditioned her utter freedom to be just herself under all circumstances. She was the embodiment of a joyous self-sufficiency, which enraptured the hearts of all who came near her.

The mysterious aloofness of her personality was totally beyond human understanding and yet it was so tempered by her compassionate love for all living creatures that she seemed closer than the most indulgent friend ever could be. She was the Teacher whose guidance was sought by the learned as well as the simple, the old and also children, people from alien cultures or from traditional backgrounds. Although she travelled incessantly, it was seen that she was at home everywhere and no one was a stranger to her. Throughout the length and breadth of India and also beyond its shores people found her to be, as if the personification of their own inner vision of the Adored one who is most dear to their hearts. In Dhaka where she first gained recognition, She was known as “Manush

Kali”, that is, the ‘living Kali’. Kali is the presiding Deity of Bengal so that was quite understandable. When she moved out of Bengal and visited other provinces, her presence elicited the same type of response, even at her first appearance. On the shores of the Holy Narmada, she was greeted as “Devi Narmada”. In Madurai she was hailed as the Goddess Minakshi by surging crowds who waited hours for a glimpse of her. In the Punjab she was given the same place of honour as the Holy Granth

Sahab. In Vrindavan, the much-respected Mahatma, Sri Haribabaji Maharaj saw in her his adored Deity, the Lord Gauranga. The Sindhi devotees of Sri Udiyababaji Maharaj paid her homage as the visible Form of their Deity Jhoolelal. One Muslim devotee used to see a vision of her with a Taj on her head during his meditations. A Christian devotee remarked quite spontaneously “Now we have a Face to put on God”. The simple highland women of Almora would say to her, “Now that we have you with us, we do not need to visit the Temple”



One visitor, an Irish journalist frankly asked her, “Am I right to believe that you are God?” Sri Ma answered, “There is nothing save He alone; everyone and everything is but a form of God. In your person also He has come here to give darshana”. He persisted, “Why are you in this world?” “In this world?” Sri Ma answered, “I am not anywhere. I am myself reposing within myself. During the same conversation the Irishman said, “I am a Christian:’ Sri Ma answered, “So am I, a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like”.

In general Sri Ma’s inimitable smile

disarmed all questions regarding her identity. She once answered a devotee’s query in these words: “What a childish question to ask; People have various visions of gods and goddesses (in me) according to their own predilections. What I was before, I am now, and shall be hereafter. I am also whatever you or anybody may think I am; why don’t you look at it this way: the yearnings (of seekers after Truth) have brought about this body.

All of you have wanted it and so you have found it. That is all you need to know.”

Richard Lannoy, a devotee of many years standing has summarised Sri Ma’s ways of being with us in a very telling phrase: “Yet there is a strangeness, a particularity, an indefinable quality which comes so near the limits of the definably human as to make an adjective like ‘human’ quite inadequate when applied to Her case, and ‘divine’ paltry. It is widely accepted that She was, simply, unique. She was, throughout Her life, the acme of effortless perfection”.

TEACHINGS

Her instructions are of a universal type meant for all men, yet their real import is not always comprehended by people like us. Still, when some of her words illumine the mind of a particular person, what he realizes by his own limited knowledge finds expression in his life according to his own capacity to move forward. It is not easy to imagine how infinitely various are the streams of water flowing from the Himalayas to plains of India through glaciers, cataracts, rivers, streamlets and springs, enriching and fertilising many sterile tracts. Although the Himalayas do not lose anything by sending out these perpetual streams, the welfare of the world is being secured by them. It is similar in the case of Mother and her devotees. The central theme of all her words and expressions is this: Life and religion are one. All that you do to maintain your life, your everyday work and play, all your attempts to earn a living, should be done with sincerity, love and devotion, with a firm conviction that true living means virtually perfecting one’s spiritual existence in tune with the universe. To bring about this synthesis, religious culture should be made as natural and easy as taking our food and drink when we are hungry and thirsty.

Just as a mother nourishes her child with all possible care and affection and makes him grow up into a healthy boy and a handsome youth, so you will find the subtle touches of the Divine Mother shaping your inner life and making you reach your full height and stature.

Mother says: “Just as there is a definite time-table for work at school, office or the shop, so should we set apart for divine contemplation a few minutes out of the twenty-four hours of every day, preferably in the morning and evening. One must make a fixed resolve that this little time shall be dedicated to God throughout life. During this

period no worldly activity should be allowed to encroach upon the contemplation of God.

A fixed time for prayer or meditation must be allotted to all the members of the family including the servants. If this practice is continued for long, divine contemplation will become a part of your nature. Once the habit is established, the future course of your life will be made quite easy. You will feel the flow of the mysterious Divine Grace feeding all your thoughts and giving you new strength. You get a pension or bonus after years of hard work, so that you need no longer earn your livelihood. In the spiritual realm the reward for good, sincere and selfless work is even far greater and can be obtained more easily.

"WHEN THE MIND CENTRES ON WHAT GIVES PEACE AND GAZE DWELLS ON WHAT PROMOTES IT, WHEN EARS LISTEN TO WHAT FILLS THE HEART WITH PEACE AND AT ALL TIMES THERE IS A RESPONSE FROM HIM WHO IS PEACE ITSELF, THEN ONLY CAN THERE BE PROMISE OF PEACE."

Those who amass money, store it up in a hidden chamber of their house, add to this store what they can save from time to time, and keep a constant watch over their treasure. So also reserve a little corner of your mind and heart for God and always steal an opportunity to add to your stock in the shape of the invocation of His name or some pious work or divine thought.

One day Mother was showing the various ways of saluting God and said: “Lose yourself altogether when bowing down to God with a single-minded devotion and you will obtain joy and power in proportion.

In this connection she added: “There are two kinds of pranamas : Offering to Him your whole body and mind with all thoughts, desires, sense-impressions, love, affection, devotion, just like emptying the contents of a full pitcher to its last drop. The other way is like scattering face-powder through the minute holes of a powder-box : the major portion of your thoughts and desires is kept back in a hidden chamber of your mind, and only a little dust is allowed to escape.”

Source: <http://www.anandamayi.org>

AN OPEN LETTER TO INDIRA GANDHI

Jayaprakash Narayan penned heartfelt thoughts to Indira Gandhi through this open letter while he was in the Jaslok Hospital, Mumbai in 1975.



DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

I am appalled at press reports of your speeches and interviews. (The very fact that you have to say something every day to justify your action implies a guilty conscience). Having muzzled the press and every kind of public dissent, you continue with your distortions and untruth without fear of criticism or contradiction. If you think that in this way you will be able to justify yourself in the public eye and damn the opposition to political perdition, you are sadly mistaken. If you doubt this, you may test it by revoking the emergency, restoring fundamental rights to the people, restoring the freedom of the press and releasing all those whom you have imprisoned or detained for no other crime than performing their patriotic duty. Nine years, madam, is not a short period of time for the people, who are gifted with a sixth sense, to have found you out.

The burden of your song, as I have been able to discover, is that (a) there was a plan to paralyse the Government, (b) that one person had been trying to spread disaffection among the ranks of the civil and military forces. These seem to be your major notes. But there have been also minor notes. Every now and then you have been doling out your 'biter dicta', such as the nation being more important than democracy and about the suitability of social democracy to India, and more in the same vein.

As I am the villain of the piece, let me put the record straight. This may be of no interest to you – for all your distortion and untruth are willful and deliberate. But at least the truth would have

been recorded. About the plan to paralyse the government; there was no such plan and you know it. Let me state the facts.

Of all the states of India, it was in Bihar alone where there was a people's movement. But there, too, according to the Chief Minister's many statements, it had fizzled out long ago, if it had ever existed. But the truth is, and you should know if your ubiquitous intelligence has served you right — that it was spreading and percolating deep down in the countryside. Until the time of my arrest, 'janata sarkars' were being formed from the village upwards to the block (ward) level. Later on, the process was to be taken up, hopefully, to the district and state level.

If you have cared to look into the program of the janata sarkars, you would have found out that for the most part it was constructive, such as regulating the public distribution system, checking corruption at the lower levels of administration, implementing the land reform laws, settling disputes through the age old custom of conciliation and arbitration, assuring a fair deal to Harijans, curbing such social evils as 'talak' and 'dahej' etc. There was nothing in all this that by any stretch of imagination could be called subversive. Only where the 'janata sarkars' were solidly organised were such programs as non-payment of taxes taken up. At the peak of the movement in urban areas an attempt was made for some days, through dharna and picketing, to stop the working of government offices. At Patna, whenever the assembly opened, attempts were made to persuade the members to resign and to prevent them peacefully from going in. All these were calculated programs of civil disobedience, and thousands of men and women were arrested all over the state.

If all this adds up to an attempt to paralyse the Bihar government, well, it was the same kind of attempt as was made during the freedom struggle through non co-operation and Satyagraha to paralyse the British government. But that was a government established by force, whereas the Bihar government and legislature are both constitutionally established bodies. What right has anyone to ask an elected government and elected legislature to go? This is one of your favourite questions. But it has been answered umpteen times by competent persons, including

well-known constitutional lawyers. The answer is that in a democracy the people, too, have the right to ask for the resignation of an elected government if it has gone corrupt and has been misruling. And if there is a legislature that persists in supporting such a government it too must go so that the people might choose better representatives.



movement just off the bat as it were. After formulating their demands at a conference they had met the Chief Minister and the Education Minister. They had held several meetings. But unfortunately the inept and corrupt Bihar Government did not take the students seriously. And then the latter gheraoed the assembly. The sad events of that day precipitated the Bihar

But in that case, how can it be determined what the people want in the usual democratic manner? In the case of Bihar, the mammoth rallies and processions held in Patna, the thousands of constituency meetings held all over the State, the three day Bihar Bandh, the memorable happenings of 4 November and the largest ever meeting held at the Gandhi Maidan on 18th were a convincing measure of the people's will. And what you had the Bihar Government and Congress to show on their side? The miserable counter-offensive of 16 November, which had been masterminded by Shri Barooah and on which, according to reliable reports, the fantastic sum of Rs. 60 lakh rupees were spent. But if that was not conclusive enough proof, I had asked repeatedly for a plebiscite. But you were afraid to face the people.

