

SATSANG



Guru Purnima 2008

*Brahma-anandam Parama-sukhadam, Kevalam Gyaana-murtim.
Dwanda-ateetam Gagana-sadrisham, Tattwa-masya-adi-lakshyam.
Ekam Nityam Vimalam Achalam, Sar-vadhii Saakshi-bbutam.
Bhava-ateetam Triguna-rabitam, Sadguram Twam Namami.*

Now, today is one day of the year when everybody, many people not everybody, come together and observe this day as Guru Purnima. We have also been doing this every year, now for the last how many years? Five years. Actually it needs no explanation, because most people know the term Guru and most people know what is Purnima, so it really doesn't require much of an explana-

tion. Guru means teacher, from our point of view, and Purnima means the full moon. Now on one hand Guru means teacher, a personal teacher, when you say teacher, you refer to a personality. The word Guru has a deeper meaning, it means the capacity to initiate the process in others, to enquire and investigate into the meaning of what the world is and what is our relationship with the world and also to the subject of existence of a deeper level of consciousness - called by various names. There is one word which we should never use because it is not fashionable - 'GOD' - because, now-a-days God is considered a delusion, so we should be very careful about using that word, or we might be thrown out of the civilized world. But people still continue to use the word.

So, this is Guru Purnima and every year it is celebrated, so that there might be teachers, or, there are teachers let us say, who have completed their Purnima, like a full moon. And why full

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November 2008



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moon, you can say Poorna Surya, but you say Poorna Chandra. The teaching is like the beautiful silvery cool light of the moon, it's not the burning light of the sun. So where that manifests, that is Guru Purnima. It's also called Vyasa Purnima, because Vyasa is considered to be a very senior Guru among all the teachers. Actually since he has written so many Vedas, codified the Vedas, not exactly written, and the Brahmasutras, which is an enquiry into the Ultimate Truth. This is Guru Purnima. So I invoke the blessings of all the Gurus in Principle as such, and all the teachers, spiritual teachers that I have known, those who are here and those who are not here, of all the teachers on this day.

While on the subject, there are things I would like to say. In fact, it is easier to be a disciple than to be a Guru. If you are a disciple, that is fine. If you want to be a Guru, it is easier to be..., because when you have already acquired the name Guru, and become a teacher, and people respect you, there are a few things which you have to follow, because if you do something, you are likely to be imitated, and you have to deal with different kinds of people, not that they all are the same. You cannot deal with this guy as you would deal with somebody who goes to temple ten times a day. But you feel that there is an inner compulsion to communicate what you have or what you feel, you have to approach it in different ways. To tell the Communist to chant "Om Namo Shivaya" makes no sense, tell the person who goes to the temple or who prays five times a day that all this is nonsense, you must find reality-it makes no sense. So, it is very difficult. Actually, I wouldn't advise anybody to take on the role of a teacher. First of all, it is thankless, secondly, it's the most difficult thing to take up. It's a fact that people are likely to put all their troubles on your head, that is also there! Because, usually, on an average, what you come across is, to be honest, very few people really want to seek the truth and all these kinds of things. Its very rare. People usually say-: I'm going for an interview, please pray for me". I'm not blaming anybody, we are all human beings with limited capacity, so it is quite natural to ask for blessings. In the middle of this marketing of wares, this housekeeping, you should also remember that there are deeper issues. Now, this can be found out in two ways. One is- to watch the teacher carefully, if he is a teacher or if you think he is a teacher. You are free to think that someone is not a teacher. If you think he is a teacher, watch carefully and you will figure out very soon that he does not, or she does not (there is no bar on 'she' being the teacher). Because he deals with each person in a different way. This is not because of a diplomatic pact, it is because that is the only way in which you can open a person out and guide that person, if that person wants guidance. If he doesn't want guidance then 100 years can follow with...

So, it is not easy to take on the role of a Guru. I am saying this because somebody might think it is so comfy, lot of flowers, plus everybody gives laddoos, but it is not the giving of the laddoo, it is , every laddoo given is like every draught of poison you take. So I am saying this, because young people will suddenly get it into their heads to turn into whatever. It is very difficult. You will get into trouble because you will become the story of the blind leading the blind, anadhai.... 2000 year old saying. And, believe me, every person I think, who is a Guru, has sometime been a student, so it is good to start with being a student and continue to be a student. The perfection of teaching is to be continually a student and not ever admit, at least in private, when others say, it's okay. In your bedroom, when you are going to sleep, say I am still a student, I am learning, because, there is no end to this knowledge. It is endless. There is some knowledge which ends, you can say 'this is finished', wind up, but no, this is a constant effort. Why I'm saying this is, it is Guru Purnima today and if you are stepping



on real enquiry, it is not an easy task. If you are happy with a little pooja, meditation, blessings from the Guru, doing your job, that can be done, but if it is the other, one has to first think whether one is ready for it. If you are ready for it and if you plunge into it, we will be happy, but don't encourage it if people who are not ready for it. The other danger is -don't imitate the teacher because, there may be various reasons why a teacher works in different ways with different people. If you imitate, you'll miss the real reason why it is done. The only thought in the mind of the teacher is how to put some sense, there is no other agenda. You'll have to work indifferent ways and sometimes you have to make people run away from you because they get too attached to the person. Sometimes when they run too far you have to throw the noose and pull... If you are serious, if you are not serious, who cares, let them go to hell, who is bothered, it can't be done that way. So, these are various things you have to consider when you are dealing with a common entity, with man, who calls himself the teacher. Don't come to sudden conclusions because, not to forget that deep down, underlying all this, there is an affection, which prevents one from turning anybody away. Now, the Guru principle, which means the principle by which one learns from the teacher, is forever. There is no end to it. See, now and then there are people coming, teaching, and going away, but that doesn't mean the teaching ever ends. It is always there, why we don't receive it is because our windows and doors are shut. So just leave them open, alert and sensitive, the teaching is always there, it never ends. This teacher is there, it is insignificant, after some years he will also go, like a stick on flowing river, it will flow for some time, then waterfall, he will go down and then that's the end, but the time doesn't stop, it is flowing. So keep your doors and windows open to receive. Whenever you see or you feel, there is no other way to reckon, that there is something we would like to learn, don't waste time, because afterwards it will be too late. Oh you can start with somewhere else, but whenever there is something like that, take advantage of it, because time runs very fast. Today I went to Palamner to the Shiridi Sai Baba

temple and I said something to them, I would like to say and show the significance. In late 1700, so what century is that? 18th century... there was a great sage called Ramalinga Swamy, Tamil man, who lived in a place called Vandalur near Neyveli. He built a temple with seven screens and as you see through each screen, finally you come to the center, which is the main pratishta in which there was a light burning. He kept the light there and said this is the light which you have to reach and the seven layers are the levels through which you have to pass. Because people thought he worshipped the light, the flame, he was called Thiru Arul Perum Jyothi Ramalinga Swamy. He lived only till the age of some 52 or something. In the Tamil literature which he had written they say is comparable to the Siddhi, the work of the Alwar saints, the pre Vaishnavite tradition. There is a collection of their poems, I forget the name - "Pravalam" I think it is called. It is called the Tamil Veda. Ramalinga Swami's writings were comparable to that not only in its poetic excellence but in the depth to which it went. Why I am saying all this is because at the age of 52 even such a great soul as Ramalinga Swami found that the little organization which he had started was totally caught up in politics. Everybody was fighting with each other. He got so fed up that at the age of 52 he shut himself up in a room and said this is finished, you do what the hell you want. One year he didn't come out. Now the story is that when they opened the door after one year, he was not there, so people say he disappeared and went back. We don't know. For all you know, he might have opened the back door and gone away to the Himalayas. I don't know. Anyway, the fact is that at the young age of 52, which is many years younger than what I am now, he just ran away, or, he left, because he got so fed up with what was going on. Nobody was learning anything, everybody was indulging in politics, so many groups, and there was no learning taking place, when that is there, how can learning take place, so, when he left, they opened the door and found that he had left a little palm leaf script there. Three sentences in Tamil. Very significant sentences. How many people know Tamil? Oh! Many! So I must be careful!

