

Bhavan Australia

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



Life | Literature | Culture

International Day of Non-Violence

“Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our being.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

The Day of Non-Violence

The United Nations’ (UN) International Day of Non-Violence is a global observance that promotes non-violence through education and public awareness. It is annually held on October 2 to coincide with Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday, the leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence.

“At the center of non-violence stands the principle of love.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

According to General Assembly resolution the International Day of Non-Violence is an occasion to “disseminate the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness”. The resolution reaffirms “the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence” and the desire “to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence”.

The UN General Assembly came up with a resolution in 2007 to establish the International Day of Non-Violence. The Day aimed to spread the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness, around the world. The resolution reflected universal respect for Gandhi and his philosophy. October 2, which is Gandhi’s birthday, was allocated as the day’s date. The first International Day of Non-Violence was on October 2, 2007.

Mahatma Gandhi

“There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no causes that I am prepared to kill for.”

—Mahatma Gandhi,

The Story of My Experiments with Truth, 1927



Mahatma Gandhi’s “novel mode of mass mobilization and non-violent action” brought down colonialism, strengthened the roots of popular sovereignty, of civil, political and economic rights, and greatly influenced many a freedom struggle and inspired leaders like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. Desiring to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence, The International Day of Non-Violence should be celebrated by all through education and public awareness. The Day helps promote and strengthen cultural understanding among the people of the world.

“Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.”

Principle of Non-Violence

The principle of non-violence, also known as non-violent resistance, rejects the use of physical violence to achieve social or political change. Many groups throughout the world use this



method in social justice campaigns. The non-violence action includes: protest and persuasion, including marches and vigils, non-cooperation and non-violent intervention, such as blockades and occupations.

“There are many people who feel that it is useless and futile to continue talking about peace and non-violence against a government whose only reply is savage attacks on an unarmed and defenceless people.”

—Nelson Mandela

The UN recognizes a philosophical connection between the human rights principles in its universal declaration and those that Mahatma Gandhi used. Gandhi is remembered today for his contributions towards India’s freedom and for sharing with the world a doctrine for dealing with injustice and disharmony. He taught people the philosophy of Ahimsa, which encourages the use of non-violence as a tool for the peaceful resolution of differences. India gained its freedom on August 15, 1947, through Gandhi’s efforts.

On the occasion **International Centre of Non-violence (ICON)** Australia launches its new electronic magazine, *Non-violence News* and *Mahatma Gandhi International Medal for Social Responsibility*.

“I do not hold to non-violence for moral reasons, but for political and practical reasons.”

—Aung San Suu Kyi

Celebrations

Many people, governments, and non-government organizations around the world observe the International Day of Non-Violence through various events and activities such as:

- News articles and broadcast announcements promoting the day.
- Public lectures, seminars, discussions, and press conferences about non-violence.
- Photo exhibitions highlighting issues, such as the dangers of the illicit trade of small arms.
- Street awareness campaigns.
- Light ceremonies promoting non-violence and peace.
- Multi-faith prayer meetings.

The International Day of Non-Violence has strong connections with the works, beliefs, and methods of peace leader Mahatma Gandhi, India’s “Father of the Nation”.

Source: www.un.org, www.gandhitopia.org, www.timeanddate.com

Nonviolence in Action

'Nonviolence' and 'Gandhi' seem synonyms.

For Gandhi, ahimsa (nonviolence) was the expression of the deepest love for all humans, including one's opponents; this non-violence therefore included not only a lack of physical harm to them, but also a lack of hatred or ill-will towards them. Gandhi rejected the traditional dichotomy between one's own side and the "enemy;" he believed in the need to convince opponents of their injustice, not to punish them, and in this way one could win their friendship and one's own freedom.

Gandhi never spoke against anyone. He advocated "hate the sin not the sinner".

Gandhi also firmly believed that if violence was used to achieve any end – even if it was employed in the name of justice – the result would be more violence. But such pragmatism in matters of non-violence was unimportant to Gandhi. Thomas Merton writes:

"In Gandhi's mind, non-violence was not simply a political tactic which was supremely useful and efficacious [for him]... On the contrary, the spirit of non-violence sprang from an inner realization of spiritual unity in himself".

Karl Deutsch, an eminent political scientist of the USA attempted an exercise wherein he made a list of eminent people of the world who had made original contributions to human civilization. Among the luminaries he mentioned were Mao of China and Gandhi of India. Later on, during the fifties, some fifty or more Nobel Laureates made a fervent appeal to the great powers of the world never to allow a nuclear holocaust. In this appeal, the only name they mentioned was that of Gandhi.

Mahatma (the great soul) Gandhi (Gandhi) defended the unique dignity of every life and the goodness of all lives. Gandhi coveted no position, no wealth, no power, and yet he was able to command the respectful obedience of millions. This influence according to Rabindranath Tagore sprang from his dynamic spiritual strength and incessant sacrifice.

Gandhi claimed to belong to all humanity. To quote him: "My mission is not merely brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India.... But through realization of the freedom of India, I hope to realize and carry on the mission of the brotherhood. ... My work will be finished if I succeed in carrying conviction to the human family that every man or woman, however weak in body, is the guardian of his or her self-respect and liberty."

Gandhi wanted unreserved reverence for all the great religions in the world. He asked for much more than tolerance among the great religious systems. He pleaded for deep mutual understanding of the humanity to learn from each other. He described his religion which transcends Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity etc. and does not supersede them. He said, "Religion must help humanity towards its ethical goals on earth."

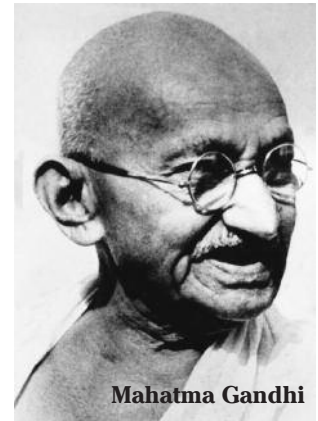
Awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989, the Dalai Lama accepted it not only on behalf of 'the oppressed everywhere' and 'the six million Tibetan people' but also 'as a tribute to the man who founded the modern tradition of non-violent action for change, Mahatma Gandhi, whose life taught and inspired me.' In 1995, felicitating the Dalai Lama on his sixtieth birthday, Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, recalled Gandhi as well.

Leo Tolstoy, much earlier in 1910 had described Gandhi's work in Transvaal as 'fundamental and important.' Today Gandhi also commands prestige in the Green movement because he espoused the simple life and the rights of the earth; and he remains a symbol for non-violent struggle. For close to century gifted individuals have continued to admire Gandhi (Raj Mohan Gandhi, *The Good Boatman A Portrait of Gandhi*, 1995 and 1997, Penguin Books).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Prophet of Power of Love):

Martin Luther King observed: “Gandhi’s was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom”.

Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love of ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love, for Gandhi, was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and non-violence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for so many months. The intellectual and moral satisfaction that I failed to gain from the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, the revolutionary methods of Marx and Lenin, the social contract theory of Hobbes, the “back to nature” optimism of Rousseau, and the superman philosophy of Nietzsche, I found in the non-violent resistance philosophy of Gandhi.



I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.

Albert Einstein (A leader of His People; These words of Albert Einstein memorably sum up the Mahatma’s life-work and position in world history):

A leader of His people, unsupported by any outward authority: a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor the mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of the force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior.

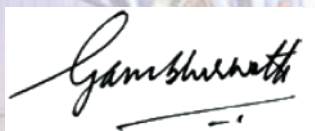
Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth. The veneration on which Gandhi has been held throughout the world rests on the recognition, for the most part unconscious, that in our age of moral decay he was the only statesman who represented that higher conception of human relations in the political sphere to which we must aspire with all our powers.

Rev. Dr John Haynes Holmes

Mahatma Gandhi’s hold upon men’s souls was irresistible and his power, therefore, incredible.... Gandhi is greatest man in the world (in a sermon on 21 April 1921). Gandhi is incomparably the greatest man now living in the world... Not a great physical presence, not a gigantic intellect; no inspired orator, but a personality or character of transcendent spiritual beauty (in a sermon on 12 March 1922).

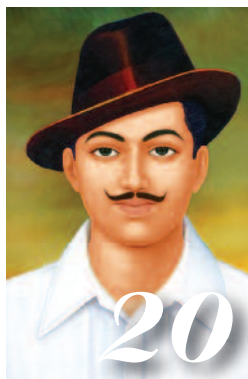
General Smuts (Mahatma Gandhi began his very first mass action in South Africa against General Smuts):

It was my fate to be the antagonist of a man for whom even then I had the highest respect. That clash on a small stage of South Africa brought out certain qualities of Gandhiji’s character which have since become more prominently displayed in his later large-scale operations in India. And they show that while he was prepared to go all out for the causes which he championed, he never forgot the human background of the situation, never lost his temper or succumbed to hate, and preserved his gentle humour even in the most trying situations. His manner and spirit even then, as well as later, contrasted markedly with the ruthless and brutal forcefulness which is the vogue in our day.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Gambhir Watts".

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

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Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Bhavan's Journal

On August 15, 1954 the first copy of *Bhavan's Journal* was published. Ever since then, the periodical is being published twice a month for the last six decades.

As in 2013 the Journal enters 60 years, the Diamond Jubilee of *Bhavan's Journal* is to be celebrated this year.

With the starting of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of *Bhavan's Journal*, the yearlong celebrations commemorating the twin events of the Platinum Jubilee of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and the hundred and twenty fifth birth anniversary of Dr. Munshi which are already in progress since September 2012, the celebrations will be reaching a crescendo, for, with the addition of the diamond jubilee celebration of *Bhavan's Journal*, the three auspicious events become a confluence like the 'sangam' of the three holy rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati at Tribeni.

In the wake of attaining Independence, while people were still basking in its euphoria, for Dr. K.M. Munshi, his primary concern was how to integrate India's legacy of cultural, historical and spiritual heritage into the educational and social system of modern day India.

He was convinced that once the British withdrew, in a scramble for development, his countrymen would reject their own cultural heritage as old fashioned and go ahead to replicate the West, if this happened, India would be following a wrong trajectory. This would create a fragile foundation which would crumble at the slightest provocation.

Ironically, Dr. K.M. Munshi was an ardent admirer of western education and culture. But that was his personal call. He never advocated it for India.

For him, India had to be built on the firm foundation of his own value system, the same cultural and spiritual heritage, a legacy left behind by the sages and their predecessors and not on the

bulwarks of western value system as our culture of continuity and pluralism, the two hallmarks of what is India, would be lost. It was, therefore, his cherished dream to uphold before his countrymen the vast repository of India's spiritual, cultural and historical heritage that *Bhavan's Journal* was born.

The Times of India in its assessment of *Bhavan's Journal* labeled it as "a wonder magazine" because it found that its readership profile included the young and old, the rich and the poor, men, women and children—even some of those, astoundingly, who could barely afford it.

So what is the secret of the mass appeal of *Bhavan's Journal*?

As one reader succinctly put it, "the periodical sells because it only prints good thoughts". This is inarguably the reason of its enormous success—the quality of its content, the intellectual cultural and educational span which appeals to all strata of the society at large. The lofty thoughts expressed in the articles act as inspiration to people. The writings help to clear self-doubt and resolve inner conflicts. It is refreshing to read *Bhavan's Journal* because it is not based on threadbare clichés.

Hence, it is wrong to think that whatever does not follow current trends on sensationalism, often at the expense of accuracy, will not sell.

In the first issue of *Bhavan's Journal* Dr. K.M. Munshi wrote: "I welcome the Book University Journal now being published by Bhavan. Bharat has a heritage and a mission in history. It should be the privilege of this Journal to interpret this heritage and the instrument of its mission."

Surendralal G Mehta
President, Bharatiya Vidya
Bhavan Worldwide



International Day of Peace

"It is not enough to teach children how to read, write and count. Education has to cultivate mutual respect for others and the world in which we live, and help people forge more just, inclusive and peaceful societies."

—UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on his message for 'Education for Peace'

Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on 21 September. The General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

The International Day of Peace, *Peace Day*, provides an opportunity for individuals, organizations and nations to create practical acts of peace on a shared date. It was established by a United Nations resolution in 1981 to coincide with the opening of the General Assembly. The first Peace Day was celebrated in September 1982. In 2002 the General Assembly officially declared September 21 as the permanent date for the International Day of Peace.

By creating the International Day of Peace, the UN devoted itself to worldwide peace and encouraged all of mankind to work in cooperation for this goal. During the discussion of the UN Resolution that established the International Day of Peace, it was suggested that:

"Peace Day should be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples...This day will serve as a reminder to all peoples that our organization, with all its limitations, is a living instrument in the service of peace and should serve all of us here within the organization as a constantly pealing bell reminding us that our permanent commitment, above all interests or differences of any kind, is to peace."

History

In 1981, United Nations General Assembly affirmed, in a declaration subsidized by Costa Rica, the third Tuesday of September as an International Peace Day devoted to observing and spiraling the ethics of peace. In 2001, a new declaration was passed through the General Assembly, supported through the United Kingdom and Costa Rice to provide the day of calm a rigid date and proclaim it as the



world ceasefire day. In the year of 2005, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan termed for the international ceremony of 24-hours cease-fire and the day of non-violence to smear the Day.

In the year of 2006, during his period in office, Secretary-General Kofi Annan rang Peace Bell for the most recent time. That year UN declared the "many ways it works for peace and to encourage individuals, groups and communities around the world to contemplate and communicate thoughts and activities on how to achieve peace. United Kingdom held the primary community and official observation of the United Nations International Peace Day and Non-Violence in Rochdale, Greater Manchester."

In the year of 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon rang Peace Bell at United Nations Headquarters in New York terming for the 24-hours termination of oppositions on 21 September, and also for one minute to make quiet to be watched around the humanity.

The Day of Ceasefire

"There is never a good war or a bad peace."

—Benjamin Franklin

In 2001, the General Assembly established 21 September as an annual day of non-violence and cease-fire. The UN invited all nations and people to

The International Day of Peace, Peace Day, provides an opportunity for individuals, organizations and nations to create practical acts of peace on a shared date

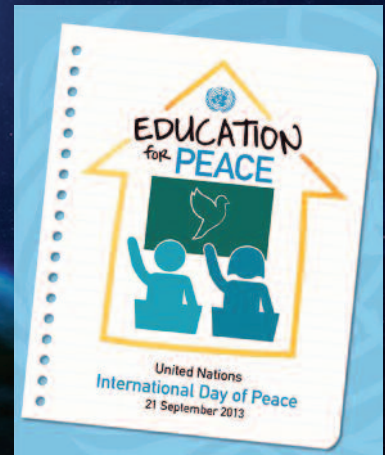
honour a cessation of hostilities during the Day, and to otherwise commemorate the Day through education and public awareness on issues related to peace. The Day is a global call for ceasefire and non-violence. International Day of Peace is also a Day of Ceasefire—personal or political. We should take this opportunity to make peace in our own relationships as well as impact the larger conflicts of our time. Imagine what a whole Day of Ceasefire would mean to humankind.

Youth for Peace and Development

Young people around the world must take a stand for peace. Youth, peace and development are closely interlinked: Peace enables development, which is critical in providing opportunities for young people, particularly those in countries emerging from conflict. Healthy, educated youth are in turn crucial to sustainable development and peace. Peace, stability and security are essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, aimed at slashing poverty, hunger, disease, and maternal and child death by 2015.

Make Your Voice Heard

The World Peace Society gives confidence contribution by all organizations, schools and



individuals. Each year; all parts of the people in the globe celebrate this International Peace Day on 21st September. Peace Bell is directed from the coins contributed by kids on all the continents, and also considered a sign of world unity. It was specified as an endowment by Japan. It is submitted to as a “reminder of the human cost of war.” The dedication on its elevation reads: “Long live absolute world peace.”

Celebrations

Anyone, anywhere can celebrate Peace Day. It can be as simple as lighting a candle at noon, or just sitting in silent meditation. Or it can involve getting our co-workers, organization, community or government engaged in a large event. The impact if millions of people in all parts of the world, come together for one day of peace is immense.

The United Nations invites all nations and people to honour a cessation of hostilities during the Day, and to otherwise commemorate the Day through education and public awareness on issues related to peace.

Source: www.un.org,
www.internationaldayofpeace.org,
www.altiusdirectory.com



International Day of Peace
EDUCATION FOR PEACE

21 September 2013



Gandhi Jayanti (Birth Anniversary)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of peace and the father of the nation was born on 2 October 1869 at Porbandar in Gujarat. In his autobiography *My experiments with Truth* Gandhi recalls that his childhood and teen age years were characterised by education in a local school, marriage to Kasturba at the age of 13 and an intrinsic love for 'truth' and 'duty'.

At the age of the eighteen, he went to England to study law. In 1891, Gandhi returned to India and set up practice at Rajkot. In 1893, he received an offer from an Indian firm in South Africa. With his two minor sons and Kasturba, he went to South Africa at the age of twenty-four. Colonial and racial discrimination showed its ugly colours in the famous train incident, when he was thrown off the compartment meant for the 'Sahibs'. During his more than two decades of stay in South Africa, Gandhi protested against the discriminating treatment that was meted out to Indians. He protested against the Asiatic (Black) Act and the Transvaal Immigration Act and started his non-violent civil disobedience movement. A Satyagrahis camp known as the Tolstoy Farm was established at Lawley, 21 miles from Johannesburg, on 30 May 1910, in order to shelter the Satyagrahis and their families. The South African Government had to heed to the voice of reason and in 1914 repealed most of the obnoxious acts against the Indians. The weekly *Indian Opinion* (1903) became Mahatma Gandhi's chief organ of education and propaganda.

Gandhi returned to India in 1915. After an interrupted stay in Shantiniketan in February-March, 1915, Gandhi collected his companions of Phoenix and established the Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad city. This was shifted in June 1917 to

the banks of the Sabarmati. This Ashram became platform for carrying out his cherished social reforms prime among which were *Harijan* welfare rehabilitation of lepers and self-reliance through weaving *Khadi*.

Between 1917 and 1918 Mahatma Gandhi participated in two peasant movements in Champaran (Bihar) and Kaira (Gujarat) and in the labour dispute in Ahmedabad itself. World War I ended on 11 November 1918; Mahatma Gandhi protested against the Rowlatt Bills and founded the Satyagraha Sabha (28 February 1919). The end of the World war also saw the dismemberment of the Khilafat (Caliphate). This hurt the Indian Muslims deeply. Gandhi was approached for counsel; and in a meeting of the All India Khilafat Conference on 24 November 1919, he proposed that India should respond by non-violent non-cooperation.

For Mahatma Gandhi 'Non-violence' and truth were two inalienable virtues. He summed up the entire philosophy of his life as: "The only virtue I want to claim is truth and non-violence. I lay no claim to super human powers: I want none".

1926 was declared by Mahatma Gandhi to be his year of silence. His famous march to Dandi in March 1930 started a countrywide movement to violate the Salt-Law. Gandhi was arrested on 4 May 1930, and the Government struck hard to crush the movement, but failed. So Gandhi was set free on 26 January 1931; and following a pact between him and the British Viceroy, Lord Irwin (5 March 1931), he was prevailed upon to represent the Congress at the second Round Table Conference in London. Gandhi was completely disillusioned with the attitude of the British, which had renewed its policy of ruthless



repression. As a result the Civil Disobedience Movement was resumed in January 1932.

Mahatma Gandhi was in prison when the Communal Award was announced in August 1932, providing for the introduction of separate electorate for the Depressed Classes. He opposed this attempt to divide the Hindu community and threatened to fast unto death to prevent it. He started his fast on 20 September 1932. It created consternation in the country, but the situation was saved by the conclusion of the Poona Pact, which provided for special reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes in legislatures, but under joint electorate.

On 8 May 1933 he announced a fast for 21 days for the *Harijan* cause. After coming out of prison Mahatma Gandhi devoted himself exclusively to the cause of the '*Harijans*'. The weekly *Harijan* now took the place of the *Young India*, which had served the national cause from 1919 to 1932. After 1934 Gandhi settled down in Sevagram near Wardha to

form a new Centre for his enlarged Constructive Programme, which included Basic Education (1937), designed to bring about the universalisation of education.

In 1942, his 'Quit India' slogan was to serve as the final signal to British dominion in India. The partition of India and Pakistan came as a personal shock to Mahatma Gandhi. When the nation was rejoicing independence (1947), Gandhi went to Naokhali to ameliorate the conditions of the communal riot victims. On 30 January 1948, Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi.

The man of the century had the courage of heart and spirit of the unafraid. His life and teaching reflect the values of this country and the values of humanity. He had been a beacon light to an army of freedom fighters who practised non-violence in world and deed.

Source: www.rrttd.nic.in

Deepavali Pandigai

Deepavali Pandigai goes by another name of Naraka Chaturdasi Snanam, perhaps from a bath taken before daybreak on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight in the month of Arpisi, corresponding to the English months of September-October. Sri Krishna killed an asura named Narakasura on this day and the festival is intended to commemorate the incident.

The word 'Deepavali' means a row of lamps and it originated perhaps from the custom of illuminating villages on this festive occasion. In course of time this included fireworks. Children and even adults light firecrackers before daybreak and enjoy it immensely. New clothes, and firework display are considered signs of auspiciousness and hence people wear new clothes after the auspicious bath and enjoy the occasion. Diwali 2013 falls on 3 November.

The new moon day which follows the Deepavali day goes by the name of Deepavali Amavasya day. The occasion is considered to be especially favourable to propitiate the manes (Pitris) of the departed and hence libations of water with sesame or gingelly seeds are offered to them with the necessary Mantras or chantings. This offering, performed by the fatherless on all new moon days, goes by the name Pitri Tarpanam which means an 'action to satisfy the manes of the forefathers.' The Hindus are enjoined to offer oblations of water everyday to satisfy the devas, the rishis (sages) and the Pitris, and the new moon days are special occasions for the offerings to the manes of the departed. Certain new moon days are considered more favourable for the offerings than other new moon days, and this new moon day is one such. People perform the tarpanam with special care and



attention on this day.

There is a belief among Hindus that there is a great reservoir of spiritual force in the universe in the custody of the Adhikarika Purushas or highly evolved souls who are responsible for the spiritual progress of human beings. These liberate portions of this force from the reservoir and pour them among the masses when they gather in particular places on particular occasions. Further, when the magnetic conditions are favourable, certain substances absorb the forces liberated and retain the property for a limited period. Gingelly seed (*Sesamum Indicum*) is a favourite seed of the planet Saturn or Sani. Perhaps on the occasion of the Deepavali morning, Saturn charges the gingelly, with special properties. So anointing the head with this oil on the occasion is considered to bestow on men and women, health, wealth and prosperity, in addition to spiritual progress. Further, water everywhere is believed to be saturated with holy magnetism on this occasion. Hence people think that water used for bathing in the early hours of the morning before sunrise is equal in merit to that



of the Ganges which is surcharged with the properties of herbs and with the magnetism of the great sages who live near the source of the sacred river and bathe in her waters. When people meet one another after the holy bath, they ask each other whether they had the 'Ganga Snanam' or the bath in the waters of the Ganges. A special noteworthy feature on this occasion is that gifts of fruit, pan-supari, sandal paste, and even money are freely made to people going to visit friends, relations and even utter strangers. People when bathing in the waters of the sacred rivers observe this custom, without which a bath is not considered to be efficacious at all.

The myth deriving the epithet 'Naraka Chaturdasi' is interesting. Once there was an asura king named Narakasura, ruling over the universe residing at a part of the present Bengal Presidency. Though a great devotee of Vishnu, his rule was considered undesirable and consequently the people approached Srikrishna. The lord proceeded to the place and overcame him on this day which was commemorated as the day of joy.

King Bali, the king of the asuras, began to usurp the kingdom of India. On being appealed to by Indra, God Vishnu, in the guise of a Brahmin dwarf, begged of the asura three feet of ground from his vast empire.

When that was granted, Vishnu assumed a huge form known as 'Trivikrama avatara' and measured the earth and the heavens with two feet, and for the third, placed his foot on the asura's head and pushed him down into the nether world. As he was a deep devotee having great merit, Vishnu blessed him with certain boons. To commemorate the advent of Vishnu's dwarf (Vamana) avatara and the giant (Trivikrama) avatara (incarnation), this occasion is considered as auspicious. Because of the boons conferred on the asura by Vishnu, the merits resulting from actions like charity to the undeserving, sacrifices of clarified butter not poured in flames, Sraddhas (ceremonies) performed to satisfy the manes of the departed without observing the prescribed rites, and yajnas or sacrifices performed unaccompanied by the necessary gifts, go to king Bali.

There is a strong belief among the Hindus, that a beginning made on the auspicious Deepavali day will be conducive to prosperity and success. Hence the Vaisyas or the Hindu trading castes of north and west India open fresh accounts on this day, after having performed puja to the goddess Lakshmi and distributed gifts to those invited.

-P.V. Jagadisa Ayyar

Source: www.bhavans.info



Nine Eleven and Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda

We pray Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda on this day of September 11.

Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha

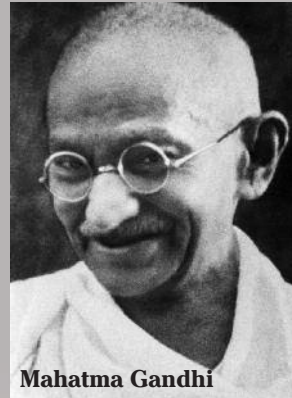
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi first articulated the concept of 'Satyagraha', non-violent resistance, at a public meeting in South Africa on September 11, 1906. His rigorous application of this philosophy over the next 40 years earned Gandhi the title of Mahatma—great soul. It also gave the modern world a powerful new political tool for dealing with conflict and hurt.

On 9/11, 1906 Gandhi found himself in a leadership role at a gathering of Indians of all faiths, castes and professions at the Imperial Theatre in Johannesburg. In an atmosphere charged with anger and the determination to fight racism, Gandhi dropped an idea that acted like a depth charge. Let us fight discriminatory laws by refusing to comply—by offering unflinching non-violent resistance.

His logic was impeccable. Truth is God and God is love. It follows that a struggle for justice cannot involve hurting one's opponent. Instead, the 'other' in a conflict must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. In turn, this means cultivating the willingness to examine 'truth' in all its many dimensions. This can only be done by being strong—not physical strength but the strength of truth-force or love-force.

Satyagraha: Its Theory and Practice

Carried out to its utmost limit, this force is independent of pecuniary or other material assistance: certainly, even in its elementary form, of physical force or violence. Indeed, violence is the negation of this great spiritual force which can only be cultivated or wielded by those who will entirely eschew violence. It is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. It can be used alike by men, women and children. It is totally untrue to say that it is a force to be used



Mahatma Gandhi



Swami Vivekananda

only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence.

