

SATSANG

NEWSLETTER FROM THE SATSANG FOUNDATION

APRIL 2009

PEEPAL GROVE SCHOOL



PGS TURNS THREE.....

Viraj Naidu

On the 18th of April, The Peepal Grove School will have completed three academic years.

Based on our experiences and discussions we have adopted the following core practices in our school:-

- From Grade 4 to 8 the focus of academics is on developing the following skills: enquiry, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy and self knowledge. The assessments are formative and diagnostic in nature. The aim is to provide feedback with a view to improving performance and not to sit on judgment.
- In the 9th and 10th Grade they are meticulously prepared for the ICSE Board examinations.
- Every child must practice Yoga Asanas twice a week to develop suppleness of body and alertness of mind.
- They do an hour of organised sport every day. Inter-school matches are organised to enable the students to benchmark their skills with others.
- Trekking and bird watching are a favourite pastime with the students. They are considered to be a strong educational tool too.
- Periodically the students enjoy Moon and Star Gazing - through our two telescopes.

- Sundays are largely unstructured. Students have the opportunity to spend hours at the Art Block, in the Music Room, on the Tennis court or Football field, planning and enacting skits or reading books.
- Eminent persons from diverse fields conduct workshops and interact with the students.
- Parents get a feedback on their child's progress in the form of a descriptive analysis, on each subject and activity. They also get to meet each of the subject teachers once a term, where they share their views and brainstorm on steps to be taken for the future development of the child. This is also a forum for the parent's to give their feedback and suggestions to the school.
- The teacher - student interaction is one of mutual respect, openness and friendliness.
- Children are guided to cultivate an attitude of inclusiveness. Seniors are guides and caretakers of juniors.
- Mrs. Tara Kini (a founder member of the Aditi Mallya School) conducts teacher training workshops. She keeps the teachers updated with the latest advancements in teaching methodologies.

At three, the school rededicates itself to strive to facilitate an environment which is conducive to education that is relevant, meaningful and challenging to the child.

Samvo Manamsi Jnanatam
(With Our Minds Put Together,
May We Understand)



RAMAYANA..... Talk by Sri M

Sri M held a discourse on the Valmiki Ramayana in Bangalore from 22nd August to 1st September 2008. While reading from Kamala Subramaniam's translation of the Valmiki Ramayana, Sri M interspersed the reading with his own observations and commentaries which made the discourse even more interesting and relevant to today's environment. Sri M's rendering of the Ramayana made this timeless story come alive for the listeners who were mesmerized by the sublime beauty and majesty of this great work.

An introduction to the talks given on the first day is presented below:

So once again we are going to go through the Ramayana. Let me make it very clear that this is not an intellectual exercise. Let's leave our intellectual predilections outside and sit and listen to the story. This is a beautiful story. Many of you have already heard the Ramayana many times and must have read the Ramayana many times. Like a great teacher said, "Every time you read the Ramayana or listen to the Ramayana or see the Ram Lila there are such wonderful ideas that come to the heart". I am using the word 'heart', not the word 'mind', for I think the Ramayana is concerned more with the heart than with the mind. So what we are reading in the Ramayana is something to do with the heart.

Now the Ramayana, written by Valmiki, in fact is considered to be the first poem written in classical Sanskrit. It is called Adi Kavya, the first poem ever written in the history of Sanskrit.

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RAMAYANA

It is an epic, a long epic poem. The very reason that it is written as a poem indicates that there are matters discussed which cannot be discussed in prose. It has to be a poem because Valmiki must have thought that these ideas cannot be expressed in prose. So it is called the Adi Kavya. Throughout the poem called Ramayana, there is one aspect which will strike you as very important in all phases of the Ramayana and that is Viraha, separation... throughout the Ramayana. From the beginning it starts with the Karoundha birds who are making love with each other, sitting on a tree on the banks of river Tamasa where Valmiki had his ashram. They get separated. Then Lord Ram is separated from his father, then Sita is separated from Ram and so on. You will find this throughout the Ramayana – this separation and yearning for unity.

A great Teacher once said, 'The whole theme of the Ramayana is the separation of the Jivatama from the Parmatama and the yearning of Jivatama to go back to its source – the Parmatama.' Here Valmiki although he admits that Sri Ram is a manifestation of divinity, in many places he treats the character of Sri Ram, the hero, as a perfect human being, Maryada Purushottam, who tries to be as perfect as he can. He sometimes even gets into difficulties and it shows how he comes out of it sticking to truth and dharma. This is the whole of Ramayana.

"The Ramayana has been the perennial source of spiritual, cultural and artistic inspiration for thousands of years not only in India but in many South Asian countries. It is considered the 'Adi Kavya', the first poetry written by the great Rishi Valmiki. It is a sad story, almost like a Greek tragedy and is the very summit of poetic art.

It is my personal belief that the younger generation especially, can draw a lot of knowledge, devotion and culture by going through the Ramayana." — Sri M



Sri M in a meditative posture at Peepal Grove School, Sadum

60TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS OF SRI M.....

Sri M's 60th birthday was celebrated on 6th November 2008 at a gathering in Bangalore. Members of Satsang Foundation had arranged a small satsang on the occasion. Sri M came looking very radiant and was smiling as usual. He cut the cake with his wife Sunanda ji, while everyone sang 'Happy Birthday' to their beloved Sir.

Sri M spoke a few words on everybody's request. He said that inspite of growing old - age wise - one must keep the mind young and active, one must be alert or else age catches up with one very quickly. He also said that we must always be thankful for everything, more so to the people who have hurt us, the more we give the more we receive. He said that when we get up each morning we must do so with gratitude for having all our faculties and for the very fact that we are able to get up.

After the talk, those present met Sir personally and were all given prasad by Him and a piece of cake. Later everyone participated in a sumptuous dinner, pucca South Indian style-on the banana leaf.

Being Sir's 60th birthday this was an occasion of great joy for everyone who is blessed and guided by him. It is said that it is very difficult to find a true guru. This is true now as it was in the past. True masters always hide their real nature from the world's eyes and reveal it only to their devoted students who have complete faith in them. Another aspect which is common among real teachers is their complete humility and lack of ego. They never make any claims or show off about themselves. In fact their true worth is only revealed through their own grace and mercy to those who are devoted

to them. All those who are under Sri M's guidance find that his teachings are not very different from those which have been imparted by prophets and saints in different periods of time. What touches the heart is his unconditional love, his total self effacement and his completeness as a human being. Anyone who comes in contact with him is touched by the joy, peace and grace which radiates from his soul to the world at large. It is a great blessing and joy to know a teacher like him in whom is reflected the wisdom of rishis and sages of all times. Our pranams and veneration to our great and beloved Teacher, Guide and Guru on this beautiful day!



SADUM RETREAT, DEC 20, 2008

SRI M'S TALK AT THE PEEPAL GROVE SCHOOL, SADUM

Sri M : Should I start speaking or anybody else wants to speak? No seriously? (laughter and background conversation)

A question is asked by a member of the group which sounds like 'How to root out the mind?' or 'What do you mean by rooting out the mind?'

Sri M : Now first I want to clarify what I meant. When I said, 'rooting out the mind', unfortunately, it is usually understood wrongly. No human being can live after rooting out the mind. It is not possible. And for those whose mind has been rooted out, they are usually in the asylums. So that is not what I meant by rooting out the mind. What I meant was – you see the mind is essential for the functioning of the organism to live in this world, to be in social company with the outside world, the mind is absolutely necessary. You cannot root out the mind.

On the other hand although we need the mind (in fact) we are the mind. It is not as if mind is some external entity. When we say 'we', we are ourselves the mind. So, it is a logical absurdity to think that I can root myself out. It is not possible because when I say I, it is my mind. I have no other way to describe it. Even the body, without the working of the brain is of no use. And here, brain is the mind. Because without thought we do not exist. It is because of thought we know we exist. That we know there are others outside, that we know that the world exists, we know that we want to be free because we are bound – this is all the function of thought.