Three sentences were there, the sentences were-

1. '*Kadai Virithom*' - I started the shop and spread out the ware.
2. '*Kolwaar Illai*' - no takers.
3. '*Katti kondum*' - so I tied them up and went my way.

So wares are opened up and kept, each one should examine we don't throw it off, we examine and throw it off, but it shouldn't come to a stage where I also have to say "*Katti kondum, kolwaar illai*". So, whenever there is a teaching, try to not waste time

With such mad people you don't know when this "*katti kondum*" - tie up your wares and walk off. Travellers... pilgrims somebody used to call. So, there we are, this is what I wanted to say. Om! Can we sit for just 2 minutes quietly. Thank you!

Dental Camp at Satsang Vidyalaya

Laughter is natural
Making others laugh is better & noble
Listening to laughter & laugh is a wonderful quality
Pray for the boon to laugh
To induce laughter
And live laughing
- Manku Thimma



The Dental camps are held regularly at the Satsang Vidyalayas and it involves check up, oral hygiene instructions and treatment. It is further proposed to initiate preventive dental practices, fillings and cleaning of teeth shortly.

About 50% of the children have cavities and 20% have gum problems. The incidence of fluorosis is an important factor to be reckoned here. This is due to excessive fluoride, which weakens and discolors tooth structure. This is seen in about 50% of children here. With better oral hygiene the smile & laughter of children is even more beautiful.

The camps have been successful thanks to Smt. Indra, her staff and the children. The children have not only been cooperative with the Dental staff but also supportive to each other. For instance, in the last camp one of the girls was apprehensive about extraction and her treatment was postponed. But a few minutes later her friend brought her back in, assured her, and stood by her till the procedure was completed.

- The Dental Camp Team: Dr. Aditya, Dr. Bhagya, Sri Surat Prasad, Chandu, Geetha, Indu, Dr. Priyam, and Shantibhushan.

Dialogues on Inner & Outer Change

An intense discussion with Sri M presented here in the form of Questions and Answers

“**F**or some time, I have been addressing gatherings. The moment I see a lot of people sitting, I have to ‘present’ something – then it becomes a problem. Now we can just sit and talk. So, what shall we take up for discussion today?”

Question: “ I think knowledge which is in books can be propagated by many. Bangalore has got the maximum number of institutions - Aurobindo Ashram. Ramakrishna Ashram, Vivekananda Ashram - at least ten of them are very active in training and propagating our Sanatan ideals. Actually, if our country has to remain as one and for us to demonstrate spirituality, we are in deep conflict then because there is a tremendous power holding our system. I don't think we can counteract that because they are far more powerful. At the other end, we have this media trying to take away the basic culture of the country. So some of us should at least keep this network together and try to enlarge this group as much as possible. We have to find ways and means of enlarging our circle, so that at least by prayer, if not anything else, we can try to bring about a certain amount of consciousness in the country. And each one can do his bit. So apart from understanding more about Bhagawad Gita and the Upanishads, each one should strive on his own. What we have, we should give. My suggestion is – enlarge the circle, try to get more people influenced, get across to the next generation and we need to get foreign help also.

That's all I want to say. I don't know how many feel that this is absurd, not in congruence with what you do normally, here. Anyway, we can talk about something else....”

M: “ Now, I would like to take up a few points of what you said. One is, I know you must be feeling very low-down, desperate and unhappy to say that we are not powerful enough to counter-act the power of the politicians. Probably you say this because of your desperation at the things that are happening, but I don't think we should take it that way.

I must tell you a story. You see, this is a story from the Islamic sources. As you know, we don't have any differences here between Islamic sources and others – I don't have to explain this to you. Some years ago we didn't even have to give this preliminary explanation – now the situation is such that you have to sometimes explain even this.

Now, when Mohammed fled from Mecca, one night, he took with him his closest follower, I think it was Omar, I'm not sure. They ran through the desert, and at one point, he said he was tired. As he rested and wondered what to do, he heard the sound of horses coming. He thought they might be the Meccans, the Quaresh tribe, who were after him to catch him.

So the two of them went into a reasonably big cave and sat down, and then, the sound of the hooves increased, because they were coming nearer and nearer and nearer. And, from the sound of the hooves, the warrior – associate, who was with Mohammed, said, “ Now, I think we are lost because I can count, from the sound, that there are a hundred men at least and we are only two! What are we going to do now? We can't fight them; it's impossible.”

Mohammed turned to him and said, “ My dear fellow! I thought you are my closest associate – you have known me for so many years and you still insist that we are only two?! We are not two --you forget that there is a Third party here, which is Almighty God, and He is equal to thousands and millions! So don't say that we are only two, we are three and the Third – Man is better than all these chaps who are coming!”

The associate said, “It is alright to talk about all this theory, but when these people descend on us, what are we to do?” Mohammed said, “ Just keep quiet!” So they kept quiet. The horsemen came and went round and round the cave for sometime. Then they said in Arabic, “ O!, they can't be in this cave. They must have gone further up. So, let's go back. !” And they went back to Mecca.

Now, this chap was surprised. He said, “ What happened?” Mohammed said, “ Even I don't know the mysteries of God! Let's go and see what happened.”

So they came out and saw that on the mouth of the cave, a spider had spun a big web. You see, what had happened was, within the time they had gone into the cave and the horsemen had come, the web was spun. When the horsemen saw the web, their logic was, “ if the web is not broken, nobody has



gone inside! So, they are not there.” And they went back.

So, for us also, the Third Person is very much there! So, let us not get so pessimistic about it. The realities are very bad, I am not denying this, but let's not think that we cannot oppose the politician who is 'mighty.' Now, I am not saying that we start a mass movement... that has happened many times before, in history. It makes no sense. We know what happens. These have no relevance after some time.

We are trying to do something here, and, I am sure many others are also trying – it cannot be an isolated phenomena, because we are at a stage of evolution when, within a few years, there is bound to be a lot of turmoil and catastrophes. Let us understand this. If you say, “What proof do you have?” I can't tell you anything. There is no proof that I can put on a plate and show you. But, I am telling you, that, from this time something is definitely going to happen, in a few years. It's already started. You can see the signs of it everywhere.

Now, the only way we can bring about a change is by individually changing ourselves. This is not mere talk. We have to change within our selves and reflect that change to people who are immediately around us! We don't have to go out but of course it helps when the message can be broadcast to a wider circle.