It is impossible for those who consider themselves to be weak to apply this force. Only those who realize that is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be passive. This force is to violence and, therefore, to all tyranny, all injustice, what light is to darkness.

We have taken long to achieve what we set about striving for. That was because our passive resistance was not of the most complete type. All passive resisters do not understand the full value of the force, nor have we men who always from conviction refrain from violence. The use of this force requires the adoption of poverty, in the sense that we must be indifferent whether we have the wherewithal to feed or clothe ourselves. During the past struggle, all passive resisters, if any at all, were not prepared to go that length. Some again were only passive resisters so-called. They came without any conviction, often with mixed motives, less often with impure motives.

Some even, whilst engaged in the struggle, would gladly have resorted to violence but for most vigilant supervision. Thus it was that the struggle became prolonged; for the exercise of the purest soul-force, in its perfect form, brings about instantaneous relief. For this exercise, prolonged training of the individual soul is an absolute necessity so that a perfect passive resister has to be almost if not entirely, a perfect man. We cannot all suddenly become such men, but if my

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proposition is correct-as I know it to be correct-the greater the spirit of passive resistance in us, the better men we will become. Its use is indisputable, and it is a force which, if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotism's and the ever-growing militarism.

Let no one understand that a non-violent army is open only to those who strictly enforce in their lives all the implications of nonviolence. It is open to all those who accept the implications and make an ever-increasing endeavor to observe them. There never will be an army of perfectly nonviolent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavor to observe nonviolence.

Swami Vivekananda's God Realisation Lecture

It was on September 11, 1893 that an Indian monk, Swami Vivekananda, was overwhelmed by a three minute standing ovation at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He travelled to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, at the age of 30, not so much as a Hindu missionary, but the bearer of what he experienced as a universal non-sectarian truth. Vivekananda realized that all spiritual striving is beyond reason, but reason is the only way to get there. For reason is the greatest gift of human existence.

Even institutionalized religions, Vivekananda told the Parliament at Chicago, are nothing but "different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight" to the same goal. That goal is God-realization or self-realization – the two being one and the same thing.

Over the next decade, till he died at the age of 39, Vivekananda travelled across the USA and western Europe engaged in dialogue about racial and religious conflict. He left behind a body of work that attempts to recalibrate the dynamic between conquest, reparation and reconciliation. Reverberations of his appeal for universal brotherhood persist today beside the buzz of protest and counter-protest.

Swami Vivekananda's speech on that day began with the simple words "Sisters and Brothers of

America" and proceeded to declare that sectarianism, bigotry and fanaticism are outdated phenomena. This is why he tends to be somewhat simplistically deployed as a poster-boy of multi-cultural camaraderie.

In this famous speech, Swami Vivekananda spoke of his vision for an end to violence and fanaticism. His message of the 1800's is as timely and fitting now, in the 2000's, as it was then, over 100 years ago.

World Parliament of Religions

In recent history there have been great strides in bridging the spirituality of East and West. Notable among these was the message given by Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. The World Parliament of Religions was sponsored by the Unitarians and Universalists of the Free Religious Association, and was a part of the greater Columbian Exposition held for several months in 1893, in Chicago, which was attended by over 27 million people.

Swami Vivekananda's Standing Ovation

Swami Vivekananda's opening talk is a benchmark, in that he was one of the earlier teachers to come to America from the East, and the first swami to visit America. Most notably, this was his first talk in America. The 7,000 people in the audience, immediately feeling the depth of his sincerity, rose to their feet and according to reports, "went into inexplicable rapture with standing ovation and clapping that lasted for more than three minutes." He went on, "It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us..."

Call for the end to Fanaticism

Swami Vivekananda closed by speaking of humanity's history of violence and his hopes for it's end, "Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."

**Source: www.opendemocracy.net,
www.mkgandhi.org, www.swamij.com**

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: Style is the Man



“He was a master of words and of no words,” observed the great literary writer Aldous Huxley. The British populariser of philosophy, C.E.M. Joad remarked that in the thick jungle of metaphysical speculation, where there was no scope left for witticism.

Dr. Radhakrishnan was witty enough to captivate his audience through his grand oratory. His writings too contained an occasional wit to provide relief to his readers struggling to capture his train of thought on a drab or obtuse philosophical exposition.

Radhakrishnan was destined to study philosophy not out of any strong inclination for the subject, but by force of circumstances. His cousin, who was his senior in college, passed on a few books on a wide range of subjects. A book on ethics engaged his attention by opening the wide gate of wisdom to pursue philosophy as a life-long intellectual occupation.

The edifice it provided was firm enough to propel him in later year to dizzy heights of academic, diplomatic and even in nation building arena.

He adorned everything he touched, from classroom to public platform, from the diplomats’ concourse to the statesmen’s conviviality. He was at home

with everyone—the low achievers to the highest performers in their terrestrial existence.

This warm feeling for fellowmen was the outcome of ethical consideration, which the study of philosophy was capable of providing. Towards the close of his glittering and unblemished career, Sir S. was all grateful to the Providence for showering all the grace on him in spite of “ordinary intellectual attainments” (his own words!).

He observed, “The subject of philosophy, which is not primarily utilitarian in its aim, is a great instrument of liberal education. Its aim is one of elevating man above worldliness, of making him superior to circumstances, of liberating his spirit from the thralldom of material things.... If properly pursued, it arms us against failure, against sorrow and calamity, against boredom and discouragements.... But it helps us to love those aims and ideals, the things beyond all price on which the generality of men who aim at success do not set their hearts. To form men is the object of philosophy.”

As a teacher and educator Dr. Radhakrishnan was extraordinary. He had developed a flair for simplicity in the deliberation on any abstract topic to the delight of his students and listeners.

When asked in the initial period of his teachership, whether he was educated in any foreign university (because of his grand articulation and distinct style of delivery), he replied rather he would go abroad to teach!

He went to Oxford in 1929 and received the honour of a philosophical bilinguist which was deservedly bestowed on him. He was at home with the Eastern religions and the Western thought and eventually became a great bridge builder in connecting the two systems of thought. To the Orientals, philosophy was essentially spiritual while it was entrenched in scientific analysis in the West. It made him to spell out that while science was analytic, philosophy was synthetic in approach.

He spoke from the pulpits in Oxford and Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester to the Christian audience with due clarity and seriousness.

An Oxford daily reported on one of his sermons, “Though the Indian preacher had the marvellous

power to weave a magic web of thought, imagination and language, the real greatness of his sermon resides in some indefinable spiritual quality which arrests attention, moves the heart and lifts us into an ampler air.”

Radhakrishnan was deeply inspired by the “eloquence and enterprise of Swami Vivekananda” in his formative years. This boosted him to amplify his commentary on Hinduism and Indian philosophy in the western world. His writings were grand enough to carry subtle thoughts in great eloquence, whereas his speeches, delivered without notes or hesitation, was masterly enough to “put every English speaker to shame” (Joad). Well-constructed sentences sparkling with appropriate words always infused grace to his style.

As a post-graduate student, his dissertation on the “Ethics of the Vedanta”, submitted to the Madras University was well received and his examiner remarked on his “more than the average mastery of good English.” He remained faithful to this great observation all through his life.

An avid reader, this scholarship won for him a praise from the Iron Man of Russia, Joseph Stalin. On his diplomatic assignment, Dr. S. went to Russia, presented his credentials to the Marshal, who was known for his reticence and lack of warmth in admitting diplomats on the basis of a well-established protocol.

But he admirably accepted the credentials of the professor representing India who reputedly read for about twelve hours a day! His stint as the ambassador further cemented the bond between the two countries, not because of his Marxist sympathy extended to some length, but for his keen understanding of the country which was seen in the west as the focus of evil (President Reagan) for a riddle wrapped in mystery inside an enigma (Winston Churchill). He broke the diplomatic barriers on many occasions, much to the discomfiture of fellow-diplomats.

When Radhakrishnan took leave of the diplomatic assignment in 1952 and met Stalin, the latter was moved to tears, opened his heart to thank him for his deep sense of understanding. “You are the first man to treat me as a human being and not as a monster,” confided the Russian man of destiny.

The grace and dignity with which he carried the exalted office of the Vice-President and President of the Indian Republic was remarkable. He availed the opportunity of expressing himself before the world at large which listened with rapt attention.

As the Vice-President, his address to the American

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Senate was captivating. “Given time and patience, radical changes may happen both in human nature and in systems of society which reflect human nature,” he prophesised.

A young Congressman was so impressed that a decade later when he became President of the United States recalled the very words of the visiting President of India. President Kennedy, while welcoming him to the White House, delightfully reminded President Radhakrishnan his earlier words of wisdom which he cherished till then.

On the intellectual scene, it was quite satisfying to find the philosopher Plato’s dream of a philosopher becoming a king was a reality. Dr. Radhakrishnan was elevated to the highest position of India. Plato envisaged that unless philosophers became kings or kings attained the philosophical detachment and impartiality, the ruled citizens would be deprived of the modicum of justice and might becoming right would prevail.

It was so satisfying to the world-renowned mathematician and philosopher. Bertrand Russell praised Radhakrishnan’s ‘precision and high intelligence’ and expected these traits and talents would be harnessed in tackling the humanity’s baffling problems.

He continued, “Radhakrishnan is one of those who

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of those who serve to make
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of the glories of human
achievement*

serve to make the culture of India one of the glories of human achievement.” In his estimate Radhakrishnan was “a very arresting personality and a broad-minded philosopher—a man of real philosophical stature.”

Russell was always candid and very often mired in controversy for projecting unconventional views. The two great minds were once brought together to expound their views on air by the BBC. ‘Don’t bring in religion.’ Something great may come out,” suggested Russell to Radhakrishnan at the beginning of their discussion spanning over a variety of topics, on a variety of topics raised by the Corporation’s moderator.

Both had their own individual style of writing and public speaking. While Radhakrishnan’s speeches were moving and lyrical, Russell’s was halting and colloquial. Russell once admitted that he spoke badly but gained confidence by comforting himself that nothing would be lost if he spoke unattractively.

Dr. S. Gopal, biographer-son of Radhakrishnan had to say, “Russell’s prose was more crystalline; but Radhakrishnan made up for this with forceful and un-tentative writing for he had the advantage of an intense and powerful vision of the world.”

Barring two semi-autobiographical writings, ‘My Search for Truth’ and ‘Fragments of a Confession’, Radhakrishnan always declined the suggestion to pen down his own biography. He avoided the temptation stating that the autobiographical writing was the most delicate of all writings and that articulation had been our precious possession and assured that he revealed himself enough through his speeches and writings which were broad in sweep and deep in substance.

He had always the telling example of Dr. Samuel Johnson, when a lady had desired to bare her anguished heart to the great writer for comfort and

consolation. Dr. Johnson avoided saying that of all her trials and tribulations which she wished to speak and he hated to hear.

Regarding the development of his style, one writer traced it to the abiding influence of Dr. Johnson (BJ, Sept. 15, 2012).

While that influence might persist in an unconscious form, the impact of the Bible, the writings of Shakespeare and Kant had their significant share in giving shape to his style of writings in a foreign tongue with a rare mastery and skill. Forthrightness was the hallmark of his vibrancy in speeches and writings.

He was once retelling the story of Jesus Christ created by the great literary figure Oscar Wilde. The language he used in elucidation nearly matched that of the original author without any trace of neither duplication nor quoting him verbatim.

One might conjure up Wild going through the ordeal of conceiving the story and then put it on paper, but Radhakrishnan retold it from memory with a style and elegance (the paucity of space precludes the reproduction of these two comparable pieces of writing for authenticity).

His creativity was always superb. All creative writers, Radhakrishnan held, be judged when they were under the spell of inspiration and remained in the moments of clearest insight.

Even philosophical writers are creative artists when they interpreted a thought from a new angle. Life to be distinct from the common run must be creative, when the new things were brought forth from the death of our being, not from the surface of our mind. Endowed with a rare felicity in writing, Dr. Radhakrishnan would have been a strong contender for the Nobel Prize for literature, which Winston Churchill and Bertrand Russell, among the prose, writers won it not without raising sharp criticism for the selectors.

However, on the basis of his findings on the faculty of creativity, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan was himself qualified to be ranked as a great artist in the philosophical realm for his clear exposition of intricate thought in a charming and lucid style. He was an embodiment of his inimitable style, rarely to be met.

-Radhanath Behera

Source: Bhavan’s Journal, July 31, 2013

SPRING OF INDIA - A Celebration of Festivals of India
Palm Grove precinct, Darling Harbour
10 November 2013: 10 am – 3:00 pm

SPECIAL ONE OFF COMMUNITY EVENT COMMEMORATING INDIAN DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA AND THE PACIFIC REGION organized jointly by the Regional PBD and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia

The seventh Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), celebrating cultural, historical, and political relationship between the Indian state and its Diasporas, will be held in Sydney, Australia from November 10-12, 2013. Previous Regional PBDs were held in: New York (2007), Singapore (2008), Hague (2009), Durban (2010), Toronto (2011), Mauritius 2012. Shri Vayalar Ravi, Hon. Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs and the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, Premier of NSW, jointly made the announcement on at 1530 Hrs AEST via a video link simultaneously in New Delhi and Sydney.

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN commemorates 75 years of its presence in INDIA and WORLDWIDE and 10 YEARS in AUSTRALIA.

The festival is free for everyone.

For more details visit: www.bhavanaaustralia.org; www.pbdsydney2013.com.au
Find on Facebook (www.facebook.com/bhavanaaustralia).



Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (Overseas Indian Day)

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India. January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa, led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians forever.

The decision to celebrate Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was taken in accordance with recommendations of the High Level Committee (HLC) on the Indian Diaspora set up by government of India under the chairmanship of L.M. Singhvi in 2002. The first annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2003 attracted more than 2,000 persons of Indian origin from around the world, including the descendants of indentured laborers in the Caribbean as well as Silicon Valley professionals.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas conferences have inaugurated a new cultural, historical, and political relationship between the Indian state and its diasporas and enabled us to understand how postcolonial states actively constitute diasporas as national subjects. The Divas is also held with a view to connect India to its vast Indian diaspora and bringing their knowledge, expertise and skills on a common platform. Besides dealing with all matters relating to Overseas Indians, Indian government gets engaged in several initiatives with them for the promotion of trade and investment, emigration, education, culture, health and science & technology.

Shaheed Bhagat Singh

“The aim of life is no more to control mind, but to develop it harmoniously, not to achieve salvation here after, but to make the best use of it here below, and not to realise truth, beauty and good only in contemplation, but also in-the actual experience of daily life; social progress depends not upon the ennoblement of the few but on the enrichment democracy or universal brotherhood can be achieved only when there is an equality of opportunity of opportunity in the social, political and individual life.”

-Bhagat Singh (Page 124 of Jail notebook)

Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh, a revolutionary and martyr gave a new direction to revolutionary movement in India. He formed ‘Naujawan Bharat Sabha’ to spread the message of revolution in Punjab, formed ‘Hindustan Samajvadi Prajatantra Sangha’ along with Chandrasekhar Azad to establish a republic in India, assassinated police official Saunders to avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, dropped bomb in Central Legislative Assembly along with Batukeshwar Dutt. He took Lala Lajpat Rai’s death revenge by killing Scott. He was a true martyr of Indian freedom struggle.

Early Life

Bhagat Singh was born on 27 September 1907 at Banga in Lyallpur district (now Pakistan) to Kishan Singh and Vidya Vati. From his early childhood, Bhagat Singh was imbued with the family’s spirit of patriotism. At the time of his birth, his father Kishan Singh was in jail. His uncle, Sardar Ajit Singh, was a great freedom fighter and established the Indian Patriots’ Association. He was well-

supported by his friend Syed Haidar Raza, in organizing the peasants against the Chenab Canal Colony Bill. Ajit Singh had 22 cases against him and was forced to flee to Iran.

Jalianwala Bagh

Kishan Singh



enrolled Bhagat Singh Dayanand Anglo Vedic High School run by Arya Samaj. While studying at D.A.V. School in Lahore, in 1916, young Bhagat Singh came into contact with some well-known political leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Ras Bihari Bose. Punjab was politically very charged in those days. In 1919, when Jalianwala Bagh massacre took place, Bhagat Singh was only 12 years old. The massacre deeply disturbed him. On the next day of massacre Bhagat Singh went to Jalianwala Bagh and collected soil from the spot and kept it as a memento for the rest of his life. The massacre strengthened his resolve to drive British out from India.

Mahatma Gandhi

In response to Mahatma Gandhi’s call for non-cooperation against British rule in 1921, Bhagat Singh left his school and actively participated in the movement. In 1922, when Mahatma Gandhi suspended Non-Cooperation Movement against violence at Chauri-Chaura in Gorakhpur, Bhagat was greatly disappointed. His faith in non-violence weakened and he came to the conclusion that armed revolution was the only practical way of winning freedom. To continue his studies, Bhagat Singh joined the National College in Lahore, founded by Lala Lajpat Rai. At this college, which was a centre of revolutionary activities, he came into contact with revolutionaries such as Bhagwati Charan, Sukhdev and others.



A Born Revolutionary

To avoid early marriage, Bhagat Singh ran away from home and went to Kanpur. Here, he came into contact with a revolutionary named Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, and learnt his first lessons as revolutionary. On hearing that his grandmother was ill, Bhagat Singh returned home. He continued his revolutionary activities from his village. He went to Lahore and formed a union of revolutionaries by name 'Naujawan Bharat Sabha'. He started spreading the message of revolution in Punjab. In 1928 he attended a meeting of revolutionaries in Delhi and came into contact with Chandrasekhar Azad. The two formed 'Hindustan Samajvadi Prajatantra Sangha'. Its aim was to establish a republic in India by means of an armed revolution.

Simon Commission

In February 1928, a committee from England, called Simon Commission visited India. The purpose of its visit was to decide how much freedom and responsibility could be given to the people of India. But there was no Indian on the committee. This angered Indians and they decided to boycott Simon Commission. While protesting against Simon Commission in Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai was brutally lathicharged and later on succumbed to injuries. Bhagat Singh was determined to avenge Lajpat Rai's death by shooting the British official responsible for the killing, Deputy Inspector General Scott. He shot down Assistant Superintendent Saunders instead, mistaking him for Scott. Bhagat Singh had to flee from Lahore to escape death punishment.

Central Legislative Assembly Bombing

"I am such a Lunatic that I am free even in Jail."

Instead of finding the root cause of discontent of Indians, the British government took to more repressive measures. Under the Defense of India Act, it gave more power to the police to arrest persons to stop processions with suspicious movements and actions. The Act brought in the Central Legislative Assembly was defeated by one vote. Even then it was to be passed in the form of an ordinance in the "interest of the public." Bhagat Singh who was in hiding all this while, volunteered to throw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly where the meeting to pass the ordinance was being held.

It was a carefully laid out plot, not to cause death or injury but to draw the attention of the

government, that the modes of its suppression could no more be tolerated. It was decided that Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt would court arrest after throwing the bomb. On April 8, 1929 Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs in the Central Assembly Hall while the Assembly was in session. The bombs did not hurt anyone. After throwing the bombs, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt, deliberately courted arrest by refusing to run away from the scene.

They wanted them to teach a lesson. Both of them got arrested and during their trial in jail, Bhagat Singh went on a hunger strike in order to protest against the inhuman treatment given to Indian prisoners. In the court he decided to use the court as a tool to showcase his protest for Indian independence. Moreover, the cause of the hunger strike was to get newspapers for political prisoners, good quality of food, better clothing and supply of necessary toiletries. He and other members of his party were there on a 63 day hunger strike. After this long strike, the British officials had to agree on their terms and they provided all the necessary things, which he demanded.

The Execution

They deliberately wanted to die and when the court gave the sentence, they were very happy. They wanted to die because they wanted that their death would inspire the youth of our country and they will get united to fight against the British Empire.

On October 7, 1930 Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Raj Guru were awarded death sentences. While Bhagat Singh was in prison along with his other three friends, he wrote a letter to the Viceroy. He wanted that he should treat him as the prisoners of war thus; they should not be hanged but, should execute them by firing squad. Bhagat Singh was a true soldier who fought for his country and got hanged when he was just 23 years of age. On March 20, one of Bhagat Singh's friends visited him in jail as he wanted him to sign on a letter for mercy, but this great man refused to sign that letter. Despite great popular pressure and numerous appeals by political leaders of India, Bhagat Singh and his associates were hanged in the early hours of March 23, 1931.

Source: www.shahidbhagatsingh.org, www.sikh-history.com, www.iloveindia.com, www.peopleforever.org, www.culturalindia.net

Swami Vivekananda Conversations and Dialogues¹



Disciple: When have you done so?

Swamiji: One day in the temple-garden at Dakshineswar Shri Ramakrishna touched me over the heart, and first of all I began to see that the houses—rooms, doors, windows, verandahs—the trees, the sun, the moon—all were flying off, shattering to pieces as it were—reduced to atoms and molecules—and ultimately became merged in the Ākāsha. Gradually again, the Akasha also vanished, and after that, my consciousness of the ego with it; what happened next I do not recollect. I was at first frightened. Coming back from that state, again I began to see the houses, doors, windows, verandahs, and other things. On another occasion, I had exactly the same realisation by the side of a lake in America.

Disciple: Might not this state as well be brought about by a derangement of the brain? And I do not understand what happiness there can be in realising such a state.

Swamiji: A derangement of the brain! How can you call it so, when it comes neither as the result of delirium from any disease, nor of intoxication from drinking, nor as an illusion produced by various sorts of queer breathing exercises—but when it comes to a normal man in full possession of his health and wits? Then again, this experience is in perfect harmony with the Vedas. It also coincides with the words of realisation of the inspired Rishis and Āchāryas of old. Do you take me, at last, to be a crack-brained man? (smiling).

Disciple: Oh, no, I did not mean that of course. When there are to be found hundreds of illustrations about such realisation of Oneness in the Shastras, and when you say that it can be as directly realised as a fruit in the palm of one's hand, and when it has been your own personal experience in life, perfectly coinciding with the words of the Vedas and other Shastras—how dare I say that it is false? Shri Shankaracharya also realising that state has said, "Where is the universe vanished?" and so on.

Swamiji: Know—this knowledge of Oneness is what the Shastras speak of as realisation of the Brahman, by knowing which, one gets rid of fear, and the shackles of birth and death break for ever. Having once realised that Supreme Bliss, one is no more overwhelmed by pleasure and pain of this world. Men being fettered by base lust-and-wealth cannot enjoy that Bliss of Brahman.

Disciple: If it is so, and if we are really of the essence of the Supreme Brahman, then why do we not exert ourselves to gain that Bliss? Why do we again and again run into the jaws of death, being decoyed by this worthless snare of lust-and-wealth?

Swamiji: You speak as if man does not desire to have that Bliss! Ponder over it, and you will see that whatever anyone is doing, he is doing in the hope of gaining that Supreme Bliss. Only, not everyone is conscious of it and so cannot understand it. That Supreme Bliss fully exists in all, from Brahmā down to the blade of grass. You are also that undivided Brahman. This very moment you can realise if you think yourself truly and absolutely to be so. It is all mere want of direct perception. That you have taken service and work so hard for the sake of your wife also shows that the aim is ultimately to attain to that Supreme Bliss of Brahman. Being again and again entangled in the intricate maze of delusion and hard hit by sorrows and afflictions, the eye will turn of itself to one's own real nature, the Inner Self. It is owing to the presence of this desire for bliss in the heart, that man, getting hard shocks one after another, turns his eye inwards—to his own Self. A time is sure to come to everyone, without exception, when he will do so to one it may be in this life, to another, after thousands of incarnations.

Disciple: It all depends upon the blessings of the Guru and the grace of the Lord!

Swamiji: The wind of grace of the Lord is blowing on, for ever and ever. Do you spread your sail? Whenever you do anything, do it with your whole

heart concentrated on it. Think day and night, “I am of the essence of that Supreme Existence—Knowledge-Bliss—what fear and anxiety have I? This body, mind, and intellect are all transient, and That which is beyond these is myself.”

Disciple: Thoughts like these come only for a while now and then, but quickly vanish, and I think all sorts of trash and nonsense.

Swamiji: It happens like that in the initial stage, but gradually it is overcome. But from the beginning, intensity of desire in the mind is needed. Think always, “I am ever-pure, ever-knowing, and ever-free; how can I do anything evil? Can I ever be befooled like ordinary men with the insignificant charms of lust and wealth?” Strengthen the mind with such thoughts. This will surely bring real good.

Disciple: Once in a while strength of mind comes. But then again I think that if I would appear at the Deputy Magistrateship Examination, wealth and name and fame would come and I should live well and happy.

Swamiji: Whenever such thoughts come in the mind, discriminate within yourself between the real and the unreal. Have you not read the Vedanta? Even when you sleep, keep the sword of discrimination at the head of your bed, so that covetousness cannot approach you even in dream. Practising such strength, renunciation will gradually come, and then you will see—the portals of heaven are wide open to you.

Disciple: If it is so, Swamiji, how is it then that the texts on Bhakti say that too much of renunciation kills the feelings that make for tenderness?

Swamiji: Throw away, I say, texts which teach things like that! Without renunciation, without burning dispassion for sense-objects, without turning away from wealth and lust as from filthy abomination—”never can one attain salvation even in hundreds of Brahma’s cycles”. Repeating the names of the Lord, meditation, worship, offering libations in sacred fire, penance—all these are for bringing forth renunciation. One who has not gained renunciation, know his efforts to be like unto those of the man who is pulling at the oars all the while that the boat is at anchor.”

“Neither by progeny nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone some (rare ones) attained immortality” (Kaivalya Upanishad, 3).

Disciple: Will mere renouncing of wealth and lust accomplish everything?

Swamiji: There are other hindrances on the path even after renouncing those two; then, for example, comes name and fame. Very few men, unless of exceptional strength, can keep their balance under that. People shower honours upon them, and various enjoyments creep in by degrees. It is owing to this that three-fourths of the Tyāgis are debarred from further progress! For establishing this Math and other things, who knows but that I may have to come back again!

Disciple: If you say things like that, then we are undone!

Swamiji: What fear? “Be fearless, be fearless, be fearless!” You have seen Nāg Mahāshaya how even while living the life of a householder, he is more than a Sannyāsin! This is very uncommon; I have rarely seen one like him. If anyone wants to be a householder, let him be like Nag Mahashaya. He shines like a brilliant luminary in the spiritual firmament of East Bengal. Ask the people of that part of the country to visit him often; that will do much good to them.

Disciple: Nag Mahashaya, it seems, is the living personification of humility in the play of Shri Ramakrishna’s divine drama on earth.