So when I say mind, I meant thought. Now, can we conceive of our mind without thought? Can we even think with our mind, without thought? We cant! When I say, "I", it means the collection of thoughts which has acquired experiences over the years, from the past. And it is still acquiring experiences in the present. It is projecting it out to the future. This is what I am. I may be good, I may be bad. I may be rich. I may be poor. I may be anybody. Or anything. But I am basically this bundle of thoughts. Now to attempt this bundle of thought to root itself out...the whole collection is called 'me'. Normally what happens is that, that me, sits and sees that certain parts of this thought process is either inconvenient, or hurtful or depressing, not to my liking in general. While, certain thought processes are liked. These are all thoughts – liking, disliking, everything. And I divide my mind into two parts artificially and say, 'I am actually a pure being, and there is this fellow who is doing all this mischief in me. And I want to root it out'. Actually that mischief that we see is also me. It is part of me. It is no different from me. This thing that I imagine to be the supreme 'me' is also my thought. Because I

have no knowledge other than that which is given by thought.

This is in a way, indirectly the subject matter of a great work called 'Pragnya Paramita' written by Nagarjuna. The great Buddhist scholar who went from Krishna district or somewhere nearby, to set up this. This is basically what he is trying to work out. That this is the entity which we call 'me' which is nothing other than thought whether the thought comes from the brain or from somewhere else. But as far as we know it comes from the brain. Because when the brain ceases to work, there is no thought. And this thought, normally, what we call thought, which is a product of the brain, can be proved very easily. If you starve for 10 days. If the brain is starved of oxygen, it can not think. So, the root of thought must be in the brain. Therefore, whatever way we try to root out, what is not good or what is inconvenient to us, is simply thought trying to remove what it thinks is inconvenient from itself. Which is an impossible task. You can do it artificially but in reality it is impossible. Because we are still within the circuit of thought. And remaining in that circuit of thought, you cannot see that which is beyond thought - if there is anything at all.

Which is why, the Upanishads declare, 'yat manasa na manute', that which even the mind can not conceive of. Now if there is that which the mind can not conceive of, can the mind, however great it is, ever find it out? It can not.

And you can not root it out. Because it is me, who is trying to root out myself. This is not possible. But we are saying, if that is so, is there a possibility, that this circuit of thought, this constant ceaseless cycle of thought comes to an end? Again, not mindlessness, please understand. We are saying that perhaps when this whole cycle of thinking, of thought, comes to an end, there is a possibility that there may be something which is completely beyond the confines of thought. Perhaps, then we are also saying that it is not deliberately possible to put an end to thought. Swami Vivekananda once went to see the great, famous atheist called George Ingersoll in London and Ingersoll told him that what you are talking in Vedanta about no thought, nothingness can be induced very easily. Why are you going to so much trouble. Take a crowbar and hit it on the head. And then no thoughts will come. Then Swamiji told him that that is not meant by no thoughts. It is not meant to deliberately put an end to thinking. You have to see the root mischief caused by thought itself and therefore abandon it. It has to be in a flash.

Now leaving that aside, let us examine the same question from a different angle. We all know that when we think, we think

in a certain language. Whatever language we have learnt or studied, we always think in that. And therefore, our thought is always colored by language. Without language, you can not think. I sit down and say, let me think. Some language is operating to give me the 'rupa' and 'nama'. The form and the name.

Because thought is in a different language, within the confines of thought there can be no deep freedom from linguistic barriers. Although you can do it outside. The same way there are other barriers. Because they are created by thought and language.

We are asking this, what we said before, in a different way. I am posing this question, is there a thought without language? Is it possible not to think. To think we need a language. Is there...could there be...let us put it this way 'thought without a language'?

(silence for some time)

If you ask me, the answer is yes. But you have to look carefully. Because most of the time we are accustomed to thinking in the language. With nama and rupa. Is it possible that there is a transcendent thinking? Which is nothing to do with language whatsoever. And if it has nothing to do with language and if there is still thought, then that thought is beyond the mind, because the mind is made up of thought which is made up of language. Is there? Could there not be, such a state? Let us ask that question. And it is true that at certain times, every human being perhaps experiences this. When he is face to face with a feeling or an emotion which he cannot put in words or cannot grasp or cannot define. That which you cannot define is usually rejected by the mind because the mind is only comfortable with that which it can define and adapt for itself and alter as it wants. That is the quality of the mind. If you come across something that is difficult to define, to categorize, to alter, then people are usually worried on how to come to terms with it.

Now when I said 'root out'...actually it is a wrong term. What is actually needed is to look at the content of the mind. See that thought is all that we call mind is made up of and also to look at the question, 'Is there something outside thought?' Is there a possibility? Because if there is something which is outside the conditionings of thought, then that can be uncorrupted by thought. And what we are seeking usually is built by our own thought and therefore it is corrupt. Suppose I say, I am seeking that reality which has been defined here, here and here. Now what am I doing? I am projecting my own idea of reality and therefore successfully blocking away reality when it happens. And reality need not be searched in caves or any such place. It is right here. Here is a reality sitting before you. Here is a reality sitting

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SADUM RETREAT

before me. There is this peepal tree. There is the sound of the birds (bird sounds heard in the background). Isn't this reality? Why do we need to construct something out of it? Because the mind likes to construct. This is available to everybody. So why would I like to think I need a special manufactured reality which raises me above the common folk.

So is it possible to look at these factors which we are discussing and then perhaps there is a possibility of finding out the root of what thought is. If you have found out the root of thought and when you go and see this endless cycle going on, at one point you say, this is utter nonsense. This is going round and round in a circle. It is like a snake eating its own tail so dump it. And then one becomes quiet. Then thought or mind is not going this way. It is not going that way. It is not seeking this. It is not looking for Allah. Neither looking for Hari. It is looking for nobody. Nobody is a very difficult state to exist in. As I always want to be somebody. If we can exist for one second in nobody, the problem is solved.

And we are saying that ...they are saying, that it is possible. Also don't think that it is difficult. It is easier than one thinks. But by our complicated thought processes we manage to cover it. If we are simple it is possible to see it. If you see it you can see the most complicated pattern of thought as it comes. Because you get a direct glimpse into the actuality of happening, when it is happening. Ok so we will leave it there and look at something else which is very interesting and also maybe useful.

I don't know if we have at any time realized that the eye for instance can only see one thing at a time. 'No' you will say, 'I can see many things at a time'. True. The eye is open. But for the time being it will see only that particular thing on which it is focused. Other things are hazy. When I look at you, I know all the others exist, but they are quite hazy. I can only see you. They are all there in the background. So, the eye can see only one thing at a time. Really seeing, meaningfully. In the same way, the mind can only think one thing at a time. You have to watch this. Don't even accept it. Look at it as you think. At a given moment, you can think of only one thing. But immediately another thing follows. Another thought follows. The space or the interval between one thought and another is so fast – and the interval is so infinitesimally small that it is not possible to see it. But when we say, 'as a chain of thought' it is many single thoughts coming together in a chain faster than even the eye can see. It is similar to the cinema. Each frame is an individual frame when we see it in the roll. But when it is projected at a certain speed you see a continuous roll happening. They need to run at a particular speed to be visible as a continuous whole.

Now we are asking, if there is an interval

between two frames, or if there is a small interval between two thoughts, is it possible to see that gap? Surely if we try to see that gap, two thoughts are trying to look at the gap between each other. But is there a possibility? And they say that between each thought there is a gap. In fact they say that the main thing is the gap and each thought that comes is like a wave coming in an ocean and settling down into the ocean. If one glimpse can be had of the gap between one thought, when one thought has arisen and another has not yet come – all problems are solved. Finished. You've seen the gap, you've seen the ground from which all thought is created and you've ended the cycle. It doesn't mean you've become unconscious. Life will go on. But you can see the gaps clearly. And as thoughts slow down, you will see the gaps become larger and larger until there is only the Gap and all these things are going round. Which is why the Buddhists call the gap *shunya*. Not because it is nothing. It is that nothing from which the entire world is created.

In Chandogya Upanishad the great sage Uddalakaruni's son goes to various teachers and comes back to him. And the sage asks him, 'Son what have you studied? Where have you been?' and the son replies, 'To this teacher and to that teacher and I've come back.' 'Have you understood the truth?' 'Yes, I have understood the truth. I think I have understood it.' 'OK, what's that, lying there?'. He says, 'It is the seed of the Banyan tree.' 'Pick it up - what do you see?'. Son says, 'I see the outer skin.' 'Remove it and peel it!'. He peels it. 'Now what do you see?'. 'I see a kernel inside.' 'Peel it. Now what do you see?'. 'I see some tiny white matter inside.' 'Open it!'. It goes on, till he says 'peel that little particle.' 'Now what do you see?'. 'I see nothing father.' The father says, 'It is from that nothing that this great Banyan tree has come about. It is from that nothing that all this something is here. Understand son, that nothing is the truth. And that you are.' That is where this sentence occurs- *Tat Twam Asi...* That thou art.

