



PEACE

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Kaivalyopaniṣat says

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः ।
परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां विभ्राजते यद्यतयो विशन्ति ॥

*na karmaṇā na prajāyā dhanena
tyāgēnaike amṛtatvamānaśuḥ,
pareṇa nākaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ
vibhrājate yadyatayō viśanti...*

Very few attained immortality, not by effort, not because of progeny, not by wealth or virtue, but by renunciation. That immortal Atman transcends heaven (all limitations). (It is free from sorrow). It, being kept (It reflects) in the cave (of heart), shines brilliantly. The strivers enter It.

In any given age people who seek *mokṣa*, liberation, from the bondage of *saṁsāra* are but a few. Majority struggle with the opposites of life, and plod on with contradictions. The few that know the truth are a great blessing to society. Gaining knowledge of the Self is the greatest service that one can render to the society. Everything else pales before it.

(Tattva Prakāśikā by Swami Tattvavidananda Sarswati)

MEDITATION

Prayer

VERSE 5

काशीक्षेत्रं शरीरं त्रिभुवनजननी व्यापिनी ज्ञानगङ्गा
भक्तिः श्रद्धा गयेयं निजगुरुचरणध्यानयोगः प्रयागः ।
विश्वेशोऽयं तुरीयस्सकलजनमनस्साक्षिभूतोऽन्तरात्मा
देहे सर्वं मदीये यदि वसति पुनस्तीर्थमन्यत्किमस्ति ॥
kāśīkṣetram śarīraṁ tribhuvanajanānī
vyāpinī jñānagaṅgā
bhaktiśśraddhā gayeyam
nijagurucaraṇadhyānayogaḥ prayāgaḥ,
viśveśo'yaṁ turīyassakalajanamana
ssākṣibhūto'ntarātmā
dehe sarvaṁ madiye yadi vasati
punastīrthamanyatkimasti.

Body is the pilgrimage center of *Kāśī*. The all-pervading flow of knowledge is the Ganges, the mother of the three worlds. Devotion and faith are this city of Gaya. The communion of meditation on the feet of one's preceptor is the city of Prayaga. Atman, the fourth, is this Lord of the universe. It obtains in all living beings as the witness to the mind and the inner ruler. As everything exists in my body, where is the need for any other pilgrimage center?

(Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's *Kāśī pañcakam*)

दृतय इव श्वसन्त्यसुभृतो यदि तेऽनुविधा
महदहमादयोऽण्डमसृजन्यदनुग्रहतः ।
पुरुषविधोऽन्वयोऽत्र चरमोऽन्नमयादिषु यः
सदसतः परं त्वमथ यदेष्ववशेषमृतम् ॥

dṛtaya iva śvasantryasubhṛto yadi tē'nuvidhā
mahadahamādayō'ṇḍamasṛjanyadanugrahataḥ,
puruṣavidhō'nvayotracaramō'nnamayādiṣu yaḥ
sadasataḥ paraṁ tvamatha yadeṣvavaśeṣamṛtam ..

Sensual men live in vain, breathing merely like a pair of bellows, blowing in and out, if they are not devoted to You, by whose will and grace alone this universe beginning with *mahat* has come into being. They are ignorant and hence are unaware that You permeate the whole creation in accordance with the various bodies, the senses, and the five sheaths* beginning with the *annamaya*, the gross body. At the same time, You exist as the form and as the formless, transcending the range of cause and effect.

(* The five sheaths are *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manōmaya*, *viññānamaya* and *ānandamaya* representing respectively the gross body, vital forces, mind, intellect and the faculty of enjoyment)

- from *Sṛtigīta* by Swami Gabhirananda

FAITH AND COURAGE

Swami Omkar

To be successful in life and to be happy in the world, Faith and Courage are needed. Man being the image of God and having God's Omnipresence, Omnipotence and Omniscience as his source and foundation, it is pitiable how he lives in constant fear, groveling the mire of delusion. Man has more faith in the lump of flesh and blood, in form and name, than in the inherent Divinity, in the formless Spirit, which is his Birthright and the only Reality in this ever changing world of changes. The inevitable results of playing the part of a fool denying faith and courage filled with restlessness, lifelessness and soullessness, is misery and agony of every kind.

Devoid of faith, man crawls like a worm but endowed with faith he flies like a bird in the sky of freedom. Verily, faith moves mountains, not the faith in the gross body but the faith in the Living Spirit. How true are the words of the sage Emerson that *"every man is a God but playing the part of a fool"*. Being lions why behave like sheep? It is the roaring fearlessness which is our Birthright but not the bleating fear. Why hide the Light under a basket? Even the faith as much as that of a mustard seed will work like leaven, leading individuals from darkness to light and from falsehood to Truth, thus changing lives and converting Hades into Heaven.

The one who is blessed with faith in God, the Higher Self works, breaths and lives in God, ever having his being in Him. All things are added to the man who has faith and everything is denied to him who is devoid of faith. Faith and courage are not two but one, for faith follows courage and courage follows faith. Indeed, faith and courage are not two separate attributes of the one life, but the two Divine forces of the same existence.

Behold in the Ocean of Faith, billows of courage are coming out. Faith and courage are the two eyes of man's life. Without them a man is blind, groping in the darkness, however learned and rich he may be in the outer world of name and fame. A man of faith is dauntless and invincible, filled with fearlessness and courage.

Man's faith should be inside, within himself, not outside on others. Outer faith is undependable and inner faith is life-sustaining. Outer dependence although it is sweet in the beginning, makes one lifeless and soulless. Self-dependence of Self-reliance although it is trying and difficult in the beginning makes a man happy and victorious in the long run. Hence, faith in the interpenetrating presence is essential to show and manifest courage in the face of endless tests and trials in the life of the world. What does it matter for the Blazing Sun even if the whole sky is filled with thousands, nay even with millions of dark and thick clouds.

Verily, Faith moves mountains as the sun dispels darkness. Strength conquers weakness, and knowledge expels ignorance. Faith and courage, what powerful and dynamic words! Endowed with faith man walks on earth like a living God. Devoid of faith he walks like a living corpse. Look at all the living corpses so restlessly busy, filled with egoism, feeling so all-important, run after shadows with feverish haste. They have haggard and long faces, entirely identifying with the bundle of flesh and blood, are not these living Mummies a burden to Mother Earth and a living disgrace to the creator?

There is fear everywhere and in everyone in some form or the other, only due to lack of faith, forgetfulness of the Indwelling Presence. Fear leads to weakness, weakness to decay, decay to destruction and destruction finally leads to death in ignorance. Hence, it is high time to assert, to express and to manifest of our Divine heritage, the heritage of millions of sun's Splendor, which is the source of Faith and courage and thus be a blessing to oneself, family, nation and the world at large.

Let us close our eyes for a while and meditate NOW on the Indwelling Light – the Interpenetrating Presence, imbued with Faith and courage, expressing the same in all our thoughts, words and deeds. May our thoughts and prayers be for the welfare of all children of God, ignoring the man-made differences in castes, creeds, colours and nations. May the communities in the East and the creeds in the West be united in the Spirit of One God, in the cause of Peace on Earth and Goodwill among nations.

May Peace be unto all!

LISTEN TO THE SILENCE OF YOUR SOUL

Swami Omkar

If there is anything interesting in this world it is the growth or evolution of man from day to day. It is interesting to watch the growth of the flowers, plants, birds, kittens but nothing is as wonderful as watching the progress of the soul from day to day.

When we were children we spoke as children, but as adults we speak as such. When young we had a crude conception of God, but it should be different now.

There was a time when barbarians used to think that God has to have human sacrifices, and today animal sacrifices are still used in worship.

Does God really need this kind of thing?

There was a time when we thought he was far away and we had to shout and name our desires. Many people still think this way.

As we pass from one stage to another we realize that God is the Interpenetrating Presence, never separate from us because that HE is in actual fact the Higher Powerhouse of our being and can be contacted and felt through concentration, contemplation and meditation, by control of the senses, and by the annihilation of the little 'I'.

When we realize that He is the Causeless Cause, the Incomprehensible Truth that can never be reached even by mind or intellect, then we turn within to recognize Him in the stillness of the heart, through deep silence.

Who can describe the ecstasy and joy of soul walking the mystic path blessed with personal experience of the Highest Consciousness?

Such souls find progress from day to day, hour by hour and minute by minute, until they come to the very summit of their

realization, wherein they are blessed with the nectar of immortality which is the goal and soul Existence.

It is Blessed to reach those glorious heights where there is no more to learn within or without, realizing which, they are realizing everything.

Such souls can live in the world in total harmony with themselves and with others.

My silent adoration be unto these Perfect Ones.

OM!

-from the Divine Voice of Omkar

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS

For all those who are struggling to be free from the clutches of misery, fear and despondency, produced by a disorderly or chaotic life, when difficulties and disappointments crowd round and poison the roots of life, there is only one way to find relief, and that is to take refuge in God. There is no savior in the entire world more real than God. When everybody fails, God never fails. This fact is actually tested and proved in the lives of great souls, whose sheet-anchor was faith in God. When storm of passions rage enveloping you in their furious blasts and the world appears to you to be a hot-bed of burning coals, when failure and despair stare you in the face, one healing thought of God, His unbounded mercy and grace, can at once bring you tranquility, sunshine and cheer, and thereby transform your entire outlook upon the world and make your life blessed and glorious. So God is the great help. He is the one great refuge in all moments of crisis. This is true of the life of every individual and humanity as a whole.

Swami Ramdas

ON LIBERATION

Swami Sivananda

Vasishtha spoke to Rama : “O Rama! an object that gives pleasure at one moment gives pain at another moment. Milk gives pleasure when one is in healthy state but produces pain and vomiting during fever, indigestion and diarrhea. This is the experience of all people. It is only when you entertain a desire to possess an object that the object gives you pleasure. Therefore, desire is the cause of pleasure. Enjoyment brings temporary satisfaction of desires. When you get satisfaction, the object is no longer gives you pleasure.