But, I think the real change comes when there is an inner – change in us. The Gita and the Upanishads and all that we read, becomes absolutely meaningless if we do not bring about the inner – change. After all, what is the message of the Upanishads? It's to bring about the inner – revolution, the inner change. Without this inner – change, the outer – change is of no use. We think that the world is heading towards a golden – age and then, suddenly, we see that it gets into its darkest phase. Again, we say, 'we'll start a mass – movement' and everything improves – and soon, everything is back in the dumps.

So, we have to start within. And any meditation or any religious advancement which is not accompanied by this inner – selflessness, I think, has no meaning; because, if our meditation does not contribute to even changing us one little bit, from our totally selfish way of life, there is something wrong with that meditation. We are only hypnotizing ourselves into thinking that we are in a beautiful state. The inner – state is reflected by how we are concerned for the outer; otherwise, we are not going anywhere

This inner – change can be brought about only through one's own personal sadhana. When I say, “One should do personal sadhana” I am not restricting it to some kind of a selfish practice – it is not that. Unless and until this sadhana is there, we will not grow inside and if we don't grow inside, what will we give to others?

Now, this inner growth is reflected and is shown by the way we act and behave with people who are close to us – that is when we reflect this, not what we wish to project. You see, now I'm sitting here and talking philosophy. But, the real I – what I really am – if I have undergone any transformation at all – can be seen when I talk to my driver, to my wife or children, close associates, or when I talk to my servant who I know cannot do anything to me. This is where my real character is reflected; and, if that character has not undergone any change in all these years of meditation and religious life – that religious life is a waste!

One thing – I want to emphasize is that – let us not think that we cannot do much – let us say, 'let us do something,' And that 'something' should start in here, in the heart.

Your suggestion that we put things together, sit together – is a very good suggestion, because, the moment we feel that we are a small group, we are isolated from the rest – we are gone! In this process, we might encounter obstacles from other groups. It doesn't matter!”

Question: “I entirely agree with you. There is no necessity of being frustrated or pessimistic about it. There are two forces – on one side are the divine forces and on the other side are the hostile forces, and this also, I think, is part of the scheme of the Almighty. He is not asleep; He knows whatever is happening in the world.

Institutions are growing; but, as you said, we have to really bring about the change within ourselves. It is individual peace, which leads to universal peace. We have to first establish it in our own heart, and then spread it. It is peace, which vibrates from heart to heart till it pervades and permeates the entire universe. This is what I feel. No doubt, let the institutions grow; let them have branches. But really a change, a transformation has to be brought about within ourselves. Then only, things will improve. You can't change society as a whole at one time.”

M: “So, what should we do?”

Question: “Intensify our efforts; spread our message.”

M: “There was another fear about young people which you expressed, which is very, very relevant, I must say. You see, there are many things that they are interested in, but when it comes to things of the spirit or of religion – very few are interested and I do not blame them because of what they see today. They see how religion is turned into politics and politics is turned into religion – the whole thing is mixed up. They see how those people who practice religion for years, who go to temples or mosques or churches – and then, when they come out, they do the same thing which everybody else is doing! So, naturally the young people say, “What the hell! Why should we?”

Question: “They see them being hypocrites.”

M: “Exactly! So when we bring about a change, they will also learn what it is about. The last time I went to the United States, I encountered very few young people who came with a curiosity to find out what's going on. They said, “O!, well, we don't attend these meetings because some Swamiji comes from somewhere and our parents here ask us to fall at his feet to show respect. We do have respect for him, but why should we fall at his feet?”

I said to them, “ Look, your parents think that because you have been born and brought up in the west, you might get totally westernized, so, they hope that this will inculcate some sort of culture.”

This is why the parents ask them to do it. But, the parents themselves are not aware of the inner springs, - the wisdom of this culture. If they had inculcated that in the children, then these things become superfluous - whether they fall at their feet or they don't – it doesn't matter! Now, what has happened is because they see only the externals, with which they are disillusioned , they think the whole thing is rubbish.

One young man told me, “My mother says I must touch your feet but I don't know why, I don't want to touch your feet.” I said, “ You don't have to touch my feet! Look, my dear young man – I think people in India have had enough of bowing down! You tell your mother, ‘For once, I'd like to stand straight. I have had enough of bending down. For hundreds of years, we have had to bend down to one conqueror and then to another. And now we keep on bending and bending and we have become hunch-backed!’ So, you stand straight and tell them that - ‘I don't want to touch his feet!’ So, he went back and after two weeks, he came all the way from Phoenix to Fremont, with his father and mother in tow. They came to ask me whether I was trying to spoil the child! We had a long talk. Now they are very good friends! They understood what I was trying to convey. I said, “You yourself should be aware before you begin to teach. If you are not aware, what are you going to teach?”

Now, in India, I think, it is the same case. We are no different. In fact, in these public talks that we have, where sometimes the subject is strictly technical, like Isha Vasya Upanishad or Bhagwad Gita, I find that, when I say, “According to Vedanta, such and such a thing is like this” – most people keep quiet and just listen. On the other hand, during a talk in Harvard University, where 65% of the audience was American, when I said, “According to Vedanta, this is what the explanation is” – immediately they asked, “Vedanta according to who? Are you talking about Ramanuja's Vedanta – Vashishta Adwaita or Adwaita or Dwaita?” You see they have gone into it and are serious, whereas here, in general, people have lost the essence of religion. We use religion only for doing rituals, for going to temples, for celebrating festivals and decorating – I am not saying you shouldn't do all this .. What I mean is, if this is state of the religion which conveys the very Essence of one's Being, which is the Upanishadic teaching, how are we to expect young people to get interested? Naturally, they want to see TV; they want to turn western, because they find nothing in this!

And we have any number of 'philosophers' who come and say that 'all this means nothing', so that's also there – that is another part of it. They talk to young Moslems there and say, “ Why do you want to go to the mosque and pray five times? It's meaningless!” But these same people don't stop them when they turn violent. They don't point out that religion is being politicized – these things they don't do.

This reminds me of a story about a community of people who lived on a small island. The wise- man of the community made a prophecy that their island was going to be destroyed. So, they had to shift out. Now, that island was physically there, but destruction took place. And then, vegetation started again, and it became an ideal place.

Now, these people who had settled down in another island, had to be taught how to get back to their original home where they did not have any jealousies, etc. It was a beautiful state – Utopia.

The elders, who remembered it, started training courses to teach these people how to get back to their island. The way to get back there was either swimming over or crossing the sea by boats.

After a few generations passed, there was a group of people who were fed-up with all this boat building and swimming and all that was being taught. They said, ‘ Best thing to do is to forget about all this, enjoy your life as it comes. Why build boats? Why go swimming?’ So, they started a propaganda saying, ‘There is no such island that exists anywhere; there is nothing called boat-building, there is nothing called swimming, this is all nonsense,’

So, those people had their own philosophy. They brought out their own encyclopaedias and dictionaries which said, ‘ boat-building: an imaginary art practiced by people who are mentally unsound’, ‘swimming: a strange practice in which you have to stand in one place and move your hands and legs around; supposed to take you to an imaginary island that is supposed to have existed many years ago.’