Now there are two very important lessons in this. One is from the universal cosmological point of view. The whole universe has evolved out of that nothing. It is like the eye of the cyclone. There is so much movement going on. Every thing is sucked into it. But the eye of the cyclone is absolutely silent. It is a complete vacuum. Which is why everything is sucked in.

Second thing is, therefore if there is a great nothing which is the essence of all something – for want of a better word, we call it nothing - is it possible for a mind filled with so many somethings to find that nothing. 'I am so and so. I am this and this. I have this.' There is so much stuck inside that how can it feel that nothing?

Now we may say that that is the meaning

of rooting out the mind. Perhaps. Even from the psychological point of view, a mind which is filled to the brim with 'I am this and this and that' and therefore 'others who are not this are different from me' - higher or lower it does not matter. How can it receive that which is almost nothing? It can't. But to receive therefore one has to be free of all that. Which is why has someone said... A great teacher told a student to first go and empty all that rubbish he had gathered inside his head and then come back. Maybe, he said, then we can work out something.

When you say rubbish, it is like trying to go and learn swimming while carrying a ton of cabbage on your head. And mostly rotting cabbage. You go to a swimming instructor and tell him you want to learn swimming. He looks at you. 'You have a big load on your head.' 'Oh that is cabbage that I have gathered over the years. Some of it is decaying.' 'Oh I see. So if you want to swim you have to keep it down.' 'I can't leave it. It is the most valuable thing in my life.' Then you can't swim. He says, 'The problem is, you don't know how to teach. You are not the right teacher. But I am not ready to drop my cabbage.' I am saying you must free your hands and feet by dropping the cabbage. Then you can learn to swim. You can ask this guy now, 'How do I swim?'

Now in that cabbage are included our hurts, our joys, our sorrows. All that we have gathered - unnecessary stuff. Which we are not ready to drop. All this is part of that garbage. But it is so difficult to remove it. So very difficult. I understand it is so very difficult to remove that garbage that you can not believe how difficult it is!

Because first thing is to realize that there is garbage. Nobody wants to think so. One doesn't want to think that there is garbage inside. First step is that. When you know then you start wondering how to release it. And please believe me, I am not talking as an exclusive individual. I also went to the Master with tons of cabbage in my head. Even though I was only 19 years old. At 19 the ambition was so strong. For something. That the garbage also was very heavy. And I must admit – give credit to the person – who could unload that for me. By just showing you how much you are carrying. And usually you don't have to do anything. You just unload it and you feel free to fly up.

Among the Tibetans there is one school of thought called the 'Dzogchen'. They have peculiar ways of teaching. The nearest you can find is in the thinking of the Upanishads. They are not interested in any of the deities worshipped by the Buddhists – Mahayana, Hinayana...nothing. They think to find the truth is a direct approach and it is very simple. In one of the teachings of Dzogchen, there is a guy who goes to a teacher and says teach me how to be completely free of this weight I am carrying. So he says, 'Yeah you realize you are carrying?'. 'Yes.' 'Ok. I will teach you. You see that hill up there?'. 'Yes I can see it.' 'Ok Go up the hill!'. He says 'Ready.' 'Wait, wait, don't be ready so fast. A nearby

vegetable merchant has a huge sack of potatoes. Just pick them up and put them on your head.' He puts them on his head. 'Hold it. Don't let it fall from your head. Climb up the hill! This guy with great difficulty, slips, falls, somehow manages to climb up to the top of the hill. The teacher says, 'As soon as you have reached the top, throw the sack away from your head and rest under the tree that stands there. That is all you need to do.' When this guy reaches up there all he wants is to get rid of this thing. As quickly as possible – he knows he has been told. He can do it – dumps it and sits under the tree. Takes a few deep breaths. Looks at the white sky. And suddenly realizes. Everything is over. (laughter). He sees the white sky and his mind becomes wide and expansive like the sky. He is free of all the burden that he has been carrying all along. Sack of potatoes is gone and along with it is gone all the potatoes he was carrying for ages. And he sees a glimpse. And when he comes back, the master asks him, 'Was it that simple?' 'Not in the beginning sir!' So this is called the purification process. The unloading of the mind so that it becomes clear, open and ready to receive. And when it receives, what remains, for all ordinary purposes, you may call it the mind. But it is 'no mind'. In the sense of the ordinary sense of the term. It is a vast open mind, which is the essential state of the mind. So one no longer is limited by one's own puny little personality. We've jumped from the well into the ocean. And believe me, that is our natural state. Why have we artificially constructed these little wells and swim from one end to another? We believe that this is the widest expanse of water in this world. There is this story of the frog in the well. Swamiji – Swami Vivekananda – was very fond of this. A frog used to live in a well. It used to jump from one end to another. And measure the distance and say, I am the greatest. Because I can jump from one end to the other. Because he did not know there is any other water existing which is wider than that. Then comes a flood. And a frog that lives on the banks of a river is brought into the well. After some time, they became familiar with each other. So this frog asks the other frog, 'Where do you live?' 'Well I live on the banks of a river.' 'Banks of the river? Which means wide expanse of water? Half this well?' 'No, no, no...much wider.' He says, 'Shut up...there can not be anything wider than this well. See I can jump. Can you jump this far?' The frog laughs and says 'I can jump many times that. Where will you jump? There is no place to jump.' He says, 'But I live near the river. It is a wide expanse of water. You have no idea what it is.' 'I don't believe you.' So they gone like this for some till another flood comes and both the frogs are transferred near the river bed. So the other frog which was living in the well looks around and says, 'I can't believe it. Is there water existing which is like this? So wide!' And the other frog says, 'How could I tell you before you saw it? You would have not understood it. Because you were born and

brought up there.'

So that is the situation. Fortunately for us, very often floods come. But we cling on to the wall of the well and refuse to let go of it. We are confined to the well. We are only saying, can we let go? That is why the Isha Upanishad said, 'Tena Tyaktena Bhunjita' - Let go and rejoice.

I said - let go and rejoice. Not give up. There is a difference between letting go and giving up. Let go – means - let things pass. Don't get too caught up.

(silence). This is the beautiful time of the evening. Slowly - creeps in. (long silence).

Interesting. Because even if we don't want to let go, in the end, death comes. And forces us to let go. We are saying why don't we prepare early and be ready for it. When it comes we say – come, come, I am not frightened. (Silence)

Question – On the same frog metaphor... you've come in. You are expecting to let go but afraid, what will happen when the flood comes?

Sir says – you know. When the flood comes you have no choice. You have no choice. If it is strong enough, however much you try to cling on, you will be thrown out. The fear is of being thrown out. Not when the flood comes - there is nothing before it comes. Before it comes there is the fear. Understand?

And then we need not expect floods always.

Question – Sir you said, mind can focus on only one thing. But there are people who are shatavadhanis and dashavadhanis ...

Sir – Who are these?

Questioner : They can concentrate on one time at hundred things or ten things.

Sir – Have you seen somebody like that?

Questioner : They claim to be like that.

Sir – they claim to be ..., you need not give it much importance.

Question – Sir when were talking about the gap between thoughts and watching that gap – that which watches is also a thought.

Sir – Absolutely. I am not saying watch the gap. Please realize that there is a gap. That also should not become a practice. See the problem is, we are so keen on doing something that we have forgotten what not to do. Because it is the daily habit. Get up in the morning. Brush my teeth. Then I do this. Then I do that. I am saying, can we be 'not doing' for some time. Not becoming. Is there something which is, and not becoming. Plato said it very nicely. He said, there are two things in this universe. One 'is' and is never 'becoming'. The other 'is not' but is 'ever becoming'. But the 'is not', that is ever becoming appears to us to be 'is' and that 'is' which is not becoming, appears to be not existent. That is our dilemma. This is not as if I say - there is a gap between the two thoughts and I am sitting down to find the gap. That is not what I am talking about. I am saying, see that fact - it is so. And look casually. Don't make it a forced discipline.