While I am on the Bihar movement, let me mention another important point that would illumine the politics of such a type of movement. The students of Bihar did not start their

movement. Even then the students did not demand the resignation of the Ministry or the dissolution of the Assembly. It was after several weeks during which firing, lathi charges and indiscriminate arrests took place that the Student's Action Committee felt compelled to put up that demand. It was at that point that the Rubicon was crossed.

Thus in Bihar, the Government was given a chance to settle the issues across the table. None of the demands of the students were unreasonable or non-negotiable. But the Bihar government preferred the method of struggle, i.e. unparalleled repression. It was the same in Uttar Pradesh. In either case, the Government rejected the path of negotiation, of trying to settle the issues across the table, and chose the path of strife. Had it been otherwise, there would have been no movement at all.

I have pondered over this riddle: Why did not those governments act wisely? The conclusion I have arrived at is that the main hurdle has been corruption. Somehow the governments have

been unable to deal with corruption in their ranks, particularly at the top level — the ministerial level itself. The corruption has been the central point of the movement, particularly corruption in the government and the administration.

Be that as it may, except for Bihar there was no movement of its kind in any other state of India. In Uttar Pradesh, though Satyagraha had started in April, it was far from becoming a people's movement. In some other states though struggle committees had been formed, there seemed to be no possibility of a mass movement anywhere. And as the general election to the Lok Sabha was drawing near, the attention of the opposition parties was turned more towards the coming electoral struggle than to any struggle involving civil disobedience.

Thus, the plan of which you speak, the plan to paralyse the Government, is a figment of your imagination thought up to justify your totalitarian measures.

But suppose I grant you for a minute, for argument's sake, that there was such a plan. Do you honestly believe that your erstwhile colleague, the former Deputy Prime Minister of India and Chandrashekhar, a member of the Congress Working Committee, were also a party to it? Then why have they also been arrested and many others like them?

No, dear Prime Minister, there was no plan to paralyse the Government. If there was a plan, it was a simple, innocent and short term plan to continue until the Supreme Court decided your appeal. It was this plan that was announced at the Ramlila grounds by Nanaji Deshmukh on 25 June and which was the subject matter of my speech that evening. The program was for a selected number of persons to offer Satyagraha before or near your residence in support of the demand that you should step down until the Supreme Court's judgment on your appeal. The program was to continue for seven days in Delhi, after which it was to be taken up in the states. And, as I have said above, it was to last only until the judgment of the Supreme Court. I do not see what is subversive or dangerous about it. In a democracy the citizen has an inalienable right to civil disobedience when he finds that other channels of redress or reform have dried up. It goes without saying that the Satyagrahi willingly invites and accepts his lawful punishment. This is

the dimension added to democracy by Gandhi. What an irony that it should be obliterated in Gandhi's own India!

It should be noted — and it is a very important point — that even this program of a Satyagraha would not have occurred to the opposition had you remained content with quietly clinging on to your office. But you did not do it. Through your henchmen you had rallies and demonstrations organised in front of your residence (begging you not to resign). You addressed these rallies and justifying your stand, advanced spurious arguments and heaped calumny on the head of the opposition. An effigy of the High Court Judge was burnt before your residence. Posters appeared in the city suggesting some kind of a link between the judge and the CIA. When such despicable happenings were taking place every day, the opposition had no alternative but to counteract the mischief. And how did it decide to do it? Not by rowdyism but by orderly Satyagraha and self-sacrifice.

It was this 'plan' and not an imaginary plan to paralyse the Government that has aroused your ire and cost the people their liberties and dealt a deathblow to their democracy.

And why was the freedom of the press being suppressed? Not because the Indian press was irresponsible, dishonest or anti-Government. In fact, nowhere under conditions of freedom is the press more responsible, reasonable and fair than it has been in India. The truth is that your anger against it was aroused because on the question of your resignation, after the High Court's judgment, some of the papers took a line that was highly unpalatable to you. And when on the morrow of the Supreme Court judgment all the metropolitan papers, including the wavering The Times Of India came out with well reasoned and forceful editorials to stomach. That cooked the goose of the Indian press, and you struck your deadly blow. It staggers one's imagination to think that so valuable a freedom as the freedom of the press, the very life-breath of democracy, can be snuffed out because of the personal pique of a Prime Minister.

You have accused the opposition of trying to lower the prestige and position of the country's Prime Minister. But in reality, the boot is on the other leg. No one has done more to lower the position and prestige of that great

office than you. Can you ever think of the Prime Minister of a democratic country who cannot even vote in his Parliament because he has been found guilty of corrupt electoral practices? The Supreme Court may reverse the High Court's judgment — most probably it will in this atmosphere of terror, but as long as that is not done your guilt and your deprivation of your right to vote remain.

As for the 'one person' who is supposed to have tried to sow dissatisfaction in the armed and police forces, he denies the charge. All that he has done is to make the men and officers of the forces conscious of their duties and responsibilities. Whatever he has said in that connection is within the law, the Constitution, the Army Act, and the Police Act.

So much for your major points: the plea to paralyse the Government and the attempt to sow dissatisfaction in the armed and police forces.

Now a few of your minor points and obiter dicta. You are reported to have said that democracy is not more important than the nation. Are you not presuming too much, Madam Prime Minister? You are not the only one who cares for the nation. Among those whom you have detained or imprisoned there are many who have done as much for the nation as you. And every one of them is as good a patriot as you. So, please do not apply salt to our wounds by lecturing to us about the nation.

Moreover, it is a false choice that you have formulated. There is no choice between democracy and the nation. It was for the good of the nation that the people of India, declared in the Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949, that 'we, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute into a Sovereign Democratic Republic. Give to ourselves !-!'s Constitution.' This democratic Constitution cannot be changed into a totalitarian one by a mere ordinance or a law of Parliament. That can be done only by the people of India themselves in their new Constituent Assembly, especially elected for that special purpose. If Justice, Liberty; Equality and Fraternity have not been rendered to all its citizens even after a quarter of a century of signing of that Constitution, the fault is not that of the Constitution or of democracy but of the Congress party that has been in power in Delhi all these years. It is precisely because of that failure that there is much unrest among the

peOple and youth. Repression is no remedy for that. On the other hand, it only compounds the failure.

I no doubt see that the papers are full these days of reports of new policies, new drives and show of new enthusiasm. Apparently you are trying to make up for lost time, that is to say, you are making a show of doing here and now what you failed to do in nine years. But your 20 points will go the same way as your 10 points did and the 'stray thoughts.' But I assure you this time the people will not be fooled. And I assure you of another thing too: a party of self-seekers, spineless opportunists and 'jee-huzurs,' such as the Congress, alas, has become, can never do anything worthwhile. (Not all Congressmen are such. There are quite a few exceptions, such as those who have been deprived of their Party membership and some of them their freedom). There will be a lot of propaganda and much ado on paper but on the ground level the situation will not change. The condition of the poor (and they are in great majority over the greater part of the country) has been worsening over the past years. It would be enough if the downward trend were arrested. But for that your whole approach to politics and economics will have to change.

I have written the above in utter frankness without mincing words. I have done so not out of anger or so as to get even with you in words. No, that would be a show of impotence. Nor does it show any lack of appreciation for the care that is being taken of my health. ! have done it only to place the naked truth before you, which you have been trying to cover up and distort.

Having performed this unpleasant duty, may I conclude with a few parting words of advice? You know I am an old man. My life's work is done. After Prabha's going I have nothing and no one to live for. My brother and my nephew have their family and my younger sister (the elder died years ago) has her sons and daughters. I have given all my life after finishing education to the country and asked for nothing in return. So, I shall be content to die a prisoner under your regime.

Would you listen to the advice of such a man? Please, do not destroy the foundations that the Father of the Nation, including your noble father had laid down. You inherited a great tradition, noble values and a working democracy. Do not leave behind a miserable wreck of all that. It

would take a long time to put all that together again. For it would be put together again, I have no doubt. People who fought British imperialism and humbled it cannot accept indefinitely the indignity and shame of totalitarianism. The spirit of man can never be vanquished, no matter how deeply suppressed. In establishing your personal dictatorship, you have buried it deep. But it will rise from the grave. Even in Russia, it is slowly coming up.

Krishna Kant and their friends have been saying, for which they have been punished.

You have talked of a 'drift' in the country. But was that due to Opposition or to me? The drift was because of your lack of decision, direction and drive. You seem to act swiftly and dramatically only when your personal position is threatened. Once that is assured, the drift begins. Dear Indiraji, please do not identify yourself with the nation. You are not immortal, India is.



You have talked of social democracy. What a beautiful image those words call to the mind. But you have seen in Eastern and Central Europe how ugly is the reality. Naked dictatorship and in the ultimate analysis Russian over Lordship. Please, please do not push India towards that terrible fate.

And may I ask to what purpose all these draconian measures? In order to be able to carry out the 20 points? But who was preventing you from carrying out the 10 points? All the discontent, the protest, the Satyagraha were due precisely to the fact that you were not doing anything to implement your program, inadequate as it was, to lighten the misery and burden under which the people and the youth were groaning. This is what Chandrashekhar, Mohan Dharia,

You have accused the Opposition and me of every kind of villainy. But let me assure you that if you do the right things; for instance, your 20 points, tackling corruption at ministerial levels, electoral reforms, etc., take the Opposition into confidence, heed its advice — you will receive the willing cooperation of everyone of us. For that you need not destroy democracy. The ball is in your court. It is for you to decide.

With these parting words, let me bid you farewell. May God be with you.