Swamiji: Decidedly so, without a shadow of doubt! I have a wish to go and see him once. Will you go with, me? I love to see fields flooded over with water in the rains. Will you write to him?

Disciple: Certainly I will. He is always mad with joy when he hears about you, and says that East Bengal will be sanctified into a place of pilgrimage by the dust of your feet.

Swamiji: Do you know, Shri Ramakrishna used to speak of Nag Mahashaya as a “flaming fire”?

Disciple: Yes, so I have heard.

At the request of Swamiji, the disciple partook of some Prasāda (consecrated food), and left for Calcutta late in the evening; he was deeply thinking over the message of fearlessness that he had heard from the lips of the inspired teacher—“I am free!” “I am free!”

-Swami Vivekananda

Source: Swami Vivekananda’s Works

¹ These Conversations and Dialogues are translated from the contributions of Disciples to the Udbodhan, the Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Divided by Work but still of One Heart

I spoke about the different jatis, the work allotted to each of them and the rites and customs prescribed for each. What I said was not entirely correct. The vocation is not for jati; it is jati for the vocation. On what basis did the Vedic religion divide the fuelsticks [that is the jatis] into small bundles? It fixed one jati for one vocation. In the West economists talk of division of labour but they are unable to translate their ideas into practice. Any society has to depend on the proper execution of a variety of jobs.

It is from this social necessity that the concept of division of labour arose. But who is to decide the number of people for each type of work? Who is to determine the proportions for society to function in a balanced manner? In the West they had no answer to these questions. Everybody there competes with everybody else for comfortable jobs and everywhere you find greed and bitterness resulting from such rivalries. And, as a consequence of all this, there are lapses from discipline and morality.

In our country we based the division of labour on a hereditary system and, until it worked, people had a happy, peaceful and contented life. Today even a multimillionaire is neither contented nor happy. Then even a cobbler led a life without care. What sort of progress have we achieved today by inflaming evil desires in all hearts and pushing everyone into the slough of discontent? Not satisfied with such “progress” there is talk everywhere that we must go forward rapidly in this manner.

Greed and covetousness were unknown during the centuries when varna dharma flourished. People were bound together in small well-knit groups and they discovered that there was happiness in their being together. Besides they had faith in religion, fear of God and devotion, and a feeling of pride in their own family deities and in the modes of worshipping them. In this way they found fullness in their lives without any need to suffer the hunger and disquiet of seeking external objects. All society experienced a sense of well-being. Though divided into a number of groups people were all one in their devotion to the Lord; and

though they had their own separate family deities, they were brought together in the big temple that was for the entire village or town. This temple and its festivals had a central place in their life and they remained united as the children of the deity enshrined in it. When there was a car festival (rathotsava) the Brahmins and the people living on the outskirts of the village [the so-called backward classes] stood shoulder to shoulder and pulled the chariot together. We wonder whether those days of peace and harmony will ever return. Neither jealousy nor bitterness was known then and people did not trade charges against one another. Everyone did his job, carried out his duties, in a spirit of humility and with a sense of contentment.

Considering all this, would it be correct to say that Hinduism faced all its challenges in spite of the divisions in society? No, no. Such a view would be totally wrong. The fact is that our religion has survived as a living force for ages together because of these very divisions. Other great religions which had but one uniform dharma for all have gone under. And there is the fear that existing religions of the same type might suffer a similar fate. What has sustained Hinduism as an eternal religion? We must go back to the analogy of the fuelsticks. Like a number of small bundles of sticks bound together strong and secure—instead of all the individual sticks being fastened together—Hindu society is a well-knit union of a number of small groups which are themselves bound up separately as jatis, the cementing factor being devotion to the Lord.

Religions that had a common code of duties and conduct could not withstand attacks from within and without. In India there were many sets of religious beliefs that were contained in, or integrated together with, a common larger system. If new systems of beliefs or dharmas arose from within or if there were inroads by external religious systems, a process of rejection and assimilation took place: what was not wanted was rejected and what was fit to be accepted was absorbed. Buddhism and Jainism sprang from different aspects of the Vedic religion, so Hinduism (later) was able to digest them and was able to accommodate many other sets of beliefs or to make



them its own. There was no need for it to treat other systems as adversaries or to carry on a struggle against them.

After the advent of Islam we adopted only some of its customs but not any of its religious concepts. The Moghul influence was felt to some extent in our dress, music, architecture and painting. Even such impressions of the Muslim impact did not survive for long as independent factors but were dissolved in the flow of our Vedic culture. Also the Islamic impact was largely confined to the North; the South did not come much under it and stuck mostly to its own traditional path.

Later, with the coming of the Europeans, faith in the Vedic religion began to decline all over India, in North as well as South. How did this change occur? Why do all political leaders today keep excoriating the varna system, giving it the name of “casteism”? And how has the view gained ground everywhere that the division of jatis has greatly hindered the progress of the nation? And why does the mere mention of the word jati invite a gaol sentence?

I shall tell you later, as best I can, about who is responsible for this state of affairs. For the present let us try to find out why some people want to do away with varna dharma. To them it seems an iniquitous system in which some jatis occupy a high status while some others are pushed down to low depths. They want all to be raised to the same uniform high level.

Is such a step possible or practicable? To find an answer, all that we have to do is to examine conditions in countries where there is no caste. If there were no distinctions of high and low in these lands, we should see no class conflicts there. But in reality what do we see? People in these countries are divided into “advantaged” and “disadvantaged” classes who are constantly fighting between themselves. A true understanding of our religion will show that in reality there are no differences in status based on caste among our people. But let us for argument’s sake presume that there are; our duty then is to make sure that the feelings of differences are removed, not get rid of varna dharma itself.

One more point must be considered. Even if you concede that the social divisions have caused bitterness among the different sections here, what about the same in other countries? Can the existence of such ill-will in other lands be denied? The differences there, based on wealth and status, cause bitterness and resentment among the underprivileged and poorer sections. In America, it is claimed that all people have enough food, clothing and housing. They say that even a domestic servant there owns a car.

It is reasonable to infer from this that the Americans are a contented people. But what is the reality there? The man who has only one car is envious of another who has two. Similarly, the fact that one person has a bank balance of a hundred

Who is to determine the proportions for society to function in a balanced manner? In the West they had no answer to these questions. Everybody there competes with everybody else for comfortable jobs and everywhere you find greed and bitterness resulting from such rivalries

million dollars is cause for heart-burning for another with a bank balance of only a million. Those who have sufficient means to live comfortably quarrel with people better off over rights and privileges. Does this not mean that even in a country like the United States there are conflicts between the higher and lower classes of society?

The story is not different in the communist countries¹. Though everyone is said to be paid the same wages there, they have officers and clerks who do not enjoy the same status. As a result of the order enforced by the state, there may not be any outward signs of quarrel among the different cadres, but jealousy and feelings of rivalry must, all the same, exist in the hearts of people. In the higher echelons of power there must be greater rivalry in the communist lands than elsewhere. The dictator of today is replaced by another tomorrow. Is it possible to accord the same status to all in order to prevent the growth of antagonisms? Feelings of high and low will somehow persist, so too the competitive urge.

It seems to me that better than the distinctions prevailing in the West—distinctions that give rise to jealousies and social discord—are the differences mistakenly attributed to the hereditary system of vocations. In the old days this arrangement ensured peace in the land with everyone living a contented life. There was neither envy nor hatred and everyone readily accepted his lot.

The different types of work are meant for the good of the people in general. It is wrong to believe that one job belongs to an “inferior” category and another to a “superior” type. There is no more efficacious medicine for inner purity than doing one’s work, whatever it be, without any desire for reward and doing it to perfection. I must add that even wrong notions about work (one job being better than another or worse) is better than the disparities and differences to be met with in other countries. We are [or were] free from the spirit of rivalry and bitterness that vitiate social life there.

Divided we have remained united, and nurtured our

civilization. Other civilizations have gone under because the people of the countries concerned, though seemingly united, were in fact divided. In our case though there were differences in the matter of work there was unity of hearts and that is how our culture and civilization flourished. In other countries the fact that there were no distinctions based on vocations (anyone could do any work) itself gave rise to rivalries and eventually to disunity. They were not able to withstand the onslaught of other civilizations.

It is not practicable to make all people one, nor can everyone occupy the same high position. At the same time it is also unwise to keep people divided into classes that are like water-tight compartments.

The dharmasastras have shown us a middle way that avoids the pitfalls of the two extremes. I have come as a representative of this way and that is why I speak for it: that there ought to be distinctions among various sections of people in the performance of rites but that there must be unity of hearts. There should be no confusion between the two.

Though we are divided outwardly in the matter of work, with unity of hearts there will be peace. That was the tradition for ages together in this land—there was oneness of hearts. If every member of society does his duty, does his work, unselfishly and with the conviction that he is doing it for the good of all, considerations of high and low will not enter his mind. If people carry out the duties common to them, however adverse the circumstances be, and if every individual performs the duties that are special to him, no one will have cause for suffering at any time.

Note:

- 1 This discourse was given many years before the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Candrasekharendra Saraswati

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

Bhagavad Gita: Principles and Ethics

The elderly veteran statesman, the late C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) published his book entitled 'Bhagavad Gita' (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1936) with relish written in simple language, easily digestible with 226 slokas out of the 700, selected and arranged in understandable sequence dealing with the essence of the three yogas and their usefulness for the day to day life of an individual and how best to get over the problems faced, and strive to lead a good.

Rajaji has indicated six main points as summary which will go a long way for a beginner, in understanding the Gita in its fundamentals before venturing onto the higher philosophy. Innumerable books are available on the Gita with comments from Adi Sankara downwards, in English and other languages.

"The yoga of the Gita is a progressive and multiple process. There is no loss in attempt and failure. Every sincere effort is a gain in itself. It consists of:

- (1) Control of the senses and purity of conduct, and regulation of the routine of life, worship, work, food, sleep etc.
- (2) Unselfish, but none the less attentive, performance of the duties to which one is called by one's natural fitness and one's place in the social organisation;
- (3) Cultivation of an attitude of true detachment and an even spirit in the face of success or difficulty or failure, or causes for joy, grief or disappointment;
- (4) Vigilant control of the motions of the mind, and the elimination of passions that disturb it—lust, anger and greed;
- (5) Periodical turning of the mind inwards, for silent, concentrated meditation and
- (6) Surrender to Gods' grace.

The realisation of the existence of the soul, the individual's immortal element, is the first step towards understanding the philosophy of Gita. The essence of man is the soul (Atman), the eternal

spirit, birthless, deathless which pervades the body. It is not visible but ever present and master of the body.

"Know that to be indestructible by which all these lives on earth are pervaded. No one can work the destruction of the imperishable". (II-7)

"Just as men cast off worn out garments and put on new ones, even so the soul casts off worn out bodies and enters new bodies". (II-22)

There is thus no point in grieving over the dead, since the soul, which pervades all lives on earth is imperishable.

"As the soul dwelling in the body goes through childhood, youth and old age, so it moves on to another body; the wise are not disturbed in mind over it". (II-13)

The individual soul is but a part of the universal soul which by fragmentation enters different souls. But the integrity of the universal soul is not affected.

At death, the soul at the time of leaving the body takes with it the characters –gunas—of the body and this forms the starting point of the next body. Thus the imperishable nature of the soul is maintained in its passage from one body to another, "As death is only disintegration of the body, and not the soul, the law of cause and effect as far as the soul is concerned continues to operate beyond death. This point indicates the Hindu theory of 'Karma', which is not fatalism. Since the characteristics (gunas) are carried over from body to body, and is a continuous process, the good or bad character of an individual is the universal soul. The law of Heredity does not dispense with or interfere with the operation of the law of Karma.

"The soul established in matter enjoys the qualities of that matter; attachment to this enjoyment is the cause of its birth in good or evil wombs. (XIII-22).

One of the central ideas in the Gita is that we must work incessantly. Every work must necessarily be a mixture of good and evil. Good action results in

good effect. If we do not attach ourselves to the work we do and do the work without selfish attachments, there is no bondage effect. This is the theory of non-attachment, to be attached to nothing while doing the work of life. This is Karma Yoga.

“Your duty is but to act, never to be concerned with results; so let not the fruit of action be your motive, at the same time do not let yourself be attached to inaction.” (11-47).

To work you have the right, but not the fruits thereof. Then why work at all when I do not enjoy the fruits? There are many arguments against this reasoning and the feeling is that, without motive one cannot work. It may sound too philosophical and theoretical than practical. “When a person feels that doing good is a part of his very being, then there is no need to seek any motive outside. Let us do good because it is good to do good”.

Serenity of the mind by contemplation of the truth, Jnana Yoga, and withdrawing from the world is another aspect to follow wherein abstention from action lies in the absence of personal motive or desire.

“Men can follow either of the two paths that I have revealed before; that of yoga by realisation of truth as explained by the Sanyasins and that of yoga by unselfish and detached action as explained by the yogis”. (111-9)

Coming to the type of motive of renunciation of the world, the question arises as to the role of man in society. Social life must go on “and cannot dispense with the cooperation of the ignorant”.

“Janaka and others attained perfection only through performance of duties looking to the society also; then you should work”. (III-20)

“True renunciation is best exhibited in selfless performance of work and not withdrawal from the world”.

The preference for selfless work over withdrawal from the world as a means of true renunciation enables one to develop the attitude of selflessness, detachment and would lead men to selfless work and action. “Constant practice of control of mind is essential to enable one to develop this attitude”. The greatest enemy of mind control is desire, which is responsible for all the evil actions in life. The need to control the senses is obvious.

“When a man allows his mind to muse on the objects of sensual enjoyments, an attraction for



them is created; attraction develops into passionate desire, and from desire follow causes for anger”. (11-62)

“Anger produces delusion; delusion confuses the memory and understanding of things; from confused understanding follows the disintegration of the power of discrimination; with discrimination gone, the man perishes”. (11-63)

Desire is responsible for all the ills which afflict the senses which when unfulfilled lead to anger. Hence it is necessary to control desire if one has not to lose the power of discrimination.

“There are three gateways to hell, by which one’s self ruin is worked, lust, anger and greed; therefore let these three be denounced”. (XVI-21).

In addition we have the other three evils—Moha, Mada and Matsarya making a total of six”. The six, if controlled will lead to happiness and contentment.

It is obvious that if an attitude of selflessness and detachment in work is to be developed it needs effective control of the mind which should be free from agitation.

One should be ready and prepared to face any difficulties arising from the pairs of opposites like pleasure or pain, victory or defeat, loss or gain etc.

“Welcoming with equanimity pleasure and pain, acquisitions and losses, victory or defeat, get ready for battle; thus you shall not incur sin”. (11-38)

These pleasures are fleeting in nature and “Self-



control is a desideratum since if it becomes weak, it can turn into an enemy”.

Occasional withdrawal from the world for deep and undisturbed meditation would lead to self-control.

“Let the yogi often retire to a secluded place, alone, with mind under control and free from possessions as well as wishes and concentrate his mind on his soul”. (VI-10)

Everything is to be in moderation—m food, sleep. The serenity, of the mind thus developed by the regulation of activities and regular meditation is ever liable to be disturbed by the forces of the inherited physical body.

The Gita divides human activities, desires, tastes and indeed everything into three classes, the first, wherein the spirit of truth and harmony dominates, is Satwik; the second wherein the urge to action, the passionate nature dominates is Rajasik; the third and last in the scale is Tamasik wherein inertia dominates.

The bhakthi path of salvation is the way to obtain His Grace. Contemplation of God should be practised dedicating all work to Him. This is complementary to the practice of an unselfish and detached attitude in the performance of the duties.

Complete surrender to God and dependence on His Grace is the essence of the Gita teaching.

“Do not depend on articles of faith or rules of observance; but surrender yourself completely to Me; grieve not, I will liberate you from every sin”. (XVIII-66)

“Regulating conduct, controlling the mind, and dedicating all activities as worship unto the Supreme being, the aspirant realises in course of time the oneness of all existence.... The Gita lays down the highest ideals of self-control and realisation...

“Better is one’s duty, though unhonoured, than the work of another even if well performed; he who does the work indicated by his own nature ensures no sin”. (XVIII-47)

“To him who constantly meditates upon Me, not letting his thoughts swerve aside, to such who is ever yoked to the Spirit, I am easy of attainment” (VI-11-14)

“The Transcendent One, in whom all beings abide, by whom all this world is pervaded, may be reached by unswerving devotion” (VIII-22).

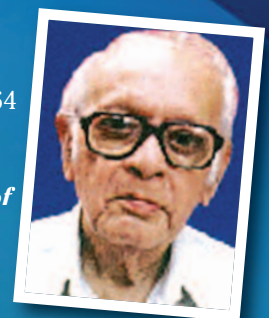
“He who leaves the body uttering at the moment of death the sacred syllable “AUM” and thinking of me, he goes to the highest goal.

The teaching of the Gita is for the young as well as the old; for the busyman of action as for those who have done with the turmoil of life... What the Gita emphasises is that everyone should observe the code of honour and perform the duties of his allotted status in society”.

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



Deepavali in Australia

Deepavali or Diwali is certainly the biggest and the brightest of all Hindu festivals. It's the festival of lights (*deep* = light and *avali* = a row i.e., a row of lights) that's marked by four days of celebration, which literally illuminates whole of India with its brilliance and dazzling colours. Each of the four days in the festival of Deepavali is separated by a different tradition, but what remains consistent is the celebration of life, its enjoyment and goodness.

Historically, the origin of Deepavali can be traced back to ancient India, when it was probably an important harvest festival. However, there are various legends pointing to the origin of Diwali or 'Deepavali.' Some believe it to be the celebration of the marriage of Lakshmi with Lord Vishnu. Whereas in Bengal the festival is dedicated to the worship of Mother Kali the goddess of strength. Lord Ganesa, the elephant-headed God, the symbol of auspiciousness and wisdom, is also worshipped in most Hindu homes on this day. In Jainism, Deepavali has an added significance to the great event of Lord Mahavira attaining the eternal bliss of nirvana. Diwali also commemorates the return of Lord Rama along with Sita and Lakshman from His fourteen yearlong exile and vanquishing the demon-king Ravana. In joyous celebration of the return of their king, the people of Ayodhya, the Capital of Rama, illuminated the kingdom with earthen diyas (oil lamps) and burst crackers.

Each day of Diwali has its own tale, legend and myth to tell. The first day of the festival Naraka Chaturdasi marks the vanquishing of the demon Naraka by Lord Krishna and his wife Satyabhama. Amavasya, the second day of Deepavali, marks the worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth in her most benevolent mood, fulfilling the wishes of her devotees. Amavasya also tells the story of Lord Vishnu, who in His dwarf incarnation, vanquished the tyrant Bali, and banished him to hell. Bali was allowed to return to earth once a year, to light millions of lamps to dispel the darkness and ignorance, and spread the radiance of love and wisdom. It is on the third day of Deepavali—Kartika Shudda Padyami that Bali steps out of hell and rules the earth according to the boon given by Lord Vishnu. The fourth day is referred to as Yama Dvitiya (also called Bhai Dooj and on this day sisters invite their brothers to their homes

Traditionally also Deepavali or Diwali is celebrated with the illumination of homes with lights and the skies with firecrackers is an expression of obeisance to the heavens for the attainment of health, wealth, knowledge, peace and prosperity.

Deepavali or Diwali is celebrated not only in India but globally by the Indian community joined by local communities in respective countries. In Australia with an Australian Indian population of 400,000 numbers a large percentage belonging to the Hindu Faith, Deepavali is celebrated in a very community festive atmosphere in various Australian cities.

Deepavali in Sydney

The Hindu Council of Australia, (HCA) a national body representing all Australian Hindus (over 300,000), has been celebrating this festival of lights for the past 15 years on a large scale in Sydney. Last year more than 20,000 people attended the





whole day of festivities of Deepavali Fair at the Sydney Olympic Park. To signify the multicultural spirit, a Deepavali preview event with excellent cultural programs was organised in Martin Place in Central Business District in Sydney. Deepavali Fair by the Hindu Council has been attracting the biggest gathering of people of Indian origin over the years. People of multi-ethnic background also come to share the richness of the Indian culture and the variety of sumptuous food items. One of the attractions of the Deepavali fair is the burning of the effigy of the Demon King Ravana followed by Fireworks display. The program finishes around 10:00 pm with a fantastic display of fireworks. HCA has organised again this year two events Diwali @ martin Place on 17 October and a Diwali Fair at Sydney Olympic Park on 26 October.

The NSW Government annually organises celebration of Deepavali with lighting up the NSW Parliament Building and a formal event is organised by community Relations Commission at the

Parliament in presence of community members and members of Parliament.

Deepavali in Melbourne, Victoria

The colourful, vibrant, much awaited annual festival of Diwali@Fed Sq will begin with a five days free Bollywood Film Show on 21st October. The main event on 26th October will showcase the rich cultural heritage of India through dance, music, arts and craft by local and renowned overseas Indian artists and artists from various communities. Multicultural dining and Bazaar will add to the festivities. The 'festival of lights' will culminate with the spectacular fireworks display on the Yarra. The community will also enjoy the films and performances every evening in The Square from 21 October in the lead up to Diwali Festival.

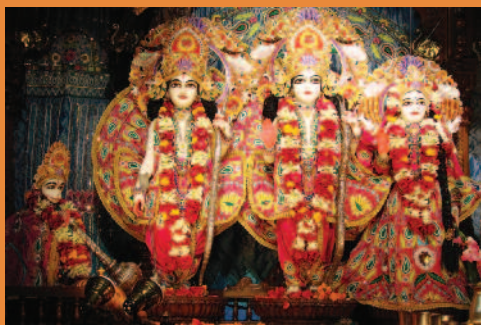
Last year the Indian community in Melbourne organised the Diwali event with a cause that attracted thousands of Indians and locals to enjoy cultural performances along with fund raising for an awareness campaign to "stop violence against women". Held at the iconic Federation Square building for the last year's event Australian Hindus gathered to enjoy music and dance, live performances, dance and craft workshops, Indian food and interactive items with AFL players and Australian cricketers.

Deepavali in Perth, Western Australia

Since 2008, the Swan Festival of Lights has been setting the Perth foreshore alight with a multitude of colours, rhythms and flavours. Celebrating the festival of Deepavali (Diwali), which literally means 'row of lights', the festival uses the unifying theme of 'light' to bring together and celebrate Western Australia's cultural diversity through dance, music and cuisine. This smoke and alcohol-free event is organised by the non-profit organisations, The Temple of Fine Arts and Annalakshmi Cultural Centre of WA.

This year's event will showcase everything from vibrant folk dances from all around India to upcoming stars of Youth Ballet WA and the amazing Ukrainian Cossack dancers, as well as soul-stirring music from Ustad Usman Khan.





There will also be a variety of food stalls, serving a delectable, mouth-watering spread of vegetarian cuisine prepared by Annalakshmi on the Swan and a variety of handicrafts and stunning Indian attire from Lavanya. The Forum of South Indian Associations will also be celebrating Diwali in a big way.

Deepavali in Brisbane, Queensland
The Federation of Indian Communities in association with Brisbane City Council and Queensland Government have organised a big Diwali Festival in King George Square, Brisbane. The annual Diwali cultural extravaganza will include a variety of Indian Cultural Programs, food stalls and entertainment to several thousands of community members.

Deepavali in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

The local Indian community is organising a Diwali Mela on Saturday 19 October at Albert Hall. Lots of entertainment, fun and colour for all ages have been planned. The Australian Parliament also celebrates the Festival of Lights every year in

coordination with Hindu Council of Australia.

It will not be too long before Deepavali will be a declared public holiday in Australia signifying the importance of this global festival in multicultural Australia.

-Vish (Narasimhan Viswanathan), a member of the management committee of the Australia India Business Council, NSW branch. He has served as President of Federation of Australian Indian Associations (FAIA), Secretary of SRI OM Foundation for Indian Seniors, past President of United Indian Associations (UIA), Director Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia. An electronics engineer by profession Vish also writes for various community journals viz, Indian Down Under, India Post and Indian Telegraph etc.





Swami Vivekananda's Poems

To the Awakened India

Once more awake!
For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!
No death for thee!

Resume thy march,
With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust

That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,
Where loving hearts had brought thee up, and
Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is strong—
This is the law—all things come back to the source
They sprung, their strength to renew.

Then start afresh,
From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-belted
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders new. The heavenly
River tune thy voice to her own immortal song;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

And all above,
Himala's daughter Uma, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power
And Life, who works all works, and
Makes of One the world, whose mercy
Opes the gate to Truth, and shows
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is Infinite Love.

They bless thee all,
The seers great, whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same,



And bravely taught to man ill-voiced or
Well. Their servant, thou hast got
The secret—'tis but One.

Then speak, O Love!
Before thy gentle voice serene, behold how
Visions melt, and fold on fold of dreams
Departs to void, till Truth and Truth alone,
In all its glory shines—

And tell the world:
Awake, arise, and dream no more!
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious, and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which
The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

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

The Core and Crux of Our Culture

Hinduism is essentially and basically a way of life based primarily on the age-old wisest philosophy or concept of Dharma embodying the ten well-known fundamental principles of life such as *Dhriti, Kshama, Dama, Asteya, Shoucha, Indriya-Nigrah, Dhee, Vidya, Satya, Akrodha*,—Fortitude, Forgiveness, Mind-control, Non-theft, Purity of body and mind, Sense-control, Wisdom, Knowledge, Truth, Non-anger. But when reduced or narrowed down to the barest minimum, the concept of Dharma boils down to righteousness in its widest connotation as known and understood by all and sundry, well-meaning and right-thinking people all over the world. It is by no means a synonym for religion as is the widely held wrong belief. It is wrong to interpret it as just a body of some set rituals or a fixed mode of worship. In the final analysis, it is the very core and crux of an individual's or a nation's genius, the very fundamental part of their being, their very innate, intrinsic nature as revealed in day-to-day conduct or mode of behaviour, which in the case of India has all along been nothing short of tolerance, magnanimity, a sense of perfect accommodation and adjustment.

Hinduism not merely envisages, but actually treats the whole world as a family as outlined in the by now all-too-familiar concept of '*Vasudhaev Kutumbakam*'—'The whole world is a family'. To take one concrete example from recent history, which other country than India would not merely acquiesce in but actually accept such wholesale systematic squeezing out of minorities from Pakistan and Bangladesh as part of a well-thought-out policy, even after the clear-cut acceptance of the two-nation theory as the basis of partition on both sides without any significant note-worthy protest from any quarter here? Which other country in the whole wide world is capable of this kind of magnanimity? The world has known great confrontations similar to war on the mere crossing of other country's border by some individuals. Such a philosophy or psychology of approach is simply alien to the Indian way of thinking.