And another thing...since you are talk-

ing about the flood - nobody can dictate when the wind is going to blow or the flood is going to come. Whichever terminology you will like to use. Nobody can dictate when the breeze is going to blow. Right? But the breeze blows. Since it blows, it has blown before and it continues to blow now and then, we know it blows. But no one can dictate and say, 'This time, the breeze must blow. And that time the breeze should not blow'. Nobody can say. So therefore, since the coming of the breeze is so unexpected and spontaneous, not within our hands, isn't it right for us to keep our windows open all the time? When it blows, we get a waft of it inside. Because usually they are shut. That is in our hands. We can certainly clean up the house. Put it in order and leave the windows and doors open. That's the maximum we can do. All the so called spiritual practice-sadhana - they are basically putting things in order. Cleaning up the house. Otherwise when the breeze comes, it will only carry the dust which has gathered inside. Not the beautiful smell of jasmine, from where it has flown.

Now we can leave the windows and doors open. Put the house in order. Keep the curtains off. And wait. That waiting is called patience. Putting the house in order and opening the doors and windows is called spiritual practice- basically opening up and not being clogged down by cabbage. And keeping the house in order means to clean the cobwebs and remove the dust so when the wind comes, it comes in its pure form. Then wait. Patience. The breeze has blown many times. It will blow now. It is going to blow. But we keep our doors and windows closed. Can we open it up? Then not get so arrogant enough to think that the breeze will blow, when we want it. That's all. When we know this, at least theoretically, then there is an automatic natural humility in us. Not induced humility. It is not the humility of somebody doing (shows someone bowing down). Means nothing. So. Don't you see, how people, when they see somebody in power bend double and roll on the ground also. But does it mean anything? That is fear. We are not talking about that. I know people, who in certain circumstances are so dictatorial in their activity and in another circumstances become like mice. So these are all put up acts. We are not talking about that, we are talking about 'humility' which comes from understanding the fact that you cannot dictate when the breeze comes. Therefore patience which is born out of the understanding - we have to wait. We are no better than anybody else. We have to wait.

I have waited. Waiting, waiting... (Silence).

Upto what time is the satsang. (Someone says upto 5). Sir says, it is 5 past 5 now. No body told me. I am waiting. (laughter) for the breeze...

VISITS: BELUR, DAKSHINESHWAR, KAMAKHYA

Reminiscing about Dakshineswar and Belur Math

Sri M was invited to a wedding in Nagaland to which many of us had also been called. Travelling to the same destination developed into a trip with the Master to long cherished sacred places – Belur, Dakshineswar & Kamakhya!

To get to Dimapur, the venue for the marriage, we had to land in Calcutta first. So, with a little planning, we were able to do Belur Math & Dakshineswar with Sir prior to the wedding. As news spread, many others joined up for Belur & Dakshineswar and returned home directly thereafter. Finally, we were a group of about 25 people from Chennai, Bangalore, Ahmadabad, Kolkata and Delhi.

Sir, along with a few others, was able to get accommodation at the Math while the rest of us found rooms at a guest house called Vivekananda Kutir. The best and most important advantage of this place was that it was at walking distance to the Belur Math.

3.1.2009

The flight from Chennai and Delhi landed in quick succession - around 8 am. We got into our taxis and sped towards Belur. This is about an hour's drive from the airport. On reaching, we off loaded our luggage at our place of stay and called Sir, who had been in Belur a day earlier to our arrival, and arranged to meet him outside Thakur's (Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa's) temple.

We made our way to the rendezvous and found Sir standing under the shade of a tree, smiling his charming, loving smile. Everything about him conveyed how happy he was to be where he was – known ground where he had once lived and worked and studied. This was sacred land – the very earth upon which stalwarts like Swami Vivekananda & his brother disciples stood!

Your browser may not support display of this image. We began the tour around the Math by first paying our respects to Thakur. Sir requested that we do not fall at his feet in the temple premises. He led us up the steps of the temple, and as we ascended behind him, the glory of the place seemed to seep under the skin causing 'goose-flesh'!

We bowed down to the image of Sri Ramkrishna and sat silently in the majestic hall built under the supervision of one of his greatest known devotees, Swami Vivekananda. We were sitting before the

place where the ashes of Sri Ramkrishna had been placed over a hundred years ago! Having soaked in the atmosphere for some time, we walked out of the left door and did a parikrama of the temple, returning to where we began.

While waiting for the entire group to assemble, we decided to see the three shrines that stand in the compound. One has the ashes of Swami Vivekananda, the second, the ashes of Swami Brahmananda & the third has the ashes of Mother Sharada. The shrines stand serene in their simplicity – Painted in the all famous badami (light pinkish-beige) colour, standard to all Ramakrishna Ashrams, set off against the cobalt blue sky, they seemed like sanyasins sitting in deep meditation on the banks of the sacred Ganga which flows gently beside them.

Sir spoke to us of his days at the ashram when he was a brahmachari. When asked by his superiors, to choose the area in which he would like to work, he opted for puja – anything to do with puja! Surprising that a person with English honours as his subject with so much interest in literature should pick puja instead of the library! Anyway, he went on to describe how he had to wake up early, pluck the flowers, decorate the shrine of Sri Ramkrishna, keep it clean... etc. He remarked that the training he received was excellent.

We made our way to the older part of the ashram – to Swami Vivekananda's room. This is on the first floor of the first structure to be built on the grounds. Sir described to us how Swamiji, during his last moments, had requested that he be taken out onto the veranda outside the room, and lying there, looking at the Ganga, he passed away. It was thrilling to see the writing table upon which the mighty, inspiring and brilliant works of Swamiji were written! His bed, the harmonium and tanpura that had been used to sing bhajans to his beloved Master were all there.

It was time for lunch (11.30am), Sir took us hurriedly to the older part of the ashram "where the boys used to sit and practice their bhajans..." Next to that was the room of Mahapurush Maharaj (Tarak). After this, we joined the queue for Prasad lunch of khitchidi, potato curry and a sweetish, tomato chutney. Sir went to his room to eat his lunch too. We were to meet again at 3pm.

The rest of the Bangalore party had arrived. They ate their first, of the many to follow, 'lucchi' meals and were ready for the rendezvous. We waited near the 'lucchi' stall outside the building where Sir's room was. We sipped tea from thimble sized mud cups (kullars) and browsed the stalls stocked with

CD's and other trinkets.

After a quick 'thimble' of tea, Sir and the whole group then meandered up the path leading to the Math – the crowds had begun to gather. We passed the shrine of a Muslim saint & his lady disciple under a huge old banyan tree near the entrance to the ashram. Once again, we toured Belur Math for the benefit of those who had missed it earlier.

Sir talked about the early days in the Math – the difficulties that 'the boys' faced – no proper food or shelter. Somehow, the way Sir narrates these incidents, they are so vividly described that they sounded like a 'first hand' report!

Sir then took us once again, to the older section of the ashram – the actual Belur Math, where 'the boys' sat and meditated and practiced their bhajans. In the early days they worshipped a photo of Sri Ramkrishna then at the time of Swami Brahmananda (Rakhal) the statue was made. Swami Brahmananda personally supervised its making and often had portions redone until this final image won his approval.

Sir pointed to the rooms behind Swamiji's rooms and told us that that was where he had stayed. The garden below, flushed with flowers was where he would pluck flowers for the decoration of Thakur.

We saw the Ashram book shop and the museum situated close to Thakur's temple. By now it was nearing the time of the aarati, so we took our seat in the hall and waited. After the beautiful aarati, we went out to find that some of the group's footwear was missing! Sir then announced that we needed to meet early at 6am the next morning to go across to Dakshineswar, as being Sunday, the temple would be crowded. So then each went their way to find their own dinner. Lucchis again for some!

4.1.2009

Early morning at 6am, we collected outside Sir's place of stay and sipped our thimbles of tea at the famous 'lucchi-walla'. A boat was arranged to take us across. After a scenic and wonderful boat ride, we alighted near the temple and bought our prasad and found a shop to deposit our shoes. We then rushed to the temple premises.

Your browser may not support display of this image. The huge courtyard had Mother's temple in the centre and beside this were three adjoining temples. One, with the image of Sri Krishna which had broken and had been mended by Thakur himself. Second, of Radha-Krishna & the



Sri M stepping out of a boat at Belur, Jan 2009

third of Ramlalla. Across from these, to one side were twelve small temples with lingas - they are meant to represent the twelve jyotir-lingas. We joined the queue and went up to see the Great Goddess who had eaten from the hands of Thakur, who conversed with him and who directed him! When we reached, we saw that we had reached the side view of Mother. The queue for the front view was very long and we did not have the time. We decided to sit in the open pandal like structure from where we could see the Mother's front view from far. We sat down and listened to Sir as he brought bits and pieces of the old days to life in our imagination.

