Events during the inauguration of Ramakrishna Math, Ramanathapuram on 26 June 2016
A CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL MONTHLY OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER
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‘Doing is very good, but that comes from thinking. . . . Fill the brain, therefore, with high thoughts, highest ideals, place them day and night before you, and out of that will come great work.’

—Swami Vivekananda
Cover Story

Ramakrishna Math, Ramanathapuram, Tamilnadu

Ramakrishna Math, Ramanathapuram, is built on the spot where stood Shankara Vilasam, a bungalow sanctified by Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji stayed in Shankara Vilasam for three days from 29 to 31 January 1897 on returning from his first visit to America. He was the guest of Sri Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramnad.

The Math became a branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math on 26 June 2016. It is around 113 kms from Madurai and 60 kms from Rameswaram.

Please see page 297 for the history of this Math.

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Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest the divinity within.

Gita Verse for Reflection
Tr. by Swami Tapasyananda

निर्मानमोहा जितसंदृष्टो अध्यात्मनित्या विनिमृत्तकामः  ||
द्वन्द्वविमुक्तः सुखः संज्ञेयः चचन्तयमूढः पदमृग्यम तत् ॥

—Bhagavad Gita, 15. 5

They who are free from pride and delusion, who have no attachments, who are ever absorbed in spiritual pursuits, who are free from all worldly desires, who are unaffected by the varying situations of pleasurable and painful nature—such persons, freed from ignorance, attain to the Eternal State.

The watchword of all well-being, of all moral good is not 'I' but 'thou.' Who cares whether there is a heaven or a hell, who cares if there is a soul or not, who cares if there is an unchangeable or not? Here is the world, and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt. Forget yourselves; this is the first lesson to be learnt, whether you are a theist or an atheist, whether you are an agnostic or a Vedantist, a Christian or a Muslim. The one lesson obvious to all is the destruction of the little self and the building up of the Real Self.

—Swami Vivekananda, CW, 2:353
Did You Ask a Good Question Today?

In 1944 Isidor Issac Rabi received the Nobel Prize in Physics. When someone later asked him how he came to be a scientist, he replied, ‘My mother made me a scientist without ever intending it. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: “So? Did you learn anything today?” But not my mother. She always asked me a difficult question. “Izzy,” she would say, “did you ask a good question today?” That difference—asking good questions—made me become a scientist.’\(^1\)

Indeed, asking questions is an integral part of our everyday life. We cannot imagine going through a day without some question popping up in our mind: ‘Where are my keys?’, ‘What is the time?’, ‘Will it rain today?’, ‘How do you do?’ One can spend an entire life entertaining such utilitarian, formal and sometimes simply idle questions. But these questions are only useful for treading the beaten path and skimming through life superficially. These questions have not the power to knock on the door and open the secrets of nature, or uncover the Truth of life.

‘I will only be too glad if I can excite in you the power of thinking for yourselves,’\(^2\) says Swami Vivekananda. Thinking for oneself means to approach a subject, a challenge, or life itself with a mind that is independent, unprejudiced, creative, clear and vigorous. It is such independent thinking that throws up fundamental questions. And these fundamental questions are the good questions. They are the pathfinders. They determine our goals, shape the purpose of our lives, and hold us steady amidst the turbulence of life. They give a forceful momentum that empowers us to go forward and uncover the mysteries and subtler truths of life. Indeed, all kinds of progress, both at the individual and at the social level, are the outcome of powerful, intelligent questions. And in our modern society where globalization and technology is rapidly changing everything, asking good questions is an important life-skill.

It is said that we now have the largest generation of 10 to 24 year olds in the history of mankind. Their population is estimated to be 1.8 billion. No wonder Swami Vivekananda repeatedly placed the youth at the centre of his plans for the regeneration and progress of mankind. These young minds are the agents of change at the local, national and international levels. They will play a crucial role in the history of human society. The important question is: are these young men and women being properly trained to face the challenges posed by technology, manipulative market forces, biased media, pseudo-intellectual discourses and fundamentalist propaganda? Are they ready to ask good questions?

Children have endless questions as they grow up. But sadly, elders at home and teachers in school soon teach children to stop questioning and to start answering their questions. Would it not be wiser for us to follow Izzy’s mother and encourage our children to be astute and ask incisive questions? Would it not be possible to design...
an evaluation system that tests the student’s ability to frame important fundamental questions? Swami Vivekananda declares that education is assimilation of ideas. This assimilation is possible only with deep, persistent, meditative questioning.

The growth of spiritual culture in the Upanishadic age was on the foundation of fearless questioning. The daring Upanishadic rishis questioned everything about Nature, man and God and evolved a science of religion that complemented the physical sciences. As spiritual scientists of the highest order, they arrived at the root of all fundamental questions: ‘What is that by knowing which everything else is known?’

They declared that Reality is one and it is manifest in the two fields of external nature and internal nature. To arrive at the complete truth, both these worlds are to be investigated. When someone investigates the field of external nature, everyone else can benefit from it. But in the field of inner nature, which is the realm of spirituality, the pursuit of truth is always subjective. The answers in this realm should be discovered within by individual effort. As Swami Vivekananda says, ‘truth which you swallow from others will not be yours. You have to realise truth and work it out for yourself according to your own nature . . . All must struggle to be individuals—strong, standing on your own feet, thinking your own thoughts, realising your own Self.’

Thousands of years ago in the Upanishadic period, Shvetaketu, a young lad, had returned home from Gurukula after rigorous studies for 12 long years. Though he had acquired great scholarship, his conduct showed that he remained ignorant of higher spiritual knowledge. Noticing this, his father, the sage Uddalaka asked him, ‘Did you ever ask your teacher about that instruction by which one hears what cannot be heard, one perceives what cannot be perceived and one knows what cannot be known?’ An embarrassed Shvetaketu had to admit that he had mastered all the branches of knowledge but had failed to ask his teacher this most quintessential question.

India’s great tradition of encouraging even children to ask fundamental questions of life, needs to be preserved and carried into the global civilization and culture that is slowly but surely taking shape. One of the powerful global movements that is carrying out this noble task was initiated sometime in the mid-19th century by Gadadhar Chattopadhyay, a charming rustic lad in rural Bengal who asked himself a simple but pertinent question: ‘What is the use of this secular knowledge?’

His sharp mind determined that such secular knowledge was a mere bread-and-butter earning knowledge and hence refused to pursue it. This in itself is nothing uncommon. But Gadadhar did not stop there. The death of his father and later his elder brother made him inquire more deeply about life. As Swami Vivekananda says, ‘there comes a time in the lives of individuals and of races when, involuntarily, they ask, “Is this real?” . . . Is death the end of all these things to which we are clinging, as if they were the most real of all realities, the most substantial of all substances? . . . The hopes of a lifetime, built up little by little with all the energies of a great mind, vanish in a second. Are they real? This question must be answered.’ As the young priest of the Divine Mother in the Dakshineswar temple, Gadadhar thought, ‘Devotees like Ramprasad had the vision of the Mother. So it is certain that the Mother of the universe is realizable; why can I not then be blessed with Her vision?’ He used to say with an eager heart, ‘Thou showed Thyself to
Ramprasad, Mother, why then shouldst Thou not reveal Thyself to Me? By the power of his intense questioning and earnest prayers he had the vision of the Universal Mother and emerged as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the divine child of the Divine Mother. And in course of time he was ready for another young lad, Narendranath Datta, who approached him with the fundamental question: ‘Have you seen God, Sir?’ This question is still reverberating and reshaping the world.

A good question can truly change the world. King Parikshit who was cursed to die within seven days for insulting a sage, installed his son Janamejaya on the throne and retired to the holy banks of Ganga. There surrounded by many great sages, he asked Shukadeva, the son of Vyasa, ‘What constitutes the most important duty of a man faced with imminent death? O great one! Tell me what such a person should hear about, repeat, do, remember and worship. Also tell me what he should not do in these respects.’ Greatly pleased, Shukadeva said, ‘O King! You have put a very excellent question. It is beneficial to the world. All great men will approve of it, and it will provide men with much devotional material fit for hearing.’ The out come of Parikshit’s question was the Srimad Bhagavatam, the antidote to maya or delusion.

Raising incisive questions is a sure way to break the spell of maya. In the parable of ‘The Barber and the Seven Jars’, narrated by Sri Ramakrishna, the king vanquishes maya through the power of his question. In the parable, a Yaksha offers seven jars of gold to the King’s barber. But the seventh jar is only half full. Greatly disappointed the barber and his wife decide to save money and fill up the jar with gold. But in spite of repeated addition of gold, the magical jar continues to remain half empty. Seeing his barber emaciated and distraught, the king rightly guesses that he is trapped by the Yaksha. He then tells the barber, ‘The Yaksha offered me also the same jars, but I asked him whether this money might be spent or was merely to be hoarded. No sooner had I asked this question than the Yaksha ran away without any reply. Don’t you know that no one can spend that money? It only brings with it the desire of hoarding.’

Much of our everyday life runs on autopilot. We go through the day by the force of habits, both mental and physical. These habits are shaped by our Samskaras. Though we make a show of being intelligent, happy and in control of our lives we are, to a large extent, miserable slaves of our deep rooted tendencies and impulses. Our tremendous inner potentialities remain unrealized. Questioning is the powerful tool that can awaken us into a conscious mode of living.

Instead of remaining always engrossed in the everyday details of life, should we not pause once in a while and remind ourselves that our time in this world is uncertain and short, and that our energy too is limited?

Would it not be wise for us to ask a good question today?

References

Srijukta Girish says now and then that he could cure diseases simply by chanting the name of the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Girish and other devotees): ‘Those that are of low propensities go in for occult powers, such as, healing diseases, helping to win law suits, walking on waters, etc. The pure-minded devotees seek nothing save the lotus feet of the Lord. Hriday once told me “Uncle, why don’t you ask for some occult powers from the Mother?” Mine was the nature of a boy,—so, while making Japam in the shrine of Kali, I told the Mother, “Ma, Hriday tells me to ask of you some occult powers!” At once I was shown a vision,—an old prostitute, about forty years old, wearing a black-bordered cloth, came and sat turning her back towards me. . . So the Mother showed me that occult power is but the ordure of the old prostitute! Then I rebuked Hriday for giving me such a bad counsel and said that it was owing to him that I had suffered the vision.

‘Those who have a little of these occult powers get name and fame in society. Many are desirous to take the role of spiritual teachers, that people might come and celebrate them,—that they might have a number of followers and disciples! People would say, “Well, Gurucharan is having a good turn nowadays,—see, persons flock to him in swarms; he has a large following; his house is flooded with articles,—various things are brought by various persons. He has the capacity now to feed thousands, if he so chooses.”

‘But Guru-ism is like prostitution! It is to barter one’s own self for the sake of such filthy things like money, name, fame, pleasures of the body, etc. Is it not foul to debase thus for trivial things those very body, mind and soul with which one can realise God? . . . . It is courting ruination to one’s self for a trifle!

‘I used to see very many other things in meditation during the period of my sadhana. Once while I was meditating underneath the Bel (Vilwa) tree, the Papa Purusha came and tempted me in different ways. He appeared in the form of a soldier, and proffered to give me money, fame, sex-pleasure, various powers, etc. I invoked the Mother. Very mysterious are all these! Then the Mother appeared before me and I begged of Her to hack him to pieces. Oh, that form of the Mother—that world-bewitching beauty of Hers—it is still recalled in my memory. But it appeared as if the whole world was trembling at Her gaze’. 
Reminiscences of Sargachhi

SWAMI SUHITANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue...)

Sargachhi is located in Murshidabad district of West Bengal and is well-known to the devotees of Ramakrishna Order for being associated with Swami Akhandananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The following writing is about another revered monk who lived in Sargachhi, Swami Premeshananda (1894-1967), a disciple of Holy Mother and well known for encouraging many young men and women, as also many married people to live a life of spirituality and service. The following reminiscences in Bengali, Sargachhir Smriti, is by Swami Suhitananda, the General Secretary of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math. He was a personal attendant of Swami Premeshananda for several years and while serving him noted his conversations and teachings in his diary. The same is being serially published in the Udbodhan (our Bengali monthly published from Kolkata) from its Jyaishtha, B.S. 1419 issue. These reminiscences have been translated by Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, a long-standing devotee from Kolkata. English words and expressions which appear in the original have been put within single inverted commas. The numbers ||1||, ||2||, etc., denote the serial numbers of the Udbodhan instalments.

16.5.59

Those who have seen Sargachhi of today won’t be able to imagine how dry its weather was during those days. It seemed like there were flashes of fire all around during the burning heat of summer. At that time the dam at Farakka had not been built. There was no electricity for bringing water to the fields with the help of shallow pumps.

Premeshananda Maharaj, after returning from his afternoon walk, was sitting in an easy chair in the veranda. It was after many days that he had walked a long distance. He was seated with his legs folded.