On the other hand, Muslims could not tolerate the presence of a microscopic minority of Kashmiri Pundits in the Srinagar valley who had to flee from their ancestral homes and hearths for no fault of theirs but because of the avowed fanaticism of the majority community there. The crowning tragedy

of the situation is that the whole nation is a silent spectator to this greatest violence on earth. All Human Rights Bodies, here and abroad, are sleeping over it as if the so-called, mostly trumped-up troubles of non-Hindus are their only concern. The less said the better about it.

And we wish and pray for the good and welfare of all humanity day-in and day-out as envisaged in the equally familiar prayer '*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina*'—May all be happy. Above all, the world so far has not invented or produced a better principle, guiding star or slogan for the smooth orderly functioning of society than the one conceived or coined by our Rishis and Munis, saints and seers, philosophers and thinkers, as under:

'Dharma ki jai ho, Adharma ka naash ho, praniyon main sadhbhavana ho, vishva ka kalyaan ho'—

Victory be to Dharma, Adharma should meet with destruction, there should be goodwill among all beings and welfare to the whole world'.

The fact of the matter is that the whole universe, being bound or held together by the eternal unbreakable common cord, wire or spark of spiritualism, running through each one of us, this slogan is a natural direct emanation or off-shoot from it which fact, however, was promptly recognised and grasped in their scintillating sharp wisdom by our ancestors, resulting from their extreme personal penances and experiences and ultimately presented by them to the world in concrete and tangible terms in the form of this impeccable summum bonum of life. This slogan also in the process answers the million-rupee question: What is or could be the ultimate robust and profound basis or charter of a substantial, meaningful and vibrant life? None or nothing else so far has beaten or improved upon it. No wonder then, spiritualism forms the hallmark or identity of this mighty ancient Hindu nation and places it as a distinct entity in the comity of nations.

No religious congregation or conference, aarti or pravaachan in India is considered complete and meaningful without the full-throated, repetitive utterance of this ideal slogan by the audience so that it is completely soaked in the minds and settles down in the remotest cells and atoms of the being. The

It is the very core and crux of an individual's or a nation's genius, the very fundamental part of their being, their very innate, intrinsic nature as revealed in day-to-day conduct or mode of behaviour, which in the case of India has all along been nothing short of tolerance, magnanimity, a sense of perfect accommodation and adjustment

whole nation seems to be completely imbued and enthused by it to the point of being overwhelmed, rather enchanted and infatuated with it. It seems to have entered the very bones and muscles, veins and arteries of the whole lot of masses and does all the wire-puffing from inside. The entire nation, through the media of its temples, awakes with this slogan and sleeps with it, as it were. And there is a perfectly visible, palpable, sincere effort on the part of the nation as a whole to live up to the ideals and principles enshrined in it in thought, word and deed irrespective of what others do.

It is precisely this sort of thing that ultimately moves the minds of the masses, catches their imagination, wittingly or unwittingly, and goes finally to form and fashion the character and personality of the nation. Some big-wigs sitting in ivory towers who mostly have their eyes glued to foreign concepts and ideas for inspiration, may not be able to understand and appreciate this very subtle aspect of human life out of sheer ignorance or arrogance. They may even go to the extent of dubbing it as some sort of the usual traditional mumbo jumbo as is their wont. But all their diseased thinking apart, it constitutes the very bed-rock of the warp and woof of the texture of national thinking right from the highest level to the lowest.

Unless this slogan is erased and eradicated from the national psyche altogether (I am by no means advocating it. Kindly for God's sake don't mistake it that way. In fact, I am its greatest votary and admirer. It is just an honest appraisal, analysis or anatomy of the subject), which it is impossible to do, all talk of tit-for-tat, an eye-for-an eye and a tooth-for-tooth or paying the enemies of the nation in the same coin, is bound to end in smoke. It explains the entire deplorable historical course of softness, flowing from this slogan, of the country towards the wrong-doers of the nation. As the Gita avers: '*Prakritim yaanti bhutaani nigraha kim karishyati*'—Beings follow their own nature, what would restraint do? -3/33

This single super-star slogan is the most constructive and sustaining force in the world to keep the wheel of life moving, around which the entire pattern of life evolves and revolves. Only some such noble idea or principle, as embodied in this, forms the basis and makes all civilized, sensible life possible and ultimately holds it together for a

peaceful, purposeful living in the world. Without the direct or indirect, open or subtle, ennobling elevating influence of this and other super-star richas, mantras and slogans of which there is no dearth in our scriptures—in fact, there is quite a surfeit of them—the world would not last a single day. The entire edifice of human life would crash and collapse and fall to pieces like a house of cards in no time under the pull and pressure of dark, dehumanising forces in the universe. All this is, however, part of a Higher Order which is perhaps beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals.

All the same, lest it appears to be too frightening an idea, it would be wrong to interpret it as the exclusive field and sphere of some selected souls. Given the will and the element of devotion and dedication involved in the exercise, it may be stated here that it does not require any sparkling, scintillating intelligence of extraordinary calibre to grasp the subtleties of this Higher design. Let there be no mistake about it. He who runs may read it. That is the inexorable law of life.

Let anybody come forward with a more appealing, compact and thorough-going blue-print for a peaceful, purposeful, life on earth than what is outlined in the above discussion. It is by no means a challenge but a sincere effort to understand life in its wider and proper perspective, and to put things in an apple-pie order.

Badlu Ram Gupta, born in Rohtak district, Haryana, India on March 25 1920, graduated from St. Stephen's College Delhi in 1942. He later felt that life is meant for something more and took to contemplation and meditation on men and matters. From 1962 onwards, he has contributed letters, articles to national, international dailies and periodicals. He has also authored twenty-two books on matters mundane and metaphysical.



Source: Living Fearless Peaceful and Purposeful Life by Badlu Ram Gupta, Bhavan's Book University, Mumbai, India

Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti (Birth Anniversary)

Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti celebrates the birthday of famous poet Valmiki, who is also known as Adi kavi or first poet as he discovered the first Sloka, the first verse which set the base of Sanskrit poetry. It falls on the full moon day (Purnima) in the month of Ashwin. This day is especially very popular in the Northern India and is known as “Pargat Diwas”.

The Ramayana

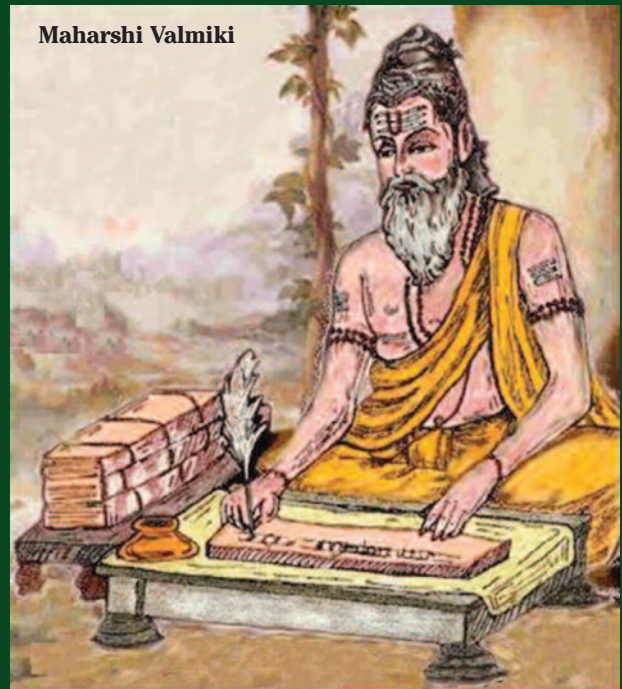
Valmiki is the author of the famous Hindu epic Ramayana and one of the greatest saints of the ancient world. Valmiki gave shelter to Sita in his own ashram and Luv-Kush were also born and brought up here. His complete life and teachings have always encouraged Humans to fight against the society injustice. In 2013, Valmiki Jayanti falls on 18 October.

The Sage Valmiki

One of the biggest contributions of sage Valmiki to Hindus is the historic epic of Ramayana. Originally Ramayana was written in Sanskrit, by Valmiki in form of slokas and is known as Valmiki Ramayana. It contained 24,000 verses. The Valmiki Ramayana is dated variously from 500 BC to 100 BC, but, over years as there have been many interpolations and redactions it is nearly impossible to date its origin accurately. There is also a religious movement called Valmikism that is solely based on Valmiki's teachings and principles.

Early Life

Maharishi Valmiki was born as Ratnakara to sage Prachetas. At a very young age he went to the forest and got lost. A hunter that was passing by saw him and took him under his own care, over the years he forgot his original parents under the parenthood of his newly found parents. Later when he grew up, he was married to a girl from a hunter's family. Being bought up in a poor hunter's family, he didn't have any measures to feed his family, so he started to hunt in the forests. He robbed the people



Maharshi Valmiki

passing through the forests.

Saint Narada

One day when saint Narada was passing by the forest, he was attacked by Ratnakar. While Narada was playing his Veena and praising Lord Rama, he saw a transformation in Ratnakar. He then asked Ratnakar, if whether the family for which he was robbing others, will share his sins also. Ratnakar went to his home and asked the same question to his family, to which he received a negative answer.

He immediately went back to Narada, Who taught him to meditate with chanting the name of Lord Rama, till he came back. Ratnakar got so immersed in the meditation over years that when Narada returned, he saw that Ratnakar was totally covered by ant-hills. He immediately removed all the ant-hills from his body and told Ratnakar that his Tapasya has paid off and that the Lord was pleased with him.

Ratnakara was bestowed with the honour of a Brahmarshi and given the name of Valmiki, since he was reborn from the *Valmika* (the ant-hill). Sage Valmiki founded his ashram at the banks of River Ganga.

Ramayana

One day when in the ashram of Valmiki, Narada narrated him the story of Lord Rama. After that Valmiki received a vision from Brahma in which the lord instructed him to write Ramayana in form of slokas, which he obediently followed.

First Sloka

Valmiki composed the first ever sloka of Sanskrit literature. History dates that once Valmiki went near river Ganga for his daily chores, a disciple named Bharadwaja was carrying his clothes. Passing through the Tamasa Stream, Valmiki remarked that “the water looks so clean like a good man’s mind; I want to bathe here today.”

Just at that point he heard two birds chirping merrily, he felt very serene at the glance of a happy and joyous couple. Suddenly, one of them fell down; hit by an arrow, a hunter had shot the bird for his food. The bird left alive was crying with agony, Valmiki felt terrible grief at the sight and plight of that bird, and uttered the following words:

*maa nishhaada pratishthaamtva
magamah shaashvatiih samaah
yat krauncha mithunaat eka
mavadiih kaama mohitam*

“Oh! Ill-fated Hunter, by which reason you have killed one male bird of the couple, When it is in its lustful passion, thereby you will get an ever-lasting reputation for ages to come...”

This was the first Sloka of Sanskrit literature.

Valmiki Ashram

A Valmiki temple is called Ashram, Which means a monastery, which means a communal house for Valmiki’s. Each such Ashram is dedicated to attracting devotees’ concentration and to spread the teachings of Ramayana. All Valmiki ashrams have a special flag called a Nishan Sahib that is placed outside like any other place of worship. The Bow

and arrow depict the disciples of Valmiki, namely Luv and Kush. Many devotees are suggested that when the distance of ashram seems unreachable to them, they can simply have a copy of Ramayana placed in their houses.

All Valmiki Ashram’s have common features. For instance, the place of worship is always in a special room and there are number of other rooms’ set-aside for special purposes. There is a Langar hall where all the devotees congregate for a meal, the community kitchen where devotees help to prepare food for the Langar. There is a classroom and library where the Ramayana is stocked for study and is used for teaching young children apart from a music room where musical instruments such as the Tabla are taught and hymns are practiced for worship. Everyone sits on the floor to show that everyone is equal in the eyes of God, regardless of whether they come from a rich or poor background.

Celebrations

Valmiki was truly a Maharshi. “He was purity, penance, benevolence and meditation personified and the sole object of his dedication and contemplation was Man, a man leaves his selfish existence and lives for others identifying himself with the composite culture of the cosmic creation.”

Valmiki Jayanti is celebrated with great enthusiasm. Maharshi Valmiki is worshipped and prayed on this day. Shobha yatra, meetings and distribution of free food is arranged in many places. Many devotees also take out processions in honour of Maharshi Valmiki, and offer prayers to his portrait.

There are many Valmiki temples in India, Which are beautifully decorated with flowers and prayers are offered in them, number of incense being lighted fill the atmosphere with purity and happiness. Many devotees go to Lord Rama temples and recite verses from Ramayana in memory of Maharshi Valmiki. Maharshi Valmiki Jayanti is celebrated with immense joy and excitement in Madhya Pradesh. There are many temples dedicated to Valmiki. The celebrations start early in the morning as people from far and wide gather at the temples with flowers and other offerings for the sage. People read verses from Ramayana and worship Valmiki along with Lord Rama.

Source: www.festivalsofindia.in,
www.indiafun.net, www.hinduism.about.com

Frits Staal: European Indologist who Popularised Vedic Rituals

“While pyramids, temples, cathedrals and skyscrapers were built and fell into decay, languages and religions came and disappeared, and innumerable wars were fought resulting in untold agony and loss of life, the Vedas and rituals of the Hindus continued to be transmitted by word of mouth, from teacher to pupil, and from father to son from time immemorial. They live eternally”.

-These words of the famous European Indologist Frits Staal flashed before me when I heard the sad news about his demise a couple of months ago. Few modern Indologists have contributed to the preservation of India’s ancient scholarship as Frits Staal from Amsterdam.

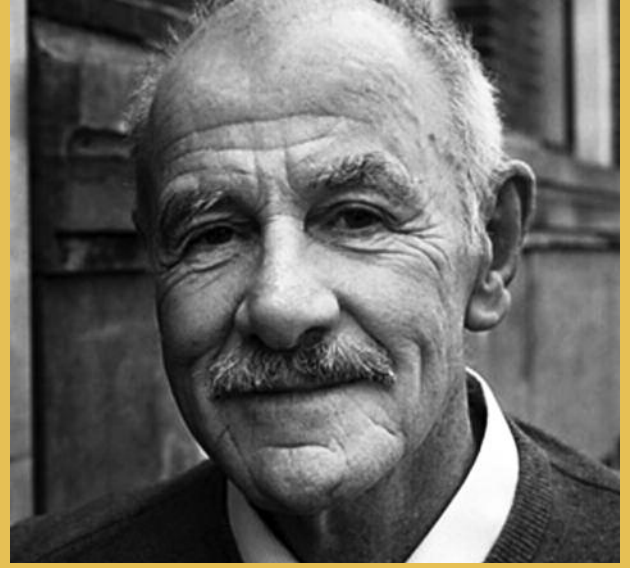
If today the most ancient Vedic ritual like the Atiratra Agnichayanam, popular mostly in Kerala and supposed to be the oldest Vedic ritual, is known to the whole world through recordings of Vedic recitations and chanting, the credit goes entirely to Frits Staal.

Johan Frederick [Frits] Staal was born on November 4, 1930 in Amsterdam. His father was an architect. Staal studied mathematics, physics and philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. A Government of India scholarship brought him to India for three years to study Indian Philosophy at the University of Madras and the Benares Hindu University. In 1957 he secured a Ph.D. from the University of Madras.

In 1962 he became a Professor of General and Comparative Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam where he worked for five years. In 1968, he joined the University of California, Berkeley as Professor of Philosophy and South Asian Languages. He retired from Berkeley in 1991 and relocated to Amsterdam.

While at Madras, he studied Panini’s Sanskrit grammar under an expert pandit. At Benares, he made an in-depth study of Navya-Nyaya logic under the guidance of another scholar. The combination of Panini and logic opened the door to modern linguistics.

Staal argued that ancient Indian grammarians, especially Panini, had completely mastered methods of linguistic theory, not discovered again until the 1950s. The Indians had thought about it long before modern mathematical logic was applied to linguistics by Noam Chomsky, the world famous American linguist from M.I.T. According to Staal “Panini is India’s Euclid”. Staal goes further and



explains how Panini had expanded the spoken Sanskrit to a formal meta-language.

During his stay in Madras, Staal often visited Kerala in connection with his research work and came in contact with several Vedic scholars of Nambudiri Brahmin families who were adepts at some of the most ancient Vedic rituals, practically extinct, except for rare observance in Kerala.

Staal was impressed by these ancient rituals and made a special study of them. He was particularly impressed by the earnestness of those Brahmins in readily and willingly sharing their knowledge with him. The details that he gained after interaction with them provided him with enough material for a two-volume work on one of the most ancient Vedic ritual called “Atiratram Agnichayanam—The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar”. (In Sanskrit, ‘Atiratram’ means all through the night. ‘Agni chayanam’ means glowing and brightening the fire.) While publishing the book, Staal openly acknowledged his gratitude to the Nambudiri Brahmins in the following glowing terms:

“Over the decades, while I penetrated the riches of their Vedic heritage, I made many Nambudiri friends and came to know them better; I have found them sincere, straightforward and disciplined. After initial reluctance, they are eager to explain the intricacies of their recitations; chants and ceremonies. They never claim knowledge that they do not possess. They will not preach or become pompous. They will express no interest in going to the US. Though no longer averse to modernisation, they remain attached to their simple habits”.

Staal was a great believer in universal peace and harmony and oneness of mankind. When he came

to know that all Vedic sacrifices are meant only to usher in world peace, prosperity, reawakening harmony among all living beings, he started evincing particular interest in them. Even though the purpose is the same, each Yajna has its own specialty and in the conduct of its performance.

Agnichayanam is one such special Yajna which is peculiar to Kerala. The complete name of this sacrifice is “Atiratra Agnichayanam” a compound Sanskrit word, meaning “keeping the sacred sacrificial fire burning all through the night”.

This is supposed to be the world’s oldest surviving ritual. The origin of the Yajna could be traced to the Yajurveda Samhitas. Even though the practice of this complicated ritual does not find frequent observance, it continues to exist among a few Nambudiri Brahmin families in Kerala, with an unbroken tradition of about 3,000 years. The entire ritual takes 12 days to perform in the course of which a great bird-shaped altar [Yagna Vedike] is built out of 10,800 bricks.

Sometime in the 1960s, some Nambudiri scholars became concerned about the weakening and possible extinction of this ancient ritual unless it is kept observed periodically and they therefore decided to conduct one. The last such performance took place in Kerala in 1956.

When Staal came to know about this plan to revive the ancient ritual, he volunteered all help. Immediately preparations started and the site for the Yajna was decided at Panjal village, about 30 km. from Trichur. The Yajna was performed for 12 days from 12th April 1975.

The rituals began every day with Vedic chants and homas. During the last 4 days, the rituals were held throughout the day and night without a break. It is said that for the Atiratra Yajnam, the organisers spent nearly 10 million rupees and over 15,000 people witnessed the rituals. Frits Staal who was present all through the Yajna documented the performance in great detail.

The Yajna was performed according to Samavedic tradition. As this was open to all, it gave an excellent and rare opportunity to different sections of society to watch it. Financial grants from institutions such as Harvard University, Smithsonian Institution, and Rockefeller Foundation helped the smooth conduct of the sacrifice.

After his participation, collecting all the details, Staal published his popular book “*Agni—The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*” in collaboration with two local experts C.V. Somayajipad and Itty Nambudiripad. His film “Altar of Fire” based on the Vedic ritual in 1975 became a widely viewed classic

of ethnographic film-making. After leading a consortium of Vedic scholars to document the Agnichayanam in 1975 at Panjal, Staal returned to Panjal, Kerala again in 2011 to be part of the same ritual, even at the advanced age of 81.

Atiratram Agnichayanam was performed for the first time outside Kerala by Nambudiri Brahmins from 21st April 2012 to 12th May 2012 at Bhadrachalam, Andhra Pradesh.

By recording these highly arcane rituals in electronic audio/video forms, Staal saved for posterity the ancient ritual form and recitation that may have been lost for ever. Staal used to observe that rituals could not be fully understood by mere access to texts. “Whatever texts may say, language does not explain activity. For the ritualists, action comes first, and action, which includes recitation and chant, is all that counts”, he said during his second visit to Panjal. Following his retirement from Berkeley in 1998, Staal moved to Thailand. There he built a beautiful house on a secluded compound a little outside the northern town of Chiangmai, Thailand. After a brief illness, Staal died on February 19, 2012 at the age of 82.

The man who made some of the earliest recordings of Vedic recitations and chanting, during a ride across South India in an old Royal Enfield may be no more. But his prophetic word that the sustenance of the Vedic tradition represented a triumph of human spirit over the limitations of matter and the physical body will continue to inspire Vedic scholars for generations.

B.M.N. Murthy

Source: Bhavan’s Journal, March 31, 2013

Born-again Family Physicians

*The time has come, the Walrus said,
To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings.*
—Lewis Carroll 1872.

*“If one does not learn from history, one will have to
relive history,” wrote Cicero, the great Roman
thinker.*

Medicine has been branching into innumerable specialties and sub-specialties (super-specialties in Hinglish). It has reached a point where the whole modern medical world is standing at the threshold of losing its sway over the common man. A recent survey in the US showed that sixty-two per cent of upper middle class Americans cannot afford to go to hospitals there as medicine has become prohibitively expensive despite patients having more than one Medicare insurance policy.

Many a time the small print in the insurance policy denies them help when the chips are down. Fifty-seven per cent of the British do not want to go to a modern medical facility, if they could help it, despite the free National Health Service there. “Modern medicine” said Prince Philip, the heir to the British throne, recently “is slightly off balance like the Tower of Pisa for all its breath-taking advances.”

He couldn't be more accurate in his assessment. The alternative medicines have been a \$70 billion business last year! Most of that is not proven to be useful, though. There seems to be confusion all over.

In the last half a century medicine has gone to the market place riding piggyback on technology and, consequently, market forces act on it in a big way today. Time was when a patient came to the doctor with all faith (faith heals) and felt that doctor is God and would do his/her best for the hapless patient. Not anymore! Today the doctor is a seller of medical technology and the patient a buyer. Consumerism rules the roost, making doctors practise expensive defensive medicine. Doctors are frustrated, patients are angry, hospitals in the west are going broke, insurance companies that are there only to make money are also declaring Chapter eleven by the day.

The administrators seem to be groping in the dark with no clear end in sight. Reminds one of the First Law of Thermodynamics which states that “anything that disintegrates eventually disappears.” Thinking people in the medical world will have to do something before it is too late. Doctors should remember that a patient could live without the help of doctors but a doctor cannot live without patients.

When a patient goes directly to a super-specialist any symptom that the patient might have looks like the rare presentation of a disease in the specialist's own field. The hapless patient gets a battery of tests and interventions only to be told at the end that he/she does not have a disease of that particular organ! By then the patient has lost most of his/her earnings. Patient did not get any solace and has had no answer to his problems, either.

Most of these interventions are not only unnecessary but could be potentially dangerous. The specialist is like the man with the hammer in the hand wanting to use it badly. For such a man

everything looks like a nail needing hammering, wrote Mark Twain years ago.

The only solution is to go back to the time tested family physician system with necessary modifications in the training period to make the family physician truly useful to the sick. The emphasis should be to seek second opinion when in doubt. Time was when medicine was practised only in the patient's homes. Hospitals were not there. The family physician made his diagnosis at the bedside and did what he could with very little technology.

Some indications today point to the fact that there has not been any marked improvement in the per capita deaths today compared to the good old days except that the dying could feel that their life has been prolonged today because of the way they are being intervened in the last ten days of their lives. Death has lost its dignity. Ninety per cent of the medical care budget in the USA goes to keep seriously ill patients alive in the last ten days of their sojourn on this planet.

Even today a double blind prospective study in London did show that eighty per cent of the accurate final diagnosis and one hundred per cent of the future management strategies could be chalked out at the end of carefully listening to the patient! Family medicine, therefore, is very useful and affordable, if practised scientifically. Only in rare cases a specialist might be needed to intervene at the behest of the family physician. Such specialists must be classed as medical technologists and not true doctors. They should have very little to do with diagnosis of illnesses.

A specialist should be like a laboratory supplying the investigation data to the family doctor when in doubt. He could also assist the family doctor to manage the illness using his tools only when needed.

Family Physician in the New Avatar

After graduation one should take postgraduate training for at least three years in this specialty,

before being let loose on the gullible public. The entry criteria for being admitted to this PG course should be the following, in addition to the marks obtained in a replicative entry examination preceding the selection:

- Can he/she smile naturally at some one?
- Can he/she touch someone comfortably?
- Does he/she have an insight into another's suffering?

If the answer to any of the above questions is in the negative he/she is debarred from this specialty. They could go into some other area where human direct contact is minimal.

The curriculum for this course should be drawn up very carefully keeping the human being as the supreme commander of all else. True humanism, medical humanism included, is simply the primacy of man in every distress situation. The family physician should be a sort of jack of all trades and he should have a good grounding in human psychology. The recent revelation to modern medicine that all ills from common cold to cancer originate in the human mind and regress also with the help of the mind makes it imperative that the new family physician should have a very thorough understanding of the human psyche. Clinical psychology should occupy a large space in the course.

The next stress should be on health promotive activities and behaviours that help keep healthy people well as long as they live. The doctor should have instructions in interpersonal relations, the social realities of the area where he/she proposes to practise later, other alternative systems of medicine being practiced in the area, as also the religious and cultural beliefs of the patients.

Intense training in bedside methods of diagnosis and management are to be stressed, technology being given very limited role. Clinical research methodologies should be thoroughly understood by these doctors as most of the milestone studies were done by family doctors practicing bedside medicine and using their curiosity being organized

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properly with logical scepticism. Nutrition and exercise physiology must also be taught in detail. Spirituality, not religion, in its true form should be taught. Spirituality is the same in every religion—sharing and caring, its role in healing has to be stressed in this course.

Many studies recently have proved that spirituality does help in disease set up. The new science of CHAOS and fractals using non-linear mathematics should be a part of the curriculum although detailed instructions in this area might be beyond the reach of most medical graduates. This latter is very essential as time evolution in a dynamic system like the human body does not depend on reductionist rules. The time evolution follows the holistic laws of uncertainty.

A touch of quantum physics could be taught for the doctor to understand the sub-atomic world and thereby understand the role played by human consciousness in illness and healing. Yoga and meditation should be a part of this course. Elementary knowledge of statistics and research methodologies is a must for the family doctor to be able to critically look at published data as also to design his/her personal studies of problems in their practice.

Conclusions

Just as fashions change in society and many a time the old fashion becomes the most modern, family medicine, the foundation of the medical consultation, the coming together of two human beings—the patient and the doctor could be the best institution for the sick. This needs to be quickly revived.

