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*Arsha Vidya
Newsletter*

In fearless voice may
we proclaim

The Rishi's message
from all house-tops

And bring the men
of different claim

To a fold of Love
where oneness lasts!



Muṇḍakopaniṣad Mantrā 9



The teacher wants to sum up¹ in the following mantra all that was said so far, so that he can continue with what he wants to say further.

यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद् यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः ।

तस्मादेतद् ब्रह्म नाम रूपमन्नं च जायते ॥ १।१।९

yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavid yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ ।

tasmādetad brahma nāma rūpamannaṁ ca jāyate ॥ 1|1|9

yaḥ – that; sarvajñaḥ – who is all-knowledge in general; sarvavit – who is all-knowledge in terms of the details; yasya – whose; tapaḥ – tapas; jñānamayaṁ – is of knowledge alone; tasmāt – from that; etad – this; brahma – hiraṇyagarbha; nāma rūpam – names and forms; ca – and; annaṁ – food; jāyate – is born.

‘That Brahman is all-knowledge in general and all-knowledge in terms of the detail of all that is to manifest. His tapas is nothing but knowledge alone. From that Brahman, hiraṇyagarbha, all names, all forms and the food are born.’

The śruti introduced Brahman through the word ‘akṣara’ (1.1.5) which is neuter gender. Here it has now changed to yaḥ (īśvaraḥ), which is masculine gender. Brahman and Īśvara are therefore one and the same. Brahman with reference to the creation is called Īśvara. Īśvara knows sarva, everything. The understanding of sarva is two-fold. One is in general and the other in particular. One who knows everything in general is called sarvajñaḥ,² and one who knows everything in particular is called sarvavit.³ Both words have the same meaning of ‘knower of everything’. Because both words are used

^१ उल्लेखमेवार्थमुपसंजिहीर्षुः मन्त्रः वक्ष्यमाणार्थमाह । मुण्डक श्राव्यम्

^२ sarvaṁ jānāti iti sarvajñaḥ, one who knows everything in general.

^३ sarvaṁ vetti iti sarvavit, one who knows everything in detail.

together, we have to make a distinction and understand them separately. . Īśvara is sarvajñaḥ and sarvavit while a wise person is only sarvajña. By understanding Brahman as satya and everything else as mithyā one becomes a sarvajña. This is what is said here.

However, mithyā is not something that is created by an individual. One finds oneself living on this planet with a given body. The planet itself with all the resources was already there before one came into being. So, everything is 'given'. With reference to the given jagat I cannot call myself sarvajña. I am not the one who has created this jagat that presupposes all knowledge. I know only a few things. The knowledge of Brahman as myself makes me sarvajña in general, but I am not the creator.

All knowledge is necessary for this so-called creation which is really a manifestation. In fact, that knowledge alone is manifest in the form of this jagat. There must be an entity that has all this knowledge. He is called Īśvara. Both Īśvara and the individual are akṣaram brahma. If I know this fact, I am also a sarvajña. But I cannot call myself Īśvara. I cannot do Īśvara's job. I do not have all knowledge 'in detail' which is required for the creation of this jagat. Īśvara has this knowledge due to māyā-upādhi. This upādhi makes the difference.

Īśvara knows all that is to manifest, and he alone manifests as the jagat. The dream example is helpful to understand this. In the dream, one manifests oneself in the form of the dream world. Everything that is manifest in the dream is nothing but one's knowledge. One's knowledge of space is 'space' there. One's knowledge of time is 'time' there. One's knowledge of sun is 'sun' there. One's knowledge of earth is 'earth' there. One's knowledge of elephant is 'elephant' there. One's knowledge alone is in the form of the dream world. One knows all the names and forms that are there in the dream creation. If you have never seen a monkey, you will not see it in the dream. There is no 'never-seen' object in the dream. A known form alone can manifest there. The dream jagat, therefore, is but the manifestation of one's knowledge.

Generally, before the creation there should be a certain condition called dissolution. Only then is the creation possible. 'The jagat comes into being',

means that it was kept under suspension for sometime in an unmanifest condition. The process of creation did not begin because tapas did not take place. So, Īśvara did tapas. Tapas is generally a discipline involving bodily afflictions like missing food. But Īśvara does not stand on one leg to create the world! Nor does he pray for some powers because he is almighty. His tapas is nothing but visualising. Being sarvavit, naturally he can see everything. That is called identification with the knowledge. When he visualises, this entire jagat becomes manifest, like one's dream world manifests. This jagat is not separate from Īśvara's knowledge. It is Īśvara's knowledge alone that is in the form of this jagat.

In your dream, you create a world of things and beings. The people there wonder who created this world. One person says, 'God is above, but we are different from him'. Another says, "God includes you". Yet another says, "God is 'śūnya, nothingness". The fourth one says, "God is a flicker of consciousness". The atheist says, "There is no God". All kinds of ideas are there among these people whom you have created in your dream. All of them are not separate from you, Īśvara. All that is there is your knowledge manifest in this form. These persons are able to see the world by the same consciousness alone. Each one's ātman is the same consciousness, because of which he or she sees everything. There is only one consciousness in which space, time, the world, everything has its existence. Similarly, all that is here in this jagat is one consciousness, Brahman, which is all-pervasive.

Analysing the jagat itself one can find that Īśvara is sarvavit, and śāstra makes it clear. I understand this with my own assimilating logic. It is my own reasoning that helps me assimilate this. Thus śāstra says, yaḥ sarvajña sarvavit: he is the one who is all-knowledge—in general and in terms of particulars also. His tapas that was necessary before the creation was jñānamaya, in the form of knowledge. He thought about the world and the world was there. Before a person makes a pot, he or she has to think of it. Before one cooks, one thinks, "What will I cook today?" That is called tapas. Tapas is a certain contemplation before doing something. Īśvara's tapas is nothing but purely visualising. That visualisation is necessary because knowledge was there even before the creation. One may wonder why the creation did not come if the knowledge was already there? It is

like one's recollection. Everything is there in one's memory, but only when one needs that information, it flashes in the mind; otherwise it does not come. Sometimes, when one does not need it, it comes, but that is a different thing altogether. That only shows the capacity of the mind. Even though such retentive capacity is there, all that you remember is not crowding your mind. Generally, when one wants to recollect something, it comes. Similarly, only when Īśvara visualises, the jagat manifests.

Tasmāt etad brahma jāyate : from that all-knowing conscious being alone, this Brahmaji is born. Brahman here is Brahmaji. The word 'brahma' can also be taken as Veda, through which you understand Īśvara, who is sarvajña and sarvavit.

In the Brahmasūtra sūtra there is a sūtra, 'śāstra yonitvāt', which establishes that Brahman is known through Veda only, and that Brahman is the revealing cause of the Vedas. Being so, it is sarvajña and sarvavit. Thus everything is born of Brahman. Then alone, by knowing one thing everything is known.