Jayaprakash Narayan

Indian independence activist, theorist and political leader

Source: Bhaqvan's Journal, 15 November, 2017

HER SENSE OF FAIRNESS

"She carried hope for all of us in her wisdom and compassion," says Sir Richard Attenborough who charts a brief history of the Gandhi pre-production to illustrate some of Indiraji's stalwart characteristics.

My first impression of her was of someone shy. Very shy. It was Sunday, May 26 1963, and I was meeting her at the Teen Murti House at the suggestion of Panditji with whom I had just had my first meeting to discuss the Gandhi film.

There was yet no sign of the latterly familiar white plume in her otherwise jet black hair. She greeted me with the customary pranam moving with perfect carriage across the room towards one of the long low settees, inviting me to sit beside her. She struck me as an extremely elegant woman.

It was immediately evident that she was very familiar with cinema — not only Indian films but those from around the world. Her interest in the Gandhi project was instantaneous and from that moment I felt our cause had a true champion. This in fact proved to be the case, for without her advice and advocacy the film would never have been made.

On her appointment as Minister for Information and Broadcasting she became officially responsible for any Government interest in the film, and with my partners, I had a number of meetings with her, both in India and in the U. K. One I remember particularly was when she spent a day with my wife and me at our Richmond home early in 1965 accompanied by her two young sons.

Throughout the time when she was Prime Minister and during the period when she was in the opposition, her interest in the film never flagged. Finally in April 1980, when she once again was at the head of the Government, she took steps which set us on our way. These were initiated, with her children and grandchildren around her, during a family dinner at 1 Safdarjang Road. I think probably she was becoming as frustrated as I was at the continual delays.

I have charted this brief history of the Gandhi pre-production simply because I believe it illustrates a number of Indiraji's stalwart characteristics.

Firstly, her agile mind, capable of moving from subject to subject with extraordinary speed aided by instant recall of all the relevant background detail, often dating back over a number of years. Secondly, her immense sense of fairness and of propriety arising from a family code of correct behavior. And thirdly, her loyalty which was intense and unswerving. Some might say to a fault — but for me ever to be cherished and admired.

She never at any time attempted to influence the style or content of Gandhi. It was she who said, 'a creative work as such must be left to the artiste'. All that the Government should properly ensure was that the film was 'fitting'. She read the final screenplay on consecutive nights between 1.30 and 3.00 am. She corrected one or two errors of fact and expressed a reservation in regard to a particular aspect of Kasturba's character. That apart she contented herself by saying that the script "captured the spirit of Bapu" — a view she reiterated on seeing the finished film.

I saw her on a number of occasions while we were in production and she dined with us at the Ashok Hotel, where she met many members of the crew, all of whom were totally captivated by her interest and charm. She also visited the set with Rajiv and Sonia. One of my treasured possessions is a photograph taken on that occasion in which she is smiling broadly. And what a smile she had — of such warmth, indicating that most engaging sense of humour which even in the direst circumstances rarely deserted her.

Her kindness to me and my wife was immense. I admired her profoundly and consider it one of the privileges of my life to have had the joy of counting her amongst my friends. I with millions of others miss her greatly: she carried hope for all of us in her wisdom and compassion.

*Sir Richard Attenborough
British actor, producer and
director of the film Gandhi
Source: Bhavan's Journal, 15
November, 2017*



ONENESS OF THE UNIVERSE

Poornamadah Poornamidam
 Poornaatpoornamudachyat Poornasya
 Poornamaadasya Poornamevavashishyate.
 - Ishopanishad

Whole universe (living and non-wing) has got an integral existence. It is interrelated, interdependent and cohesive in nature. Vedic teachings emphasize the singular, unified nature of universe stating that we all are one. Auras are just energy and non-living things (unmanifested) have them too because they are uftimateo the same energy we are.



Human being has 100 trillion cells. Cell is smallest living unit of living organism. Number of cells combine to form tissues, tissues to organs and combination of organs leads to living organism. There are over 1.5 million species of living organisms in the universe. A living cell is a self assembling, self regulating, self replicating isothermal open system of organic molecules operating on the principle of maximum economy of parts and processes. Early philosophers suggested that living organisms are endowed with mysterious and divine life force or Prana (Vitalism). If living organisms are composed of molecules that are intrinsically inanimate, why does living matter differ so radically from non-living matter, which also consists of intrinsically inanimate molecules. Famous biochemist Lehninger calls it 'Molecular logic of the living state' and it is the objective of biochemistry to determine how the collection of inanimate molecules found in living organisms interact with each other to constitute, maintain and perpetuate the living state. While the debate is

going on living and non-living, quantum world-view teaches us that we are all the same wave energy and therefore interconnected. Inconsonance with the above statement Vivekananda gives a quantum perspective to Vedanta thus:

FLOWCHART OF 'ONENESS' OF LIVING & NON-LIVING

Physical Body



Organ systems

(a group of two or more organs, eg. Cardiac system)



Organ

(a collection of 2 or more tissues, eg. Brain)



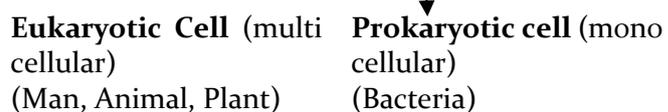
Tissues

(a group of specialized cells, which are adapted to carry out a specific function, eg. Bone)



Cells

(The basic structural & functional unit from which all Biological organisms are made, eg. - Nerve cell, Muscle cell etc.)

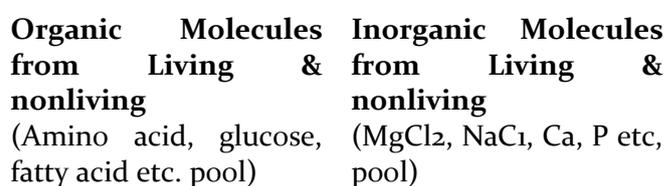


Stem Cell (Wonder of Nature—has the capacity to become part of host's organ)



Organelles

(Intracellular structure that carries out specific functions within a cell, eg. Nucleus, Mitochondria, etc.)





Element

(with different atomic number) (Carbon, Nitrogen, Mg, Zn etc — only differ in protons & Neutrons but exhibit different properties: **Wonder of Nature**)



Atom

(every atom is composed of nucleus & one or more electrons Bound to the nucleus)



Nucleus

(The atomic nucleus is the small, dense region consisting of protons and neutrons at the centre of an atom)



Protons & neutrons

(Proton & neutron have extremely large number of light weight particles called Quarks, antiquarks and gluons which bind quarks in proton/neutron)

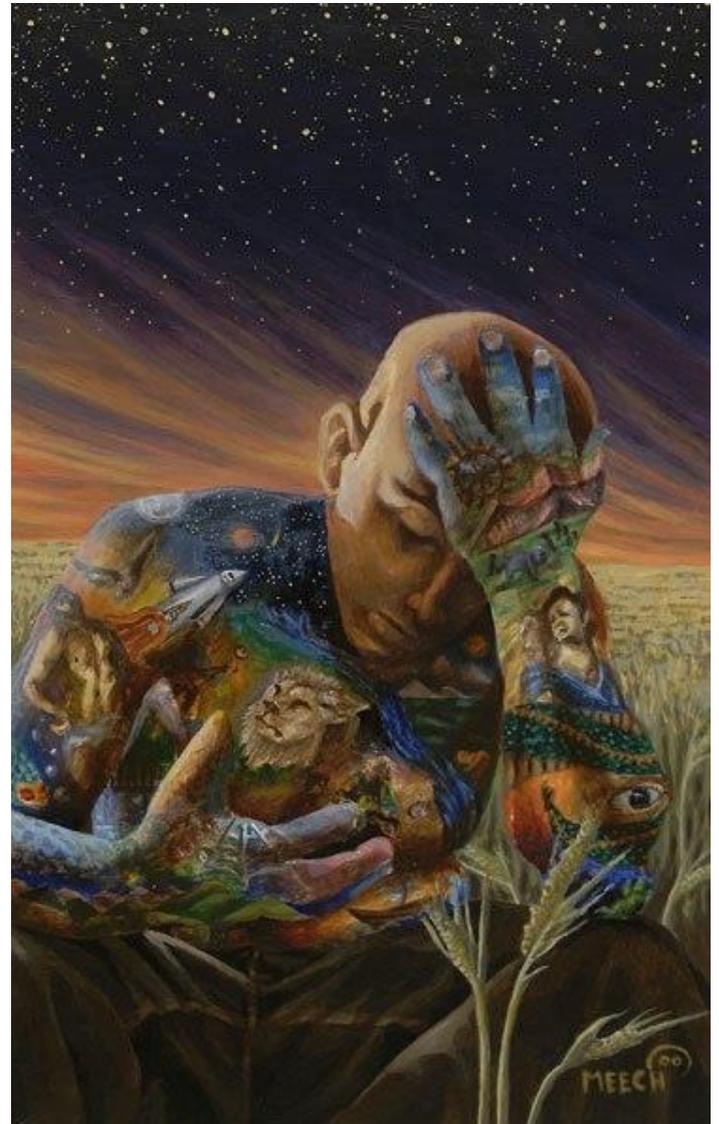


Quarks

(Smallest energy particle, a fundamental constituent of a matter, whizzing around nearly at the speed of light in proton and neutron)

"One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. Flowchart of 'Oneness' of Living and Non-living shows how the universe is interconnected. As if in a prophetic anticipation of quantum world view of Vedanta, Vivekananda prophesied in a speech on 'Immortality' in New York in 1896 said "All in this universe is in the form of waves, you and I must be part of cosmic consciousness, cosmic life, cosmic mind and cosmic intelligence. This cosmic intelligence is what people call God, what materialists perceive as force, what quantum physicists call as wave energy and what our Rishis called as Sat-Chit-Anand — the eternal, infinite, inexpressible bliss". He said that all pervasive consciousness is the infinite inherent principle of God embodies in everyone of us and be aware of our innate divinity always. Vedic Rishis said His wisdom lives within all of us and can be known instantly and intuitively through Practice of Yoga and Meditation. When

one knows the reality of oneness of all life, we become more open to giving and receiving love, our sense of right or wrong springs forth from within us; we see clearly that our thoughts, actions and words ultimately impact only ourselves and life will be a smooth sailing.