It is that foundation which developed into the first “clinic” and later developed into hospitals of

modern era. The latter hi-tech five-star hospital care has gone beyond the reach of most people in society.

Hence there is an urgent need to re-invent that sacred doctor-patient relationship which is the basis of the placebo effect, the shot in the arm for the human immune repair mechanism in all disease conditions.

The kingpin in the game is the first contact doctor, the family physician. He needs to be re-equipped for his changing role in the present set up, having been born again as a specialist in his own right. He is the true doctor that “cures rarely, comforts mostly, but consoles always.” The earlier it is done the better for mankind. This is not the most celebrated specialty today, though.

“No less in war as elsewhere, the most beautiful and most virtuous deeds are not always the most celebrated ones.” -Plutarch

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Source: Bhavan's Journal, April 30, 2013

Hindi Diwas (Day)

September 14 is celebrated as Hindi Day or Hindi Diwas. Hindi was adopted as the official language of Constituent assembly in 1949 on this day. The Day marks Hindi as our Raj Bhasha (National Language). The Constitution of India adopted Hindi in Devanagiri Script as the official language of the union in 1950. Hindi is a standardised and Sanskritised register of the Hindustani language derived from the Khariboli dialect. Hindi, the primary official language of the Republic of India, is one of the 22 official languages of India.

History

Hindi has a history behind; it belongs to Indo-Aryan branch of Indo-European language family. The word 'Hindi' itself is a gift of Persian, Mughals added to its flavour, Amir Khusro was first to write Hindi Poem. Though it evolved from Sanskrit but many of its words originated from Arabic or Persian language.

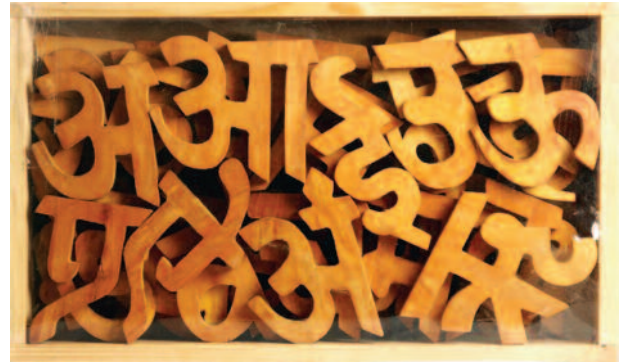
The Link Language

Hindi is also called as a 'link language', as it has united the vast Indian Diaspora and also minimized the gap between South and North India. Hindi language has travelled a long distance to make its presence felt in the World. It is spoken in many parts of the world and is one of the main languages in Mauritius, Surinam, Trinidad and many others including US, South Africa, New Zealand etc. If it is mother tongue of 180 million people then it is also the second language of 300 million people. Mahatma Gandhi used this language to unite the whole India and used this language as 'language of unity'. The word Swadeshi revolutionised the freedom struggle, and its entry into the Oxford dictionary marks its importance in world history. Hindi being a live language is gaining popularity and on the way to become a global language.

The Official Language

At the state level, Hindi is the official language of the many states in India: Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. Each of these states may also designate a "co-official language"; in Uttar Pradesh for instance, depending on the political formation in power, sometimes this language is Urdu. Similarly, Hindi is accorded the status of co-official language in several states.

The celebration of our Independence Day in the month of August leaves us with more reason to enjoy the spirit of patriotism by celebrating the Hindi day in September. Our national language has a



special significance in touching our lives each day. Renowned poets and lyricists have conveyed via many songs the spirit of freedom felt by Indians and also extolled the beauty of poetry through Hindi.

The essence of Hindi is felt in mythological characters, school syllabus and our daily exchange as a means of communication. The visit to theatres is characterized by respecting our National Anthem in Hindi which expresses wonderful emotions felt by all Hindustanis.

Celebrations

Hindi Diwas is celebrated in many schools and colleges. It is fun to enjoy poems and exchanges in dramatic sequences highlighting the multifarious activities that can be conducted through Hindi. Students recite poems and read papers to show the importance of Hindi. Various religious and cultural programs are held in the schools. The students recite Dohas of Kabir, Ravidas, Rahim. The students and teachers use Hindi language in their conversation throughout the day. On the Day Hindi Diwas awards and Raj Bhasha Awards distribution functions are organized.

Hindi Diwas Celebrations in Australia

Indian Literary & Art Society of Australia Inc (ILASA) organised a Kavi Sammelan & musical evening on 14th September in Sydney. Gambhir Watts OAM, President Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia presented Medals and Certificates of Appreciation, on behalf of Bhavan and ILASA, to the contributing poets. Australian Hindi Committee and IABBV Hindi School organized 'Hindi Mela' as part of Hindi Divas celebrations and awards were presented to all outstanding students for excellence in achievement in Hindi. Hindi Samaj of Western Australia will be organising a number of events over the next 10 months.

Source: www.goodparenting.co.in,
<http://en.wikipedia.org>,
<http://indiascanner.com>, www.mapsofindia.com

Karna-Conundrum

It is held that Karna is great for two divine qualities viz. / generosity and gratitude. A reading of Mahabharata shows that both these are mere myths and are not true.

Take first the so-called generosity of Karna. Till he was installed as king of Anga by Duryodhana, Karna was an ordinary man. His foster father Adhiratha was a charioteer. His family was not rich at all to give anything to anyone. Even after he was made the king of Anga, his royal status was a nominal title. Anga desa was located in North East of India.

According to Mahabharata, he was mostly in Hasthinapura with, Duryodhana. There is nothing on record to say that the kingdom was ever actually ruled over de facto by Karna. That place was under the suzerainty of Duryodhana. In order to give him status as a Kshatriya, Duryodhana made him nominally the king of Anga.

There is no record anywhere to the effect that Karna used to give away anything begged by anyone. Even if an emperor started giving anything to anyone, on the 15th day he would become a pauper! How then could Karna have given anything which he never had? He hardly had anything of his own to give !

On the other hand, records are to the effect that Karna deeply believed in rituals. Every day he would go to the river and do pooja to Lord Surya. Coming back home from the river Karna, as part of his rituals would give away whatever he had with him to a Brahmin. Even Indra had to come and beg for Karna's ear-ornament and armour with which he was born, only assuming the form of a Brahmin! Otherwise, he would not have given anything to Indra. In fact, after agreeing to give his armour, upon knowing that it was Indra who had come, Karna bargained with him and demanded certain special asthras. This is no generosity of giving anything demanded from him. In fact, when Krishna and Kunti met him, he did not give them what they wanted, though he had just finished his Surya-pooja, when Kunti met him.

There is another story: One day Karna was having oil-bath. The oil container was a sleek one made of silver. He was applying oil from that over his body. At that time, a Brahmin came and begged for some alms, saying that his son's thread-ceremony had to be conducted for which he required money. Karna only had this silver-utensil with him. He immediately offered it to that Brahmin by his left hand. The

Brahmin in an objecting tone asked: "Why don't you give it by your right hand?"

Karna's quick reply was: "Oh Vipra! Since my left hand was near this utensil I pulled it out by that and offered it to you. Do you know why? Human mind is very fickle. If I wanted to give you with my right hand, by the time I change over to my right hand from the left, I might change my mind and perhaps I might not give you this silver item at all." The Brahmin more interested in the gift, took that away immediately!

In this popular story too, the person who came to beg was a Brahmin! If not, Karna might not have given him that silver-item. Krishna and Kunti did not get what they demanded, only because neither was a Brahmin!

There is one more story: When Karna was about to die, Lord Krishna came there disguised as a Brahmin priest and begged for some gold from Karna. Karna broke his jaw gave his teeth to the priest. Karna's dentist had fitted him with golden teeth, which were



given to the priest. This is mentioned to praise Karna as a great Danaveer, i.e., a generous giver. Even here Krishna had to come as a Brahmin priest! Therefore the common belief that he was very generous to all and would give away anything to anyone is not correct.

Coming to the second great quality—believed to be his, i.e., his so-called gratitude towards Duryodhana, Karna who was an adept in archery already, had come to Drona when the latter had arranged a competition in archery for his students. There was no one to compete with Arjuna in archery at the time.

On the Kaurava side, no one was courageous to challenge Arjuna. Duryodhana was no match to Arjuna in archery. In fact, Arjuna was just 16 years old then. The only person who confidently came forward to challenge Arjuna was Karna.

But in competitions those days, since people below the age of 16 were regarded as children, only persons marginally above their age could participate. Yet Karna challenged Arjuna when he was over 16 years elder to him! Drona warned Karna about his age-factor, making him ineligible to participate.

But Karna ignored that. Then, Arjuna took up a very unreasonable stance. He said: "I am a Kshatriya. A

Sutaputra (Karna) cannot compete with me."

It was a silly and childish objection. Karna was taken aback. He was always considered as a Sutaputra, since his father Adhiratha was Suta by caste. Karna was stunned and he felt insulted, and humiliated. Duryodhana felt that he should snatch the opportunity and take Karna on his side by adopting a ruse. Immediately he announced that he was crowning Karna as the king of Anga. This changed Karna into a Kshatriya.

Just see how caste was never birth-based or parentage-based. Karna was immensely pleased. His status suddenly changed. This elated him. He could not judge people properly. He thought a great favour was done to him by Duryodhana, who really had paid him a bribe to purchase him which Karna could not understand. Anga those days was like a desert. It was in an extreme corner of North East India and was small in area. It would take over 30 days for him to reach there on his chariot. He had to cross Assam. "Assam" was a derivative of the Sanskrit term "Asamaha" i.e., not even (i.e., full of mountains). Moreover, Duryodhana did not offer his sister or some close cousin of his in marriage to Karna! Karna had to marry only a Suta-girl. Poor Karna was fooled.

With all these, Karna was not sincere in his claim that he was a close friend of Duryodhana. In fact, both were pretending to be close friends but not so in practicality. Just see the following incidents in Karna's life which show his true character:

(i) Karna flees when Duryodhana was Kidnapped

When the Pandavas were on exile, once Duryodhana came to the forest with his army. He had to face the Gandharvas' army.

They smashed the Kaurava army and kidnapped Duryodhana. Karna who was there, took to his heels and escaped. If a true friend of Duryodhana, he should not have run away and escaped. He would have given up his very life to save Duryodhana.

Just see the contrast. At the same time, on coming to know of the abduction of Duryodhana, Yudhishtira asked Arjuna to fight with the Gandharvas and save Duryodhana. When Arjuna was hesitant, Yudhishtira told him: "Oh Arjuna! I know Duryodhana has done grave injustice to us. Yet, after all, he is our cousin. When third parties indulge in war against him and kidnap him, we should not remain indifferent. We have to save him."

Arjuna challenged the Gandharvas and waged a fierce fight and got Duryodhana released! Duryodhana never felt grateful to the Pandavas for saving him. He again joined hands with Karna to



After agreeing to give his armour, upon knowing that it was Indra who had come, Karna bargained with him and demanded certain special asthras. This is no generosity of giving anything demanded from him

scheme against the Pandavas. Though Karna ran away like a chicken unbothered about

Duryodhana's fate, Duryodhana put up with this act of cowardice and ingratitude since to combat the Pandavas he badly needed Karna.

(ii) Karna lets down Duryodhana Again!

The Mahabharata war lasted for 18 days. Though Karna was instrumental in egging on Duryodhana to go in for a genocidal war, when the war was about to start, Karna had a quarrel with Bhishma. Moreover, Bhishma always detested Karna and he suspected that among the notorious trio who were always with Duryodhana, who followed him like a tail, Karna was the most cunning. He was the Chief Advisor of Duryodhana. The other two (Shakuni and Dussasana) were not of much use in regard to war-strategy or as warriors.

Bhishma's dislike for Karna was equal to his dislike for Duryodhana. For all these reasons, when Bhishma was appointed Generalissimo of the Kaurava Army, without any regard for his friendship for Duryodhana, Karna refused to participate in the war. His ego was more important for him than Duryodhana's victory in the war. He ditched Duryodhana very badly and disappointed him. He did not participate in the war and was merely a spectator for ten days!

At that juncture, no one knew that the war would last for 18 days! It could have been over in 2 days or on the first day itself if Duryodhana had been killed by then! Karna was egoistic and adamant and his conduct did not evince even a semblance of gratitude in him towards Duryodhana.

(iii) Karna was a Coward and Wicked

Karna was one of the six unruly warriors on Duryodhana's side who attacked in unison, that sixteen-year old boy Abhimanyu in the most dastardly manner. Even among these six unruly warriors, Karna was the most cruel and cowardly because, he knew that Abhimanyu was his own younger brother Arjuna's son, that too, a child. Still he slaughtered his nephew. Moreover, when Karna first came with Shalya as his charioteer, he asked the Pandava soldiers as to where Arjuna was and

anyone giving the correct information, he offered to give one hundred girls! He was prepared to adopt unfair means, that too very mean ones. He was no hero.

(iv) Karna lets down Duryodhana for the 3rd Time!

When Drona became the Commander-in-Chief after Bhishma was vanquished, Karna joined the war under Drona. On the 14th day, after Drona was killed, instead of continuing the war, Karna ran away when the other soldiers also were running away.

Of course, the news of Drona's fall shocked everyone. The soldiers on the Kaurava side were totally demoralised. They started running away helter-skelter from the field. Instead of encouraging them to stay on and continuing the war, Karna too ran away like an effeminate. He had again let down Duryodhana.

(v) Secret Divulgence of his Dream

Here is another very surprising aspect in Karna's life. When Lord Krishna met him and disclosed that he too was a Kounteya, i.e., Kunti's son, and asked him to leave Duryodhana to join the Pandavas' side, Karna was in a dilemma. Since it pricked his conscience to leave Duryodhana abruptly when the war was afoot, he could not join the Pandavas. But he disclosed his secret love for Yudhishtira and divulged his dream which he had, just the day before. He said: "Oh Keshava! I had a strange dream, where Yudhishtira stood in the palace as the emperor. He is flanked by Bhima and Arjuna. Nakula was holding the royal umbrella over Yudhishtira. Sahadeva was fanning Yudhishtira. And all were wearing silken clothes. It indicated that Yudhishtira is sure to become the emperor!"

This dream he never shared with Duryodhana. If a sincere friend known for gratitude, he should have disclosed this to Duryodhana and advised him to give at least a few acres of land to the Pandavas. The least Krishna demanded was just five villages or five palatial houses for the Pandavas in recompense for the kingdom!

Banking on the support of Karna, Duryodhana rejected even this offer and arrogantly replied that



he would not give even an inch of land to the Pandavas. Strangely, Karna narrates this dream to Krishna in such a manner as though he wanted his dream to come true! Of course, he refused to come to Pandavas' side since that would be openly letting down Duryodhana and would be hurting his own ego besides bringing him ignominy.

Secondly, till this time, since his conduct was very uncouth towards the Pandavas, it was difficult for him to hold his head high and come to the Pandava side. Only one thing was certain: His love for Duryodhana was fake and he really had no gratitude in him at all!

(vi) Secret Pact with Kunti

Here is the most atrocious aspect of Karna. On being induced by Krishna, Kunti comes to reveal that she was his mother and that when he was born, she was unmarried and a virgin. Of course, he knew this fact already from Krishna. Yet, he acts as though he was upset! Thereafter, he asks her to sit on the floor, and keeping his head on her lap he tells her: "Oh! Dear mother! Do you know how I was always feeling thirsty for your filial love and how I had a craving all these years to rest my head on your lap?"

He even shed tears. She too cried. He wiped her tears. But, while refusing to come to Pandavas' side, he entered into a secret pact with her that he would

not fight with Yudhishtira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva. He would fight only with Arjuna.

He promised his mother that at the end of the war, Kunti would always have five sons: The other 4, plus either Arjuna or himself!

These developments, he did not share with Duryodhana. This shows that he was never sincere in his friendship with Duryodhana. If he had not joined the Pandavas, it was only because of his ego. Further, since he indulged in many atrocities against the Pandavas and Droupadi, he had no guts to face the world and to openly join the Pandavas. He was ashamed to do so.

This secret pact with Kunti shows that Karna had turned a traitor. In fact, he implemented this secret pact by allowing ever-so many chances of killing his four brothers, slip away. Is it being fair to Duryodhana?

(vii) His Incurable Complex

The central problem with Karna was his inferiority complex. During his time, children born to a Kshatriya father with a Vaishya or Shudra mother were known as Sutas. They were treated by society as a community below Kshatriyas. When Karna was 11 years old, his parents disclosed to him that he was really a Kshatriya boy and that his mother left

him in a stream inside a wooden box and that when Adhiratha, his foster father, saw this box and took him in his hands, he was seen with ear-ornaments and with an armour which had been fastened to his body made of his own skin and that at birth he was really a Kshatriya.

Thereafter Karna made fervent attempts-to locate his mother. He was unsuccessful. He always aspired to be recognised as a Kshatriya. This landed him in severe inferiority complex.

Look at Vidura. He was the youngest brother of Dritharashtra and Pandu. Out of the three, he alone was born without any congenital handicap. Above all, he was very wise. His Vidura Neeti, a smriti, is well-known.

As he was born to a Vaishya maid working in the palace, he was considered a Suta. But he never suffered from any complex. He was given a small house, while his brothers lived in huge palaces. They were treated as princes. He was their personal secretary! With all this, Vidura did not suffer from any complex. He was a contended man and was very peaceful and gave peace to others.

Karna, on the contrary, was always agitated, worried and never had or gave peace. Because of his inferiority complex, Karna's psychology was gravely affected. He wanted to learn archery from Parashurama. He suppressed his identity as a Suta and falsely claimed that he was a Brahmin, that too a Brahmana of the Brighu clan knowing that Parashurama was from the Brighu clan!

One day when Parashurama was asleep resting his head on the lap of Karna, an insect started biting Karna and sucking his blood. If he attempted to drive away that insect, Karna thought Parashurama's sleep would be disturbed. He put up with his pain bravely. But the oozing blood from the wound woke up Parashurama, who immediately knew that Karna was a Kshatriya and that his claim that he was a Brahmin was false. As a punishment for lying about his identity, Parashurama cursed Karna that the Brahmastra which he had taught would not come to his aid and that at the crucial moments he would forget it!

It is to be noted that Parashurama did not curse him for his caste. He cursed him because he uttered a lie! That Parashurama could not have cursed him on caste-factor at all is clear, from the fact that according to Mahabharata, Parashurama taught archery and other fighting-skills to Bhishma a Kshatriya!

(viii) Karna was An Adamant Fool

During the Mahabharata war, because of Karna's

arrogance and adamant conduct, Duryodhana was put to lot of difficulties. He refused to participate in the war for ten days, because of Bhisma-factor. Now, on the 16th day when he became the Generalissimo, he insisted on being given an able charioteer equal in ability in charioteering to Krishna as a pre-condition for fighting Arjuna.

Duryodhana was in a fix. There was only one good charioteer on the Kaurava side who was almost equal to Krishna in charioteering skills. He was Shalya, who never liked Karna. He was the uncle of Nakula and Sahadeva. He was duped by Duryodhana by offering him hospitality when he was proceeding towards Indraprastha to join the Pandavas, and thereby drew him to the Kaurava side. Though physically with the Kauravas, his heart and soul were with the Pandavas. He was a reluctant warrior on the Kaurava side.

Karna chose him as his charioteer. It was a foolish decision and a Himalayan blunder. A charioteer is the most important ally to a warrior. Shalya was always deliberately shouting, screaming and taunting Karna to divert his attention every now and then, while charioteering him and Karna's attention was diverted very often. Moreover when his chariot's wheel got stuck in a slush, though it was his duty to remove the wheel from the slush, Shalya refused to co-operate. His words in answer hurt Karna beyond repair. He said: "I am the King of Madra desa and you are a mere charioteer. How can I obey your command?" This forced Karna to get down when the war was on, and eventually brought about his end. In selecting a wrong charioteer, he and Duryodhana both committed a grave blunder!

Karna was wholly unfair: It is recorded in the Karna Parva of Mahabharata that once Karna -shot the Naagastra on Arjuna, claiming that he was sure to kill him thereby. But, as the arrow was about to come near Arjuna, Krishna suddenly lowered the chariot as a result whereof, the asthra could only hit Arjuna's crown and Arjuna could escape. A skilful charioteer, he could do that and he is obliged to do that to save his master riding in the chariot.

A little later, on the same day. Arjuna's chariot got stuck in a slush. Krishna immediately got down and He was pulling the wheel out. At that time, the infuriate Karna directly shot arrows on Krishna. This was very unfair and un-warrior-like of Karna. On the same day, when Karna's own chariot's wheel got stuck in a slush, he expected Arjuna to follow the dharma of not attacking a weaponless hero engaged in lifting of his chariot's wheel! He had one standard for himself and another for others.

Just see what Mahabharata says in Section-X-C of Karna Parva in this context: "After that snake had been cut off by Arjuna, Lord Keshava, i.e.,

Purushottama Himself raised up with His own arms the chariot from the earth. At that time, Karna, keeping one eye on Dhananjaya, pierced Purushottama with ten shots whetted on stones and equipped with peacock feathers”.

End of Karna

When the chariot wheel of Karna got stuck in the slush created by flowing blood here and there in the battle-field like thick streams, on refusal of help from Shalya, he himself got down from the chariot and was attempting to take out the wheel. While doing so, he told Arjuna: “Oh! Partha, you know the rules of war. While your opponent is unarmed and is trying to take out the chariot from the slush, according to Yuddha-Dharma, you are not supposed to attack your opponent.” Hearing this, Arjuna allowed some lull in his fierce battle. But, Lord Krishna told Arjuna not to listen to Karna and not to spare him. Krishna openly asked Karna the following questions one after the other:

- i) You are on the side of Adharma, then what locus you have to speak of dharma?
- ii) Oh Karna, at the assembly, Shakuni, an adept-cheat in dice, vanquished Yudhishtira by fraud, why did you not speak up and where had your dharma gone then?
- iii) When Duryodhana, under your advice, attempted to kill Bhima by poisoning the food, where was your dharma?
- iv) When the period of exile to forest was over you did not advise Duryodhana to return the kingdom to Pandavas. At that time where did this dharma go?
- v) You set fire to the house of lac at Varanavata for burning to death the sleeping Pandavas! Whither then, Oh, Radheya, had this dharma of yours gone which you canvass now eloquently?
- vi) You laughed at Droupadi while she stood in the midst of the assembly, forcibly disrobed and was under physical control of Dussasana. Where then, Oh Karna, had this dharma of thine had gone then?
- vii) When from the apartment reserved for females, innocent Droupadi was being dragged by her hair, you, like a sadist were enjoying her misery. Where this dharma of thine had gone then?
- viii) What temerity you had to tell Droupadi: “You can choose another husband?”
- ix) Greedy to grab the kingdom, relying on Shakuni’s deceitful skills you asked the

Pandavas to come for a match of dice. You did so knowingly. Did you have regard for Dharma then?

- x) When many mighty warriors, you including in a dastardly manner surrounding that boy Abhimanyu in battle, slaughtered him, why you did not think of this dharma then?

The Lord finally told Karna: “If this Dharma which you now invoke did not come to your mind on those occasions”; what is the use then of parching your palate now by uttering the word “dharma”, “dharma” “dharma”?

Krishna’s words infuriated Arjuna and exasperated him terribly. After this, as recorded in Mahabharata (Karna Parva-Section), “Karna hung down his head in shame and gave no answer.”

After Some fight, when again Karna attempted to release the wheel of his chariot from the slush, the Lord commanded Arjuna to cut off the head of Karna which Arjuna finally did by using his Anjalika asthra. Vrisha i.e., Karna fell down dead.

Karna was basically good. He immensely loved his foster parents till the end. He had great devotion for Krishna. He knew Krishna was God-Incarnate. When Krishna met him to lure him to the Pandavas’ side, just before parting, the Lord affectionately hugged Karna. After that lovely embrace, Karna felt in himself: “How fortunate would be Arjuna to get such embraces from the Lord that too in plenty?”

In fact, when Kunti met him with a worried face, he clearly asked her: “When the holy one (Krishna) is there with Partha where is the cause for any worry in you?”

Not only was he an expert archer, he had a very handsome and comely personality. His inferiority complex and his undue support to Duryodhana who admittedly was on the side of Adharma both ruined him. Duryodhana himself wondered about this destiny of his when he said: “I know what Dharma is. It is not as though I do not know what it is. But somehow I can not follow it. I know what Adharma is. But there is an irresistible impulse in me only to do it. I am helpless.”

But for these two solid negative-factors in Karna referred to above, which over-shadowed his good side, it is quite clear that Karna would have become the Emperor of India and not Yudhishtira!

M.N. Krishnamani is former President of Supreme Court Bar Association and recently conferred Doctorate in Laws (Honoris Causa) by North Orissa University.

Source: Bhavan’s Journal, May 15, 2013

Tweets Democratic

New Delhi: On July 4, Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat and putative prime ministerial candidate of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), became the most-followed Indian politician on Twitter, with more than 1.8 million followers. (Full disclosure: the long-time leader whom he eclipsed was me.) The occasion was celebrated by BJP supporters across the Internet, and triggered a spate of assessments of social media's growing impact on Indian politics.

Four years ago, when I first went on Twitter, many Indian politicians sneered at the use of social media. It seemed like every remark of mine was taken out of context in the press and blown up into a political controversy. As the BJP's president at the time, Venkaiah Naidu, presciently warned me, "Too much tweeting can lead to quitting."

As recently as last September, India's Economic Times reported that, faced with such risks, most young Indian politicians were not active on any social-networking site. Those with active accounts posted only sporadic—and uninteresting—updates.

The journalist and poet Pritish Nandy, interviewed in the Times article, remarked that even he had more Twitter followers than Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (who had only around 195,000 at the time). Others interviewed made it clear that they had no intention of adopting social media in the near future.

But the pace at which the political world is embracing social media has accelerated dramatically in the last year. Aside from the BJP's wholesale adoption of Twitter—Modi's allies on the network include the party's parliamentary leader, Sushma Swaraj, and a coterie of organized

supporters—prominent Indian politicians from all parties have leapt in.

A day after he was sworn in as India's president, Pranab Mukherjee announced that he would open a Facebook account to receive and respond to the public's questions. Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee runs a popular and widely read Web site that traditional media outlets mine daily. Similarly, Omar Abdullah, the youthful Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, regularly interacts on Twitter, and his much older Rajasthan and Kerala counterparts, Ashok Gehlot and Oommen Chandy, respectively, have opened Facebook accounts as well.

More than half of the Council of Ministers are now online, as is the statistics-dispensing Planning Commission, and most government offices are establishing a social-media presence. The prime minister's Twitter account has more than tripled its following in the last nine months, to almost 660,000 (more than 50% higher than Nandy).

