

Bhavan Australia

Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides – Rigveda 1-89-1 www.bhavanaustralia.org



March - April 2018

Bhavan Australia ... Vol 14.13 - 14.14 ... ISSN 1149 - 3551

LIFE ... LITERATURE ... CULTURE

Words of Eternal Wisdom



Nobody can hurt me without my
permission.

Mahatma Gandhi

Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.

Buddhist proverb

Pain is temporary. It may last a minute, or
an hour, or a day, or a year, but eventually
it will subside and something else will
take its place. If I quit, however, it lasts
forever.

Lance Armstrong

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it
is the courage to continue that counts."

- Winston Churchill

"We must accept finite disappointment,
but we must never lose infinite hope."

- Martin Luther King

"The world breaks everyone, and
afterward, some are strong at the broken
places."

- Ernest Hemingway

Although the world is full of suffering, it is
also full of the overcoming of it.

— *Helen Keller*

"The secret of health for both mind and
body is not to mourn for the past, worry
about the future, or anticipate troubles,
but to live in the present moment wisely
and earnestly."

- Buddha

"If you are going through hell, keep
going."

- Winston Churchill

President Page

How to Overcome Pain and Let Hope into Your Life

Sad news has come to us on the 3d of February 2018. Mr. Gambhir Watts OAM was hit by the car. Because of this terrible accident Mr. Watts had lost his both legs and seriously hurt his shoulders. Luckily, there were no spine or head injuries. Mr. Watts spent one month in the hospital struggling with pain, stress and depression but was still highly determined to organise our most loved Holi Festival as he has always been mainly responsible for putting it together and organizing finances. However, in mid-March Bhavatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia Organisation has decided to cancel Holi 2018 as we all believe that Mr. Watts needs all his strength, energy and vital power to fight with the physical and mental consequences of the accident.

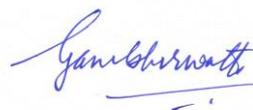
Today Mr. Wats remains in the Rehabilitation Centre and makes progress in his recovery. We extend our best wishes for him and keep him and his family in our prayers.

This issue of Bhavan Australia we would like to dedicate to those people, who experienced bad and terrible things in their life, how did they accept it and moved further overcoming these tragedies. Because bad (and good) things happen to everyone. No matter how adverse the experience we are having, life always presents us with something beautiful to appreciate, embrace and enjoy.

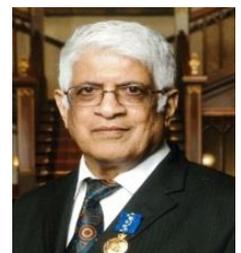
There's a story of a monk who was imprisoned for his religious beliefs. He was a peaceful man and never harmed a soul. Yet he was put into jail along with men who had committed terrible crimes. After years in prison, he was finally released. When asked about his experience, rather than harbor resentment and anger about his unfair incarceration, he said, *"Spending so much time alone deepened my meditation practice. I learned to appreciate the beauty in everything—including the cockroaches that would visit me in my cell every day."*

Anna Andriiashina
Editorial Committee
Tribute to president
of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia

Gambhir Watts OAM



President, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia
Organiser of Holi Mahotsav



THE WORLD PAYS CONDOLENCES TO RUSSIA ON TRAGEDY IN KEMEROVO

The whole world is mourning together with Russia on the victims of the fire in Kemerovo. Many world leaders sent their condolences to our country.

Giving a speech in Varna, Chairman of the European Council Donald Tusk paid his condolences on the deaths of people in the fire in the shopping and leisure center in Kemerovo in the Russian language. "Today we, Europeans, are mourning together with the Russian people about the victims of the tragic fire in Kemerovo in the Western Siberia. Our thoughts and hearts are with you," he said.

US State Department paid condolences to the families of the victims. Earlier the representative of the American administration also paid the condolences, but the wore unofficial.

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko sent his condolences to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and Governor of the Kemerovo Region Aman Tuleyev. He noted that the Belarusians are sincerely sympathizing with families of the dead and wishing the speedy recovery to the living.

Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev has grievously perceived the news on the tragic death of people as a result of the fire in the shopping and leisure center in Kemerovo.

Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid has also sent a telegram to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "I am paying my deep condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the accident. In this tragic moment all our thoughts are with the Russians," the telegram reads. Prime Minister Juri Ratas and Foreign Minister Sven Mikser have also expressed the words of sympathy.

Latvian Foreign Minister has also directed the message of condolences to the families of the victims of the fire in Zimnaya Vishnya shopping center.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė paid her sincere condolences to the Russian nationals due to the tragic fire in the shopping center in Kemerovo. She wished the families of the victims to keep up their spirits.

The words of support were also expressed by President of Afganistan Ashraf Ghani, President of Brazil Michel Temer, President of Venesuella Nicolas Maduro, Israeli opposition leaders, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and others.

Moreover, people are bringing candles and soft toys to the Russian Embassies in many cities.

On these days in all Russian orthodox churches including the temples abroad, will sound prayers for the repose of the souls of people who died in the Kemerovo's shopping centre.



Source: <https://russkiymir.ru/en/news/239446/>



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Bhavan Australia includes a number of articles from Bhavan's Journal.

Bhavan Australia: - ISSN 1449 - 3551

BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO EVERYONE

You're watching the TV news. The reporter is describing a terrible car accident that just took place on the highway. A mother of three children was rear ended by a careless driver who fell asleep at the wheel. The woman survived the collision unscathed. Unfortunately, her three children all died in the accident.

After describing the sad events, the reporter wraps up the segment by saying, "Three children instantly killed in the collision. The tragic accident was something no parent should ever have to go through."

I'm sure you've heard a variation of the reporter's commentary throughout your life. Maybe you've even said something similar to the following:

No one should ever have to experience (fill in the blank).

But the truth is, if you live long enough, you're most likely going to experience some significantly stressful event: a loved one will die. You'll get sick. Someone will mistreat you. The list goes on. "I'm a good person, how could this happen to me?" is one question so many of us ask ourselves when tragedy strikes.

THE REALITY IS BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO EVERYONE.

We live in a world filled with catastrophes. Just click on your favorite news website, and you'll see a long list of stomach churning, tear jerking events. The problem with clinging to the mindset that you or someone you know doesn't deserve to experience a certain painful event, that it's unfair, that it shouldn't have happened, is that it increases suffering.

WHEN ADVERSITY STRIKES WE HAVE TWO OPTIONS: ACCEPT WHAT IS OR SUFFER

There is much confusion about "accepting what is."

Many caring, compassionate people confuse it with indifference. They contend, "That's terrible. I don't want to accept what is and sit back and do nothing."

I agree. Accepting what is, in the context I'm describing is not the same as throwing your arms in the air and doing nothing. In fact, I am a strong

believer in taking action when you witness injustice or helping those in need.

When you're confronted with circumstances that stir you into action ask yourself, "Is there something I can do to improve the situation?" "Can I volunteer, write a check, or contribute my efforts in other ways?" In other words, is there a way you can do your part?

As you can see, my version of accepting what is has nothing to do with complacency.

The problem is, many people who want to make a difference in the world suffer because they are unable to quiet their minds after they've done their part. Accepting what is means aligning your actions with your values. And once you've taken action, you let go of the outcome.

When you continue to worry and set up expectations for a certain outcome that must happen, you are not accepting what is. As a result, you'll suffer. The mental thoughts will stress you out, create anxiety, and can even make you physically sick.

SO HOW DO YOU ACCEPT WHAT IS AND ACT IN A WAY THAT ALIGNS WITH YOUR CONVICTIONS?

Let's take the example of professionals who deal with high-stress situations everyday. Doctors, nurses, firefighters, law enforcement, and social workers often experience harrowing situations on a regular basis. These professions are notorious for burn out that often results in high worker turnover.

But many professionals that are able to maintain their careers over the long-term have learned a powerful skill. They show up to work. They do their jobs. They take care of those who need help. Once they're done for the day, however, they flip the mental switch, so to speak, and put work behind them. This "out of sight, out of mind" approach is what allows them to maintain their careers helping others while maintaining peace of mind.

Source:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/meditation-modern-life/201706/bad-things-happen-everyone>

WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?

THE HINDU PERSPECTIVE

by Audarya-lila Dasa

We make judgements of good and bad based on our own conditioning. What is good for one person is bad for another. Therefore what constitutes a 'good person' or a 'bad person' is a relative consideration. Beside that point the answer that Vedanta gives to your general question is that Karma (action and reaction) is anadi - or beginningless. Everyone has unlimited amounts of karma and it is presenting itself in different forms to us. We have our parabdha karma which is karma being played out in our current field of activities which is the body and the phenomenal world. Karma is also behind the scenes in seed form - reactions that will come to fruition in the future. You, no doubt, have heard the term 'skeletons in the closet' which refers to things about people which are not apparent to others. The unlimited Karma represents the 'skeletons in the closet' that are attributed as causation of action be it good or bad.

THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

by Timothy McCabe

Jesus teaches us that no one is good but God (Mat 19:17, Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, Rom 3:12).

According to the Bible, every one of us has failed at what we have been called to do (Rom 3:23). Even the best people in the world have been dishonest, greedy, selfish, or lustful at some point in time. All of us have done something we shouldn't have, and as a result, our connection with our perfect Creator is damaged and broken.

NO ONE IS GOOD BUT GOD.

When we disobey the Lord, do we really expect that good will come of it? Unfortunately, most of the time, the answer is yes. We expect good things to happen to us, whether we obey Him or not. This is probably because God is merciful (Deut 4:31, Neh 9:31), forgiving (Num 14:18, Dan 9:9), and often gives us what we do not deserve (Prov 3:34, Isa 26:10). We get used to His goodness, and take it for granted, thinking we have earned it.

But the Bible tells us that what we have really earned is death (Rom 6:23).

However, it goes on to say that God has offered us a free gift, something we have not earned, the gift of eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus (Rom 6:23).

It seems as though, from a Christian perspective, since there really are no good people, the real question is, "Why do good things happen to us bad people?" And the Biblical answer is that there is a merciful and gracious God in heaven who loves sinners so much that He sent his only Son to die in their place (Romans 5:8; John 3:16).

Have you accepted His forgiveness? The Bible teaches that "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved!" (Rom 10:9)

THE MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE

by Shaheed Williams

Misfortunes or calamities happen to everyone.

Allah (God) says:

"And so are the days (good and not so good), We give to men by turns, that Allah may test those who believe, and that He may take martyrs from among you. And Allah likes not the Zalimun (polytheists and wrong doers)." (3:140)

They are also a result of the deeds we do. Allah (God) says:

"And whatever of misfortune befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned. And He pardons much." (42:30)

Allah (God) also says:

"And if Allah were to punish men for that which they earned, He would not leave a moving (living) creature on the surface of the earth, but He gives them respite to an appointed term, and when their term comes, then verily, Allah is Ever All-Seer of His slaves." (35:45)

Source:

<https://www.godcontention.org/compare-religions/why-do-bad-things-happen-to-good-people>

HOW TO OVERCOME PAST PAIN AND LET HOPE INTO YOUR LIFE



By Whitney Hopley

Each new day of your life is a gift from God that He wants you to live fully. But if the pain you've suffered in your past is still impacting your life now, you can't fully embrace the new life God offers you because you'll be stuck in a frustrating cycle of brokenness that leaves you feeling hopeless.

The key to overcoming your past pain is making choices that invite God's hope into your life. Here are some choices you can make to heal from your past and enjoy hope from now on:

TRANSFORM YOUR PAIN INSTEAD OF TRANSFERRING IT.

If you don't find ways to learn from your past pain, you'll likely be doomed to repeat the mistakes you made in the past and transfer your pain to everyone with whom you interact – from your friends and family members to your coworkers and neighbors. So ask God to break the hold that your past has over you and show you what useful lessons you can learn from it so you can begin moving forward. God is much more powerful than your history, and when you trust Him, God will start to transform your pain into healing and wisdom in your life.

LEAVE SHAME BEHIND.

Silence the voice of shame in your life so it won't block the healing that God wants to give you. Listen to the Holy Spirit's voice telling you that

God loves you completely and unconditionally, regardless of what has happened in your past. Even though God knows the worst about you, He wants to redeem you anyway. Let go of shame and accept God's invitation to healing.

OVERCOME YOUR REGRETS.

Holding onto regrets from your past will only lead to more regrets unless you break the unhealthy cycle by releasing your regrets to God. Realize that it's pointless to dwell on your regrets, since you can't go back and change your past – all you can do is keep moving forward. Pray specifically about each of your regrets while envisioning Jesus on the Cross. Leave every one of your regrets at the foot of the Cross as a symbolic way of entrusting them to God's power to redeem them for good purposes.

CONFESS THAT YOU'RE NOT OKAY.

Don't waste any more time or energy pretending to be fine when you're really hurting, lonely, confused, or frightened because of your past pain. If your pain was caused by some sin of yours in the past, confess that to God, repent from the sin, and ask Him to forgive you. If your pain was caused by someone else sinning against you, admit to God that you need to forgive the person who hurt you, and ask God to empower you to do so. Ask God and some fellow believers you can trust to help you start the healing process.

PURSUE HEALING.

Turn to the ultimate Healer, Jesus Christ, to help you heal. Seek Jesus' guidance for every step of your healing journey, knowing that He specializes in taking what's broken and restoring it to how it should be.

EMBRACE YOUR PAST.

Accept the reality of what happened in your past that has caused you pain, without denying it or minimizing its effect on your life. Let go of your desire to have life go the way you'd planned it. Surrender your past to God, so He will take it and use it for good purposes. Talk openly about your past with other people who are struggling with similar types of pain, if you sense God leading you to share what you've learned with them. Doing so can usher hope into their lives as well as your own.

CHOOSE TRUSTING GOD OVER PLEASING GOD.

Instead of trying to make up for your past failures by working hard with religious rituals you hope will please God, choose to trust God's promise that He loves and accepts you unconditionally. Rather than trying to reach God through your own efforts, trust in His grace.

Accept God's surprising gift of radical grace, and be graceful with others. Unlike the limited, strings-attached grace that other people (even those in church) offer you, God Himself wants to give you completely unconditional grace – grace you can count on, no matter what you've done in the past. That grace is surprising, yet real. God sees past your past sin when He looks at you; He focuses on the fact that you're one of His beloved children. No matter how others may label you as a second-class person due to your past mistakes, God always sees you as a first-class person. Express your gratitude to God by following His command to forgive the people who have hurt you in the past – relying on God's help to do so.

DISCOVER THE TRUE MEANING OF GOD'S WILL FOR YOU.

You can free yourself from the burden of worrying about aligning your decisions with God's will when you realize that knowing God's will is simple. God's will isn't about figuring out

specific details about your circumstances, such as which job you should pursue or where you should live. Instead, God's will is simply about giving your best effort to loving God and loving people in any circumstances. Recognize that God has given you the freedom to make your own decisions about specifics in your life, as long as you follow the basic principle of God's will, which is to choose the most loving course of action while trusting God. Don't worry that poor decisions you made in the past may have caused you to miss out on God's will for your life. You can always get back in line with God's will for your life when you trust God to redeem your mistakes and try to make loving decisions from now on.

BE GRATEFUL.

Choose to be grateful for all the good gifts that God constantly pours into your life. The more you choose gratitude, the less power your painful past will have over you.

OVERCOME FEAR.

You can move past your fear of the unknown and into a hopeful future when you ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind each day. Then you'll be able to approach any situation from a faithful perspective. Focus on God's love, which drives out all fear, and you'll experience more hope in



your life.

Adapted from Let Hope In: 4 Choices That Will Change Your Life Forever, copyright 2013 by Pete Wilson. Published by W Publishing Group, an imprint of Thomas Nelson, Nashville, Tn., Source: www.thomasnelson.com.

FROM SICKNESS TO FITNESS

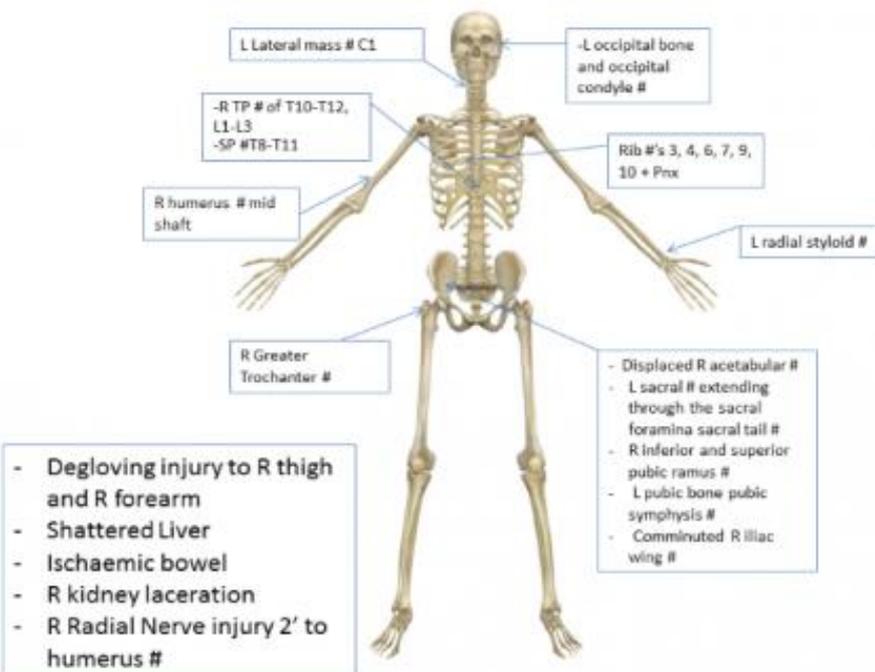
The real story about a girl who never gave up.

On 2nd April 2014, my whole world was turned upside down, never to be the same again. I was involved in a RTA which has changed my life in so many ways, forever. I vowed 2 years ago that if I ever found life after trauma, I would do all in my power to pass that hope on to other trauma survivors... so here I am.

I don't remember the day of my crash. I don't remember much of the month afterwards either if I'm honest. Apparently, I was driving home alone from my partner's house, on the way to buy my father a birthday present – a normal day right? For an unknown reason on that journey, down a road I travelled on daily, sometimes twice a day, my passenger wheel collided with the nearside curb, sending me onto the opposite side of the road and into the path of an oncoming vehicle. Apparently my car rolled onto its roof, I was partially ejected and trapped by my seatbelt as the car skidded over my lower body.

sleep and put a breathing tube in to make sure I could breathe ok before going on the ventilator. I was brought in via HEMS I + V with pelvic binder and spinally immobilised. I was a 'Code Red Trauma Call' at St George's Hospital in Tooting, which meant I was taken to CT scan then straight to theatre for emergency surgery. It was now that the extents of my injuries were confirmed. I had broken a total of 28 bones in my body, including in my neck, skull, spine, arm, pelvis, ribs and hip. I had 'de-gloved' my right forearm and thigh which means that every layer of skin had been torn off. My spleen was bleeding, my kidneys were failing, my lungs had been punctured and I had shattered my liver. It was also found the next day that part of my bowel had become ischemic and therefore part of it was removed and I was fitted with an ileostomy bag for 5 months. I was also covered in burns from the petrol in the car.

I then spent 22 days in GICU in an induced coma, before stepping down to HDU and then the trauma orthopedic ward for a further 62 days. I had a metal 'in-fix' around my pelvis, which meant that I wasn't allowed to weight bare for 12 weeks, and lost a lot of bone and muscle strength in that time. I dropped two stones in weight in 3 weeks, and I wasn't allowed to weight bare through my right arm for a few weeks after waking up either. That was a very testing 3 months, but what I didn't know was that it was going to get a whole lot worse before it got better.



(On the picture above, I should add that I also had a "diffuse axonal head injury" my physio who made the skeleton just told me he forgot to add it!) Thankfully no other parties sustained any physical injuries.