Nāma rūpam annam ca jāyate : also different names, forms and food are born. Anna is also born from that Brahman. Anna is the life-saving food; what is eaten, adhyate iti annam. The nāma, rūpa and anna, which cover everything are born of Brahman.

| iti prthama muṇḍake prathamakhaṇḍaḥ |
Thus ends the first section of the first chapter.

“Vedanta is not a topic in books. It is just you; it is your vision; it is your responses to situations. Vedanta helps change your scales of vision. Your emphasis changes and so small things remain small because you are concerned with something bigger. Thus Vedanta does bring about a cognitive change. Your cognition changes, thereby, a number of changes can take place”.

Pujya Swamiji

Śrī Rudram

नम आसीनेभ्यः शयानेभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १३ ॥

nāma āsīnebhyaḥ śayānebhyaśca vo namaḥ ॥ 13 ॥

nama – salutation; āsīnebhyaḥ – to those who are seated; śayānebhyaḥ – to those who are in a reclining posture; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who are seated and who are in a reclining posture.

Namaḥ āsīnebhyaḥ – Salutation to you in the form of those who are sitting. The king sitting on his throne is frightening because he has power. When you go for an interview, those who are sitting to ask questions are āsīnās. You cover them all with īśvara buddhi.¹ And the fear goes away which is why there is abhaya-hasta, hand that signifies Īśvara's offer of refuge. In Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the form indicates fearlessness, as apasmāra, the demon is under his feet. When Īśvara is in your life, there is no fear. And finally when it is known that there is no second thing, there is no fear at all. You are the one who is āsīna—king, interviewer, judge, tiger and so on.

Śayānebhyaḥ – Salutation to the one who is in the form of those lying down such as snake and so on, which cause fear. If somebody does not get up from sleep, there is fear.

नमः स्वपद्भ्यो जाग्रद्भ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १४ ॥

namaḥ svāpadbhyo jāgradbhyaśca vo namaḥ ॥ 14 ॥

namaḥ – salutation; svāpadbhyaḥ – to those who are sleeping; jāgradbhyaḥ – to those who are awake; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who are sleeping and those who are awake.

The sleeping ones include all potential dangers. Many pāpa-karmas exist in our account and we do not know what they are. We do not know which pāpa-karma is going to surface and when. The waking ones are karmas that have already started unfolding in various forms such as marriage, children and so on. O Lord! Both the sleeping ones and waking ones are in your form alone. My salutation to you, who is in those forms.

नमस्तिष्ठद्भ्यो धावद्भ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १५ ॥

nāmastīṣṭhādbhyo dhāvādbhyaśca vo namaḥ ॥ 15 ॥

¹ īśāvāsyam idam sarvam yatkiñca jagatyām jagat – whatever in the world is to be covered with the vision of the Lord. (Īśāvāsyopaniṣad)

namaḥ salutation; stiṭhadbhyaḥ – to those who are standing; dhāvadbhyaḥ – to those who are running; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of those who are standing and those who are running.

Unto that which stands and that which runs, which are you, my salutation. Standing ones refer to sthāvarās such as mountains and trees and running ones refer to jaṅgamās such as wolf, tiger, river, wind and Lord Yama.

नमस्सभाभ्यस्सभापतिभ्यश्च वो नमः ॥ १६ ॥

namāssabhābhyāssabhāpatibhyaśca vo namaḥ || 16 ||

namḥ – salutation; sabhābhyaḥ – to the assemblies; sabhāpatibhyaḥ to those who are the heads of assemblies; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of assemblies and in the form of heads of assemblies.

Namḥ sabhābhyaḥ – Salutation to assemblies, courtrooms. Assemblies where you are going to speak are frightening. This is called stage fear. He is in the form of frightening assemblies. You are going to be called upon and your fate is going to be decided. Sabhā can also be a place where there are a lot of people, such as an unruly assembly and this can be frightening too. Also, he is in the form of sabhāpati, like a king or a leader and unto him my salutation.

नमो अश्वेभ्योऽश्वपतिभ्यश्च वो नमः । १७ ॥

nāmo āśvebhyo'śvapātibhyaśca vo namaḥ | 17 |

namaḥ salutation; āśvebhyaḥ – to those who are in the form of horses; āśvapātibhyaḥ – to those who are in the form of horse-riders; ca – and; vaḥ – to you; namaḥ – salutation.

Salutation to you in the form of horses and in the form of horse-riders.

He is in the form of the horse and the one who rides the horse. In Vedic language all that moves in the heaven is āśva or the seven rays of the sun. Unto the one who is the form of these horses, my salutation.

Āśva includes a mule, which is neither a horse nor a donkey. Each mule is a cross breed and, therefore, the genetic mutation stops there. A mule does not produce another mule. A mule has the swiftness of the horse and the sure-footedness of a donkey. Āśvapatis are mounted soldiers of the cavalry. The Lord is in the form of a cavalry. As a mere āśva cannot frighten, we should look upon it as a cavalry. Similarly, a jockey cannot frighten you. Here āśvapatis are kings and soldiers who come with arms; they alone can frighten you.

The Chandogya Camp in Rishikesh

The Chandogya Camp in Rishikesh ended the day before Maha Sivaratri, 2013. Over the course of the camp we followed Svetuketu, the student in the sixth chapter of Chandogya Upanishad, as he was taught, and understood the *mahavakya*, *tat tvam asi*. Gratefully, Svetuketu asked his teacher, who was his father, to explain the *mahavakya* to him no less than eight times. Indeed, if Svetuketu had asked a dozen more times, no one attending the camp would have complained, extending as it would have Puja Swamiji's ever clear unfolding of the Upanishad.

Uddalaka, Svetuketu's father, teaches Svetuketu the truth of what is, knowing which all else is as though known. First Uddalaka explains the nature of creation. Uddhalaka explains how, by its own *sankalpa*, unmanifest *sat* as though becomes manifest. *Sat* created the subtle element fire. Fire, necessarily associated with *sat*, created the subtle element water, which likewise created the subtle element earth. These subtle elements, when combined become grossified, retaining their individual names according to the predominance of each in the three combinations. It is these subtle and gross elements which, having *sat* as their cause, make up the entire creation, including the human body, mind and senses. Thus it is that the creation is *sat*.

How can that which is one without second, which is undivided, which is not available for perception, be manifest? The answer is *vacarambhana*, having its basis in word and meaning alone. All perceived differences in the manifestation, including the manifestation itself, are word and meaning alone. Just as clay is clay whether it has pot-ness, bowl-ness, etc., so too, no matter what name is given, everything is *sat* alone. This is the magic, *mithya*, of the entire creation.

Having explained the creation, Uddalaka describes what happens at the end of manifestation. Just as, when the mind is resolved during sleep one is free from the mistaken identification with the body, mind and senses, when the *jiva's prarabdha karma* in a given body is exhausted, the *jiva* ceases to identify with that body, and resolves into *sat*. If the *jiva* has not yet achieved its purpose, to know the truth of itself as one with *sat*, it will manifest again in a different body in keeping with its *karma*. If, however, the *jiva* knows the truth of itself, it will not take another body. That *sat*, from which everything manifests and into which everything resolves, Uddalaka tells Svetuketu, you are that, *tat tvam asi*.