It is mere foolishness to take delight in momentary pleasures. O Rama! annihilate all desires and thoughts. Do not associate the mind with objects. He who has no knowledge of the *Atman* is bound; he who has *Brahma Jñana* is liberated from bondage. Therefore, O Rama, meditate constantly and intensely on *Brahman* and attain *Brahma Jñana*.

This mind is a mischievous imp. It is the cause of bondage and liberation. It is ever fluctuating. It jumps from *Patala* to the firmament in the twinkling of an eye. It has the power of creating or undoing the whole world in a moment. The oscillation of the mind generates the illusion. The mind is the effect of *Avidya* or ignorance, O Rama! annihilate this mind through destruction of *Vāsanās* or control of *Prāṇa*. Mind is nothing but a bundle of *Vāsanās*. If the *Vāsanās* are destroyed, the mind can no longer exist. The expansion and contraction of mind causes the display and dissolution of the world. Therefore, stop the action of the mind by controlling the *Vrittis* or Sankalpas or waves of thought. Control of the *Prāṇa* will lead to the control of the mind. The breath of life conducts as well as stops the business of the world. Restrain the breath by the practice of *Prāṇāyāma* or regulation of the breath. If the mind is destroyed, you will enjoy infinite bliss. If the visibles and the sight are merged in

the seer, if the knower, knowable and knowledge(*Jnāta*, *Jneya* and *Jnāna*) are combined, that is, if there is dissolution of the triad (*Triputilaya*), you will realize the supreme peace of the Atman.

Renunciation of desires, control of the breath, and right enquiry will contract the action of the heart and mind, and consequently check the rise of the passion and illusion. Right understanding weakens the sensuous mind. Wrong understanding thickens and fattens the carnal mind. The mind of a sage is no mind. It is *Brahman* Himself. It is the essence of purity by itself. Just as copper is transmuted into gold by the process of alchemy, so also the sensuous mind is transmuted into pure mind by the process of meditation. Distinctions and differences are only created by the mind. They do not really exist. The lower or impure mind sports in the objects of the world. The higher or pure mind rests peacefully in *Brahman* or the Supreme Self. *Brahman* is One. He has become many through the mind which divides, differentiates, splits and separates. The dividing wall or the partition between man and *Brahman* (God) is mind. An ordinary wall is made of brick, stone and cement; but this mysterious wall is made up of *Vāsanās*, thoughts, egoism and likes and dislikes. If this mysterious wall is pulled down through enquiry or meditation, you will experience homogeneity, unity or oneness only. ‘One’ alone is real. *Brahman* alone is real. ‘Many’ is illusory like the snake in a rope or water in a mirage or thief in a post.

THE STORY OF THE BILVA FRUIT

Vasishtha continued, now O Rama, listen to a small pleasant story which was never told before, and which I will briefly narrate to you for your instruction. There is a huge and beautiful Bilva fruit which in diameter is as large as the distance of many myriads of miles. It will not decay in the course of many Kalpas or ages. It has a lasting and sweet flavor as that of honey or celestial nectar. It is extremely soft and palatable. It is the best of all fruits. It is the

quintessence of all fruits. It is as firm and fixed as the Mandara hills and immovable even by the fierce storms at the end of the Kalpa. It never falls down to the ground. It is never found in an unripe condition. It is filled with six kinds of savoury substances (the *Shadrasās*).

There are millions of worlds within the fruit as its countless seeds. It contains the pith and marrow that support and sustain all living beings. The fleshy part of this marvelous fruit is the limitless *Jñana* or pure Consciousness. The marrow is the *Chit Shakti* which generates *Akāsa*, time, space, motion, quarters, law etc.,

Rama said, O venerable sir! This is a beautiful allegory. I have understood the parable of the Bilva fruit. The Bilva fruit is Brahman Himself. It is imperishable, illimitable, *Satchidananda Paramatman*. It is no other than the all-pervading *Jñana* or pure intelligence. The rind of the Bilva fruit of *Jnana* is Brahma's egg and all worlds.

Vasishtha concluded, Brahman is the most delicious spiritual fruit. He is a mass of bliss and knowledge. He, who eats this most wonderful fruit, attains immortality.

- from the *Stories from the Yoga Vasishtha*, DLS Publication.

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS

The only way to bring about peace in this world is for each one of us to realize peace in our own hearts. This is born of a union of our life with its source – God, who is the eternal, all-pervading Spirit. This approach to the realization of peace is known to everyone and we can, with assurance, declare that humanity is slowly progressing towards the attainment of this much longed for harmony and peace.

Swami Ramdas

PARABLE OF THE MILLIONAIRE AND THREE BEGGARS

Swami Sivananda

There was good natured millionaire in the town. Three beggars thought of approaching him for help. The first man went to the millionaire and said, "O lord! I want five rupees. Please give me". The millionaire was taken aback at this man's impudence. "What! You demand five rupees from me as though I owe you the money! How dare you? How can I afford to give five rupees to a single beggar? Here, take these two rupees and get away," he said. The man went away with the two rupees. The next beggar went to the millionaire and said: "Maharaj! I have not taken a square meal for the past ten days. Please help me". How much do you want? Asked the millionaire. "Whatever you give me, Maharaj," replied the beggar. "Here, take this ten rupee note. You can have nice food for at least three days". The beggar walked away with the ten rupee note. The third beggar came, "Maharaj, I have heard about your noble qualities. Therefore, I came to have your Darshan. Men of such charitable disposition are verily the manifestations of God on earth," he said. "Please sit down," said the millionaire. "You appear to be tired. Please take this food," he said, and offered food to the beggar. "Now please tell me what can I do for you". "Maharaj" replied the beggar, "I merely came to have the Darshan of the noble personage that you are. You have given me this rich food already. What more need I get from you? You have already shown extraordinary kindness towards me. May God bless you!" But the millionaire, struck by the beggar's spirit, begged of the beggar to remain with him, built a decent house for him in his own compound, and looked after him for the rest of his life.

God is like this good millionaire. Three classes of people approached Him, with three different desires and prayers. There is

the greedy man full of vanity, full of arrogance, full of desires. He demands the objects of worldly enjoyment from God. Since this man, whatever be his vile desires, has had the good sense to approach God. He grants him some part of the desired objects (even these very soon passes away, even as the two rupees the first beggar got are spent before nightfall). The other type of devotee prays to the Lord for relief from the sufferings of the world, but is better than the first one, in as much as he is ready to abide by His Will. To him the Lord grants full relief from suffering, and bestows on him much wealth and property. The third type is the *Jñani*; he knows the nature of God. He merely prays to the Lord; “O Lord, Thou are *Satchidananda*; Thou art Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute etc.,” What does he want? Nothing. But the Lord is highly pleased with his spirit of renunciation, of desirelessness and of Self-surrender. Therefore, He makes him eat His own food, i.e., He grants this man Supreme Devotion to Himself. Over and above this, He makes the Bhakta to live in His own House – Vaikuntha. For ever afterwards this *Jñani* – Bhakta dwells in the Lord’s Abode as Liberated Sage.

-from the “Divine Life” Feb. 1999,

LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT

It is in the Hours of Silence, one is aware of the Light that never goes out, the Light that never sleeps or stops shining, even one is asleep. How blessed it is to recognize that perpetual Light, the Light which is self shining and which does not need the help of another object for its recognition.

That Light is the Soham Light which is same and ever-present from eternity to eternity. May all Homage be unto SOHAM -the Breath of the breath, the Life of the life and the Soul of the soul.

-Swami Omkar, from the Hours of Silence

OBSTACLES ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

Swami Chidananda

With every problem is born its solution. Therefore, be not afraid when problems arise. Make God the Pole-star of your life. Overcome personal desire and aspire for Him alone. What is pleasant does not necessarily lead to supreme happiness. Live for Him, Who has brought you into this world. To know Him utilize every moment of your life well. You become what you think. God is the greatest wealth. Bliss is within.

The path of Yoga is no doubt difficult. One has to come across various temperaments. It is often that the student of Yoga is confronted with disappointments, failures and set backs. The earnest aspirant sees in all these the hidden hand of the lord, an opportunity to perfect the imperfect nature. Hence all such so-called obstacles are converted into opportunities to triumph over our nature. Patience is necessary.

It is our duty to give love to all, even to those who tend to disappoint us. Love that is not given freely is not true Divine love. Through such perfect Divine love you will be able to change the heart of your friend. Pure love always conquers in the end. It transforms the hearts of others as well as the heart of the giver.

Never fear about your spiritual progress. Your faith and devotion will help you at every step. Guru kripa ever guides the faithful disciple. Live in the awareness of the Divine presence. Let your daily life be unbroken stream of God-remembrance. See Him in and through all faces. Be worshipful at heart. His name is thy strength and support, unfailing.

This mundane life is full of miseries. Pain is a blessing in disguise. Pain turns your mind towards God, in whom alone there is lasting happiness and peace.

Incessant remembrance of God destroys the misery of the whole world and fills a person with the Highest Bliss.

The seeker, during spiritual practices will have to undergo different kinds of experiences. These experiences are part and parcel of Spiritual life. Sometimes the seeker feels joy and sometimes feels no taste for the spiritual life. You will have to rise above happiness and unhappiness. Let not these trouble your mind. They come and go.

Essentially you are Divine. Your real nature is Peace. Nobody can disturb you. Nothing will disturb you. You are not affected by the external environments.

Pray to God silently. Seek solitude and do enquiry of “WHO AM I” in right earnest. Tell your mind to constantly plunge into the thought of God. Regular practice of contemplation and meditation will bestow upon you peace and happiness. Think positively always. You grow into the likeness of the thought picture which you hold on to with sincerity and persistence. Contemplate upon the ideals into which you wish to grow.