He narrated the story of Ramlalla (baby Ram) - one of the images in one of the temples. Some bairagis (wandering sadhus) visited the temple and one of them had this small image of baby Ram that he called Ram-lalla. He was never separated from this image - he bathed him, fed him, put him to sleep - just like a living child. As soon as soon as he went in front of Thakur, Ramlalla jumped from him and went to Thakur. The bairagi tried to coax him to come back, but He refused. Finally, Thakur asked Him to return to the bairagi - so he did. Then it is believed that Ramlalla told the sadhu, "Why don't you leave me here. I get good food. You are wandering and sometimes I go hungry." So, the bairagi is supposed to have left him behind.

Having soaked in the atmosphere in front of the Mother's image, we went to the 12 shrines of the Jyotir-lingas and onto the room of Sri Ramakrishna. Unbelievable peace and a kind of home-coming feeling overcame me. We saw the nahabat where Mother Sharada lived and cooked for Thakur.

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We then made our way to the famous 'Panchavati' where Thakur had performed great penances - The tree is there but now they have created a garden around it. They have constructed a hut like room near it too.

We sat under this tree for a while and entertained some monkeys (langoors) by trying to feed them. It was so amusing to see how choosy they were about their food. They were bored with bananas and preferred the sweet Prasad or the marigold flowers. We were also mobbed with beggar children that brought our attention to today's world. We then strolled towards the dock to board the boat back to Belur & breakfast. Lucchis again for some!

There were many places to see in Kolkata connected with Swami Vivekananda. We thought of taking a trip after lunch and a small nap but later decided not to go and settled to one end of the Math, near Swamiji's shrine and despite the teeming millions visiting Belur on that Sunday afternoon, Sir with his calm and loving voice, began a wonderful talk when questioned "Please tell us what happened after the death of Sri Ramakrishna..." After this talk and a short break, we assembled again for the aarati. There were so many people that only a few were able to find place to sit near the entrance of the temple. After this, we were once more free to spend some hours on our own and find our own dinner too.

5.1.2009

Each went their own way - according to their departure. Sir, and the others going to the wedding with him had to leave early enough to catch the flight to Dimapur, Nagaland.

At the airport we sat beside Sir and listened to him while he told us of the simplicity and wisdom of Mother Sharada. Unfortunately we could not tape it as it would have broken the intense atmosphere that had built up. We were so enjoying ourselves that we did not mind any kind of delay - the longer the better! But alas! The flight was announced and we left for our next destination - Dimapur in Nagaland.

GUWAHATI-7.1.2009

After the wedding dinner at a farmhouse in Dimapur, Nagaland, we returned to the hotel only to discover that the train that was to take us to Guwahati the next day, had been cancelled!!

This was a big calamity - We had hotel bookings for the 7th night at Guwahati and we were to visit the famous Kamakhya temple there, and then had flights leaving for various destinations the next day. If we did not get to Guwahati by noon then the temple too might shut - what to do?

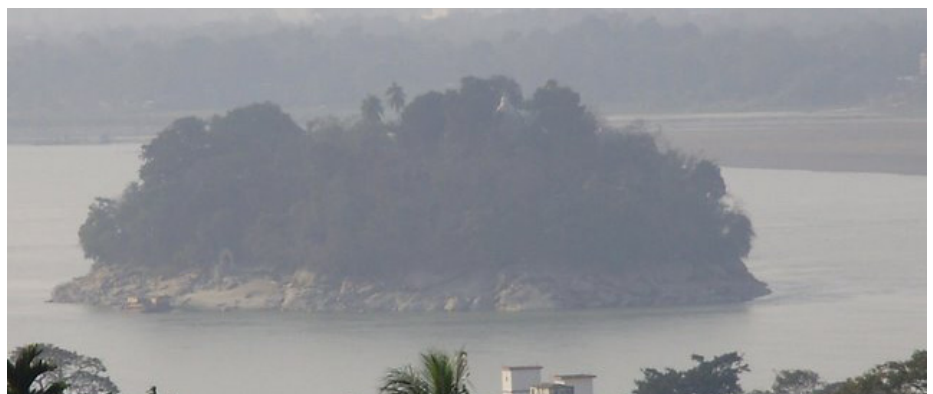
A great back-up plan came into operation - much to the amusement of Master; who sat smiling and worry free! Stand-by cars were arranged to take us to Guwahati by road. It was decided that we would go to the station and see if there were any other trains operating before hitting the road... Lo and behold! We discovered that a special train had been arranged and we could buy unreserved tickets on it! This was a miracle!

The train ride was unforgettable - we managed to get seats together except for a few in the next cubicle. We reached destination on schedule. The receiving party were waiting for us and we rolled out to Belle View Hotel - atop an elevated piece of land with an excellent view of the Brahmaputra River.

We had a quick bite, freshened up and left for the temple which was about 45 minutes from the hotel. There was great excitement - I could not get over how we had made it so far. We contacted the punditji and there we were at Kamakhya Shakti peeth!

The story is that when Sati immolated Herself, Shiva took Her body in His arms and danced His dance of destruction. Lord Vishnu had to cut Her body to pieces as it was unlikely that He would stop unless He were separated from Her. This was the place where it is believed that the yoni or womb of Mother Sati fell and once in a year the water that flows perpetually from Her, turns red.

We inched our way in the queue and descended down the steps carved on the rocky floor to a lower level where we were shown a rock formation, highly decorated with flowers and shiny cloth. The pundit told to bow down to Mother Kamakhya as he sprinkled us with the water that perpetually flows from around Her. A little ahead of this, we were shown two other highly decorated formations and were told that they were Saraswati-ma & Laxmiji. It is much on the lines of Vaishno Devi - an awesome feeling in the gufa (cave) though there is no image as such.



An island in the Brahmaputra where Umananda Temple is situated.

*Continued from page 7...***VISITS: KAMAKHYA**

Around the main temple are the temples of the other Mahavidyas. We did not have the time to see all of them, but we saw Tara – the only temple with a kind of image with eyes. The temple of Chinnamasta too, we visited. Here again, a rock formation and no image. The temple of Bhuvaneshwari is said to be beautiful, but we could not drive there as it was too late. However, having completed the main purpose of our visit – we headed back to the hotel joyously.

On an island in the Brahmaputra, luring us was the temple of Umananda. It seemed impossible to squeeze this in as the departures to various destinations were to begin around 9am next morning. We have the management of Belle View and its willing staff to thank for going out of their way to arrange a boat at 7am!

The person who collected milk every morning for the hotel convinced the boatman to take us across two hours earlier to the normal scheduled time! We thanked the Almighty for this arrangement, and set sail upon the mighty Brahmaputra. We docked on the island that had been calling to us from the windows of our room and climbed the steps to Umananda quite easily.

It was early; the air was fresh and the heart brimming with contentment as we returned on schedule with the feeling of complete satisfaction. It was amazing how, despite uncertainties, an invisible hand had intervened and lent a happy mystery to everything – A special train – A special boat – A special trip with A special Master. Our thanks Always with Salutes Sir!



Kamarupa Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati

JALAL AL-DIN MUHAMMAD RUMI

Research: Gagan Ahluwalia and Abhijit B. Jadeja

Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi or Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi (30 Sep 1207 – 17 Dec 1273) was a Persian philosopher, theologian, poet, teacher, and founder of the Mevlevi (or Mawlawi) order of Sufism; also known as Mevlana (Our Guide), Jalaluddin Rumi, or simply Rumi. He is one of the greatest spiritual masters and mystic poets of Islamic civilization. In Afghanistan, he is known as “Mawlana”, in Iran as “Mawlawi”, and in Turkey, “Mevlana”.

Kindly treat this compilation as a mere cross-sectional view and by no means, figuratively speaking, an attempt to contain the ocean in a bottle! Plunging into the vast ocean of Rumi’s works, one feels enriched and uplifted if not ascend and soar in awe, majesty, and benediction.

Over a period of 25 years, Rumi composed over 700 verses of poetry and 1659 quatrains on the subject of divine love, mystic passion, & ecstatic illumination. He wrote in Persian and Arabic and as such he is claimed by three countries: Afghanistan because he was born there; Turkey because he lived there for most of his life; and Iran because he wrote in Persian.