The text of the Upanishad does not provide specific questions asked by Svetuketu, after Uddalaka tells him, *tat tvam asi*. However,

after each repetition, Shankaracharya poses questions in the *bhashya* drawn from the teaching that follows. Thus, the first question is how it is possible that the *jiva* does not know the truth of itself as *sat*, despite the mind resolving daily in sleep? Uddalaka uses honey made of nectar collected from various species of plants by the bees, as an example. Regardless of where the nectar is gathered, in the process of being reduced to the sweet that is honey, any peculiar characteristic derived from the plant source is given up. In the same way, *jivas* lose individual characteristics associated with a given manifestation upon resolving into *sat*. Therefore, there is no thought of individual identity. Does this mean that they lose track of all the *karma phala*? No. The Upanishad says that no matter how long a *jiva* is unmanifest, that *jiva* will come back in keeping with *karma* it previously accrued.

Having understood why the *jiva* does not know the truth of itself as *sat* during the time it is resolved, the question arises why the *jiva* does not know it has come from *sat*? The example given is that of a river which when merged with the ocean cannot be identified as different from the ocean. Not having originally known itself as ocean, when it evaporates from the ocean and later, falling as rain, becomes another river, it does not know it came from the ocean. In the same way a *jiva*, not knowing that it has merged with *sat*, cannot know that it has come from *sat*.

Why then, *bhashyakara* asks on behalf of Svetuketu, is it that waves and bubbles, etc.,

resolving into water are destroyed, but a *jiva*, resolving in sleep, again emerges in the same body after sleep? By using a tree to explain how this is so, the Upanishad highlights that trees are living beings, thus negating a contention by Buddhists and Vasheshikas, that being stationary, trees are not living. Like other *jivas*, no matter where a tree is cut, there is sap which, like the blood of other living beings, is the product of water and nutrients/food imbibed by the tree. Other than this, the example is only to show that a *jiva* can withdraw from one part of a particular body and remain living. The whole tree does not die when the *jiva* withdraws from one or even several branches, it continues to live. Likewise, when the mind is resolved and sense perceptions are withdrawn in sleep, the *jiva* continues to live. Further, even after the body falls, the *jiva* continues to live. How is this known? In the world one sees that newborns do not have to be shown how to feed, there being some sort of memory in all *jivas* with regard to nursing/feeding. *Bhashyakara* points out that it would be contradictory if the Vedas enjoined *agnihotra*, etc., which give *karma phala* for the *jiva* after the fall of the body, if the *jiva* did not continue to live.

The nature of *jiva* having been explained, the creation itself is taken up. How can the physical world, having names and forms, be the manifestation of something so subtle that it cannot be known through the senses? Uddalaka asks Svetuketu to break open a fruit from a banyan tree. Inside the fruit are many atom-sized seeds, one of which

Uddalaka again asks Svetuketu to break open. Having broken the seed open, Svetuketu is not able to see anything inside it, being as small as it is. Even though nothing appears to be there, Uddalaka points out, that it is from this that a whole banyan tree grows.

It is clear that Svetuketu is not convinced that the whole *jagat* can come from something that appears to be imperceptible. He asks for further explanation, which Uddalaka obliges by giving another example. Svetuketu is asked to put some salt crystals into water and leave them over night. When Uddalaka asks Svetuketu to fetch the salt from the water the following day, the salt has dissolved and the crystals cannot be seen. Does that mean the salt is not there? No, it is always there. By tasting the water at the top, middle, and bottom of the container, Svetuketu confirms this. Although imperceptible to the *pramana* of sight, the cause for the salty water is available for knowledge by another *pramana*. Understanding this example, Svetuketu naturally wants to know the *pramana* for the knowledge, knowing which all else is as though known.

The answer is, of course, the guru who knows the *shastra*. Uddalaka describes a scene in which a person from Gandharas is kidnapped and, having been blindfolded and had his hands bound, is left alone in a deep forest. The person represents the *jiva*, the blindfold, *avidya* and the forest is the body. How can anyone, so completely lost and helpless, find a way out of this

suffering? It is only because of the endless compassion of a guru, depicted as a learned traveler in the scene described by Uddalaka, that one can be freed from the suffering. That guru, hearing the cries for help, removes the blindfold and other bonds, and then teaches the one who is lost, how to go.

Uddalaka responding to Svetuketu's last two requests to explain more, tells Svetuketu the process by which the *jiva* leaves the body and resolves into *sat*. Uddalaka further explains why it is that, even though both the *ajnani* and the *jnani* leave the body in the same manner, the *ajnani* returns while the *jnani* does not. It is one's commitment to truth that protects one from the suffering which is a result of *kartrtvam*, doer-ship, and *bhoktrtvam*, experiencer-ship. By means of the following example Uddalaka explains this to Svetuketu. A suspected thief is asked to hold a heated iron axe. Uddalaka points out how the suspect who makes himself false, denying the allegations while having committed the theft, will be burned, *kartrtvam/bhoktrtvam* being there. However, the suspect who denies the allegations and is telling the truth, will not be burned by the axe. His commitment to truth, protects him from *kartrtvam/bhoktrtvam*. How does the truth protect? Even though the contact of the hot axe with the hands is the same, for the one committed to the truth there is no *kartrtvam/bhoktrtvam*. Further, when there is no *kartrtvam/bhoktrtvam*, there is no agent for accumulated *karma* and, therefore, no cause for another body to be taken. The one who due to ignorance is committed to

kartrtvam/bhoktrtvam, however, will take another body in keeping with his or her understanding.

At this point, Svetuketu understands what he has been taught and the Upanishad ends. A few additional doubts are addressed by Sankaracarya in the *bhashya*. One of these is why it is that the body does not drop immediately upon gaining the knowledge as there is no longer a *karta* for the *karma* unfolding. The *karma* that brought this body into being having already begun has its own momentum and does not stop until it is exhausted. Thus, a *jnani* continues to live until the *prarabdha karma* giving rise to the body is exhausted. However, the *jnani* lives without the suffering inherent in mistaking oneself to be the *karta/bhokta*.

The final class ended with several students acknowledging those who made this camp the gift that it was. Swami Shuddhanandaji was thanked repeatedly for his continuous attention to details. The facilities, the scheduling, the food, and the willingness of

all the Rishikesh ashram staff to cheerfully assist in whatever way they were able, made one well aware that a lot of collective *punya* was unfolding! Swami Sakshatkrtanandaji was acknowledged for his complete and continued dedication to the students of the course. Added to his already long list of roles was that of knowledgeable tour guide when he accompanied 80 or so students for the day on a trip to local places of interest.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the grace of Pujya Swamiji. Any thank-you, seems almost too perfunctory when it comes acknowledging Pujya Swamiji. Being no other way to express in writing, however, I offer my greatest thanks and *pranams* to you, Pujya Swamiji, who so unswervingly and continuously, lives and teaches the true meaning of the *mahavakya*, *tat tvam asi*.