This body is the product of Prarabdha. It is an ever changing, unreliable vehicle which we have assumed to enter into this earth life. You are the glorious Self or the Atman that shines radiant and ever abides in its changeless shape of peace, bliss and fullness. For, it is the divine Spark, a ray of radiance emanating from the Supreme Lord Shri Hari who is its source, support and ultimate destination. Body is not your true self. It is both the vehicle and a vexing bondage too, but it is a blessing in as much as we are enabled to worship the Lord, take His name and meditate upon His wondrous Divine Being with the help of this body. But, even independent of it you ever abide in your primal, shining state of pure Atmic Satchidananda swarupa. To be rooted in this Truth Consciousness is the most pleasing worship of the Lord Narayana.

Be perfectly confident. Banish all fear from the mind. Mind is a great deceiver. It is the root of all sorrows. Fear is itself the main disease. Throw it out of the mind. Be always smiling. Your real nature is joy, is Bliss. Know yourself to be different from the mind. Rise above it. Discard its dominance by asserting your real spiritual nature. You are Soul Immortal.

Calmly if you reflect over your life and its circumstances, you would find that you enjoy better ease and a better situation than those that are meted out by the Hand of Providence to thousands around us. The best way out of the present difficulties is more faith in the Divine, greater industry, more hard work, and a continued appeal to the Divine to use your energies more and more, and afford you unasked the necessities of life in greater measure. I am conducting special prayers for you and I am sure the Divine Lord will not only enable you to bear your difficulties with a cheerfulness and a calmness and a peace that belong to spiritual aspirants like you, but also to give you opportunities for increasing your income, for overcoming your financial odds.

Be of good cheer! Destiny by which the Merciful Providence is familiar to people, will help your industry, your hard work, your prayers, your brave will and will soon show you a way out of your predicament. Kindly conduct Satsangs at home. Kirtans, Bhajans, prayers – these are the great spiritual treasures which will bring you material wealth too.

Never be afraid of Samsara. When you have the Name of God upon your tongue and the Smaran of Sri Gurudev in your heart, what can Samsara do? If you are careful about your diet, your health will improve. Do not take hot drinks; avoid strong tea etc. Avoid fried articles, chilly and pepper. Take little quantities of milk frequently. Never worry. Never hurry. Keep your mind from anxieties. Be happy and be in a cheerful mood always. Smile at everyone. Laugh a number

of times during the day. Atman is Ananda. You are Paramananda. Feel and express this.

There may be ups and downs, storms and stresses, smiles and tears, as you go on living your life amidst its many vicissitudes, trials and tribulations. Do not loose faith but press on with a firm conviction that god wants to mould you in His own image through sufferings and tribulations. Pray fervently and wholeheartedly. Leave everything to God. He will do what is good for you.

Spiritual life is life in the Divine through control of mind. The spiritual path demands long perseverance and great patience. The thought you create in your mind and the images you form in your daily life help you in making you what you are or what you would become. Therefore, do not be brooding over failures in controlling anger etc. "Let the dead past bury its dead; act in the living present" is a golden precept. Therefore, substitute Divine thoughts in place of worldly thoughts. The very thought that you will be successful in Brahmacharya in the next month will make you successful in the ensuing month.

The Lord is everywhere. Feel His presence everywhere. His eyes behold everything. His hands protect all. Trust in Him. Take refuge in His sweet Name. you need not despair. You need not be afraid of anything.

The Supreme Lord is all mercy and love. He is ever waiting to take charge of us and remove all our difficulties and obstacles. We should unhesitatingly seek His grace and make Him our loving companion.

The only way to get rid of your present difficulty is through self-control. There is no other way and no remedy for this. The first thing you will have to do is that you should change your attitude towards women. Except your legally married wife, you should consider all

other women as the embodiment of Divine Mother. Do not see the world as it appears to you but see it as it is. What is there in the woman? What charm is there? It is only a cage of flesh and blood. There is no beauty in reality. You think she is beautiful due to your own imagination. Maya is so powerful that it covers the reality. Study the works of Mahatma Gandhi. Study our Gurudev's book, "Practice of Brahmacharya".

The attainment of purity helps you to control negative thoughts. Regular prayer to God, reading of religious books like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Shrimad Bhagavad Gita and the company of saints will immensely help you to attain purity of mind.

Ups and downs, troubles and tribulations are common in the world. They are common to one and all. Each individual in one stage or the other has to face these circumstances. There is no way to escape from them. There are many instances in our Puranas of those who had to undergo a lot of sufferings. What about Harischandra? What about Nala? What about Dharmaraja?

Face them bravely. Each obstacle will strengthen you. Each failure is a stepping stone to success. Please be happy wherever God has placed you. Rely upon Him. Pray to God to give you strength to face them calmly. Total surrender to the Lord will bring you highest happiness. He knows what is best for you. Have intense faith in Him. He will protect you and guide you. He is the supporter of the entire Cosmos.

Kirtan also is equally important. God is not keen on your voice and music; but your heart, regularity and surrender. Cultivate the habit of singing the Lord's Name and His glories. This will make you blissful in a short time and will remove all your tiresomeness and worries.

Beloved self, kindly do not give way to anxiety and fear. Be

cheerful and trust in the Lord. He will guide you in everything you do. Surrender unto Him, knowing that it is His will that does every thing.

Daily make it a point to study some religious books and reflect upon the truths contained therein. Spend some time in silent communion with the Lord. Think of Him during the day also, when you have some leisure. Seek His guidance like a little child. The more you trust in the Lord, the more will you feel His Divine hand leading you. You will enjoy immense peace of mind and joy.

Sickness is only in this perishable physical body. The real “You” is beyond all sickness. This real “You” is beyond all these mundane afflictions. Your real nature is Divine. Know this through regular meditation, contemplation and by right Vichar.

The spiritual path is a question of supply and demand. If the demand is there in the form of constant aspiration and remembrance of God, the supply in the form of guidance, protection and peace is bound to manifest itself. God, who is an ocean of mercy and love is waiting with outstretched arms to receive His children. So let us turn to Him now.

Through the healing you have mentioned in your letter now clearly notice a manifestation of the Divine power of God. It is God alone who is the Great Healer, not only of all physical ills, but the more serious ills of the mind and soul. Aspire for purity, perfect love and compassion. Then the Divine Power will flow through you automatically and bring solace and comfort to all.

Unceasingly pray to God. Surrender to Him whole heartedly. God runs to him who prays with a sincere heart. You may be certain of that. Be pure in heart. Let your mind and your lips be as one. Surrender yourself to His care.

The Lord will hear your prayers. If your prayers are not heard,

wait for sometime. God is all merciful. He will certainly listen to you. Your prayer must come from your heart. Then only, He will take care of you.

Always take God's Name. his Divine Name is your strength. He is your Father and Mother. Take shelter in Him.

Difficulties come in our path to test our strength. As such, we should welcome them, and with faith and trust in the Lord and His holy name, we should tide over them. Therefore, take refuge in the Lord's Name and surrender unto Him happily, and without question.

Kindly conduct regular Satsang at home daily in the evening and sing the name of the Lord. Surrender to him and pray for his help. He will solve all your difficulties and fill your life with joy, peace and prosperity. Always remember Him during the day by repeating His Holy Name. Nama Smaran will call forth His Grace and protection upon you. The Lord knows what is best for us. So trust in Him and rest in peace.

Lead a life of simplicity and purity. Be regular in your daily prayer. Take daily some physical exercise. Do not mix with bad or evil company. Do not entertain negative thought. Let not undesirable thoughts cross your mind. Develop healthy habits. Take simple and wholesome food. Pray to the Lord to give you strength to lead a spiritual life.

..... to be continued

Follow the heart. A pure heart sees beyond the intellect; it gets inspired; it knows things that reason can never know, and whenever there is a conflict between the pure heart and the intellect, always side with the pure heart even if you think what your heart is doing is unreasonable.

- Swami Vivekananda

THE FOREST OF BRAHMA SUTRA

Swami Krishnananda

The greatest truths available for human comprehension are supposed to be documented in the great scriptures called Upanishads. They are exultations of masters who are deeply involved in the ultimate principles of the cosmos. They are realized souls, called Rishis, but these Rishis in their expressions through the Upanishads spoke in terms of their particular vision of Ultimate Reality.

A common student of the Upanishads is likely to feel embarrassed over apparently irreconcilable differences and contradictions among the statements of these great masters. Every kind of philosophy you will find in the Upanishads. There are provisions for establishing the monism aspect of philosophy, the dualistic aspect, the active aspect, the volitional aspect, - everything can be found. Even the Sankhya and Mimamsa have a reference.

What is that you are supposed to take from the big forest of statements on the nature of Reality? To clarify the intension of these sages and to reconcile these statements in a harmonious manner, and to point out that different expressions do not necessarily mean contradictory presentations, Brahma Sutra was written. They can be harmonized by a higher perception of what is there and what is happening. In order to harmonise these multifaceted statements, Bhagavan Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa wrote a new text called the *Brahma Sūtra*. *Sūtra* is a thread that connects different parts of the vision of Truth.

All the statements connected with Ultimate Reality, known as Brahman in the Sanskrit language, have to be threaded together so that, instead of the various statements of the Upanishads being contradictory outbursts, they become beautiful pearls in the garland

of the knowledge of the Supreme Being, from various points of view. This act of reconciliation is called *Samanvaya*.

We have problems like this in the Gita also. What is it that Gita is telling us? 'Go ahead and fight'; 'Think of Me always'; 'I am doing everything' – what is the point in saying all these things which seem to be negating one another?

When a Cosmic perception enunciate a Truth, it may look like a multiple proclamation of different hues, colours and emphases, which an ordinary person will not be able to reconcile. You cannot know which is the correct vision which is lesser or higher. To obviate these difficulties, the great master Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa wrote the wonderful interpretative textbook called Brahma Sutra.

“What do you want?” is the first question. “I want the ultimate being, Brahman”. This is a terrific question, and a statement. Who is it that wants Brahman?