Rumi left Afghanistan as a young man when his family fled before the invasion of Ghengis Khan and the Mongol hordes who devastated Balkh and Samarkand in the early 1200s. He settled in the province of Rum in Turkey (the origin of the name by which he came to be known). Even in his day, Rumi was sought out by merchants and kings, devout worshippers and rebellious seekers, famous scholars and common peasants, men and women. Listen to His unique call for seekers of Truth:

“Come, come again, whoever you are, come! Heathen, fire worshipper or idolatrous, come! Come even if you broke your penitence a hundred times, ours is the portal of hope, come as you are!” Elsewhere he notes, “I have relinquished duality & seen the two worlds as One; One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.”

For Rumi, God is the ground as well as the goal of all existence: I died as a mineral and became a plant, I died as plant and rose to animal, I died as animal and I was Man. Why should I fear? When was I less by dying? Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar with angels blessed; but even from angelhood I must pass on: all except God doth perish.

When I have sacrificed my angel-soul, I shall become what no mind e’er conceived. Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence proclaims in organ tones, To Him we shall return.” On our inner search, he reminds us, “Wherever men or women put a big lock, that is a sign of something precious and valuable. Just like the snake that guards a treasure, do not regard what repels you, but look instead at the preciousness of the treasure.”

Rumi’s Works

1. Masnawi: Mystic feelings and ideas are narrated in story forms and considered to be one of the greatest works of mystical poetry.
2. Diavani – Kebir: Poems on various themes.
3. Fihi Ma Fih: Contains talks he gave at various gatherings.
4. Makatib (Letters): Book of letters he wrote to his close friends and answers to questions he was asked.
5. Mejalis-i Seb’a (Seven Courts): Compilation of notes from his teachings and sermons.
6. Divan-i Shams: A masterpiece of wisdom and Eloquence.

Rumi’s Philosophy:

Rumi was an evolutionary thinker in the sense that he believed that the spirit after separation from the Divine Ego undergoes an evolutionary process by which it comes nearer and nearer to the same Divine Ego. All matter in the universe obeys this law and this movement is due to an inbuilt urge, which Rumi calls “Love,” to evolve and seek enjoinment with the Divinity from which it has emerged.

Good and Evil: Rumi says, we cannot deny that God is responsible for evil just as he is responsible for good. Yet this does not diminish His generosity. His bestowing of evil is part of His perfection. A painter creates two kinds of picture, beautiful and ugly. He can portray beautiful young maidens; and equally portray nasty criminals. Both kinds of picture display his mastery. The ugly pictures do not reflect his ugliness, but rather his creativity. In his creative genius he can reveal the full horror of ugliness and thus reveal the perfection of his artistry. If he were not able to paint ugly pictures, he would be imperfect. That is why God has created both selfish unbelievers and honest believers. In this respect both faith and unbelief bear witness to Him; both through their behavior pay homage to His power. The difference is that the unbeliever does not recognise this and pursues other aims; while the believer rejoices in serving God.” (II 2535-45). There is no absolute evil in the

world since evil is relative.. one person's food is another person's poison. For the snake, poison is life, for humans it is death. The fish needs water to breathe, while humans drown in it." (IV 65)

Pilgrimage (Hajj)

The pilgrimage to Mecca can be understood in terms of a conscious journey towards the source of our being. Rumi clarifies this as a journey of self-realization, a journey that begins and ends within us: "O Pilgrims on the path, where are you? Here is the Beloved! Here! Your beloved is your neighbor, just the other side of the wall. Why do you err in the desert? If you look at the Beloved's Face, and don't fix your gaze on form, you become the House, and its lord, for you are the Kaaba! You!"

Bhakti

In AD 1244, Rumi, aged 36, encounters Shams of Tabriz (his Murshid or Master and a highly advanced Sufi in his 60s) who was to shake the very foundation of his life. Instantly, each recognizes in the other the confidant they have been seeking all along. Shams fires up Rumi's heart and inspires him to resign from teaching, discard all his beloved books, and instead take to the path of love and bhakti through insight, music, sema (a whirling spiritual dance), and poetry. Rumi was so devoted to his Murshid that he throws away all his books and stops teaching too! On being separated from Shams due to internal conflicts amongst his followers over Shams, he ends up expressing agony of separation and suffering in his poetry. Providence unites them once more only to be separated soon, for good, on similar grounds. Eventually, Rumi realizes that the 'true friend' he had been seeking all along was none other than his own inner self. Together they spent about 2 years after which Rumi became the great mystic we know today whose words continue to ring over 7 centuries!

Select Quatrains

1. Lovers drink wine all day and night and tear the veils of the mind. When drunk with love's wine - Body, heart, and soul become one!

2. Be certain in the religion of Love, there are no believers or unbelievers. Love embraces all.

3. To place You in my heart, may turn You into thought. I will not do that! To hold You with my eyes, may turn You into thorn. I will not do that! I will set You on my breath, so You will become my life.

4. First he tempted me with infinite caresses. He burnt me in the end with pain and sorrow. In this game of chess, I had to lose myself in order to win Him.

5. The heart is like a candle longing to be lit. Torn from the Beloved, it yearns to be whole again. But you have to bear the pain. You cannot learn about love. Love appears on the wings of grace!

Rumi's 'Wedding Night'

In the autumn of 1273, Rumi fell ill. On Dec 17, at the age of 66, Rumi left this world and was reunited with his Lord, an occasion which is referred to by his followers as his 'Wedding Night', or the 'night of union.' His passing shook Konya, a spiritual equivalent of the earthquakes that had shaken the town earlier that winter. Aflaki relates that during the earthquakes Rumi had commented that the earth was hungry for 'a fat morsel,' and that she would soon receive one! Rumi was mourned by the entire city of Konya, and his funeral was attended by people of all ages, races, and religions: Turks, Greeks, and Arabs; Muslims, Jews, and Christians. When non-Muslims were asked why they were attending the funeral of a Muslim sage and saint, they replied that 'they had learnt from him more of the mysteries shrouded in their scriptures, than they had ever known before,' and they declared, "if you Muslims hold him to have been the Muhammad of his age, for us he was the Moses, the David, and the Jesus of our time!"

SPORTS.....

SPORTS DAY AT THE PEEPAL GROVE SCHOOL

The Sports Day conducted at The Peepal Grove School in February was a huge success and booster to all involved –the children, parents, and the entire team at PGS.

It must be said that great amount of attention was paid to details in organizing this event. A big covered pandal (which was most welcome on account of the heat), cool potable water from huge matkas, etc were some of the facilities which were noticeable at the event.

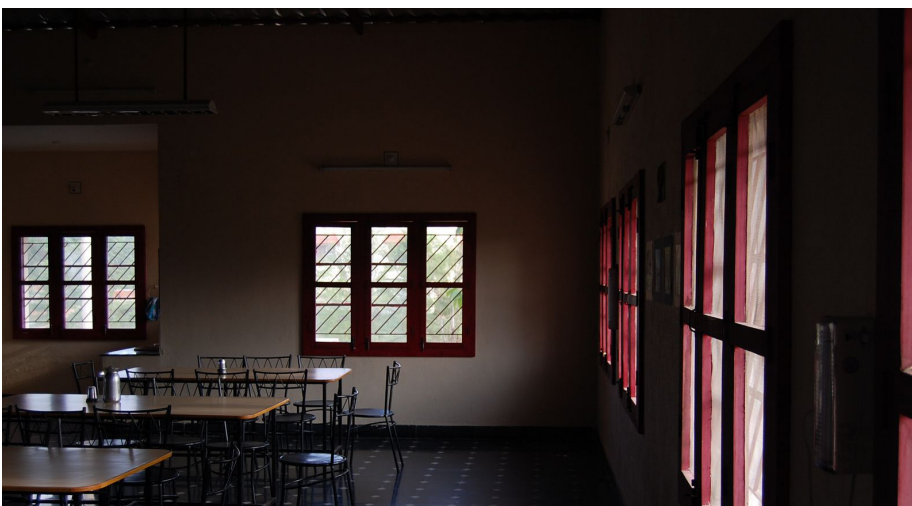
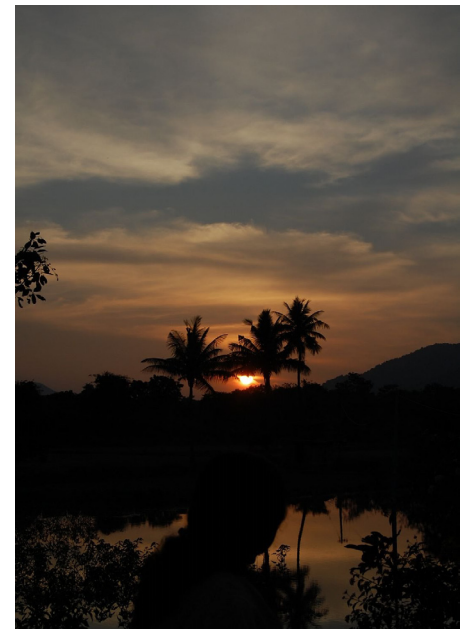
The Sports Day ran over 2 days and covered a lot of events such as running, long jump, high jump, discuss throw, javelin, etc.