By Julie Carpenter

आचारः कुलमाख्याति देशमाख्याति भ्राषणम् ।
संभ्रमः स्नेहमाख्याति वपुराख्याति भोजनम् ॥

ācāraḥ kulamākhyāti deśamākhyāti bhāṣaṇam ।
sambhramaḥ snehamākhyāti vapurākhyāti bhojanam ॥

A man's behaviour shows his class, a man's language reveals his native place, a person's hospitality betrays his affection and a person's bulk tells about his food intake.

Pujya Swami Dayanada and The Teaching He Has Brought

Reflections of a student

When I think of Pujya Swami Dayananda, I can't help but be filled with wonder. I have never met this extraordinary man; however, his influence on my life in the form of the teaching he has brought, is felt by me every day. I am not expressing hero worship here. I don't like that sort of thing. Rather, it is a deep appreciation of the value and significance of the vision that is Vedanta and the form in which he unfolds it, so that people like me can see themselves, others and the world from this vision. To me, he is the vision of the Vedantic scriptures in living form. This vision enables me to see life in an entirely different light. It takes me beyond a subjectivity that I have unknowingly suffered from all my life.

I have lived out my whole life enclosed in a subjectivity that was experienced as completely objective. Everything was seen from my own personal standpoint and my desires and aversions completely determined how I lived my daily life, even though I had plenty of spiritual and philosophic notions to the contrary. I have been plagued by a sense of emptiness all my life and took it to be based on some ontological (pertaining to my reality) defect, some intrinsic badness or insufficiency that belonged to my nature. Efforts to try and

remedy this "assumed" defect became an all consuming endeavour that coloured every aspect of my life. I did not understand that my problem was ignorance, I thought my problem arose from what I was in reality.

I found myself experiencing myself as a specific kind of person; experiencing other people and the world in definite kind of ways. I did not know that my self notions and the notions I had of others and the world were being continually and unknowingly projected from myself, as the experience of how things seemed to be. So here I was struggling valiantly with my notions in their projected form, whilst taking them to be external realities. The meaning of the metaphor of the rope being mistaken for a snake was lost on me. My underlying conviction was that my experience of myself and the world were an expression of what was factual and real. Even when I added new notions about myself and life, acquired from experiences and books, all that happened was that I gained more material which was in turn projected as experience. However, no matter what new notions I entertained, I was thoroughly entrenched in a way of seeing which Pujya Swamiji encapsulates in the saying "because I see it, it is there". This is a saying which he uses to make clear what subjectivity is.

As a young man, I studied for the Catholic priesthood for a few years. When I left, the only thing I knew was that I wanted to 'know' God; I also realised that a 'belief' in a God did not cut it for me. In Catholicism knowledge of God was not an emphasis. It was belief in God that counted. He could not be known because He was somewhere else and we were in a world cut off from him. This is an impossible gap to bridge (not that I didn't try) and was the source of great frustration and despair for me. I felt the great need for answers and understandably I was looking for something in the world, other than myself, that would solve the problem. I thought in terms of finding a true philosophy, a spiritual practice that could free me from my difficulties which consisted of my imagined psychological make up. I wanted to find something that would resolve the painful experiences that I had undergone and the ongoing events which I found difficult to deal with. I had no idea that the emotional suffering that I was experiencing was based on my notion that I was a suffering person. As far as I was concerned, I was "a suffering person" who was having a hard time and if I could find the right remedy, things could get better. This was my hope.

I then formally studied Aristotelian philosophy and later completed a Masters of Applied Science and did formal training in Psychotherapy. All of this activity was done in the light of how I saw life, was used to immensely strengthen my hubris and when it boiled down to it, was all just a defence against this intrinsic insufficiency and badness which I was convinced I had. I wanted to add to myself because the self

I took myself to be was so insufficient and incomplete, it needed something external to add to its stature. No matter what I did in terms of adding to myself, this basic unhappiness was never addressed as such and anything that could be a distraction from it assumed inordinate importance in my life (women, booze, reading, entertainment, approval, status, excelling intellectually etc, etc.).

Just before I came across Vedanta, I had come to a point where I understood clearly that for all my efforts, I was a complete and utter psychological and spiritual failure. The basic unhappiness and sense of defect was still present and I knew I was incapable of doing anything about it. All my efforts had failed and I was helplessly stuck with what I took to be myself. This was very difficult because what I took to be myself was not a pleasant sight.

I then came across the ideas of Vedanta and that gave me hope but it was not until I met Swamini

Atmaprakasanda (disciple of Pujya Swamiji) with her emphasis on living a life of Dharma, did I gain any real direction. The idea that life needed to be responded to in terms of what was needed in a given situation, rather than in terms of what I liked or disliked, was a new thing for me. I discovered that under the sway of my likes and dislikes, I was continually omitting what I needed to do and was continually doing things I did not need to do. I had not previously seen that there was a direct relationship between the quality of my mind and how I lived, in terms of

doing the needful, moment by moment, with presence of mind. What was interesting was that this way of life which my teacher was suggesting, had nothing to do with trying to be a “nice guy”. It had nothing to do with my major preoccupation which was trying to look good in my own eyes and trying to look good in the eyes of others.

Swaminiji directed me to read “The Value of Values” written by Pujya Swamiji. For all my religious and spiritual notions (believe me I have had plenty of them), living a life of Dharma was entirely new to me. Pujya Swamiji’s idea of the necessity of the discovery of values and living in the light of them has been for me a great boon; especially the value of graceful acceptance and living non harmfully. The content of Value of Values has been the most important psychological work I have ever read. Through it, I saw clearly that without the discovery of values, desires and aversions reign supreme and govern entirely how my life is lived. This is because my mind always tends towards what it loves or values. This is an iron clad psychological law. It was Ignorance of the value of values that was the problem, not some imagined defect in myself . This ignorance prevented any real transformation of the quality of my mind and the way I lived. If there was no change in what I loved and valued, my mind would remain the same. This is an obvious fact but for all my study in psychological matters, I had never seen this before.

Swaminiji encouraged me to read all Pujya Swamiji’s books and always made herself

available to clarify my confusions as I went along, especially about God, prayer and living a life of Dharma. The confusions have been many and they are, by no means, all gone. Vedanta constantly challenges my experience of myself, others and the world. To a Christian Judaic mind, the idea that God is the material cause as well as the efficient cause of the universe is at first a stunning proposition. I finally accepted that everything was given but it was a while before I could really see that the presence of the given, which is always here, is also the presence of the Giver. This knowledge, which is not a theological concept, has invited God into my life in a very tangible way. I now understand that God is always present in my life in the form of the given, no matter what that is. I no longer have to raise my eyes upwards, I just have to become aware of what is always in front of me.

When I first came to Swaminiji I had so many erroneous ideas about life, God and spirituality. I had no idea about what ‘a means of knowledge’ was. Thankfully it has been made clear to me that Vedanta is a vision of reality, not a set of philosophic notions *about* reality. I don’t study Vedanta as an external subject. I study my life and myself in the light of the Vedantic scriptures. This was a big thing for me to understand.