To avoid the quandary that may arise out of making a statement of this kind, the Sutra – the first one – avoids ‘who’, ‘why’ and all that. It simply makes an impersonal statement that Brahman should be known. Who should know It, it does not say, because if you ask such questions you will involve yourself in some kind of preliminary contradiction. Who are you to know Brahman? What right have you? So, avoiding such possible objections, the Brahma Sutra goes directly into the main theme, “It has to be known”.

What is the meaning of ‘knowing’? you know that there is a meeting here, I know that many people are sitting here, you know that I am speaking – this is the kind of knowledge, of course. Is it in this sense that you have to know Brahman? Or is there any other way?

The word Brahman comes from a Sanskrit root, “*Brhm*” – to expand, to be comprehensive, to include and be perfect. If the thing

that is to be known you call Brahman is that which is inclusive and comprehensive, it must be including the knowing individual also. If the knowing person is outside this comprehensive Being, then that being would not be comprehensive, because it has excluded the knower or the person who aspires for it. So, it should include the aspirant for it. Here is a knotty point before us.

If that which is to be known includes the knower of it also, then what is the answer to this question “Brahman is to be known?” known by whom? It is already told that nobody is there to know it. Yet at the very beginning itself is a statement, ‘It has to be known’. Is Brahman knowing Itself? Brahman is to be known – *‘Athato Brahma Jijñasa’* – when thus it is said, does it mean that Brahman is wanting to know Itself? What for is this book which is to be read by people when only Brahman can know Itself and no one else can know It? That is to say, there is no passage to It with which you can be acquainted with.

We are all in the world of dualistic perception. We are here seeing something and there is something else which we are seeing. This is how we feel in this world. We cannot even use the word ‘world’, unless it is seen and confronted by us because worldly perception which needs a duality, a dichotomy between the seer and the seen, which is the world, creates another difficulty regarding the way in which we can bring together the seer and the seen. The seer is not the seen, the seen is not the seer, is something very clear. You are not the world that is seen and the world which is seen is not yourself.

Such being the case, how would you bring together in a state of harmony the seer and the seen? Who is to work out this mystery? This deep analytical process, which will stun the mind of any person and debar anyone from even approaching it; this wonderful self-identical means of knowing Brahman is called *‘jñāna’*, which cannot

be translated into English language easily. People say *‘Jñāna’* means knowledge, wisdom, but they are all inadequate expressions of the operation that is taking place when Brahman is known.

You will be terrified at the very outset when feeling within yourselves the consequences that may follow from attempting to know a thing which can be known only by Itself. The meaning of this situation, if it has entered your mind, would explain to you what Knowledge is. It is not anything that you are thinking in your mind. It is not a degree qualification or a perceptual vision or empirical knowledge.

‘Jñāna’ may frighten away anyone while approaching it. It can throw you out. You cannot go near It, as it will happen if you go near a powerful magnetic field. It will kick you back; you cannot go near. It is considering this aspect of the nature of Jnana’, that Bhagavan Sri Krishna mentions in the Gita (XII.5) – ‘this is a difficult path’.

*“Klesōdhikatarasteṣāṃ Avyaktasaktachetasāṃ
Avyaktā hi gatirduḥkham Dehavadbhiravāpyate”.*

Body-consciousness is the obstacle to understanding what all this means. Body-consciousness is just individual consciousness, affirmation of this particular individuality, the ‘me’. It contradicts that which is inclusive and is complete and is itself, as it were. Brahman is also called Bhuma, the all-comprehensive Absolute, Plenum, including everything. Those who are located in one body only, - ego-are far from this fullness.

Again the fear strikes us: Including everything? Including me also? ‘Oh! This is not for me, this is not for me! Every one will say “this is not for me”, ‘I will not go near It!’ , Brahma-Sutrakara Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa knows all these problems, that people will be turned away by thought, the very thought of the question regarding Brahman.

The Upanishads define Brahman. Let us see again what kind of thing It is. What kind of thing is Brahman? Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam. This is what Taittiriya declares regarding Brahman.

*"Satyam Jñanamanantam Brahma,
Yo vēda nihitam guhāyam Paramē Vyōman.
Sōṣnute sarvān Kāmān saha Brahmaṇā Vipashchitēti"*

One sentence, this particular declaration in the beginning of the Second Chapter of the Taittiriya Upanishad, can make you so happy, thrill you to the brim, if only you could sense what depth of meaning this sentence contains. The moment you know Brahman, the whole Universe of Bliss enters into you and simultaneously you enjoy the whole universe; '*Saha Brahmaṇā Vipaschita*'.

You can enjoy so many things in this world. You can eat, you can go on a tour, you can read books, you can go to a drama or a cinema, you can dance-there are so many varieties of enjoyment; but when one enjoyment is taking place, another cannot come. They are all different things. So, successively we are enjoying different things in the world, but not all things at one stroke. Here is the difference.

The joys of all kinds of pleasurable encounters, whatever the number of these be, innumerable, infinite ways of the enjoyment of things in the world- when they all get clubbed together into a melting pot of a single instantaneous expression of Oceanic Bliss- that will be your experience when you experience Brahman, perhaps.

You shudder even to think that such a Bliss is possible. Even the thought of such unthinkable Bliss can cause terror and tremor in our body. We can be in a state of terror and tremor by seeing fearful things, but here we can have terror even by imagining the superb Absolute-Brahman, wherein Bliss is a simultaneous completeness.

All disturbing and distracting notions in the mind have to be obviated first before we try to plunge into the nature of Brahman that is to be known.

The Brahma Sutra makes a statement 'Brahman is to be known'. Commentators write pages after pages in explaining the meaning of one Sutra only, '*Athato Brahma Jijñasa*'. Volumes have been written, commentaries have been written, and commentaries on commentaries, and a third commentary on the first and second. Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Vallabhacharya, Nimbarkacharya, all wrote commentaries on the Brahma Sutra.

-from the analysis of the Brahma Sutra, a DLS, publication

..... *To be continued*

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS

Things on the surface may look dark and discouraging. The turmoil that is going on in the hearts of the majority of the people in the world indicates that the thirst for peace is turning their thoughts and emotions towards the supreme source of goodness, power and joy-God. It is true to say that the natural evolution of the soul is always for reaching the sublime state of this pristine spiritual magnificence. What is needed is the intensification of our longing to reach the goal as early as possible. When we come to feel the presence of this supreme peace in us and everywhere about us, we shall be spreading the light of it far and wide, and creating an atmosphere suitable for the establishment of real unity and goodwill on earth. So let us pray with all love and devotion to the Divine for freeing ourselves from selfishness, pride and wrath, which are solely responsible for the present highly distracted and chaotic state of affairs in the world and for finding lasting happiness and tranquility in the bosom of the Supreme being.

-Swami Ramdas

THE TWO SADHUS

Swami Ramdas

Once two *Sadhus* came to town from different directions. One settled down beneath the shade of a peepal tree and the other under a banyan tree. Hearing of their arrival a *Bania* householder first went to the *Sadhu* of the peepal tree and prostrated before him.

‘*Maharaj*’, said the devotee, ‘It appears another *Mahatma* has come to our town. Do you know him?’

“Yes”, returned the *Sadhu* contemptuously. “I know him; he is a buffalo”.

Soon after, the devotee arming himself with a bunch of hay visited the *Sadhu* of the banyan tree and, placing the hay before him, prostrated.

“Well” cried out the *Sadhu*, “What do you mean by this? Why this hay?”

“It is an offering, *Maharaj*, deign to feed upon it and bless your devotee”, appealed the *Bania* with folded hands.

“What! Are you mad? – eat hay?” flared up the *Sadhu*.

“*Maharaj*, a *Sadhu* below the peepal tree, at the other corner of the town, was good enough to inform me that you were a buffalo. So I thought I could bring you a fitting present”, coolly said the devotee.

“How could you believe him? Have you no sense? Asked the *Sadhu* reprovingly.

“*Maharaj*, how could a poor and ignorant man like your slave dare to understand *Sadhus*? A *Mahatma* alone can know a *Mahatma*”, returned the devotee.

“Go then and tell him he is an ass”, said the *Sadhu*.

The *Bania* devotee left the place, and directly went to the

bazaar, purchased a seer of cotton seeds and making a bundle of it, proceeded to the first *Sadhu* of the peepal tree. Untying the bundle he poured out the contents in front of the *Sadhu* and prostrated before him.

“How now”, asked the *Sadhu* with a surprised look, “What is this for? – it is cotton seeds.”

“Right, *Maharaj* – a stuff so dear to you. Do accept the humble present and making a full meal of it, shower your grace upon your slave”, prayed the *Bania*.

“Is anything wrong with you? – what do you mean, eat cotton seeds?” Uttered the *Sadhu* in consternation.

“Why not? *Maharaj*, a *Sadhu* over there, beneath the banyan tree told me that you are an ass. An ass has a great partiality for cotton seeds”.

“You fool”, he roared in rage, “don’t you see that I am not an ass?”

“How should I know, *Maharaj* – a poor man like me caught in the meshes of *Maya*! It is said: a *Mahatma* alone can recognize a *Mahatma*”, replied the devotee with a sly twitch at the corner of his thin lips.

The *Sadhu* was by this time thoroughly roused and rising to his feet, said in an imperious voice:

“*Bhaktraj*, take me to the place where the other *Mahatma* is; I should like to teach him how to speak of his betters”.

They went. It appears there was a terrible fight between the two *Mahatmas*, the *Bania* devotee witnessing the fun from a distance. The affair ended in the *Sadhus* going without food for the day!