Indian political issues are being raised and debated regularly—and boisterously—across social media. The finance minister spoke to the public about the budget, not on TV, but in a Google Hangout. The Planning Commission, the Minister of Road Transport and Highways, and I have all emulated him. Even 12% of India's population—the extent of Internet penetration today—makes the country the world's third-largest online market, and also the fastest growing for its size. Indeed, in terms of people online, India is expected to overtake the US by 2020.

Nonetheless, skepticism about the reach and political impact of social media in India is in order.

A recent study conducted by the IRIS Knowledge Foundation and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (AIMAI) suggests that there are as many as 160 constituencies (out of 543 in India's popularly-elected lower house of parliament) where the margin of victory is smaller than the number of constituents on Facebook, or where over 10% of the population is on Facebook. The study estimates that by the next election, due in 2014, as many as 80 million Indians will be using social media—a voting bloc that, supposedly, no politician can afford to ignore.

As one of India's first politicians to embrace social media, my view is that this conclusion is premature. I do not believe, given the numbers, that any Indian election can be won or lost on social media alone.

Only a small minority of India's 753 million voters use social media; with electoral districts of some two million people each, Twitter is of little help in political mobilization. Unlike the US, for example, Twitter would be useless for organizing a mass rally or even convening a large public meeting.

But, while social media cannot be a substitute for conventional campaigning, they can help to set the agenda of public debate, because traditional media—newspapers and television, which do reach most voters—tap into social networks for information about and from politicians. This indirect impact makes social media an indispensable communications tool for politicians.

This will certainly become even more important when developments that improve Internet availability on mobile telephones, and the advent of 4G services, make access to social media more universal. Though only 12% of Indians use

computers, more than 70% have mobile phones, but very few currently find it easy or affordable to use them to access social media.

In any case, no democratic politician should resist a new communications medium, particularly an interactive one—even if some seem to regard it mainly as a public-relations tool. Modi's triumph has not noticeably been marred by widespread accusations that the BJP is creating “fake” accounts to boost his number of followers (and, if true, it would be further proof that Twitter now matters in India).

The name Twitter initially put me off, and many Indian savants suggested that it was not a suitable medium for a serious politician. But Google and Yahoo! were once silly names; both are now household words. I am convinced that a majority of politicians in twenty-first-century democracies—including India—will be tweeting within ten years, and those, like me, who were ahead of the curve will have only the consolation of knowing that we got there first.

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



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Festivals of the Month—Australia

Alice Desert Festival



Animania Festival



Cairns Festival



Adelaide Film Festival

Animania Festival, Sydney—14-15 Sept 2013

Animania Festival, a celebration and exploration of the world of Japanese pop culture is Australia's anime and manga event. Japanese animation, or anime, and graphic novels (manga) have proliferated on the Australian pop culture scene, creating an avenue of escape, fantasy, and imagination.

Alice Desert Festival, Northern Territories—11-15 Sept 2013

The Alice Desert Festival is Central Australia's arts and cultural festival, celebrating the desert and the diversity of people that live here. The festival shares the stories, songs and the unique lifestyle of Central Australia's arid region.

Cairns Festival, North Queensland—14-15 Sept 2013

Cairns Festival is one of Australia's leading diverse cultural festivals and is a showcase for the region both nationally and internationally, featuring a program of creative, cultural and sporting events across a three-week period.

Adelaide Film Festival, South Australia—10-20 Oct 2013

The Adelaide Film Festival is the most important cultural event to do with cinema in Australia. It

engages with filmmakers, nationally and internationally, film programmers, film critics, film cognoscenti and film lovers. It celebrates the moving image—the ideas and artists that animate the multiple screens in our lives.

Eden Whale Festival, NSW— 26 October-3 November 2013

The Eden Whale Festival is an annual event, highlighting the southern migration of the humpback and other whales. The whales can be seen in large numbers in the Twofold Bay for one to get up close and personal with these magnificent animals.

Melbourne Festival, VIC—11-27 October 2013

Melbourne International Arts Festival now commonly known as Melbourne Festival is one of Australia's leading international arts festivals presenting unique international and Australian events in the fields of dance, theatre, music, visual arts, multimedia and other outdoor events.



Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam
"The Whole world is but one family"

Festivals of the Month—India



Ganesh Chaturthi



Dusshera



Id-ul-Zuha



Onam

Teacher's Day—5 Sept 2013

A good teacher is like a candle—it consumes itself to light the way for others.

5 September is celebrated as Teacher's Day as a mark of tribute to the contribution made by teachers to the society. 5th September is the birthday of a great teacher Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, who was a staunch believer of education, and was the well-known diplomat, scholar, President of India and above all a Teacher.

Ganesh Chaturthi—9 Sept 2013

Ganesh Chaturthi festival marks the birthday of Lord Ganesh. Lord Ganesh is considered to be an Avatar of both Shiva and Vishnu.

Onam—16 Sept 2013

Onam Festival, a festival of Kerala marks the commemoration of Vamana Avatara of Vishnu and the subsequent homecoming of mythical King Mahabali.

Navratri—5 Oct 2013

Navratri, the festival of nine nights is dedicated to Goddess Durga and her nine forms.

Dusshera—14 Oct 2013

Dusshera also called Vijaya Dashami is a

celebration of victory of good over evil. The celebrations starting from Navratri ends with the tenth day festival of Dussehra celebrating the triumph of Lord Rama over Demon Ravana and of Goddess Durga over the buffalo demon, Mahishasura.

Id-ul-Zuha (Bakr-Id)—15 Oct 2013

Eid-ul-Zuha, also known as Eid-ul-Adha, Bakra-Id is celebrated to commemorate the sacrifice of Prophet Ibrahim, who willingly agreed to kill his son at the behest of God. The word 'Id' is derived from the Arabic 'iwd' meaning 'Festival' and Zuha comes from 'uzhaiyya' which translates to 'Sacrifice'. This festival coincides with the Haj pilgrimage in Mecca. Prayers are offered in the mosques and the sacrificial meat is then distributed after the Id prayers.

Source: www.festivalsfindia.in,
www.panchangam.org,
www.hindudevotionalblog.com,
www.drikpanchang.com

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India Tourism Sydney



The Great War's End in Syria

New Delhi: As the West begins to gear up for the centenary of the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Middle East is being convulsed as never before by the legacy of the Ottoman Empire's breakup. Look no farther than Syria, where one part of that legacy—the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divided the Levant into British and French spheres of influence even while the Great War still raged—is coming to a brutally violent end.

Likewise, the current turmoil in Turkey is, at least in part, a consequence of “neo-Ottoman” overreach by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government. In seeking to establish the type of regional influence that Turks have not had since Kemal Atatürk founded the Republic of Turkey, Erdoğan has fallen prey to some of the Ottoman regime's hubris.

The Levant has, of course, been the scene of countless conflicts through the centuries. Sir Archibald Wavell, one of Britain's greatest World War II generals and the penultimate Viceroy of India, wrote in his biography of the WWI Field-Marshal Edmund Allenby, who led the Allies in the Levant: “The greatest exploit in the history of horsed cavalry, and possibly their last success on a large scale, had ended within a short distance of the battlefield of Issus, where Alexander the Great first showed how battles could be won.”

But peace still eludes the Levant. As Middle East analyst Murtaza Hussain recently observed: “Syria and Iraq, formerly unified Arab states formed after the defeat of their former Ottoman rulers, exist today only in name.” What will emerge could be a

fragmented, easily manipulated region.

This is why Syria's civil war is now a geopolitical battle for regional domination, with multiple fractures along sectarian lines. As is now clear, no country is really free of the charge of interfering in Syria. While Shia-majority Iraq has attempted to portray itself as neutral, it has permitted Iranian flights to use its airspace to carry weapons to President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Iran, too, has long used its alliance with Syria to pursue its interests in the Levant, which include support for Hezbollah in Lebanon. On the ground, Hezbollah, now openly fighting in Syria to keep Assad in power, asserts that “war is coming to Aleppo,” the ancient city that is the heart of the anti-Assad rebellion.

Indeed, according to Lakhdar Brahimi, who serves as Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the Arab League for Syria, there are an estimated 148 groups, big and small, fighting in the country. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and Qatar—which Middle East commentator Saeed Naqvi has called the “most vulnerable Sunni Kingdoms”—attempt “to divert popular discontent along sectarian, Shia-Sunni lines.”

This ancient fracture, papered over by Sir Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot 97 years ago in their secret agreement, has now swallowed Syria, with Assad portrayed as some sort of Alawite ogre. Many Western diplomats appear to be of the same superficial cast of mind as Sykes and Picot,



believing that Assad's fall from power would remove Syria from the Iran-Hezbollah-Hamas axis.

But will it? And who or what will replace Assad? Surely not the ragtag groups fighting Assad's regime, even if the United States now supplies some of them with arms, as President Barack Obama's administration recently announced.

Recent history suggests just how malleable the elements in play in Syria really are. Consider Saudi Arabia's actions there. As Bruce Riedel, an ex-CIA analyst and former National Security Council member, recently noted, "Ironically, [Saudi intelligence chief Prince] Bandar was crucial to the transition in Syria from Hafez Assad to Bashar back in 2000, assuring key Alawite generals, then in the regime, that Bashar was up to the job and had Saudi support." Now the same Prince Bandar "is trying to get arms to the Sunni rebels to oust Bashar."

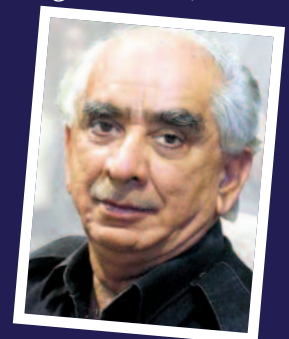
Such long-term unpredictability is why the former European Union foreign-policy high representative Javier Solana and former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer assert that talks in Geneva are the only viable way out of the Syrian morass. An agreement last month between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov to launch a new political process for Syria, Geneva II, marked a possible opportunity; but hope is waning even before the talks begin.

Indeed, one reason for this is that, on the opening day of the Russia-EU Summit in Yekaterinburg on June 4, Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed

that his country will honor its contract with Syria to deliver S-300 surface-to-air missiles. Putin stressed Russia's disappointment over the EU's failure to maintain the arms embargo against Syria, thus permitting each EU member state to arm the Syrian rebels.

Now, with Obama's decision to send arms as well, his "red line" in Syria—the use of chemical weapons—could well create a legacy as damaging to the region as that of the Sykes-Picot "line in the sand" proved to be. To arm the rebel groups is, perhaps inevitably, also to arm their terrorist and mercenary allies. That is not a recipe for long-term stability.

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



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Homage to Two Legends: Symphony of Maths & Wisdom of Music

As though by divine design, two of India's greatest legends in music and mathematics died within hours of each other on April 21-22, 2013.

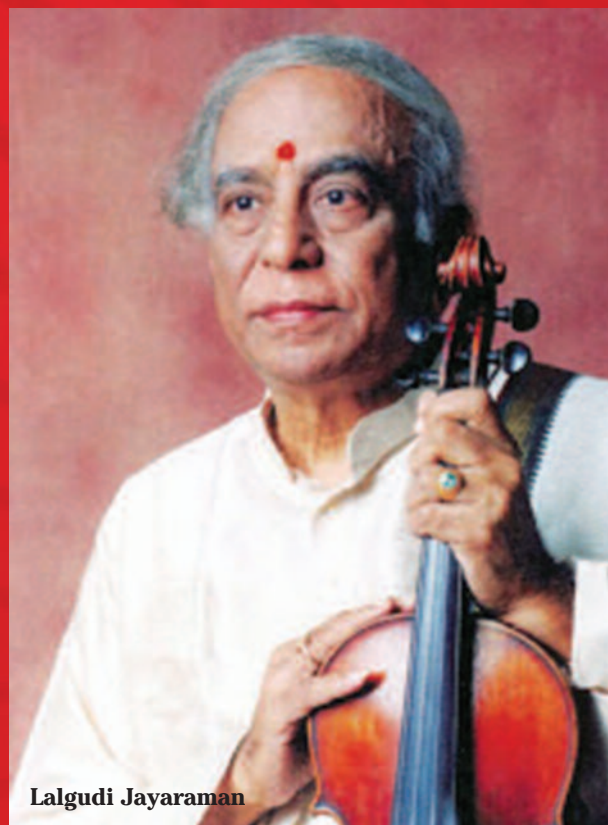
Lalgudi Jayaraman, who raised violin-playing to heights of mastery and melody unreachable by even acclaimed musicians of our times, leaves behind an infinity of kaleidoscopic patterns and imageries of sound for future generations to savour and revel in.

Scion of a Guru-Sishya parampara tracing back to Saint Tyagaraja, Lalgudi Jayaraman elevated even ordinary concerts into the realm of the extraordinary. For singers of different styles and temperament, "Lalgudi" was an ideal accompanist. His versatility manifested itself in various ways—as a composer, writer of songs and an inspirer. Shakuntala Devi was what one writer described as a "Math-magician". Numbers danced to her tunes and held audiences spell-bound.

An hour with Shakuntala would transform an assemblage into a concert in numbers. She was not a great mathematician like Ramanujam working out complicated theorems and formulae. But she made three generations of children enjoy playing with numbers.

With her, mathematics became fun, ceasing to be a bugbear. Her powers of calculation bordered on the unthinkable. She was rightly described as a "human computer" but she often outperformed the computers.

Back in 1971, she stunned an American audience by solving the 23rd root of a 201 digit number in less than a minute—50 seconds to be precise. The computer took a couple of minutes to confirm the correctness of her answer. Thinking of the two together, one could visualise an alliance of maths and music—there's melody in mathematics even as



Lalgudi Jayaraman

there's rigid and unwavering maths in music. The connection between the two goes as far back as the days of ancient Greeks and Indian epics. A bad musical concert violates rules of geometry and calculus, essential to musical expertise.

Today pure noise is dished out as music, but music has always been noise put into a pattern, set in numbers, given beats and answering to clearly laid formulae.

Music and mathematics have much in common and blended together, they attain the highest level of aesthetics and creative art. The late Veena maestro Balachander used to give a loud twang and then move his hand slowly upwards and bring it down in a parabolic movement and the enchanted audience could literally see, yes see, the movement of sound.

I had experienced the ecstasy of following the geometric patterns woven by Ustad Bismillah Khan discoursing Mian ki Malhar with ravishing notes. The completely entranced listener travelling back and forth feels that it would be perfectly alright with



With her, mathematics became fun, ceasing to be a bugbear. Her powers of calculation bordered on the unthinkable. She was rightly described as a “human computer” but she often outperformed the computers



Shakuntala Devi

him if the ustad went on endlessly, as if there is nothing else to live for.

I have experienced the same feeling when M.S. Subbulakshmi plumbed the depths of the human soul and soared to the heights of divine melody while dwelling on the line “Seetapate, na pai neeku abhimanamu ledha. ...” (oh, Rama, have you no concern for me... aren’t you the one who rushed to save Gajendra from the crocodile?) in Mysore Vasudevacharya’s immortal classic in Khamas.

It was like a ray of light passing through a prism and a riot of colours scrambling to race out to infinity from the other side. Lalgudi’s violin produced the same effect; he has written and composed exquisite Tillanas that are now a routine diet of all Carnatic music concerts and Bharatanatyam recitals.

The Greek mathematician Pythagoras (remember the theorem about the square on the hypotenuse which used to be the bugbear of school goers everywhere?) was perhaps the first to link music with mathematics by pointing out that musical

pauses could be expressed as ratios—octave 1:1, fifth 2:3, fourth 3:4, etc. Thanks to this link, the science of cosmology came to be seen both as musical and mathematical.

The universe consisted of revolving spheres and being large bodies they ought to be making harmonious noises while engaged in harmonious revolutions. Why don’t we hear it? Aristotle had an explanation. Humans could not hear this wonderful music because the sound was present at birth and hence could not be distinguished from silence.

Keats decided to be content with speculating on the sweetness of melodies unheard but Shakespeare, deafened by the decibel dust around him, declared that the smallest celestial body “sang like an angel but...this muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.” Plato through the mouth of Socrates said music was a “heaven-sent ally in reducing to order and harmony any disharmony in the revolutions within us.”

The cosmic order could thus be explained in terms of what a modern science writer calls “the symphony of science and its counter-point the wisdom of music”.

If one has to define God ideally, the Pythagoras-Plato concept, explained and exemplified millennia earlier by our sages and rishis, says that the universe is a harmonious and sublime system guided by an omniscient intelligence and every living creature and inanimate object has a predetermined role to play in this infinite scheme of things.

So, music ushered in the seasons as much as seasons inspired music; we have no right to laugh jeeringly to see flowers blossoming when Tansen sang “Bagh lagadon sajni” and lights flickering when he sang “Diva jalao, jag mag jag mag”.

In their joint journey to the here-in-after, Lalgudi Jayaraman and Shakuntala Devi embody the spirit of the cosmic order manifesting in them the symphony of maths with the wisdom of music.

-V.N. Narayanan Editor, Bhavan’s Journal. Parts of this were excerpted from an article written him for a music souvenir in 1994.

Source: Bhavan’s Journal, May 15, 2013

Central Bankers on the Ground

New Delhi: Markets are in turmoil once again, following the US Federal Reserve's indication that it might reduce its bond purchases toward the end of the year. The intensity of the market reaction was surprising, at least given the received wisdom about how the Fed's quantitative-easing policy works. After all, the Fed was careful to indicate that it would maintain its near-zero interest-rate policy and would not unload its bond holdings.

The dominant theory of how quantitative easing works is the portfolio-balance approach. Essentially, by buying long-term Treasury bonds from private investors' portfolios, the Fed hopes that these investors will rebalance their portfolios. Because a risky asset has been removed and replaced with safe central-bank reserves, investors' unmet risk appetite will grow, the price of all risky assets (including remaining privately-held long-term Treasury bonds) will rise, and bond yields will fall.

A central element of the theory is that the stock of bonds that the Fed has removed from private portfolios, not the flow of Fed purchases, will determine investors' risk appetite. Unless investors thought the Fed was going to buy bonds forever, news about a reduction in Fed purchases should have had only a mild effect on their expectations of the eventual stock of bonds the Fed would hold. So why such a violent reaction in markets worldwide?

One possible answer is that the volume of monthly Fed purchases also matters for global asset prices. Another possibility is that investors around the world read far more into the Fed's statements than the Fed intended. Either answer is worrisome, because it would suggest that central banks—which are now holding trillions of dollars in assets—have less ability to manage the process of exiting quantitative easing than we would wish. Perhaps Winston Churchill might have mused about quantitative easing, “Never in the field of economic policy has so much been spent, with so little evidence, by so few.”

Quantitative easing has truly been a step in the dark. Given all the uncertainty—why it works, how

to make it most effective, and how to exit—why have central bankers, for whom “innovative” is usually an epithet, departed from their usual conservatism in adopting it?

One possibility is that in the past, crises typically occurred in countries that lacked the depth of economic training that exists in, say, the United States or Europe. When emerging economies' policymakers were told that they needed to implement significant austerity, as well as widespread bank closures, to cleanse the economy after a crisis, they did not protest, despite the prospect of years of high unemployment. After all, few had the training and confidence to question the orthodoxy, and those who did were considered misguided cranks. Multilateral institutions, empowered by their control over funding, dictated policy from the economic scriptures. In sum, those determining policy were distant from the pain.

When the crisis hit home, Western economists were much less willing to accept that pain was necessary, or so the explanation goes. Keynesianism, which promises painless answers, was resurgent once again. The Fed, led by perhaps the foremost monetary economist in the world, proposed creative solutions that few in policy circles, including the usually conservative multilateral institutions, questioned. After all, they no longer had the power of the purse or the advantage in economic training.

But this is not an entirely satisfactory explanation. Nobel laureates like Joe Stiglitz did protest very publicly about the kind of austerity to which Indonesia, for example, was subject. While many more protest austerity today, it was not that smart economists were totally oblivious of the pain emerging economies were going through when they were hit by crisis.

Consider another explanation: Perhaps central bankers' success in preventing the collapse of the financial system after the 2008 crisis secured for them the public's trust to go further. Perhaps their successful rescue of the banking system also misled some central bankers into believing that they

possessed the Midas touch. After all, despite their natural conservatism, it would have been hard for central bankers to do nothing if they believed that there was something, anything, they could do to improve growth and reduce unemployment.

Yet this, too, seems to be only a partial explanation. Few among the public were happy that the big banks were rescued, and many did not understand why the financial system had to be saved when their own employers were laying off workers or closing down.

Indeed, perhaps a better explanation is that instead of creating more room for central bankers, the banking rescues narrowed their political room for manoeuvre. Perhaps what forced central bankers to act creatively was the political difficulty of doing nothing after having spent billions rescuing private banks. After all, how could one let a technical hitch like the zero lower bound on nominal interest rates stand in the way of rescuing Main Street when innovative financing facilities had been used to save Wall Street? Once central bankers undertook the necessary rescue of banks, perhaps they became irremediably entangled in politics, which made quantitative easing an inevitable outcome.

As with much concerning recent unconventional

monetary policies, there is a lot about which we can only guess, including why it has happened. The bottom line is that if there is one myth that recent developments have exploded it is probably the one that sees central bankers as technocrats, hovering independently over the politics and ideologies of their time. Their feet, too, have touched the ground.

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



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World Forest Coverage

ABOUT 40% or 4500 million hectares or 11,115 million acres of the world's land surface are covered by forests, even though man has desecrated vast areas in different parts of the world. Entire civilizations have been known to have disappeared with the destruction of forests in some countries.

Ancient civilizations of Mexico and Peru are historic examples. Today the largest area of forests is in the USSR (928 million hectare); followed by South America (915 million hectares), Africa (744 million hectares), Asia (408 million hectares), Oceania (300 million hectares), and finally Europe (160 million hectares). 1500 million people who live in the rural areas of the world depend on wood for their cooking needs and for heating their homes. On this and other accounts, the Ivory Coast area of closed forestry has declined from 12 million to 4 million hectares from 1960 to 1977.

It is unbelievable that, world-wide, it is estimated that tropical forests are being cut down at the rate of 20 hectares per minute. Forest fires also take a heavy toll. So also atmospheric pollution of forests and deterioration of environment in industrialized countries, as pointed out by the recent World Forestry Conference in Mexico.

The net area of forests in the world is decreasing by several million hectares per annum due to continuous destruction and degradation, chiefly by shifting cultivation in South America, Africa and parts of Asia including India and, with the world population going up to 6000 million by 2000 A.D., the annual increase in the world consumption of wood will go up still further by another 2%. For every cubic metre extracted by the Timber industry, 5 cubic metres are taken by agriculture.

Functions of Forests

Forests perform a wide variety of functions. They protect the soil. They slow down the passage of

water to the ground and allow most of the moisture to be absorbed gradually by the soil. They counter erosion, floods, and landslides. They shelter and protect agriculture. They influence local climatic extremes and ensure clear water supply. They prevent pollution and provide a habitat for a vast variety of flora and fauna. They are essential components of attractive landscapes. They provide recreational facilities for grownups and children.

They are the home of many species of wild animals and birds which have as much right to live as man. They are a vast storehouse of plants, some of them yet undiscovered. Nearly half of all medicines contain a drug of natural origin. Yet only 50% of plants have been studied for their medicinal value.

If such plants are more and better utilized, they will be of great value in the preservation of health and in ensuring the wellbeing of mankind.

Deforestation—A Cause for Floods

On the other hand, cutting down or destruction of trees and forests has made areas susceptible to flood damage to such an extent that in the last one decade, such damage has doubled from 20 million hectares in 1980, that is, within just a decade.

Floods remove myriad habitats that depend upon tree cover. They reduce fertility levels of many regions and increase the number of slip areas and the frequency of their occurrence.

They sweep away entire villages and wash away the valuable top soil created by falling leaves for hundreds of years. They threaten wild life and sometimes decimate it. This may result in the extinction of plant species.

Soil Erosion

For example, in various States, hazards of soil



erosion have increased with deforestation in the last 20 years and as a result 150 acres of productive soil are being washed away in the Bay of Bengal every year. We are trying to arrest that trend.

Slump in our Forests

At one time, India ranked very high in forest area. We had the largest variety of tropical forest.

Today, however in spite of having 15% of the world's population and despite the 1952 forest policy statement laying down that at least one-third of the land area must be under forests, we have less than one percent of productive forest area left. Latest satellite data show that India is losing 1.3 million hectares of forests per year, i.e., nearly eight times the annual rate put out by the Forest Departments. We have 75 million hectares of forest area today accounting for 22.7% of the total land area. Even of that, only 10% are reserved for performing protective and ecological functions. Approximately 81 million hectares or almost 25% of the country's land is subject to soil erosion as a result of the destruction of forests.

Malpractices particularly by some unscrupulous forest contractors and others are greatly responsible for the profit and loss accounts— huge profits for themselves and losses for the forest by their chopping and the poor people who inhabit them and whom they exploit.

Large areas once afforested have now been replaced by grasslands, scrub, swamp, desert or agricultural land. In the last three decades nearly 4.5 million hectares have been lost; 2.5 million hectares for cultivation and river valley more than half a million hectares projects, though certainly they have their own value in economic development of the country.

As a result, we have slumped to the 75th rank

among the nations of the world in the percentage of forest land. French Guiana ranks first with 90%, Cambodia and North-Korea rank 5th with 74%, Bhutan 8th with 70%, even the highly developed Japan ranks 11th with 69%.

There are only a few examples of extensive natural forests which originally covered our country. Most of the natural cover has been destroyed by man and beast alike.

*Without trees the world would languish
Man would faint and die in anguish
Ignorance, we'll fight and vanquish
Heal the earth with trees;
Trees for beauty, inspiration,
Trees for future generation,
Trees for health and sure foundation
Heaven bless our trees!*

-Homi J.H. Taleyarkhan, (1912 - 27 June 1998) was a Gandhian, Congress politician and a former Governor of Sikkim. A member of the Parsi community Homi was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1991. He was a prolific writer, especially on Gandhi



and Gandhism. Some of his books include From Warfare to Welfare: The Ideal of National Integration, The Splendour of Sikkim. A keen environmentalist Homi was associated with various voluntary organizations economic and cultural ones and especially Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Source: Environment and Forestry in Economic Development by Homi J.H. Taleyarkhan, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, India



Annie Besant

Annie Besant

No philosophy, no religion, has ever brought so glad a message to the world as this good news of Atheism.