Prof. B. C. Harinath
Source: Sevamed Journal, April, 2017
Picture credit: <https://angelicview.wordpress.com>

HEALTH BYTES FROM WEB

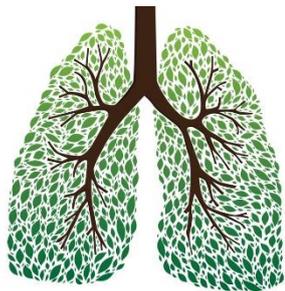


1. Hold that pose: Yoga may ease tough depression.

Major depression is common and often persistent and disabling and Up to 40 percent of people taking medication

for this form of depression won't see their depression go away. Researchers found that weekly sessions of yoga and deep breathing exercises helped ease symptoms of the common condition. They believe the practice may be an alternative or complementary therapy for tough-to-treat cases of depression. The intervention seemed helpful for "people who are not on antidepressants and in those who have been on a stable dose of antidepressants but have not achieved a resolution of their symptoms.

consumer.healthday.com, Mar 9, 2017



2. Two new drug therapies might cure every form of tuberculosis. Tuberculosis, the world's leading infectious killer, may have finally met its match. Two new drug therapies called BPamZ

and BPaL, may be able to cure all forms of tuberculosis – even the ones most difficult to treat. BPamZ involves taking four drugs once a day. Trials carried out in 240 people across 10 countries in Africa suggest that it cures almost all cases of ordinary TB in four months, and most people with drug-resistant TB in about six months. In the majority of cases, the TB bacterium had disappeared from sputum within two months. Meanwhile, BPaL, a therapy that involves taking three drugs once a day, has so far cured 40 of 69 patients with "extremely-drug resistant TB" – the most difficult form to treat. The TB Alliance says that BPamZ has the potential to treat 99 per cent of people who catch TB each year, while BPaL could treat the remainder.

www.newscientist.com, Feb 15, 2017.



3. Beware! Colouring your hair can up chances of breast cancer.

Women beware before dying your hair or using hormonal contraceptives, as they may increase your chances of breast cancer.

The biggest risk factor in breast cancer is high age and known lifestyle-related risk factors include late age at first birth, small number of children, high alcohol consumption and sedentary lifestyle. Researchers, analysed self-reported survey data from 8,000 breast cancer patients and 20,000 controls from Finland and suggested that use of other hormonal contraceptives was, by contrast, associated with 32 percent higher breast cancer risk among younger women under 50 when compared to women who did not use hormonal contraceptives.

timesofindia.indiatimes.com, Mar 10, 2017



4. These are the 10 foods that affect your risk of heart disease, according to scientists

Fruits: Three average-sized fruits daily; Vegetables: Two cups cooked or four cups raw vegetables daily;

Nuts/seeds: Five one-ounce servings per week – that's about 20 nuts per serving; Whole grains: Two servings per day; Polyunsaturated fats: These are healthy fats that should make up 11 per cent of daily calories; Seafood: About eight ounces a week are considered to be beneficial for heart health. Further, there are some "bad" foods you shouldn't eat too much of like: Red meat: one weekly serving – a serving is a medium-sized steak, for example; Processed meat: None recommended; Sugary drinks: None recommended; Salt: Limit your intake to about 2,000 milligrams daily – that's just under a teaspoon.

globalnews.ca, Mar 9, 2017



5. Low back pain? relax, breathe and try yoga
Yoga has become increasingly popular in the United States in recent years. It typically involves a combination of physical movements, controlled breathing, and relaxation or meditation. According to a new review, yoga may be a natural fit in the quest to relieve an aching back. The findings come from an analysis of 12 studies that included more than 1,000 participants with lower back pain. The studies compared yoga to physical therapy or patient education. There was some evidence that yoga led to small improvements in pain, and small to moderate improvements in back function at three and six months.

consumer.healthday.com, Feb 10, 2017



6. Consumption of leafy greens during pregnancy protects baby from hypertension

A new research suggests that would-be-mommies should eat plenty of leafy green vegetables during pregnancy as it can protect their newborn from high blood pressure. In young adults, higher folic acid consumption has been associated with a lower incidence of hypertension later in life. Folic acid - found in spinach, kale and broccoli - is thought to protect children's heart health. The nutrient - found in spinach, kale and broccoli - is a member of the family of B vitamins and it is particularly involved in gene expression and cellular growth.

www.deccanchronicle.com, Mar 10, 2017

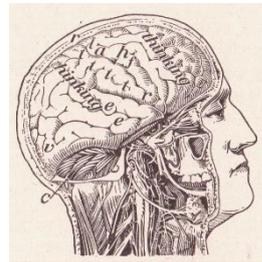


7. 3 salt-free ways to flavor your food if you have high blood pressure.

Over consumption of dietary sodium is a major risk factor for hypertension. Here are 3 delicious ways to flavor your foods, sans salt: use lemons, opt for herbs, try salt-free seasoning mixes. Incorporating the optimal blends of lemon juice and zest to a meal can change the entire flavor profile, and aid in digestion, as the citric acid contained in lemon juice helps break down

fats, carbohydrates and protein. Using herbs when you cook is a great way to reduce the overall salt, fat and sugar content without sacrificing flavour.

www.vanguardngr.com, Mar 10, 2017



8. New insights into how the mind influences the body

Neuroscientists have identified the neural networks that connect the cerebral cortex to the adrenal medulla, which is responsible for the body's rapid response in stressful situations. These findings provide evidence for the neural basis of a mind-body connection. Specifically, the findings shed new light on how stress, depression and other mental states can alter organ function, and show that there is a real anatomical basis for psychosomatic illness.

www.sciencedaily.com, Aug 15, 2016



9. Handful of nuts a day helps in weight loss, cuts risk of cancer.

According to a new report, nuts are rich in heart-healthy polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats, which lower LDL or "bad" cholesterol; plus, they are a good source of phytosterols, compounds that help lower blood cholesterol. In fact, the research suggests that nuts may help with appetite control, which can prevent weight gain or even help with weight loss. The study included all kinds of tree nuts, such as hazelnuts and walnuts, and peanuts (which are technically legumes). They are packed with fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals, including folate, vitamin E, potassium and magnesium. Walnuts are a winner among nuts, because unlike their siblings, they have a significant amount of essential omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for skin health.

www.newkerala.com, Mar 11, 2017

Source: <http://www.jbt-drc.org>
Sevamed Journal, April, 2017

Picture credit: <https://www.istockphoto.com/au>

SANSKRIT – OUR GREATEST TREASURE

Sanskrit is one of the greatest languages of the world. It is the classical language par excellence of India. There is the time honored attitude towards Sanskrit, which holds it in a spirit of veneration, as the most ancient language of the world and as the repository of vast spiritual knowledge and science. Its value for humanity in general and for India in particular is that of a great feeder language. Sanskrit is the speech through which the civilization of India, ever since its formation in the Vedic period, has found its expression for over four or five thousand years. When Jawaharlal Nehru made the following observation about the importance of Sanskrit in India, he was only reiterating the general belief of the Indian people and the considered views which have been expressed not only by the greatest thinkers and leaders of India but also by foreign scholars and specialists in Indian history and civilization, who are in a position to appraise objectively, the value of Sanskrit. Pt. Nehru's observation:

"If I were asked, what is the greatest treasure that India possesses and what is her finest heritage, I would answer unhesitatingly — It is the Sanskrit language and literature and all that it contains. This is the magnificent inheritance and so long as this endures and influences the life of our people, so long the basic genius of India will continue."

As a matter of fact, a long series of quotations can be made in this connection from most eminent savants of both India and outside India, beginning with the illustrious Sir William Jones, who in 1786, announced to the western world, the great fact of Sanskrit being a language more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin and more exquisitely refined than either.

The long and unbroken continuity of Sanskrit in the life and tradition of India is something unique. In this context, Sanskrit has shown a dynamic force, the force of a language that is perennially living. It has never been static and in the building of it, all the peoples of India had a share. The spoken forms of the Aryan speech in India — the Prakrit and the Apabramshas — were never looked upon as any separate languages.

In any case, from century to century, there was the development of civilization in India. We have

the Sanskrit speech in its various stages and forms — the Vedic Sanskrit as in the Samhitas; the Sanskrit of the Br̥hmaa texts and Upanishads; the more popular Sanskrit of the R̥mayaoa and the Mahabharata as well as the Puraoas; the Sanskrit of the learned schools as envisaged by PaCtini, IOtyayana and Patanjali; as a language of the specially educated class (the Shicmabhasha); the mixed Sanskrit of the Buddhists; the Sanskrit of the scientific writings such as those on Arthash5tra, K5mashastra, Narnyashastra

"If I were asked, what is

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will continue."

— Jawaharlal Nehru

Ayurveda and Jyotisha; the simple Sanskrit of Kavyas and dramas; the ornate Sanskrit of the prose romances; the simple unsophisticated folk style as seen in fable books like the Panchtantra and Hitopadesha and the thousands of Subhashitas. The total output of each of these literatures easily transcends extent which any other ancient or medieval can show. Not only has the quantity to be taken into account, but also the

extraordinarily high quality of a large percentage of it too.

The Indian people and the Indian civilization were born and nursed so to say, in the lap of Sanskrit. It went hand in hand with the historical development of the Indian people and gave the noblest expression to their mind and culture which has come down to our day as an inheritance of priceless order of India.

Sanskrit is, therefore, not merely a classical language which enshrines the ancient literature of India, but it is of a much greater significance. It was through Sanskrit literature e.g., in the Vedas on the one hand and epics

and the Puranas on the other, that the Indian body politic created for itself a consistent and a comprehensive interpretation of its past and a hope for its present and future. Sanskrit literature became a great force for bringing about unity among Indians.