-from the stories as told by Swami Ramdas,

TO BE ALWAYS IN LOVE AND JOY, DEPEND ON GOD'S NAME

Swami Satchidananda

You are all votaries of God's name and all of you have understood and experienced the sweetness and efficacy of God's Name. I can tell you for certain that when we have God's Name with us, we really have God with us, we are absolutely fearless. So, every devotee who is a votary of God's name should remain fearless in all conditions and circumstances, because he or she has God with him or her. When the Name is with us, we get the necessary courage to face the daily battle of life. Where does the courage come from? The courage comes from God within us. He gives us the necessary strength and wisdom to tackle all situations in the world. If we are devotees, we are sure to lead a very peaceful and happy life with the courage to face all inevitable unpleasantness in the world bravely because we are able to feel the presence of God with us. If one has no devotion, or philosophical background, even though he may be successful in business or prosperous, he will be simply hollow within. When a critical situation arises, he will not be able to face it. Why? Because, he has no support from within. Unless one depends upon God, one will not be able to face the daily battle of life. So, let us all, with faith and devotion, cling to the Name and ever keep God with us, so that we remain happy and peaceful in all situations of life.

Those who have God's Name will be able to accept whatever happens in the world as happening by God's will and, because it is happening by God's Will, take it for their good. So, take to God's Name with all faith and devotion and repeat His Name as much as possible. When the name is with us, a remarkable change takes place in us. We must strive for such a change. With the name on our lips, we will be able to expand our hearts and love on everybody. First love everybody in the house, then love everybody outside and,

ultimately, love everybody in the whole world and embrace the whole world as our own. When we are able to love even one person, how much happiness we get! If we are able to love millions and millions of people, how much happiness and joy will we get! We will then be virtually swimming in an ocean of love and joy. All this can be brought about by depending upon God's Name which will purify our mind, remove all dirt in it, make it crystal pure and finally give us the experience of our oneness with Him. Oneness with Him means, we lose our individuality (ego) and merge in Him and realize that we are He, i.e., "I am Brahman". This experience can be gained by simply, but continuously chanting God's Name. Remember, when we chant God's Name, we are chanting the Name of God who is absolute existence, all pervading who has manifested as the entire universe and who is seated in all hearts. With this consciousness, if we keep on chanting the Name, we are sure to progress on the path and reach the ultimate Goal pointed out by our great saints and sages.

We are blessed because we have been able to come in contact with great saints and become the recipients of their Grace. We are meeting to day in a holy place where the presence of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba is felt intensely. Let us make the best use of the Name that He has given us, that the Mahatmas have given us, and progress on the spiritual path and reach the supreme Goal pointed out by them, which will result in Eternal happiness.

*-from the book Points to Ponder, Anandashram publication,
Kanhagad, Kerala*

First be master of yourself, stand up and be free, go beyond the pale of these laws, for these laws do not absolutely govern you, they are only part of your being.

- Swami Vivekananda

SELF-PURIFICATION AND SELF DISCIPLINE

-Edited by Sista Subbarao

(Continued from March 2014)

The man who conquers another by force is strong, the man who conquers himself by meekness is mighty. He who conquers another by force will himself likewise be conquered; he who conquers himself by meekness will never be overthrown, for the human cannot overcome the divine. The meek man is triumphant in defeat. Socrates lives the more by being put to death; in the crucified Jesus the risen Christ is revealed; and Stephen, in receiving his stoning, defies the hurting power of stones. That which is unreal; when a man finds that within him which is real, which is constant, abiding, changeless and eternal, he enters into that Reality and becomes meek. All the powers of darkness will come against him, but they will do him no hurt and will at last depart from him.

As a man practises self-control he approximates more and more to the inward reality and is less and less swayed by passion and grief, pleasure and pain and lives a steadfast and virtuous life, manifesting manly strength and fortitude. The restraining of the passions, however, is merely the initial stage in self-discipline and is immediately followed by the process of purification. By this a man so purifies himself as to take passion out of the heart and mind altogether, not merely restraining it when it rises within him, but preventing it from rising altogether. By merely restraining his passions a man can never arrive at peace, can never actualise his ideal, he must purify these passions.

By these four things is the heart defiled; the craving for pleasure, the clinging to temporal things, the love of self, the lust for personal continuance. From these four defilement's spring all sins

and sorrows; Wash thou thy heart; put away sensual cravings; detach thy mind from the wish for possessions; abandon self-defence and self-importance. Thus putting away all cravings thou wilt attain to satisfaction; detaching thy mind from the love of perishable things, thou wilt acquire wisdom; abandoning the thought of self, thou wilt come to peace. He who is pure is free from desire; he does not crave for sensual excitements; he sets no value on perishable things; he is the same in riches or poverty, in success or failure, in victory or defeat, in life or death. His happiness remains, his rest is sure.

True strength and power and usefulness are born of self-purification, for the lower animal forces are not lost, but are transmuted into intellectual and spiritual energy. The pure life (pure in thought and deed) is a life of conservation of energy; the impure life (even should the impurity not extend beyond the thought) is a life of dissipation of energy. The pure man is more capable and therefore more fit to succeed in his plans and to accomplish his purposes than the impure. Where the impure man fails, the pure man will step in and be victorious, because he directs his energies with a calmer mind and greater definiteness and strength of purpose.

As a man grows purer, he perceives that all evil is powerless unless it receives his encouragement, and so he ignores it and lets it pass out of his life. It is by pursuing this aspect of self-discipline that a man enters into and realises the divine life and manifests those qualities which are distinctly divine, such as wisdom, patience, non-resistance, compassion and love. It is here, also, where a man becomes consciously immortal, rising above all the fluctuations and uncertainties of life and living in an intelligent and unchangeable peace.

The obliterating of injuries from the mind is merely one of the beginnings in wisdom. There is a still higher and better way. And that way is to purify the heart and enlighten the mind so that, far

from having to forget injuries, there will be none to remember. For it is only pride and self that can be injured and wounded by the actions and attitudes of others; and he who takes pride and self out of his heart can never think the thought, "I have been injured by another", or, "I have been wronged by another".

From a purified heart proceeds the right comprehension of things; and from the right comprehension of things proceeds the life that is peaceful, freed from bitterness and suffering, calm and wise.

Into the causes of cause shalt thou penetrate and lifting, one after another, every veil of illusion, shalt reach at last the inmost Heart of Being. Thus becoming one with Life, thou shalt know all life and seeing into causes and knowing realities, thou shalt be no more anxious about thyself and others and world but shalt see that all things that are, engines of the Great Law. Canopied with gentleness, thou shalt bless where others curse; love where others hate; forgive where others grasp; lose where others gain. And in their strength they shall be weak; and in thy weakness thou shalt be strong; yea, thou shalt mightily prevail. "Therefore, when Heaven would save a man, it enfolds him with gentleness".

The flesh flatters; the spirit reproves. The flesh blindly gratifies; the spirit wisely disciplines.

The flesh loves secrecy; the spirit is open and clear.

The flesh remembers the injury of a friend; the spirit forgives the bitterest enemy.

The flesh is noisy and rude; the spirit is silent and gracious.

The flesh is subject to moods; the spirit is always calm.

The flesh incites to impatience and anger; the spirit controls with patience and serenity.

The flesh is thoughtless; the spirit is thoughtful.

Self-control, self-reliance, and watchfulness- these are three lesser powers. Steadfastness, patience, gentleness-these are the three greater powers. When thy mind is well-controlled and in thy keeping; when thou reliest upon no external aid, but upon Truth alone; and when thou art ceaselessly watchful over thy thoughts and actions-then thou wilt approach the Supreme Light.

Until you can stand alone, looking for guidance neither to spirits nor mortals, gods nor men, but guiding yourself by the light of the truth within you, you are not unfettered and free, not altogether blessed. But do not mistake pride for self-reliance. To attempt to stand upon the crumbling foundation of pride is to be already fallen. No man depends upon others more than the proud man. His happiness is entirely in the hands of others. But the self-reliant man stands, not upon personal pride, but on an abiding law, principle, ideal, reality, within himself. Upon this he poises himself, refusing to be swept from his strong foothold either by the waves of passion within or the storms of opinion without.

Spiritual transmutation consists in an entire reversal of the ordinary self-seeking attitude of mind towards men and things and this reversal brings about an entirely new set of experiences. Thus the desire for a certain pleasure is abandoned, cut off at the source and not allowed to have any place in the consciousness; but the mental force which that desire represented is not annihilated; it is transferred to a higher region of thought, transmuted into a purer form of energy. The law of conservation of energy obtains universally, in mind as in matter and the force shut off in lower directions is liberated in higher realms of spiritual activity.

Along the saintly way towards the divine life, the midway region of Transmutation is the country of Sacrifice, it is the plain of Renunciation. Old passions, old desires old ambitions and thoughts

are cast away and abandoned, but only to reappear in some more beautiful, more permanent, more eternally satisfying form. As valuable jewels long guarded and cherished, are thrown tearfully into the melting pot, yet are remoulded into new and perfect ornaments, so the spiritual alchemist, at first loath to part company with long cherished thoughts and habits, at last gives them up to discover, a little later, to his joy, that they have come back to him in the form of new faculties, rarer powers and purer joys, spiritual jewels newly burnished, beautiful and resplendent.

A good man is the flower of humanity and to daily grow purer, nobler, more god-like, by overcoming some selfish tendency, is to be continually drawing nearer to the Divine Heart. "He that would be My Disciple, let him deny himself daily" is a statement which none can misunderstand or misapply, how-so-ever he may ignore it. Now here in the Universe is there any substitute for goodness; and until a man has this, he has nothing worthy or enduring. To the possession of Goodness there is only one way and that is, to give up all and everything that is opposed to Goodness. Every selfish desire must be eradicated; every impure thought must be yielded up; every clinging to opinion must be sacrificed; and it is the doing of this that constitutes the following of Christ.

Jesus so lived and all men may so live, if they will humbly and faithfully carry out His precepts. So long as they refuse to do this, clinging to their desires, passions and opinions, they cannot be ranked as His disciples; they are the disciples of self. "Verily, Verily I say unto you: who-so-ever committeth sin is the servant of sin", is the searching declaration of Jesus. Let men cease to delude themselves with the belief that they can retain their bad tempers, their lusts, their harsh words and judgments, their personal hatreds, their petty contentions and darling opinions and yet have Christ. All that divides man from man and man from Goodness, is not of Christ, for Christ is love.