So, the whole society got built on those lines. Anybody talking about that island was immediately labeled as 'lunatic'

This is exactly our situation. On the one hand, there are a few people who are trying to show that there is still something left. On the other hand, there are others who think themselves wise and declare that 'all this is nonsense.' And there is the third set, which is the majority of people, who are so lost that they go behind any person who temporarily proclaims himself to be a leader. Isn't this the situation? We are so confused that anybody who offers to give some orders, we follow – like blind sheep .So ...'

To be continued...

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So we have a morning sandhya which is dawn and we have an evening sandhya which is dusk – beautiful time when that and this come together for a short while. And the higher and the lower are merging just as the sun is setting. In the morning and evening, the higher and lower at certain points of time are more accessible to the human mind and that is sandhya – coming together. At those times whatever work you have, even if it is for 10 minutes, go in your room. Don't have to go outside and make a big noise about it. That way in the Bible, Jesus describes prayer beautifully. He says, ‘When thou prayest go into a closet, when you have shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is inside thee.’ Shut thy door and don't even let anybody know what you are doing. Sit quietly, close your eyes, fix your attention, think God is residing here. And what will you pray ? Pray that all creatures around you who are suffering may lose their suffering.

— Sri M

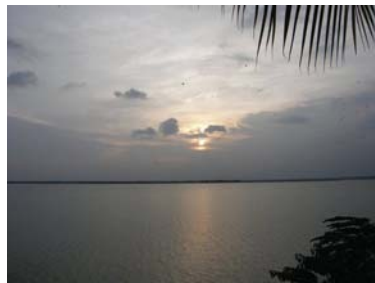
Godavari Retreat

An account by Satyen, Jayshree and Achutya Rao

A retreat was organized on the banks of the river Godavari at Rajahmundari (Andhra Pradesh) between 17th and 21st of October, 2008. The town has a very old history and is well known for the 11th century Chalukya King, Raja Raja Narendra, from whose court the great poet Nannaiah started the translation of Mahabharata into Telugu language and where the Godavari Pushkaram (like the Kumbh Mela) is celebrated once every 12 years.

Sri M and the participants reached Rajahmundari on 17th forenoon and were lodged at the River Bay Resort overlooking the river. The place was well chosen, which was spacious, comfortable and suited for the retreat participants. After a sumptuous lunch and some rest, the evening programme commenced. The daily schedule started at 0600 AM with one hour of Yoga and Pranayama in the open lawns on the river bank, demonstrated and guided personally by Sir, followed by Meditation. After the breakfast, around 0900 AM, talk by Sir and followed by a Question and Answer session. In the evening, Satsang, followed by a boat ride on the river to one of the islands for walk and meditation. On coming back, Bhajans and talk by Sir. Then dinner at 2030 Hours a stroll and retire for the night.

On 19th there was an opportunity of having exclusive one to one talk with Sir and a final session and blessings from Sir. Each of the sessions was rewarding, with the constant physical presence and illuminating talks of Sir, the nice boat rides and walks on the sands, meditation by the serene waters and devotional bhajans. It was an experience watching trains and motor vehicles passing on the long rail cum road bridge above and heads of cattle swimming from the a kilometer away island to the main shore through about a hundred feet deep flowing river during the boat rides. It was an exhilarating experience, on the second day evening on an island, very close to our group when a huge matriarch buffalo heading its group ferociously chased away a herd of sheep to claim its territory.



Thanks to the good organizing capabilities and pains taken for every detail on the part of the organizers and the cooperation of the resort management, our group had its exclusivity, timely and excellent cuisine with some Andhra delicacies both on the menu and in the 'Prasaadam'. It was a very useful and pleasant stay.

The gist of Sir's talks during the period is as follows: The central message of the SATSANG was to cultivate or instill a sense of intense love for all living beings.

Sir began by quoting all the great Acharyas who had written various commentaries on the Vedanta about the Supreme Being. He also mentioned that one of the greatest Acharyas –Adi Shankaracharya had –after so much of work finally concluded that chanting the name of the Lord is the surest way to reach Him..... BHAJA GOVINDAM BHAJA GOVINDAM, GOVINDAM BHAJA MOODHA MATE !!! (Chant the name of Govinda you fool !!!). So, instead of indulging in verbal acrobatics and intellectual arrogance and

debates, its better to chant the name of the Lord.

Sir then went on to mention that one of the commentaries which he was not supportive of – was the mention of this world being an ILLUSION. He said that this world is REAL and we have to understand that and deal with it and start from there.

He urged us to begin looking at ONLY understanding what we are capable of at the ground level and quoted SAT CHIT ANANDA and ASTHI BHATI PRIYA !!!

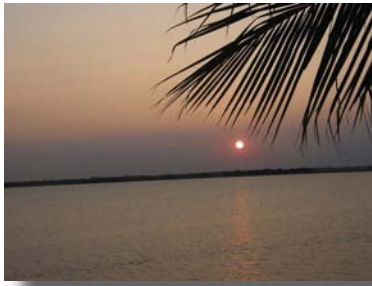
He explained that in both these beautiful messages, it is difficult to comprehend the first two words and hence why not look at the third word, i.e., ANANDA or PRIYA. He stressed the importance of PRIYA (LOVE) in our lives and beginning to encourage that emotion first within our own family and then extend it to outside. This is the only way to EVOLVE and then be able to understand the other two words like "Sat Chit or Asthi Bhati".



He pointed to a description of the ASHWATH TREE (Peepal) in the scriptures –which is described as being upside down –with its leaves and branches on the ground and then its roots at the top. Similarly, we can only reach the Ultimate or Supreme roots by starting bottom up. He also urged us to ponder over the similarity of the Peepal leaf to a heart or love shape.

Sir also emphasized on the importance of forgiving and forgetting and not keeping any grudge which can heighten the pace of evolving. He suggested a method during meditation – remembering and visualizing the person who we think has harmed or hurt us most and then either embracing that person and giving that person a rose or a flower and making up with him.

On 20th after the morning tea, we all left in good air conditioned 9 and 12 seater vehicles, by road, with the river on one side and green paddy fields and coconut farms on the other side. The journey lasted for half an hour to a place from where the boats start. It was a good 100 seater mechanized



boat exclusively hired for the group, having an air conditioned lower deck and open upper deck with chairs. After a hot breakfast, it started at 0900 hours. It was a smooth and wonderful 8 hour upstream trip with rolling green mountains on either side of the now wide - now a little narrowing around 200 feet deep fast flowing river, occasionally seeing a tribal village, some of which do not have electricity or road connection. In the forenoon we stopped at a village and visited the temple of the local Goddess Gandi Pochamma and in the afternoon we stopped at village Perantapally and visited the serene ashram of late Sri Balananda Swamiji, who was from Rama Krishna Ashram. Excellent exclusive arrangements for comfort, good food and fruits were made on the boat. The staff was very attentive and helpful, especially for the seniors. Where the river takes nice curves amidst 'Paapi Kondalu', the higher mountains of eastern ghats, it was a breathtaking picture post card type of scenery.

Around 1700 hours we got down from the boat, climbed up the steps of the high embankment at a village, beyond which due to limitations of depth and presence of submerged rocks, large boats can not go and got back in to the same vehicles which reached by road there, with our luggage. After a two hour ride in the interior roads we reached the famous shrine town of Bhadrachalam. The town and temple of Sri Rama are located on a hill by the side of the river and from one side of the temple the steps lead in to the river. Though presently the river was flowing so low not encouraging people to climb down the steps, during the season, waters raise quite close by and during the occasional floods, waters even enter the temple area.