Sanskrit was the linguistic and literary expression of the great cultural synthesis which is identical with the 'Bharata Dharma', — the spirit of India. The whole of India thus gradually came under the aegis of Sanskrit. One important feature of Sanskrit is that it did not suppress other languages which had merits of their own. The policy of 'live and let live', and even of active support, led to the acceptance of Sanskrit spontaneously. Grammarians on the Sanskrit model were prepared for the various Indian local languages.

The Sanskrit classics were translated into various Indian local languages including those of the south. On a study of Sanskrit and its sister languages, the basic unity of the Indo-European people has been, to some extent, established. Sanskrit found for itself new homes in Burma, Siam, Lao, Cambodia, Champa, Malaya and

Indonesia etc.,. In fact, a new science — comparative philology came to exist with the spread of Sanskrit.

Sanskrit is not a dead language. Sanskrit still plays an important part in the life, thought and expression of the entire people. It is the language of the culture of the country, is still spoken in learned assemblies and continues as a medium of original literary compositions. It is one of the fourteen main languages enumerated in the Indian constitution. The greatest bond of unity is to be found in it and in its great literature; and the greatest bond of unity is to be found in it and when one remembers that the strongest force

for unity is culture, not politics, one will comprehend the real value of Sanskrit and the part that it can play, even in a practical way, in the consolidation of the far-flung Indian Union. The role of Sanskrit through the centuries has been to rejuvenate with its infinite

resources, local languages and cultures, to absorb local excellences and to evolve a constructive and harmonious synthesis. And even to-day, all the religious performances are done mostly through this great language which is the greatest asset of India. The greatest edifice of Hindu culture, religion and philosophy are built in Sanskrit. As C Rajagopalachari once said: "Sanskrit is the symbol of our seniority among the nations of the world".

Prof. T. S. Krishnamurthy

former Indian Revenue Service officer and was the Chief Election Commissioner (C.E.C) of India (February 2004 - May 2005)

Source: Bhavan Journal, 15 September, 2017.



MARWAR'S CONTRIBUTION TO SANSKRIT LITERATURE

If we go back to trace the history of the Sanskrit Literature of Marwar, we remember the name of Bhinamal (Srimal) one of the most important and richest cities of the State. The 'Srimala Mahatmya' records that the city was in existence in the 'Second century': It was the home of all the Sastras, Vedas, Upanishads and Prosody.

According to A. B. Keith, Mahakavi Magha (8th century), the author of the Sisupalavadha, who was a resident of Bhinamal, occupies an important position in the history of Mahakavya literature. His father Dattaka was famed as Sarvasraya and his grandfather Suprabhadeva was the Servadhikarin of King Varmalata.

In Sisupalavadha, the main story has been taken from the Mahabharata. It records the slaying of Sisupala at the hands of Sri Krishna after the completion of the Rajasuya sacrifice of Yudhisthira. The story in the Mahabharata is very simple but Magha has made sufficient improvements in it. Magha very fond of Alankaras and double entendre'.

He is an authority on grammar and gives numerous examples of the use of grammatical rules. Critics hold a very high opinion of Magha. After Magha the name of a Jain polymath Acharya Haribhadrasuri (A.D. 700-770) holds an important place in the Sanskrit literature of Marwar. He has written about 1400 works. The most important of them are:

The SaddarSana-samuccaya, Yagadrstisamuccaya, Yogabindu, Dhurtukijana, Kathakosa, Munipaticaritam etc.

Other important Acharyas are Sri Siddharsisuri (A.D. 905), poet Suddhala (A.D. 1026-1050) and Udyotna Suri (A.D. 778) of Jalore. They have written Uparniribha Vaprapanca. Udayasundari katha and Kathakuvalayamala especially the latter one is written in the style of Bana's Kadambari. The Katha Kuvalayarnala was originally written in the Prakrit but it was later translated into Sanskrit by Ratnaprabha Suri in the twentieth century.

Ramachandra, the disciple of Ramachandracharya has written a drama Nirbhayabhima in the second half of 12th century. Another Ramachandra composed the Prabuddharauhineya in the same period. Sri

Jinadatta Suri composed the Vivekavilasa in the thirteenth century.

In the Mughal period, a collection of many valuable and important manuscripts were destroyed by the Mughals. However, a part of this vast literature survived and existed in the Marwar.

The Jains devoted great attention to their own works and system but even then they studied philosophic works of the other sects and systems to compete with the non-jain authors in the field of general subjects like poetics, drama, prosody, astrology, ayurveda and grammar. To mention a few, Sri Jinapala Upadhyaya composed the Sanatkumara charitam and Jinavallabhasuri composed the Jayadevdchhandas.

Sanskrit commanded the foremost place in the literary activities of Marwar in the earlier centuries before the advent of the Rathores. After the settlement of the Rathores in the thirteenth century, the noble tradition of extending patronage to great scholars, artists and poets was maintained. Some of the rulers themselves were good poets and scholars.

In the patronage of Rao Maldeva (A.D. 1532-62), Chandu the son of Raghavadeva Purohit of Lunkarana raval prepared the 'Chandu Pancanga' which still continues to be published in Marwar.

Maharaja Yashvant Singh (A.D. 1638-1678) was himself a great author. He has composed the Bhasabhusana, Chandprabodha and Anandavilasa all in Sanskrit verses.

In the reign of Maharaja Ajit Singh (A.D. 1678-1724) a number of scholars, and poets enriched the Sanskrit literature of Marwar. Among them the most important are Balkrishna Dikshit and Jagajiwan Bhatta. Sri Dikshit composed a historical Sanskrit Mahakavya-Ajita Charita.

The work is composed in ten cantos and there are 418 Slokas in it. In the first canto the poet gives a Mangalacarana and then gives a description of the great religious place Puskar Raja. The description of the rulers of Marwar has been given in this Kavya. They are Gangaji, Maldeva, Sursingh, Gajsingh Yashvantsingh and Ajit Singh. The last Sloka of the Kavya pays rich tributes for the prosperity of the prince, Ajitsingh.

Thus we find that Ajitcharita is not only a Mahakavya but it is a true historical Mahakavya. The names of the kings which are available in the work are identical with the names of the chronological order of kings of Marwar as described by Sri Gehlot. The Mahakavya gives a vivid picture of the social life of the contemporary princes of Marwar.

Bhatta Jagajiwan, the other important poet under Maharaja Ajitsingh of Marwar has composed two important kavyas. They are Ajitodaya and Abhoyoiaya. The Ajitodaya consists of thirty two cantos. 'M angalcarana' relating to the prayer of Radhakrishna⁴.

The Kavya records the contemporary historical events of the Marwar State. During this period Aurangzeb was the emperor of Delhi. This incorporates a vivid and true account of the battles fought between the Mughals and Rajputs. Most of the details of the Mahakavya are historical. It gives a list of many ruler-kings. They are Yaswantsingh. Ajitsingh. Bhakhatsingh. Mohkam Singh, Rao Inder Singh. Rajsingh, Swai Jaisingh, Kutubulmulka, Rafidaulla, Aurangzeb, Tahwarkhan and Durgadas. All of them are historical persons according to the chronological tables of Marwar.

The events mentioned, cities and the setting of Mughal rule on Jodhpur after the death of Maharaja Yaswant Singh and birth of Shri Ajitsingh are historical facts. In view of this observation, it can safely be concluded that the Ajitodaya is a historical Mahakavya. It would not be out of place to have a glance on Bhatta's Abhayodaya Mahakavya

The Kavya deals with poetical description of the rulers of Marwar especially of Maharaja Yaswat Singh and Maharaja Ajitsingh. The original manuscript has been corrected by Pt. Nityanandji Shastri of Jodhpur At the very outset of this Mahakavya the poet gives consisting of ten cantos with 409 slokas. Opening with the prayer of Srikrishnas the Mahakavya mainly deals with the period of Abhay Singh but other important facts pertaining to the famous rulers of Marwar are also recorded there. The most important of them are Sri Maldeva, Sursingh, Gajsingh and Yasvantsingh.

Maharaja Abhaysingh was given the title of 'Ijarajeshwar' by the emperor and this fact is well mentioned in the seventh canto. The original copy of this work is not available. The copy

prepared by Sri Bal Ram Sadhu is however available in the 'Pustak Prakash' of Jodhpur. As many of the events furnished in the kavya are historical, it is also a historical Mahakavya like the. Ajitodaya and Ajitacarita.

All the three kavyas are important poetical compositions and furnish valuable political and historical informations, cultural customs and traditions which were contemporary during this period. Vamasramadharma is a common theme in all the three kavyas. Town planning of the Jodhpur city, construction of wells, markets etc. are described at length. Thus these kavyas occupy a unique place in the history of Jodhpur.

Shrinatha Purohit, son of Shri Jyotirvidcakrapani, was a resident of Jodhpur, during the times of Yaswant Singh. He was a scholar in Sanskrit and he composed the 'Avayamnirupana' and has written a commentary on the Kiratarjuniyam.

Harivijayavyas was a resident of Merta and was a profound scholar in Sanskrit. He was a contemporary to Ajitsingh. Other important scholars of the period are Sri Haradeva, Sri Lokamani Vyas and Gagnadhar.

Maharaja Vijaisingh (A. D. 1752-1773) was a devotee of the Vallabhasampradaya. He built Krishna temples and collected a number of vallabha works. Maharaja Mansingh (A.D. 1804-1843) was a great patron of poets and scholars. He himself was a good poet.

He belonged to Nathayogi's sect. He composed the Nathacaritam. and many other works. He was a well-educated and enlightened prince. His court was always an assembly of scholars, poets, philosophers, yogis, artists and musicians. He was a man of deep understanding and intuition'.