—Annie Besant

Dr Annie Besant is one of those foreigners who inspired the love of the country among Indians. She declared in 1918 in her paper “New India”: “I love the Indian people as I love none other, and... my heart and my mind... have long been laid on the altar of the Motherland.” Annie Besant, born of Irish parents in London on October 1, 1847, made India her home from November, 1893. Dr Besant, said Mahatma Gandhi, awakened India from her deep slumber. Before she came to India, Dr Besant passed through several phases of life—housewife, propagator of atheism, trade unionist, feminist leader and Fabian Socialist. By 1889, “there was scarcely any modern reform (in England) for which she had not worked, written spoken and suffered.” Dr Besant started the Home Rule League in India for obtaining the freedom of the country and reviving the country’s glorious cultural heritage. She started a paper called “New India.” She attended the 1914 session of the Indian National Congress and presided over it in 1917.

My own life in India, since I came to it in 1893 to make it my home, has been devoted to one purpose, to give back to India her ancient freedom.

A Born Orator

Liberty is a great celestial Goddess, strong,

beneficent, and austere, and she can never descend upon a Nation by the shouting of crowds, nor by the arguments of unbridled passion, nor by the hatred of class against class.

An orator and writer with poetic temperament, Dr Besant was a veritable tornado of power and passion. By her eloquence, firmness of convictions and utter sincerity she attracted some of the best minds of the country for the national cause. She was largely responsible for the upbringing of the world renowned philosopher K. Krishnamurti.

Early Life

Annie Wood was born in 1847 in London into a middle-class family of Irish origin. Annie was always proud of being Irish and supported the cause of Irish self-rule throughout her adult life. Her father died when she was young and left the family almost penniless. Annie’s mother was forced to support the family by running a boarding house for boys at Harrow. She raised the money for a private tutor for Annie in this way. Annie was educated privately by a female tutor as an Evangelical Christian. She was given a strong sense of duty to society and an equally strong sense of what independent women could achieve.

Married Life

Annie was married in 1867 in Hastings, Sussex, to 26-year-old clergyman Frank Besant, younger brother of Walter Besant. The marriage was, however, a disaster. The first conflict came over money and Annie’s independence. Annie wrote short stories, books for children and articles. Frank took all the money she made: married women did not have the right to own property. Politics further divided the couple. Annie began to support farm workers who were fighting to unionise and to win better conditions. Frank was a Tory and sided with the landlords and farmers. The tension came to a head when Frank struck Annie. She left him and returned to London. Annie was to remain Mrs Besant for the rest of her life.

The Social Activist

Every person, every race, every nation, has its own particular keynote which it brings to the general chord of life and of humanity.

Annie fought for the causes she thought were right, starting with freedom of thought, women’s rights, secularism, birth control, Fabian socialism and workers’ rights. Once free of Frank Besant and exposed to new currents of thought, Annie began to question not only her long-held religious beliefs but also the whole of conventional thinking. She

began to write attacks on the Churches and the way they controlled people's lives. In particular she attacked the status of the Church of England as a state-sponsored faith.

Fabian Society and Socialist

That is the true definition of sin; when knowing right you do the lower, ah, then you sin. Where there is no knowledge, sin is not present.

For Annie, politics, friendship and love were always closely intertwined. Her decision in favour of Socialism came about through a close relationship with George Bernard Shaw, a struggling young Irish author living in London, and a leading light of the Fabian Society. Annie was impressed by his work. Shaw sponsored Annie to join the Fabian Society. In its early days, the Society was a gathering of people exploring spiritual, rather than political, alternatives to the capitalist system.

Unemployment was a central issue of the time, and in 1887 some of the London unemployed started to hold protests in Trafalgar Square. Annie agreed to appear as a speaker at a meeting on 13 November. The police tried to stop the assembly. Fighting broke out, and troops were called. Many were hurt, one man died, and hundreds were arrested. Annie offered herself for arrest, but the police refused to take the bait.

The events created a great sensation, and the newspapers dubbed it 'Bloody Sunday'. Annie was widely blamed for it. She threw herself into organising legal aid for the jailed workers and support for their families. Socialists saw the trade unions as the first real signs of working people's ability to organise and fight for themselves. Until now, trade unions had been for skilled workers—men with a craft that might take years to acquire and which gave them at least a little security. The Socialists wanted to bring both unskilled men and women into unions to fight for better pay and conditions.

Her most notable victory in this period was her involvement in the London matchgirls strike of 1888. Annie was drawn into this first really important battle of the 'New Unionism' by Herbert Burrows, a young socialist. He had made contact with workers at Bryant and May's match factory in Bow, London, who were mainly young women. They were very poorly paid. They were also prey to horrendous industrial illnesses, like the bone-rotting Phossy jaw, which were caused by the chemicals used in match manufacture. Some of the match workers asked for help from Burrows and Annie in setting up a union.

Annie met the women and set up a committee, which led the women into a strike for better pay and conditions. The action won enormous public support. Annie led demonstrations by 'match-girls'. They were cheered in the streets, and prominent churchmen wrote in their support. In just over a week they forced the firm to improve pay and conditions. Annie then helped them to set up a proper union and a social centre.

At the time, the matchstick industry was an immensely powerful lobby, since electric light was not yet widely available, and matches were essential for lighting candles, oil lamps, gas lights and so on. Besant's campaign was the first time anyone had successfully challenged the match manufacturers on a major issue, and was seen as a landmark victory of the early years of British Socialism.

Servant of Humanity

Never yet was a nation born that did not begin in the spirit, pass to the heart and the mind, and then take an outer form in the world of men.

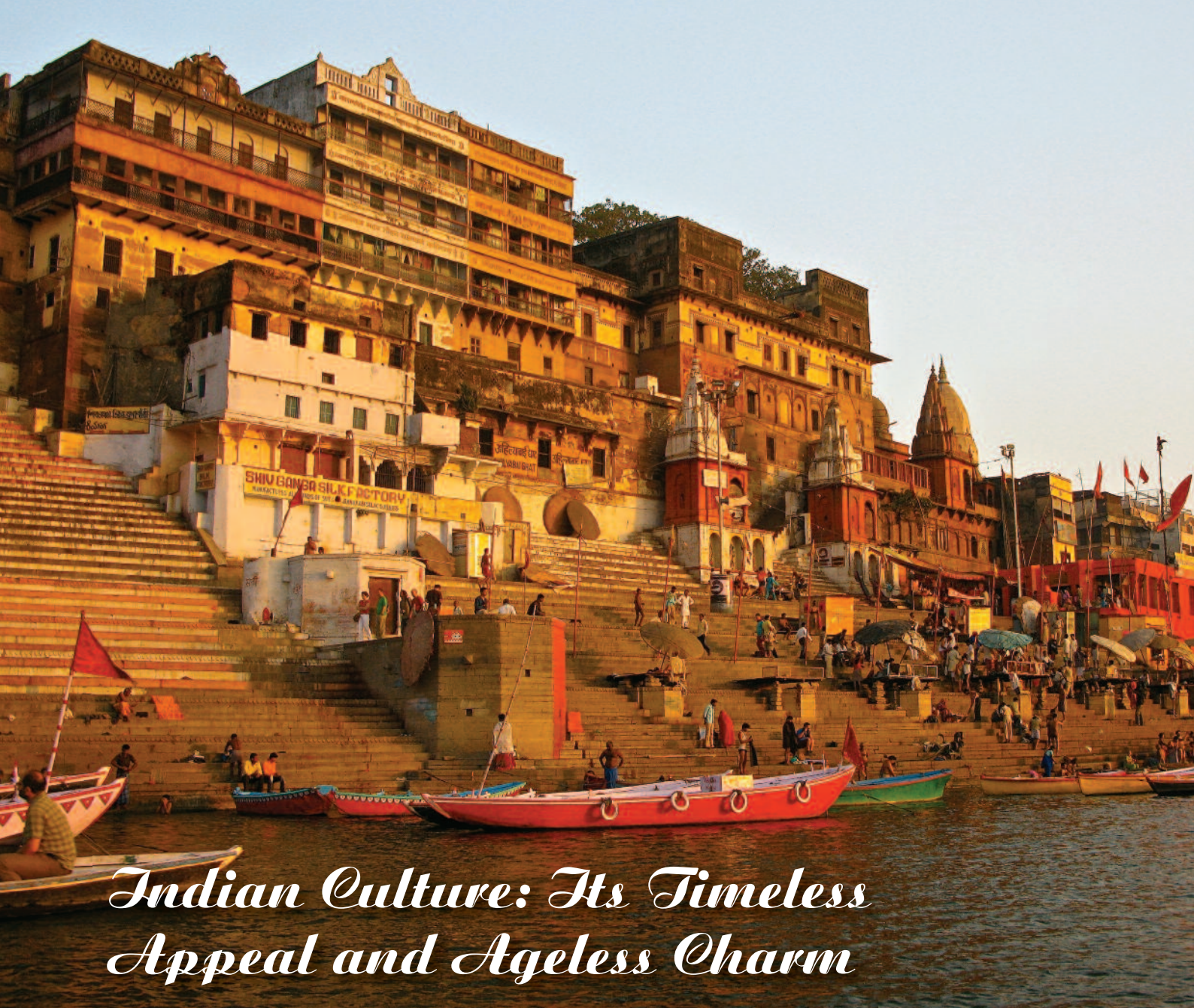
Annie Besant fought for the causes she thought were right. She became interested in Theosophy as a way of knowing God. Theosophical Society was against discrimination of race, color, gender and preached Universal brotherhood. To serve humanity at large was its supreme goal. It was as a member of Theosophical Society of India that she arrived in India in 1893. She toured the entire country of India. It gave her first-hand information about India and middle-class Indians who were affected more by British rule and its system of education. Her long-time interest in education resulted in the founding of the Central Hindu College at Benares (1898). She also became involved in Indian freedom movement. In 1916, she founded Home Rule League which advocated self rule by Indians. She became the President of Indian National Congress in 1917. She was the first woman to hold that post.

Death

Never forget that life can only be nobly inspired and rightly lived if you take it bravely and gallantly, as a splendid adventure in which you are setting into an unknown country, to face many a danger, to meet many a joy, to find many a comrade, to win and lose many a battle.

Annie Besant died on September 20, 1933 at Adyar (Madras), India.

Source: www.liveindia.com



Indian Culture: Its Timeless Appeal and Ageless Charm

Indian thought and culture has a hoary past. It is not its antiquity that is the only importance: many other ancient cultures are dead, only archaeological excavations throwing light on them.

But as far as Indian culture is concerned, in addition to its antiquity, it has been flourishing all along—a vitality that has through centuries persisted and preserved intact.

The fundamental principles of Indian culture have remained the same and with the passage of centuries, they have gained by the application, verification and interpretation of a succession line of teachers and thinkers. What is remarkable is that this process of churning continues even today.

Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome had their heydays thousands of years ago as enviable civilisations and today all of them have disappeared and it is only their ruins that stand testimony to their

former grandeur.

Contrastingly, India has not merely ruins to speak of her past, the voice of great Sages and Rishis who took birth now and then has saved her great tradition and ancient culture throughout the millennia.

Even today great saints like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Maharshi Aurobindo and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi have showered paeans about the great Indian tradition and culture attracting rapt attention all over.

The main reason why India has stood like a “Rock of Ages”, weathering many a fierce storm is because her foundations are deep rooted and implanted in the firm soil of the eternal values of philosophy and religion, and not on the shifting sands of the secular arts of beauty and governance for which Greece and Rome were popular.

Ahilya Ghat by the Ganges Varanasi



Goddess Durga



Even if the average Indian citizen might forget this higher call, there have appeared in India, in an unbroken succession, spiritual leaders to remind him of his true end and lead him on to the correct path.

The greatest men and women of India have always been the messengers of the spirit who appeal to the fundamental unity of all to the basic Reality which is spiritual, and a comprehensive outlook, knowing no narrow distinctions. They have been the true torch-bearers of our culture. In other words, Indian culture is a harmonious blending of the Vedic wisdom (which throws Light) and universal amity which is palatable and tastes sweet to every one.

That is why Mathew Arnold in his book Culture and Anarchy describes Indian culture as “Sweetness and Light”—Sweetness symbolising universal love and Light symbolising spiritual wisdom.

These sages and seers who have been the very salt of the earth are the real custodians of Indian culture. They constitute a blessing for the whole world.

What is Culture? The English word is derived from the Latin term ‘Cult’ or ‘cultus’, meaning ‘tilling, care, refinement and worship’. In effect, it means, cultivating and refining a thing to such an extent that its end product evokes one’s admiration and respect.

This is practically the same thing as ‘Samskriti’ in Sanskrit. It was in France that Voltaire and others started using the word culture in the present sense. It is again Voltaire who first emphasised that history lay not in dynasties, kings and wars, what is essential is Culture as seen in beliefs, customs, character etc.

Another term normally associated with the Sanskrit word ‘Samskriti’ is ‘Samskara’. It refers to



the process of cultivating, preparing or refining. The abstract quality in the end product of refinement is called 'Samskara'. But, very often both the words 'Sanskriti' and 'Samskara' are used as if they are identical.

Dealing with the culture of a country, there is another associated term called 'civilisation'. However, there is a subtle difference between the two. Man struggles against nature to achieve progress in every field.

This progress can be of two kinds; external progress which leads to better standards of physical living which is called 'civilisation'.

There is an internal progress that is achieved by the refinement of the whole personality viz., body, mind, senses, intellect, emotions, will, morality and spirituality. This intrinsic progress is called 'culture'. A nation requires both these to achieve total development of individuals and society.

While civilisation is skin-deep culture is deeper still many mistake civilisation for culture. That is why Swami Vivekananda specifically says that it is 'culture' that withstands shocks and not 'civilisation'.

The Swamiji gave the examples of nations like Greece, Rome etc. which had high civilisation, but the less cultivated and barbaric hordes of Persia, Mongolia etc. invaded and conquered them and they fell for good because their civilisation was based on physical strength and power which were easily destroyed by the superior physical strength and barbarism of the less cultured races.

But India could survive similar attacks because its power and strength lay in its spirituality and

culture. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda noted that spiritual culture as the one that makes for lasting progress.

Culture and civilisation are like character and conduct. The core of conduct is character and the expression of character is seen in conduct. What we are is character; how we are is conduct. Preferably, character and conduct should be in tune with each other. Civilisation shines in proportion to the intrinsic preciousness of culture. Scarcely should civilisation be contrary to culture.

Character should always be unchanging, in tune with the intrinsic divinity of man. Civilisations, now and then, may undergo a few changes, but without affecting the cultural moorings—that is the true test of a well-developed culture. In India, in spite of foreign invasions and reigns and the advent of their styles of living, the core values of its culture have remained untouched.

The main reason why Indian culture alone has remained unaffected by the ravages of time is the fact that Indian culture is based on Vedanta philosophy. Vedanta believes in the divinity of man and the divine unity of all creations. It advocates the fundamental harmony of all religions, as is evident from the Upanishadic statement "Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti", meaning "Truth is one; sages call it by many names".

Vedanta reinforces the fact that the whole world is one unit and it can reside under a single family, as clearly stated in the Yajurvedic Mantra "yatra vishvam bhavathi eka needam", meaning 'the whole world can rest together under a single nest as one family'.

As has already been stated, the core of Indian culture is its spiritual life. Those who make the greatest appeal to the Indian mind are not the military conquerors, not the rich merchants and traders or the great administrators and diplomats, but the holy sages, the Rishis, who embody spirituality at its finest and purest.

India's pride is that in almost every generation and in every part of the country, from the time of her recorded history, she has produced these holy men who embody for her all that the country holds most dear and most sacred.

By their lives, these holy teachers have taught us that pride of power, wealth and glory, are nothing in comparison with the power of the Spirit. It is these holy men and women who are the real torch-bearers of Indian culture.

-B.M.N. Murthy

Source: Bhavan's Journal, May 31, 2013

A Science of Consciousness

“As the sun alone illuminates all this universe, so does the living entity, one within the body, illuminate the entire body by consciousness.”

Bhagavad-Gita 13.34

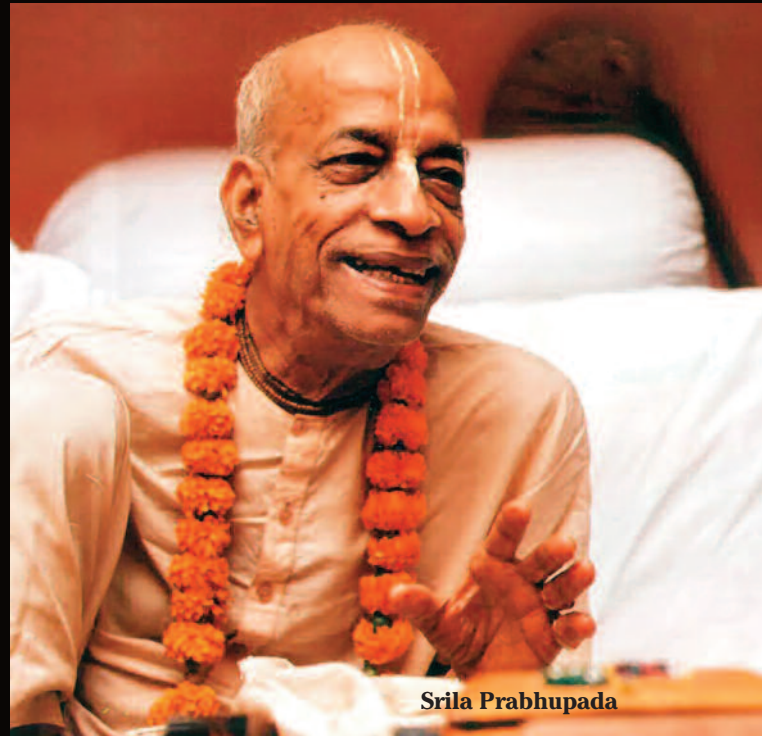
If the world is ever to become free from the threat of environmental annihilation, we shall have to undertake a thorough reexamination of the materialistic assumptions underlying not only our picture of nature but our conception of our very selves.

Some scientists are already beginning to question whether materialistic principles are really adequate to explain basic features of human existence—such as consciousness. For example, John C. Eccles, a Nobel-prize-winning neurobiologist, states, “The ultimate problem relates to the origin of the self, how each of us as a self-conscious being comes to exist as a unique self-associated with a brain. This is the mystery of personal existence.” Eccles said that “the uniqueness each of us experiences can be sufficiently explained only by recourse to some supernatural origin.”¹

If the conscious self is factually supernatural in origin, and if this knowledge were firmly integrated into our educational and cultural institutions, society would probably be much more directed toward self-realization than it is today. The overwhelming impetus toward the domination and exploitation of matter that underlies today’s industrial civilization and culminates in environmental catastrophe would certainly be lessened.

Insights from the Bhagavad-Gita

According to the Bhagavad-Gita, our unique sense of individual experience results from the presence within the material body of a spiritual particle, the symptom of which is consciousness. “As the sun alone illuminates all this universe,” states the Gita (13.34), “so does the living entity, one within the body, illuminate the entire body by consciousness.” Srila Prabhupada comments, “Thus consciousness is the proof of the presence of the soul, as sunshine or light is the proof of the presence of the sun. When the soul is present in the body, there is



Srila Prabhupada

consciousness all over the body, and as soon as the soul has passed from the body there is no more consciousness. This can be easily understood by any intelligent man. Therefore consciousness is not a product of the combinations of matter. It is the symptom of the living entity.”

The nonmaterial nature of consciousness was understood by the famous nineteenth-century British scientist Thomas Huxley, who stated, “I understand the main tenet of materialism to be that there is nothing in the universe but matter and force; and that all the phenomena of nature are explicable by deduction from the properties assignable to these two primitive factors... It seems to me pretty plain that there is a third thing in the universe, to wit, consciousness, which...I cannot see to be matter or force, or any conceivable modification of either.”²

The Gita (2.20, 2.17) offers extensive information about the nature of the nonmaterial particle that imparts the symptoms of life to the material body: “For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn,

eternal, ever-existing, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain....That which pervades the entire body you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that imperishable soul.”

The Sanskrit word often used for soul is *atma*, which means “the self.” The Gita (2.23-24) gives these further characteristics of the *atma*: “The soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. The individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable, and eternally the same.”

Srila Prabhupada comments, “The individual particle of spirit soul is a spiritual atom smaller than the material atoms, and such atoms are innumerable. This very small spiritual spark is the basic principle of the material body, and the influence of such a spiritual spark is spread all over the body as the influence of the active principle of some medicine spreads throughout the body. This current of the spirit soul is felt all over the body as consciousness, and that is the proof of the presence of the soul. Any layman can understand that the material body minus consciousness is a dead body, and this consciousness cannot be revived in the body by any means of material administration. Therefore, consciousness is not due to any amount of material combination, but to the spirit soul.”

Empirical Evidence for the Atma

Although this line of thought may appear logical, one might still ask if there is any scientific evidence for the existence of the soul. Of course, if there actually is a nonmaterial entity one would not expect that it would be easily detectable by material instruments and empirical methods. Yet some fields of scientific research do give evidence for a conscious self that can exist apart from the physical mechanism of the body.

The medical field provides substantial data on out-of-body or Near-Death Experiences (NDEs). Not uncommonly, patients subjected to extreme trauma, during accidents or sudden attacks of illness or operations, experience their conscious selves separating from their bodies. For example, people who have been treated for heart attacks report seeing their own bodies from a point above the operating table. But according to current medical understanding these patients should have been completely unconscious.

Although some reports of NDEs are questionable, reputable scientists have made convincing studies. Among these highly qualified researchers is Dr. Michael Sabom, a cardiologist and professor at Emory University Medical School in Atlanta, Georgia (USA). Initially skeptical of NDEs, Sabom changed his mind after conducting a thorough investigation.

In his book *Recollections of Death: A Medical Investigation*, Sabom gives dozens of documented accounts of Near-Death Experiences. For example, one man said, “I was walking across the parking lot to get into my car...I passed out. I don’t recall hitting the ground. The next thing I do recall was that I was above the cars, floating. I had a real funny sensation, a floating sensation. I was actually looking down on my own body, with four or five men running toward me. I could hear and understand what these men were saying.”³ But the core of Sabom’s book is a detailed study of heart attack patients. Sabom divided them into two groups. The first group, consisting of twenty-five patients, did not report any Near-Death Experiences. When he asked them to give details about their heart attack treatment in the hospital, none gave a correct description.

The second group consisted of thirty-two patients who had reported Near-Death Experiences during their heart attacks. When asked to describe their treatment, six gave descriptions that corresponded in detail to what happened, although they should have been unconscious at the time. This result supported the view that these patients had in fact been looking at their bodies, and the treatment they were being given, from a point outside their bodies.

Sabom states, “If the human brain is actually composed of two fundamental elements—the ‘mind’ and the ‘brain’—then could the near-death crisis event somehow trigger a transient splitting of the mind from the brain in many individuals?... My own beliefs on this matter are leaning in this direction. The out-of-body hypothesis simply seems to fit best with the data at handCould the mind which splits apart from the physical brain be, in essence, the soul, which continues to exist after final bodily death, according to some religious doctrines? As I see it, this is the ultimate question that has been raised by reports of the NDE.”⁴

There’s a second category of scientific evidence suggesting that the self is a conscious entity that can exist apart from the physical body. These are reported memories of past lives. Here again is a field in which there is understandably much room for



skepticism. Nevertheless, serious researchers have carried out painstaking investigations. Among them is Ian Stevenson, Carlson Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia (USA). Stevenson has performed in-depth studies of reincarnation memories, focusing exclusively on memories reported by children, who are less likely than adults to have the motive or resources to fabricate recollections of past lives. In many cases Stevenson was able to verify extensive details of the accounts given by the children, confirming the existence of the places and persons they described, including the dead person they claimed to have been in their previous life.⁵

As of 1983, Stevenson had recorded about 2,500 reports of reincarnation memories. Of these, he said 881 had been investigated, and in 546 cases he and his team of researchers had verified details of the previous life reported by the subject. In other words, out of the total number of investigated cases, 62 per cent had resulted in this kind of confirmation of the reported past life. Many of these cases are reported in Stevenson's four-volume compendium titled *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*, published by the University Press of Virginia.

Dr. Peter Ramster, a psychologist at the University of Sydney, Australia, has performed similar research involving adults who reported past lives memories under hypnosis. Accompanied by independent observers, he took some of these subjects to the places of their reported past lives, where he verified even the minutest details of their memories.

In addition to past life memories, both Ramster and Stevenson present evidence of xenoglossy (unexpected knowledge of foreign languages) under hypnosis. Stevenson reports a case of an American housewife who fluently spoke an old Swedish dialect under hypnosis, although she had no known exposure to Swedish throughout her life.⁶ Such reports of xenoglossy indicate that the conscious self within a given physical body may have existed previously in a different physical body and was able to carry with it knowledge from that previous existence.

But today, influenced by materialistic science's refusal to consider the existence of a nonmaterial conscious self, people tend to identify exclusively with the body and mind. They therefore tend to exploit matter for the purpose of continually increasing their bodily satisfaction. Expressed through today's urban-industrial civilization, this



exploitation is causing environmental decay of unprecedented global proportions.

The Bhagavad-Gita and other works of Vedic literature provide a theoretical understanding that the self is different from the body. But for realizing this there are practical programs of yoga and meditation—such as the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra. This gives direct perception of the self. In *The Science of Self-Realization*, Srila Prabhupada says, "If one chants the Hare Krsna mantra, he will realize that he is not this material body. 'I do not belong to this material body or this material world. I am a spirit soul, part and parcel of the Supreme.'"⁷ Understanding the difference between our temporary material identity and our true spiritual identity is the key to solving the environmental crisis. The foundation for an environmentally healthy planet is a science of consciousness that incorporates knowledge of the soul.

Michael A. Cremo & Mukunda Goswami

Source: *Divine Nature: A Spiritual Perspective on the Environmental Crisis, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust*

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1. *Eccles 1977, p. 88*
2. *Huxley 1892, p. 220*
3. *Sabom 1982, pp. 162-163*
4. *Sabom 1982, pp. 183-186*
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6. *Stevenson 1974*
7. *The Science of Self-Realization, p. 144*





Madam Bhikaji Cama

Madam Bhikaji Cama nee Bhikaji Patel belongs to History as the lady who hoisted the Indian Flag for the first time in a foreign country. It was in Stuttgart, Germany, and on August 18, 1907 that she staged this bold performance, saying that she was doing it so only to bring the poverty, starvation, oppression and slavery, as also India's thirst for freedom to the attention of the international assembly of socialists there. Madam Cama was 46 when she did this act of patriotism. It was two years earlier that she, in company with another freedom fighter, Vir Savarkar, designed the Tri-Color flag for a free India. Elegant as a queen, she was a heroic patriot, who left her home to fight for the freedom of India from within and abroad. She helped revolutionaries with money and material as with ideas.