I had an RSI at the scene (Rapid Sequence Intubation), which is where they put you off to

the 31st March, by now it was around the 10th May...I will never be able to describe how hard it is to come to terms with not remembering a whole month of your life, especially when you try day in day out to remember what happened. I had been in a virtual world for a month,

dreaming the weirdest, wackiest dreams, which I was adamant were real life.

Eventually with the support of family, friends and the amazing staff at St George's Hospital, I started to understand that none of these things were real, and that I had been in an induced coma which meant I had some very strong drugs in my system. Day by day I began to realize what had happened, and things became clearer, including the extent of my injuries and scars – I still to this day do not remember the accident.



Every day was a struggle. I'd gone from complete independence to having a catheter, a stoma, a feeding tube, a drip and a whisper for a voice. I couldn't go to the toilet, feed or wash myself. It was at least 2 months before I even had a shower and I realized how much we take the 'little things' for granted.

I was so dependent on everybody around me and that was incredibly difficult. I was surrounded by amazing support in the form of nurses, health care assistants, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, drs, consultants, dieticians, psychologists, speech therapists, family and friends. They all pushed me each day and kept my spirits high in the most difficult time of my life, and for that I will never forget each and every person.

I was discharged home on 26/06/2014 but spent the next two months in and out of my local hospital and St George's before I had my ileostomy reversed in September 2014, when I then caught a nasty bout of pneumonia. 'When is this going to end' I thought to myself. I channeled so much of my thought and feelings into my injuries, particularly my ileostomy bag, that I genuinely thought I was Ok mentally. It was in September 2014, when I was discharged home, that reality hit and I was far from OK. I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't smile. I

couldn't speak. I couldn't watch TV. I couldn't laugh. All I could do was cry. I went 72 hours without sleeping at one stage. Even now, when I think back to how I felt then at that time, I get teary...It's a feeling that you cannot describe unless someone else has felt it. I remember falling to my mother's feet in the hallway one morning, not long after I'd been discharged and begging her to tell me I was going to be OK, that I was going to get a life back and crying that if this is how I was going to feel forever then I didn't want to live. I genuinely could see no way



out. Shortly after I was diagnosed with depression and generalized anxiety disorder.

At this stage I started taking an anti-depressant, which enabled me to get some sort of routine back, in that I could shower or eat without crying and I could sleep for at least a couple of hours. As I started to feel better emotionally, I started to get better physically too because I had the drive and motivation to do so. I set myself a new goal every day, at first it would be to 'walk to the bathroom' then 'walk to the bathroom and back' and these progressed to 'walking to the end of my road with just a walking stick' or 'doing my make up with my left hand' because my right hand had severe radial nerve damage and I couldn't use it. These goals kept my going each day, but there is always that uncertainty. I needed to see somebody who had been through the same physical trauma and was OK now. No matter how many people told me 'you'll be fit again in no time', I needed to see that it had been done to know that it was possible, because I had no confidence in my ability whatsoever.

At the end of November 2014 I was admitted to Queen Mary's Hospital for 2 weeks of intense physiotherapy. I went into the hospital as a wheelchair user, walking no more than

200metres with a walking stick and a limp. Within 10 days of rehab, I ran my first 5KM on the hospital treadmill in 42 minutes. I wanted to get this under 40 minutes and so the day I was discharged I ran another 5KM in 39 minutes. It was the first time in 8 months that I saw I could get my life back. It completely changed my life forever and I will never forget that moment. It hurt, it was tough and I was in agony afterwards...but I did it and that feeling of euphoria afterwards outweighed any pain. It was here that I set my short term and long term goals to keep me progressing through my rehab. My ultimate goal was to run the London Marathon by 2019. After months of not being able to use my legs properly, I only dreamed that one day they would carry me 26.2 miles around London

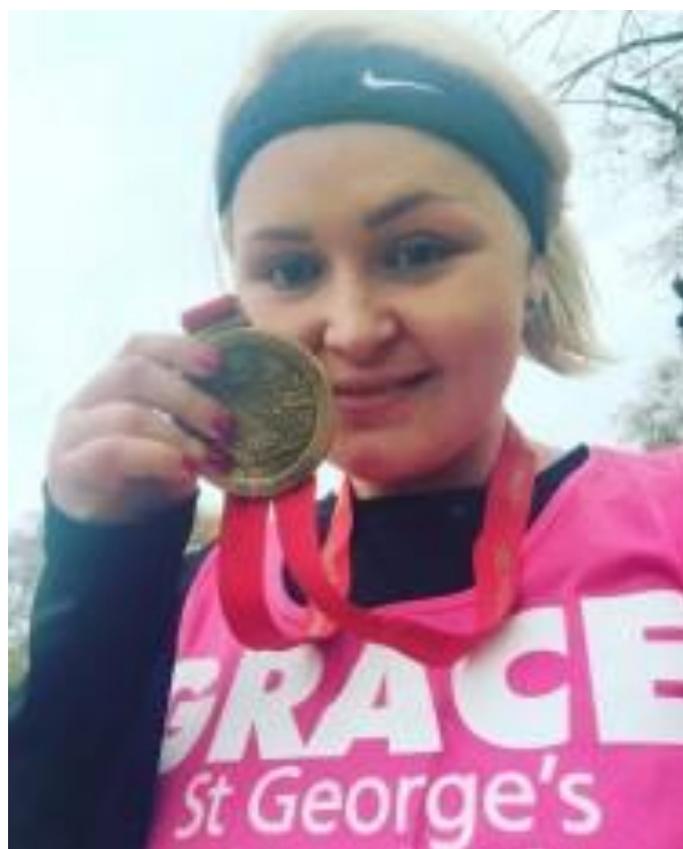
I carried on progressing with my running, whilst slowly getting my life back on track – returning to uni, going on holiday and enjoying all those things I genuinely thought I would never enjoy again. In May 2015, after only completing a 10K, I applied to run the London Marathon for St George's and Queen Mary's Hospital charities to try and raise some money and give a tiny bit back in comparison to what they gave me – my life. I got accepted in October 2015 and completed the London Marathon 2016 (3 years earlier than anticipated) whilst raising a massive £14,000 for the charity.

Since that day in 2014 I have got engaged to my partner who stood firmly by my side through all of it, returned to uni and finished my degree (something I never thought I would), returned to work, ran the marathon, been on 3 holidays and I have renewed passion for life and a desire to live it to the full. I have 3 more marathons on my list as well as a tandem skydive. Yes, I have some horrific scars. Will I ever be OK with exposing them? Probably not. Do they bother me? Yes they do, I'd be lying if I said they didn't, but the fact of the matter is those scars tell a story – a story that says 'I survived', 'I was stronger than whatever tried to break me' because I'm still here. I'm still smiling. I'm determined to take every positive I possibly can out of it...my accident has shaped and welded the person that I am today. I always used to say

'everything happens for a reason' – we may not always know that reason straight away and sometimes it can take years, but whether good things happen or bad things happen I believe they happen to put you on the path you're supposed to be on.

On 2nd April 2014, my whole world was turned upside down, never to be the same again. It's been a physical, mental and emotional rollercoaster but what matters is that I had the chance to rebuild it – bigger, better, happier and stronger than ever. Whatever I do now, I do with all my heart and I'm more determined than ever to grab what I want out of life with both hands (and feet!) because I truly believe anything is possible if you just believe. I hope that by sharing my story I can give at least one person who is feeling as helpless as I once was, the hope they need to get better.

That feeling of hopelessness and helplessness after trauma is by far the worst I have ever felt, and the worst I hope I ever will. 'Trauma always leaves a scar, it follows us home and changes our lives' – I was determined to make it change mine for the better ♥



Source: <http://www.aftertrauma.org/survivors-stories/graces-story>

“I WENT FROM TRAUMA CLINICIAN TO PATIENT WITH LIFE-CHANGING INJURIES”

I was a healthy physiotherapist cycling to work when I was hit by a car – and suffered the injuries I used to treat.

In November 2008 I was cycling through Greenwich Park as part of my daily commute to the Royal London hospital. I saw a car suddenly turn in front of me and I knew I couldn't miss it. Time froze for an instant as I prayed for a miracle to save me. That is THE moment that changed me, no other moment has had such a profound impact on my life.

When I came to, I was underneath the car. Pins and needles raging through my four limbs. My neck was twisted, my breathing shallow. In vain I tried to move first my legs and then my arms. Nothing. As a physiotherapist who worked with trauma patients, I knew what this could mean: spinal cord injury, possible permanent paralysis. I asked the paramedics earnest questions: “What are my blood oxygen saturations? Blood pressure?” Strangely, I wasn't in pain.

Firemen eventually hydraulically lifted the car off me. The air ambulance couldn't fly due to inclement weather, so I was blue-lighted to the Royal London major trauma centre by an emergency ground ambulance.

On arrival I had x-rays and CT scans that showed the full extent of the impact: a crushed fourth vertebrae and damage to my spinal cord – the vital neural structure which relays both sensation and muscle commands to my arms and legs. The only option was to operate. Five hours after the accident, I was under general anaesthetic having bone taken from my hip and placed into my neck to reform my vertebrae.

I woke up in the trauma ward where I had spent the previous year working and treating patients. In a surreal transformation from healer to victim, I found myself looking up at my colleagues, now my carers, and hearing the gurgling of phlegm as I breathed. This time I was vulnerable: unable to move, feed or wash myself. As night fell, I waited for the nurses to come and help move me: please come, I whispered. The loss of control over basic body functions was terrifying. But I was determined to survive.

I thought: so this is what my patients go through.

The following day friends and family gathered. Bringing gifts, cards, well wishes. It was overwhelming to be on the receiving end of so much affection and compassion. In two days I was transferred to a rehabilitation unit at Stanmore spinal cord injury unit. Over the next 10 weeks I was put through the arduous physical rebuilding I used to help my patients with. I was now the focus of goal-setting meetings and exercise regimes. I felt oddly out of place and yet desperately needy.

As muscle activity slowly returned, my sense of self also started to return, but it was a version of me different from the original. I had scars. I felt weakness, pain, tiredness, anxiety, fear, dependency. My body had morphed into something I wasn't sure I could ever rely on again. It was over these weeks of hospital rehab that I came to accept that a physical job such as physiotherapy would be difficult – if not impossible – for me to return to. Five months after my accident I did attempt to return to work. I was assigned administrative duties and then some aspects of clinical work. But I crumbled, physically and emotionally.

And so what now? How changed am I? When people first meet me, they see someone who still looks fit and healthy. But if you followed me over a week, you'd spot the physical remnants of trauma: spasms, fatigue, pain, weakness, trips on pavements, slowly ascending stairs, standing unsteadily on the Tube platform, fighting back a panic attack.

Eventually, I found a way to stay in the profession I loved but not on the frontline. I have morphed into an academic, teaching the physiotherapists of the future at the University of East London. I miss helping patients of course, but I love inspiring students in a clinical practice which is essential to helping trauma patients rebuild their lives. And I share the insights I gained both at the hospital bedside and in the hospital bed!

Source:

<https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2015/dec/03/trauma-clinician-patient-life-changing-injuries>

ATTITUDE

In a given situation, different people think differently. It is not necessarily the character, education or orientation, but the attitude which differs. Brothers and sisters who have been brought up in the same environment think differently. Why should it happen? How can we influence a change in our attitude?

For the sake of better understanding, let us classify attitude into positive and negative. Satvik and some of the Rajasik persons fall in the category of positive people while the Tamasik and part of the Rajasik, particularly those who are egoistic, fall in the category of negative people when we make any suggestion, some people react positively while a few

others react negatively. When a boss calls five executives independently to his chamber and asks whether a particular task can be completed in a week, two of them may simply say no while two others may start thinking. Only one of them may say 'Yes'. The person who says 'yes', will start preparing a plan to complete the task. In 9 out of 10 cases, he may succeed. Even in the case of a rare failure, he will analyse the causes of failure and think carefully before making a similar commitment next time. In either situation, he is bound to get appreciation from his seniors for the hard work and success, which will further motivate him to make up larger responsibilities. Those who say NO simply try to justify as to why it is not possible. So they escape without any struggle. In fact, they have their reasons ready as to why the job cannot be completed in such a short period. However, when the other person succeeds, the jealousy and frustration becomes evident in their behaviour. This also affects their

reputation and promotion. Some of these executives may try to turn positive by taking some initiatives, with the hope that their boss will recognise their efforts in the future. If they are convinced that there is no harm in taking a slight risk, then they are further encouraged. So our surrounding environment also influences our attitude.



TYPE OF ATTITUDE: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

Among some friends in a class, one gets an award for his or her outstanding performance in a competition. While many feel happy, a few others feel jealous. Such people may also try to avoid meeting the winner. It is not that the winner is egoistic or arrogant. He may be very modest. But still some people cannot tolerate the success of others. This is negative attitude. If we go up to the winner, and compliment him, the gesture will make the person happy. This can make a big difference. We can take inspiration and also try to become a winner.

There are people who do not want to take any initiative for their own progress. They feel that hard work is not worth the effort and think that promotion is an additional burden. They are happy with whatever they have. They keep on justifying that what they are doing is sufficient.

They are probably beyond the stage of improvement.

Most of the people with a negative attitude, do not wish to spend on others and on the contrary, they expect others to spend on them. Such people are disliked even by their close friends. People with positive attitude are willing to help others, believe and respect others and co-operate with their progress. They do not mind taking risk, working hard and making every possible effort to complete the assignment designated to them. So, they are admired by everyone, while those with negative attitudes are generally avoided. It is not difficult to find out who has a positive attitude and who has a negative attitude.

CULTIVATE POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Human resource experts engaged in placement services narrate that while recruiting high level managers they allot 75 to 80% to their attitude and the remaining 20 — 25% to qualities such as skill and qualifications. If the person has a positive attitude, he or she will definitely acquire skills and other qualities required for fulfilling the goals. On the other hand, people with a negative attitude will not have any inclination to do any constructive work. Hence, the entire team fails to make progress under the leadership of such people.

People with a negative attitude in the office are like rotten fruits in a basket, which hasten the process of spoiling other fruits as well. They attract the attention of other colleagues by talking against their superiors and slowly kill the initiative of other good workers as well. They like to entertain their group by criticising people who

are not present. Initially some may enjoy the gossip but gradually they find such company tiresome, because they only have negative stories to circulate, which are often not true.

Positive attitude is not only helpful for better performance in the office but also for accomplishing ambitious personal goals throughout the life. In the absence of a positive attitude, the human resource, instead of serving as an asset, proves to be a liability. Hence, it is better to make a deliberate attempt to change the attitude. Special efforts should be made to cultivate positive attitude. It is better to keep a

distance from negative people, who not only waste our time but also spoil our sleep.

CHANGE IN ATTITUDE

People develop their behaviour, habits and attitudes right from their childhood. They keep on developing and changing as they grow in the company of their parents, friends and teachers. Social customs and traditional background also influence the attitude to a great extent.

People in a group, should be able to judge the attitude of

others and identify those having positive or negative attitude. We should try to be in the company of people with positive attitude and avoid negative persons. In the company of positive people, even with the

AVOID NEGATIVITY

People with negative attitude will change gradually. With the initial pleasure we experience in the company of people with positive attitude we are attracted towards them. Bigger success follows smaller success because in the company of positive people, there are no losers —everyone



is a winner. We find such company extremely homely, supportive, and useful, particularly when we are in a depressed mood.

“People with positive attitude are willing to help others, believe and respect others and co-operate with their progress. They do not mind taking risk, working hard and making every possible effort to complete the assignment designated to them.”

HOW TO IDENTIFY PEOPLE WITH POSITIVE ATTITUDE

- They are patient, willing to listen to others, accept suggestions and are prepared to change their decisions.
- They anticipate positive results and outcomes.
- They have high expectations from others and are confident of their achievements.
- They are humble, willing to work hard, trust and respect others and form a part of any good team.
- They contribute to productivity, peace and harmony.
- They celebrate the success of their team as well as the success of the individuals.
- They derive pleasure from the success of others and hence they are always cheerful.

Key Qualities of Positive People

- Desire to work hard and accept responsibility.
- Commitment to the task.
- Possess integrity, maintain discipline and high degree of transparency.
- Curb ego and greed.
- Show respect to others.
- Discourage sycophants.

How to Identify People with Negative Attitude

- They are critical of others and try to spend time pulling down others.
- They resist any suggestion and change. On the contrary, they are in the habit of disagreeing with the suggestions made by others.
- They are an obstacle to new ideas, suspicious by nature and always trying to find fault.
- They create bitterness, stress and harbour resentment towards others.
- They generally do not trust others.
- They enjoy the failure of others and cannot tolerate the success of their friends and team members.
- They are often sad and frustrated.
- They create unpleasant scenes even for trivial matters.

It is not very difficult to identify people with negative attitude. In the office, I could identify the attitude of some people by placing a few questions or suggestions before them. For instance, when I visited a farm and suggested introducing a new crop or a new system, I expected two kinds of responses. While some Managers immediately said 'yes', others said 'it may not work because ' The people in the first category were positive minded because they were prepared to accept new ideas, give it a thought and make a genuine attempt to bring some improvement or change. The Managers in the second category were either lethargic or egoistic; they had lost interest in taking any initiative and hence were not willing to change their attitude. These are the negative people who are not only obstacles in the road to progress but also a signal to stagnation in the organisation. If such people are in our house we should encourage them to attend some courses to change their attitude. If they are in the office they need counselling and training, following by a change in responsibility as well. If you are recruiting any new staff, check their attitude and avoid those with a negative attitude.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

We need to build our capacity by feeding our mind with positive thoughts and knowledge regularly. Knowledge is the information analysed and processed into usable form. Knowledge becomes power, when used beneficially. Thus, our learning should be put into practice.

While knowledge is the potential power, wisdom is the real power. Wisdom is developed by fitting

the mind with powerful thoughts regularly and by effective use of the knowledge in our day to day living. With application of knowledge, the experience is transformed into wisdom. That is why people who spend a lot of time in reading books do not become wise. It is only when the knowledge is used for practice, they develop wisdom and start developing a positive attitude. However, we need motivators to encourage negative people to change their attitude. It is often useful to interact with negative people and help them to change their attitude. Can people with negative attitude change? Yes, it is possible to change their attitude to a great extent.

Parents, particularly the mother, is the best teacher for orienting children. Orientation of the mother with spiritual thoughts during her confinement has been an age old practice in the Indian culture.

During school days, teachers are the best guides to help us in changing our attitude, in addition to parents.

Among parents, if one of them is generous, kind and helpful, children also pick up the same qualities.

Children have a tendency to imitate elders, which becomes a habit. Parents are the role models for their children. Whenever they have to act in a given situation, children remember how their parents had faced a similar situation and act accordingly.

When a beggar approaches a man walking on a street to give money he may react in many ways, either give a coin or politely refuse or even shout at him. In most cases his action would have had a heavy influence of his elders on him. His childhood memory influences him to take an instant decision. This is orientation.

A mother pats her child who joins her in reciting prayers in the evening approvingly. This is how the attitude of children is developed. When a child becomes violent, the parents become stern

and this forces the child to change his or her attitude. This is how the personality is developed. The prevailing law and order and rules and regulations imposed by the Government, can also influence the citizens to mend their ways. Discipline also helps in changing our attitude. A good example is that of Indians living in developed countries. Many citizens do not bother to follow the rules and regulations in India. We see people driving rashly, ignoring the red light at the traffic signal. They do it because there is no one to catch them. Even if they are caught, they feel they can get away with it. This is how some citizens develop a wrong attitude. If we enforce discipline on people by enforcing heavy fine and punishment, then citizens are forced to change their attitude. In many countries, littering in public places is an offence. So people are careful

in not throwing litter. In India, even literate adults who are concerned about cleanliness in their own houses throw garbage in public places! How can we expect children to learn? Smoking is another example. With

greater awareness about the hazards of passive smoking, followed by imposition of laws, people resist from smoking in public places. This is how smokers are disciplined even without the presence of authorities concerned. Hence, change is possible, provided there is a will.