Kavi Sambhudatta was also a good poet and scholar in Sanskrit literature. He composed the Nathacandradayah, Jalandharastotram and Rajkumaraprabodha. Other Sanskrit

scholars in the times of Maharaja Mansingh were Pt. Sadananda Tripathi and Pt. Visvarupa During the tenure of Maharaja Takhsingh, the adopted son of Maharaja Mansingh, a number of poets and scholars composed poetry and prose works in Sanskrit. Sesakavi composed the

Takhat-vilasacampu which describes the life and works of the king. The poet who hailed from Andhra came under the patronage of Maharaja Takhsingh of Jodhpur. Maharaja Jaswant Singh II (A.D. 1873) was himself a Sanskritist and established a Sanskrit school at Jodhpur. Pt.

Muraridana Kaviraja composed the 'Yasavantayaso-bhusanam' dealing with all the figures of speech.

Pandit Ramkaran Asopa, who was born in 1857 was a great scholar in Sanskrit, grammar, Sahitya, Jyotisa, Ayurveda, Vedas and Puranas.

A man of exceptional attainments and his knowledge of epigraphy ranked him among the first of half a dozen Indian experts. He has written, translated and edited a number of works, most important of them are — the Yagvantayasabhusanam, Subhasitavali, Dadhimatyastakam-isavastyapanisad,

Mukapancastakam Astddhyayi-sutra- Vriti (all translated and edited). His three works i.e. the History of Jodha ji, Guhilacari'ta and Rathadavamsa all in Sanskrit have still not seen the light of day.

In 1916 the then Maharaja Samer Singh of Jodhpur requested the British Government to confer the title of Mandmahopadhyaya to Pt. Asopa but before it could materialise, he passed away on October 1, 1943. However, he was awarded posthumously'.

Among the later Sanskrit scholars of Marwar, the name of Pt. Nityanand Shastri Dadhich is important. He was known as Asukavi and was a talented scholar in Sanskrit and Hindi. His Rdmacaritabhiratna mahakavya is regarded as a masterpiece in later Sanskrit poems.

Other important names of Sanskrit scholars of Marwar are Sarvashri Takte Sahib, M. M. Visheshwar Reu, R. N. Khumbhare. Pt. Govindnarayan Asopa (younger brother of Pt. R.K.A Asopa), Pt. Jai Narain Asopa (son of R.K. Asopa), Pt. Narnarain Asopa, Pt. Bhagavatilal, Pt. Pannalal Shrimali,

Pt. Vishveshvara Dwivedi, Pt. Mani Shankar, Pt. Hukumraj, Dr. Narayandatta Shrimali, Prof. Kalyan Bharti, Vaidya Vishnu Datt Sharma, Pt. Kalu Ram and Pt. Badrinath Bhatta. Research scholars in all the three Universities of Rajasthan are engaged in search of Sanskrit manuscripts of Marwar⁸.

Evidently it can be vouchsafed that Marwar occupies an important place in the field of Sanskrit literature.

Prof. Dr. Ram Dutt

Source: Bhavan's Journal, 15 September, 2017.



“The Most Perfect Flower The Indian Soil Has Ever Produced”

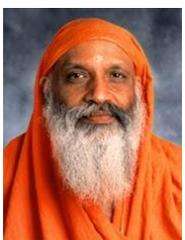
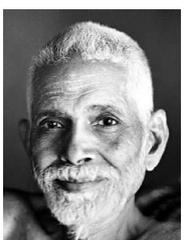
“With earnestness, love and goodwill carry out life's everyday duties and try to elevate yourself step by step. In all human activities let there be a live contact with the Divine and you will not have to leave off anything. Your work will then be done well and you will be on the right track to find the Master. Whatever work you have to do, do it with a singleness of purpose, with all the simplicity, contentment and joy you are capable of.

Thus only will you be able to reap the best fruit of work. In fullness of time, the dry leaves of life will naturally drop off and new ones shoot forth.

If you cannot do anything else, at least morning and evening at the appointed time, lay down your body, mind and life before Him in salutation and surrender, and think of Him just a little.”

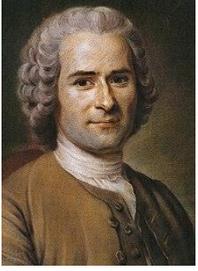
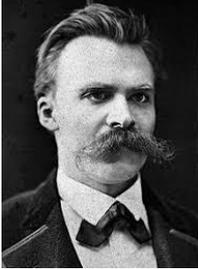
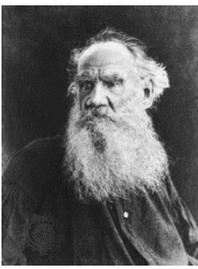
Anandamayi Ma

PERSONS OF THE MONTH: INDIA

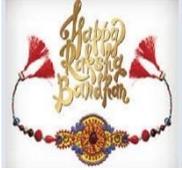
<p>Indira Gandhi (19 November 1917 – 31 October 1984)</p>		<p>Indira Gandhi was an Indian stateswoman and central figure of the Indian National Congress.[1] She was the first and, to date, the only female Prime Minister of India. As Prime Minister, Gandhi was known for her political ruthlessness and unprecedented centralisation of power.</p>
<p>Anandamayi Ma (30 April 1896 – 27 August 1982)</p>		<p>Anandamayi Ma was an Indian spiritual leader. Precognition, faith healing and other miracles were attributed to her by her followers. She was given a name "joy-permeated" by her devotees in the 1920s to describe what they saw as her habitual state of divine joy and bliss.</p>
<p>Jiddu Krishnamurti (11 May 1895 – 17 February 1986)</p>		<p>Jiddu Krishnamurti was a philosopher, speaker and writer.. His subject matter included psychological revolution, the nature of mind, meditation, inquiry, human relationships, and bringing about radical change in society.</p>
<p>Dayanand Saraswati (12 February 1824 – 30 October 1883)</p>		<p>Dayanand Saraswati was a Hindu religious leader and founder of the Arya Samaj, a Hindu reform movements of the Vedic tradition. He was also a renowned scholar of the Vedic lore and Sanskrit language. Denouncing the idolatry and ritualistic worship prevalent in Hinduism at the time, he worked towards reviving Vedic ideologies.</p>
<p>Ramana Maharshi (30 December 1879 – 14 April 1950)</p>		<p>Ramana Maharshi was a Hindu sage and jivanmukta. Ramana Maharshi approved a number of paths and practices, but recommended self-enquiry as the principal means to remove ignorance and abide in Self-awareness, together with bhakti (devotion) or surrender to the Self.</p>
<p>Har Gobind Khorana (9 January 1922 – 9 November 2011)</p>		<p>Har Gobind Khorana, was an Indian born American biochemist who shared the 1968 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine with Marshall W. Nirenberg and Robert W. Holley for research that showed how the order of nucleotides in nucleic acids, which carry the genetic code of the cell, control the cell's synthesis of proteins.</p>

Detailed profiles of these personalities are available in Bhavan's Journals.

PERSONS OF THE MONTH: WORLD

<p>Jean-Jacques Rousseau (28 June 1712 – 2 July 1778)</p>		<p>Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a Francophone Genevan philosopher, writer, and composer of the 18th century. His political philosophy influenced the Enlightenment in France and across Europe, as well as aspects of the French Revolution and the overall development of modern political and educational thought.</p>
<p>Kabir (1440-1518)</p>		<p>Kabir was a 15th-century Indian mystic poet and saint, whose writings influenced Hinduism's Bhakti movement and his verses are found in Sikhism's scripture Guru Granth Sahib. His early life was in a Muslim family, but he was strongly influenced by his teacher, the Hindu bhakti leader Ramananda.</p>
<p>Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (15 October 1844 – 25 August 1900)</p>		<p>Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was a German philosopher, cultural critic, composer, poet, philologist, and Latin and Greek scholar whose work has exerted a profound influence on Western philosophy and modern intellectual history.</p>
<p>Valentina Tereshkova 6 March 1967 (aged 80)</p>		<p>Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova is a retired Russian cosmonaut, engineer, and politician. She is the first woman to have flown in space, having been selected from more than 400 applicants and five finalists to pilot Vostok 6 on 16 June 1963. She completed 48 orbits of the Earth in her three days in space.</p>
<p>Immanuel Kant (22 April 1724 – 12 February 1804)</p>		<p>Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher who is a central figure in modern philosophy. Kant argued that the human mind creates the structure of human experience, that reason is the source of morality, that aesthetics arises from a faculty of disinterested judgment, that space and time are forms of human sensibility, and that the world as it is "in-itself" is independent of man's concepts of it.</p>
<p>Lev Tolstoy (9 September 1828 – 20 November 1910)</p>		<p>Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was a Russian writer who is regarded as one of the greatest authors of all time. Born to an aristocratic Russian family in 1828, he is best known for the novels War and Peace (1869) and Anna Karenina (1877), often cited as pinnacles of realist fiction.</p>

FESTIVALS OF THE MONTH: INDIA

<p>Raksha Bandhan (7 August 2017)</p>		<p>Raksha Bandhan is celebrated during the Hindu month of Shravana. The date is determined by the 'purnima day' otherwise known as the 'full moon day' during that month. Raksha Bandhan, also known as Rakhi, is a Hindu festival celebrating the bond between siblings. The name itself - 'Raksha' means 'protection' while 'Bandhan' means 'to tie'.</p>
<p>Krishna Janmashtami (15 August 2017)</p>		<p>An annual Hindu festival that celebrates the birth of Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu. Krishna Janmashtami is followed by the festival Nandotsav, which celebrates the occasion when Nanda Baba distributed gifts to the community in honour of the birth.</p>
<p>Ganesh Chatuthi (25 August - 5 September 2017)</p>		<p>Ganesh Chaturthi is a festival that celebrates the homecoming of Lord Ganesh as he leaves Mount Kailasha and enters our homes to bless us with happiness and prosperity.</p>
<p>Navaratri (21 - 29 September 2017)</p>		<p>Navarathri, is a nine nights (ten days) Hindu festival, celebrated in the autumn every year. It is the post-monsoon autumn festival called Sharada Navratri that is the most observed in the honour of the divine feminine Devi (Durga).</p>
<p>Dhanteras (17 October 2017)</p>		<p>Dhanteras, also known as Dhanatrayodashi, is the first day that marks the festival of Diwali in India. Dhanvantari is the God of Ayurveda who imparted the wisdom of Ayurveda for the betterment of mankind and to help rid it of the suffering of disease.</p>
<p>Diwali (19 October 2017)</p>		<p>Diwali or Deepavali is the Hindu festival of lights celebrated every year in autumn in the northern hemisphere. One of the most popular festivals of Hinduism, it spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair</p>
<p>Kartik Purnima (4 November 2017)</p>		<p>Kartika Purnima is a Hindu, Sikh and Jain holy festival, celebrated on the Purnima (full moon) day or the fifteenth lunar day of Kartik (November-December). It is also known as Tripuri Purnima and Tripurari Purnima. It is sometimes called Deva-Diwali or Deva-Deepawali - the festival of lights of the gods. Karthikai Deepam is a related festival celebrated in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telanagana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Sri Lanka.</p>