Somebody said: Yes, if you sit this way with your legs folded you would be quite comfortable.

Maharaj: You see, there is no comfort until you go beyond the body, mind and intellect. I recovered from my bodily ailment a while ago. But what of it? There would be ailment again and recovery once more. Peace is when you go beyond these. Let whatever you talk, be about God—even if you talk about other things, bring it back to talking about God. It is very difficult to talk about God with ordinary people. Take the case of the doctor who is so learned — he too says that he has seen somewhere in a cinema that in Dwaraka Sri Radha merged into Sri Krishna. How would they know what God is? This body made of five elements does not merge. From our childhood we had heard that Chaitanyadeva merged into Jagannatha. But later it came to be known that he left his mortal body because of septicaemia. His ‘I’ had merged and become one with the collective ‘I’. However, to make the masses understand, there is no way but to explain it in terms of the
body. To make them understand that it is very difficult to realize God, we have to say that one must perform austerity by remaining in the head-downwards position for ten thousand years. Why did Ravana have ten heads? This was to signify that Ravana had ten-fold more desires. They were Asuras as written in the sixteenth chapter of the Gita. The real objective is to learn ‘Who am I?’ For that there is no question of any sect, or good or bad way. ‘Sri Ramakrishna is the latest and revised edition of Parabrahma’. Therefore, since we have got the opportunity, catch hold of him.

17.5.59

It is 10.30 in the morning. Someone is offering bhoga [ritualistic offering of food] to Thakur. Would that prevent his eating? It is he who has said – ‘Aham Vaishvanaro bhutva praninam dehamashritah’ (abiding in the body of living beings as Vaishvanara, I . . . – Gita, 15.14).

Attendant: Maharaj, can some danger crop up from the way we are going?

Maharaj: One must remain very careful in monastic life. It seems that things are going on very well, but slowly one becomes bound—God recedes in the background. There are dangers all around us. They are always trying to lead us astray. However, it is also true that we have a stock of discriminatory powers in us. If we pray Dhiyo yo nah pracodayat (‘Inspire our intellects’— part of the Gayatri mantra), then these cannot do any harm whatsoever.

Attendant: In the scriptures there are many authentic statements that one can raise one’s life solely by devotion. Then why do you speak about the four Yogas again and again?

Maharaj: To attain God solely through devotion or worship is the ultimate thing. Gopal’s mother had that. Her mind had been purified perhaps as a result of impressions gained in earlier births. But we have to purify our mind first. After the mind becomes pure we will ‘feel affinity’ with God. We will have to try constantly to purify the body-mind-intellect by means of conscious discrimination and in this way make the mind pure. Then we will attain love for God.

22.5.59

Maharaj: There are three things of Thakur which may be meditated upon:

(1) Appearance — His eyes, nose, mouth, hair, cloth and hands. His long eyes, hands befitting a great man, the structure of his feet etc. The ears are below the level of the eyes.

(2) Disport — Starting from little Gadai slowly to his play during the last days. All is imbued with the thought of God.
(3) Who he is—To know this is knowledge.

Before meditation, think that I am not the body, nor the mind, nor the intellect at least for five minutes. If you can do this every day you may redeem yourself.

Attendant: One thing. How can we recognize those who have had transcendental experience?

Maharaj: Those who think about and dwell on this a good deal can understand.

Attendant: Sir, your ‘conviction’ is established. Just like one who has heard stories about London, can describe London as if one has roamed in it. Please tell us how many in our Order have had transcendental experience?

Maharaj: I don’t know. These things cannot be said from outside.

Attendant: Have you recognized someone who has had it?

Maharaj: That cannot be recognized from outside. Many do have ‘conviction.’

Attendant: One thing Maharaj, Thakur nowhere said what the four Yogas are.

Maharaj: Look at his life. He said things like ‘Satchidananda Krishna, O Krishna! You are my life. O Krishna! You are my mind.’ (Knowledge). Again, he said, ‘O Hari!’, ‘Mother show yourself’ and floated in tears (Devotion). Then he used to pass into Samadhi (Yoga). And to bring this message unsolicited to people, he used to go from house to house (Work). Everything of what Thakur said is not in the Gospel. Besides, people like him did not destroy anything which was in vogue. And this to such an extent that even though Thakur knew that the Brahmins of the Kali temple used to carry the consecrated food to the houses of their concubines, he would show respect to them as Brahmins. He used to respect all the current disciplines — those of Knowledge, Work, Devotion and Yoga.

And Swamiji was verily the interpretation of Thakur. Thakur entered into Swamiji. We do not see Thakur, Mother and Swamiji as different. They are our ‘trinity’. Besides, you will see that as soon as there is Knowledge, Devotion will come and as soon as there is Devotion there is no way but Yoga will be there. And as soon as there is Yoga, one has to work for the sake of His pleasure.

Question: Did Sankara have all the four Yogas in him?

Answer: Yes, Sankara was both a jnani and a yogi. He had to fight with the Buddhists. The Buddhists were argumentative. Therefore he had to make the way of knowledge ‘predominant’. Read about Sankara’s founding of temples and images of gods and goddesses and the hymns written by him — those show what a great devotee he was. And Thakur said that just as elephants have two kinds of teeth, Chaitanyadeva had knowledge inside and devotion outside.

Attendant: Did Totapuri have all four?

Maharaj: Totapuri did have all four. But he did not know. Hence he had to learn from Thakur.

25.5.59

Soumya Maharaj had sent two Brahma-charins from Shillong. (One of them later became revered Swami Prameyananda—a Vice-President of our Order; the other is now in America—Swami Bhaskarananda.) In the afternoon, while walking in the veranda, Maharaj told them: See, just as one develops interest in mathematics as one goes on working out mathematical problems, similarly one develops love for God as one goes on cultivating interest and studying about God. However, it is seen that many derive a kind of delight from the study of treatises on knowledge. They become engrossed in
that and forget their real purpose. If they are taught the second part of Atmavikasa (a manual for young students, which Maharaj had written long ago) right from a young age, then they might be spared a lot of suffering. And all suffering that exists originates from desires—*Vihaya kaman yah sarvan* (The man, who abandoning all desires... – *Gita* 2.71)

Brahmacharin: Our lot is only to go on doing work, work and work! What is the value of work without knowing God?

Maharaj: To know God is a far cry. One has to do work. Don’t say work—say service. Knowing everyone to be God we would serve everyone. Otherwise ‘attachment’ would come. No harm would result if one works in that spirit.

26.5.59 (8.30 in the morning)

The location was the northern veranda. Maharaj was seated in an easy chair and the attendants were sitting around him in a circle. The two Brahmacharins from Shillong were with them.

Brahmacharin: There should be a properly written manual directing us about how we should conduct ourselves. Otherwise, we see monks of different types and cannot understand anything.

Maharaj: That’s right. Monks are of many types—some are endowed with *tamas*, some with *rajas* and some with *sattva guna*. Thakur saluted even a *tamoguni* (one endowed with *tamas*) monk with folded hands; otherwise he would curse. A *rajoguni* (one endowed with *rajas*) monk likes work. *Sattvaguni* experiences bliss. One who has read the *Gita* can rightly recognize these distinctions of a monk and can keep the goal steady.

Brahmacharin: What kind of clothes should we have?

Maharaj: One should follow the middle path. Let not it seem from outside that you are doing austerities, yet do not take to foppery. Do not pay too much attention to worldly matters. The real goal is to attain God. All work is for the sake of that.

Brahmacharin: That is, one has to carry on with our sight on God without caring for who says what. Is that so?

Maharaj: No. We live in society; so we have to abide by social customs a little. That means we have to take the boat to the destination; for that we have to incline a little here, turn a little there and go on making room and sidetracking somehow. Otherwise there will be a collision and everything will be finished. One has to always remember the ‘end and means.’ Whatever ‘means’ I may adopt, I should watch out whether that is taking me along the way to God.

Brahmacharin: Maharaj, if we are not careful about these matters, will downfall ensue?

Maharaj: No, we do not see any downfall. A sheep trails behind on the way, but that is only to go faster later. Perhaps it may seem that one has had a downfall in this birth; but in the next birth one would go ahead fast with doubled enthusiasm.

Nowadays our work has multiplied a lot. But unless we pay equal attention to all the four Yogas, in no way can ‘growth’ be achieved. *(To be continued. . .)*

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Don’t give up the chance to serve others. Devotion grows very quickly if all living beings are served with one’s body, mind, and speech. —*Swami Premeshananda*
Practical Vedanta

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

Summing up the lessons of India’s political history, Will Durant in Our Oriental Heritage says, ‘Weakened by division, it succumbed to invaders; impoverished by invaders, it lost all power of resistance, and took refuge in supernatural consolations; it argued that both mastery and slavery were superficial delusions, and concluded that freedom of the body or the nation was hardly worth defending in so brief a life’.¹

Time and again did Swami Vivekananda turn the searchlight inward and declare that our internal dissensions, selfishness, mutual jealousy and hatred were among the principal causes of our degeneration; that these sordid vices ate into the very vitals of the nation and promoted slavery. The Swami’s penetrating observations in this context may be profitably read by everyone wishing the well-being of the country: ‘What we in India have are only deep-rooted envy and strong antipathy against one another, morbid desire to ruin by hook or by crook the weak, and lick the feet of the strong…’² Unfortunately, even today these defects of our national character continue to be present in menacing proportions.

The wailings of the nation’s soul, incarcerated like Prometheus, had already begun to be heard in the last century. The first faint murmurings of a new life were already audible to the pioneers of awakened India. But it fell to the lot of Swamiji to give the nation the lead that would rehabilitate it. ‘India was hauled up out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries by the hand of her own sannyasin.’³

It is indeed a fascinating exercise to read the story of the life of Swamiji in the context of national awakening. Swamiji had the unique advantage to come in contact with a super-personality like that of Sri Ramakrishna. He saw the living image of wisdom and love in his master. The Swami’s penetrating observations in this context may be profitably read by everyone wishing the well-being of the country: ‘What we in India have are only deep-rooted envy and strong antipathy against one another, morbid desire to ruin by hook or by crook the weak, and lick the feet of the strong…’² Unfortunately, even today these defects of our national character continue to be present in menacing proportions.

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to affirmation of the reality of the illusory appearance. Sri Ramakrishna, by means of his unique Sadhana, imparted to the monistic Vedanta a practical mould by emphasizing a positive aspect. The trans-empirical awareness of identity upon which the doctrine of pure Advaita is ultimately based was of course Sri Ramakrishna’s fundamental philosophy. And he stood with the traditional Advaitins to acclaim identity as the fundamental stuff of reality. Yet he refused to remain forever absorbed in Samadhi. His spiritual life was a perpetual transition from unity to plurality and vice versa. Swamiji’s Nirvikalpa Samadhi gave him the incontrovertible certitude of the teachings of his guru.

Following the pathway treaded by his master, Swamiji seized the essential truth of religion, viz, the oneness of Jiva-Brahma. His own supreme realization of the unity of existence and of the divinity of the soul dissolved the breach between the spiritual and the secular, between perfect detachment and disinterested service guided by an integral vision. The spiritual ideal is for life, and life must be lived truly and well in all its spheres – private, social and international. Swamiji wished that the eternal faith should become dynamic and living and be a force for waging a relentless struggle for the all-round development of the human personality. Swamiji yearned to raise mankind to higher levels of existence by the gradual spiritualization on the vital plane, by the sanctification of the empirical, and the deification of the material. He made a very bold attempt to convert the metaphysical abstraction of Vedanta into a vibrant, living force. He worked to bring the Vedanta from forest to the battlefield of life. He did not want us to make use of the Vedanta force exclusively for the supra-mundane quest. His mission was to transfer the emphasis from involvement in metaphysics to living a life of practical righteousness, and from striving for individual salvation to labouring for the salvation of all beings. ‘The abstract Advaita’, he argued, ‘must become living, poetic in everyday life’. Thus Brahmanubhuti, the Universal Consciousness, the highest spiritual realization visualized by the monistic school of philosophy, was brought in letter and spirit by Swamiji into his advocacy of dynamic religion and Practical Vedanta. His grand message is a call of awakening to the totality of our manhood, to the all-ness of our personality. The modern apostle of monism that Swamiji was, he breathed a new life into the moribund Hinduism. To quote a writer, ‘This new Shankaracharya may well be claimed to be the unifier of Hindu ideology. Travelling all over India, he not only aroused a sense of Hindu feeling, but taught the doctrine of Universal Vedanta as the background of the new Hindu reformation.’

Swamiji, though a staunch monist, never preached a world-denying, pessimistic and negative philosophy of life. In his interpretation of Vedanta, the world does not get totally negated and annihilated, but is sublimated, transformed and deified. The world thus transformed and deified is the real world; and Swamiji was the first to proclaim this truth in clear, unequivocal and emphatic terms. It is not possible to come across a finer statement of the quintessence of the Advaita Philosophy than in his brilliant lecture, God in Everything, delivered in London on October 27, 1896.