For the night, after dinner, we halted at the A . P. Tourism Department's 'Punnami' Hotel. We visited the temple at 0530 along with Sir and had a good darshan. Here, the unique features are that in the sanctum sanctorum, only Sri Rama, Sita and Laxmana are there and Hanuman is out side the main temple in a separate structure and Rama and Laxmana have four arms, each holding bow, arrow, Shanku and Chakra; the one with arrow showing Abhaya Mudra.



The puranic story is that during their exile, Rama and Sita stayed here in this region and while wandering in the beautiful surroundings of Panchavati, relaxing on a boulder and being happy with the comfort provided by that boulder, Rama blessed it. Later, during Dwaapara yuga, that boulder was borne as a son - Bhadrta to Mountain Meru. Bhadrta through penance with single minded desire to see Rama, pleases Maha Vishnu, who agreed to stay on him, where by the mountain got the name Bhadrachalam. Much later, in the 17th century, one Kancharla Gopanna who was a revenue Tahsildar of the Muslim ruler Tan-e-Shah, happened to visit that place and finds the local villagers

worshipping the bare idols on the hill. Being himself a Rama devotee, with the moral and limited financial support of the people started construction of the temple and having run out of funds, used off the land revenue collected by him and completes the project. When Tan-e-Shah came to know of it, he imprisons Gopanna at Golkonda prison for twelve years and tortures him. One night, Rama and Laxmana appear before Tan-e-Shah, in the guise of Maratha soldiers and hand him over an amount of six lakh coins which was spent by Gopanna and obtain a receipt and disappear. After realizing that, Tan-e-Shah releases and sends back Gopanna with all honour to Bhadrachalam, and he himself attends the temple on important occasions like Ram Navami with gifts. Because of his high level of devotion and the service, Gopanna was called as Rama Dasa and being great poet, he has written a number of Keerthanas on Rama, which are very popular (Dasa Sahitya) and some other works like Dasaradhi Satakam, etc.



After breakfast at 0900 AM, we left Bhadrachalam by road and reached Rajahmundry around 1315 hours, partly through interior roads with nice country side and beautiful huge lotus filled tanks. After nice lunch at the same resort, people parted on their individual journeys back home.

Every detail was worked out well, adequate care was taken to organize, schedule timings and provide for best possible facilities and food by the organizing couple who richly deserve our heart felt thanks. All had the benefit of the grace and kind presence of Sir so close by, throughout, sharing, interacting with and immensely benefiting by it.

Both from tourism and spiritual aspects, it was a very rewarding experience.

The Gift of Rain

Memoir by Rob Snyder of his stay at Madanpalle

Behind the little cottage that I'm staying in, in an open field that extends out one hundred yards or so before bumping into a farm planted in corn, I've watched for hours a group of people digging a trench. There are seven in all, four men, two teenage girls and a woman perhaps 60. The trench they are building is quite impressive. At present, it's 2 feet deep and at least 100 feet long. The process begins with two of the men inside the trench, one with a long metal pry bar and the other with an odd angled shovel. As the two men pry and shovel the soil loose, a third man places the loosened soil into a metal bucket and then on top of the head of one of the women. She then walks away and joins the other women in a tag team, moving bucket load after bucket load, hands to their sides, a 100 feet away. The fourth man then removes the bucket of soil from the last women's head and tosses it on top of an every growing mound. This work continues from sun up to sun down with rarely a break in motion. And as with all the Indian

people here, the women shine with their beautiful saris, bright, and flowing. The men in their loincloth, plain long sleeve shirts and scarves wrapped about their heads. All in bare feet.

I have encountered a few of these men here in passing and have wanted to ask them about their project and mention how impressed I was. Namaste is the only word that we have a mutual understanding of and although limited, the gesture is always kindly acknowledged. Beyond that however, we have tried to communicate, but the language barrier keeps us to a few hopeless hand gestures and sounds that mean nothing to each other's ears.



This afternoon it began to rain. Not a drizzle, but something we in the North-west are all too aware of. In excitement of the familiar sound and the possible relief from the heat, I came out of my room and sat on the porch and watched. As I sat marveling at how I have actually grown to enjoy the rain, I could hear voices drifting in from around the corner. My porch is shaped in an L that wraps around half of the four walls of my cottage. In a short while one of the men I have been observing for so long appeared from around the corner. It was the man who worked the pry bar, seeking relief from the rain. We did our dance with hands, pointing to the rain and making sounds with our mouths. Yes, rain I said, a monsoon and pointed again. He repeated the word monsoon, smothered heavily in a Hindi accent, making the sound uttered something quite different yet close enough to see we agreed. We now had two words, Namaste and monsoon. But that was it, two words to describe our two very different worlds.

More voices streamed in from around the corner. Lots of laughter followed. Lots of fast spoken Hindi words were exchanged as the sounds of women's voices were added to the mix. I think they were saying, come look, there is a funny looking white man here. Just sitting here, come, come, it's very funny.

One by one they came around the corner to have a look. They stood eight feet away in a huddle, all staring and thinking, yes that is a funny looking white man sitting there. These are always awkward moments, of wanting to communicate but your tongue is tied to another land. We did the pointing thing again with a mix of odd sounds. All I could do was smile. So that's what I did, sat there and smiled while they continued to speak and laugh amongst themselves.

The two teenage girls were most intrigued by me. They kept looking at me with sweet eyes while occasionally peering through the open door of my room with curiosity. The older woman, whom I'm assuming was the mother, became very vocal in speaking to me while making gestures toward the eldest teenage girl. I think she was saying, hey you, funny looking white man sitting there, you should marry my daughter. Yep, I'm sure of it. I kept smiling as the rain continued to pound.

My sweet smile must have made them comfortable as the huddle moved within 4 feet. We again tried with hand gestures and more mumbo jumbo. I tried to speak of home. Doesn't everyone know that word? Me from Seattle Washington, home. That got nowhere. In a flash of brilliance I held up a finger, said one moment and moved within my mysterious abode. I came back with my laptop in hand and began to show them a slide show of my property and home. This was great fun. Finally we had a language that would bridge the gap between us. With each picture we pointed and gave our own words to describe the trees, flowers, garden, house and Buddha statue that appeared. We were now on the same page. And then came an image of two tree frogs on a leaf. I tried my best to repeat the words they were using for the little frogs. Packa packa packa, I blurted. It made everyone roar with laughter. I continued again and again to try, each time we all laughed so hard and with such joy.



Now on a roll I thought I'd show them my artwork. I began the slide show and remembered that I had brought some gifts for my teacher. Three glass leaves and a glass twig. Again I held up a finger and dove into my cave. I showed them the glass pieces and began the slide show again. As images appeared I held up the glass pieces to the screen for them to get the connection. They did and were entranced. This time I could use hand gestures to depict scale as they nodded in agreement.

I can't tell you how exciting this was for me, to actually break through the barrier that stood between us. It was a genuine connection of heart. A connection that was sealed with an exclamation point as they left, hands waving, their smiles stretching ear to ear.

As to the marriage proposal, I'm giving it a few days.