FESTIVALS OF THE MONTH: AUSTRALIA

<p>Splendour in the Grass (21 - 23 July 2017)</p>		<p>An Australian music festival that was jointly created and promoted by the Village Sounds and Secret Service music companies. It is considered the country's largest winter music festival.</p>
<p>Australian Surf Festival (28 July - 10 August 2017)</p>		<p>The Australian Surf Festival will take place on the Tweed Coast. The annual event will see over 500 competitors from around the nation for a shot at being crowned an Australian Champion.</p>
<p>Maroochy Music and Visual Arts Festival (26 August 2017)</p>		<p>An Australian contemporary music festival that was first held in 2015 on the site of the former Horton Park Golf Course in Maroochydore, Queensland. The festival was created and promoted by a home-grown team to bring up-and-coming contemporary Australian music to the area alongside visual art installations and displays.</p>
<p>Byron Bay Film Festival (6 - 15 October 2017)</p>		<p>Australia's largest regional film festival. It is an AACTA Awards accredited independent awards-based film event held in the late Australian summer at the Byron Community & Cultural Centre, in the coastal town of Byron Bay.</p>
<p>HarbourLife (18 November 2017)</p>		<p>Harbourlife is Sydney's spectacular waterside party brought to you by Fuzzy (the team behind Listen Out and Field Day). Situated at Mrs Macquaries Point, Harbourlife creates the best-located dance floor in the country and plays host to the a hand-picked selection international and local house music artists.</p>
<p>The African Music and Cultural Festival (9 December 2017)</p>		<p>The African Music and Cultural Festival (AMCF) is the largest annual African festival in Australia showcasing an amazing array of vibrant music, dancing, diverse arts, cultural performances and authentic African food that transports visitors to Africa.</p>
<p>Beyond the Valley (28 - 31 December 2017)</p>		<p>Beyond the Valley is a boutique Australian music festival that began in 2014, and runs annually over the New Year's Eve period. Each year, a carefully crafted selection of world class local and international artists perform across three distinctly designed, purpose built stages.</p>

INFLUENCE OF THE VEDAS ON INDIAN CULTURE

It was Swami Vivekananda who said that "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man and religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man." The Sanskrit word for Culture is (Samskruti) which is derived from (Samksrita) which means well made; and is the name of the language spoken by celestial beings or Gods and hence divine.

Therefore it is said: Samskrtam naama daivee vaaganvaakhyaataamaharshibhih. which means that the great sages have said that Sanskrit is divine. The Vedas which are only three the Rigveda, Yajurveda, and Samaveda (excluding the Atharvaveda which deals with magic, sorcery and witchcraft) are all in Sanskrit and therefore divine in origin, form and content. The term Veda, derived from the root Vid 'to know' connotes knowledge. The Vedas and the Upanishads propound the noblest form of religion and embrace all virtues which are after all the foundations of Indian Culture. Religion as propounded by the Vedas in its perfection and divine sublimity has been the moral force behind India and Indian Culture, which have stood the test of time, inspite of several kinds of upheavals. The richness and purity of Indian Culture and the precepts of human conduct are so nicely packed up in the charming and sonorous hymns of the Vedas that a deep and penetrating study of the Vedas does not fail to reveal their influence. The Vedas as specimens of soul-stirring poetry have a universal appeal and they form the basis for the ethical and social codes. No wonder that scholars in England and Germany took to keen, sympathetic and dedicated study of the Vedas to expound its contents to humanity in general. While some erudite scholars were enamoured of the lovely hymns, others were enthralled by expressions of faith, originality and lofty simplicity of thought. I will now quote specific instances to show their influence in Indian Culture after elucidating a few aspects of it.

One of the salient features of Indian Culture is the belief in an Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent God and offering prayers to Him, who is formless and nameless. No act is performed without first offering prayers to Him

in some form or the other. This is doubtless due to the influence of the Vedas which are after all full of prayers to One Supreme God who manifests Himself in many forms and ways like light, truth and love. The invocation may be in the form of meditation in thought, or in the form of song, in speech or in the form of offerings or worship in action. The following hymn in the Rigveda serves as a beautiful illustration of prayers in speech.

Paavakaa nah sarasvatee
vaajebhirvaajineevatee, yajnam vashtu
dhiyaavasuh. Codayitree suunrtdanaam,
yajnam dadhe sarasvateemaho arnah
sarasvatee pracetayati Ketunaa, dhiyo visvaa
viraajati (Rg. 1-3-10, 11, 12).

which means:

May Saraswathi (Speech) who is mighty with might, who pours sweetness and animates good thoughts kindle the beacon light and illuminate the vast ocean of knowledge as she rules over all intellects and all sacrifices.

The following famous Vedic hymns have had a tremendous influence on Indian Culture from time immemorial.

Satyam vada, dharmam care,
satyaannapramaditavyam, bhuutyairna
pramaditavyam, maatr devo bhava, pity devo
bhava, aacaarya devo bbava, atithi devo bhava
hriyaa deyam, bhiiyaa de yam, sraddhayaa
deyam, which means: Speak the truth. Perform
acts of righteousness. Do not swerve from the
paths of truth, righteousness and prosperity.
Consider your mother as God, your father as
God, your preceptor as God and your guest as
God. Give freely with bashfulness, without fear
and with faith.

These injunctions are so beautiful that they have been adopted by a few universities in India like Poona and Banaras and Vidya peethas as fitting instructions to graduates at the time of conferring degrees during the annual convocations. The purpose behind this practice is to make them cultured citizens of India. Respect to elders, cleanliness, honesty, celibacy and nonviolence are the main traits of a cultured person who has a vedic background for his education. Another factor which should not be lost sight of is the devotion shown to the

parents and elders and which continues to exist even after their departure from this world, in the form of performing ceremonies with great faith, devotion and rigour.

The Dharma Sastras or Codes of Conduct written by enlightened sages like Manu, Yagnavalkya and Paraasara indicate sixteen Samskaras to be performed by a man from his birth to death, which make him a cultured being to lead a purposeful life in this world.

These codes are after all based on the Vedic injunctions as is clearly expressed by Kalidasa in one of his poems as follows: srterivaartham smrtiranvagocchat.

"The meaning of the Vedas is reflected in the Sastras." Each Samskara contributes to the perfection of culture in man and makes him educated in the real sense.

The most important Samskaras during the childhood arektakarma, Namakarana, Annaprāsana, Chowla and Aksharabhyasa, in that order, i.e. the writing of the horoscope the naming, the first feeding of food, the tonsure and the commencement of learning of the alphabets. All these Samskaras are performed with the chanting of Vedic hymns. For instance the following mantra is chanted in the ear of the child during the naming function: angaadangaatsambhavasi

hrdayaadadhij□□yase, aotmao Nom putranaa maasitvarn jeeva saradah satom. "Limb of my limb, you are born out of my heart, you are myself called son, may you live for one hundred years." This lofty concept does not fail to reveal the background for the cream of Indian Culture. Similarly the initiation, which is performed at an impressionable age of the individual assumes great importance in the influence that the Vedas wield in his cultured life. To begin with the initiation which consists of wearing a sacred thread and chanting Gayathri mantra, a particular number of times, thrice a day, introduces a rigid discipline into his life and also helps him towards spiritual enlightenment. The hymn is an invocation to the Sun God who is the dispeller of darkness both literal and figurative, and the destroyer of diseases like leprosy and jaundice. The hymn is: tatsaviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dheemahi, dhiyo yo nah pracodayat.

"Let us pray and meditate upon the most powerful Sun God so that he may nourish our intellects and prompt them in the proper manner." The Sandhyaa Vandana or bow to the twilight at dawn and dusk and to the Sun at midday is definitely one of the spotlights in Indian Culture influenced by the Vedas.

The institution of marriage, an important Samskara in the Indian life reveals to a great extent the Vedic influence on Indian Culture. It abounds in so many details that, they appear unnecessary at first, but are really essential in improving the culture of the persons involved. For instance, both the bride and the bride groom are made to promise or swear to, each other not to hide any matter religious, financial or sexual from his or her partner under any circumstances. The following is the swearing: dharme ca arthe co kaame ca naatitaraami.

which means: "I do not keep anything away from you in religion, finance or sex." Similarly the instructions to the bride as to how she should conduct herself in the new house are simply grand not only from the point of view of poetic excellence but also from the cultural point of view in as much as they expect a high degree of adaptability to ensure a happy home, as in bhartr-maatr pitr bhraatr hrdayaanandinee bhava avidhavaa bhavo varshaant maa dukham labheh kacit.

"Delight the hearts of the father, mother and brother of your husband. Be with him for many years and do not get any kind of sorrow whatever."