Thus theoretically Swamiji’s message is one of sarvata-vada, and practically, it is one of sarva-seva-vada. There are monists who vehemently support the first, but do not pay any heed to the second. It was Swamiji, who
for the first time combined gloriously the Advaita doctrine of the oneness of the soul with the Vaishnava doctrine of service to all. His crystal-clear and trenchant exposition of maya, of karma, of Vedanta, and privilege of Practical Vedanta, is a new light shed on philosophy. His brilliant and exhilarating message of spiritualistic humanism is voiced thunderingly all through his fiery speeches and writings. He was an eternal pilgrim to the city of God and still a valiant warrior in the cause of suffering humanity. His magnificent and colorful personality had immense lustre added to it because of this twofold characteristic.

Truth is not a closed book. The newness of Swamiji’s message lay in the turn he gave to life’s motif. It was one of his greatest services to the welfare of mankind that he showed how pure religion can face all the challenges and help man in his evolutionary process. No higher stroke of his genius can be looked for than in his thesis of Practical Vedanta. It has no parallel in history. As Romain Rolland says, ‘He (Swamiji) surrounded service with a divine aureole and raised it to the dignity of a religion’. For nearly ten centuries, Advaita philosophy had been a series of footnotes to Shankara. All religious movements that shook the community had aimed either at strengthening orthodoxy or expanding the folds of social workers, and were narrowly spiritual in appeal or much too mundane. In Swamiji, the urges of the total life in all its aspects found a voice that struck the consciousness of the people. For the first time in the history of the world, the harmony of religions took deep root in the human psyche.

For the first time in Indian history, philosophy and religion were examined from a modern historical background and spiritual treasures were successfully pressed into the service of enriching the secular life. Swamiji re-oriented the whole outlook of religion and life by his emphasis on Atmano Mokshartham Jagaddhitaya Cha – for the liberation of self and for doing good to mankind. India had known orders of sannyasins for ages upon ages, but never before were they consecrated to the service of that God whom we mistakenly call man. Never before was Vedanta interpreted as a mine of strength; never before had Vedantic catholicity as Swamiji conceived and realized it, made such an impact on human life. Never before had the conception of the all-round development of the human personality been based on the four yogas. Never before had this lucid exposition of Vedanta been made: ‘If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction henceforth between sacred and secular…. Life is itself religion’. Speaking on ‘The Absolute and Manifestation’ to a London audience in 1896, Swamiji said: ‘By Buddha the moral side of the philosophy was laid stress upon, and by Shankaracharya, the intellectual side. He worked out, rationalised, and placed before men the wonderful coherent system of Advaita.’ And the great Swami applied the truths of Vedanta to the solution of all social and national and international problems so that man’s life on earth might become saner, richer, and fuller.

References

The Sethupathis

The royal families of Sethupathis have been ruling the Ramanathapuram from time immemorial. They are credited with protecting the Sethu (bridge) built by Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra and the Rameswaram temple where Lord Siva was worshipped by Sri Ramachandra. Swami Vivekananda refers to the stone slab in the Ramanathapuram palace on which Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra installed their ancestor as Sethupathi for the first time. The stone can still be seen 'throne-like' in the palace and is used during coronation and other important ceremonies connected with the royal family.

It is said that during the period of Kizhavan Sethupathi (1673 to 1708 A.D.), Ramanathapuram became the capital of their kingdom. In 1772, the British led by Commander Stevenson and the Mughals jointly took control of the Ramanathapuram State. Colonel Martin was given the responsibility of administering the state. Colonel Martin lived in a bungalow which came to be called Colonel Bungalow. After the demise of Col. Martin, the Rajas used to worship the Divine Mother Rajarajeswari with sacrifices in the Martin Bungalow. In 1894, the pontiff of Sringeri Mahapitham, Sri Siva Abhinava Narasimha Bharathi, visited the place. The Raja expressed his desire to give up sacrificial practice and follow Sattvika mode of worship. The Pontiff stayed in the bungalow for 48 days and performed Goddess Rajarajeswari yagna and thus consecrated the bungalow. The golden idol of Goddess Rajarajeswari was latter shifted from the bungalow to the palace temple. Since then, the bungalow has come to be known as Shankara Vilasam, also sometimes referred to as ‘Shankara Villa’ or ‘Shankara Vilas’.

It is believed that it was in this Shankara Vilasam building that Swami Vivekananda stayed as the guest of Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramnad. Bhaskara Sethupathi had decided to go to America to attend the Parliament of Religions. But after meeting Swami Vivekananda and conversing with him, the Raja decided that Swamiji was the right person to attend the conference.

Since the time of Raja Muthuramalinga Sethupathi, the father of Bhaskara Sethupathi, many poets, scholars and pundits have visited and stayed in Shankara Vilasam.

Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi

Born on 3 November, 1868, the Raja lived only for 35 years. He was the then Queen Parvatavardini Natchiar’s sister’s grandson. Since he lost his father Muthuramalinga...
Sethupathi (II) at the age of four, he was, according to the British law, groomed by a committee constituted by the ‘Court of Wards.’ He was trained in British lifestyle, mannerisms, western music and English language until the attainment of majorhood. The Ramnad State was, during this transition, under the control of the Collector of the area. Bhaskara Sethupathi took charge as the king on 3 April 1889.

Although he was trained in western traditions, his mind was always with Indian Gods and traditions. He was greatly devoted to Ramalingeswara of Rameswaram temple, Goddess Rajarajeswari, and Thiruppullani Venkateswara. He was also well versed in Tamil literature.

The Raja was known for his generosity. It is estimated that he gave away Rs. 40 lakhs in charity which was an astronomical sum in those days! He was also a champion of the masses. In 1897, he conducted a protest march against people not allowing dalits into the Hindu temples.

But the crown of his character was detachment. In the year 1900, the Shankaracharya of Sringeri was performing Sri Rajarajeswari puja in the palace. The Raja then knelt and offered his turban and sword at the feet of the Shankaracharya, thereby symbolizing the handing over of his kingdom to the Sringeri Math. The Shankaracharya accepted the gift and in turn handed over the kingdom to the Crown Prince Rajarajeswaran. At that time, Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi was just 32 years old!

His end was as dramatic as his life. Leaving the kingdom to his son, the Raja went away to the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam (an old, traditional math) on the banks of the river Thamarabarani and spent his life in spiritual practices. Even during the last moments of his life, he requested the famous musician Harikesanallur Muthaiah Bhagavatar to sing the Divine Mother’s song in mohana ragam. Presenting a diamond necklace to the musician, the Raja attained the feet of the Divine Mother.

Swami Vivekananda, the wandering monk

Swami Vivekananda, after wandering through the length and breadth of India to study the condition of her people, reached the Kanyakumari Rock on 24 December, 1892. After meditating for three days on the Rock, Swamiji left for Rameswaram. Going on foot, he stopped on the way at Madurai, where he met Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi, to whom he had a letter of introduction. The devout prince, one of the most enlightened of the Indian rulers, at once became Swamiji’s admirer and disciple. He invited Swamiji to be a state guest at the Ramanathapuram Palace. Swamiji stayed in the Shankara Vilasam for a week and also visited the Rameswaram temple.
Swamiji shared with the Raja many of his ideas about the education of the poor, the improvement of agriculture, and about the problems and potentialities of India. The Raja persistently urged Swamiji to go to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, saying that it was a great opportunity for drawing the attention of the world towards Indian spiritual thought, and for laying the foundation for his future work in India.

According to Raja Kumaran Sethupathi, the present Raja of Ramnad, Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi met Swamiji again at ‘Woodland Palace’ in Royappettai, Madras, in January 1893, to impress upon him the paramount need to address the Parliament of Religions.

**Swami Vivekananda, the triumphant hero**

After his epoch-making lectures at Chicago and other places in America and England Swamiji returned to India on 26 January 1897. The place of his landing was at Pamban, now called Kunthukal. Kunthukal literally means ‘setting foot’. The place is so called because Swamiji first set his feet in India at this place after returning from the west. This place was under the rule of Bhaskara Sethupathi who accorded him a rousing reception. To quote from Swamiji’s biography:

On Tuesday, January 26, about 3 p.m, the steamer carrying the Swami and his European disciples arrived in Pamban. The Swami had been invited by the Raja of Ramnad to Rameswaram and was about to land and proceed to that place when he heard that the Raja was coming in person to meet him. On the Raja’s arrival, the Swami and party transferred from the vessel in which they had come to the state boat. As soon as he entered it, the Raja and all his staff prostrated before him. The meeting between the prince and the monk was a touching one. The Swami feelingly said that, as the Raja had been one of the first to conceive the idea of his going to the west and had encouraged and helped him to do so, it was apt that he should meet the Raja first on returning to the Indian soil.

The Raja seated Swamiji in a throne-like seat in the state-boat, placed sandals at his feet and remarked that he deemed it a high honour and privilege to have been in a position to do this than to wear the richest diadem on his head.

When the state-boat reached the shore, Swamiji was given a tremendous ovation by the people of Pamban. Under a decorated pandal, an address of welcome was read out and presented to him. The Raja added to this a brief personal welcome which was remarkable for its depth of feeling. Then Swamiji gave a short reply, pointing out that the backbone of Indian national life was neither politics nor military power, neither commercial
supremacy nor mechanical genius, but religion
and religion alone; and India alone could give
spirituality to the world. He concluded by
thanking the people of Pamban for their kind
reception, and expressed his gratitude to the
Raja of Ramnad for all that he had done for
him.

Swamiji was accompanied by his brother
disciple Swami Niranjanananda, Mr. and
Mrs. Sevier, J.J. Goodwin and Mr. Harrison of
Ceylon.

The Pamban (Kunthukal) Monument
The Raja later commemorated the spot
where Swamiji set foot on the Indian soil
after returning from the west, by erecting a
monument, forty feet in height, bearing the
following inscription:

Satyameva Jayate

The monument erected by Bhaskara Sethupathi,
the Raja of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot,
where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda’s
blessed feet first trod on Indian soil, together
with the Swami’s English disciples, on His
Holiness’ return from the Western Hemisphere,
where glorious and unprecedented success
attended His Holiness’ philanthropic labours to
spread the religion of Vedanta.

January 27, 1897

This monument does not exist now. When asked about the monument, Swami
Tathagatananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order reminisced, ‘For a long time,
there has been no trace of this monument. Our Mission conducted relief work near the
Rameswaram temple in 1958. At that time our monks tried hard to trace it out. None could
tell them anything about it.’ It is believed
that the local fishermen broke down the
monument.

Recently, an imposing palatial structure
has been built at this place by the Government
of Tamil Nadu. This monument is being
maintained by Ramakrishna Tapovanam,
Tirupparaitturai. Hundreds of tourists visit
this holy spot every day.

Swamiji then drove in a state-carriage.
After some time, the Raja commanded that the
horses be unharnessed and he himself drew
the carriage to the town. Swamiji remained
in Pamban for three days. On 27 January,
he visited the Rameswaram temple. He
recalled his previous visit five years ago as a
wandering monk. Swamiji was received
at the Rameswaram temple with
temple insignia, a procession
of elephants, camels

Kunthukal - view from the sea

T h e  V e d a n t a  K e s a r i  ~ 3 0 0 ~  A U G U S T  2 0 1 6
and horses to the accompaniment of traditional music. Swamiji spoke here on 'Real Worship', the script of which can be seen inscribed in Tamil and English at the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum. S. Nagalingam Pillai translated his speech into Tamil. To mark the occasion, the Raja fed and clothed thousands of poor people.

Towards Shankara Vilasam

From Pamban, Swamiji reached Ramanathapuram via Tiruppullam in a state-boat on 29 January 1897 at about 6 p.m.

To quote again from the Biography of Swamiji:

The firing of cannon announced to the waiting thousands the arrival of the Swami. At the time of landing and during the procession, rockets shot into the air. There was rejoicing everywhere. The Swami was driven in the state-carriage, accompanied by a bodyguard commanded by the Raja’s brother, while the Raja himself, on foot, directed the procession. Torches flared on either side of the road. Both Indian and European music added life to the already lively proceedings. ‘See the Conquering Hero Comes’ was played on landing. . .

Attended with all pomp, Swamiji reached the Shankara Villa.

J.J. Goodwin mentions that the cheering and shouting of ‘Hara Hara Mahadev’ was terrific. He felt proud of Swamiji and realized what Swamiji was to India.

Swamiji entered the Shankara Vilasam where many had gathered to hear his reply to their welcome. Swamiji was received with shouts of triumph and joy. The Raja opened the meeting with a speech in high praise of Swamiji. Raja Dinakara Sethupathi, his brother, read out an address of welcome.