In the government and private offices, various methods of consultations and decisions as a part of the decision making process before taking a major decision, compels the chief to think positively in the best interest of the organisation. If negative people are convinced about the drawbacks of their attitude, they will be motivated to change their attitude.



MARCH FOR OUR LIVES : THOUSANDS JOIN ANTI-GUN PROTESTS AROUND THE WORLD



Hundreds of thousands of students joined the pro-gun control March for Our Lives rallies across the US in one of the largest expressions of popular opposition in the modern era.

Events have been taking place at more than 800 locations around the world – including London, Sydney, Tokyo, Mumbai, plus hundreds of places in the US.

In Washington, as the number of young, diverse and impassioned protesters swelled along Pennsylvania Avenue, many carried signs reading “We are the change”, “No more silence” and “Keep NRA money out of politics”.

Organizers said they hoped their protest would be one of the biggest in the capital since the Vietnam era, and it was clear they had been careful to create a diverse, inclusive group of speakers.

Along with survivors from the attack in Parkland, Florida, who have galvanized the new push for

gun reform, speakers included young victims of gun violence from around America. They sang, they chanted, and they challenged their parents’ generation to be effective in eliminating gun violence from society.

Edna Chavez, 17, from Manual Arts high school in Los Angeles, took the stage with a raised fist and spoke powerfully about her brother, who was killed by gun violence. “I have learned to duck from bullets before I learned to read.” She led the crowd to chant his name, “Ricardo! Ricardo!”

Trevon Bosley, a high school student from Chicago whose brother was killed, said: “I’m here to speak for those youth who fear they may be shot while going to the gas station, the movies, the bus stop, to church or even to and from school. I’m here to speak for those Chicago youth who feel their voices have been silenced for far too long.”

Yolanda Renee King, granddaughter of Martin Luther King, told the crowd: “I have a dream that enough is enough. And that this should be a gun-free world, period.”

She then asked the crowd to repeat back her words: “Spread the word, have you heard? All across the nation. We are going to be a great generation.”

She led the chant three times, encouraging the crowd to repeat her words “so the whole world can hear”.

Shortly before the end of the event, Parkland shooting survivor Emma Gonzalez – who had been a leading voice immediately after the attack on her school – took to the stage for six minutes and 20 seconds, much of that in silence. She said it was the amount of time it took a school shooter to kill 17 people at her school in Florida last month.

As the students gathered, Donald Trump was whisked by motorcade to his West Palm Beach golf club. Trump later tweeted support for “the victims of the horrible attack in France yesterday” but did not mention the rallies on Twitter. A White House statement read: “We applaud the many courageous young Americans exercising their first amendment rights today. Keeping our children safe is a top priority of the president’s, which is why he urged Congress to pass the Fix

NICS and STOP School Violence Acts, and signed them into law.”

The administration also drew attention to some minor reforms the president has called for, including a move by the justice department on Friday to ban bump stocks, the accessory that allows rifles to mimic the rapid fire of automatic weapons.

'We want our voices to be heard': March for Our Lives protesters in their own words

The NRA stayed silent on the student gatherings. But outside the FBI headquarters in Washington, about 30 gun-rights supporters staged a counter-demonstration in front of the FBI headquarters, standing quietly with signs such as “Armed

from Manchester, Vermont, with dozens of her classmates. Clutching a sign that read “I should be writing my college essay, not my will”, Pearce said: “I’m here because enough is enough. We have a right to be heard. We don’t want to be killed in school.”

In a meeting with lawmakers in the aftermath of Parkland, the president had signalled support for stronger background checks on gun purchases and raising the minimum age for buying high-powered rifles. But the NRA staunchly opposed these measures and Trump appears to have abandoned the proposals.

A group of student journalists from the Stoneman Douglas newspaper, the Eagle Eye, were invited to guest-edit the Guardian’s US website this



victims live longer” and “Stop violating civil rights”.

Veteran civil rights leader John Lewis said the protests reminded him of the early days of the civil rights era. “I think it’s amazing,” Lewis said. “They will be the leaders of the 21st century.”

In one of the first speeches, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas senior Delaney Tarr told the crowd of the students’ demands, including background checks and a ban on assault weapons. “When you give us an inch, that bump stocks ban, we will take a mile,” she said. “We are not here for breadcrumbs, we are here to lead.”

Earlier, the Guardian spoke to Cassie Pearce, 17, who had ridden in her school bus for 10 hours

weekend. Eleven students covered the rally in Washington, interviewing other survivors of gun violence from Stoneman Douglas and elsewhere. Parkland student Jordan Khayyami, 15, said: “I think that legislatures should be aware that the next generation of voters is right in front of them so if they don’t want to promote change then we will vote for change.”

The scenes of thousands of students on the streets was overwhelming to many of the victims of gun violence who attended the Washington rally. “I did not expect this. I’m still astounded,” said Mark Barden, whose seven-year-old son Daniel was one of the 20 children murdered at

Sandy Hook in 2012. “To me, it looks like our entire nation is finally on board.”

Barden has spent five years pushing for stricter gun control laws, first with the support of Barack Obama’s White House, then continuing when gun control again dropped off the national agenda.

While the day was focused on the youth, Sir Paul McCartney stood in solidarity with marchers in New York’s Central Park and referred to John Lennon’s fatal shooting outside his apartment building in 1980. “One of my best friends was killed by gun violence right around here, so it’s important to me not just to march today but to take action tomorrow and to have these people to have their voices heard,” he told CNN.

There were, however, a number of counter-protests in some cities. AP reported that in Salt Lake City, Utah, about 500 pro-gun marchers walked to the state capitol building, though they were far outnumbered by an estimated 15,000 gun control marchers there.

While classmates are rallying in Washington, thousands more Stoneman Douglas survivors, their families and supporters were among tens of thousands gathering in Parkland, Florida, the scene of last month’s shooting.

More than 20,000 attended to listen to the

Park before walking the mile south to Stoneman Douglas high school.

“Parkland is a family. And when our family is hurting, we all come together,” said Liam Kiernan, a 15-year-old Parkland 10th-grader. “We become stronger because we feel we’re all one person.”

Max Schachter, the father of Alex, a 14-year-old Stoneman Douglas marching band musician, broke down in tears as he recalled how his son enjoyed playing basketball with his older brother and teaching his little sister “to become a better trombone player”. Schachter said that on 13 February he was like any other parent, wanting his children to be happy and get good grades. Then the Valentine’s Day shooting happened.

“Since the day that changed my life, I will not stop fighting for change,” he said.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/mar/24/washington-march-for-our-lives-gun-violence>



speeches from the amphitheater at Pine Trails

HOLI

Colours have a special significance in Indian culture. We cannot imagine a life without colours. We have a colour for every aspect of life, at every stage, for every occasion, be it food, sweets, fabric, dance, drama or painting. Our streets sport all sorts of colours by way of banners, posters, flags, decorations, etc. Yes, colours are crucial to our culture and they have importance beyond decoration. Our deities and their dress, our environment, our behaviour — all are colourful.

Goddess Durga, Lord Krishna, Goddess Saraswati, Lord Ganesh —all have their special colours.

Red is the widely used colour followed by yellow, green and white. Sensuality and purity are represented by red. It is used on all auspicious occasions and festivals. The vermilion mark on the forehead of a married woman is red. Goddess Durga wears a red saree. It is the colour of power (Shakti). It is a colour associated with deities who are protective and brave.

Saffron is a sacred colour for Hindus representing fire that burns all impurities. It is associated with ascetics — sadhus who have renounced the materialistic world. It was the preferred colour of our ancient heroes and warriors.

Green for us is the colour representing prosperity, growth and happiness. A sign to proceed ahead. It is also associated with festivities. A system of eschewing green still exists. Widows in certain communities in Maharashtra avoid green clothes and green bangles. Green stabilizes the mind. Thus, it finds a place in our hospitals too. Green is cool. It is the colour of Nature.

Yellow is associated with Lord Vishnu — Peetambara. It signifies the qualities of competence, peace, joy and knowledge. Lord Krishna and Lord Ganesh too are adorned with yellow clothes.

White signifies peace, purity, cleanliness and knowledge. Goddess Saraswati is attired in white. The colour was assigned to 'Acharyas' who imparted knowledge in the Hindu tradition.

The sky is blue, the oceans are blue, the rivers are blue, the lakes are blue. Blue represents tranquility, deep thinking and determination. Lord Krishna is Neelakalebara.

The extensive importance attributed to colours indicates that through the ages we have mastered

the art of colours, its preparations, combinations and applications — in peace, war, festivals and in day-to-day life. Colour is part of our existence.

Rangoli, a pure form of art made of colours has been passed down from generations. With varied patterns and colour combinations, it is part of festivals like Diwali, Pongal or Onam. It brings in prosperity, love and co-operation. Rangoli using national colours is a tradition. Rangoli can have geometrical designs and various colours and is known by different names in different parts of India — Kolam in Tamil Nadu, Aripama in Bihar, Aipam in Uttarkhand and Alpana in Bengal. The pookalam (rangoli using flowers) during Onam is famous.

Kalamezhthu — a floor art form using natural dyes is a UNESCO recognized art form of Kerala, mostly used in temples and associated rituals. It is popular in Kali temples and for Nagraja poojas. The traditional artisans use rice powder, turmeric powder, charcoal, green leaves, mixture of lime and turmeric, etc.



All forms of dance in India are colourful.

Bharatnatyam Kuchipudi, Kathak, Manipuri, Odishi, Kathakali. Garbha and Bhangra have their own specified colours and costumes. The colourful costumes worn by the artistes is the core of these art forms. Additionally, the Kathakali artistes create various colour combinations on their faces (called pacha, kathi, thadi, etc.) depicting the character they represent in the dance. Krishna, Arjuna, Duryodhana, Dussasana, Ravana, Veta (hunter), Parashurama, Panchali, Damayanti, et al have separate facial colorized art depictions.



Kalamezhthu — a floor art form using natural dyes is a UNESCO recognized art form of Kerala, mostly used in temples and associated rituals.

The only festival where colour could be indiscriminately used is Holi. People use any colour as there are no rules on the colours to be used. There is no rule on design either. People simply apply or pour colours. That is Holi. There is freedom to apply colour on everyone and on each other. Holi is solely an Indian festival. It now finds place in some of the southeast nations, and in countries like the US and UK, where Indians are a sizeable population. Holi is celebrated in the month of Phalgun, on the full moon day (poornima). It ushers in spring. It is a festival to celebrate victory of good over evil. The holika dahan on the previous evening (a bonfire) is symbolic of burning the destructive evil. The succeeding day is one of joy and colour, transcending age and gender, bringing all people together.

HOW IS HOLI CELEBRATED IN AUSTRALIA?

Universally known as the festival of colours, Holi is celebrated throughout the world by the Hindu community as a welcome gesture to the relaxing season of spring. The celebration kicks off on the full moon of the Phalgun Purnima when the bonfire is lighted and on the following day a spectrum of colours can be seen on the streets in the household and everywhere. The Indian Diaspora, at long distance from their home, find Holi a way of keeping connected to their homeland, to the traditional values of their homeland. Through this festival of colours and

friendship, many inculcate the values into the minds of their children, which their motherland has taught them.

Not only Holi is a festival of colours but it also gives us an opportunity to organize and get together sharing the cultural values of our fellow Indian. The Hindu religion believes it to be a festival when one can wash off all their sins and start afresh with an altogether novel way of thinking. It acts as a tool to let go of all the resentments and grievances, cleaning up the souls and preparing us for to face courageously all the hurdles that may arise in the way of achieving our goals with an optimistic frame of mind. The enthusiasm can be seen on the streets of Australia visually by looking at the paintings of a rainbow of colours.

Several events are organized all over in Australia where people play with non-toxic colours. Most of the people on this day dress themselves up in white traditional clothes and attend the party or events where they hurl colours on each other. Melbourne specifically organizes for the Holi festival event which is the best way for the Indians to quench their desire to be drenched in multi colours. The festival here in Australia is an opportunity for the people of Australia to deepen their understanding of the Hindu religion which is a way of giving a warm welcome to the season of spring and saying good bye to the darkness of the winters. The festival is an opportunity for Australians to promise to themselves to always be successful over the evil with their own good.

Holi is a festival when people can extend warm wishes to each other and bring their loved ones closer, inculcating the spirit of friendship and fun. People get to understand about the background of each other in a society wherein people from diverse cultures live together.

The Hindu Council of Australia is hosting events to mark Holi in Sydney's Wentworthville on the 3rd of March and Liverpool on the 11th of March. Bhavan Australia is also organising a variety of events including a parade through the Sydney CBD and a Holi walk through the Darling Harbour precinct. Events will incorporate performances and food in keeping with the traditional theme of colour and culture and take place on the 14th and 15th of April.

*Source: Bhavan Journal
February 28, 2018*

VAISAKHI



Vaisakhi Day: 14 April, 1699
Guru Gobind Singh initiating the first five members of the Khalsa

Vaisakhi (Punjabi: ਵੈਸਾਖੀ or ਵਸਾਖੀ, vaisḡkhī, is, as well, known as Baisakhi), it is a very important day for Sikhs and one of the most colourful events in the Sikh calendar. It occurs during mid-April every year and traditionally concurs in Punjab with the first harvesting of the crops for the year. So, historically, it has been a very joyous occasion and a time for celebration. However, since 1699, it had marked the very significant religious event of the creation of the Khalsa.

Vaisakhi falls in the Nanakshahi calendar on the first day of Vaisakh month and marks the sun's entering Mesha Rasi (this fact is called Mesha Sankranti, i.e. the solar transit into Aries). Vaisakhi is therefore determined by the solar calendar. Baisakhi usually falls on April 14, and on April 15 once every thirty-six years, however it has now been agreed for Vaisakhi to always fall on the 14th of April. It is not, as is commonly believed, a New Year for the Sikhs. This Sikh New Year is

celebrated on the 1st day of Chet which usually falls on March 13, a month earlier.

HISTORY OF VAISAKHI

Religious persecution under Aurangzeb

A younger son of Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, seized the Gaddi (Throne) of the Mughal Empire from his brother Dara Shikoh, arrested his father and took the Imperial name of Alamgir I (seizer of the Universe, besting his father who had styled himself Grabber of the World) in 1657. His coming to the throne had been costly for his family members, now it would become a disaster for the people of India and those who dared to challenge his policy of religious persecution as he set in motion the process of the Islamization of India.

The Brahmins were his primary target but he reinstated the unethical religious tax, that Akbar had ended, on the Hindus. Their temples and places of learning were shut, torn down and often replaced with Masjids, often built from the stones of the Hindu Temples. He had been convinced by the powerful ulama, whom his predecessors had

largely ignored, that once the highly respected Brahmins of Kashmir accepted Islam, the Hindus of all castes would then follow suit.

1675: THE FIGHT AGAINST SUBVERSION

The Brahmins of Kashmir were given an ultimatum— convert or die. Thoughts of death, rape and torture for themselves and loved ones weighed heavily on their minds. When the time allotted for their answer was almost up, they looked for a dynamic leader to help in their fight against subversion.

The Kashmiri Brahmins, led by Pandit Kirpa Ram sought the intervention of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Nanak or preceptor of the Sikh religion — the Dasvin Patishah or Guru, in his new city, near the ruins of ancient Makhawal, — today's Anandpur Sahib. They asked him for guidance on combating the atrocities being committed by the Mughal Emperor.

At the time of their meeting, Guru Tegh Bahadur's nine year old son, Gobind Rai, was sitting beside him. As Guru Tegh Bahadur was deep in contemplation, thinking of the problem, his young son asked the reason of his concern. Guru Tegh Bahadur said that the matter was of vital importance; the world is aggrieved by oppression; and no brave man had yet come forward who was willing to sacrifice his life to free the earth from the burden of Aurangzeb's persecution. Young Gobind Rai replied, "For that purpose who is more worthy than you my father." So after entrusting the Guruship to Gobind Rai, Guru Tegh Bahadur and several of his Sikhs proceeded to Delhi, the seat of the Mughal Empire. But, before reaching Delhi, the Guru and his loyal attendants were arrested and put in chains by the agents of the Mughal Ruler Aurangzeb.

THE MARTYRDOM OF GURU TEGH BAHADUR

While in prison, Guru Tegh Bahadur foresaw the beginning of his ecclesiastic journey. To test his son's courage and capability to carry on the Guru's mission, he wrote him saying, "My strength is exhausted, I am in chains and I can make not any efforts. Says Nanak, God alone is now my refuge. He will help me as He did his Saints." In reply young Guru Gobind Rai wrote: "I have regained my Power, my bonds are broken and all options are open unto me. Nanak,

everything is in Thine hands. It is only Thou who can assist Thyself."

Guru Teg Bahadur offered his life for the freedom of all, not just his own group of Sikhs, but for those of another religion to be able to freely choose when, where and how they would hold their worship. His spirit of sacrifice and courage kindled a similar spirit in the heart of young Gobind Rai.

It was November 11, hundreds of people had gathered around Chandini Chowk where Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred in Delhi. The executioner left the Guru's severed head and body to lie where they had fallen. In fear of a sudden sand storm he had run for shelter. No one stood up to claim the body of the fallen Guru or his companions who had died tortured deaths before his eyes. Who would perform the religious rites of these brave men. Even the most ardent disciples withdrew, unrecognized.

But, taking advantage of the stormy weather one man, a member of the Mazhabis, managed to take the severed head of Tegh Bahadur to his family back in Anandpur where the appropriate rites were given the noble Guru. Another man, assisted by his sons, secreted the Guru's body away before it would surely be quartered or hung on display by Aurangzeb's minions. They used their humble home as the Guru's secret funeral pyre, as any proper cremation would have brought down the wrath of the frustrated Aurangzeb on their heads. Aurangzeb had lost in this challenge to his plans— for Guru Tegh Bahadur had endured all of the tortures and lures that the mighty Aurangzeb could muster, neither he or any of his companions had taken the easier road and abandoned their religion and principles. Gobind Rai would now seek to endow each of his Sikhs with the iron will and fortitude of his father. For the moment the Pandits were safe, but Guru Gobind Rai now worked to prepare his Sikhs for the coming storm.

1675- : Guru Gobind Rai leads the moral struggle With the criteria of courage and strength to sacrifice, Gobind Rai became the tenth Sikh Guru. He wanted to instill these principles in his downtrodden followers. He wanted to uplift their morale to combat the evil forces of injustice, tyranny, and oppression.

Every year at the time of Baisakhi (springtime), thousands of devotees would come to Anandpur

to pay their obeisance and seek the Guru's blessings.

1699: GURU GOBIND RAI (SINGH) ESTABLISHES THE KHALSA

A depiction of Guru Gobind Singh initiating the first five members of the Khalsa Woodcut, Amritsar or Lahore, about 1874-5

Guru Gobind Rai was 33 years old when he had Divine inspiration to actuate his designs. In early 1699, months before Baisakhi Day, Guru Gobind Rai sent special edicts to congregations far and wide telling all the Sangats that that year's Baisakhi was going to be a unique affair. He asked them not to cut any of their hair — to come with unshorn hair under their turbans and chunis, and for the men to come with full beards.

On Baisakhi Day, March 30, 1699, hundreds of thousands of people gathered around his divine temporal seat at Anandpur Sahib. The Guru addressed the congregants with a most stirring oration on his divine mission of restoring their faith and preserving the Sikh religion. After his inspirational discourse, he flashed his unsheathed sword and said that every great deed was preceded by an equally great sacrifice: Then calling out to the assembled crowd, 'My sword is hungry for a head', He demanded one head for oblation. After some trepidation one person offered himself for the Guru's 'great sacrifice'. The Guru took him inside a tent. A little later the Guru came out of the tent, his sword dripping with fresh blood only to ask for another head. One by one four more earnest devotees offered their heads. Every time the Guru took a person inside the tent, he came out with his sword dripping fresh blood.