Every precept of Jesus demands the unconditional sacrifice of some selfish, personal element, before it can be carried out. Man cannot know the Real whilst he clings to the Unreal; he cannot do the work of truth whilst he clings to error. Whilst a man cherishes lust, hatred, pride, vanity, self-indulgence, covetousness, he can do nothing, for the works of all these sinful elements are unreal and perishable. Only when he takes refuge in the Spirit of Love within and becomes patient, gentle, pure, pitiful and forgiving, does he the works of Righteousness and bears the fruits of life. The vine is not a vine without its branches, even then it is not complete until those branches bear fruit. Daily practising Love towards all in heart and mind and deed, harbouring no injurious or impure thoughts, he discovers the imperishable Principles of his being.

The only salvation recognised and taught by Jesus is salvation from sin and the effects of sin, here and now; and this must be effected by utterly abandoning Sin, which having done, the Kingdom of God is realised in the heart as a state of perfect knowledge, perfect blessedness perfect peace. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." A man must become a new creature and how can he become new except by utterly abandoning the old? That man's last state is worse than his first who imagines that, though still continuing to cling to his old temper, his old opinionativeness, his old vanity, his old selfishness, he is constituted a "new creature" in some mysterious and unexplainable way by the adoption of some particular theology or religious formula.

The doctrine of the overcoming or annihilation of self is simplicity itself; indeed, so simple, practical and close at hand is it that a child of five, whose mind has not yet become clouded with theories, theological schemes and speculative philosophies, would be far more likely to comprehend it than many older people who have lost their hold upon simple and beautiful truths by the adoption of complicated theories.

The annihilation of self consists in weeding out and destroying all those elements in the soul which lead to division, strife, suffering, disease and sorrow. It does not mean the destruction of any good and beautiful and peace-producing quality.

He who will not give up his secret lust, his covetousness, his anger, his opinion about this or that, can see nor know nothing; he will remain a dullard in the school of Wisdom, though he be accounted learned in the Colleges. If a man would find the key of knowledge, let him find himself. Thy sins are not thyself; they are not any part of thyself; they are diseases which thou hast come to love. Cease to cling to them and they will no longer cling to thee. Let them fall away and thyself shall stand revealed. Thou shalt know thyself as comprehensive vision, Invisible Principle, Immortal Life, and Eternal Good.

--from *Book of Meditation for Everyday in Life* by James Allen., published by Geeta Pracharaka Sangham, Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India.

THE WORLD IS MERE FROTH

The world is mere froth, the tiniest particle of the bubble in the Ocean of SAT CHIT ANANDA, the Existence absolute, Knowledge absolute and Bliss absolute. It is only when one realizes one's own Blissful Nature, all attraction for the froth ceases and one becomes free of all activity both within and without, where one is blessed with the awareness of Brahman in the moments of Silence.

-Swami Omkar, from *The Hours of Silence*

श्रीगणेशाय नमः
श्रीशङ्कराचार्य विरचितं
काशी पञ्चकम्
Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's
Kāśī pañcakam

-Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati

VERSE 4

काश्यां हि काशते काशी काशी सर्वप्रकाशिका ।
सा काशी विदिता येन तेन प्राप्ता हि काशिका ॥

kāśyām hi kāśate kāśī kāśī sarvaprakāśikā,
sā kāśī vīditā yena tena prāptā hi kāśikā.

काश्याम् *kāśyām* - in *Kāśī*, हि *hi* - indeed, काशी *kāśī* - *Kāśī*, काशते *kāśate* - shines, काशी *kāśī* - *Kāśī*, सर्वप्रकाशिका *sarvaprakāśikā* - illuminates all, सा *sā* - that, काशी *kāśī* - *Kāśī*, येन *yena* - by whomsoever, विदिता *vīditā* - realized, तेन *tena* - by him, हि *hi* - indeed, काशिका *kāśikā* - *Kāśī*, प्राप्ता *prāptā* - gained.

The city of *Kāśī* is indeed shining in the Awareness that is Atman. That *Kāśī* illuminates all. Whosoever realizes that *Kāśī* indeed gains that *Kāśī*.

Kāśī is the light of lights, the Awareness that is Atman. In the waking state, the eyesight is light to shapes and colors and the ears are light to sounds. Mind is the light of all cognitions. But all these lights are illuminated by one light, the light of Awareness. In the dream state too, the light of Awareness illuminates the mind and all of its

projections. In the sleep state, all lights are gone – no sun, no moon, no eyesight, no ears, no mind, and yet, the absence of all is lighted up by the light of Awareness. This light of Awareness is áiva and the body-mind is the city of *Kāśī*.

The *ājñācakra* located at the center of the eyebrows, where we apply ku'kuma, is the shrine of Lord áiva. In modern anatomy, it is the locale of the pituitary gland. It is interesting to note that the *ijmucakra* is described as a lotus with two petals and the pituitary has two lobes. The power center is represented as a lotus in the language of the scriptures. As one focuses the mind in the *ijmucakra* and merges in the awareness, one becomes áiva. '*Śivo*'ham, *Śivo*'ham, I am *Śiva*, I am *Śiva*'.

The *ājñācakra*, the center of awareness, is considered to be the third eye of Lord *Śiva*. The sight of the two eyes is transient and fickle, and is not there when the eyes are closed, the mind is preoccupied, or in sleep. On the other hand, the third eye, the eye of awareness, is nitya, timeless. It shines in all the three states. It is like the sun, which has no day or night. One who knows this *Kāśī* gains It. One has to meditate by focusing the mind in the center of the eyebrows.

This verse is a meditation verse and we will look into this meditation in some detail:

Meditation 1

Sit comfortably in a stable position. Keep the neck, the back, and the head in a straight line. Close the eyes half way and sport a smile on the lips. This inner smile symbolizes samatva, equanimity, towards the opposites of life. Squeeze the eyes once and watch the half closed eyes. Now, try to watch the mind that watches the eyes. Slowly, go behind the mind and watch it. If a thought arises, let it be; don't identify with it, don't judge or evaluate it. If it departs, let it go.

Even as you attempt to watch the mind, it becomes quiet. Gradually, there is no mind to watch and you become the watchfulness itself. There is inner silence.

Meditation 2

Then there is the *śāmbhavī mudrā* described as *antarlakṣyaṃ bahirdūṣṭirnimeṣonmeṣavarjitā, sā mudrā śāmbhavī*, focus is within while the eyes look out without blinking. Open the eyes and blink twice or thrice. Stop blinking and look ahead. Try not to see what is ahead. Focus the attention on the inner. Don't blink as long as you can. You reach a state of awareness, in which there is no seer-seen division. There is only the pure awareness of the being. This divisionless watchfulness is *Kāśī*. This practice builds the inner awareness and silence. We have to discover the inner silence. If we let the mind chatter non-stop all day, it makes us go crazy. The inner silence is *Śiva*, the immortal happiness. That is our true nature and we have to discover it.

Meditation 3

Sit erect keeping the hands in the lap. Close the eyes softly half way. Sport a smile on the lips. Make this smile intrinsic to you. Don't lose it at any time. Watch the eyes. The eyes are half closed. A little movement of the eyes is not uncommon, since the eyesight is known to be *cala*, unsteady. Keep the pupils in the center. Focus the sight of both the eyes in the center of the eyebrows. As you watch the center of the eyebrows with the closed eyes, gradually the division between the watcher and the watched resolves in watchfulness. It is the awareness, of nothing in particular. It is Awareness pure, undifferentiated, and focused on itself. That is the *Kāśī*. You are not the ego, not the doer, not the mind, and not the body. You are that light of awareness, you are *Kāśī* and you are *Śiva*.

Atman is the changeless, spaceless, and timeless Awareness.

It is undivided and indivisible. It is not self-consciousness, It is impersonal. It is sat-cit, the awareness of the being. It is fullness in the sense that there is no sense of insufficiency in it. It illuminates the mind and the sense organs and enlivens the body. Be bold and say, 'I am Śiva'. 'Cidānanda rūpaḥ śivo'ham śivo'ham, I am of the nature of Awareness and I am Śiva, the auspicious'.

At the end of meditation, sit at ease for a while keeping the eyes closed and then slowly open the eyes. Each of these meditations can be done for about 15 minutes and practiced at least for 41 days. As the mind moves, it creates the content of the waking consciousness. The content is unreal, but appears real due to ignorance. As long as we are interested and attached to the content, we will not be able to discover that it is unreal. Once we discover the inner silence through dispassion towards all content of the waking consciousness, we need not do anything about that content. It will come and go. It is unreal and there is nothing to be done about it. It will go through its motions as per its own nature. Your home is the inner awareness, not this unreal content, and this is Self-knowledge. And you will know that you are āiva. This is the real pilgrimage of *Kāśī*.

..... To be continued

Be brave, be brave! Man dies but once.

Be chaste in thought, word, and action.

Be content to work, and above all be true to yourself.

Be courageous. Do not try to lead your brethren, but serve them.

Be bold and fear not.

Be bold and fearless and the road will be clear.

- Swami Vivekananda

HOW TO BE AN IDEAL DISCIPLE

Swami Jyotirmayananda

śiṣya is the Sanskrit term for disciple, from the root "*śiṣ*". Implying nobility and culture. The Sikh religion, which arose out of Hinduism through the teachings of Guru Nanank, is derived from this term. So important is the word in Hindu culture that the scriptures emphasize the nature of a true disciple and the qualities he must unfold even more than those of the Guru.

Through the ages, though, we find that every religion is sustained by the tradition of the Guru-disciple relationship. For example, Lord Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, illustrating the need for initiation from a Guru in upholding a religious tradition.