Swamiji began his reply with a speech starting with the words ‘The longest night seems to be passing away...’ which have since become immortal.

The Raja introduced Swamiji to the elite of Ramnad. Swamiji stayed at Shankara Vilasam for three days, i.e., up to 31 January. At Ramnad, Swamiji gave a lecture in a Christian Missionary School. He also attended a durbar held in his honour at Ramalinga Vilasam Palace. In the meeting, Swamiji received addresses in Tamil and Sanskrit to which he replied appropriately. During the course of the function, Swamiji conferred on the Raja, the title Rajarishi, meaning that he was both a King and Sage at the same time. This speaks for the glory of the Raja of Ramnad.

Enroute to Madras

Swamiji left the Ramnad palace on 31 January 1897 and travelled through Paramakkudi, Manamadurai, Madurai, Trichy, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, and Mayavaram to Madras. In most of these places...
he delivered inspiring addresses waking up the sleeping Leviathan that was India. These lectures brought out in a book titled ‘Lectures from Colombo to Almora,’ give Swamji’s detailed plan of action for the rejuvenation of an awakening nation. Particularly worth mentioning is the address at Kumbakonam in which he exhorted Indians to ‘Arise, Awake and Stop not till the goal is reached.’ Pronounced for the first time in Kumbakonam, these words have inspired innumerable youths to dedicate their lives for the betterment of their nation.

The journey from Ramnad to Madras which is about 380 miles by rail was an arduous one for several reasons. Swamiji had to halt at a number of places and attend crowded programmes at each of them. Besides this he did not have proper rest as the journeys were done at night and for some distances by coach. At every station in which the train halted, thousands had gathered on the platform. Speaking about the strain that Swami Vivekananda was put to ever since he landed at Colombo, Romain Rolland comments: ‘A sick man who needed to nurse his vitality, he made a superhuman expenditure of his energy.’ One wonders where he got all this energy from. An explanation can be found in Dr. Radhakrishnan’s commentary on the Bhagavad Gita:

He works as God works, without any binding necessity or compelling ignorance, and even in performing work, he is not involved. When his egoism is removed, action springs from the depths and is governed by the Supreme, secretly seated in his heart. Free from desire and attachment, one with all beings, he acts out of the profoundest depths of his inner being, governed by his immortal, divine, highest self.

Later developments

When Ramanatha Sethupathi, the great grandson of Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi, passed away in 1979, the royal family members wanted to sell the Shankara Vilasam building to some organization associated with Swami Vivekananda. Several Hindu organizations tried to procure the memorial, but for reasons unknown, they could not do so. Finally, in 2002 the building was purchased by Sri M.S. Karunanidhi, a businessman who lives in an adjacent plot just behind Shankara Vilasam. In the same year, at the request of Dr. S.M. Kamaal, a historian and writer, Swami Atmanandaji, President of Sri Sarada Niketan Trust, purchased the land along with the dilapidated building from Sri M.S. Karunanidhi. Sri Karunanidhi gave 3000 sq ft of the land as a gift and sold the remaining portion at the same cost at which he had purchased from the palace authorities. Swami

Rameswaram temple corridor
Atmanandaji demolished the dilapidated building and built in its place a beautiful temple for Sri Ramakrishna at a cost of Rs.40 lakhs. The two pillars at the entrance to the sanctum sanctorum have been retained from the original building and reinforced. Much of the teak wood from the old building has been retrieved and used mainly in the construction of the shrine door and the main door of the temple. This new temple was consecrated on 30 August 2007 by Swami Gautamanandaji, President, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.

**As a branch centre of Ramakrishna Math**

This temple became a branch center of Belur Math when Swami Atmanandaji unconditionally gifted it to the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math on 26 June 2016. The center is now headed by Swami Abhiramanandaji, a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

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Things are turning out most curiously for me. From Colombo in Ceylon, where I landed, to Ramnad, the nearly southernmost point of the Indian continent where I am just now as the guest of the Raja of Ramnad, my journey has been a huge procession—crowds of people, illuminations, addresses, etc., etc. A monument forty feet high is being built on the spot where I landed. The Raja of Ramnad has presented his address to ‘His most Holiness’ in a huge casket of solid gold beautifully worked. Madras and Calcutta are on the tiptoe of expectation as if the whole nation is rising to honour me. So you see, Mary, I am on the very height of my destiny, yet the mind turns to quietness and peace, to the days we had in Chicago, of rest, of peace, and love; . . .

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and Tirukkural: Some Similarities

K. PANCAHPAGESAN

The Tirukkural (Tiru = Sri or sacred; Kural = a couplet containing roughly seven words in two lines), was composed by the saint-poet Tiruvalluvar about two thousand years ago. He is said to have lived in Mylapore in Chennai and there stands a temple for him in this locality. ‘Valluvar’ is said to be the caste he belonged to. The Tirukkural has been translated into more than thirty Indian and foreign languages. The 1330 couplets are divided into 133 chapters in three sections: 1. ‘Aram’ (Dharma) 2. ‘Porul’ (Artha) and 3. ‘Inbam’ (Kama) corresponding to the ‘Purusarthas’ or goals of life. Though he omitted ‘Veedu’ (Moksha), he has spoken of the liberation of the soul in many a couplet in the ‘Aram’ section, containing 37 chapters. Tiruvalluvar might have thought that a strict adherence to the moral, ethical and spiritual canons codified by him in the ‘Aram’ section might pave the way for one’s liberation or ‘Mukti’.

Since Tiruvalluvar is non-sectarian, he has followers from different faiths. This universal acceptance speaks for the life he led. It reminds us of what Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar said to Sri Ramakrishna: ‘What, then, should be our duty? It seems to me that we should live in such a way that, if others followed our example, this very Earth would be heaven. Everyone should try to do good to the world.’

Over the centuries some ten commentaries were written on Tirukkural, of which Parimelazhagar’s commentary is regarded as the best. Today, there are more than a hundred commentaries in different languages. The first English translation of Tirukkural was done by Rev. G. U. Pope in the year 1886. Some other English translators are Va. Ve. Su. Iyer, Kavi Yogi Suddhanandha Bharati, Sri Aurobindo, Sivaya Sivasubramuniyaswami, and V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar.

The immeasurable depth of Tirukkural is described beautifully by Avvaiyar, a contemporary saint-poetess. She describes Tirukkural as a mustard which is pierced and made to contain the seven seas! Subramania Bharati, the famous Tamil poet who wrote patriotic and devotional songs, rightly says, ‘Tamil Nadu gave Valluvar to the world and thereby won great renown.’

The Tirukkural is a treasure-house of moral and ethical maxims useful to master the art of living. In his ‘The Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta’ Swami Prabhavananda says, ‘Like Krishna and Buddha, Christ did not preach a mere ethical or social gospel but an uncompromisingly spiritual one. He declared that God can be seen, that divine perfection can be achieved. In order that man might attain this supreme goal of existence, he taught the renunciation of worldliness, the contemplation of God and the purification of the heart.

☐ A long-standing devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, the author taught English at the Vivekananda College, Mylapore, Chennai.
through the love of God.'Whatever is said of Christ here aptly applies to Tiruvalluvar the mystic.

‘Aram’ (Dharma) is defined by Tiruvalluvar as purity of mind, desirelessness, elimination of lust, anger, jealousy and the use of harsh words. ‘Aram’ not only enriches our life in this world, it also paves the way to liberation. If one studies, with the help of a good commentary, the 37 chapters in ‘Aram’, one finds that the couplets deal with all those spiritual and ‘dharmic’ values that we find recorded in The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, which embodies Sri Ramakrishna’s life, conversations, anecdotes and parables.

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, first published in 1942, is the English translation of the Bengali text Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita written by Mahendranath Gupta, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The book presents a detailed account of Sri Ramakrishna’s daily life and his conversations with his disciples, devotees and visitors.

‘Discrimination’ and ‘Renunciation’ are the two important spiritual disciplines dear to Sri Ramakrishna and Tiruvalluvar. Sri Ramakrishna makes the pithy maxims come to life with his characteristic rural humour, mild sarcasm and high seriousness. Talking about intense renunciation, Sri Ramakrishna tells Mahimacharan this story: ‘A certain woman said to her husband: “So-and-so has developed a spirit of great dispassion for the world, but I don’t see anything of that sort in you. He has sixteen wives. He is giving them up one by one.” The husband, with a towel on his shoulder, was going to the lake for his bath. He said to his wife: “You are crazy! He won’t be able to give up the world. It is never possible to renounce bit by bit. I can renounce. Look! Here I go.” He didn’t stop even to settle his household affairs. He left his home just as he was, the towel on his shoulder, and went away. That is intense renunciation!’

It is interesting to note how Tiruvalluvar presents this precious truth in one and a half lines, Curb the senses five and renounce, The craving desires all at once. (35,3)

The 35th chapter entitled ‘Renunciation’ begins with a couplet which translates thus, From what, from what a man is free, From that, from that, his torments flee.

The wording of this couplet on detachment is such that, our lips are detached from each other when we read this in Tamil! While conversing with Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Sri Ramakrishna tells him, “I” and “mine” – these constitute ignorance. “My house”, “my wealth”, “my learning”, “my possessions” – the attitude that prompts one to say such things comes of ignorance. On the contrary, the attitude born of Knowledge is: “O God, Thou art the Master, and all these things belong to Thee. House, family, children, attendants, friends, are Thine.” This same idea is wonderfully presented in a nutshell by Tiruvalluvar:

Give up that ego, ‘I and mine’- pure ignorance To heaven they go. (35,6)

He follows it up with:
Those who give up not the ego,
Woes give up not
In grief, they are caught!

Talking about the importance of regular spiritual practice Sri Ramakrishna tells a devotee, ‘Through the discipline of constant practice one is able to give up attachment to “woman and gold.” That is what the Gita says. By practice one acquires uncommon power of mind. Then one doesn’t find it difficult to subdue the sense-organs and to bring anger, lust, and the like under control. Such a man behaves like a tortoise, which, once it has tucked in its limbs, never puts them out. You cannot make the tortoise put its limbs out again, though you chop it to pieces with an axe.’ In Kural 7 of chapter 13 Tiruvalluvar uses the same simile. In this chapter that speaks of humility, control of the tongue, avoiding anger and unpleasant words Tiruvalluvar focuses mainly on the need for curbing sense-pleasures. He writes,

If one were to withdraw within oneself the five senses like a tortoise,
It would afford him protection all the seven births.

Sri Ramakrishna tells a Brahmo devotee, ‘It is enough to feel that God is a person who listens to our prayers, who creates, preserves and destroys the universe and who is endowed with infinite power.’ In the first ‘Adhikaram’ (chapter) ‘Invocation’, Tiruvalluvar worships God as a person. He refers to the twin feet of God in all the couplets,

which is common to the Gods of all faiths. He asks

Of what avail is learning if the learned do not adore
the good feet of Him, who is Immaculate Wisdom?

When a devotee asks for blessings, Sri Ramakrishna tells him of the blessings that Yasoda prayed from Radhika. Yasoda says, ‘Please bless me, that with all my body, mind, and speech I may think of God and serve Him; that with my ears I may hear the singing of God’s name and glories; that with my hands I may serve Hari and His devotees; that with my eyes I may behold His form and His devotees.’ Sri Ramakrishna then assures the devotee that he does not have to worry as Divine love has grown in him.

Tiruvalluvar does exactly what Yasoda asks for. His worship of God is on all the three levels—body, mind and speech.

Those who incessantly think of the great feet (of Him) who lives in the lotus of the heart (of the devotee) live eternally in heaven. (1, 3)

The head that does not bow down before and worship the Lord with attributes will be like the palsied senses. (1, 9)

Actions both good and bad that spring from the darkness of
the mind will never touch those who ever chant the glories of the Lord.

Speaking of discrimination, Sri Rama-krishna gives a wonderful description, ‘Discrimination is the reasoning by which one knows that God alone is real and all else is unreal. Real means eternal, unreal means impermanent. . . With the awakening of this spirit of discrimination, a man wants to know God.’8 In Kural 2, Chapter 36 Tiruvalluvar uses the words ‘darkness’ and ‘light’ in a spiritual sense and writes,

Men of pure vision are led from darkness.

He uses the words ‘marul’ and ‘mayakkam’ for delusion. He counsels in Kural 8, Chapter 36,

Seek the Truth to remove delusion; that is wisdom.

Again he says,

Out of ignorance which mistakes things unreal for things real, springs the wretched cycle of births.

In Kural 2, chapter 36 he uses the words, ‘Inbam payakkum’ which means ‘will bestow joy’. This is similar to the ‘mansion of mirth’ that Sri Ramakrishna speaks of. Sri Ramakrishna tells a pundit, “This world is, no doubt, “a framework of illusion”, unreal, as a dream. One feels that way when one discriminates following the process of “Not this, not this”. But after the vision of God, this very world becomes “a mansion of mirth.””9

Sri Ramakrishna often pointed out that the staircase leading to the roof is made of the same substance as the roof. It may not be far from the truth that Tiruvalluvar prescribed the moral and ethical disciplines as steps leading to the realisation of the Absolute.