Early Life

A prominent personality of the Indian Nationalist Movement, she was born as Bhikaji Rustom Cama on 24 September, 1861 to a Parsi family in Bombay (Mumbai). She was a great freedom fighter. Her father Sorabji Framji Patel and mother Jijibai belonged to a prosperous Parsi business family. Sorabji Patel was a powerful member of the Parsi community. Their prosperity was evident from the fact that he had left 13 lakhs to each of his sons and created a trust of lakh for each of his eight daughters.

Very little is known of this affluent family besides that fact that it contributed the first Indian woman revolutionary to fight for India's freedom from alien rule. Bhikaji took education from Alexandra Native Girl's English Institution. From the very beginning, she was a very sincere child. She always admired the personalities of the Nationalist Movement.

Married Life

On the 3rd of August in the year 1885, she tied her wedding knots with Rustom Cama, an affluent pro-



Madam Bhikaji Cama

British lawyer. Her given name was Rustum (Munni) Bhikaji and she came to be known as Madam Cama after her marriage with K.R. Cama, a lawyer and social worker who supported the British rule (1885). Right from her student days she was interested in the freedom movement. She did not enjoy her married life and spent most of her time performing altruistic activities. Her husband's pro-British stance and opposition to her anti-British activities created problems in their life and finally she left her home and became a full-time freedom fighter.

Bombay

In the year 1896, Bombay was hit by a natural calamity, which had adverse effects on the city.

Bhikaji was instrumental in the activities undertaken to provide assistance to the afflicted people. While rescuing other people and inoculating them, she herself became a victim of the infection. She became very weak, but somehow managed to survive. In the year 1902, she went to Europe for subsequent medical care and convalescence. Sent to Europe for better treatment (1902), she was in Germany and Scotland, and finally reached London where she had a surgical operation.

The Exile

During her stay in London, she got a message that her return to India can take place subject to the promise that she would not participate in the Nationalist Movement. She refused to make such a promise and remained in exile in Europe. While Madam Cama was in London, she served as the private secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji, who was the first Asian to be elected to the British House of Commons.

When Bhikaji Cama was in Paris, she happened to come across a number of notable leaders of the Indian Nationalist Movement. In Holland, they secretly published and circulated the revolutionary literature for the Nationalist Movement. During her stay in France, the British Raj authorities requested her extradition, but the French Government did not show their willingness and refused to cooperate. In return, the Britishers confiscated Madame Cama's legacy.

Freedom Movement

She was a powerful speaker and her sharp attacks angered the British, and attempts were made to assassinate her. From Europe she continued her campaign against the British rule in India. She brought out books and journals from France and Germany on Indian revolutionaries. Her book on

It was in Stuttgart, Germany, and on August 18, 1907 that she staged this bold performance, saying that she was doing it so only to bring the poverty, starvation, oppression and slavery, as also India's thirst for freedom to the attention of the international assembly of socialists there

India's first war of Independence (1857), was banned even before its publication. But the book came out through underground channels, reprinted and distributed by greats like Subhash Chandra Bose and Bhagat Singh.

When the First World War broke out, she called upon the soldiers of India not to fight for the British who enslaved the country. She was declared a persona non grata and was ordered to return to India. She defied it and became a heroic model for revolutionaries in various countries like Turkey, Ireland and China.

Final Days

She wanted to spend her last years in India. And finally she reached Bombay, after 34 years of hectic campaign for India, but she had to move to a hospital straight from the port. The treatment was protracted, and the brave revolutionary breathed her last on August 13, 1936. She was 75. Bhikaji Cama had always been actively involved in fighting for gender equality. There are many cities in India that have streets and places being named after Bhikaji Cama. On 26th January 1962, the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department issued a stamp to acknowledge her work and give her honour. The Indian Coast Guard consists of a ship that has been named after her. In true sense, the lady who unfurled the First national flag of India across the seven seas is the real 'Daughter of India'.

Source:

www.vandemataram.com, www.iloveindia.com,
www.amaltas.org, www.indiavideo.org



Lal Bahadur Shastri

“The world as a whole is full of problems and difficulties and it is most important that every country which loves its Freedom and wants to maintain its Independence and sovereignty should work for peace and try to see that there is disarmament in the world which alone will lead to real peace”.

—Lal Bahadur Shastri

Small of stature, simple and soft-spoken, Lal Bahadur proved to be one of the heroes of the history of India. A great General in Mahatma Gandhi's army of peaceful soldiers of freedom, Lal Bahadur became the symbol of India's valour and self-respect.

“I am just an ordinary man and not a very bright man.”

But there was always a smile, which overarched his words. There was not the slightest sign of pride or authority in his bearing.

*A short man, A lean body,
Eyes wide as the wheels of a cart.
His clothes simple,
his voice soft and almost inaudible.*

Lal Bahadur never praised himself. He never aspired for power. He never worked for it. And yet power and authority came in search of him. Fame set a crown on his head. The short man grew into a colossus. He showed by his work that, though he was tender like a flower, he could be hard as diamond, too. He filled the Four Corners of the world with the fame of India.

Childhood and Early Life

Lal Bahadur Shastri was born on October 2, 1904 at Mughalsarai, Uttar Pradesh to Sharada Prasad and Ramdulari Devi. His father Sharada Prasad was a school teacher and later on he became a clerk in the Revenue Office in Allahabad. He got a meagre salary of fifty rupees a month. Even with this little money he could meet his both ends properly. Though he had limited means, he never accepted bribes and lived a life of honesty and integrity. Lal Bahadur, who was beau ideal of simplicity and honesty, got these habits from his father.

His mother, Ram Dulari was also a very great soul. Because of her strong will, high character and spirit of dutifulness, she became an ideal mother. In 1906, when Lal Bahadur was just eighteen months old, his father suddenly died of the plague. The breadwinner of the

family was gone leaving a young pregnant widow, Ramdulari Devi with two small children. Lal Bahadur's younger sister was born after three months of his father's death. With three small children, Ramdulari Devi faced her misfortunes with great courage.

As a boy, Lal Bahadur loved reading books and was fond of Guru Nanak's verses. He revered Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the Indian nationalist, social reformer and freedom fighter. Lal Bahadur listened to the speech of Tilak when he visited Varanasi, which left strong impressions in the mind of Lal Bahadur and guided him all through his life. Lal Bahadur was greatly inspired when he heard a speech of Gandhi in Varanasi in 1915. Then and there he dedicated his life to the service of the country.

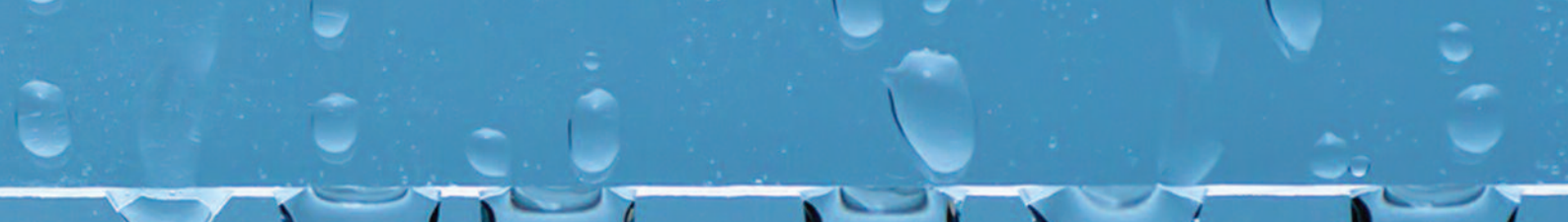
Youth and the Independence Struggle

Since his childhood, Lal Bahadur was a responsible, disciplined and a simple person. During his young age, he was excited to hear about the great martyrs and their sacrifices for the nation and was greatly influenced by the life and thoughts Guru Nanak, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mahatma Gandhi. As a committed young man Lal Bahadur himself was ready to sacrifice his life for the freedom struggle and for the independence of the nation. He participated in the various movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi for the political independence of the nation and imprisoned seven times during the period of 1921 to 1945.

Mahatma Gandhi

Lal Bahadur took a keen interest in Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and when the time came to boycott the schools, he did so by not appearing for his examinations. With just one year left for his graduation, the news was not taken well at home. None supported Lal Bahadur's action, but his mother who had complete faith in him, supported his decision as long as he promised not to renege from the task later. With his mother's blessings, he became fully involved in the non-cooperation movement. He was arrested for taking part in banned processions but released since it was his first offence. This was to be the first of many arrests for Lal Bahadur. He worked during the evenings in a Khadi shop and studied while studying for the Degree of Shastri (Bachelor) in Philosophy. Lal Bahadur graduated at the head of his class.

He then went on to do social work among the Harijans, working to make their lives better. Two



years later he married Lalita Devi. Lal Bahadur and Lalita moved to Allahabad where Lal Bahadur served as secretary of the District Congress Committee. He attended the 1929 Lahore session of the Congress, and upon his return to Allahabad actively spoke out against the British Raj and for “Purna Swaraj”. As protests continued more and more people were arrested for participating in the struggle. When Lalita Devi mentioned to Lal Bahadur that the jails were full, he replied in his characteristic fashion, “Yes, but there is still room for me.” He was arrested a few days later. During his stay in jail his wife gave birth to their first child Kusum. He had two other children, Hari and Suman.

Freedom Struggle

His total commitment to Mahatma Gandhi and the non-cooperation movement resulted in many jail terms. Since the Congress party was banned by the British Government, Lal Bahadur and his associates spent their time travelling around India spreading Mahatma Gandhi’s message. He was soon arrested for these activities, and jailed for seven months at an unknown location. Eighteen months later Lalita Devi was granted permission to meet her husband.

Prime Minister of India

“We believe in peace and peaceful development, not only for ourselves but for people all over the world. Our main preoccupation is with economic and social development at home and peace and friendship abroad”

Lal Bahadur was finally released from prison in 1946. On August 15, 1947 India gained independence. Lal Bahadur was appointed Minister of Police in Nehru’s cabinet. In 1951 Jawaharlal Nehru was re-elected Prime Minister for a second term, and Lal Bahadur was appointed General Secretary of the Lok Sabha. While in Nehru’s cabinet, Lal Bahadur was entrusted with portfolios for Minister of Railways, Minister of Communications and later Home Minister. He served as Nehru’s right hand. On May 27, 1964 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru died. May of that year Lal Bahadur Shastri became India’s second Prime Minister. His term is best known for introducing measures to make India self-sufficient in food production.

Pakistan War and Tashkent

In 1965 Pakistan attacked India on the Kashmiri front

and Lal Bahadur Shastri responded in kind by punching toward Lahore.

If Pakistan has any ideas of annexing any part of our territories by force, she should think afresh. I want to state categorically that force will be met with force and aggression against us will never be allowed to succeed. -Lal Bahadur

In 1966 a cease-fire was issued as a result of international pressure. Lal Bahadur Shastri went to Tashkent to hold talks with Ayub Khan and an agreement was soon signed. Shastriji had suffered heart attacks twice before. And during the period of the Pakistan war and the following days, his body, already battered, had to bear a very heavy strain. At a time when the world sang his praises as a hero, an incomparable patriot-hero and as the architect of peace, and just as he touched the peak of his life, Lal Bahadur passed away all too suddenly. He came to power unexpectedly, and he left the world equally suddenly. He signed the joint Declaration on 10 January 1966. He died the same night.

The news of Lal Bahadur Shastri’s death struck India like a bolt from the blue. The entire nation was plunged in grief. Some people suspected foul play also. Gone was the war hero and the messenger of peace, gone was the great statesman who restored to India her honour and self-respect in the assembly of nations. A tiny, tidy figure. A soul that had lived in perfect purity of thought, word and deed. The very embodiment of selflessness, detachment and simplicity. Such was this man who had lived in our midst. He belongs to the race of the heroes of India.

Bharat Ratna

Lal Bahadur was a star of great brightness in the history of India. After his death the President of India conferred on him, on behalf of the nation, the award of ‘Bharat Ratna’; it was a most fitting. A small bodies but mighty man—so runs a Kannada proverb. It applies to several great men. Shivaji was not tall. But like a magnet he attracted people and organized and built a great empire. Napoleon was short. But he shook the whole world. Lal Bahadur Shastri was not taller than those two; but he was not second to them in greatness. Firmness, love of adventure, patience and skill in administration were the hallmark of Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Source: www.liveindia.com, www.freeindia.org, www.lalbahadurshastri.ind.in



Untold Stories of King Bhoja

Madanarekha's Doser

Without the least sign of excitement, the princess addressed the lad: "O, learned man! May I ask a boon of you? If you grant me that, I shall unhesitatingly fulfil your desire."

Replied the priest's son: "O, flower of my life! Be it money, be it my own life, I am willing to grant it to you. Pray, ask me."

To this Madanarekha replied, "I shall not ask money of you, I have enough of it; neither your life which I have just given you back. You must only let me do this: when I get married to whomsoever I might, I shall give you the right of stealing delight from me first even before I go to my husband, but allow me to go now. I beg of you to agree to this. This is the boon I ask of you."

Replied the priest's son: "O, Lady! Is it proper for you to fill me with hope thus and the next moment dash it on the ground? Even if what you say be your true intention, will it be really possible for you to do as you say? When you get married and your husband knows of your intention, will he ever permit you to do so? Will he allow you even as much as to leave his presence? When such is the case, why unnecessarily talk of improbable things? What guarantee have I that you will keep your promise? How possibly can I sustain my life till that day? O! Please save me here and now from falling a prey to the shafts of the love-god."

Madanarekha: "What a fool you are! Do you really believe that I am capable of telling you a lie? Get that doubt off your chest right now." Brahmin Boy: "Has anyone heard that women will act up to their promise? Don't you know that their words are as ephemeral as snowflakes, as unsafe as the water under the bridge? One can count the particles of rain, one can count the sands on the banks of the Ganga, one can even count the stars in the heaven, but can't fathom the thoughts of a woman!

Don't you know that when pleasures come unexpectedly one should enjoy them the very moment they do? Don't you know that money made by gambling, wealth made by graft, all such things should be enjoyed as soon as they come to hand? I am quite sure that if I leave you today, I shall never be able to see you again. I cannot believe you, whatever you may say to the contrary."

Madanarekha: "I swear to return as promised. Have faith in me. If I fail to do so, may I be subjected to that sin and suffering which a person is subject to

when he prevents the efforts of a pious Brahmin at giving away his daughter in marriage."

At last the Brahmin lad was convinced that Madanarekha's intent was serious; he consequently released her and she returned to her parents. In course of time, Madanarekha got married to a prince by name Tantri.

On the night of the marriage, the bridegroom's people dressed Madanarekha as a second Rati and were about to escort her to the nuptial chamber of the groom. At that time, Madanarekha recollected her promise to the priest's son and thought as follows: "I promised that Brahmin lad that on the day of my marriage I would offer myself to him in bridal costume first before I went to my husband. I gave him several assurances to that effect and made him believe my words. Now my husband awaits me.

I do not know what I should do. To my mind both are important obligations. To put off these escorts saying that I shall follow later and ask them to return now does not look proper. It is equally improper to go to the priest's son after first sleeping with my husband or abandoning him. It is bad enough in all conscience to spoil the happiness of my husband; worse still not to fulfill my promise to the Brahmin boy.

This leaves me with one alternative, that is, to seek the permission of my husband to keep the promise made prior to the marriage; but will he agree? Will he see my point of view at all? O! How I wish there were someone who could think clearly on this issue and advise me as to which is dharmic and which is not. The worst part of it is that this is a matter which cannot be made public or widely discussed. Nor is it one that can be dropped lightly."

Thinking things over in this manner, Madanarekha came to the conclusion that her primary duty lay in laying bare her heart to her husband.

Accordingly, she allowed herself to be led to her husband's presence in the beautifully decorated nuptial chamber and, as soon as the bevy of girls who accompanied her left Madanarekha and her husband to themselves, making one excuse after another, the latter drew her to his side.

-To be continued...

V.A.K. Ayer

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



Mahatma Gandhi in Africa



The government of England, which he had thought was liberal, refused to listen. The Transvaal was soon to be self-governing. The British wished to please them rather than the Indian populace.

The Transvaal government's first act was to pass a Black Bill. Indians, now realizing the hypocrisy of the British government, decided not to register and the wrath of the government resulted in arrests and deportation. Finally, General Smuts had Gandhi arrested and brought to trial in the same court where he had been a barrister. Sentenced to three months' imprisonment in Johannesburg jail, he called the movement "passive resistance" a unique struggle of people who did not resist punishment. Later, he renamed it "Civil resistance" and then Satyagraha, the doctrine of "holding fast to the truth."

In Sanskrit, *satya* means truth and *agraha*, desire or effort. Gandhi described it as a vindication of truth, never by inflicting suffering on the opponent, but by self-sacrifice. It is patience, faith and above all truth to oneself. So, a *Satyagrahi* suffers even death to preserve this truth, which is a "weapon of the strong, who do not allow violence in any form.

In 1914 "force had to bow down before heroic gentleness." The act was abolished and the non-resistance movement won. Satyagraha had triumphed, and would triumph again and again through the century.

The first civil disobedience movement where the Indians threw their certificates into the fire was repeated many years later in India when foreign cloth was burnt in huge bonfires all over the country. Another word that was coined, for voluntarily for absenting oneself from work was

M.K. Gandhi

hartal, which means strike, action or a mobilization of mass protest.

Though Gandhi was always in conflict with the imperialistic British, he had close friends amongst them. When he was beaten up by *Pathans* who refused to register even after Smuts had climbed down on the subject of registration, and had injured Gandhi badly, it was his friend, the Baptist minister Joseph Duke who took him home and nursed him. When Joseph Duke had read about "passive resistance" he wanted to meet Gandhi. He expected a tall bold masterly man and was surprised to see "the small slim figure with the smile, that lighted the face and the direct fearless glance which simply took one's heart by storm."

It is almost impossible for us today to even think of the terrible hardships this man of truth and non-violence suffered.

The British authorities under Smuts abused and beat up the volunteers in jail. Often, other prisoners who were Zulus of the criminal type also hit and abused them. When Gandhi was taken into court, this great man was dressed as a convict and handcuffed. Yet he never protested. Even though he heard his wife was seriously ill, he did not ask for pardon as he had dedicated himself to the great struggle.

-To be continued...

-Mrinalini Sarabhai, an internationally recognized dancer and choreographer is a director as well as an author of scholarly books, novels and children's books. She was Chairperson of the Gujarat State Handicrafts and Handloom Development Corporation Ltd and is one of the trustees of the Sarvodaya International Trust, an organization dedicated to promoting the Gandhian ideals of Truth, Non Violence, Peace, Universal Brotherhood and Humanitarian Service. She is closely associated with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for the past more than three decades. The Bhavan has published her book 'Sacred Dance of India', 'The Mahatma and the Poetess', a selection of letters exchanged between Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu edited by Mrinalini Sarabhai.



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



*From Bhavan's Journal August 18, 1963
Reprinted in Bhavan's Journal August 31, 2013*

Contribution of Hinduism to the World

Varnashrama Dharma itself is a unique contribution of Hinduism to the world. Hinduism has saved us from bhaya, i.e., peril. If Hinduism had not come to my rescue, the only course for me would have been suicide. I remain a Hindu because Hinduism is a haven which makes the world worth living in. From Hinduism was born Buddhism. What we see today is not pure Hinduism, but often a parody of it. Otherwise, it would require no pleading from me in its behalf, but would speak for itself, even as if I was absolutely pure I would not need to speak to you. God does not speak with His tongue, and man, in the measure that he comes near God, becomes like God. Hinduism teaches me that my body is a limitation of the power of the soul within.

Just as in the West they have made wonderful discoveries in things material, similarly, Hinduism has made still more marvellous discoveries in things of religion, of the spirit, of the soul. But we have no eye for these great and fine discoveries. We are dazzled by the material progress that Western science has made. I am not enamoured of that progress. In fact, it almost seems as though God in His wisdom had prevented India from progressing along those lines so that it might fulfil its special mission of resisting the onrush of materialism. After all, there is something in Hinduism that has kept it alive up till now. It has witnessed the fall of Babylonian, Syrian, Persian and Egyptian civilisations. Cast a look round you. Where is Rome and where is Greece? Can you find today anywhere the Italy of Gibbon, or rather the ancient Rome?

—*Mahatma Gandhi*

Love and Religion

The tendency of the Indian mind has ever been towards that transcendentalism which does not hold religion to be ultimate but rather to be a means to a further end.

Such an extreme form of mysticism may be explained to the Western readers by its analogy in science. For science may truly be described as mysticism in the realm of material knowledge. It helps us to go beyond appearances and reach the inner reality of things in principles which are abstractions.

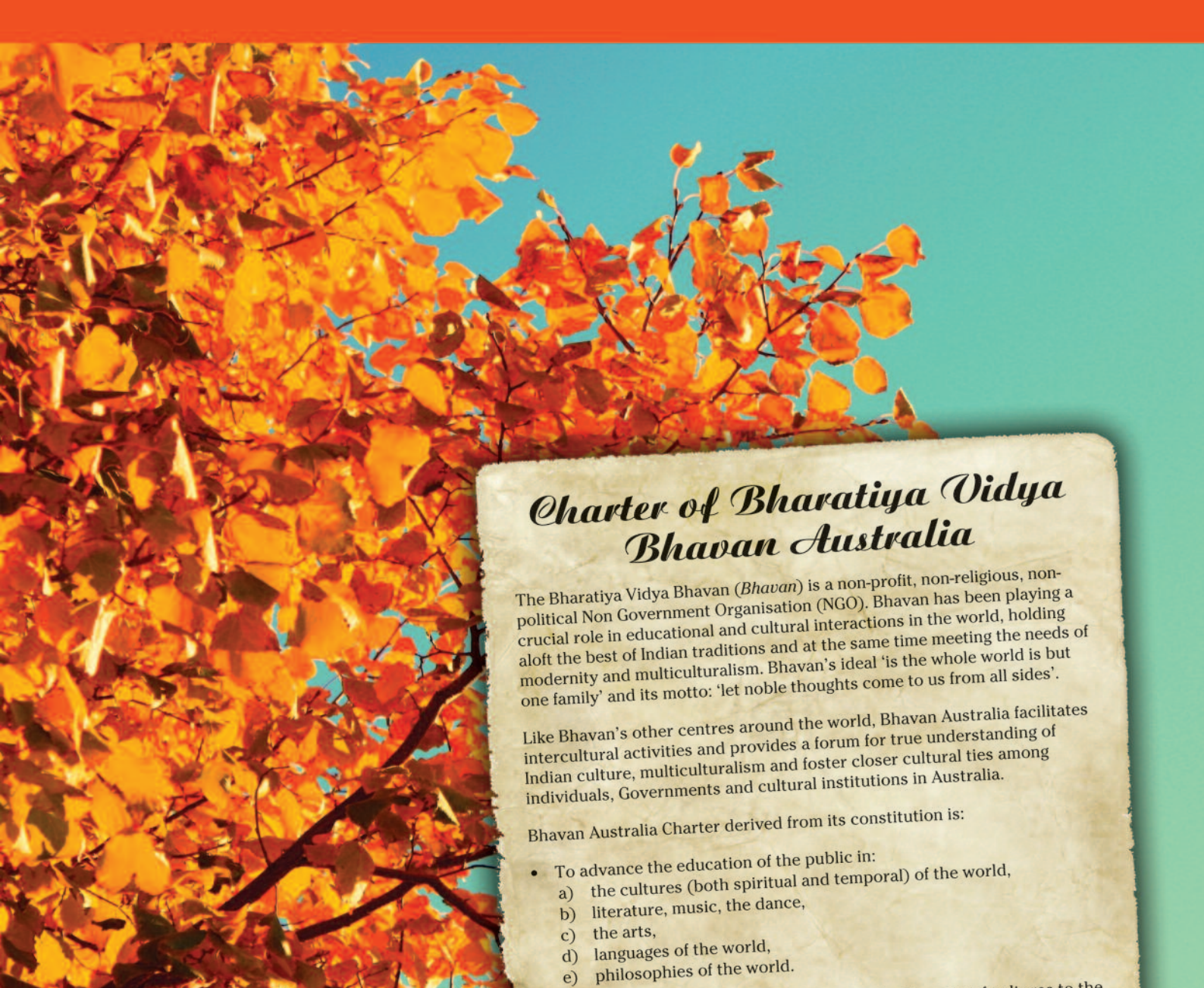
But though science brings our thoughts to the utmost limit of mind's territory it cannot transcend its own creation made of a harmony of logical symbols.

But in India it has been said by the yogi that through an intensive process of concentration and quietude, our consciousness does reach that infinity where knowledge ceases to be knowledge, subject and object become one—a state of existence that cannot be defined.

The ancient explorers in psychology in India who declare that our emancipation can be carried still further into a realm where infinity is not bounded by human limitations, are not content with advancing this as a doctrine; they advocate its pursuit for the attainment of the highest goal of man.

—*Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore*

◀ ◀ ◀ *Flashback*



Charter of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Australia

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

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

Bhavan Australia Charter derived from its constitution is:

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

www.bhavanaustralia.org

The Test of Bhavan's Right to Exist

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

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

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

Holy & Wise

*The water that was first created,
the sacrifice-bearing fire, the priest,
the time-setting sun and moon,
audible space that fills the universe,
what men call nature, the source of all seeds,
the air that living creatures breathe-through
his eight embodied forms,
may Lord Siva come to bless you!*

-Kalidasa

*If we have no peace, it is because we have
forgotten that we belong to each other.*

-Mother Teresa

*I do not hold to non-violence for moral
reasons, but for political and practical
reasons.*

-Aung San Suu Kyi

*There are many people who feel that it is
useless and futile to continue talking about
peace and non-violence against a government
whose only reply is savage attacks on an
unarmed and defenceless people.*

-Nelson Mandela

*Non-violence is not a quality to be evolved or
expressed to order. It is an inward growth depending
for sustenance upon intense individual effort.*

*If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we
are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have
to begin with the children.*

-Mahatma Gandhi

*I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so
tragically bound to the starless midnight of
racism and war that the bright daybreak of
peace and brotherhood can never become a
reality... I believe that unarmed truth and
unconditional love will have the final word.*

-Martin Luther King, Jr.



Kulapativani

Universal Peace

Universal peace will come. At present the animal instincts in man are manifesting themselves in world-wide movements. But this is the churning of the ocean of life. This universal churning brings out wickedness, which is the explosion of animal instincts. It also brings out beauty, which is the expression of fundamental spiritual values. As the churning proceeds, the life throws up poison, but in the end it brings forth nectar, too. This is symbolised in our Puranic story of *Samudra-manthan*.

Dr K.M. Munshi
Founder, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan



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WE CONNECT



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