.....
Never in the midst of all your activities, forget to remember God. Whatever be your activity you are involved in, don't forget to remember at least for few minutes in the evening – there is a Supreme Reality who is behind the whole universe.

— Sri M

United Nations Talk

Sri M

Talk at the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations, August 28, 2000.

The invitation to attend The Millennium World Peace Summit of religious and spiritual leaders filled me — and I am sure all other religious and spiritual leaders — with great joy and hope that at last the esteemed United Nations has seen the importance of getting religious and spiritual persons to sit together and sort out the problem of world peace.

This is the first time such a step is being taken and considering the gravity of the situation, we all hope many more constructive steps will be taken to tackle the issues of world peace.

After all nobody likes war. Nobody, irrespective of what faith he or she belongs to, likes violence and bloodshed and the misery and sorrow that characterize war, and yet religion fights religion, sect is set against sect, and human beings, forgetting that they are what in the ancient Hindu religion is called 'Vasudeva Kutumba' (One universal family), or as mentioned in the Koran 'Servants of The One God, The Lord of The Universe (Rab-il-Alamin)', or what The Bible calls 'children of the Living God'; kill each other in cold blood.

It is high time we together call a halt to this cancerous malady, especially because political leaders, by themselves have failed to do so, and in some cases, unfortunately, have even willingly or unwillingly abetted war's destructive march.

All that is true one would say but what are the practical steps to be taken, now that we see the danger.

Mere social reforms however, cannot do much as we have seen in the past. What is required is the reformation and change, which is the natural outcome of the individual's spiritual experience of inner unity, which again comes with the realization, that every human soul is potentially a spark of the divine Supreme Reality, or at least is linked to that Being, who for want of a better word we call God.

If this inner conviction, which the great religions of the world and the great spiritual teachers have spoken about — nicely summed up by the words of the great teacher of Galilee, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God." Or the famous statement in the epistles of St. Paul, his disciple, "Know ye not that ye are the children of the living God and the spirit of God dwelleth in ye"— can be translated into action, world peace which is the end of war, is not far away.

I must remind all our friends who have gathered here that every religion subscribes to the tenet of PEACE first and foremost. When a Muslim meets another, the first greeting is, "Salaam alaikum (may the peace of the Lord be upon you)". "Shalom (peace)," says the representative of the ancient Jewish religion. Every prayer of the great Hindu heritage ends with, "OM Shanti (OM peace)". For, peace is the very foundation and fabric of human coexistence.

The great religions of the world all admit that spiritual teachers and prophets have arisen in all parts of the world for thousands of years and have taught each race and generation, as the Sufis say, "According to their needs and according to their capacities." The four thousand year old Rigveda, one of the sacred works of the Hindus puts it succinctly when it says, "Ekam Sat vipra bahuda vedanti," — the truth is one, wise men call it by many names.

If the world's religious and spiritual leaders keep this in mind and consider peace and human welfare as the crux of religion and spirituality, then the very lives we lead will contribute to peace. We can, then, without the least trace of hypocrisy or greed for power and position, guide and direct the people to take practical steps to bring about world peace and end war.

Only the truly religious, who are free from the greed for power and position can inspire true reform and galvanize the masses to shun war and strive for lasting peace. Only when the heart is pure (Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God — New Testament) and unselfish, does the concern and compassion for fellow humans arise. In the words of the Bhagawad Gita, another great book of Hindusthan, the country where I come from, "He who seeks the welfare of all living beings is the greatest practitioner of religion." The great Swami Vivekananda was a perfect example of such a practitioner of religion in the recent past.

One of the oldest religions of India, Jainism, has in fact made non-violence the most important creed of their faith: 'Ahimsa paramo dharma' (non-violence is the greatest religion) declared their Thirthankaras (Perfected teachers). And, we all know how important non-violence was to the great Buddha.

No wonder that attempts to end war by the professedly agnostic and atheistic leaders have failed miserably, since they lack the tremendous energy that flows from the core of the consciousness of those who have true spiritual realization and the resultant deep inner conviction.

Therefore, it is the religious and spiritual leaders who must take the initiative and work in cooperation with the United Nations Organization to truly unite all the nations on the earth.

Standing on the firm foundations of faith and soul-harmony let us now look at the logistics.

The United Nations could follow up with more such conferences, so that, the world's religious and spiritual leaders can meet more often to chart out a course of action.

The International Advisory Council of Religious and Spiritual leaders, a permanent body which the U.N. has suggested, is a step in that direction.

Since religious and spiritual leaders wield so much influence among their followers and associates, a core group of such leaders, constantly in communication with each other, must be set up so that the moment the preliminary symptoms of the disease called violence, sprouts in their respective communities, they can instantly give a call for peace and nip the strife in the bud before it grows into monstrous proportions.

For this, first of all, the leaders themselves being experts in their respective traditions and even of other traditions should identify all the positive, unifying and peace generating factors from their sacred lore and project them in a way that influences their followers to move towards humanitarian concerns.

Aspects of these traditions which might have, in the past, for historical or other reasons, reflected the opposite of what one is now attempting to do — namely, an end to violence — must be ignored, explained away or totally discarded, for times have changed and all responsible persons see the importance of living together in peace and harmony.

Fortunately, the above process will not be difficult because the goodness and humanitarian contents of the great religious traditions far outweigh the minor aberrations — provided of course that the leaders agree to be altruistic and pragmatic in their approach to the dissemination of the teachings.

To bring this about, studies in comparative religion will turn out to be very useful.

I believe that the U.N. would be doing a great service to the cause of inter-religious harmony and world peace, if it could set up a well equipped center for the study of comparative religion or support such already existing centers.

Also, apart from the conferences at the U.N. headquarters, smaller conferences and meetings could be organized at national, state, and regional levels to bring together religious and spiritual leaders.

The U.N. could also organize and participate in rallies (Padayatras) for religious harmony like the ones the Manav Ekta Mission — a wing of the Satsang Foundation, of which the writer is the founder — has been organizing for the last few years (Clippings attached).

Last, but not the least, all attempts to bridge the gap between religion and science should be encouraged.

In this age, when science is almost a religion and a scientist's views are generally accepted by all the rational human beings, steps should be taken to bring scientists and religious and spiritual leaders together.

Confrontation between science and religion should be replaced by cooperation and willingness to examine each other's ideas with the prejudices of the past set aside; a task which Al Ghazali, the well known sufi teacher, among others, initiated long ago but has since been largely abandoned.

It is the responsibility of the scientist as well as religionists to show that knowledge is not opposed to religion. "Seek for it in China, or even in the deserts of Tartary", said the prophet of Islam. The ancient sacred books of the Hindus extol knowledge and call religion the Science of God. Yoga and the mystic practices of Sufis, for instance, provide a vast field of research for unprejudiced scientists, especially neurologists and psychologists. For instance, it is well known today that some forms of meditation do help to lower stress levels or induce sleep, without chemical sedatives.

If facilities for research in such religio-scientific areas could be set up or supported, it is bound to mutually benefit the scientists, on the one hand, who will understand that the study and practise of ethics and religion is as much important as the study of physical sciences, or even that religion and meta-physics transcend the world of the senses; and the religious leaders on the other hand, who will learn to eliminate the superstitions and arrive at the purest form of religion and religious experience.