References
2. The Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta, p 15  
3. The Gospel, p 410-411  

Glimpses from Tirukkural

Four ills eschew and virtue reach,  
Lust, anger, envy, evil-speech.  
What bolt can bar true love in fact  
The trickling tears reveal the heart.  
Who holds His feet who likes nor loathes  
Are free from woes of human births.  
The seat of life is love alone;  
Or beings are but skin and bone!

As earth bears up with diggers too  
To bear revilers is prime virtue.  
The wealth that wise and kind do make  
Is like water that fills a lake.  
Rein the tongue if nothing else  
Or slips of tongue bring all the woes.  
All lands and towns are learner’s own  
Why not till death learning go on!

—Tiruvalluvar
Code of Conduct for Householders according to Jainism

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

Although Jainism is a monastic oriented religion, the role of lay devotees is not underestimated. The vows of the laymen are simpler versions of the Mahavratas which are for the Jain ascetics. The laymen vows are meant only to curb evil behaviour and cannot lead to final liberation. The Jain acharyas knew that no institution can survive without the strong involvement of the laity. Respecting this fact they created a number of texts elaborating the conduct for the lay. But even these disciplines for the laymen are infused with an ascetic spirit. A Jain householder is called a shravaka and the code of conduct is called shravakachara.

Like in any other major religion of the world, a person born in a Jain family is considered a Jain. Again, like in all major religions, such a Jain by birth becomes a true Jain by the process of ritual initiation, which is like baptism and is called ‘samvakatva’.

Shravakachara or the code of conduct for a Jain householder consists of: 1. Eight basic restraints or Mula Gunas; 2. Thirty five qualities of a noble life or Marganusari Gunas; 3. Twelve vows which include five Anu Vratas, three Guna Vratas and four Shiksha Vratas. To these is added Sallekhana Vrata, and 5. Six Essential duties. We shall here briefly deal with them.

According to the Digamber sect of Jains, there are eight basic restraints called Mula Gunas which a Jain householder must observe. They include refraining from taking meat, wine, honey and five kinds of figs.1 The ingestion of these is prohibited because often insects grow inside them. In lieu of these eight Mula Gunas, the Swetambara sect of Jains prescribes the avoidance of seven bad deeds which are gambling, meat-eating, consuming alcohol, adultery, hunting, stealing and debauchery.2

Hemachandra in his Yogashastra has mentioned 35 qualities called Marganusari Gunas which enable a Jain householder to lead a noble life. These qualities presented in ten verses have been rendered into English by Mrs. Stevenson in her book, The Heart of Jainism, and are paraphrased below:

A) (1) He gains his livelihood by honesty; (2) admires and follows excellence of conduct; (3) marries his sons and daughters to well born and well behaved families.

B) (4) He is afraid of committing sins; (5) follows the customs of his country; (6) never speaks evil of any one and especially not of his ruler.

C) (7) He lives in neither too secluded nor too open a residence. It must be situated in a good locality and have good neigh-

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T h e V e d a n t a K e s a r i ~ 3 0 8 ~ A U G U S T 2 0 1 6
bours. The house must not have too many entrances.

D) (8) He always associates with good men; (9) worships his parents; (10) abandons an unprotected place of evil reputation; (11) does not indulge in evil actions.

E) (12) He regulates his expenditure according to his income; (13) dresses according to his position; (14) is endowed with eight kinds of intelligence; (15) hears religious discourses every day.

F) (16) He does not eat when suffering from indigestion; (17) eats only at fixed times; (18) gains his purusharthas in such a way that the one does not interfere with the other.

G) (19) He gives alms to those who come unexpectedly—to the sadhus and to the poor; (20) is free from obstinacy; (21) has a partiality for good qualities.

H) (22) He knows his strength and weakness, (23) avoids such actions as are not suited to the time and country (in which he lives). (24) worships persons who are steadfast in keeping their vows, and far advanced in knowledge; (25) feeds those who deserve to be fed.

I) (26) He is provident; (27) has more than ordinary knowledge; (28) is grateful for what is done for him; (29) is loved by people; (30) is modest; (31) is merciful; (32) is of a serene disposition; (33) is benevolent.

J) (34) He is always intent on defeating the six interior enemies; (35) controls all his five senses.

Such are the suggestions of a householder’s duties. 3

The Twelve Vows of the Householder

Five Anu Vratas: Vows of limited nature (in comparison with Mahavratas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vrata</th>
<th>Nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ahimsa</td>
<td>Sthula-pranatipat-viraman-vrata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Satya</td>
<td>Sthula-mrushavada-viraman vrata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Achaurya</td>
<td>Sthula-adattadana-viraman vrata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Brahmacarya</td>
<td>Sva-dara-santosh vrata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Aparigraha</td>
<td>Ichchha-parimana or Parigraha-parimana vrata</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guna Vratas: Three merit vows or supporting Vows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vrata</th>
<th>Nature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Dig parimana Vrata</td>
<td>Restraints of geographical limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Desavakasika Vrata</td>
<td>Stricter geographical limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Anartha-danda-Vrata</td>
<td>Avoidance of purposeless activities</td>
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</tbody>
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Shiksha Vratas: Four disciplinary vows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vrata</th>
<th>Nature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Samayika Vrata</td>
<td>Practice of equanimity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Bhogaupbhoga Vrata</td>
<td>Restraint on indulgences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Paushadha Vrata</td>
<td>Practicing the life of a Monk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Atithisamvibhag-Vrata</td>
<td>Discipline of share and care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anu Vratas

1. Ahimsa Anuvrata—abstinence from gross violence

In order to steer clear of violence it is necessary to know the various ways in which violence is caused. It is of two kinds: (a) Sankalpi (intentional) and (b) Arambhi (occupational). Hunting, offering animal
sacrifice, killing for amusement, decoration or sport are instances of intentional violence. Abstinence from those is possible without any difficulty. All householders should practice this type of non-violence.

*Arambhi-himsa* is violence committed by a householder in the ordinary course of his living. It is of three kinds: (i) *Udyami*, i.e. committed while undertaking some occupation in order to maintain oneself, and one's family. (ii) *Gruharambhi* i.e. committed in carrying out the domestic acts like preparation of food, constructing home, cleaning etc. (iii) *Virodhi* i.e. committed in self-defense or defense of one's property or members of the family and friends or the nation. One has to defend against thieves, robbers, dacoits or enemies in battles. However, aggression is strongly discouraged. One must not indulge in violence out of hostility or revenge.

**Five transgressions (Atichar) of the vow of non-violence**

(i) Binding any creature and confining it in a cage. (ii) Beating and chasing of animals. (iii) Cutting their organs or castrating them. (iv) Making them carry heavy loads. (v) Withholding their food and drink.¹

Everyone should avoid violence and practice benevolence towards all living beings, feel joy at the sight of the virtuous, show compassion and sympathy towards the afflicted, and adopt an attitude of tolerance towards the insolent and ill-behaved. Thus, the positive virtues, which a votary of non-violence must possess, are *Maitri* (love or friendship), *Pramoda* (joy and respect), *Karuna* (compassion), and *Madhyastha* (tolerance or indifference) towards living beings.

2. **Satya Anuvrata—Truthfulness or abstinence from gross falsehoods**

This also includes avoidance of harmful, rough, cruel or secret revealing speech. It is falsehood to make a wrong statement through carelessness (*Pramada*). Gross falsehoods are those in which there is an evil intention and knowledge that the statement is false. That which causes pain and suffering to a living being is not commendable, whether it is according to the actual facts or not.

**Four kinds of falsehood**

(i) Denying the existence of a thing with reference to its position, time and nature when it actually exists; (ii) Assertion of the existence of a thing with reference to its position, time and nature when it does not exist; (iii) Where a thing is represented to be something different from what it is actually, and (iv) When a speech is ordinarily condemnable, sinful and disagreeable.

**Five transgressions of this vow**

(i) Giving wrong advice about any matter and misleading people in matters of belief or conduct. (ii) False accusations. (iii) Disclosure of confidential talks, slandering others or talking about their weaknesses, breaking the promise of secrecy. (iv) Committing perjury or forgery, keeping false accounts, documents, and carrying on false propaganda about others; and (v) Committing breach of trust or misappropriation of what is entrusted to an individual in confidence.²

3. **Achaurya Anuvrata—Non-stealing or taking what is not given**

Stealing is taking what is not granted by its owner, (Swami Adatta); what is not granted by a living creature, (Jiv Adatta); what is not granted by the Tirthankars (Jin Adatta), and what is not given by Gurus (Guru Adatta). In modern context the vow of Achaurya
prohibits making illegal copies of software, unauthorized use of copyrighted material, unauthorized downloading of music, etc.

Five transgressions of this vow
(i) Prompt someone to commit theft or show him the way of committing theft; (ii) Accepting stolen goods without the real owner’s consent; (iii) Resorting to underhand dealings, against the rules that the state might have imposed, like smuggling of banned products; (iv) Using false weights and measures; (v) Counterfeiting and adulteration etc.6

4. Brahmacharya Anuvrata—Celibacy
It is to be content with one’s legally married spouse and to desist from having physical union with other women.

Five transgressions of this vow
(i) Arranging marriages of people other than one’s own children and celebrating the marriages of others; (ii) Having relationship with a prostitute or some other lady for a particular time; (iii) Having relationship with a lady who has no guardians; (iv) Using unnatural means of physical gratification; (v) Having excessive sensual desire.7

Thus a householder must avoid any illicit physical relationships, must view a person of opposite gender as brother or sister, should not get involved in match making, except for his/her own children and should not talk of lust or look at a person of opposite gender with lust.

5. Aparigraha Anuvrata—Non-Possessiveness
To set a limit to possessions and refrain from acquisition after the voluntarily set target is reached. Every householder should impose upon himself restrictions as to the nature and extent of objects (animate and inanimate) of possession so that there could be a check on his greed.

Five transgressions of this vow
(i) Possessing land and houses beyond the predetermined limit; (ii) Possessing gold, silver and money more than the predetermined limit; (iii) Keeping at home cattle, grains, and other provisions more than the predetermined limit; (iv) Keeping servants, workers, etc., beyond the predetermined limit; (v) Exceeding the limit of house-ware and equipments like utensils, furniture etc.8

(To be continued . . .)

References
1. I.e. Umber or sicus glomereta; vata or sicus bengalanasis; piptal or sicus religiosa; plaksha or sicus insectoria; and kabumbari or sicus oppositifolia wild.
2. Jain, Prof. Sagarmal, An Introduction to Jain Sadhana, Parsvanath Vidyapitha, Varanasi, 5. 1995, Rs. 40, pp.47
3. Ibid, pp. 47-48
5. Ibid, 7.21
6. Ibid, 7.22
7. Ibid, 7.23
8. Ibid, 7.24

The household is the Lord’s, and so in whatever work He has placed you, you should, depending entirely upon Him, do your best to perform it well. . . If sorrows and troubles assail you, call on the Master and he will show you the way.

—Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Sarada Devi: Life and Teachings, p.125
Unpublished Letters of Swami Saradananda

Udbodhan Office.
Baghbazar. Calcutta.
India. Nov. 30. 11.

My dear Miss MacLeod or Mrs. Leggett—

I need not tell you how we have been feeling during the last few months with Swami Ramakrishnananda gone, Sister Nivedita gone and a younger brother of mine gone leaving behind him a widow and a train of five little children without any means of subsistence. An Indian poet Tulsidas has said—‘salute the bad and the good men alike from a safe distance but never mix with them—for the former will give you no end of troubles and misery as long as they will be with you—and the latter will take away your life when they will leave you, with the never-ending pangs of separation!’ The poet has verily spoken the truth. Well, but the world will go on and we shall have to go along with the stream. So Nivedita has left us, but I must talk to you to arrange a thing which she took in hand before leaving.

You know perhaps that your sister Mrs. Leggett ordered for a statue (marble) of the Prophet through Nivedita. She sent a cheque for £50-0-0 for it, but unfortunately Nivedita passed away without endorsing her signature on the same. Now the statue is complete and will cost a little over the amount indicated in the cheque viz. £50/- . It will cost Rupees 870/- in all including the expenses of one of us to go to Jaipur for approving and bring it here from there. We hear that Mrs. Leggett will be in China this winter but has given up the idea of coming to India. As we do not know where to find her to return the unendorsed cheque and get another (cheque) from her for Rs.870-0-0, I am writing this to you. Kindly return it to her and send the amount as soon as possible in my name. The Sister Nivedita had also ordered for a little Bas-relief of the Prophet for presenting it to you, paying the expenses from her own pocket. That too is complete now and waiting to be sent to you. May I request you to pay the freight & carriage expenses for the same. You know very well I have been made a true Sannyasin as far as ‘gold’ is concerned since Saint Sara’s death! The Sister ordered for a brass coffee-pot to present to Mrs Leggett. That too is waiting to be sent. So you better pay for the freight etc. for that too.