Thinking their Guru had gone mad and afraid He would ask for more heads some of the congregation started to disperse when suddenly the Guru emerged with all five men dressed piously in white and in a new ceremony that changed the way that one became a Sikh the Guru now initiated the five into a new and unique order of Sikhs. The ceremony was called pahul, what Sikhs today know as the baptism ceremony or Amrit Shakna. Then the Guru asked the first five Khalsa Sikhs to baptise him, in the same manner. He then proclaimed that the Panj Pyare -- the Five Beloved Ones -- would be the embodiment of the Guru himself:

"Where there are Panj Pyare, there am I. When the Five meet, they are the holiest of the holy."



And so, as it was carried out on that historic day, the ceremony of Pahul continues to this day.

The important thing to remember about that day is that the five volunteers and the whole sangat thought or were "under the impression" that the five Sikhs were really walking to their deaths--being killed, one by one. The Sikhs who volunteered, had demonstrated their willingness to give their heads--in the same way that Guru Tegh Bahadur had done that day in Delhi. The Guru's bit of showmanship, his seemingly--all to real test, was performed to prove the devotion and dedication of his Sikhs. Those who were ready to give themselves up to their Guru were the bravest and most devoted. These brave men had unknowingly chosen to be part of a new paanth - the Khalsa Panth. Guru ji joined the Khalsa Panth after his devoted Sikhs - the initiator becoming the initiated. Today, as then, they lead the Khalsa alongside the Guru:

"Where there are Panj Pyare, there am I..."

1699 AMRIT SANCHAAR

He said whenever and wherever five baptised (Amritdhari) Sikhs come together, the Guru would be present. All those who receive Amrit from five baptized Sikhs will be infused with the spirit of courage and strength to sacrifice. Thus with these principles he established Panth Khalsa, the Order of the Pure Ones.

At the same time the Guru gave his new Khalsa a unique, indisputable, and distinct identity. The Guru gave the gift of bana, the distinctive Sikh clothing and headwear. He also offered five emblems of purity and courage. These symbols,

worn by all baptised Sikhs of both sexes, are popularly known today as Five Ks: Kesh, unshorn hair; Kangha, the wooden comb; Karra, the iron (or steel) bracelet; Kirpan, the sword; and Kachera, the underwear. By being identifiable, no Sikh could ever hide behind cowardice again.

Political tyranny was not the only circumstance that was lowering peoples' morale. Discriminatory class distinctions (--the Indian "caste" system--) promoted by Brahmins and Mullahs was also responsible for the peoples' sense of degradation. The Guru wanted to eliminate the anomalies caused by the caste system. The constitution of the Panj Pyare was the living example of his dream: both the high and low castes were amalgamated into one. Among the original Panj Pyare, there was one Khatri, shopkeeper; one Jat, farmer; one Chhimba, calico printer/tailor; one Ghumar, water-carrier; and one Nai, a barber. The Guru



gave the surname of Singh (Lion) to every Sikh and also took the name for himself. From Guru Gobind Rai he became Guru Gobind Singh. He also pronounced that all Sikh women embody royalty, and gave them the surname Kaur (Princess). With the distinct Khalsa identity and consciousness of purity Guru Gobind Singh gave all Sikhs the opportunity to live lives of courage, sacrifice, and equality.

CELEBRATION

The birth of the Khalsa is celebrated by Sikhs every Vaisakhi Day on April 13. Vaisakhi 1999 marks the 300th anniversary of Guru Gobind

Singh's gift of Panth Khalsa to all Sikhs everywhere.

SIGNIFICANCE OF VAISAKHI

For many 1000's of years, April has been the time when farmers have put their sickles to harvest and collected the precious life saving crops. In the countryside, during this time, the fragrance of the harvest is ubiquitous with scenes of many large piles of grains in one corner of the field; the stacks of wheat stalks ready as fodder for the cattle in another and the general urgency and excitement of the hustle and bustle of transporting and selling of the farm commodity by the farmers.

Without a good harvest, communities would perish and so there was always great joy when a good harvest resulted at Vaisakhi time. The spring season has always been an important and decisive time for the people of the northern hemisphere from times immemorial. During historical times, much had depended on the outcome of the harvest. This in turn had depended on the weather during the months following winter.

1699: A RENEWED BEGINNING

However, since 1699, the Sikhs have had a further reason to celebrated at this time of the year. Now Vaisakhi is celebrated with even more energy, pomp and fanfare. It has become a holy day to mark the birth of the Khalsa fraternity. And so 300 years on, this traditions continues with much gaiety, vigour and enthusiasm. Sikhs worldwide will justifiable spend much time remembering this most important day in their religious calendar – the day the Khalsa was created.

The religious remembrance mixed with the remnant of the harvest festivals of Punjab combine to make this an exciting and particularly festive time for all. Celebrations of many different type take place - many Nagar kirtans will be arranged in many large cities both in the west and in India; lots of Langars will be held in many Gurdwaras ; and holy Paaths will also be

undertaken where the sacred verses of Sri Guru Granth Sahib will be recited.

With these religious events on the one hand will be combined Bhangra dancing, Vaisakhi Dinner and dance functions and much drinking and partying by the non-Gurdwara going community. Under the volumes of such a terrific amount of fun and celebrations have we forgotten the real significance of Vaisakhi? Has the real message of Vaisakhi of 1699 been lost?

A NEW SIGNIFICANCE

Guru Gobind Singh, "I want 1 head"

If we take ourselves back to 1699 and the birth place of the Khalsa perhaps the real significance of Vaisakhi can be comprehended. During the period around 1650, the country around Punjab was in turmoil; the rulers were corrupt; there was no rule of law; the rights of the common people were tramped on; justice did not prevail. The strong imposed their will and their way without question; the weak suffered constantly and quietly; there was misery everywhere.

The weakest were slaughtered daily and no one heard their screams; the rich were accountable to no one and their wishes prevailed; higher authority could be easily bought with money and wealth; for the average person, no peace could be guaranteed; people lived like animals; fear gripped many nations. The minority ruled by imposing terror upon the common people; death was never far away from one's thoughts.

It was under these circumstances that Guru Gobind Singh rose to the occasion and chose to create the Khalsa – the pure saint soldier. The Guru was looking for special people within the community who would take on the challenge and rise above the weakness of the common people; to be strong and fearless; to be prepared to face these challenges without reservation and without resorting to injustice; to be fair and even handed at all times; to be prepared to die for the truth.

Praise of Khalsa (Khalsa Mahima)

The Guru says the following about the Khalsa:

The Khalsa is my true image. I dwell in the Khalsa. Khalsa is my chief purpose. I am forever with the Khalsa.

Khalsa is my closest friend. Khalsa is my mother, father & my comfort.

Khalsa is my caste & creed. My creation is through the Khalsa.

Khalsa is my haven and storehouse. Because of the Khalsa I am honoured.

Khalsa is my body & spirit. Khalsa is my life & soul. Khalsa is my total, true Guru. Khalsa is my courageous friend.

Khalsa is my wisdom & knowledge. I will always contemplate for the Khalsa.

Full tribute of the Khalsa is beyond me. It is impossible to truly praise the Khalsa with one tongue.

I certify that in the above, nothing is false. God and Guru Nanak are my witnesses to this truth.

The Guru had a vision to create a human being who would hold dear the message of all the previous Gurus and who would be able and be strong enough to see their mission through. Guru ji clearly states that his mission on earth was very clear. In the Dasam Granth (Page 136), Maharaj says:

When I was busy in the austere devotion, the Lord called me and sent me to this world with the following words.²⁸

The Word of the Non-Temporal Lord: Chaupai: I have adopted you as my son and hath created you for the propagation of the path (Panth).

"You go therefore for the spread of Dharma (righteousness) and cause people to retrace their steps from evil actions".²⁹

Kabebach: Dohra

I stood up with folded hands and bowing down my head, I said: "The path (Panth) shall prevail only in the world, with THY ASSISTANCE."

A NEW ERA DAWNS

Guru Gobind Singh initiating the first five members of the Khalsa

So the tenth Guru chose April and in particular Vaisakhi in 1699 to ask for the Sangat (congregation) to make a commitment to the Panth (community) and join his army of Saint Soldier. Their mission was to help in the spread of Dharma and to stop the spread of evil and sin. The passage of time does not diminish the significance of this call from the Sikh master. It is a call to all the peoples of the world. His call requires the community to join his specialist army unit to defend and nurture the high principles set by the Gurus.

The Gurus promoted the principles of equality, compassion, love and peace, humility and contentment, devotion to truth, protection of the weak, the sharing of resources, the right to work, the right to free worship and remembrance of God, etc. The real significance of Vaisakhi is to heed the call from the Guru. If you are already an Amritdhari Sikh, renew your duties to the Panth and if you have not taken Amrit yet, then this is the time to listen carefully to that loud call of the Guru in 1699. What is that call saying? "I want the head of one dedicated Sikh!" Why not make it your head this year and become a fighter in the army of Guru Gobind Singh.

Vaisakhi should be the time when vows to uphold those golden principles of Dharam and Sikh faith are renewed. It should be the time when those of us who have shunned 'the Sikh identity' to realign once again our philosophy with the original spirit of this day. It should be the day when Turban is given back the 'Glory of a Crown' it once commanded. It should be the day when Sikhs intoxicate themselves with Guru's Amrit rather than with booze. It should be the day when they reintroduce the concept of Sikh-Rehat in their lives rather than running away from it in hordes. Then and only then, this festival of Vaisakhi will have some meaning for us, the Sikhs.



THE PATH OF DHARAM

Even today, the evil in the world continues to increase:- hatred; war; terrorism; unrest; lawlessness, etc., with all the other enemies of Dharma continue to increase. The need for Guru's Khalsa is there even today. So become a Singh or Kaur and become part of the family of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Kaur and realise the significance of Vaisakhi! It should be considered a day of reflection for all of us, the believers of the Sikh faith and all others who care for the world and its peoples. It should be the day when all who call themselves 'People of God' start making some grass-root resolutions to change the status-quo rather than going with the flow.

KHANDA DI PAHAL

Vaisakhi, the most celebrated Festival of the Sikhs, this year falls on Friday, April the 13th. The article below is dedicated to this most important event of their faith.

Truly speaking, no other day or event in the life of a Sikh carries more significance than the day of Vaisakhi, for it was on this day in the year 1699 that the 'Order of the Khalsa' was initiated by Sahib-E-Kamaal Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It signifies the beginning of the process of transformation of the ordinary people of India into a morally responsive and disciplined martial army of the pure and fearless, difficult to reckon with. As per Guru Gobind Singh Ji's own statement in the Bacchitter Naatak, this act was accomplished

under the direct command from God Almighty. The initiation of the Khalsa Panth', in the religious landscape of India, indeed re-defined the concept of standing up against religious tyranny and human rights violations. By emphasizing 'the protection of the defenseless and helpless people' as an essential concept of the religious obligations of the Sikhs, he was able to give a fresh shot in the arm of developing faith on this day of Vaisakhi.

According to some historians, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh faith was actually born during the month of Vaisakh and not on Purnima of Kartika, as is commonly believed. This fact alone makes this day even more significant for the Sikh people. Guru Amar Dass Ji, the third Guru of the Sikhs had initiated an annual congregation on Vaisakhi at Goindval in Punjab. As time passed, the Sikh Sangat started to assemble on this auspicious day, where ever the seat of the then Guru would be.

For centuries, 'the meek and week' of India had been living under constant fear and coercion not only from the invaders who came via North-West India but also from the ruling class. They had been continuously exploited and forced to adopt the religion of the people in power. On that fateful Vaisakhi day, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, ultimately gave a choice to the people to mold their own destinies by standing firm to face the bigoted and intolerant rulers of the day. Interestingly, this concept of Sant Sipai, or 'Saint-Soldier' had already been instilled in the Sikh-psyche by Guru Hargobind Ji, the sixth Guru and the grandfather of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. But it was Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Sahib-E-Kamaal, who finally institutionalized this concept.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, a true Indian nationalist, a daring son and a selfless father with a keen desire to serve his country of birth, its people and their faiths, had invited the Sikh congregation on Vaisakhi day at Anandpur Sahib in the Shivalik foot hills. He desired to mold them by infusing a new blood of a new philosophy. Eighty thousand people had gathered from all over the country. Standing with a naked sword in his hand, he asked for a head from within the congregation for his stated cause. One by one, five committed individuals came forward. They were drawn from across the country from different castes, a Khatri

from Punjab, a Jat from vicinity of Delhi area and three other low-caste Hindus respectively from the States of [[Gujarat]], East India and from the township of Bidar in Karnataka. And then through a unique ceremony of "Amrit Sanchar" known as 'Sikh Baptism' in Western culture (perhaps due to the lack of a better word) he transformed them into Punj Piaras, the Five Cherished Ones.

1699 AMRIT SANCHAR

And then he bent down on his knees and sought Amrit for himself from those who had just been turned into 'Cherished Five' of the Khalsa. With folded hands and bowed head and with a posture of extreme humility, this man extra-ordinaire' set an example of equality and democratic fraternity, not to be found anywhere else in the annals of world history. Such an act of democratic equality and great humility where a Leader, the Guru purposefully turned around and transformed himself into a Seeker (Guru-Chela) had never been performed before, nor will it ever be again! Describing this event, Dr. Gopal Singh mentions in his book, "The people of India had lost hope, courage and their country to the invaders of the middle-east. He abolished privilege and raised the lowest, equal in all ways to the highest and restored to man his manhood, to woman her woman-hood. He was undeniably and absolutely adamant in his refusal to ever be called God by his followers, unlike many other spiritual heads. Putting a serious injunction against those who ever wished to know him as such, he commanded 'He who calls me God will for sure burn in the fires of hell. For, I am only a servant of God; yea doubt not the veracity of this statement' (From Bachittar Naatak, written by Guru Gobind Singh, translated by Dr. Gopal Singh).

Such metamorphosis of the followers initiated by this patriotic son of motherland, led to the emergence of a martial nation, the Khalsa Panth, whose noble objective, among others, included its ultimate liberation from the clutches of the cruel and polluted rulers. Thus Guru Gobind Singh Ji turned sparrows into hawks to confront the forces of intolerance that had been leashed upon the helpless people by the ruthless and bigoted rulers of the times, for this was the only language, he felt, they understood. Yet Sarbans-Daani father of the Khalsa wrote in precise and clear terms that such an option should be

exercised only after all other means had failed. Even W. H. Mcleod, a controversial Sikh history writer, in his book titled 'Exploring Sikhism, published by Oxford University Press, clearly mentions on page 59 'The Khalsa was established by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as a formal and defined order because the Panth in its earlier, looser form was inadequately equipped to resist forces of destruction which loomed threateningly...'

By proclaiming such a sea-change within the Sikh people on this auspicious day, Guru Gobind Singh Ji promoted a highly visible Sikh identity of uncut hair and other articles of the Khalsa. By assigning a specific code of conduct (Rehat Maryada), he formalized the Khalsa Panth once

BUT ALAS! LOOK AT US, THE 'MODERN SIKHS'!

With the passage of time, we have been gradually losing sight of that fundamental spirit and significance of this important day. We simply keep on flouting the very basic guidelines established by the Khalsas' founder. The Sikh community as a whole, whether in India or abroad, is turning Vaisakhi into an event of hollow festivities without due attention to what it truly stands for. The celebrations are getting more and more elaborate, both on the religious and social fronts, yet the true perspectives and spirit behind such activities are continuously eroding in our minds.

Certainly, in saying so, I do not intend to imply that one should not celebrate this festive



and for all and transformed it into the 'Fauj of Akal Purukh' or the 'Army of God'. In fact, it is only the followers of this unique faith who can trace their existence to a formalized spiritual order with an assigned external discipline having its roots in one specific event on one particular day. No other religious festival could ever boast of such a singular association. That is why, the Vaisakhi has also been known as the 'Saajna Divas' or the 'Day of Creation' of the Khalsa. He wanted to make sure that his people, the Khalsa, even if they wished, could not hide themselves in the crowd especially at a time when their presence to protect the weaklings became imperative.

occasion in great jovial spirit that it is worthy of. On the contrary, I would categorically state that this being the 'Day of Creation of Khalsa', the celebrations should encompass all the happiness and excitement that they can muster. But unfortunately what is missing in all these celebrations is the lack of motivation to understand and then act on the message that was imparted to the Sikhs on this particular day.

We find more and more of us looking like others. Instead of supporting our Turbans, the Crowns, we are subtly emphasizing crew-cuts for our children. The distinct uniqueness of the Sikhs is being continuously adulterated by us, the so-called 'Modern Sikhs' who seem not to care much about the true meaning or message of Vaisakhi.

So much so, that this concept of 'Modern Sikh' even shows up at the time of Anand Kaaraj, the most sacred Sikh marriage ceremony. In order to look like what a Sikh should be looking like, our Sikh children have started temporarily supporting a turban with partially cropped up and clipped beard just for the time of this ceremony. The metamorphosed appearance even disorients the closest of the invited friends not to talk about somewhat less than close acquaintances. Come evening wedding reception, the Turban, the Crown of the Sikh, is thrown away like an unneeded piece of clothing, never to be seen again. The newly-wed groom appears at the show in his usual day to day appearance, totally groomed with a shaven beard and without an iota of hair. 'Can such temporary deception at the time of Anand Kaaraj ever confuse the 'Guru Eternal' whom we pay the utmost respect and around whom we circumambulate while taking vows to stay true to our future life partner?' If not, then one has to wonder as to the need of playing such games and with whom?

Didn't our Guru emphasize upon us to maintain a unique identity with full uncut hair, beard and turban once and for all? What could be clearer than his statement "Jub Lug Khalsa rahe niaraa, Tub lug tej deeo Mai Saara. Jub Aeh Gahai bipran kee reet, Mein naa karron inkee parteet." meaning thereby "That so long as my Khalsa stays

uniquely distinct, I will provide it with all the strength. And when it starts imitating others, I will not care for it any more".

Vaisakhi should be considered a day of reflection for all of us, the believers of the Sikh faith. It should be the day when all who call themselves 'the Sikhs of Guru' start making some grass-root resolutions to change the status-quo rather than going with the flow. It should be the day when vows to uphold those golden principles of Sikh faith are renewed. It should be the time when those of us who have shunned the 'Sikh identity' realign once again our philosophy with the original spirit of this day. It should be the day when Turban is given back the 'Glory of a Crown' it once commanded. It should be the day when Sikhs intoxicate themselves with Guru's Amrit rather than with booze. It should be the day when Sikhs reintroduce the concept of Sikh-Rehat in their lives rather than running away from it in hordes.

Source:

<http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Vaisakhi>



RATH YATRA



Ratha Yatra, the ancient annual festival of the chariot journey by Lord Jagannatha, the presiding deity of the great temple Srimandira at Puri, is one of the grandest spectacles on earth. Jagannatha along with siblings Balabhadra and Subhadra ride three colourful chariots in their annual sojourn to their garden house and birthplace Gundicha Temple where they stay for seven days before returning. RathaYatra is rooted in ancient traditions, myths and legends and embodies the most colourful elements of the classical and folk cultures of the Indian subcontinent and the Odisha region.

RATHA YATRA LEGENDS

According to a widespread belief, the origins of the festival can be traced back to Lord Krishna, the eighth avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, who is said to have appeared in his human form on earth in 3228 BC. Lord Krishna is held to be the supreme God in Indian Hindu Mythology and hence, he is often worshipped as Jagannath (meaning "master of the world"). The Jagannath temple of Puri is dedicated to the worship of Lord Jagannath(Lord Krishna), his elder brother Balabhadra and their sister Subhadra. Just two kilometres away from this temple is situated another temple called "Gundicha Mandir" or "Gundicha Ghar". Gundicha Ghar is supposed to be the home of the aunt of Lord Jagannath. According to a legend, Lord Jagannath once expressed his desire to visit his birthplace

Gundicha Ghar once every year for a week. And true to his wish, every year he spent seven days at Gundicha Ghar along with his elder brother Balabhadra and younger sister Subhadra. The Ratha Yatra festival commemorates this annual journey of Lord Jagannath to his aunt's residence along with his brother and sister.