My whole life I have studied and became familiar with ontological notions about life. Ontology is the study of reality. Ontological notions are not just philosophical, they are any notions I have about the reality of myself, others and the world. I have many. They don’t just sit inside my head. They

are ways of seeing. Swamini Atmaprakashananda pointed out very early on that all notions about self, positive or negative, were erroneous. All my studies and all the books I have read consisted of ontological notions about life. All the ideas I picked up in my life about myself, other people and the world are ontological notions. When I looked at life, these notions determined what I was seeing. "Because I see it, it is there". As I previously stated Pujya Swamiji uses this phrase to make clear the meaning of subjectivity. No matter how brilliant the theory whether it be spiritual, psychological, sociological, theological, philosophical, they are only ontological notions *about* life.

What I find interesting about Vedanta and take it to be its defining characteristic, is that Vedanta is an epistemological (pertaining to knowing) method of enquiry, whose subject matter is myself. This epistemological process transforms the way we see ourselves, the world and God. It has nothing to do with acquiring new ontological notions. The word epistemology means the study of knowledge. Its subject matter is the act of knowing and it covers what the nature of knowing is and its range. As I engage in Vedantic enquiry, I make discoveries and I see what I did not see before. As my range of seeing broadens, I see more and more what has been here all along. "Because it is there, I see it" - this is a phrase that Pujya Swamiji uses to make clear what is meant by objectivity. The thing I find so profound is that Vedantic enquiry has nothing to do with the projection of ontological notions. It is not a theory about God, the self and the world; it is rather

freedom from our subjective notions about these things.

To me Pujya Swami Dayananda is the "Shankara" for the West. He has brought an epistemological method to the West, not a new set of spiritual notions. There is a marketplace full of these. When I expose my mind to this means of knowledge, it becomes very clear that I or others are never evil or bad, we just suffer from ignorance. Ignorance is the defect, not some kind of innate sinfulness. I don't need a saviour, I need knowledge.

I am just filled with gratitude to Pujya Swamiji for bringing this teaching to the West in a way that can be understood meaningfully by a western mind like mine. It has been and is such a blessing to have Swamiji's disciple, Swamini Atmaprakashananda as my teacher. She unfolds the vision of the teaching in a way that enables me to see myself and my life from that vision. She has such a wonderful pedagogical gift of making things very clear, as well as a rigour that makes the teaching very impactful. She is a traditional teacher who emphasises the necessity of living a life of karma yoga, in order to prepare the mind for the absolute knowledge. Frankly, I am a person who needs clear instructions about how to prepare myself for the knowledge. Swamini's insistence that I confront the way I live in this world and actively learn how to live rightly within it, is a wonderful thing because it makes the teaching so existentially relevant. I am now confronted daily with the choice between the usual resistance to facts and mindless emotional

reactions or graceful acceptance and beneficial responsiveness. Before meeting Swaminiji and through her, the Vedantic teaching, this choice was not available to me in any meaningful way.

Vedanta can be understood as an ontology (a philosophy of reality), a cosmology (study of the nature of the material universe), a psychology (theory of mind), a theology (theory about God), a system of ethics (our acts in relation to others). It is none of these, though it can easily be mistaken for such things because it sheds its light on all these subjects. It is ontological in the sense that we *see* what is reality in fact. It is cosmological in that we *see* the nature of the material universe as an “as though universe”, rather than substantial. It is psychological in that it transforms our emotional reactions and responses to life because we *see* ourselves and others differently. It is theological in the sense that we *see* what God is. It is ethical because once we *see* the value of values, we live peacefully and non harmfully in relation to others. It is also existential because the way we *see* determines how we exist in the world. If Vedanta is not understood as a

means of knowledge, a method of enquiry in which the subject matter is ourselves, the cognitive transformation it offers, that frees us from human suffering, won't be available to us.

Vedanta, as an epistemological methodology, does not fit into any of our usual Western theoretical categories because it is not theoretical. It is also not an Indian philosophy. Vedanta is rather a vision that transforms our lives because it transforms our way of *seeing*.

My thanks to my teacher Swaminiji Atmaprakashananda for making this means of knowledge available to me in such a useful form.

My immense gratitude goes to Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati for making the tradition of Vedanta available to people like me who live in the West and who are not part of the Indian culture. I bow to your feet in gratitude and love. May I be a worthy student of the teaching you have brought.

Bede Clifford

“Vedanta is not a topic in books. It is just you; it is your vision; it is your response to situations. Vedanta helps change your scales of vision. Your emphasis changes, and so small things remain small because you are concerned with something bigger. Thus Vedanta does bring about a cognitive change. Your cognition changes, thereby, a number of changes can take place.

Pujya Swamiji

KARMA YOGA PERSONIFIED

In Bhagavad Gita rendered to Arjuna, the Warrior
Bhagavan Krishna taught him Karmayogin's career
Being a Kshatriya his Karma is to fight
To destroy Adharma with his might.

Karma is not confined only to battlefield
To settle scores with adversaries and make them yield,
It has a wider connotation in the World,
To alleviate the suffering of the lesser mould.

Thus Pujya Swamiji gave a serious thought
And conceived a project to set at naught
The suffering of less fortunate and needy
And to give them relief quite speedy.

AIM FOR SEVA as he rightly designed
Reaching remote areas to give them relief assigned
Health, Education handicrafts are the field
To fulfil their long felt need.

Sadhus will show the way to reach lotus feet of Lord Narayana
But Pujya Swamy showing the way to serve Human Narayanas
Thus he gives Karma Yoga new dimension
Indeed Pujya Swamiji is Karma Yoga personified in our vision.

Dedicated by Dr. Pa. Kuppuswamy, Advocate
Coimbatore to Pujya Swamiji on first
Chithirai, Vijaya.

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- *9. Bhavishya Purana. 14,500 verses*
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- *17. Garuda Purana. 19,000 verses*
- *18. Brahmanda Purana. 12,000 verses*

SHIVARATRI SPECIAL:-

1 ON LINGAPURANA:-

- a) In the Lingapurana, the five aspects of Shiva- Sadyojaata, Vaamadeva, Tatpuruasha, Aghora and Eeshaana are described.

The story of Shiva appearing as a huge pillar of fire to Vishnu and Brahma is dealt with.

Chapters 17 to 20 of the Purana deals with the puffed up and arrogant pride of Vishnu and Brahma with their powers .

They had ignored Shiva and so, he appeared before them as a pillar of fire of immense length. When he challenged both Vishnu and Brahma to find the extremities of the pillar, they failed.

They accepted his superiority.

This pillar of fire became "Linga" and all creatures merge in it at the time of laya (dissolution).