To conclude, let me invoke the ancient vedic prayer:

Lead me from the unreal to the real (Asato ma sad gamaya)

Lead me from darkness to light (Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya)

Lead me from death to immortality (Mrityor ma amritam gamaya)

Let there be peace peace peace (Om Shanti Shanti Shanti)

It doesn't matter whether you are sitting behind closed door at midnight and doing some mysterious japa, calling some intelligencies to come in –it is all absolute rubbish- what you have to do is to go out and see people who are in trouble and help them. That will be a better sadhana.

— Sri M

Peepal Grove School Update

The Peepal Grove School (PGS) a co-educational residential school promoted by the Satsang Foundation in June 2006, has been accorded recognition by the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (ICSE) and is now affiliated to ICSE. The first batch of Class 10 students will be giving their board exams in 2010.

In addition to high quality academic programmes pursued by the school, there are various extra curricular activities in the school which provide the students holistic, all round growth and education. Among various activities carried on by the school, a few are highlighted in this article.

In September 2008, Class 8 students went for an excursion trip to Coorg. They had a pretty challenging trek and a most comfortable stay. Students also visited the Dubare Elephant camp and The Tibetan Golden Temple which are located in the neighbouring area.

As a part of their EEP (Environment Education Programme), a group of students went on a field visit to Madanapalle. They first visited The Foundation for Ecological Security (An NGO affiliated to the National Dairy Development Board) who took them for a visit to their project areas. The children were shown how the villagers were benefiting through a combination of check dams, afforestation, soil protection and other measures. The students then stayed at the Satsang Foundation Guest House at Madanapalle where the Founder, Sri M himself resides. The following day they had chalked out a programme of interacting with the children from the rural school (Satsang Vidyalaya). The programme included tree planting, singing, dancing, skit, games (kabbadi) and finally a visit to the houses of some of the children studying there.

A Musical Troupe from Bombay visited PGS on Aug.6th, 2008. A Lecture Demonstration on Santoor was made by Pandit Ulhas Bapat – an internationally acclaimed Santoor player. Another Lecture Demonstration was done on Sitar by Ustad Siraj Anwar Khan – a disciple of Ustad Vilayat Khan who represents the fifth generation of the illustrious ‘Mewati Gharana’. A demonstration was made on Tabla by Sri Kiran Yavagal. This was a most enlightening experience for students interested in classical music as they were able to learn about Notes, basics about ragas, technical aspects of each instrument, tuning the instruments, comparing and contrasting Hindustani, Carnatic and Western Classical Music, roots and philosophy of Hindustani Classical Music.

PGS is now two and a half years old. A unique and integral part of the education at PGS is the exposure provided to students to experts from varied professions and fields.

Some of these interactions are as mentioned below:



Shannon Jones with PGS students

Shannon Jones — Soprano (Portland, USA) conducted a workshop on Western Opera on 22nd January, 2007. General overview of western opera, including listening to recordings and doing some vocal exercises and singing. Comparison of Western and Indian classical music.

Mandira Naidoo — Graphic Designer (Bangalore) conducted a workshop on Graphic Design on Feb. 9th and 10th, 2007. Mandira said, “I am amazed at the response and the natural free flow of creativity in the kids. The results of the workshop are almost at par with college level students”.

Robert Snyder — Sculptor (Seattle, USA) conducted a workshop on 24th, 25th and 26th Feb. 2008. Rob said, “It was great fun for me to work with such delightful children. Each child was enthusiastic and dedicated to the assignment, using the materials that were discarded from building construction to make art. I was impressed with the way each one participated in the group and blown away by the creative diversity that emerged”.

Pradeep Kapur (Now Indian Ambassador to Chile) — Indian Foreign Service (Delhi) held a workshop on Diplomacy and Foreign Policy on August 12th, 2008. “The holistic development taking place amongst the children is fascinating. There is a sense of mission and purpose, and positive inquisitiveness and curiosity. They answered questions with a sense of understanding and maturity. These bright students were able to think in context and respond beautifully”.

Ramji Raghavan — Chairman, Agastya Foundation (Bangalore) conducted a workshop on Mobile Science Labs on Sept. 11th, 2008.

Ramji Raghavan — “It was a wonderful experience. The teachers and the students are very friendly. Students are very interested and not shy about participating and expressing themselves”.

Achutya Rao, IPS (Ex-Comissioner of Police) — Director General of Police (Bangalore) held a workshop on ‘Indian Police Service’ on Feb.15th, 2008. Achutya Rao spoke about different roles of IPS officers, preparing for the IPS, experiences as an IPS officer, dealing with naxalites and terrorism, intelligence, corruption in the Police.

Rohit Bhushan — Musician (Bombay) held a workshop on Indian Music and Indo-Western Fusion; Sept. 19th to 28th, 2008. He demonstrated on the Sitar, the different rhythmic cycles in Indian music; explained concept of improvisation in Indian music; children composed lyrics to a folk melody.

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1 Sri M with Achutya Rao at the PGS

2 Hans with PGS students

3 Rob Snyder with students

A Tribute to a Friend

Surya Deo



Late Sh. Ajit Kalyanpur

One first saw Ajit during the Satsang meets and gatherings. He was amongst the earliest members associated with Sri 'M' and used to be fully engrossed in the talks and bhajans. After the meetings and talks, he left without lingering around for greetings, discussions or commentaries. His devotion towards Sri 'M' was total, though he never showed or talked about it.

Much later, one got to know him and a friendship developed gradually. Ajit was a simple open minded and private person. He trusted life – that everything and everyone has potential for some good. As a result, he was non judgmental and prone to gossip or negativity. He was happy and wanted others to be happy. He was a very good and sensitive listener. He never allowed problems to develop at his workplace and immediately sorted them out, even if it was at his cost.

Ajit was no fool and could see through situations and people. If needed, he would tell people what he thought and felt about them, sounding stern and angry at that moment. When he was through, the matter ended as far as he was concerned. Behind all this, was basic goodness, kindness and understanding. At times he talked of his earlier days, his friends, life in the Merchant Navy and his travels around the world. He talked about his experiences and the difficulties he faced in his life without bitterness or regrets. He believed that everything that happened in life, both good and bad, had a purpose.

Ajit liked driving with music in his car listening to mostly sufi songs, Kabir dohas and bhajans. He used to get carried away with them and liked to explain the things that touched him. After working hard at his business, he liked to take off in his car and get out of the city. He liked the rainy season and enjoyed traveling to lesser known places not commonly visited by tourists – like forests, old and abandoned temples and small villages without the usual crowds and noise. No prior reservations would be made and we spent the nights wherever accommodation was available. During these trips, he simply switched off from his work and completely immersed in the surroundings, calling home in between to talk to his family. Ajit had great mental strength and strong beliefs and principles. Besides the deeper aspects of all religions, he was fascinated with Sufi teachings and Kabir dohas.