During Ratha Yatra, the Jagannath temple of Puri becomes the centre of all activities. A majestic structure of 65 metres in height, the temple was built during the twelfth century A.D. in the Kalinga style. It houses three splendid wooden idols of Lord Jagannath(Lord Krishna), Balabhadra and Subhadra. Every year during the festival, the idols are taken through the streets of Puri on beautifully decorated wooden chariots and journeyed to the Gundicha mandir where the idols of the deities are dismounted from the chariots and taken inside. After a week, the deities are returned back on chariots to the Jagannath temple. There is an ancient legend describing how the images first came to the temple. The story goes that a long time ago, a few years after the great Mahabharat war, a king named Indradyumna lived in Avanti, the capital of Malwa of which he was the ruler. His chief minister Vidyapati had a dream where the god Nilamadhava was in a temple situated in a deep jungle jealously guarded by a tribal chief on an island known as Swarn Deep, in Udra Desi (Orissa), beckoning to him to come there. Vidyapati told the king about this dream and was

soon dispatched to that town to find out why the good Lord had come in his dream. Vidyapati took two years to reach Nilakandara. To his dismay he found that the deity had vanished from the temple. This upset everyone, particularly Indradyumna. Still, he decided to perform the Ashvamedha Yagna on the shores of Udra Desi. During the yagna he heard the voice of Lord Nilamadhava asking him to look for a piece of wood with special divine specifications marked on it. When all the rituals of the yagna were completed they saw, to their amazement, a log of wood floating near the shore which they discovered was that of the neem tree. The presence of some strange markings on it convinced them that this was the divine wood they had been told of. At this very moment a man walked in and introduced himself as a carpenter. He said that he was the fittest person to be entrusted with the task of shaping the wood, as he understood the sacred markings. He, however, put some conditions before the king. He said that he should not be disturbed while executing the task and no one should enter the chamber where he would work without eating or drinking or sleeping for eight full days and that he should himself open the door when the task was completed. The king agreed and the carpenter went inside the room with the log of wood and shut himself in. When four or five days passed without a sound coming from the room, the king got apprehensive and ordered his men to open the door. The door was opened and the king found, to his surprise, no one inside except four half finished idols.

Even today, everyone believes that it was Lord Krishna who had come as the carpenter and fashioned the idols. They remain so even when remade. They had no hands or feet and so they remain to this day. New ones are only made in a year which has two Ashvads and this happens every 12 to 19 years. This event is known as Nav Kalever. The idols are designed exactly as the original and painted also in the same manner. The chariots are mended every year since they lie out in the open.

Another fascinating legend tied in to the Ratha Yatra festival tells of the ancient monarch of Puri, Purshottam Dev. The king was fascinated by

Padmavati, the daughter of the king of Kanchi of the South, and wanted to marry her. The father of the girl was unwilling to marry her off to the king of Puri. Not one to give up so easily, Purshottam went into battle with the king of Kanchi. But he lost the war. This made him very angry. He prayed fervently to Lord Jagannath, and again went to war with the neighbouring state. With the blessings of the Lord, he won the war this time. But such was his indignation at the defeated foe that he declared that he would take Padmavati to his kingdom and marry her off to a chandal (the lowest of the low caste). But before he could find a chandal the festival of Rath Yatra came about and the king got busy making preparations for the festival. He had to perform the rituals that he, as the king of Puri, had to perform. As was the custom, he took a broom and began to sweep the path in front of the chariots. The head priest was a very intelligent and pragmatic person; he knew that the king's daughter must not be insulted. So he quickly declared that since the king was doing the work of a chandal he was now a chandal himself and as such could marry the daughter of the defeated king, and so the princess was married to the king of Puri.

Another stirring tale related to the festival is found in the Bhagvat Purana (Hindu scripture) and tells how Kansa, the maternal uncle of Lord Krishna, sent Akrur to bring the Lord and his elder brother Balram, to Mathura from Gokul. His intention was to kill the two brothers as a divine voice had warned him of his death in the hands of Lord Krishna. When the brothers were ready to leave for Mathura, the Gopis and Gopals - childhood friends and playmates of Gopala (Lord Krishna) blocked the way of their chariot. When the Lord consoled them and allayed their fears, they bid him a weepy and painful farewell. The Festival of Rath Yatra is said to commemorate this incident of overwhelming separation.

Source:

http://www.theholidayspot.com/rath_yatra/legends.htm#4kt8hzzZk5yoKdGx.99

WHAT IS EASTER: UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY AND SYMBOLS



Susan E. Richardson

WHAT IS EASTER?

Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb on the third day after his crucifixion. Easter is the fulfilled prophecy of the Messiah who would be persecuted, die for our sins, and rise on the third day. (Isaiah 53). Remembering the resurrection of Jesus is a way to renew daily hope that we have victory over sin.

WHEN DID EASTER START?

The early Christians began remembering the Resurrection every Sunday following its occurrence. In A.D. 325, the Council of Nicaea set aside a special day just to celebrate the Resurrection. The problem with an official day was deciding whether the Resurrection should be celebrated on a weekday or always on a Sunday. Many felt that the date should continue to be based on the timing of the Resurrection during Passover. Once Jewish leaders determined the date of Passover each year, Christian leaders could set the date for Easter by figuring three days after Passover. Following this schedule would have meant that Easter would be a different day of the week each year, only falling on a Sunday once in awhile. Others believed since the Lord rose on a Sunday and this day had been set aside as the Lord's Day,

this was the only possible day to celebrate His resurrection. As Christianity drew away from Judaism, some were reluctant to base the Christian celebration on the Jewish calendar. Finally the Council decided Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Since the date of the vernal equinox changed from year to year, calculating the proper date can be difficult. This is still the method used to determine Easter today, which is why some years we have Easter earlier than other years.

Since Easter is a celebration of Jesus' Resurrection, you would think there wouldn't be room for paganism. However Easter is one of the holidays most intertwined with pagan symbolism and ritual.

WHAT DOES EASTER MEAN?

The origin of the word easter isn't certain. The Venerable Bede, an eighth-century monk and scholar, suggested that the word may have come from the Anglo-Saxon Eostre or Eastre – a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility. Recent scholars haven't been able to find any reference to the goddess Bede mentioned and consider the theory discredited.

Another possibility is the Norse eostur, eastur, or ostara, which meant "the season of the growing sun" or "the season of new birth." The word east

comes from the same roots. In this case, easter would be linked to the changing of the season. A more recent and complex explanation comes from the Christian background of Easter rather than the pagan. The early Latin name for the week of Easter was hebdomada alba or “white week,” while the Sunday after Easter day was called dominica in albis from the white robes of those who had been newly baptized. The word alba is Latin both for white and dawn. People speaking Old High German made a mistake in their translation and used a plural word for dawn, ostarun, instead of a plural for white. From ostarun we get the German Ostern and the English Easter.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF EASTER BUNNY

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Easter? As a Christian, the first image might be the cross or the empty tomb. For the general public, a blitz of media images and merchandise on store shelves makes it more likely that the Easter Bunny comes to mind. So how did a rabbit distributing eggs become a part of Easter?



There are several reasons for the rabbit, or hare, to be associated with Easter, all of which come through pagan celebrations or beliefs. The most obvious is the hare’s fertility. Easter comes during spring and celebrates new life. The Christian meaning of new life through Christ and a general emphasis on new life are different, but the two gradually merged. Any animals – like the hare – that produced many offspring were easy to include.

The hare is also an ancient symbol for the moon. The date of Easter depends on the moon. This may have helped the hare to be absorbed into Easter celebrations.

The hare or rabbit’s burrow helped the animal’s adoption as part of Easter celebrations. Believers

saw the rabbit coming out of its underground home as a symbol for Jesus coming out of the tomb. Perhaps this was another case of taking a pre-existing symbol and giving it Christian meaning.

The Easter hare came to America with German immigrants, and the hare’s role passed to the common American rabbit. Originally children made nests for the rabbit in hats, bonnets, or fancy paper boxes, rather than the baskets of today. Once the children finished their nests, they put them in a secluded spot to keep from frightening the shy rabbit. The appealing nests full of colored eggs probably helped the customs to spread.

Back in Southern Germany, the first pastry and candy Easter bunnies became popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This custom also crossed the Atlantic, and children still eat candy rabbits – particularly chocolate ones – at Easter.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF EASTER EGGS

Next to the Easter bunny, the most familiar symbol is the Easter egg. Like others, the egg has a long pre-Christian history. Again there’s no certainty as to why it became associated with Easter.

Many Ancient cultures viewed eggs as a symbol of life. Hindus, Egyptians, Persians, and Phoenicians believed the world began with an enormous egg. The Persians, Greeks, and Chinese gave gifts of eggs during spring festivals in celebration of new life all around them. Other sources say people ate dyed eggs at spring festivals in Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome. In ancient Druid lore, the eggs of serpents were sacred and stood for life.

Early Christians looked at the connection eggs had to life and decided eggs could be a part of their celebration of Christ’s resurrection. In addition, in some areas, eggs were forbidden during Lent; therefore, they were a delicacy at Easter. Since many of the earlier customs were Eastern in origin, some speculate that early missionaries or knights of the Crusade may have been responsible for bringing the tradition to the West.

In the fourth century, people presented eggs in church to be blessed and sprinkled with holy water. By the twelfth century, the Benedictio Ovorum had been introduced authorizing the

special use of eggs on the holy days of Easter. The timing of this blessing would uphold the idea that Crusaders may have brought the tradition back. Even though eggs had been used previously, the Crusaders may have made the custom more popular and widespread.

In 1290, Edward I of England recorded a purchase of 450 eggs to be colored or covered with gold leaf. He then gave the eggs to members of the royal household.

Once the custom became accepted, new traditions began to grow up around it. Eggs were dyed red for joy, and in memory of Christ's blood. Egg rolling contests came to America from England, possibly as a reminder of the stone being rolled away.

What about the familiar Easter Egg hunt? One source suggested that it grew out of the tradition of German children searching for hidden pretzels during the Easter season. Since children were hiding nests for the Easter Bunny to fill with eggs at the same time they were hunting pretzels, it was only a small leap to begin hiding eggs instead.

THE EASTER LAMB

Of all Easter symbols, the lamb is probably the most strongly Christian. Other than the fact that lambs are young animals born in springtime, it has no strong ties to pagan traditions.

The lamb comes from the Jewish Passover, where each family killed a lamb as a sacrifice. When Christ became the Passover Lamb for everyone, the lamb became a symbol for His sacrifice.

John 1:29 - "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

1 Peter 1:18-21 - "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."

NEW CLOTHES AT EASTER

New clothes have long been associated with the idea of newness and a fresh beginning. The

familiar custom of having new clothes for Easter probably began with early Christians wearing new white robes for baptism during Easter Vigil services. Later, the custom expanded to everyone wearing new clothes in celebration of his or her new life in Christ.

SUNRISE SERVICES

The familiar sunrise service is a relatively new addition to Easter. A group of young Moravian men in Hernhut, Saxony held the first recorded sunrise service in 1732. They went to their cemetery called God's Acre at sunrise to worship in memory of the women who went to the tomb early on the first Easter morning and discovered it empty. Moravian immigrants brought the custom to America, with the first service in the United States held in 1743.

EASTER LILIES

The Easter lily is another new addition to Easter celebrations. Throughout the years, painters and sculptors used the white Madonna lily to symbolize purity and innocence, frequently referring to Mary. This lily doesn't force well, so nurseries couldn't get the flower to bloom in time for Easter.



In the 1880s, Mrs. Thomas Sargent brought Bermuda lily bulbs back to Philadelphia. A local nurseryman, William Harris, saw the lilies and introduced them to the trade. A more practical consideration was that they were easy to force into bloom in time for the Easter season. From there, they Bermuda lily, now the familiar Easter lily, spread throughout the country.

Source:

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/undertanding-the-history-and-symbols-of-easter-1256039.htm>

MY BELIEF IN MULTICULTURALISM



By Orphan Pamuk

There is a new nationalist, illiberal wave washing over Earth. As ever, we must resist authoritarian instincts that restrict our liberties, demonise anybody who appears to be different and —as is happening in Turkey — outlaw freedom of expression, judicial independence and pluralism. We must stand unflinchingly in defence of our dearest values: women's rights, freedom of thought, academic liberties. By learning to understand one another more fully, we remain calm in the assurance that we know our neighbours, regardless of how different they may be.

Multiculturalism enabled us to live alongside people of different religious and cultural backgrounds without having to shed our own heritage. The concept of multiculturalism was essential to the American 'melting pot' in which people of disparate faiths and cultures came together and were forged into one nation.

It challenged those who would have pitted communities against each other to live instead in harmony in the same country, in the same city and on the same street. People of different cultures could keep the traditions that

governed their religious beliefs, social mores, and everyday habits, as long as they recognised that those values were relative.

Forty years spent writing novels and trying to understand people different from me have taught me the same thing: to remain calm in the face of these easterly and westerly, historic and contemporary forces. The illiberal winds we face today are not so strong as to sweep all logic away.

The novelist and the multiculturalist share a similar approach, one based on imagining and understanding the humanity of people who are not like us.

“Multiculturalism enabled us to live alongside people of different religious and cultural backgrounds without having to shed our own heritage. The concept of multiculturalism was essential to the American 'melting pot' in which people of disparate faiths and cultures came together and were forged into one nation.”

Source: Bhavan Journal January 31, 2018
The Hindu and The New York Times

WARD OFF DESPAIR

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

We are facing a time of great uncertainty and upheaval in many corners of our planet. When it comes to making the world a better place, concern for others is tantamount.

Our future is very much in our hands. Within each of us exists the potential to contribute positively to society. Although one individual among so many on this planet may seem too insignificant to have much of an effect on the course of humanity, it is our personal efforts that will determine the direction our society is heading. Wherever I go, I consider myself just one of 7 billion human beings alive today. We share a fundamental wish: we all want to live a happy life, and that is our birthright. There is no formality when we're born, and none when we die. In between, we should treat each other as brother and sister because we share this commonality — a desire for peace and contentment.

Sadly, we face all sorts of problems, many of them of our own making. Why? Because we are swayed by emotions like selfishness, anger and fear. One of the most effective remedies for dealing with such destructive patterns of thought is to cultivate 'loving-kindness' by thinking about the oneness of all the world's seven billion humans. If we consider the ways in which we are all the same, the barriers between us will diminish.

A fulfilling life

Compassion enhances our calm and self-confidence, allowing our marvellous human intelligence to function unhindered. Empathy is hardwired in our genes — studies have shown that babies as young as four months experience it. Research has shown again and again that compassion leads to a successful and fulfilling life. Why, then, do we not focus more on cultivating it into adulthood? When we're angry, our judgment is one-sided, as we aren't able to take all aspects of the situation into account. With a calm mind, we can reach a fuller view of whatever circumstances we face.

Humanity is rich in the diversity that naturally arose from the wide expanse of our world, from the variety of languages and ways of writing to our different societal norms and customs.

However, when we overemphasize race, nationality, faith, or income or education level, we forget our many similarities. We want a roof over our heads and food in our bellies, to feel safe and secure, and for our children to grow and be strong.

As we seek to preserve our own culture and identity, we must also remember that we are one in being human, and work to maintain our warm-heartedness toward all.

Intertwined lives

In the last century, the inclination to solve problems through the use of force was invariably destructive and perpetuated conflict. If we are to make this century a period of peace, we must resolve problems through dialogue and diplomacy. Since our lives are so intertwined, interests of others are also our own. I believe that adopting divisive attitudes runs counter to those interests.

Our interdependence comes with advantages and pitfalls. Although we benefit from a global economy and an ability to communicate and know what is happening worldwide instantaneously, we also face problems that threaten us all. Climate change, in particular, is a challenge that calls us more than ever to make a common effort to defend the common good.

For those who feel helpless in the face of insurmountable suffering, we are still in the early years of the 21st century. There is time for us to create a better, happier world, but we can't sit back and expect a miracle. We each have actions we must take, by living our lives meaningfully and in service to our fellow human beings — helping others whenever we can and making every effort to do them no harm.

Tackling destructive emotions and practising loving-kindness isn't something we should be doing with the next life, heaven or nirvana in mind, but how we should live in the here and now. I am convinced we can become happier individuals, happier communities and a happier humanity by cultivating a warm heart, allowing our better selves to prevail.

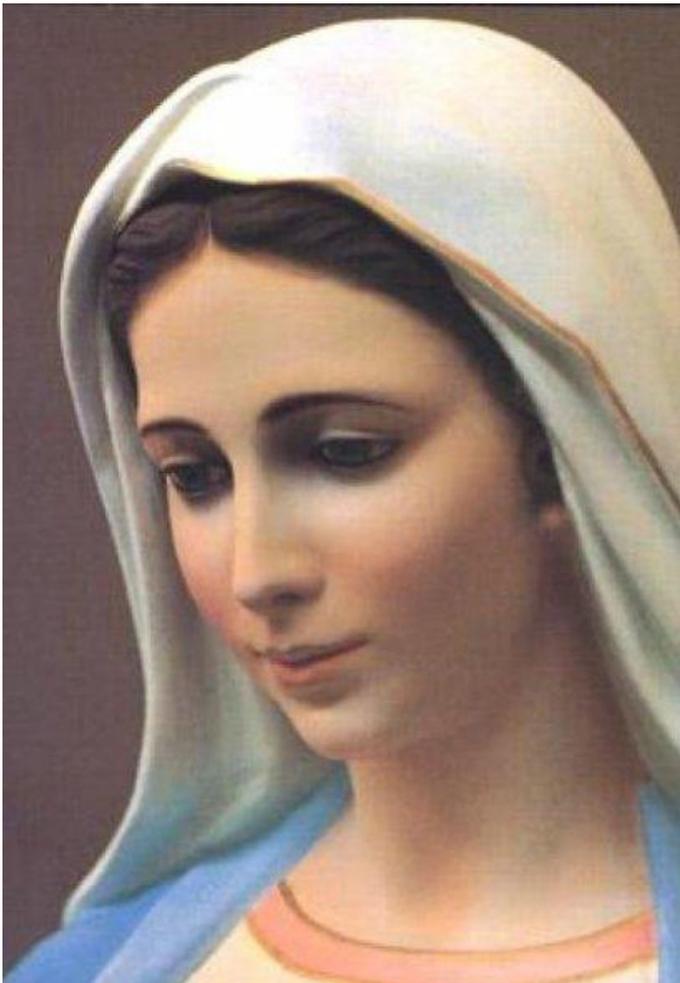
Source: Bhavan Journal January 31, 2018

THE FIRST ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SAINT FROM INDIA

by Dr. Elias Jimmy Chathuruthi

Pronouncing a person as a Saint is not very common among the Orthodox Churches across the world. It is in practice in the Roman Catholic church. They follow a definite and lengthy procedure to do so. This includes a fact finding commission, deliberations in appropriate synods, years of evaluation and finally a proclamation by the appropriate authority. Among Orthodox churches, the Russian Orthodox church has occasionally pronounced some persons as Saints from the 10th century AD onwards. Over course of time, the Eastern Orthodox churches accepted Sainthood of St. Mary —Mother of God, the apostles including St. Mathiyas and St. Paul, Saints Stephan from Palestine, Athaanaasiyos and Kooreelos from Egypt, Cleemees and Yooliyos from Rome, Ignathiyos and Osthathiyos from Antioch and many more. There was none from India.