(LeeyatE asmin; Layam gachchati) IT HAS BEEN CONCLUSIVELY PROVED THAT THE FIRST IDOL WORSHIPED BY ANYONE WAS A SHIVALINGA AS A FINAL PRODUCT OF THE YOOPASTAMBHA AS THE YAAGASHAALA EVOLVED GRADUALLY INTO THE HINDU TEMPLE PROVING THAT THE SHIVALINGA WAS AN EXTREMELY ANCIENT SYMBOL.

b) TYPES OF LINGAS-

Lingas are of two types_ kritrima and akritrima. Akritrima lingas include svayambhoo and Baana lingas. There is another classification also- chala and Achala. Chala lingas made of metals, clay stones and wood are worshiped at homes. Rubies, pearls, corals, topaz, emerald and diamond are the precious stones used for chala lingas. Gold, silver, copper and bell metal are the metals used.

Achala lingas made of stone are usually fixed in temples with a pedestal and the linga proper. The linga itself consists of Brahmabhaaga, Vishnu Bhaaga and Rudrabhaaga. The upper most part is the cylindrical portion which is the poojaabhaaga.

Stories of Dadheechi, Vyasa, Nandi, Sooryavamsha and chandravamsha kings, Kaashi etc., are the other stories.

Shiva's eight forms, Shiva panchaakshari mantra and the meditation of Shiva after establishing shivalinga, the mruthyunjaya mantra are the other contents. SHIVA IS DEPICTED IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES- SAUMYA OR ANUGRAHAMURTI , UGRA, RAUDRA OR SAMHAARAMURTI, NRITYA OR TANDAVAMURTI.

Sphatika Linga

God is niraakaara and nirguna. No particular form or specific qualities are to be assigned. A uniformly rounded surface has been conceived as the best representation of such a God. You may remember that Linga also represents Devi, Ganapati and Nrisimha in addition to Shiva-Rudra.

Lingas are of two types- kritrima and akritrima- natural or man made. They are also classified as chala and achala- movable and immovable. Chala lingas are made of metals (gold, silver, copper or bell meta), clay, precious stones or wood. The precious stones could be rubies, pearls, corals topaz, emerald or diamond. Different materials used for the lingas are recommended for fulfillment of different kinds of desires.

For example- topaz linga gives prosperity, pearl linga removes sins etc. The sphatika linga is considered sacred and is believed to yield immense benefits to the worshipers. It is this type which is generally used for rudraabhisheka at homes. It is important to know that the lingas are divided into three parts- The lowest part, called Brahmabhaaga is square in shape. The middle part represents the vishnubhaaga and it is octagonal in shape. The top most part is the Rudrabhaaga and it is this portion which is worshipped (poojaabhaaga).

WORSHIPPING LINGA:-

The sculptured image of Shiva and Parvati worshiping a linga in the Kailasanatha temple in Ellora adds to the mystery that the linga may be a very ancient object of reverence. It could be the final product of the Yoopasthamba as the Yaagashaala evolved gradually into the hindu temple. Thus it is an extremely ancient symbol.

Shiva is said to have manifested himself as a great altar of gold from which sprang forth a blazing fire before Ashvatthaama. This is as mentioned in the Mahabharatha (Souptikaparva). Certain non vedic cults wherein phallic worship might have existed as in many ancient civilisations of the world might have been absorbed into the vedic culture and the same elevated to the father-mother principle at

the cosmic level. We may also remember that the lingas have been described as emblems of the Devi, Ganapati and Narasimha and worshipped as such.

The Lingapurana states that when Vishnu and Brahma were puffed with arrogance ignorig Shiva, he appeared before them as a pillar of fire of infinite length whose extremities could not be found. This pillar of fire came to be known as linga because all creatures merge in it at the time of destruction (leeyate asmin, layam gachchanti).

ABOUT THE VISHVESHWARA LINGAM IN KAASHI-BENARES.

The puranas say that Shiva came down from the mandara hills along with his paraphernalia and stood in the mukti mandapa in Kaashi to give darshan to Vishnu and Brahma in the form of a huge jyoti which is now called Viswesara jyotirlingam (sat chit ananda swaroopa).

The ancient Shiva temple is believed to be at the place where a mosque now stands next to the Adi Visweswara temple on a hill on the banks of Ganga river. This mosque was constructed after destroying the ancient Shiva temple (at the same location) during the rule of Raziya Sulatana. This is the view expressed by the American researcher Diana Eke. The present temple of Vishvanatha was constructed in the Viswanatha lane under the patronage of maharani of Indore Ahalyabai Holkar in 1777.

This is in a congested place and it is difficult even to see the top of the temple because of insufficient space around. There appears to be an influence of the Muslim architecture in the design. Although there is no antiquity, the temple attracts lakhs of pilgrims regularly to attend to the ancient pooja system etc., The evening saptarishi abhisheka attracts devotees in large numbers.

When Aurangzeb was destroying the temple, the priest of visweswaras temple took the lingam and immersed in the jnaanavaapi well nearby. It was reinstalled after the construction of the temple again.

The water of jnaanavaapi well is considered very sacred as it was supposed to have been made by Shiva himself through his trident (trishoola).. This was kept closed for a long time. (even now it is closed). The mosque constructed near this well is called the jnaanavaapi mosque. LINGAS IN KAASHI:- There are 511 shivalingas in Kaashi. Out of these the twelve swayambhuva shivalingas are:-

1. AvimuktEswara,
2. OmkaarEswara,
3. JyEshtEswara,
4. MadhyamEswara,
5. Adi mahaadEva,
6. VishvEswara,

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 7. BrishabhadvEswara, | 8. KEdaarEswara, | 9. Kapardeeshvara, |
| 10. Swayambhuva lingEswara, | 11. BhoorbhuvEswara, | 12. VeerEswara, |

In addition to these, there are several others installed by deities, rishis and grahas and shivaganas.

JYOTIRLINGAS IN INDIA:-

The twelve jyotirlingas in India are :-

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Somanataha in Sourashtra, | 2. Mallikarjuna in Srisailam, |
| 3. Mahaakaala in Ujaain, | 4. AmarEswara in Omkaara, |
| 5. Bheemashankara in daakini, | 6. ViswEswara in Kaashi, |
| 7. Tryambaka on the Banka of Goutami, | 8. Vaidyanaatha in parali, |
| 9. NaagEsha in Daarukaavana, | 10. Rameswara in Rameswaram, |
| 11. Ghushmeswara, | 12. KEdaarEswara in the Himalaya. |

HISTORY OF THE SHIVA TEMPLE IN KAASHI- BENARES.

A Shiva temple has been mentioned in Puranas including Kashi Khanda (section) of Skanda Purana.

In 490 AD , the Kashi Vishwanath Temple was built. In 11th Century AD, Hari Chandra constructed a temple. Muhammad Ghorī destroyed it along with other temples of Varanasi during his raid in 1194.

Reconstruction of the temple started soon after. This was demolished by Qutb-ud-din Aibak. After Aibak's death the temple was again rebuilt by Hindu rajas. In 1351 it was destroyed again by Firuz Shah Tughlaq.

The temple was rebuilt in 1585 by Todar Mal, the Revenue Minister of Akbar's Court. Aurangzeb ordered its demolition in 1669 and constructed Gyanvapi Mosque, which still exists alongside the temple.