My kindest regards to Mrs. Leggett please when you write to her and tender the same to all friends who are still alive and care for it.

With love and blessings and prayers for our dear Jojo.

Yours affectly

Saradananda
My dear Kali Krishna,

I was thinking of writing to you about the changes that we are intending to make shortly, for running the work smoothly in the Ashram, when your kind letter came to hand. I need not tell you how glad I am to have it. I am sorry however, that you have not spoken a single word about your own health, for which every one of us feel so very anxious. Please tell us in your next whether you are free from fever or not nowadays. We are seriously of opinion that you ought to take the editing of the 3rd volume after you are a little better. I hear that mother’s health is also far from satisfactory. So please do not hasten the editing work, but take it easy and do it when both of you are better. Tender my respects to mother please and tell her that the above is our earnest request.

Now for the new arrangements of the affairs of the Ashram, I am glad to learn that you will be helping the new workers with your experience and advice. That would make things easy for them.

As for transferring the money, you need not do it just now, but wait until you come down and meet us, and until everything is settled properly by us in consultation with mother and yourself. In the meantime you can give Br. Prajnananda sufficient money to conduct the works of the Ashram, say, for six months or so. Or you can arrange with him to come to you for money whenever he needs it for any work of the Ashram. I am sure you will find in him a very congenial and amiable spirit to work with (The removal of Probhash too can be settled if necessary, after Prajnananda goes up and finds out in consultation with you that he can do without him.) You need not assure me that personally you bear no ill will towards anybody and that what you tell us is only for the good of the work there. I shall be stupid indeed dear boy, if I cannot find that out myself after having known you for all these years. So please do not hurry anything but transfer everything in proper time and direct Prajnananda and the workers as you think best, and remain assured that we always have faith in you.

As the workers who are going to be sent up, were at different places in India, so the delay in their starting is unavoidable. Sitapati has not reached here yet, though we have heard that he has started from Bangalore. Br. Bharat has just reached from Barisal. Then again as you have not told us about what clothings will be necessary for them to take, we are directing them on the matter, as best as we know. That also is taking time. But anyway Br. Prajnananda & Bharat will reach Mayavati by the first week of December.

Hoping this to find you well and with our love & blessings to you and everybody there, I am

Yours affly
Saradananda

P.S. Please tender my thanks to mother for her kind letter & tell her that Sister Christine is better & has no fever …

References

Courtesy: Ramakrishna Museum, Belur Math
Perspectives on Death
RAJSHREE AND RAGHUNATH DESHMUKH

Death is the most mysterious thing in human experience. There is no way we can know what happens after death or for that matter if anything happens at all. In the history of human race, every civilization and religion has tried to understand this mystery with imagination and logic. An attempt is made here to understand different perspectives of death in Hinduism.

Conceptual Frameworks in Hinduism
Hinduism believes in a gradual spiritual progression of the individual and it provides a conceptual framework or foundation for every stage of the journey. This helps people to focus on the current stage of their journey. It also ensures that people do not overreach and misunderstand higher concepts.

At the initial stage of the journey a strong conceptual foundation comes from the Smritis which are the Puranas and the Itihasas. For the advanced stages it comes from the Shrutis which are the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Each of these literature explains the concepts according to the stage of the journey. The Puranas and the Itihasas explain more in terms of rituals, vratas and stories, while the explanation given by the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita is more intellectual. These explanations may apparently seem different and contradictory, but there is always continuity in terms of evolution.

People engage in rituals and vratas for the fulfillment of some physical or mental needs. This involvement helps them to remember god at each step. In fact the stories, rituals, and vratas from the Puranas and Itihasas are more like pointers to the ultimate goal described in Shrutis. Thus people gradually evolve to higher stages and are introduced to the advanced concepts of life.

The Satyanarayana puja is a very common vrata observed all over India. Most people perform it for material gain and well-being. But when done regularly with deep faith and over a long period of time, the vrata uplifts the mind beyond the mundane desires. The Katha which is read at the end of the puja and the act of offering the fruits of the puja to the Lord uttering Krishnarpanamastu, enables the worshipper to understand the importance of offering karmaphala or fruits of our actions to the Lord and feeling the constant presence of Lord Satyanarayana in every activity. This journey can be difficult and slow. As the Bhagavad Gita says it can take multiple life-death cycles and in every new life, the person starts from where s/he left in earlier life.

Death in Hinduism
In this journey of life the conceptual frameworks, at various stages, includes an understanding of death from the perspective of the layman to that of the enlightened yogi.
Death: As viewed by a layman

The most basic belief about death in Hinduism is more or less similar to other religions. After death, a person either goes to Heaven or Hell. In Garuda Purana, there is a detailed description of how a departed soul progresses from this mortal Mrityuloka to the other world. The Puranas also talk about how a soul goes to hell or heaven, depending upon the karma or fruits of his or her actions. There is a gory description of what hell is, and everybody wants to go to heaven. Following a prescribed guideline of do’s and don’ts can take one to heaven. These injunctions of Smritis motivate people to do good things in life, which eventually leads to good thinking and further progress on the spiritual path.

Death: As viewed by the spiritually evolved

A person, who has spent some time on the spiritual path contemplating life evolves to understand the impermanence of worldly life. At this stage he knows that after death, the next birth is decided by agamikarma earned in the just ended life and sanchitakarma carried from lives previous to that. There is a clear understanding that there is no death to the soul, but only transmigration. As the Bhagavad Gita declares, nobody can kill the soul; it is eternal and there was never a time when it didn’t exist and there would never be a time when it would not exist.

The Chandogya Upanishad describes four paths that the deceased take depending upon how they have lived the life. The first called Devayana is a path taken by the spiritually advanced people, who though having led a pious life, serving others and meditating on God are unable to attain complete Self-realization before death. These people reach Brahmaloka, the highest heaven and from there in due course, attain final liberation.

The second path is called Pitriyana or way of the fathers. It is taken by people who have done a lot of charity or rituals with the desire of enjoying its results. These people reach Chandraloka, the lunar world and enjoy a very happy time in heaven before coming back to Mrityuloka to continue the cycle of life and death.

The third path is for people who have lead an impure life and do things forbidden by the scriptures. These people are born in sub-human species and after experiencing the fruits of their actions return back to human life, where they again have an opportunity to progress on the spiritual path.

The fourth path is for those who lead an extremely wicked life. These people again and again take birth as insects and other lower animal species. After suffering thus they too get an opportunity to be born again as a human being and tread the path of spiritual progress.

A very apt explanation of heaven is given by Sant Jnaneswar in his ‘Jnaneswari’. He compares heaven to a brothel where one is treated royally until one has money. Once money is over, the person is thrown out. In the same way when the sanchitapunya or accumulated merit is over, one is thrown out of heaven back to the cycle of birth and death in Mrityuloka.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad explains in detail how the soul moves to the next life and assumes a new body. According to it at the time of death the soul moves like a caterpillar. The caterpillar supported on a straw goes to the end of it, takes hold of another support and contracts itself out of the old position. Similarly, the soul first
connects with the new body before leaving the old one. While leaving the old body, it only takes the impressions of the life lived. These karmic impressions decide its further progress in the next life. All the associations, physical and social, are left behind as if they do not belong to it.

Srimad Bhagavatam explains this concept through the story of King Chitraketu. King Chitraketu had four wives but no offspring. With the blessings of Rishi Angiras, the eldest queen gave birth to a son. King Chitraketu became very attached to the eldest queen and her son and neglected his other childless queens. Filled with jealousy, and hatred for the king, these queens killed the young prince by poisoning him. To assuage the grief of the terribly grieving king and his family, Rishi Angiras and Narada appear on the scene. Narada Maharishi brings before them the soul of the dead child and asks it to reassume the body of the prince and live with its parents. But the soul does not identify Chitraketu and his queen as his parents. It instructs the royal family gathered there of the endless transmigration of the soul and its non-identification with any person or thing. This helps Chitraketu to understand the real meaning of life and death, and to make spiritual progress.

With this understanding, people at this level strive to attain moksha or final liberation from the repeated cycle of birth and death. This liberation has different meanings; to some it simply means becoming one with the Supreme Self or God.

Death: As viewed by enlightened yogis

Enlightened yogis do not see the birth-death cycle or the journeys to heaven or hell. For them, this whole world is one unitary existence where space and time are mere illusions. This one consciousness is called by many names. Vedantins call it Brahman, Vaishnavites call it Vishnu, Shaivites call it Shiva, and many others by so many other names.

These yogis do not take any of the paths for the deceased because there is no death for them. When a yogi at this level, drops his or her body, people see it as an act of dying; but for these yogis nothing really happens. The best way to understand this is through the Nirvana Shatakam of Adi Shankaracharya. Sri Shankaracharya declares that he is not the mind, the intellect, the ego, sadness, happiness, virtue, sin, earthly possessions or any other things which can be perceived by the mind or eyes. He does not have a mother or a father or death or birth, as he was never born or would never die. He is pure bliss and occupies every corner of this universe, covering everything in the world.

Established in the consciousness of the Atman, the yogis resolve the mystery surrounding death. This is the highest stage of the spiritual journey and the ideal presented by the Shrutis for all mankind.

‘Look here—we shall all die! Bear this in mind always, and then the spirit within will wake up. Then only, meanness will vanish from you, practicality in work will come, you will get new vigour in mind and body, and those who come in contact with you will also feel that they have really got something uplifting from you.’

The Order on the March

News and Notes from Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Inauguration of new centre at Ramanathapuram

The Ramanathapuram branch centre of Ramakrishna Math was inaugurated on 26 June 2016. A day-long function was organized in which 85 monks of our Order, 25 monks of Ramakrishna Sampradaya and 3000 devotees participated.

A special worship of Sri Ramakrishna was performed in the temple which is built on the historic and sacred place where Swami Vivekananda stayed as the guest of Raja Bhaskara Setupathi, the Raja of Ramnad. A public meeting was organized in which Rev. Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission delivered the Presidential Address and released a Souvenir.

Other speakers included Revered Swami Gautamanandaji, Swami Balabhadrarandaji, Swami Abhiramanandaji, Swami Kamalatmanandaji, Swami Atmanandaji of Sri Sarada Niketan Trust, Sri Kumaran Sethupathi, Raja of Ramanathapuram, Mrs. Lakshmi Kumaran Sethupathi, Queen of Ramanathapuram and Pulavar Ilankumaran. A cultural programme was performed in the evening by the students of Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

Chandigarh centre held a special lecture programme on 12 June which was attended by about 150 devotees.

Rajmahendravaram (Rajahmundry) centre conducted a youth convention on 11 June in which about 700 students took part.

Swamiji’s Ancestral House and Cultural Centre held four lectures at the centre from 23 May to 17 June which were attended altogether by 1200 people. On the centre’s initiative, four public meetings were held in and around Kolkata from 2 May to 4 June. In all, about 1250 people attended the programmes.

News of Branch Centres (in India)

As a part of its yearlong centenary celebration, Chandipur Math conducted cultural programmes on 17 & 19 April and 8 May. Also, a doctors’ conference was held on 14 June in which 155 doctors took part.
The General Secretary inaugurated the newly constructed school building at Kozhikode centre on 4 June. Sri Keshari Nath Tripathi, Governor of West Bengal, visited Darjeeling centre on 6 June.

Guwahati centre conducted a free medical camp during Ambuvachi Mela near Kamakhya Temple from 22 to 25 June in which 4250 patients were treated.

Sri Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala, inaugurated Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence and National Integration at Thiruvananthapuram centre on 28 June, in the presence of many dignitaries.

Values Education and Youth-related Programmes conducted by centres in India

Chennai Math conducted a three-day youth camp from 17 to 19 June in which 230 youths took part. On the last day, the youths cleaned the area around Chennai Math and the nearby Sri Kapaleeshwarar Temple.

Hyderabad centre held a three-day personality development camp from 24 to 26 June in which about 200 girls participated.

Kankurgachhi Math conducted five values education workshops covering six educational institutes in Birbhum district from 10 to 12 June which were attended altogether by 400 people, mostly students.

Vadodara centre held two seminars on values education for teachers on 16 and 18 June at Ahmedabad and Vadodara respectively. In all, 260 teachers participated in the seminars.

Summer Camps for Students

Summer Camp programmes which included chanting, bhajans, yogasanas, values education classes, etc. were conducted by some centres: Kadapa—7-day camp for 275 students; Mysuru—8-day camp for 140 students; Kayamkulam—5-day camp for 40 students; Nagpur—two camps over 40 days for 80 students and Tiruvalla—7-day camp for 35 students.

Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan

Kankurgachhi centre launched Swachchha Kankurgachhi for a Swachh Bharat, a cleanliness drive, on 26 June. About 40 persons cleaned Maniktala main road and several lanes of Kankurgachhi area that day.

Nagpur centre took out a rally in Takiya area on 5 June, World Environment Day, to create awareness about cleanliness. About 75 people, mostly children, took part in the rally. As a part of the rally, the children enacted a street play.

Free Eye Camps

18 centres conducted free eye camps in which patients were checked/given spectacles/operaed: Bankura centre treated 486, operated 111 patients; Baranagar Math treated 53; Chennai Math treated 73 operated 10; Guwahati treated 100; Halasuru treated 240 operated 97; Jamshedpur treated 144 operated 10; Kamarpukur treated 507 operated 103; Khetri treated 148 operated 47; Lucknow treated 1949 operated 126; Madurai treated 261 operated 63; Madurai treated 261 operated 63; Naora treated 299 operated 87; Porbandar treated 115 operated 59; Rajamahendravaram treated 252 operated 25; Ranchi Morabadi treated 1507 operated 10; Rajkot treated 165 operated 63; Salem treated 282 operated 68; Saradapithas treated 250 operated 35; Seva Pratishthan treated 139 operated 17, and Silchar treated 786 operated 130 patients.
Relief Work

**Drought Relief:** In the wake of a drought-like situation in the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Telangana, the following centres conducted relief operations mentioned below:

(a) **Karnataka:** Belagavi (Belgaum) centre distributed 14,000 litres of drinking water among the affected people of 5 villages in Belagavi district from 29 May to 15 June.

(b) **Maharashtra:** (i) Aurangabad centre distributed 26.90 lakh litres of drinking water among 23,910 people of 25 villages in Aurangabad district from 24 May to 14 June. (ii) Pune centre distributed 28.76 lakh litres of drinking water among 14,295 people of 5 villages in Satara and Ahmednagar districts from 20 May to 25 June.

(c) **Telangana:** Hyderabad centre distributed 15 lakh litres of drinking water among 17,443 families of 19 villages in Adilabad, Warangal and Karimnagar districts from 26 May to 6 June.

**Flood Relief**

(d) **Assam:** Karimganj centre distributed 1100 kg rice, 210 kg dal, 200 packets of biscuits, 100 kg salt, 300 kg potatoes and one lakh halogen tablets among 810 flood-affected families in 11 villages of Karimganj district from 30 May to 8 June.

(e) **Jammu and Kashmir:** Following a flash flood which affected 15 villages in Kund area in Ramban and Udhampur districts, Jammu centre distributed 1500 kg atta, 600 kg dal, 600 kg edible oil, 600 kg sugar and 300 utensil sets (each set containing a vessel, a kadahi, a griddle, 2 ladles and 3 plates) among 300 affected families on 27 May.

**Flood Rehabilitation**

(a) **Chennai Math** constructed Swami Vivekananda Community Hall and Educational Centre and 60 low-cost houses at Meliruppu Panchayat area in Cuddalore district which had been affected by floods in November 2015. The General Secretary declared open the building and handed over the houses to 60 flood-affected families on 28 June. Each family was also given a stove and an LPG cylinder. Revered Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj inaugurated the Welfare activities wherein educational support for higher education is being provided for 25 poor students at an estimated cost of Rs.17 lakhs.

(b) On 29 June, the General Secretary laid the foundation stone for the proposed ‘Sister Nivedita Community Hall’ to be constructed by Chennai Student’s Home at Thathaimanj village in Thiruvallur district. On the same day, this settlement of Irula tribals, where the centre had earlier built 19 low-cost houses and 13 additional toilets, was renamed ‘Vivekanandapuram’. Moreover, the centre has undertaken construction of 78 low-cost houses in nearby villages for flood victims.

**Drought Rehabilitation**

Hyderabad centre installed a water purification plant (reverse osmosis) at Gajulaguda village in Ranga Reddy district to provide safe drinking water to the villagers. The plant was inaugurated on 10 June.

Is it possible for everybody to meditate all the time? That is why Swamiji taught selfless service in order to make it easy for people to reach union with God.

—Swami Brahmananda, *Eternal Companion*, p.135
The great sages have called Sanskrit as the divine dialect. The rarest of the rare gems are hidden deep down in the ocean of Sanskrit. Swami Vivekananda held Sanskrit in high esteem and considered it as a glorious language. He said ‘the very sound of Sanskrit words gives a prestige, a power and strength to the races (CW, 3.290). Sanskrit and prestige go together in India (CW, 3.299).’ The very meaning of the word ‘Sankrit’ being refined, Swami Vivekananda opines that the only way to raise oneself is by studying Sanskrit.

In the pursuit of refinement we are now privileged to have ‘Rajayoga’ of Swami Vivekananda, which was dictated by Swamiji himself to his student Waldo at New York. The book has been translated into Sanskrit by Sri Keshavalal V. Sastry. According to the translator this translation has to reach all national and international seekers of Spirituality, who better understand Sanskrit than their own native language.

The author has to be congratulated and deserves every bit of encouragement for attempting a task as daunting as translating a monumental work of Swami Vivekananda into a language that is as immense and intriguing as the subject dealt in the book, and also for the method of translation he has adopted. It is worthwhile here to note that an effort in this regard has been hitherto unheard of.

At some places translation needs more attention in the selection of exact words, and grammar. Typos are to be attended to in future editions.

Shodasi – Secrets of The Ramayana
(A Tantric Commentary on Valmiki Ramayana)
by Gunturu Sheshendra Sharma
Available from Gunturu Sheshendra Sharma Memorial Trust, Hyderabad. E-mail: saatyaki@gmail.com, 2003. paperback, pp 245, Rs.400.

The book under review which is an English Translation by Dr. Gurajada Suryanarayana Murthy of the Telugu original text represents a scholarly attempt by the erudite author to justify and prove the validity of certain radical propositions which he makes about the world-renowned Kavya Valmiki Ramayana. The propositions which he makes are
1) Sundara Kanda is an allegory of Kundalini Yoga
2) Sita is Kundalini Sakti
3) Hanuman’s search-mission of Sita symbolises the Tantric exercise of identifying the Kundalini Sakti and raising it from Muladhara Chakra (denoted by Lanka) to Sahasrara Chakra
4) The descriptive terms employed about Sita by Valmiki hint at Sita being essentially Kundalini Sakti
5) Trijata’s dream is nothing but Gayatri Mantra
6) Valmiki’s language has a pronounced Vedic flavour
7) The phraseology employed by Valmiki corresponds largely to the terms employed in Lalita Sahasranama, Durga Saptasati, Devi Bhagavatam etc.
8) The aptness of the name ‘Sundara Kanda’ is provable on strong grounds
9) Ramayana is anterior to Mahabharata on various grounds such as the Vedic language
employed in the former, the reference of Valmiki
and Ramayana episodes in Mahabharata and
absence of reference to Vyasa and Mahabharata
episodes in Ramayana, mention of Rama in
Mahabharata and Rama’s greater antiquity than the
Pandavas and a host of other plausible evidences
(10) Indra, the chief Vedic God, is more prominently
featured and praised in Ramayana than Vishnu of
Puranic origin (11) Megha Sandesham of Kaalidasa
originated out of the seed of Valmiki Ramayana
and (12) The benedictory verse of Saakuntalam is a
Eulogy of Devi.

The brain-tickling propositions are not
just off-the-cuff remarks made without basis but
credible theories buttressed by profuse quotations
of relevant Sanskrit texts, wide and deep study of
the relevant treatises, unassailable arguments based
on internal and external evidences and astounding
scholarship of Sanskrit classics.

On the flip side, there are a few errors in
the transliteration of Sanskrit texts. Had the
Sanskrit passages from the treatises been provided
in Devanagari script also in addition to their
transliterated form in Roman script, the value and
appeal of this essentially Sanskrit-oriented book
would be much higher to the large and growing
Sanskrit readership. The book is doubtless, a
product of deep research, intense intellectual labour
and amazing scholarship.

N.HARIHARAN, MADURAI

YOGA-YAJNAVALKYA-
SAMHITA. THE
YOGA TREATISE OF
YAJNAVALKYA

English Translation by
Dr. M. Jayaraman
Published by Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram,
No.31, 4th Cross Street,
RK Nagar, Mandaveli,
Chennai - 600 028. Email:
mails@kym.org, 2015,
paperback, pp.226.Rs.250.

Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram is a Yoga
Centre in Chennai, nationally and internationally
recognized. This institution specializes in imparting
yoga training to lay people, both Indian and foreign.
Of late, it has been active in resurrecting ancient
yoga texts, editing them and publishing them. The
book under review is the latest in this series.

The book is in 12 chapters and is in the
form of a dialogue between Sage Yajnavalkya and
Brahmavadini Gargi. The topic of their dialogue is
Ashtanga Yoga.

The first chapter introduces the two main
personalities. Gargi and Maitreyi duly approach
Yajnavalkya to receive the wisdom about Yoga.
The request made by Gargi is for knowledge of
the principles of Yoga. Yajnavalkya welcomes her
and informs her that he had long ago approached
Brahma with the same request and that he would
impart to Gargi whatever he has learnt from
Brahma. This establishes the authenticity of the
answer. He begins in general terms talking about
human actions and how to make oneself fit to
receive this knowledge.

The sage then says that yoga has eight limbs,
the same as mentioned by Patanjali. These are then
briefly introduced. There are ten Yamas and ten
Niyamas mentioned. The Yamas are elaborated
upon in this chapter. The ten Niyamas are described
in the second chapter.

The third chapter is dedicated to Asanas.
Eight of them are considered to be superior and
each one is described with sketches. Chapter 4,
which is fairly long comprehensively describes
Pranayama techniques and also talks of the Nadis.
This book recognizes only 14 nadis and all of them
are dealt with in detail. This leads naturally to the
flow of 10 types of Prana along them. Of them,
Prana and Apana are the most important.

In the 5th chapter, in answer to a question
by Gargi, Yajnavalkya gives in brief a summary
of the technique of Nadishuddhi, the process of
cleaning the nadis. This chapter is of great value
to practitioners, because it is one of the easiest
techniques of Pranayama.

The sage now goes into the nitty-gritty of
breathing exercises in Chapter 6. He talks of Puraka,
Rechaka and Kumbhaka, as well as the variations
of Kumbhaka. This last one is extremely important
because without mastering it, the yogi cannot hope
to arouse the Kundalini, which is after all the whole
objective of Hathayoga. In this sense, this chapter is
extremely useful for practitioners.

Patanjali splits the eight limbs of yoga into
two groups. Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara
along with Yama and Niyama constitute the
external exercises, whereas Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are mental states. The former is called Bahiranga Yoga, and the latter Antaranga Yoga, also called Samyama. The connecting link between them is Pratyahara. This is the theme of chapter 7.

Pratyahara is the withdrawal of the mind from all external influences. This is not as easy as it sounds. For this purpose, the Sage recommends several techniques to steady the mind. Unless this is achieved, the Yogi has no hopes of concentration or meditation. The techniques are illustrated with the help of a line diagram.

Once the mind is internalized, the Yogi is ready to choose a topic on which he can concentrate. Even though the choice is unlimited, the Sage recommends one of the five Tattvas, Earth, Water, Fire, Wind or Space. The techniques for doing this are described in chapter 8. The benefits of choosing these topics are also elaborated upon. This automatically leads to chapter 9, in which various techniques of meditation are described. The Sage goes into great detail here, emphasizing the importance of imagination, since all processes occur inside the mind.

Chapter 10 is the climax leading the Yogi to the state of Samadhi. The Sage is rather brief in his description here, because Samadhi cannot be talked about. It can only be experienced. At this stage, Gargi asks a very interesting question in the chapter 11. When a Yogi is performing all these, should he continue with the routine rituals? The Sage answers that when the Yogi is in the state of Samadhi, he is not bound by any ritualistic duties. However, when he descends to the normal state (vyuthhana), he has to perform all duties. Gargi requests the Sage to summarize whatever he has told her. His summing up the entire teaching is the topic of the 12th and last chapter.

There are two postscripts to the book. One is the notes from an essay by Sri Krishnamacharya and the other the essay itself.

In Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana University two courses are compulsory – Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras and Swatmarama’s Hatha Yoga Pradipika. The reviewer has had the privilege of teaching both to several batches of students. What he noticed is that this book is almost a condensation of Swatmarama’s book, and would make an excellent reading material.

The format of the book is very attractive; the slokas are grouped together with English transliteration and meaning. The Mandiram should be thanked for the great service it has rendered to the Yoga community, especially in the year in which the entire world celebrated the Yoga Day.