Geevarghese Mar Gregorios, popularly known as 'Parumala Thirumeni' as a Saint. Accordingly on 18th December 1947, His Holiness Baselios Geevargees II, the then Catholicose of all the East, made the official proclamation. Thus, Chathuruthil Geevarghese Mar Gregorios became 'St. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios', the first Indian to be canonised and be included among the Saints accepted globally (Mar Baselios Yeldho Mafriyana who was entombed at Kothamangalam was also pronounced saint on the same occasion but he was a Syriyan — not Indian). By virtue of being a Saint, He would be remembered in all kurbana, Churches would be dedicated in His name, His image would be displayed at the holiest spot in churches, His relics would be displayed in specially made containers in the churches for obeisance of the devotees, His feast (Perunnaal) and holy kurbana in His name would be celebrated in churches and devotees could pray for His intercession.



St. Mary, Mother of God

On 2nd November, 1947, the Episcopal Synod held at Parumala decided to pronounce Indian Orthodox Syrian Christian Bishop Chathuruthil **Bhavan Australia | March - April 2018**



Bishop Chathuruthil Geevarghese Mar Gregorios

There are many uncommon, but distinct aspects in the life and personality of St. Gregorios which led him to be canonised a Saint. He was considered a Saint by his disciples and common men during his lifetime itself. Incidentally, H. H.

Baselios Geevargees II, who proclaimed the canonisation, was himself a disciple of St. Gregorios. So was his predecessor H.H. Geevargees mar Deevannaasios, (who was also canonised a saint later). A tree is known for its fruits. Most of the disciples of St. Gregorios were eminent leaders of the church in the later years. He was a Maha Guru in all senses. He was a man of prayer'. He used to be in meditation and prayer during most hours of the night. He never skipped any of the yams praarthana —prayers prescribed to be made at prescribed times of the day. He had strong faith in God.

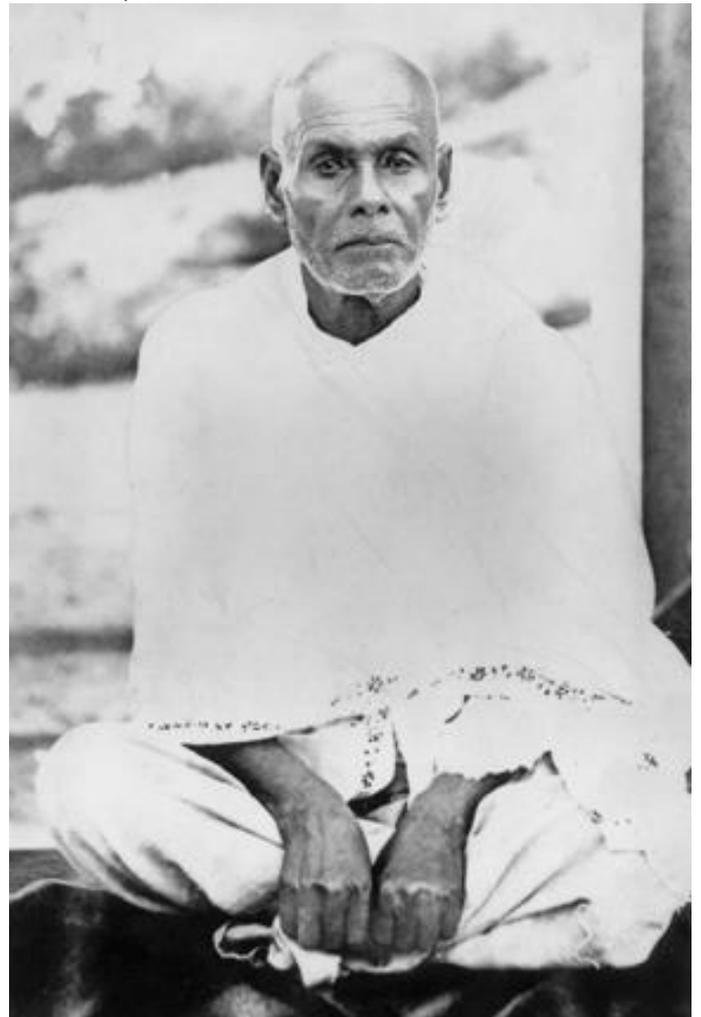
During his time the Orthodox faith in Kerala was facing a very strong challenge from some protestant believers, the Anglican church sponsored by the East India Company and a very strong indigenous group of people who supported a deviant theology of the original Orthodox faith. St. Gregorios was the most effective and prominent leader of the Orthodox church who preached against deviating from the Orthodox beliefs and practices.

St. Gregorios (June 15, 1848 to Nov 2, 1902) was a social reformer. It is to be noted that he was a like Karl Marx (1818 -1883), Engels (1820-1895), Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar (1820 - 1891), Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836 - 1886), Chattambi Swamikal (1853 - 1924), Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928) and Swami Vivekananda (1863 -1902). Social reforms were taking place all over the world at the time. Communist manifesto was taking wings.

In Kerala, strong social interventions, against evil practices like untouchability, were made by people like St. Gregorios, Sree Narayana Guru, Chattambi Swamikal and others almost at the same period of time. Since the Church gave importance mainly to the divinity of St. Gregorios, other aspects were not projected. But the views he had held and decisive actions he had taken are not unimpressive for a student of social history. Even among Christians of that era, some of these practices existed. The so-called low-class converts had a separate graveyard at some places. St. Gregorios could stop such practices with his strong intervention. He believed that lack of education was the root cause of poverty — both physical and intellectual. It led to superstitious and evil practices. The only remedy was education. Spiritually and physically what exists as light is nothing other than knowledge, is a fact,

that everyone would agree to. Our Saviour and Lord, Masihaa blessed and led his disciples and especially bestowed upon them this all important knowledge ..." (from one of St. Gregorios' letters written in 1892 from Niranam church).

"Do not waste children's time. If you could provide education to your children that is enough. Providing other things are not important. Please do not show negligence in educating Cheriyan Kurya. Also please do not worry about spending a little (money) for this purpose." (From a letter to my great grandfather regarding education of my grandfather's brother.)



Sree Narayana Guru

St. Gregorios established many schools. The first one was St. Thomas English School at Mulanthuruthi, his birth place. The second was St. Ignathiyos school at Kunnamkulam in 1899. Other schools established on his initiative are at Niranam, Thumpamon, Kottayam Thazhath Angadi, Thiruvalla (later the Thiruvalla school was given his name-MGM school). Thirumeni was a strong advocate of English education.

St. Gregorios stood against other social evils like child marriage. His concept in this regard can be clearly understood from the letter he wrote from Parumala to Family House at Mulanthuruthi on Kanni 3 rd 1896:

"I have the thought that, since they are children, only after attaining adulthood and becoming aware that they are 'Man' and 'Woman', should consummation of their marriage take place. I notice that being the youngest of children at both households, they are held with lot of affection and love. But, the fulfilment of that affection and love should not be in seeing them married before they lose their milk teeth and their permanent teeth erupt; on the other hand, it should be in seeing that they grow up fully in the fear of God and love of men and in achieving high levels of education and knowledge."

He was very much against the 'Dowry system', which was very prevalent among Christians. He called it 'evil' and discouraged it.

St. Gregorios was born on June 15th, 1848 at Chathuruthi House in the village of Mulanthuruthi in Kanayannoor Taluk of Ernakulam district. Chathuruthi family has its origin traced to the 16th century. Many Syrians came to Kodungalloor area between AD 300 and 400. Many of them settled there. Most of them had to flee from thereto Kaduthuruthi, Piravom and nearby places in Travancore and Kochi during the latter half of 16th century due to persecution. Two brothers from this group reached Mulanthuruthi and got married from a local family and settled there. Consideration of existing documentation leads to believe that one of these brothers was the forefather of Chathuruthi family.

Chathuruthil Mathai and Kallarakkal Mariyam of Kandanad were married and they had two daughters and three sons. The youngest was baptised as Geevarghese and was called Kochaippora at home. Geevarghese showed extreme interest in religious matters from early childhood itself. His role model was Geevarghese Valiya Malppan, younger brother of Chathuruthil Mathai, was an unmarried scholarly priest. He used to live in the Mulanthuruthi Mar Thomman Church and teach deacons. He was also a scholar in Suriyani language, indigenous medicine, astrology, etc.

At the age of about 5, Geevarghese joined the local kudippallikkoodam under an Ezhava Guru

named Onakkavil Ayya. Maamoottil Mani Ashan also taught him. These teachers taught him the basic language and arithmetic. Geevarghese was an outstanding pupil. The love and respect the saint had shown to his teachers even after becoming a Bishop was amazing and the relationship has been described as example of 'Ideal Gurubhakthi' by many writers.

Between the age of nine and ten, Geevarghese was ordained korooyo— student deacon — at Karingashra St. George Church by the then Malankara Methraapoleetha Mathews Mar Athanasios. Afterwards he stayed most of the time, with his paternal uncle, Valiya Malppan at Mulathuruthichurch and underwent training to become a priest. He was always 'knowledge hungry', and spared no effort to attain immense knowledge in Syriac language. He was widely appreciated for his sweet and clear recitation of Suriyani songs. Before completion of his training, the Valiya Malppan died due to smallpox. Deacon Geevarghese stayed with his Guru in spite of objection from the Malppan and served him till the last moment. Eventually Geevarghese was also infected with Haemorrhagic Smallpox which is considered almost always lethal. During his illness his elder sister Mariyam looked after him with motherly love and affection. Geevarghese had lost his mother when he was only two years old. Mariyam was the one who always looked after him. All through his life, the love and affection Thirumeni had shown to his sister was commendable. During the course of the illness, deacon Geevirghese spent most of his painful hours in deep meditation and prayer. One day he was blessed with a vision of Holy Mother Mary who consoled him and assured him of a speedy recovery. After this event he decided to fully surrender his life for works of God.

After recovery from the lethal illness, he pursued his training under the famous Christian teacher of those days Konat Geevargees Malppan, and later under H.G. Yuyaakkeem Mar Kooreelose, a Syriyan metrapolitan who was the resident representative of the Antiochian Patriyarch. Deacon Geevarghese was consecrated as kasheesha in November 1864 and immediately afterwards he was also given the position of Cor episcopa in recognition of his profound knowledge in the Orthodox theology and the religious practices. He functioned as the secretary

to H.G.Kooreelos Metrapoleetha as well as vicar of Mulanthuruthi Marthomman church. Rev.Fr. Geevarghese wished to lead a completely monastic life like St. Anthoniyos of Egypt. With this intention he moved into Vettikkal near the outskirts of Mulanthuruthi. Vettikkal was a small chapel built in AD 1125, in the same year of establishment of Mulanthuruthi Marthomman Church. There, Fr. Geevarghese led a hermit's life, most of the time—during daytime and during nights—he spent in deep meditation and prayer. He undertook long periods of fasting and penance. He ate only to sustain life. He slept less and was always either praying, meditating or reading. He was a voracious reader. He used to translate books from Syriac to Malayalam. Recognising his ability and knowledge he was Elevated to the status of Rambaan on April 17th, 1872.

In 1875, Patriarch Ignathiyos Pathrose III visited India and stayed here for two years. Ramban Geevarghese was selected to be his secretary and translator during the whole period of his stay in India. He was entrusted with the lead role in holding the famous Mulanthurutthi Synod (in which the important constitution of the orthodox churches of the East was framed and passed for first time) and the first time ever 'mooron koodaasha' (blessing the holy oils) was conducted in India.

On 10th December, 1876 Ramban Geevarghese was consecrated as Metropolitan under the name Geevarghese Mar Gregorios at St. Thomas Church, North Paroor. He was less than 29 years of age then. It is very rare among Orthodox Christians to be ordained Bishop at such a young age. He was the youngest among Bishops and so was popularly called Kochu methrathan. He was given the administrative charge of Niranam Diocese. Later he was also given full charge of Parumala Seminary and was responsible for conducting the whole training courses there as a Guru. In addition to these, he was asked to take charge of the Dioceses of Thumpamon and Kollam— thus, he was to look after all dioceses and churches south of Kottayam upto Trivandrum! And he performed his duties perfectly well and with commendable efficiency, without giving any chance for any complaint from any quarter.

He showed evidence of divine powers while he existed in flesh and blood. To mention one

incident: While on a visit to Trivandrum, the official photographer of the Travencore Government, Mr. D'Cruz, tried to take a photograph of Thirumeni to publish in the State Manual to demonstrate the robes of Syriyan Christian bishops. Many times he tried and failed due to bright sunlight. Finally he put up the matter to Thirumeni. Thirumeni looked up and prayed, moved his 'sleebea' and drew a cross with it in the air. Mysterious clouds flew over to hide the sun so that ideal lighting for the snap prevailed and Mr. D'Cruz clicked his picture. Soon after, the clouds disappeared leaving a wonderstruck D'Cruz! This has been recorded by Mr. D'Cruz himself!

“It is very rare among Orthodox Christians to be ordained Bishop at such a young age. Geevarghese Mar Gregorios was the youngest among Bishops and so was popularly called Kochu methrathan.”

In 1895, he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and published a very famous travelogue after returning. This travelogue Oorshlem Yoathroa Vivaranam is considered the first printed travelogue in the Malayalam language.

Extensive travelling, strict observance of penance and fasting, etc took a toll on his health. He succumbed to death on 2nd November, 1902 after suffering an illness which made him bedridden for about two months.

Thousands of pilgrims visit Parumala, a small village on the banks of the Pampa river, after observing fast and penance to seek consolation for their ailments physical or otherwise. Innumerable wonders have been reported by pilgrims. Limitations of this short essay does not permit a detailed description of these but day by day, the number of pilgrims have been increasing.

Source: Bhavan Journal January 15, 2018

THE POWER OF BEING A WOMAN

Hema Raghavan

First century B.C., representing the synthesis of masculine and feminine energies of the universe (Purusha and Prakriti). It also shows how Shakti, the female principle is intertwined with the male principle, Shiva. In the Hindu belief, everything in this universe originates from this synthesis and the two are inseparable.

In Christian faith, Mother Mary, the mother of Jesus and known as Virgin Mary, symbolizes faithfulness, devotion, humility, compassionate love for all the people.



St. Mary, Mother of God

The Holy Quran, the central religious text of Islam says, 'Your wives are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them' (Quran 2.187). The implications are man and woman are like garments to each other and therefore have equal status. They complete and complement each other — each one takes on a new aspect of their common humanity and thereby adds a new depth and dimension to his and her personality.

In traditional Judaism, women are for the most part seen as different but equal. Women's obligations and responsibilities are different from men's, but no less important. The equality of men and women begins at the highest possible level: God in Judaism, unlike in traditional Christianity, has never been viewed as exclusively male. Judaism has always maintained that God has both masculine and feminine qualities.

The above extracts from four major religions of the world formed the central tenet of ancient tradition to recognize and appreciate the complementarities and equality of men and women in society. It is strange and defies logic when we see today a lot of gender polemics with heated discussions on gender rights and gender parity denied to women who constitute one half of the population. The emergence of 'Me-too hash tag' that started in the US in October 2017 and has since spread all over the world, including India, has brought to the fore the sexual harassment of women in their professional work places, not to speak of the domestic violence inflicted on them. The daily reports of rape — as lethal and fatal as Nirbhaya — go beyond sexual harassment to tell a tale of masculine brutality and violence. Juvenile crimes against young girls are worrisome and disturbing. Not a day passes without a mention of extreme provocation aimed at women by men of all age groups.

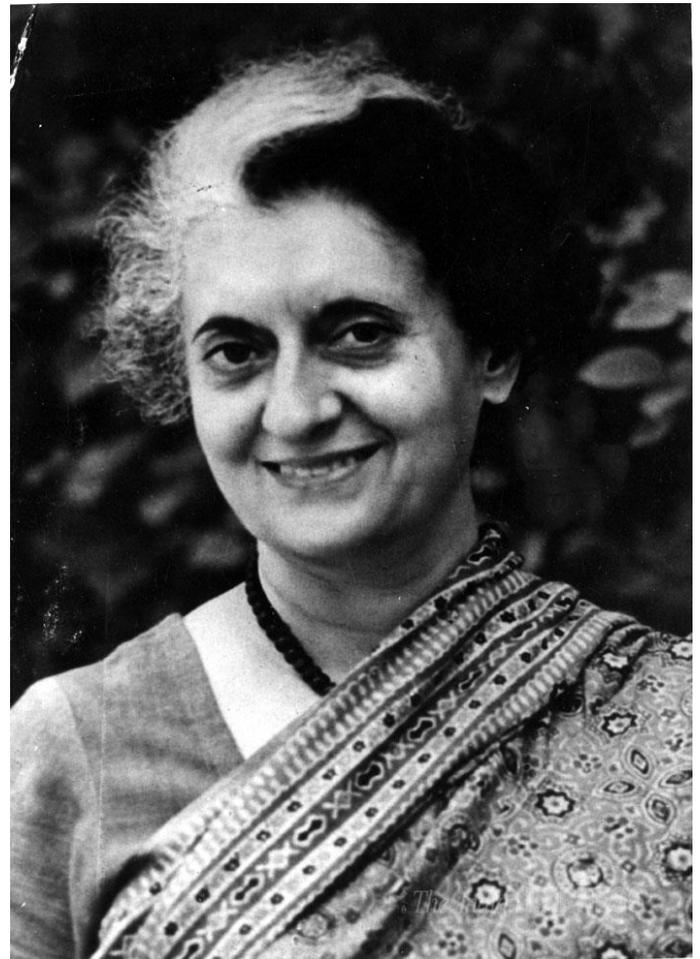
In India, the last 2000 years since the celebrated Kushan period of the first century B.C. (when the concept of Ardhanareeshwara took root), have seen an opprobrious decline of manly values that were earlier founded on the principles of liberalism, democracy and human rights. The traditional manly values that have been identified since the early days are prudence (doing the right thing at the right time), courage (required to take risks), temperance (self-limitation of the passions) and justice (equality under the law for all). All these values have since been turned on their head as freedom is today interpreted as unrestricted license to live without any limits imposed — a far cry from Rousseau's famous statement, 'Man is born free; he is forever in chains'. Courage is seen as machismo, an exaggerated sense of masculinity that places great value on physical courage, virility, domination of women and aggressiveness; temperance is

replaced by hedonism and justice has become nothing more than a veneer of equality.

Given this state, the disturbing question is how to create a society that ensures freedom, equality and security to all — in particular to women who are today regarded as subordinate sex or second sex in our male dominated society holding on to a system of patriarchal rule. The current arbitrary classification of society as patriarchal and matriarchal, has led to the collapse of all human values of equity, equality, liberty, justice and humanity. Is it possible once again to embrace feminine values to bring about the synergy of masculine and feminine power and establish equality between men and women? If the society is conceptualized as a triangle with a broad base and its two sides deemed as men and women, the apex becomes the meeting point of the two sides. The scriptures' conception of society in the early days was structured on the pattern of an isosceles triangle where the two sides are equal and whose interior angles inclined to the base are also equal. But today's society is structured more like a right triangle with the hypotenuse, longer than the base and the other side, and its incline of 90° more than the sum of the other two angles of the triangle. The tension, imbalance and skewed gender bias is because of the extra length and angular incline given to the hypotenuse. We have to revert to the isosceles pattern to re-establish an equal and just society.

This, prima facie requires acceptance of feminine values as equal to the male values and equally intrinsic to a humane and civilized society. What are the feminine values? How different are they from the masculine values? Are they so divergent that the two cannot and will not meet? Is it valid to privilege one set of values over the other? It is evident that the two sets of values are different but complementary. They are like the two sides of the same coin. Feminine values are thoughtfulness, intuition, patience, compassion and empathy. They also include maternal love, devotion, commitment and humility. These values have been wrongly labelled as soft virtues in contrast to the tough and strident manly virtues of heroism, courage, swiftness, aggression and violence. But both values are needed in society. Heroism without intuition, courage without thoughtfulness, aggression without compassion, swiftness without patience and violence without empathy results in the decline

of evenness and balance of society. The manly virtues have the force of protection and defence while the feminine virtues have the force of sustenance and nourishment. The two have to be harnessed together to get our society back on its wheels.