Traces of the old temple can be seen behind the mosque. It is said that the Shiv-Linga was thrown in the 'well'



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Mataji: +91 88050 23450

Email: avg.ngp@hotmail.com

They took Sannyas on the Mahasivarathri Day



Back Row left to right

Swami Shivaprakashananda Saraswati. Br. Shivapraash (Shivaranjana Bhat)
Swami Kaivalyananda Saraswati. Br. Balakrishnan (Balakrishnan Kandembeth)
Swami Bodhatmananda Saraswati. Br. Bodha (Lior Shani)
Swami Shankarananda Saraswati Br. Shankar

Front Row left to right

Swamini Brahmapriyananda Saraswati.(Brni. Preeti (Preeti Pundit)
Swamini Vishvapriyananda (Brni Vishva (Poongothai)
Swamini Jivanmuktananda Saraswati. (Swamini Jeevantika)

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Mahasivaratri at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg

Mahasivaratri was celebrated at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg, PA, on Sunday, March 10. The day started with the usual daily morning prayers of Abhisheka to Lord Ganesha and Lord Dakshinamurti. Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji inaugurated "Om Namah Shivaya" chanting at 7am and it was followed by several devotees who took turns throughout the day lending their voices. The chanting was accompanied by sounds of tambourines, tabla, and cymbals playing in the background. With Pujya Swamiji's blessings, the Akhanda Japa concluded at 7pm with the final minutes listening to a recording of his voice chanting "Om Namah Shivaya" which brought great enthusiasm to the devotees.

Priest Ganeshji then led the group with a sankalpa before beginning the Abhisheka to Lord Dakshinamurti. The traditional puja included offerings of milk, curds, honey, haldi, and flowers brought by the devotees. Sri Suddhatmaji led the chanting of Sri Rudram and other suktas. While the priest completed the puja, Swami Pratyagbodhanandaji addressed the gathering.

Swamiji shared stories about Mahasivaratri from the Siva Purana which describes the significance of this special occasion. According to one legend, during the samudra manthan, a pot of poison emerged from the ocean. This terrified the Gods and demons as the poison was capable of destroying the entire world, and they ran to Lord Siva for help. To protect the world from its evil effects, Lord Siva drank the deathly poison but held it in his throat instead of swallowing it. This made his throat turn blue, and he was given the name Neelakantha, the blue-throated one. Mahasivaratri is the celebration of this event by which Lord Siva saved the world.

Another legend explains the all-night worship of Lord Siva on Mahasivaratri. There was once a poor tribal man who was great devotee of Lord Siva. One day he went deep into the forest to collect firewood. However he lost his way and could not return home before nightfall. As darkness fell, he heard the growls of wild animals. Terrified, he climbed onto the nearest tree for shelter till day-break. Perched amongst the branches, he was afraid he would doze and fall off the tree. The tree happened to be a bel tree. To stay awake during the night, he decided to pluck one leaf at a time from the tree and drop it, while chanting the name of Lord Siva. At dawn, he realized that he had dropped a thousand leaves onto a Linga. This unwitting all-night worship pleased Lord Siva, by whose grace the tribal was rewarded with divine bliss. This story demonstrates that even if sivaratri vrata is performed unconsciously, great punya is obtained.

Devotees arrived at the temple throughout the day and by evening, there were well over 200 people at the Gurukulam. The program concluded with evening arati and prasada was served in the dining hall afterwards. It was a great blessing for all who attended this function.

Sarjita Naik

Thieves Strike At Three Temples In Indore

Source

INDORE, INDIA, February 25, 2013 (daily.bhaskar.com): Unidentified miscreants struck at three different temples situated under Annapurna area and decamped with booty worth thousands of dollars late on Saturday night. The thieves targeted Sai Mandir and Sri Ram Mandir situated in the vicinity of Bank Colony and also broke open the locks of a Shiv Mandir situated in adjacent, Vishwakarma Colony. The incident came to fore when locals thronged the temples to offer their morning prayers and discovered the theft. Following this, a team of Annapurna police reached the spot and took stock of the situation but found no vital clue about the miscreants. The police suspect that the thefts were committed under the influence of drugs or alcoholic substance by some local miscreants, who were aware that the area was quite deserted with inadequate lights arrangement.

As the news of theft spread in the area, local residents gathered outside the temples and registered their protest against the incidents. The residents accused police of negligence as there was no police patrolling in the area. The locals warned police of soon arrest and stern actions against the thieves or they would stage a demonstration against the department. A case was registered at Annapurna police station and further investigation was underway. Over a dozen

temples, gurudwaras and shrines situated in different parts of the city have been barged in last one month. Besides, thefts in eight temples situated in Annapurna, Chandan Nagar, Rajendra Nagar and Hira Nagar have been reported in last five days. The incidents have raised a question mark over the claims of the police about night patrolling. The police even could not ascertain the identity of the miscreants involved in any of these thefts

“Dharma Bee” Draws Huge Response As Registration Swells

Source

HOUSTON, TEXAS, February 28, 2013 (Indo American News): The Dharma Bee contest, organized by the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), is getting enthusiastic response from children of all age groups all over USA. Learning from the popularity of Spelling Bee contests among Indian students, HSS has come up with the idea of Dharma Bee to make children learn about Hindu culture and heritage in a fun environment. The topic is Bhagwan Sri Krishna (early childhood stories) and Swami Vivekananda (life and message).

Over 2,300 children have already registered for the contest to date. Children in grades Kindergarten to Eighth are eligible to participate. There are 4 groups. Group 1 is K-1st grade; Group 2 is 2nd-3rd grades;

Group 3 is 4th-5th grades; and Group 4 is 6th, 7th, 8th grades. After registration, the contestants are required to undertake an online pre-qualifying exam to test their preparedness for Level 1.

The nationwide contest, first of its kind by HSS, will be held at 200 centers across 30 states. Level 1 will be mostly objective questions and written (similar to practice online exam). At Level 2, it will be oral (objective and subjective). Level 3 will have written, oral, and team aspects to it. Before Level 1, the contestants may do a Home Project which is optional. Level 3 National will be held at June 15-16 weekend in Chicago. The organizers will take care of all boarding and lodging arrangements. Some travel allowances may also be considered. For more information, visit <http://www.dharmabee.org>.

In Houston itself, 19 prominent Hindu organizations have opened their heart and premises as the Dharma Bee Centers for level 1 test. Along with rest of the country, Houston has seen a surge in interest towards this noble and unique project. HSS is expecting 10,000 children to participate in this by the time the registration closes next month.

Heightened Security At Meenakshi Temple Irks Devotees

Source

MADURAI, INDIA, March 2, 2013 (The Hindu): With Meenakshi Amman Temple

coming under a security blanket, devotees as well as residents in the vicinity are uneasy over the heightened police presence. "The temple has been taken over by the police for all practical purposes and under the guise of security the police are troubling the common man," devotees complain.

There were complaints from some of the Bhattars working in the Temple. "The police are checking us physically before entering the sterile area...We objected to this and informed the temple authorities. The moment we produce our photo identity cards, the police should allow us in without frisking," they argued.