Kathopanishad portrays Nachiketa, a five-year-old boy, as the picture of an ideal disciple. Nachiketa's father was performing a sacrifice in which he was giving away cows in charity. They were so old, however, that they would only be a burden to those who received them. There was a selfishness involved in that type of sacrifice and Nachiketa, though a boy, noticed the error committed by his father. Overcome by affection and love, he wanted to correct his father's mistake by asking, "O father, to whom will you give me away in charity?" He asked this three times. His incensed father said, "I shall give you to death!" In those days, people did not speak in vain, and Nachiketa, hearing the command of his father, at once committed himself to death by mere act of will.

The spirit of Nachiketa rose to the astral world and reached the gates of Yama, the God of death. He knocked at the gate and rang the bell, but the God of death was not at home. For three nights and days, Nachiketa waited and fasted at the abode of death. When Yama returned, he expressed his regret in keeping a Brahmin boy unwelcomed for so long. "I have left a Brahmin guest fasting; that

was a great sin on my part, but I was busy. However, to compensate, Nachiketa, I will give you three boons.”.

For the first boon, Nachiketa asked for the mental peace of his father. He asked that when he returned to the mortal world, his father would receive him with a glad heart. For the second boon, Nachiketa wanted to learn the art of sacrifice and karma yoga (action), so that he might be more serviceable to humanity.

For the third boon, he asked for knowledge of the Self. The first two boons Yama gave readily, but concerning the third, “that boon you should not ask, O Nachiketa. Ask for anything else.. ask for one hundred extra years of life, for wealth, for the pleasures of the world. Even if you were to ask for all the wonders of heaven, I would send them to you back in the mortal world. Please, ask for anything, but do not ask for immortality of the Spirit”.

Thus, Yama offered all temptations of earth and heaven to deter Nachiketa from enquiry into the nature of Self. However, Nachiketa, recognizing the perishability of all these, asked for the boon of wisdom alone. “You will give all these, yet one day you will come and take them all away from me. Therefore, I do not want anything on which you have your hold”. Yama succumbed and presented his sublime teachings pertaining to the knowledge of Self.

This story of the Upanishads sums up the qualifications of an aspirant. An ideal disciple persists to attain Self-realization by developing profound renunciation towards the objects of the world. Like Nachiketa an aspirant must promote harmony at home, be endowed with zeal for serving humanity, and develop a supreme dispassion towards all earthly and celestial pleasures.

The Upanishads also indicate further qualifications of an aspirant; the four fold qualifications of discrimination, dispassion, the six-folded virtues (serenity, control of the senses, renunciation of

egoistic involvement, endurance, faith and tranquility of mind) and burning aspiration for Self-realization.

Having understood the transitoriness of the world and the vanity of the worldly pleasures, students with superior aspiration approached greater spiritual preceptors to receive the knowledge of Brahman. They aspired for that intuitional knowledge by which all is known, knowledge which is not cumulative, but enlightening and transforming in its effect.

A disciple must integrate his personality by rendering selfless service at the Guru's ashram. By developing a befitting personality, wisdom can be received and assimilated by a disciple. To show their resolve, disciples of ancient times approached their Guru carrying *samit* (wood for fuel). A bundle of wood symbolized their aspiration. Just as the bundle of wood is to be burned up, so too, the load of karmas must be burned up by the fire of Wisdom.

Strive to Deserve Spiritual Guidance

An aspirant discovering a sensitivity towards spiritual movement begins to understand that the process towards Self-realization is an integral unfoldment. Your being guided by a Guru does not depend upon the intensity of your search for the proper Guru, but rather upon your advancement. You should not be obsessed with finding the perfect Guru, but rather concern yourself with becoming a perfect disciple.

The world is governed by an immutable law, and if you are deserving, you will automatically receive a response from the world in the form of a Guru. However, if you do not deserve such, you may be placed near the highest personality in the world, yet not be aware of it and continue to linger on lesser levels. You cannot advance unless your personality is ready to receive spiritual wisdom.

For example, Jesus had various personalities around him.

Judas hardly knew Jesus. Even though living with Christ, he continued to fill his mind with jealousy and hatred. And there was Thomas, who, when Jesus appeared before his disciples after his crucifixion, would not accept Christ's resurrection unless he touched His wounds. After Thomas was convinced, Jesus said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet believe". (St. John 20-29). If a disciple develops faith of a higher nature and does not enter into confusion or argumentation, he is very advanced.

All may not be so advanced however. An aspirant once begged his Guru to bestow upon him Self-realization. The Guru said, "Dear Disciple, you must prepare the vessel of your personality. Practice karma yoga and render your heart pure to receive wisdom".

The disciple said, "O Guru, what is the harm of bestowing wisdom in a person who is not qualified?"

The Guru suggested him to wait for the proper answer. One day he asked his disciple to serve him food and extended a bowl filled with dirt and debris. The disciple would not offer his rich preparations in such a filthy bowl and asked his Guru's permission to wash the bowl first. The Guru remarked how even more important it is to purify one's personality to receive the immortalizing food of spiritual wisdom. The disciple understood.

Another misconception is that all wisdom is within and there is no need for Guru's guidance. Even though music flows from within you, you must be guided by a trained musician to express it. Much is the same way, you must be guided by a Guru in discovering the eternal music of the soul within your personality.

The nature of Guru's Guidance

Guru's guidance is not external; it is mystic and internal. Guru

is the symbol of the Higher Self in the disciple. Therefore, instructions received from a Guru are actually a process of discovering a relationship with and being guided one's Higher Self.

A disciple serves the Divine Self in Guru. You live in an environment of elevated understanding and spiritual relationship. You train yourself to serve the mission of your Guru and thereby link your personality to a dynamic process of spiritual upliftment.

The Yogic scriptures speak highly of developing devotion to Guru. Shwetashwatara Upanishad concludes saying, "he who has supreme devotion to God and Guru, to him alone the scriptures will reveal their secret wisdom."

Devotion to Guru draws Divine grace in the form of Guru kripa (the grace of spiritual preceptor). When an aspirant discovers increasing mental strength during trials and tribulations, it is the result of the Guru's grace. When the mind enjoys increasing peace and serenity, it is due to Guru's grace. When the intellect is able to comprehend the subtle implications of Yoga philosophy, it is by Guru's grace. When outer and inner obstacles are removed, it is indeed Guru's grace. Thus, the grace of Guru continues to work mysteriously.

As an ideal aspirant, you should not seek a sentimental relationship with Guru. You must express your love and devotion through practical service in the Guru's cause. You should not be generous in lip-service alone.

Spiritual wisdom is not a mere verbal or intellectual transaction. One does not become a disciple by mere scholarship, erudition or worldly achievement. A disciple must learn the art of developing humility, selflessness, mental peace, generosity of heart, endurance and cheerfulness.

A disciple must not hold a shallow personality, effervescent

like a bottle of soda water. You must learn to be persistent, patient and enduring. You must show tenacity and fidelity in your life.

A beginning aspirant may have an idea that the moment one meets a Guru, there will be a demonstration of psychic powers. The Guru will read his mind or perhaps rise a foot above the earth saying, "Just for you I have done this miracle. Do not mention it to anyone else".

If you are such an aspirant, feeling that Guru's miraculous powers will take care of everything, you may fail to evolve, and remain with only a sentimental understanding. You will continue to feel that since Guru is God and knows all, whatever you intensely desire will be given by Guru's grace. If, despite your continuous prayers, your desires are frustrated, you may erroneously conclude that there must be other more suitable Guru. Therefore, do not look for miracles in Guru's life. Learn to understand the subtle teaching of Yoga with His aid.

Similarly, an aspirant may develop an idea that Guru must have perfect health, then, at the first sneeze, the disciple's faith starts to shake. Or he may, perchance, develop the idea that Guru cannot be hurt by anything. When the day comes that Guru stubs his toe or trips and falls, the aspirant feels Guru is no different than anybody else. Similarly, if the slightest error is made by Guru in speaking or in any movement, the disciple's faith will tremble again.

Along a similar line, a disciple must not imitate the Guru's mannerisms. You must not stammer if your Guru stammers. Rather you must learn to imbibe His spirit, not His externalities.

As a disciple, do not look for your ideal in terms of these sentimental concepts. Rather, Guru is a symbol. As you advance, you reach out to the higher in Him and in yourself, because your movement towards Guru is primarily based upon your own

advancement. As you advance, nature necessitates proper guidance given to you in the form of Guru. An ideal relationship with the Guru is sustained by a process in which reason is fulfilled by faith and devotion, in which faith blooms into spiritual experience and infinite freedom.

Prashnopanishad tells of six disciples who approached a spiritual preceptor, Pippalada. They had already practiced certain austerities and completed various studies, but now, desirous of attaining Liberation, they presented their questions to the Guru. Pippalada asked them to stay, performing their services for one full year. "But staying with me does not imply you are to stay as guests of honour. Stay here for one year practicing austerity, celibacy and faith, serving the mission, attending to the duties of the ashram and helping others. Then if after a year you have shown the sincerity of your aspiration, you may ask questions as you please. If I know the answers, I will surely explain them to you".

..... to be continued

- from the International Yogaguide, July 2012

Forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not that the God thou worshipping is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all renouncing Shankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasures, not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers.

- Swami Vivekananda

MY VISIT TO SRI SHANTI ASHRAM

Totapalli Hills - November 3rd to November 22nd , 2013

- by Krishna Chaitanya, now Gurubhaktananda

The Abode of Peace

Shanti Ashram was a must for me to spend some much-needed precious quiet time after a very strenuous course in Vedanta. It provided the perfect atmosphere for deep, inner introspection and reflection upon the Vedantic truths we had assimilated there. I was accompanied by another student of the same course, who wished to be there for the same purpose.

The Abode of Peace is truly a creation of God, executed through His divine instrument, Pujya Swami Omkarji, and currently administered by him foremost disciple, the saintly and motherly Pujya Mata Jnaneswariji. The Institution was begun in 1917 and is thus nearing its grand Centenary year of unbroken service to humanity, nurturing hungry and thirsting souls who go there for inspiration and silence in the midst of its rare natural surroundings.