Indira Gandhi

Women by nature are genetically wired to be patient, kind and considerate. They are not endowed with physical strength adequate to handle difficult situation. As the Bible says 'A soft answer turns away wrath', women have the power to douse a fire. They have the patience and sensitivity to act with peaceful diplomacy when the vital interests of the state are challenged. This does not in any way show them to be weak or less courageous, for whenever there is the need to combat, they do not hesitate. History is replete with courageous acts of women who have won wars. In the '70s of the century gone by, India's Indira Gandhi and Israel's Golda Meir have proved that they can be a force both during peace times and wartimes. Indira Gandhi's strength and action in standing up to President Nixon during the victorious Bangladesh liberation war and her magnanimity in allowing the 93,000 Pakistan soldiers who had surrendered to go back home,

unharmd and unscathed is proof of what women



can achieve through a blend of courage and clemency, humanity and forbearance. Similarly, Golda Meir emerged as a forceful spokesman for the Zionist cause in negotiating with the British mandatory authorities.

Even after Israel won the six days war against Egypt, Jordan and Syria, she pressed for a peace settlement in the Middle East by diplomatic means.

Golda Meir

But the important thing to note is neither Indira Gandhi nor Golda Meir could have accomplished victory without the support of the army. Under Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, India won both the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan. It was the combination of feminine power of firmness and humanity of Indira Gandhi and the masculine power of bravery and courage of Sam Bahadur Manekshaw that gave India both a moral and military victory in the 1971 war.

Our scriptures quoted above have stressed on the synergy between the female and the male power in the service of humanity.

India has constantly marched towards such a synthesis, but its progress more often than not has got derailed by the aggression and demonic male forces especially in the last few decades. The media coverage of these ugly incidents involving male brutishness against innocent women has increasingly revealed the outrageous happenings in our society though the judiciary with its low and delayed rate of conviction of the rapists, the police with its refusal to register complaints of sexual harassment and the law enforcers' inability to catch and punish these dregs of the society have made all of us hapless witnesses to the horrid and ghastly happenings all around. It is distressing and painful to learn about young adolescents and even younger teens indulging in sexual assault and sexual abuse. This new breed of sexual predators has been greatly influenced by

cinema that gives them a distorted vision of masculine virility in such sexcapades.

What we need is not just law enforcers as much as trusted and wise mentors who can educate our young adolescents into understanding the physiology, psychology and social dimensions of sex. While home plays an important part in the bringing up of our young men and women, schools have a much greater role to play. To start with, there should be mixed schools and not separate boys' and separate girls' schools. Boys and girls should grow together and should learn to appreciate and respect each other. It is time to give up our squeamishness about teenage crush. It is normal for any growing young man and woman to get attracted to the opposite sex but they have to be taught to understand the problems of sexual union and the need thereof to practise self-control and restraint. How to achieve this which sounds easy to read and listen to? How to mould young minds that are under the influence of drugs, films, porn videos and sex abusive contents on the 'Net?

It may seem incongruous to discuss the measures to be adopted in an article highlighting the female virtues. But I have given myself the indulgence to spell out possible measures to combat sexual predation among young boys and young male adults. The universal problem plaguing the young minds is the TINA problem. There is nothing in schools and colleges to engage his mind and attention. Classrooms are dreary, teaching is pedestrian, examinations are farcical. If the mind is not engaged at the tender age to learn and find avenues to satisfy its curiosity, it runs after things that excite it erotically. Teachers complain that students are not interested. Parents complain that children don't respect their advice. We are a notorious generation of whiners and snivellers. No one addresses the questions how to engage young minds in a constructive way. The early years — what we term as Brahmacharya — are the years for learning discipline. The brahmacharya (bachelor student) stage of one's life as conceived in our philosophy is up to 25 years of age. It is the period to focus on education and learning and imbibe the practice of celibacy. In this context, it connotes chastity during the student stage of life for the purposes of engaging the mind in learning without any distraction.

Source: Bhavan Journal January 31, 2018

KEY TO SUCCESS



T.G.L. Iyer

The author says that it is important to visualize and expect success in order to achieve it.

High achievers have shown that no matter how different one's personality, work habits or occupation is, to accomplish great things in life, one has to visualise and expect success. They had the ability to vividly picture their achievements and to reassure themselves in the face of odds to come through. To visualise the person you want to become, set aside sometime in which you can create an atmosphere that is conducive to identifying your life's dreams.

One stormy night, an elderly couple entered a hotel lobby and asked for a room. The night clerk replied, "We are completely full with a convention group. Normally, I would send you to another hotel but this stormy night, I can't do that. Why don't you just stay in my room? It may not be a luxury suite, but it is clean."

The couple seemed uncomfortable but they accepted the offer as there was no alternative. The next morning, when the couple went to pay the bill, the clerk who was still at the counter, said, "There is no charge for the room. You don't need to worry about that."

The old man said: "You are the kind of person every hotel owner dreams about having as an employee. Maybe, someday I will build a hotel for you."

A few years passed and the hotel clerk was still at the same job. One day, he received a registered letter from the old man. The letter expressed his vivid recollection of the stormy night and invited him to New York. The clerk met the old man who took him to a magnificent new building and said, "That is the hotel I have built for you to operate." The clerk was stunned but the old man continued, "My name is William Waldorf Astor and you are the person I want working for me." There is a personal message in it for all of us. Why do we need a benefactor to come along and make us believe in our dreams? How is it that an outsider can perceive more potential in us than we can see in ourselves?

“Why do we need a benefactor to come along and make us believe in our dreams? How is it that an outsider can perceive more potential in us than we can see in ourselves?”

There is a proverb which says: 'People can be divided into three groups; those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who do not know what is happening'! My teacher used to tell me, "Joy is accepting yourself as you are right now i.e., an imperfect, changing, growing and a worthwhile person. Liking yourself is feeling that you are okay. Understand the truth that although we as individuals are not born with equal physical, mental and intellectual attributes, we are born with equal rights to feel the excitement of joy and in believing that we deserve the best of life.

“When we love someone, we do not love them all the time in exactly the same way from moment to moment. It is impossible. It is even a lie to pretend to and yet, this is exactly what most of us demand.”

When we love someone, we do not love them all the time in exactly the same way from moment to moment. It is impossible. It is even a lie to pretend to and yet, this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We insist

permanency in duration, continuity, when the only continuity possible in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity and in freedom. Sometimes, we have all experienced the feeling of being totally captivated by strangers, who after a few weeks of relationship, cause us to wonder what we ever saw in them. Man is but a network of relationships and these alone matter to him.

I read this poem somewhere:

When I ask you to listen to me and you start giving advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me why I should not feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

Perhaps, that is why prayer works for some people because God is mute and he does not offer advice or try to fix things.

He just listens and trusts you to work it for yourself; so please just listen and hear me, and if you want to talk, wait a few minutes for your turn and I promise I will listen to you.

My boss used to say, "Don't anticipate the worst; expect the best. A problem is a problem only if you want it to be. You can transform a problem into an opportunity. Focus on where you want to go rather than where you are coming from. Learn from your successes as well as from your mistakes. Real success has little to do with a gifted truth, outstanding talent or high intelligence. You make your own happiness knowing it is an attitude, a habit gained from daily practice!"

Source: Bhavan Journal January 31, 2018



THE TEACHER AND THE TAUGHT

Dasu Madhusudhana Rao

I am a teacher; so I am a student (learner) too.

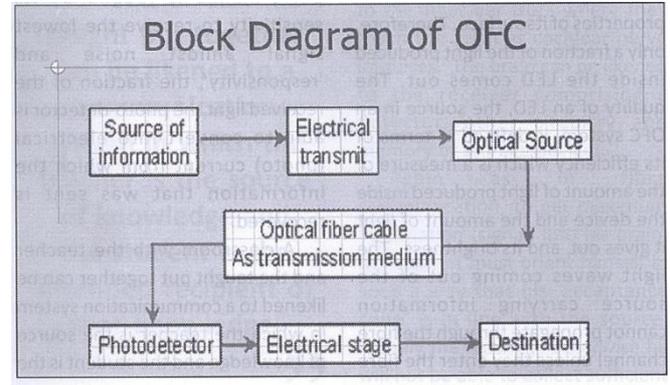
Teachers give lessons and students receive the lessons. Be they on any subject, Science, History, Economics or Philosophy, what lessons can the teachers draw from the lessons they teach? What lessons can the students draw from what they learn? These twin questions struck me one day when I was giving a lesson on 'Optical Fibre Communication (OFC) System' to undergraduate engineering students.

The purpose of any communication system is to transfer information from a source to the destination with maximum efficiency and least distortion. In any modern (electronic) communication system, the message, say in the form of sound, is first converted into an electrical signal form by a microphone. This electrical signal is then placed on a carrier (a radio wave) in a source unit called transmitter, and this modulated carrier with the message riding on it travels through a suitable channel (medium — air in the case of wireless communication) to the receiver. At the receiver, a detector or demodulator extracts the message signal from which the audio information is reproduced by a loudspeaker.

Similarly in an OFC system, the message to be sent modulates an optical (light) wave produced in an optical source, for example a Light Emitting Diode (LED). The modulated light, whose intensity varies in accordance with the amplitude of the message signal, is then sent through an optical fibre to the receiver. At the receiver, a photo-detector senses the optical signal and reconverts it into electrical current from which the transmitted information is recovered by an appropriate device.

In a communication system the quality of the received message depends on the performance of different components in the system viz. the transmitter and the receiver as well as on the properties of the transmission channel which can degrade the signal passing through it. The performance of the OFC link, therefore, depends essentially on the quality of the LED lamp, the optical fibre channel and the photo-detector. The quality of these components in turn is judged by certain properties and they are selected on the basis of these properties. What are the properties

that determine the quality of communication in an OFC system? And what bearing do they have on the teacher and the taught in a classroom? Light in a semiconductor diode (LED) is produced by the 'radiative recombination' of negatively charged electrons and positive 'holes'



(ions). The amount of light (photons) produced internally depends directly on the number of such recombination reactions. However, the amount of light the LED emits depends on the transmission properties of its surface. Therefore, only a fraction of the light produced inside the LED comes out. The quality of an LED, the source in an OFC system, is defined in terms of its efficiency which is a measure of the amount of light produced inside the device and the amount of light it gives out, and its brightness. The light waves coming out of the source carrying information cannot propagate through the fibre channel unless they enter the fibre within what is called an 'acceptance cone' of the fibre, which defines its light gathering capacity. If the light falls outside this cone, the signal will be lost. At the fibre end the light is made to fall on a photo-detector which is the most important component in an optical receiver. The receiver's performance is judged by its sensitivity to receive the lowest signal amidst noise and 'responsivity', the fraction of the received light the photo-detector is able to convert into electrical (photo) current from which the information that was sent is recovered. A classroom with the teacher and the taught put together can be likened to a communication system in which the teacher is the source of knowledge and the student is the intended recipient of that knowledge. As in the case of the OFC system, where the quality of communication depends on the performance of the source, the fibre channel and the receiver, in the classroom

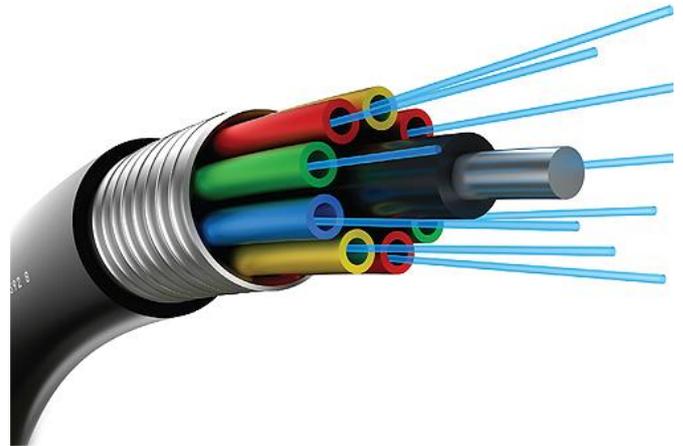
the transfer of knowledge (learning outcome) depends on the quality of the teacher (source) — student (receiver) binary. The quality of teaching depends on first, the internal and external efficiencies of the teacher. That is, how much of the subject he is teaching does he understand, and how much of what he understands he is able to

“A classroom with the teacher and the taught put together can be likened to a communication system in which the teacher is the source of knowledge and the student is the intended recipient of that knowledge.”

effectively deliver in the classroom. Secondly, it depends on the intensity of his teaching. Again as in the OFC link, how much of the knowledge delivered by the teacher goes into the communication channel and finally into the receiver (student) depends upon their characteristics. Here, we may consider that both the channel and the receiver are within the student himself. The student's auditory system, which aids hearing, consisting of the outer ear that collects and focuses sound waves on the eardrum, the middle and inner ears, can be thought of making up the channel like the fibre in OFC. Three small bones (ossicles) in the middle ear conduct sound vibrations from the eardrum to the inner ear from where they reach the brain as cochlear nerve impulses. The brain can be likened to the receiver comprising a detector, other circuitry and memory or storage devices.

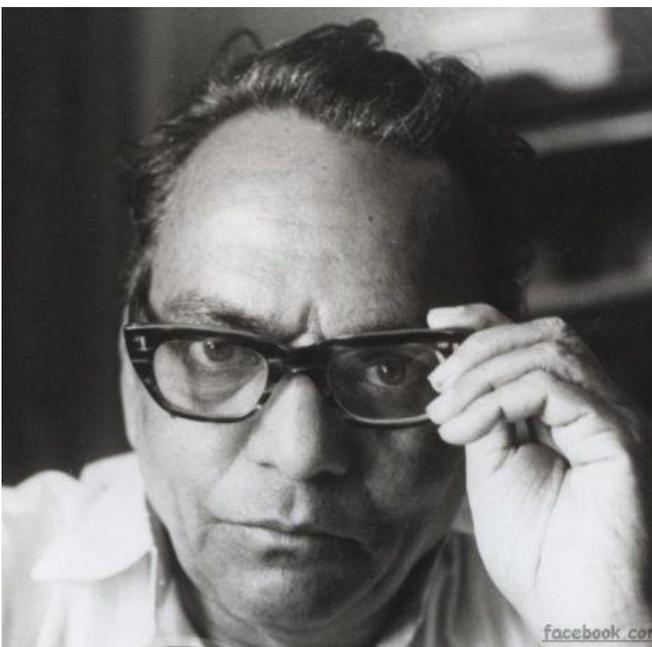
Again as in fibre communication, to get maximum information (signal) into his brain, the student must orient himself in such a way that his 'acceptance cone' is in line with the source, namely the teacher. Otherwise he will not be able to collect sufficient information and will not follow the lesson. The lesson is transmitted thus

via the auditory system to the receiver namely the brain of the student. Here, the performance of the student depends on his brain's sensitivity and responsiveness. That is, knowledge acquired in the classroom depends on the student's ability to concentrate and his level of comprehension.



The different components in an electronic communication system can be designed to perform at a desired level. Similarly for good performance in the classroom the student needs to be attentive and must concentrate on the lesson. The teacher on his part must have good expression and voice modulation so that what he says reaches the student meaningfully. However, even if the source works well, a well designed system can cause degradation of the signal due to some imperfections in the channel and the receiver. The imperfections in the fibre can attenuate and distort the signal, and the internally and externally generated noises in the receiver can interfere with the signal and sometimes can even overwhelm it. Since both the communication channel and the receiver are within the student, if he is not attentive he will not receive the full lesson. In addition the internal and external noises distract him and make his mind wander although he is bodily present in the classroom. Even if the student ignores the external noises, the internal noises in the form of myriad thoughts do not allow him to concentrate on the lesson. What are these disturbing noises which make the student to deviate from his objective namely, to be attentive in the classroom and acquire knowledge? This question can be generalized as why we tend to deviate from our set goals and fail in our duties? How can we overcome these impairments and attain our objective? Let us take another analogy, this time from Physics.

Most of us know what an electron is. An electron is one of the fundamental particles of matter. It is very light and carries an electric charge. Hence, its behaviour can be affected by both electric and magnetic fields. When a bunch of electrons going on a straight path is subjected to orthogonal electric and magnetic fields and the electric field tries to deflect it from its straight course, the magnetic field tries to force the moving charges to go around it. Only those electrons with a specific speed can balance these two disturbing forces and go straight unscathed. That is, only those charges that have strength or energy enough to nullify the influence of the external forces can go about their business unharmed. The particles with even a little less or a little more energy than required to exactly balance the influence of the external agencies become vulnerable and succumb to them and go astray. This is the working principle of a device called velocity selector or Wien filter used in electron microscopes and mass spectrometers to filter or select charged particles based on their speed. The electrons in our analogy have to contend with only two forces — the electric and magnetic fields. But we move under the influence of innumerable temptations which make choosing the right choices difficult. These enticements constantly test our wisdom as described succinctly by the great Telugu poet Sri Sri (Srirangam Srinivasa Rao) in his Sandhya Samasyalu (Twilight Dilemmas), wherein he says, "Norma Shearer in Roxie, Kanchanamala in Broadway"; in a restaurant, "badam halya on one side, semiya idli on the other." Where to go and



what to choose are the problems often faced by many.

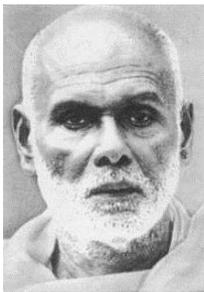
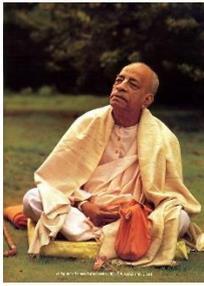
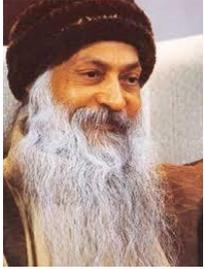
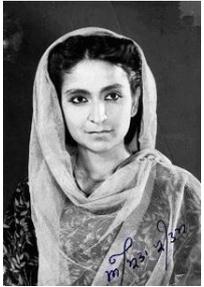
Norma Shearer and Kanchanamala (yesteryear film actresses) and baadam halva and semiya idli (eatables) are only metaphors representing the many temptations every one of us, irrespective of gender and age, encounters every day. Unless we have the necessary strength and the will to withstand these external influences that constantly put pressure on us, and to resist these enticements and balance ourselves, we are sure to become easy prey to them and divagate from our ideals (like the electrons in the above example), which may sometimes prove disastrous. This was clearly stated in the 'Divine Song' (Bhagavat Gita, 3-9) as: tyagnaarthaat karmanaanyatra, lokoyam karmabandhana; tadartham karma kounteya, muktasanga samaacard. If work is worship one has to perform one's work (duties) with devotion to reach the goal. This devotion and dedication to his work will free him fully from the imminent attachment to the flooding thoughts that might otherwise engulf and drown him.

True education will enable one to resist these external influences and help in distinguishing between good and evil, and in making right choices. In the velocity selector described previously, only those charged particles with a particular speed will have enough strength to withstand the deviating forces and so are selected. In the same way, society respects and remembers only those who are upright and perform their duties with sincerity and devotion. The Bhagavat Gita (3-7) describes such persons as 'yastvindriyaani manasaa niyamyaaarabhaterjuna, karmendriyaih karmayogamaskatah savishyate'. Those who monitor and regulate their senses, and thus control their self, and do not seek gratification from their actions and who perform assigned duties with sincerity and dedication are regarded as superior (or ideal) persons.

For one to attain this state, the teacher (as the LED lamp in our analogy) must be able to properly illuminate him with knowledge to dispel the darkness of ignorance in him and show him the right path. Shrutis declare that such teachers are venerated as in 'am ajnaana timiraandhasya, jnaanaanjana salaakaya, caksurunmeelitaam yena tasmai sri guravenamah'.