One of the nice touches was to also invite and include the students of the Satsang Vidyalayas from Madanapalle and making them participate in the events alongside the PGS children. It must be admitted that 'The Vidyalaya' children were beating the PGS kids in quite a few events thus bringing in a much needed healthy competition.

Not to forget mentioning about a highly energetic and enthusiastic set of parents who had come in to not only watch the events and their children but to also pep up the participants with huge cheers and thunderous applause.

It was also a nice gesture of the PGS staff to organize special games for parents such as musical chairs, throwing the balls in the baskets, and not to forget filling water into the bottles.

All in all, the spirit of sport and high energy levels were experienced by one and all which led to an overall sense of well being amongst all!



DIALOGUES ON INNER & OUTER CHANGE.....

An intense discussion with Sri M, presented as Questions & Answers. Continued from the November 2008 issue of the SATSANG Newsletter...

Question "Since we are on different levels of evolution, different level of understanding and so on, each can give only what he is capable of."

`M': "Right."

Question "A certain sense of achievement is required for any progress..."

`M': "Yes."

Question "So meditation, if you go closer and closer ...then there is an urge to go forward. There are others who have got a superficial, temporary commitment. They are not able to internalize; they are not able to make progress, and since they feel guilty about it, they take to other methods – organizing something – a meeting or they go to a temple, do some ritual and so on, partly out of the guilt that they could not proceed..."

`M': "Do you think so?"

Question "This is my guess. I could be wrong because I'm also confused..."

`M': No – I'm just trying to find out..."

Question "Secondly, I believe that our civilization continues, our culture continues because of the manifestation of these rituals – including touching feet, saying 'Namaste', showing respect – our Ram Navami, Durga Puja, going to temples – all these manifestations are responsible for Indian culture to continue. We also have philosophy and meditation. But the majority of people want some external manifestations.

They have been kept alive. In India, there are really 3000 years of cultural continuity because of these manifestations. India is the only civilization where there are external manifestations, however hypocritical. Educated people don't do that. I've not seen many people go to Ayappa. Millions of people go – they are middle-class, not so intelligent with no understanding of Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita and so on. So, that's what they can do – they can go to bow down and so on.. You see, everybody has a place. Large majority has no understanding.

I have not seen a single highly educated man, a scientist or a manager or a very rich man, coming to a Durga Puja celebration. They all sit at home.

The men who are in distress, those who are ignorant – illiterate people who dip themselves in the Ganges, Gaya or Rameshwaram – that's all they know about. Since their intellectual understanding is not....."

`M': "But, I would like to suggest that it would also be good to – in some way or the other – make this majority which you are talking about, understand the Inner meaning, because, that effort has to be put in by us. So, as we said in the beginning, can we come together and get things going – in

some way? I am putting my individual effort here. Individual effort is most important, I mean, every one of us should; but can these individual efforts be put together?

Let us not feel that "this is 'another' organization. We must not associate ourselves with it," or "this is 'another' teacher – so we are not going to associate ourselves with him, because we have another teacher." What I mean is – get whatever is useful, whatever we need from all over... This is Sat-Sang, that is also Sat-Sang!"

Question "Sat-Sang is the key."

`M': "This is the key. Now, Sat-Sang can come from every-where. But, that does not mean that we should accept everything. We are mature individuals – we have our reasoning – we know upto what limit we can go with this particular thing – that can be done.

So, the change has to come from inside. And, how are we going to go about it? This is the central question that has emerged. Can we work together on this? Actually we were a little off the track earlier. So, coming back to this question – this is very important for us and that is – are we going on with our sadhana regularly? This is the single, important question because without this sadhana, there cannot be any external change.

We can go on saying that 'we are doing this, we are doing that' – but – as long as the Inner Being is not in Peace, It has not found Its place, we cannot go anywhere.

Also, if the inner-surety doesn't come within oneself, then, we will always be confused and we will be led to and fro, here and there and in the end, give-up the whole thing in disgust! This has happened to many people."

Question "I want to ask you a question.... I have this close friend who is very interested in spirituality. He's been meditating for many years. He gave up his business because his Guru told him to, if it was hampering him. Now the other day, he shocked me – he said that he has given-up meditation. I asked him – 'why?' Apparently, he has reached the stage where he feels that Realization or whatever it is, has not come and that it is futile to continue to meditate. He even told his Guru, it seems, that he's not going to meditate.

Now, is there any answer for this or have you any comments to make on this?"

`M': "I can't give you an answer on this because, you see, what you are telling me is a report about a friend of yours. Since I haven't seen this person, I cannot exactly say; but I can give you my comments on this matter. For one thing, we have to first consider what kind of meditation this is that he is talking about, which he started, continued

for so many years, and has now got fed-up with and so wants to give it up after such a long time?

We have to go into the actual meditation, which he was doing, because I think there is something basically wrong with what he started off with. It may be his fault, or, it may be his teacher's fault – we don't know, because, he had to give it up, after so many years; with nothing happening to him – which means, there is no sense in that meditation. If there is no inner-change taking place in a person... 'inner-change' doesn't mean giving up your job – please understand...."

Question "His point is that.... 'Changing the guna in myself, I have not been able to achieve. I would like somebody to tell me how I can achieve that."

`M': "I would suggest that you ask him to see me some-time. Will you ask him to see me sometime?"

Question "I tried to invite him this morning, but...."

`M': "You tell him that I don't want to become his Guru, please – no! Explain it clearly to him that I don't want to become his Guru; I don't want to draw him away from his teacher or anybody. I just want to meet him as a friend. Tell him that.

Suppose I have a friend who has gone into some business and failed, and he is suffering.... You know, suffering comes in various ways – it's a very interesting thing, this suffering – because, we think that we are suffering and the other man is happy, normally, and the other man thinks otherwise, because, suffering is different things to different people. One man may have millions of rupees. He has every-thing but suddenly his wife or his son has died – he is in deep sorrow and he finds that all these millions have not been able to do anything for him.

Now, on the other hand, there is a poor chap who has a hand-to-mouth existence – he is also suffering. He is suffering very badly. And then, there is a man who is physically suffering from some disease that he knows is going to claim him very soon. Death is staring him in the face. He is also suffering.

So, suffering may come in different forms to different people but it is a common factor, which everybody has. I have, at least, not met anybody who is not suffering in some way. By 'suffering' I mean 'sorrow'.

Suffering doesn't mean all the time crying – that's not what I mean. It means 'sorrow', which is the common factor. What I am trying to say is that it may come to different people in different forms – but it is there – for everyone. It is the common factor.



A SCHOOL WITH A DIFFERENCE : SATSANG VIDYALAYA, MADANAPALLE.....

When one visits the Satsang Vidyalaya at Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh, the first impression that comes through is that of smiling, gentle and well behaved village children dressed neatly and busy with something or other. The children of this school have grown up in the Sugali Thanda tribal community which is one of the most deprived and destitute tribal communities. The family backgrounds are riddled with violence, alcoholism and abuse.

But seeing these children no one can guess that they come from such backgrounds. The school provides them a holistic environment for the growth of their mind, body and character. The Satsang Vidyalayas were promoted by Sri M in 1999 in order to provide free education to the children of this deprived tribal society. The school at Madanapalle has been accredited with State Government recognition recently.