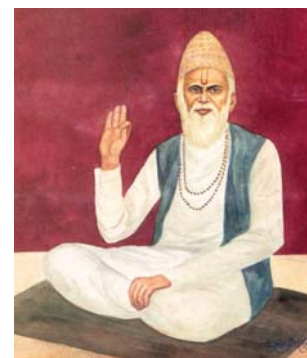
Shortly after his daughter Anushri's wedding, Ajit was diagnosed with a nerve related disease, His mobility gradually decreased, eventually confining him to a wheelchair. His health deteriorated as he developed breathing problems. Visiting him and seeing him in this condition, one felt totally helpless and frustrated at not being able to do anything for him. During all this time, Ajit was always cheerful and positive and never complained about his condition. The atmosphere at his house appeared normal with everybody doing their best for him without showing any signs of anxiety or fear. His wife Suchitra lovingly took care of his needs round the clock. His son Anirudh took over the business and was also available wherever help was needed to home. Ajit used to remark how blessed and fortunate he was to have them around. He spent a lot of time watching comedy shows on TV and DVDs and listening to music. He diligently did his physiotherapy sessions everyday. Several friends and well wishers came to visit Ajit regularly – Asha came to give him Reiki everyday; Sri Talgery and Sri Kalawar visited him every evening to do pranayam.

Suchitra and Anirudh were at his side when his end came rather suddenly. It was a privilege to have been his friend and to be able to learn so much from this remarkable person May his soul rest in peace.

Sant Kabir

Abhijit K. Jadeja (Aum)

Sant Kabir Das (a weaver by profession is believed to have lived between AD 1398 and 1518; Kabir: Arabic for 'great,' Das: Sanskrit for 'slave' or 'servant') is widely acknowledged as the great religious reformer whose literature greatly influenced the Bhakti movement in India. As His origins are shrouded in mystery, this is a humble attempt to try and get only a glimpse of his divine mystical teachings. Al-Kabir (the Great), is one of the 99 names of God in Islam. Technically speaking, the language-of-Kabir (all recorded verses are in Hindi) contains elements of old Avadhi, Braj, and Bhojpuri. He used common language that resonated with all people and transcended social barriers making his philosophy accessible to millions the world over. He is considered one of the foremost of mystic poets, revered mainly by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Turks alike.



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*Yeh tan vish ki belri
Guru amrit ki khaan,
Sheesh deeyo jo guru mile
Toh bhi sasta jaan.*

Body is like a poisonous creeper, Guru is the ocean of nectar; Offer your head if you meet the Guru, Even that is a small price to pay.

*Sab dharti kagaj karoon
lekhi sab banrai,
Saat samudra ki mashi karoon
Guru gun likha naa jaaye.*

If I the whole earth be a sheet of paper, And all forests become a pen; If the waters of seven seas become ink, Even so one can't write the Guru's eminence.

*Aisi vaani boliye
man ka aapa khoye,
Auran ko seetal kare
Aap hu seetal hoye.*

...Continued from page 14 [Sant Kabir by Aum]

A Bhakti saint, who sang the ideals of seeing all of humanity as one, his name, Kabir, is often interpreted as Guru's Grace. His greatest work is the Bijak (that is, the Seedling), an idea of the fundamental one. Kabir openly criticized all sects by opposing caste practices, rituals, and all forms of religious bigotry and sectarianism. The beauty of Kabir's poetry is that he picks up situations that surround our daily lives and is relevant and helpful in both social and spiritual context. Kabir did not classify himself as either a Hindu or Muslim, Sufi or Bhakta. On the contrary, he taught the brotherhood of mankind under one God (Sahib mera ek hai). His teachings emphasize non-duality, equality, brother-hood, serving humanity at large, etc to name only a few. It is estimated that Kabir wrote approximately two thousand songs and fifteen hundred couplets.

The Holy Guru Granth Sahib contains over 500 verses by Kabir (the major part of Kabir's work as a Bhagat was collected by the fifth Sikh guru, Guru Arjan Dev). The Sikh community in particular and others who follow the Holy Granth, hold Kabir in the same reverence as the other ten Gurus. To the Hindus, Kabir was a Vaisnava bhakta, to the Muslims, a pir, to the Sikhs, a bhagat and to the followers of Kabir, an avatar of the supreme Being. Kabir is revered as Satguru by the Kabir-panthis (a spiritual sect based in Maghar, a town in Sant Kabir Nagar District, UP)

Babaji's mission in India has been to assist prophets in carrying out their special dispensations. He thus qualifies for the scriptural classification of Mahavatar (Great Avatar). He has stated that he gave yoga initiation to Shankara, reorganizer of the Swami Order, and to Kabir, famous medieval master.

At the time of Kabir's death, the disciples quarreled over the manner of conducting the funeral ceremonies. The exasperated master rose from his final sleep, and gave his instructions. "Half of my remains shall be buried by the Moslem rites," he said, "let the other half be cremated with a Hindu sacrament." He then vanished. When the disciples opened the coffin which had contained his body, nothing was found but a dazzling array of flowers. Half of these were obediently buried, in Maghar, by the Moslems, who revere his shrine to this day. The other half was cremated with Hindu ceremonies in Banaras. A temple, Kabira Cheura, was built on the site and attracts immense number of pilgrims.

In his youth Kabir was approached by two disciples who wanted minute intellectual guidance along the mystic path. The master responded simply:

"Path presupposes distance;
If He be near, no path needest thou at all.
Verily it maketh me smile
To hear of a fish in water athirst!"

Speak such words, Bereft of selfishness; Which bring sweetness to others, And make one sweet inside.

*Bura jo dekhani mein chala
Bura na miliya koye,
Jo dil khoja aapna
Mujhse bura na koye.*

Searching for evil in others, I found none who was evil; When I looked within I found, There was no one worse than me.

*Tera saayin tujh mein
Jyon upvan main baas,
Kasturi ko hiran jyon
Phir phir dhoonde ghaas.*

Your Lord is within you, As fragrance resides in the garden; Like the musk deer looks for incense, In the grass which actually is inside.

– Dohas by Sant Kabir

THE SATSANG VIDYALAYAS

Primary Educational Initiatives of The Satsang Foundation

The Satsang Vidyalayas - one of the primary initiatives of the Satsang Foundation has been steadily progressing in not only providing primary education but also all round growth and development of the 'not yet stagnated young brains'.

Very recently, the Satsang Vidyalaya, Madanapalle has obtained the recognition from the State Education Board for classes I-VII (English & Telugu Medium). This is a great boon for children from the neighboring villages and outside to study in the vidyalaya and stay in the hostels- Gurukula Pathashala and Navodaya - in Madanapalle, sponsored by the Central Government. The children can also now obtain the Transfer Certificate - a must, to join other recognized schools to continue the higher education.

Class VIII in Telugu medium has also been started this year, raising the total school children strength to 135. The staff strength is now nine, with three more teachers being added for Science, Maths & Hindi. Some of the recent building & infrastructure developments in the school involved construction of the compound wall around the entire school, extending the kitchen room, building a store room, toilets etc., procurement of laboratory equipment for the science lab, cupboards, class room furniture, TV & DVD player, encyclopedias, reference books, dictionaries, educational CD/DVD & sports related equipment and structures - funded by some senior members of the Satsang Foundation and also by the Asha Foundation, Silicon Valley Chapter, USA.

It is proposed to construct two class rooms, a shelter for vocational training, a reading room / library, a bore well and procure furniture, office equipment - projector, intercom, sewing machines for vocational training, internet broadband connection, etc.

With this additional infrastructure in place, the school will be well-equipped with modern educational & communication facilities to enable it to be one of the key educational centres in the area.