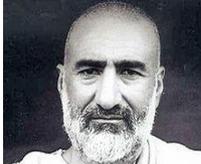
Source: Bhavan Journal February 28, 2018

PERSONS OF THE MONTH: INDIA

<p>Narayana Guru (c.a. 1856 – 20 September 1928)</p>		<p>Narayana Guru, also known as Sri Narayana Guru, (c. 1856 – 20 September 1928), was a social reformer of India. He led a reform movement in Kerala, rejected casteism, and promoted new values of spiritual freedom and social equality. He stressed the need for the spiritual and social uplift of the downtrodden by their own efforts through the establishment of temples and educational institutions. In the process, he denounced the superstitions that clouded the fundamental Hindu cultural convention of caste.</p>
<p>A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1 September 1896 – 14 November 1977)</p>		<p>Abhay Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Abhoy Charonarobindo Bhoktibedanto Shwamy Probhupad; 1 September 1896 – 14 November 1977) was a Gaudiya Vaishnavism spiritual teacher (guru) and the founder preceptor (Acharya) of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness[1] (ISKCON), commonly known as the "Hare Krishna Movement". Adherents of the ISKCON movement view Prabhupada as a divine avatar and messenger of Krishna.</p>
<p>Rajneesh (born Chandra Mohan Jain) 11 December 1931 – 19 January 1990)</p>		<p>Rajneesh, also known as Osho, Acharya Rajneesh, or simply Rajneesh, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh or simply Bhagwan, was an Indian Godman and leader of the Rajneesh movement. During his lifetime he was viewed as a controversial mystic, guru, and spiritual teacher. In the 1960s he travelled throughout India as a public speaker and was a vocal critic of socialism, Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu religious orthodoxy.</p>
<p>Tilopa (928 - 1009)</p>		<p>Tilopa (Prakrit; Sanskrit: Talika or Tilopada) was a tantric practitioner and mahasiddha. He practiced Anuttarayoga Tantra, a set of spiritual practices intended to accelerate the process of attaining Buddhahood. Naropa is considered his main student. At Pashupatinath temple premise, greatest Hindu shrine of Nepal, there are two caves where Tilopa attained Siddhi and initiated his disciple Naropa.</p>
<p>Amrita Pritam (31 August 1919 – 31 October 2005)</p>		<p>Amrita Pritam was an Indian writer and poet, who wrote in Punjabi and Hindi. She is considered the first prominent woman Punjabi poet, novelist, and essayist, and the leading 20th-century poet of the Punjabi language, who is equally loved on both sides of the India-Pakistan border. With a career spanning over six decades, she produced over 100 books of poetry, fiction, biographies, essays, a collection of Punjabi folk songs and an autobiography that were translated into several Indian and foreign languages.</p>

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

PERSONS OF THE MONTH: WORLD

<p>Jane Addams (September 8, 1860 – May 21, 1935),</p>		<p>Jane Addams, known as the "mother" of social work, was a pioneer American settlement activist/reformer, social worker, public philosopher, sociologist, protestor, author, and leader in women's suffrage and world peace. She co-founded, with Ellen Gates Starr, an early settlement house in the United States, Chicago's Hull House that would later become known as one of the most famous settlement houses in America.</p>
<p>Ruth Margaret Adler nee Oppenheimer (1 October 1944 – 18 February 1994)</p>		<p>Ruth Margaret Adler was a feminist, human rights campaigner and child welfare advocate. She was founder of Amnesty International's Scotland office as their first employee in Scotland in 1991. She was a founding member of Scottish Women's Aid in 1974, a member of the Lothian Region Children's Panel and she helped to establish the Scottish Child Law Centre.</p>
<p>Daniel Joseph Berrigan SJ (May 9, 1921 – April 30, 2016)</p>		<p>Daniel Joseph Berrigan SJ was an American Jesuit priest, anti-war activist, and poet. For the rest of his life, Berrigan remained one of the US's leading anti-war activists. In 1980, he founded the Plowshares Movement, an anti-nuclear protest group, that put him back into the national spotlight. He was also an award-winning and prolific author of some 50 books, a teacher, and a university educator.</p>
<p>Daisaku Ikeda (born 2 January 1928)</p>		<p>Daisaku Ikeda is a Buddhist philosopher, educator, author, and nuclear disarmament advocate. He has served as the third president and then honorary president of the Soka Gakkai, the largest of Japan's new religious movements. Ikeda is the founding president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), the world's largest Buddhist lay organization with approximately 12 million practitioners in 192 countries and territories.</p>
<p>Abdul Ghaffār Khān (6 February 1890 – 20 January 1988)</p>		<p>Abdul Ghaffār Khān was a Pashtun independence activist against the rule of the British Raj. He was a political and spiritual leader known for his nonviolent opposition, and a lifelong pacifist and devout Muslim. A close friend of Mohandas Gandhi, Bacha Khan was nicknamed the "Frontier Gandhi" in British India. Bacha Khan founded the Khudai Khidmatgar ("Servants of God") movement in 1929, whose success triggered a harsh crackdown by the British Raj against him and his supporters, and they suffered some of the most severe repression of the Indian independence movement.</p>

FESTIVALS OF THE MONTH: INDIA

<p>Holika Dahan (1 March 2018)</p>		<p>Holika Dahan is celebrated by burning Holika, the devil. For many traditions in Hinduism, Holi celebrates the killing of Holika by Vishnu in order to save Prahlad, a devotee of God Vishnu in the city of Multan Pakistan, and thus Holi gets its name. In olden days, people use to contribute a piece of wood or two for the Holika bonfire, and this represents Holika killing her brother Hiranya Kashipu.</p>
<p>Holi (2 March 2018)</p>		<p>Holi is commonly referred to as the "Festival of Colors". People exuberantly throw colored powder and water all over each other, have parties, and dance under water sprinklers. Bhang (a paste made from cannabis plants) is also traditionally consumed during the celebrations. Holi is a very carefree festival that's great fun to participate in if you don't mind getting wet and dirty.</p>
<p>Festival of Bharat (1-4 March 2018)</p>		<p>This special four-day destination festival has been curated to showcase and celebrate the essence of Bharat (India). It will feature the best live Indian music, literature, debate, celebrity discussions, yoga and meditation, Ayurveda, healthy food, and a Holi party with organic colours. Tickets are available here.</p>
<p>Tulip Festival (First 2 weeks of April 2018)</p>		<p>Spring is when Kashmir is at its most picturesque, and is also the season for flowering tulips. This special time of year is beautifully captured by the Tulip Festival in Srinagar, home to Asia's largest tulip garden. As well as the arresting sight of more than a million blooms, the festival features daily cultural programs, Kashmiri folk songs, sale of local handicrafts, and traditional Kashmiri cuisine. This year, there are more than 50 varieties of tulips and several new fountains installed in the garden.</p>
<p>Baisakhi (14 April 2018)</p>		<p>Baisakhi is a harvest festival, a Punjabi new year festival, and commemoration of the founding of the Khalsa (Sikh religion brotherhood) all rolled into one occasion. It's celebrated with a great deal of feasting, bhangra dancing, folk music, and fairs. Major celebrations are organized at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and it becomes carnival-like outside. There's also a street procession.</p>
<p>Chithirai Festival (April 18 – 3 May 2018)</p>		<p>The two week long Chithirai Festival is one of the biggest celebrations in Madurai. It reenacts the wedding of Lord Sundareswarar (Lord Shiva) and Goddess Meenakshi (Lord Vishnu's sister).</p>

FESTIVALS OF THE MONTH: AUSTRALIA

<p>Taste of Sydney (8-11 March 2018)</p>		<p>The Taste Festival is an annual feast for all senses and celebration of Sydney's vibrant food and culture scene! Taste of Sydney is a sophisticated playground for art and entertainment enthusiasts, culinary connoisseurs, gig-goers and passionate producers.</p>
<p>Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour (23 March – 22 April)</p>		<p>Experience a new production of Puccini's iconic opera La Bohème coming to Sydney Harbour in March 2018. Directed by Andy Morton, conducted by Brian Castles-Onion and designed by Dan Potra, La Bohème will be performed at Mrs Macquaries Point between 23 March and 22 April 2018.</p>
<p>Sydney Royal Easter show (23 March – 3 April 2018)</p>		<p>The Sydney Royal Easter Show is a celebration of Australian culture, from our rural traditions to our modern day lifestyles, providing unique experiences for everyone. Every Easter, the country and city join together at Sydney Showground, Sydney Olympic Park, for twelve days of agricultural competitions, animal experiences, live entertainment, carnival fun, shopping and much more.</p>
<p>Sydney Comedy Festival (23 April – 20 May 2018)</p>		<p>Beginning in 2005 as the Cracker Sydney Comedy Festival, the Festival officially rebranded as Sydney Comedy Festival in 2009. Each year the Festival brings the best international and local acts to venues across Sydney.</p>
<p>ANZAC Day (25 April 2018)</p>		<p>On Australia Day we celebrate all the things we love about Australia: land, sense of fair go, lifestyle, democracy, the freedoms we enjoy but particularly our people. Australia Day is about acknowledging and celebrating the contribution that every Australian makes to our contemporary and dynamic nation.</p>
<p>Staircase to the Moon (April 2018)</p>		<p>You have to see it to believe it! This amazing natural phenomenon takes place along the Pilbara and Kimberley Coastline, when the full moon rising across the exposed tidal flats creates the impression of a staircase leading to the moon.</p>
<p>Orange F.O.O.D Week (6 – 15 April 2018)</p>		<p>The Orange F.O.O.D Week (Food of Orange District) festival is Australia's longest running regional food festival and has been acclaimed as one of Australia's top ten food festivals. It's one of the Orange region's most loved events, appealing to both residents and visitors alike, and celebrates a significant milestone in 2016 marking the event's 25th anniversary year.</p>

SUPER MANKIND

By R. R. Diwakar

It was the morning of 1st January, in the year 1932. Gandhiji was with Karnataka workers and volunteers in Bombay. Dr. Hardiker had arranged that meeting. The previous night, the Congress Working Committee had already thrown a challenge to the government saying that the Congress will have to renew Civil Disobedience.

If I remember correctly, it was Kamaladevi who asked, "Is there any one single instance in history of a country getting independence by non-violence?"

Gandhiji raised his eyes and with a gentle smile but in all seriousness said, "We are writing new history."

He was dealing not only with historical man and the present man but also with the future man. He was living, thinking, and acting in the present and battling with day-to-day problems. At the same time he was also doing all this in the perspective of man in the process of evolution; of man as he has become today; and of man as he is going to be and ought to be in future.

Biological evolution is a truth and human evolution along with it is as much a truth. But what is significant about human evolution is that in man, 'self-consciousness' has been a developing factor that has opened the gate for enabling man to participate in his own evolution and not leave everything only to the mysterious ways of nature as hitherto and to chance mutation. Ultimately mutation may step in and man may take a leap to 'super mankind' as the ape leapt to mankind. But man through the power of his self-consciousness and by trying to align himself with the innate evolutionary urge will have prepared the ground.

Gandhiji was in good company with the scientists in this matter. He was not merely one of the utopian dreamers who followed their imagination more than their intuition. They live in ideas, he lived in action.

Rev. Dominique Pire, founder of the University of Peace in Belgium, stated in one of his latest books that intuition can also tell us about man (Saint-Exupery had said, 'Only the heart can truly see.')

"Man is becoming more and more conscious not merely of the past evolution through which he has passed but is seeing dimly the lines of his future evolution. I am not quoting from a poet's vision or a yogi's super-perception but from an article of

Professor J. Hiernaux: 'So, if we see the matter aright, we are advancing towards a 'Supermankind', and not towards Superman. We may be unable at our stage in evolution to gain a complete picture of this future state, but already we know the paths that lead to it. It may sometimes be difficult to abandon an untroubled immobility, but if we are to accept our responsibilities as human beings and respond to the forces of progress, we must move forward along these paths—the ways that lead to knowledge and amity."

"It is also very satisfying to note that some biological data is available in support of the evolutionary process going on in the structure of the brain of man, if not in the other physical organs or substance of the human body. It was the Viennese brain specialist, Constantin Von Economs (1888-1931) who launched the concept of the 'progressive development of the human brain'. That thread is continuing and Professor Hugo Spatz of Germany has said that what is called 'the basal Nev-Cortex' in the brain of man (a) is the last to develop, (b) was not yet completely developed in primitive man, (c) is the last part of the brain to develop in the human embryo, and (d) produces the highest degree of impression on the human skull."

Gandhiji tried to place himself at the disposal of the human evolutionary urge and endeavoured to spell in thought and action the dynamics of individual and social elevation to higher dimensions of living. It was his genuine humility which made him say once and often that he was experimenting with truth, with the truth of life which was dynamic and ever going forward and higher.

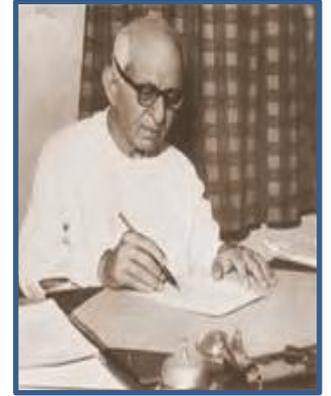
*From Bhavan's Journal, January 28, 1968
Reprinted in Bhavan's Journal January 31, 2018*

Flash Back

Kulapativani

Students Bring Sunshine

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



Dr K.M. Munshi
Founder, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

The Test of Bhavan's Right to Exist

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

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

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



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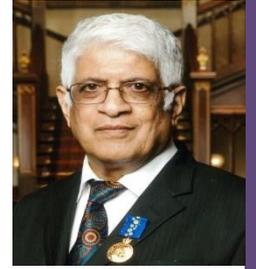
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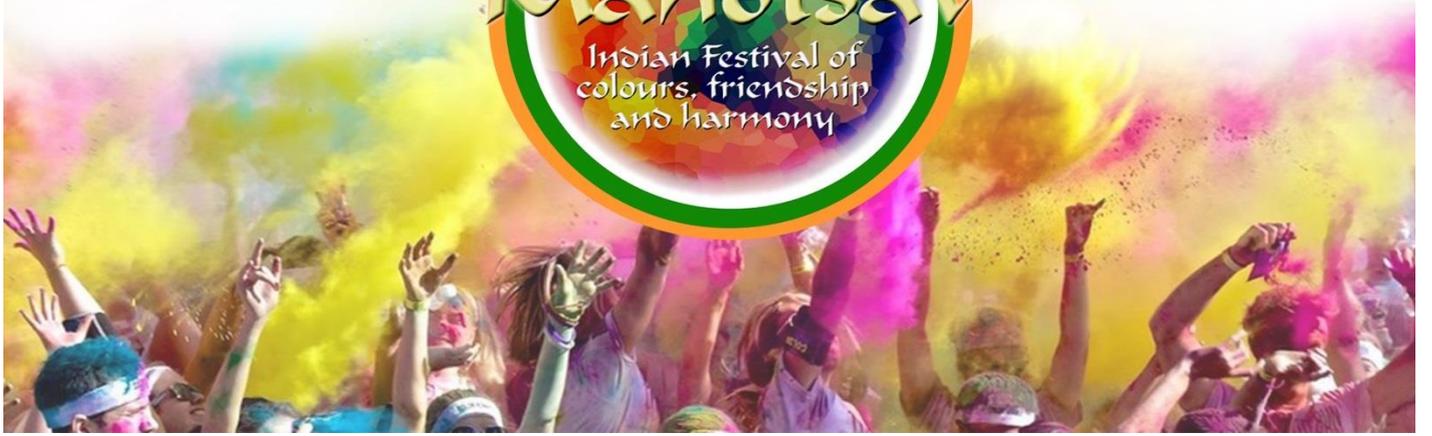
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HOLI MAHOTSAV 14-15 APRIL 2018 IS CANCELLED

Gambhir Watts OAM is in the Hospital from 3rd February 2018 and will remain in Rehabilitation Centre until mid April 2018.

Mr. Watts was hit by car due towards he lost his both legs and seriously injured his shoulders.

As Mr. Watts has been mainly responsible for putting together Holi Festival and organize finances, it has become inevitable that we cancel our most loved festival.

We are very sorry and apologies for the inconvenience.

Thank you.

*Gambhir Watts OAM
President
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia*

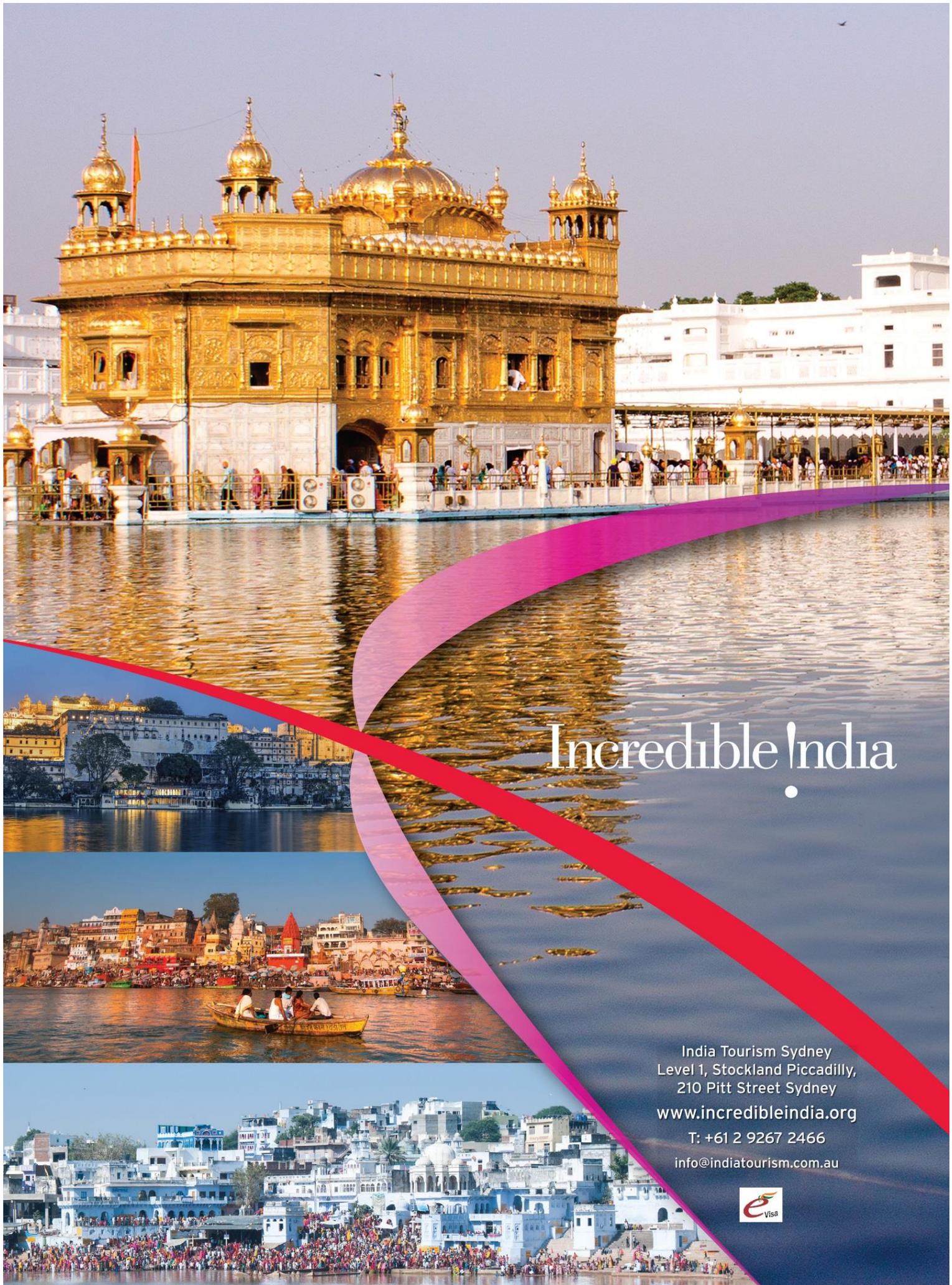
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