The same thing is true of every Samskara that is performed from the birth, right upto death and even after. A European officer who accidentally happened to hear the Shraddha mantras from a neighbour's house and who was apprised of the rigorous procedure in its performance seems to have remarked spontaneously and appreciatively as follows: "Indian Culture can be said to be the finest without the fear of contradiction as the parents are remembered with great respect and reverence even after years of their departure from this world. The chanting of the Vedic hymns is so awe-inspiring that one does not fail to discern their influence in every walk of life. This remark does amply substantiate the belief that every Samskara in life contributes to the perfection of culture in man.

I will now select a few hymns which are famous throughout as Shanthi mantras to point out and highlight the cultural influence wielded by them. They are recited at congregations assembled for eating together or studying together or being trained.

saha naavavatu, saha nau bhunaktu, saha veeryam karavaavahai, tejasvl naavadheetamastu, maa vidvishaavahai.

'May He protect us both. May He help us to eat or enjoy together: May both of us do powerful and strong acts. May our study be illustrious and let there be no hatred among us.'

The concept of living and working together eschewing hatred is one of the finest examples of the influence of Vedas in Indian Culture. This was the basis for the joint family institution which flourished in India. Again the hymn bhadram karnebhiih srnuyaama devaah, bhadram pasyemaakshabhriyajatraah, sthirairangaistushtuvamstanuubhiih vyasema deva hitam yadaayuh.

"May we hear with our ears what is auspicious and may we see what is good with our eyes; May we with steady limbs live happily throughout our lives doing what is pleasing to gods and what is beneficial to others."

A laudable concept in the Vedas which has influenced Indian Culture to a great extent is in the following hymns of the tenth mandala of the Rigveda.

sam gacchadhvam sam vadadhvam sam vo manaamst jaanataam, devaa bhaagam yatha puurve sanjaanaanaa. upaasate (Rg.10-191-2)

"Move together, Speak together; May your minds understand together, just as Gods of ancient times share the oblations offered to them, may you also share your wealth with unity and understanding."

The cultural aspect underlying this concept is live and let live policy. Universal happiness exists in sharing the wealth with others and not in grabbing all the wealth for oneself. Absence of selfishness is one of the qualities which is seen prominently in Indian Culture and is undoubtedly the influence of the Vedas.

samaano mantrah samitih samaanee samaanam manah saha cittam eshaam, samaanam mantramabhi mantraye vah samaanena vo havishaa juhomi. (Rg. 10-191-3).

"Let the prayer of all be the same. Let the counsel of all be the same. Let their minds be the same and let all of us think alike. I shall recite a hymn for achieving unity of your minds. Similarly I shall worship with oblation for your good and prosperity."

The efficacy of congregational prayer is hinted in this hymn. It is always desirable when we offer prayer for others and not for ourselves. Pushing self to the background and praying and sacrificing for the good of others is a noble trait of Indian Culture which is clearly the influence of the Vedas. Unity of thought and unity of purpose, sinking all differences, are essential for universal peace in the world. That is the reason why these are called hymns of Peace or Shanthi mantras:

samaanee va aaluutih samaanaa hrdayaani yob, samaanam astu vo mono yathaa vah susahaasati (Rg. 10-191-4).

"May your aim be the same and may your hearts be united. May your minds become one and of the same form. May all these tend towards your mutual auspicious association."

In this hymn also is seen the unity of thought and purpose. All these hymns indicate beyond doubt how the development of Indian Culture was influenced by the Vedas.

The hymns that have been quoted by way of illustration as specimens of the influence of Vedas in Indian Culture, are full of boundless optimism, unshakeable faith in divinity and haunting melody and have exercised a lasting and visible impact on the human mind for several thousands of years. As H. H. Shankaracharya of Puri has rightly pointed out, the Vedas are the fountainhead and illimitable store-house of all knowledge. It automatically follows that Indian Culture, which is the oldest, the richest and the finest must have been influenced entirely by the Vedas, which also form the foundation for philosophy and spiritual knowledge.

Sahithyalankara Kavibhushana Dr. K. S. Nagaraian (Late)

Collected by Dr. Keladi Gundajois

Source: Bhavan's Journal, 15 September, 2017

THE GODAVARI PUSHKARAM

Rajahmundry, more popularly known as Rajamahendravaram is situated on the eastern bank of the river Godavari and is the most important place of historical interest in Andhra Pradesh.

It is one of the few ancient capitals of the Hindu kingdoms of the Deccan that still survives and maintains the glorious past and reputation as an ancient seat of learning and culture. In this celebrated city flourished the great poets and scholars who wrote some of their immortal poems and brought eternal glory and fame to Andhra Pradesh.

Matchless for its sanctity, unparalleled in colour and pageant and unequalled for the milling multitudes it draws, the Godavari Pushkaram held once in twelve years here is looked forward to with yearning tenderness and anticipation by Hindu devotees, rich and poor, young and old, the sinner and saint.

Godavari Pushkaram, Andhra's greatest bathing fair, recently came off after 12 years on the 7th and 24th September with great pomp and glory that have made the river Godavari the greatest river of the season.

The Great Godavari

During this season, the river Godavari at Rajahmundry is considered to be as sacred as the Ganga, having been brought by the great sage Goutama who performed ceaseless penance at Brahmagiri in Western ghats and obtained Ganga from Lord Shiva and led her here. Since she A bath in Godavari particularly in Rajahmundry is noted for fulfilling all one's wishes, curing diseases, bestowing riches and longevity.

Significance of Pushkaram

It is said that Devendra, having been cursed by sage Goutama for committing a sin, approached Brahma, the Creator with a request to favour him with a most sacred theertha where one could wash off one's sins by a mere bath.

Taking pity on Devendra, Brahma created a deep tank in the river Ganga, poured the sacred waters

from his holy vessel into it and called it 'PUSHKARA'. Devendra got rid of all his sins and once again became pure, after taking bath in it for three days. Since then, Pushkara became famous and was called the "THEERTHARAJ" by Brahma. Later, Devaguru Brihaspati having satisfied Brahma with his great penance, obtained the Pushkara as his boon. Pushkara, however, refused to follow him leaving Brahma. At last it ended in a compromise that Pushkara should be with Devaguru for twelve days in the beginning and twelve days in the end of his (Jupiter's) year and one hour at noon during the rest of the days.

Devaguru or Jupiter's stay in the twelve Rasis (the Zodiacal signs, viz., Mesha, Vrishabha etc.) represents Pushkara Festival to the twelve sacred rivers of India: his stay in Mesha is Pushkara for Ganga, Vrishabha for Narmada, Mithuna for Saraswati, Karkata for Yamuna, Simha for Godavari, Kanya for Krishna, Tula for Cauvery, Vrishchika for Tamraparni, Dhanus for Sindhu, Makara for Tungabhadra, Kumbha for Bhimarathi and Meena for Praneeta.

According to the terms of compromise, Brahma with Vishnu, Siva, other Lokapalas like Indra, Rishis, Pitrudevas etc. with all their retinue and the three and half crores of holy theerthas, go to Pushkara during the above twelve days.

The popular belief is that a bath in the holy river during this period would absolve one of all sins and religious rites and ablutions are performed to the deceased ancestors who bless their progeny with all success in life.

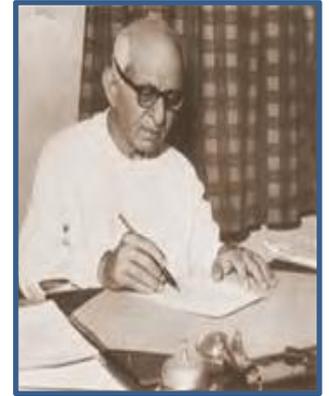
*From Bhavan's Journal, November 05, 1967
Reprinted in Bhavan's Journal July - December,*

2017

Kulapativani

Students Bring Sunshine

True service, apart from great national crisis where the student must render every assistance, is to bring sunshine in whatever sphere he moves in. It is as great a service as any man can render. An ailing sister in the house; a lonely mother who needs company; an unfortunate neighbour who needs aid; a passer-by who is in distress; a victim of crime as you go along the street; some unfortunate who is being sacrificed at the altar of a social, economic or communal evil; a riot where the innocent requires protection even at the cost of life; a city without sweepers which wants volunteers for scavenging; a great occasion to be organised which needs service; a village needing education for social welfare; a night class where the poor have to be taught; — these are spheres of service in which every student can bring not only help but sunshine.



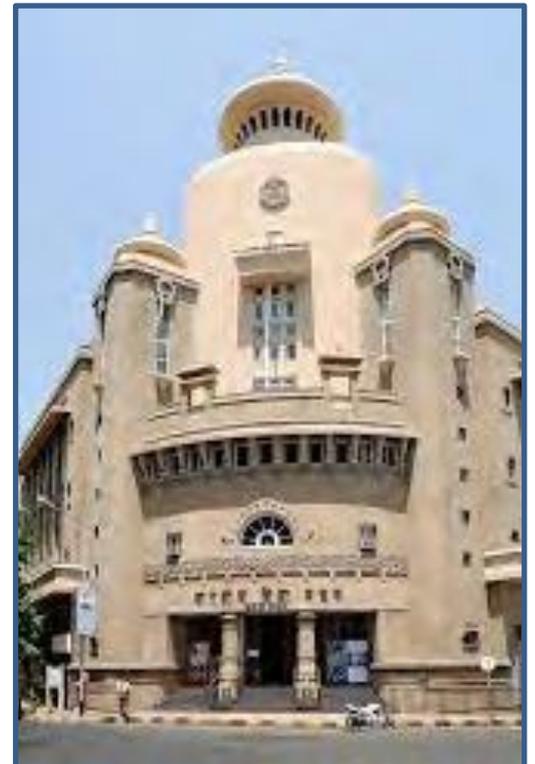
Dr K.M. Munshi
Founder, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

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.



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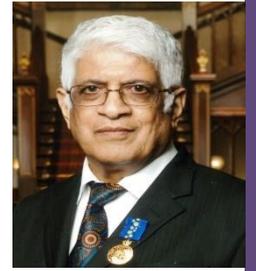
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