The children here pursue academic careers with great passion. The school is presently up to Class VIII and after finishing Class VII or VIII here, the students are able to clear entrance tests and get admissions in higher secondary easily due to their sound educational background. Besides academics, children are so proficient in art and craft that the teachers are planning to bring out a book on the subject based on the craft work done by the school students. The school choir is the pride of the school and always touches the heart with their musical proficiency and melodious rendering of Carnatic

music and other traditions.

Recently the Satsang Vidyalaya students participated in the sports day event at Peepal Grove School, a residential school promoted by Satsang Foundation, with great zeal and enthusiasm. Their agility and skills at various sports amazed everyone and they even beat the PGS school children in some of the events.

The school serves 3 meals to the children – ragi drink in the morning, lunch in the afternoon and a nutritious drink or cereal before they go home. The idea is to enable them to get complete nutrition at the school so that their health is taken care of. Members of the Satsang Foundation and other volunteers also arrange health camps and dental camps from time to time for ensuring good health and hygiene. The school teachers arrange regular de-worming and lice treatment to keep them clean and healthy. Due to this the children have developed a good sense of hygiene and cleanliness.

These factors play a big role in moulding the children's character and personalities and providing them opportunities to uplift their families from degradation and destitution.

The Satsang Vidyalaya school is funded by members of Satsang foundation and other patrons. The school has also received grants from Asha Foundation of US for upgrading the infrastructure and educational facilities. The school strength is increasing every year due to great demand for admissions and in 2009-10 the number of

students are expected to go up to 175 from the current 137. This year the school is also taking a few students from neighbouring villages as well whose parents don't mind traversing the distance of 4-5 Kms to send their children here.

There are currently 8 teachers in the school which number will need to increase as the students' numbers go up. The students use 5 class rooms and two more classrooms are under construction.

The Satsang Vidyalaya is both a school and home for the children of Madanapalle where all their needs are looked after and they are provided sound value oriented education for building a good future for themselves.

(The school offers sponsorship program whereby interested sponsors can fund the education of one or more children. For details regarding sponsorship and other requirements any of the area representatives of Satsang Foundation or the school management can be contacted. Pls see page 12 for contact information)

"We are talking about 'humility' which comes from understanding the fact that you cannot dictate when the breeze comes." — Sri M

NEWS

- New office of Satsang Foundation in Bangalore was informally inaugurated on 21st March 2009. The office will be the hub for official activities of the Satsang Foundation and operate as venue for future committee meetings.
- Various committees have been formed within the Satsang Foundation to manage the following activities: newsletter publication, website development and maintenance, programmes (retreats, talks and social/community activities) and rural schools (Satsang Vidyalayas).
- Sri M's visit to US and a retreat at Britenbush, Portland will take place in the last week of August.
- A trip has been planned with Sri M to visit Mount Kailash & Lake Mansarovar in first & second week of July 2009.
- A satsang will be held in first week of June at the Mitra Jyoti blind school at Bangalore. For details please contact C N Bhushan (Tel No. 09341254570)

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DIALOGUES ON INNER & OUTER CHANGE

Therefore, in this sorrow, we are all united, you understand? It is not in happiness that we are united. In fact, when somebody is happy, many people are unhappy; that is jealousy. In Kerala there is a saying, 'There is no medicine for two diseases, - one is baldness and the other is jealousy!'

Now, this sorrow is the thing that unites all of us, in the sense that it is the common factors that all of us possess. In this sorrow, we are all one. We are all one because we are all in sorrow.

Question "Sir, this suffering also depends on one's mental attitude - how you react to that is different. The same event, one person will be highly grieved; another would take it in a different light."

M: "Yes - but when something else happens to him, he may feel grief. The same thing may not grieve him - that is what I said - that, it applies to different people in different forms, but it is a common factor, in that, everybody has it. I mean everybody at least experiences and knows what it is, to some extent - so we are all one in that. All our minds are in that.

Therefore, when this person feels sorry that after so many years he has not had any experience and he wants to give up meditation - for which he even gave up his job - then, I feel I am some-how linked to this person. I just want to talk to him. You

please explain to him - there are no strings attached because I just want to talk to him as it grieves me to hear that this has happened to him. We should talk to him. I don't mind going and seeing him, because you are telling me a very serious thing. You are telling me about a person who has given up his job because he wanted to meditate. And now, after so many years, he finds that he has nothing - he has no faith in what he was doing. He is lost. It is a very serious thing; it is more serious than losing something in your life, in the material world, because this man will become a complete cynic. But, the point is that he need not become a cynic - because, in actual fact, there is Truth; there is Peace - known through meditation. But, somewhere, he has gone wrong. So, please tell him to see me and that we should meet, just to talk!

You know something? When you share somebody's sorrow - you are not actually sharing it because you are only re-establishing the fact that you are already the same, because, this is the common factor that everyone has. So, when you 'share' somebody's sorrow, what is happening is, your sorrow and my sorrow are meeting somewhere and it is this meeting which gives a spark. You know that when dry twigs are rubbed together, there is a spark? You compare your sorrow and my sorrow to dry twigs. What is a dry twig associated with normally? Death, dissolution, destruction. But, when these two dry twigs are struck together, what do you get? A spark! Now - that is the spark where meditation begins, where inner-peace begins. That is the fire which we just lit - which spark will not come when we rub two raw, fresh twigs together. Although we think that these are dry, useless twigs, they are the ones that give us fire. So, it is when I meet your sorrow and you meet my sorrow, then, there is a spark!

Now, don't get into a bad mood because we are talking of sorrow! But, when we see sorrow and are able to, at least, smile at the situation, then perhaps we are beginning to be a little happy. You see, the fact cannot be denied that other kinds of happiness will go off when this sorrow comes. But, when we are fully aware that it is there and can still smile, then we are beginning to tackle sorrow. Before that, we can't even tackle it. We don't need any Sanskrit or Arabic or Hebrew terms to handle these things. These are facts of life. It so happened that people who understood this, wrote in a certain language and so we have these terms which we can refer to.

So, Sat-Sang again, basically, is sitting down together like this and looking at the facts of life - meditating on the situations and the problems of the world at large which always begins with our problem. The whole world is our responsibility. We cannot blame anybody else. It's our responsibility - if I cannot put my house in order, how can I point my finger at somebody?

So now, can we, for two or three minutes - just sit quietly and reflect on what we were

discussing? With closed eyes or open eyes - it doesn't matter! We all have frustrations in some form or the other; we are jealous in some form or the other; we are violent in many ways. These are all the contents of the Universal Consciousness. The whole world that we see is us! It is us! So, it is no wonder that behavioral patterns are also connected in some way. Now, they are experimenting and it's become an experimental science. So, perhaps they will find out that human beings are connected. It is well known that when there is illumination in one mind, it automatically affects many, at least, in some ways, depending on how thick the exterior is for it to be able to penetrate.... or how thin!

See, most of us spend our lives harboring a great illusion that we are going to live for many years. That is the basic illusion that all human beings are caught in. Actually, it is the greatest illusion which keeps us bound. We all believe that it will take a long time for us to die and that we are going to live forever. I am not trying to be pessimistic, but, it is a fact that - one of the greatest illusions around which we all go round and round - like a merry-go-round - is, 'we are always going to be alive! Even though everyday we see people dying, 'we won't die.'

Question "You said that in sorrow, we are all one. Why is it not so in happiness?"

M: "Sorrow is part of our consciousness - what we call our mind. And the so-called 'happiness' that you find as part of our consciousness, is not 'happiness' at all. It is the gap between two sorrows."

Question "Pleasures of the senses...."

M: "The real Happiness which we all want - which we have no idea about, is beyond the whole cycle of the mind."

Question "So, real 'dukha' is also not there?"

M: "Real 'dukha' is there as long as you are within the circle. Where is real 'dukha'? (laughs). As long as you are caught in this circle of the mind - the boundaries of the mind... however much it expands and calls itself, 'universal consciousness' and so on, still, there is sorrow.

But, if somebody breaks out of this cycle of the mind, then that sorrow has vanished! What remains is what is Actual. You cannot even call it, 'happiness', because when you call it 'happiness', you are projecting your idea of what you think is happiness.

Many people think in Samadhi, they are going to be happy - in the sense that they project all the little, little happiness, which they experience in daily life and think that happiness is some deep expanded structure of these things. That is totally different from anything that you can conceive of. It is not the gap between two sorrows."

The Satsang Foundation and The Satsang Trust are exempt under Section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act for donations.