Thirty-two years have elapsed since the Mahasamadhi of its great Founder, Sri Swami Omkarji. In that period, the institution has made steady growth at a very natural pace. As a bud imperceptibly blooms into a beautiful flower, the ashram is blooming day by day, spreading its fragrance to all mankind worldwide. Pujya Mataji is now well into her 80's, but she is the fountain of inspiration to many an aspiring spiritual child who is fortunate to sit at Her holy feed in silence. A word or two from Her is sufficient to make one re-dedicate himself with full vigour in his sadhana.

Mother Jnaneswariji

Mataji is the crest-jewel embodying Pujya Swami Omkarji's

spiritual vision. She personifies all that is best in human life, as well as divine life. A mother and Goddess at one and the same time, she nourishes her longing children with motherly sweetness, and tenderly implants in them seeds of spiritual wisdom without any effort on her part. Spiritual fragrance and glow radiate from her loving heart even as the rays of the sun fall onto the trees and plants and make them grow without ever being noticed or applauded. Mataji's dedication to her beloved master is a great inspiring lesson to her children.

The ashram is very simple, feigning no spectacular buildings that may attract tourists or the multitude of pilgrims. In the age of rampant externalization of spirituality in the form of exquisite temples and huge modern structures with all the modern electronic and living facilities, Shanti Ashram has maintained a misleading simplicity. For the entire period that we were there, there was no internet connectivity. That would have easily deflated the expectations of many a modern seeker who is well clued up in our technocratic society. But Shanti Ashram still survives. Its glory does not rest upon modern media exposure; God has found human hearts to be a more suitable medium to express His glory!

With all that, hundreds of pilgrims do come daily to offer their worship at the Shiva Linga at Vishwanath Mandiram, the highest point of the ashram, bordered by the dense natural forest which sits as a canopy over the Totapalli range of hills. The ashram's fifty or so cows freely graze on any part of the ashram's 80 acres of rich pastureland. The monkeys come down from the hills occasionally to celebrate their "festive days" in the ashram, with the blessings of Mataji. The crows and multitudinous variety of birds abound on the trees of the ashram. Truly, a more ideal surrounding for one's spiritual sadhana is rare to find in this 21st century.

Swamini Vinamranandaji

Whilst age may restrict Pujya Mataji's influence to the silent

sittings at her feet on her verandah, the ashram's bustling activity is continued under the humble supervision of the ever-smiling and dynamic personality of Swamini Vinamranandaji. Through her dedicated life of utter simplicity and readiness to serve the ashram in all departments, the future of this Abode of Peace is being ensured. Swamini's simplicity is amazing to the visitor – one day I was surprised to find her exhausted figure on the kitchen floor as she tried to snatch a few moments of much needed rest! Such tireless service can only be founded securely in the depths of spiritual wisdom which she expresses through her every act. She is a tower of strength to all the ashramites. Her leadership is one that is set by example rather than by command.

All these together made my experience at the ashram a very rich one indeed. I stood aghast to see how our ancient spiritual tradition can flower without any dependency on the power of modern media. Spirituality, indeed, can be promoted by spiritual hearts alone. There is no other alternative known to mankind.

The Peace Prayer

Shanti ashram, in thus relying solely on this foundation for ensuring its growth, is perhaps one of the few spiritual organizations in the country that has been successful in promoting the spiritual welfare of humanity worldwide without much publicity. The rock bottom foundation of its success lies in its ardent faith in the power of the "Peace Prayer", composed by its illustrious founder Pujya Swami Omkarji Maharaj. The 21st of every month is marked as the birth-date of Pujya Swami Omkar (born on 21st January 1895) by akhanda recitation of this prayer throughout the day.

May the torch which Swami Omkarji set aflame nearly a century ago, gain in brilliance as we approach the centenary of this formidable instrument of God's Peace – Sri Shanti Ashram.

HONOURING A MOST HONOURABLE MAN

In memory of Sri K. Prakash Rao

(01-01-1939 to 03-03-2014)

Sri K. Prakash Rao, an invaluable ashram resident, passed away from this earth on March 3rd, 2014.

His passing occurred during Brahma Muhurtham (the first hours/ waxing of the day), Suklapakshami (the waxing of the moon), and Uttarayana (the first months/waxing of the year). A rare auspicious occasion, indeed!

Sri K. Prakash Rao was born on Jan. 1st, 1939 in Pamaru, East Godavari Dist. to a virtuous, civic-minded family. His education, which began in Pamaru, then to Amalpuram for secondary school, and to Eluru at C.R. Reddy College where he graduated in Science, took him finally to the prestigious Benares Hindu University, where he completed his post graduate Masters degree in Science.

He worked until December 31, 1996 at Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Ltd. in Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai. After his retirement and the passing of his wife, Sri Prakash Rao spent the next six years visiting many ashrams in quest of God before he settled on Sri Santhi Ashram in August 2002.

Believing in the teachings of Swami Omkarji, he began to live the life of a sadhak at Santhi Asram Ashram, became a general body member in January 2003, and within the year, became part of the Executive Membership for the Managing Committee of Sri Santhi Ashram, taking responsibility for his life there.

Not only his abilities, but his devotion to the ashram and his dedication to his own spiritual learning endeared him to all.

His ability in Sanskrit, Hindi, English and Telugu made him an invaluable asset to the ashram. He worked six hours a day, tirelessly in the manner of selfless service – writing all letters that Mataji dictated to him, writing letters to all donors, using the computer daily for data entry, statements of receipts and payments, bank reconciliation statements, accounts for the auditors and government departments, preparing agendas and minutes for the Managing Committees, and, of course, corresponding with emails.

He was instrumental in Mataji obtaining her Travel Visa for Canada in 2004, and maintained signing authority in the service of the ashram, especially during the recuperation of our General Secretary. He was always available for decision making at the most organic levels to the most critical levels.

He served all, and was always available to help those who did not speak Telugu. Visitors from around the world were all served by him.

His ability to still remain true to his own spiritual life was evident in how he conducted the rest of his day.

He woke at Brahma Muhurtham hour, meditated and did Hatha Yoga (at times leading the group at Rama Tirtha Institute), and in the evening , he read spiritual material before sleep. He attended satsang as long as his health would allow.

He always washed his own clothes and never took on the manual services of another. He had his food at the main dining hall with all.

In February of 2014, he underwent eye surgery. On March 1st, a bronchial disorder was noticed. He was taken to a clinic, but was told that there was no problem. On March 2nd, he came to the office to serve using a stick to walk with, but was encouraged to return to his kutir and rest. The following morning, he fell into a deep sleep.....to rest in the arms of the Lord.

He truly followed Swami Omkarji's way of "Simple Living and High Thinking". His quiet, unassuming, respectful manner, his level-headedness, his true devotion were witness to this.

The ashram joins all who grieve for him, and requests all to join the ashram in its grief over the loss of this precious human being.

We offer condolences to his daughters – Smt. Annapurna, Smt. Padma and Smt. Lalitha.

Sri K. Prakash Rao served all and loved all - and in a most exceptional way! Hari Om!

KEEP THE UPPER HAND IN DOING GOOD

"Keep the upper hand in what you say, Keep the upper hand in the right way.

It must be the truth, it must not be wrong, In doing good always you will be strong."

Perhaps it is in Swamy Ram,'s works, we read that Johnson was the prince of talkers. No one could beat him in argument. He should have always the upper hand in all conditions. It has been said of him, that if he missed the aim, when he longed to shoot a person, he would beat him to death, with the but end of his pistol. It is wonderful to have such zeal and enthusiasm. But in many a case, it is wrongly expressed and misused. There are many people who, knowing that they are wrong, long to support their wrong or weak point, and to prove that what they say, is right, regardless of the pain and suffering they cause to the innocent.

If they miss their aim to hurt you in one way, they will try a hundred other methods to condemn and crucify you, for they wish to have the upper hand in what they say, even though they themselves know, that they are entirely wrong. May God bless them with right vision !

OM TAT SAT OM!

Ashram News

Pujya Jnaneswari Mataji in her Telugu New year message conveyed her greetings to all by saying "Time is the image of God which moves on continuously and will not wait for any body even for one second. Our life is like water filled in a pot with a hole at the base. As the death follows the birth which is inevitable, it is better to wake up early in ones' life and stop thinking about past and future and waste his valuable time craving for the worldly things. Sadhana is the only way to have control over the mind and it has to be practiced every day. Stop thinking on worldly things and do not desire them. Integrate Omkara meditation in day to day life to attain eternal peace."

At Kotagiri branch of Sri Shanti Ashram, Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu two Sadhana camps were organised from 1-5-2014 to 14-5-2014 and 19-5-2014 to 1-6-2014. Swamini Vinamranandaji conducted these programmes under the guidance and supervision of Pujya Jnaneswari Mataji and with the blessings of Pujya Swami Omkarji maharaj. Swamini Srusananda explained the importance of Surya Akshi Upanishad during these camps. Brahmacharini Suhita Chaitanya gave a discourse on Isa upanishad. Dr. K. Venkatasivayya explained about stories of Lord Siva. Talks on Upadesa Sara of Sri Ramana were also given to the participants in these camps.

At Visakhapatnam branch and Kotagiri branch regular activities were carried with the blessings of Pujya Swami Omkarji Maharaj

Peace be unto all !

Your contributions and support:

1. Annadanam : a) Permanent- Rs. 5,000/-, Rs. 10,000/- Rs. 20,000/-, 25,000/- (Meals) b) One day -Rs. 500/-, 1000/-, 2000/-, 2,500/-
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10. Gosamrakshana (Cow Protection) Fund

Donations can be addressed to :

**The Secretary, Sri Shanti Ashram, (via) Sankhavaram ,
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email : srishantiashram@rediffmail.com; Phone: 7382009962
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