NVC SWAMY, BANGALORE

THE BIJAK OF KABIR
By Linda Hess & Sukhdev Singh
Published by Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt Ltd, 41 UA Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. E-mail: mlbd@mlbd.com 2015, paperback, pp 200, Rs 250

As the Introduction to this elegant translation of poems of poet-saint Kabir observes, Religious Literature in medieval India was sung. Kabir, like many ancient saints, chose the sabda, the Word, as the medium to convey spiritual lessons. Unfortunately, over centuries several compositions of saints including those of Kabir became untraceable.

Swami Vivekananda rated Kabir as an Avatara, with a ‘heart as broad as the sky – as Sri Ramakrishna’ (CW.6.394). Friars of the orders of saints like Kabir sought to bring qualitative improvement in lives of people. His style was unique. Hard hitting, incisive and fearless, he ridiculed leaders of Hindu society in the holiest Hindu city and the religion of the Emperor in the land ruled by Muslims, as the authors state.

The Bijak of Kabir invites readers attention to the saint’s warnings about failure to lead a meaningful life. Kabir’s distress about the valueless lives led by people blissfully unconcerned about the certainty of death is revealed in the poems contained in the book. Laments the saint: ‘…Even now you lounge in bed as Yama’s club falls on your head…’ He was aware that his ideals will be resisted by contemporary ignorant society. A popular episode relates to the dispute even over disposal of his mortal remains.

Says Kabir:
Saints, I see the world is mad.
If I tell the truth they rush to beat me, if I lie they trust me... The rest of this Sabda (page 42) revealing shades of hypocrisy is in its satirical best, mordant, thought-provoking and entertaining.

The saint’s eagerness to elevate people from their tamasic existence is remarkable. Caste, religious, social and other barriers so pained his noble heart that he uses harsh, cynical expressions on the morbid condition of society.

This English translation of the Bijak, the sacred literature of Kabir Panth, includes a detailed, informative introduction. Pointing out that Kabir’s poems are the most translatable of the non-modern Indian poets, the translators refer to three major collections of the work of Kabir that are in use; one in Punjab, another in Rajasthan and the third, in U.P/Bihar. The Bijak, holy scripture of Kabir Panth, contains Kabir’s works alone unlike the others. Selected verses from three main sections of Bijak known as Sabda, Ramaini and Sakhi have been included – details are found in the preface.

The religious denomination of Kabir at birth, his early life, etc. are not clear, nor verifiable. Puranic stories reveal ingenious methods, even subterfuges, adopted by seekers to access acharyas of repute. Kabir took to an unorthodox, amusing strategy to catch the attention of his guru and obtain mantra diksha.

Although as the authors state, the saint was not a synthesizer of Hinduism and Islam, he sought to promote religious harmony, abjure meaningless rituals, selfishness, inability to seek divinity within, etc.

The Bijak of Kabir is a useful publication at the present juncture as fanaticism and intolerance is eroding faith in humanity.

P. S. Sundaram, Mumbai
poor were peerless. Parts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the life of Sri Ramakrishna have also been dovetailed.

Among the lessons learnt by Vignesh from his adventure a few may be noted. One should not compromise on truth in order to please the next of kin. Humility should be ensured when offering gifts. One should appreciate the value of help received. Therefore, character building is essential to ‘have the awareness to treasure the gift’.

‘Stolen Idol’ is a ‘philosophical mystery’ that seeks to awaken knowledge in a complex, circuitous way. Some spelling and grammatical errors must be corrected. A Glossary would help readers unfamiliar with expressions in Hindu philosophy.

The chapter on ‘Vedas and Scriptures’ identifies the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the interpretation of vedic texts, mantras, by scholars as well as religious leaders.


Consumption of soma rasa, atomic theory and ancient aulukya darsana of rishi Kanaada, (page 99), Manu, reality of God, Gayatri mantra and a host of other topics are among contentious issues. The chapter on ‘Manu the Great’ observes how researchers come close to Manu on the age of cosmos. Through charts and tables, data on cosmic distances from earth to other lokas are indicated to show that intellectual giants ruled in puranic times.

Misconceptions on caste system have been pointed out. Unlike other faiths, catholicity of Hinduism is unique, open to questions by aspirants.

Concluding chapter ‘Summation’ recalls how stalwarts of the freedom struggle were keen to preserve the primacy of Indian culture.

The author is vexed that with a prosaic understanding, writers find vedic texts riddled with errors. At best there is a perfunctory acceptance of Indian philosophy.

Religious scriptures and puranas are perceived in two ways. Most readers will be seeking ideals that elevate the human spirit and lead a life adhering to purusharthas. Others tend to stigmatize scriptures. Let us recall Swami Vivekananda’s views on Ramayana. He considered the ideals of the story important. Speculating whether the principal characters ever existed or were fictional, is useless exercise.

Science of Hinduism is a book for research scholars as a response to critics.

Nobody attains freedom without shaking off the coils of worldly worries. The very fact that somebody lives the worldly life proves that he is tied down to it as the bondslave of some craving or other. Why otherwise will he cling to that life at all? He is the slave either of lust or of gold, of position or of fame, of learning or of scholarship. It is only after freeing oneself from all this thraldom that one can get on along the way of freedom.

—Swami Vivekananda, Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, 6:505
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai is doing seva for the Leprosy Afflicted Persons (LAPs) for the past 28 years. More than 1500 LAPs are benefitted by this service and they are now leading a dignified life in the society. We propose to convene a National Awareness Convention on Leprosy Afflicted Persons.

Why this Awareness?

Though it has been declared elimination of leprosy, India shares about 60% of the total global leprosy burden as per World Health Organization (WHO) report (2015). Effective multi-drug therapy is provided by the Government free of cost, however awareness of therapeutic and rehabilitative options is very low among public.

The LAPs are not only isolated by society and family but also tormented by several inhuman legal acts. Several acts against leprosy enacted (in 1898) during British rule still exist and they are discriminatory and require amendment.

There is an immediate need to coordinate all leprosy control and rehabilitative measures so as to eliminate the social stigma on the LAPs and make them to live on par with any normal Indian citizen. Hence, this convention will focus on the challenges that the LAPs face and the effective methods to address the challenges. The suggested solutions will be recommended to the Govt of India for providing effective means to empower these children of God.

Special Guests participating in the event

Key Note Address by Sri Jagat Prakash Nadda, Hon’ble Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India

Address & Taking of Oath by Sri Tarun Vijay, Hon’ble Member of Parliament

Special Talks

Role of SAKSHAM in Leprosy Services by Sri Dr. Sukumar, National Organizing Secretary, SAKSHAM, Nagpur

Benedictory Address by Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, Adhyaksha, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai

Presentations from various sections of society: Social, Education, Media, Medical, Science and Technology, Service organizations and LAP beneficiaries

There is a special exhibition on services rendered for LAPs

Conferment of Swami Akhandananda Award for the best services in elimination of Leprosy

All are Welcome

Swami Gautamananda
Adhyaksha

Venue: Triple Helix Auditorium, CSIR-Central Leather Research Institute, Adyar, Chennai-600 020.

Date: 20th August, 2016 (Saturday)

8.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m
Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama
(A branch centre of Ramakrishna Math & Mission, Belur Math. Howrah, W.B. – 711 202)
Swami Vivekananda Path, P.O. Bela, Muzaffarpur-842 002, Ph.: 0621-2272127, 2272963
E-mail: rkm.muzaffarpur@gmail.com  Website: www.rkmumuzaffarpur.org

Appeal for Vivekananda Netralaya
(Eye, ENT, Dental Clinic cum Diagnostic Centre)

Present Infrastructure:
- Oldest Eye Infirmary in North Bihar established in 1947,
- General dispensary, Dental, Homeopathy, X-Ray, Pathology

Service Rendered (2015-16):

Our Vision:
- A new Medical Building with Speciality Eye, ENT and Dental care, Various OPD Sections, Well equipped Clinical Lab., R & D, Modern Diagnostic Unit, Para medical Training.

Work in Progress:
- Construction of Diagnostic Unit is complete and has been brought in use.

Funds Required:
- Rs.35 Lakh for remaining work of Recovery Unit.
- Rs.65 Lakh for remaining work of Gr Fl. and 1st Fl. of Vivekananda Netralaya.
- Rs.6 crore for construction of Ancillary Medical unit, Office and Doctors Qrs.
- Rs.3 crore for Equipments.
- Rs.15 Lakh for Maintenance.
- Rs.15 Lakh for Educational Programmes, Puja and Celebration.
- Rs.15 Crore for Permanent Fund (corpus)

Dear Devotees and Friends,
We appeal to you to contribute towards up-coming Vivekananda Netralaya project (Eye, ENT, Dental Clinic cum Diagnostic Centre) which we took up in 2011 and has made remarkable progress with your help. Health infrastructure in Muzaffarpur in north Bihar is very poor and our Sevashrama needs to have a better set-up for continuing its medical services. Your contribution will be a real worship of Sri Ramakrishna, Ma Sarada and Swami Vivekananda who lived their lives for spiritual growth of devotees and aspirants. I fervently hope by this service to the poor and needy we both shall be nearer to the ideals of Atmano Mokshartham Jagat Hitaya Cha (For liberation of the self and good of the world). It will also serve the purpose of perpetuating memories and sentiments of your near and dear ones.

Kindly send your contribution by Cheque/DD or by NEFT/RTGS to A/c No. 10877071752 IFS Code: SBIN0006016 (Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muzaffarpur)
Donations to Sevashrama are exempted from Income Tax u/s 80G of IT Act 1961.
Details of the Project may be had from our office.
With Prayers to Holy Trinity for you and all yours,

Swami Bhavatmananda
Secretary
A HUMBLE REQUEST

New Universal Meditation Hall, Educational and Cultural Complex at Chandigarh Ashrama

Dear devotees, well-wishers and friends,

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Chandigarh was started in 1955 in the aftermath of India’s partition. Since then the Ashrama has been providing spiritual solace to seekers in search of peace, free mobile medical service, a Boys’ Hostel for college students, value education programs in schools and colleges, spread of inspirational and ennobling literature among the masses, etc.

Over the years, these activities have steadily increased and so also the number of devotees attending these programs as well as morning and evening prayers, and those coming for meditation, spiritual retreats/satsangs. To meet the increasing needs for space, it has been decided to construct a new building having

a) A spacious Meditation Hall and Monks Quarters - Rs. 1.3 Crores (approx.)

b) Educational & Cultural Centre: Rs. 2.1 Crores (approx.)

Total cost of the project: Rs. 3.4 crores (approx.)

Cheques/ Demand Drafts may be drawn in favour of ‘RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, CHANDIGARH’ and can be sent to the address given above. Contributions, from within India, can also be directly deposited in any of the following banks:

1) ICICI A/c No. – 001301029198, Branch – Sector 15-C, Chandigarh, IFSC – ICIC0002429

2) IDBI A/c No. – 003104000083216, Branch – Sector 8-C, Chandigarh, IFSC – IBKL0000003 (Kindly intimate us the details of the deposit, your address and phone number by e-mail on the same day)

Contributions to the Ramakrishna Mission are exempted from Income Tax u/s 80(G) of I.T. Act, 1961.

Yours in the service of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna
Swami Satyeshananda, Secretary
To commemorate the birth centenary of the Second President of Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission our Most Revered Pravrajika Mokshapranamataji, the newsletter Devakshar’s issues (2015, 2016) have been published as a tribute to her. Devotees who wish to read them may download them directly. (the link is http://rksaradadprayag.org/debakshar.htm).

May the choicest blessings of Most Revered Mataji be showered upon all. This is my heartfelt prayer.

Yours sincerely
Swami Sarvatmananda
Secretary

Communication:
Swami Sarvatmananda
Ramakrishna Sarada Ashrama,
Dak Banglow Road, PO: Devaprayag, Tehri Garhwal,
Uttarakhand. Pin - 249301
Email: rmksarada@gmail.com; Phone-09410520939, 9897452084
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The Universal Message Of Swami Vivekananda
—A Compilation
Published by Swami Suhitananda

Presentations (thirty in all) at the International Seminar and the Parliament of Religions in commemoration of Swami Vivekananda’s 150th Birth Anniversary at Belur Math, Kolkata on 27 and 28 January 2014.

The general theme of the Seminar was ‘The Universal Significance of the life and message of Swami Vivekananda in the 21st century’, and the theme of the Parliament of Religions was the ‘Harmony of Religions’.

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Translated by Swami Vimohananda

It was in 1918 that Swami Apurvananda, the author of this book, first came to Belur Math. Shortly thereafter, he received initiation from the Holy Mother. In his life, he came in contact with many direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and other participants in His divine play. He also saw many of Sri Ramakrishna’s householder devotees in different places and times. Through his reminiscences of these spiritual luminaries and through stories of Belur Math during his time, the author provides the readers insightful and rare glimpses into the lives of those who belonged to a divine realm.

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An Appeal
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—Holy Mother
Sri Sarada Devi
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—Swami Vivekananda

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