Women devotees with infants, unaware of the heightened security, are irked when they are told to leave camphor, match box, tender coconut water filled in bottles and other puja items such as agarbathis and milk outside the premises.

A policeman is on guard atop a specially erected watch tower. All this gives an impression that we are living in a high security zone such as New Delhi." Even the temple staff are uncomfortable with the repeated checks. "When will the police relax this scale of security, a temple staff asked"

A senior police officer said, "After the receipt of a specific threat, we have no other option but to step up vigil. The public have to cooperate. When the Central security agencies alert us about a possible threat, we cannot remain silent or hope nothing untoward would happen," he argued and added "if something goes wrong, the police would be blamed."

Could Hindu Festival 'Pop-Up Megacity' Be An Organizational Model For India?

Source

ALLAHABAD, INDIA, March 1, 2013 (Washington Post): — Onno Ruhl, head of the World Bank in India, calls it “an incredible logistical operation.” Harvard researchers describe it as “a pop-up megacity”. On the sandbanks of the Ganges River at Allahabad, bureaucrats and workers from Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state and one of its poorest, took less than three months to build a tent city for 2 million people — complete with hard roads, toilets, running water, electricity, food shops, garbage collection and well-manned police stations.

Organizers do much the same every three years - although on a particularly large scale every 12 years, as in 2013 - for the Kumbh Mela, a Hindu festival celebrated in turn at four different locations in India.

Apart from a Feb. 10 stampede at the nearby Allahabad railway station in which 36 people were killed, the Kumbh Mela itself has so far gone smoothly. Fresh water comes out of the taps. Toilets are disinfected. Trained police carefully shepherd the crowds to the bathing ghats. The lights come on at night.

In the minds of both Indians and foreigners, this raises important questions: How? Why? Or, if the authorities can build infrastructure so efficiently for this short but very large festival and its instant city, why can they not do the same for permanent villages and towns?

The World Bank’s Ruhl, who was moved to bathe in the Ganges himself when he visited the Kumbh Mela this year, says the city on the sandbanks, soon to be dismantled before

the river floods, “has water, sanitation, power, solid waste management, everything, actually, that many Indian cities lack”.

”To somebody who does projects, it’s like a mega-refugee camp that came up overnight and gets sustained and managed for two months with people filtering [in and out] at a rate of millions a day. I’ve never seen anything like it in my life. It’s managed by the UP [Uttar Pradesh] government. If somehow we could translate that capacity to day-to-day business, you could transform UP. It’s a really powerful thought.”

Malaysia’s Hindu Temples Face Priest Shortage

Source

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, February 7, 2013 (Free Malaysia Today): Hindu temples nationwide are facing a shortage of priests. This is because the Immigration Department is only granting visas for only one or two priests from India to work at a temple.

The Petaling Estate Sree Maha Mariamman Temple board of trustees chairman A. Vasudevan Nair said it was difficult for one or two priests to serve about 5,000 to 10,000 devotees who throng temples, especially during Hindu festivals. “While they allow barbers and restaurant workers from India to work here without any major restrictions, the same cannot be said for priests.

The issue of shortage of Hindu priests was brought up just after the 2008 general election. The government had entrusted Human Resources Minister and MIC vice-president S. Subramaniam to look into the matter. The government then came-up with a plan to send local Hindus to be trained, not only as priests, but also musicians and

sculptors, in India for a one-day induction course.

“Local priests are not well versed in Sanskrit... most prayers and mantras must be recited in Sanskrit. This is one disadvantage. Another is the small number of priests serving thousands of devotees. For example this temple has some 5,000 devotees but is only serviced by one priest. This is absurd,” Vasudevan said.

He said the government should not only concentrate on repairing and rebuilding temples but also pay heed to the temple’s needs and requirements of devotees,” he said.

There are (18) eighteen Puranas and 18 Upapuranas and another 18 Upa Upapuranas.

*Name the important major Puranas.
(Total 4,00,000 verses)*

1.	Brahma Purana	10,000	verses
2.	Padma Purana	55,000	verses
3.	Sri Vishnu Purana	23,000	verses
4.	Siva Purana	24,000	verses
5.	Bhagavatha Purana	18,000	verses
6.	Naradha Purana	25,000	verses
7.	Markandeya Purana	9,000	verses
8.	Agni Purana	15,400	verses
9.	Bhavishya Purana	14,500	verses
10.	Brahma Vaivarta Purana	18,000	verses
11.	Linga Purana	11,000	verses
12.	Varaha Purana	24,000	verses
13.	Skandha Purana	81,100	verses
14.	Vamana Purana	10,000	verses
15.	Koorma Purana	17,000	verses
16.	Matsya Purana	14,000	verses
17.	Garuda Purana	19,000	verses
18.	Brahmanda Purana	12,000	verses



Two Muslim students win all 3 Sanskrit medals in Gujarat University.

“inspired to learn Sanskrit after hearing stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata”.....

“Muslim boys and girls diversifying into other educational fields is a good sign”.....

Syed Khalique Ahmed | Indian Express | Ahmedabad, | Thu Mar 07 2013 :: Defying stereotypes, a Muslim boy and girl have bagged all three medals instituted for the BA

course in the ancient Indian language by the Gujarat University.

Two of the medals for Sanskrit were won by Taiyab Sheikh, a student of Y S Arts and Commerce college in Devgadhi Baria in Panchmahals district. The third went to Yasminbanu Kothari of the Adiwasi Arts and Commerce college in Santrampur in the interior of the state's tribal belt.

Sheikh got 75.5 per cent marks and Kothari 68.5 per cent. The medals were awarded at the convocation Tuesday.

Sheikh, 23, who is now studying for a B.Ed. degree in a Godhra college, said he was inspired to learn Sanskrit after hearing stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharat told by his teachers in primary school in his village of Tokarwa.

He said he wants to be a post-graduate in Sanskrit and pursue teaching it as a career. Sheikh enrolled himself for a BA degree with Sanskrit as his main subject as he failed to get a teaching job in a primary school after doing a teachers training course.

His elder brother is a head master in a government primary school and there was no opposition in the family to him studying

Sanskrit. "My parents, who are farmers and not educated, only wanted me to perform well," Sheikh said.

Kothari said she developed a liking for Sanskrit when she was in class 12. The daughter of a fruit-seller who studied up to class 12, she too said she did not face any opposition to her choice of the language. "In fact, my father and his friend Rafiq Sheikh, a college teacher, encouraged me to study it," she said.

Kothari teaches at a primary school in Santrampur and like Sheikh, she too wants to do an MA in Sanskrit and work as a teacher.

"A language does not belong to any community. Anyone can learn any language provided he or she has interest in it," said J R Machchi, Sheikh's Sanskrit teacher.

"Muslim boys and girls diversifying into other educational fields is a good sign," added J S Bandukwala, a retired Physics professor from M S University who runs Zidni Ilma Trust, which promotes professional and technical education among poor Muslim students.

Courtesy: Indian express

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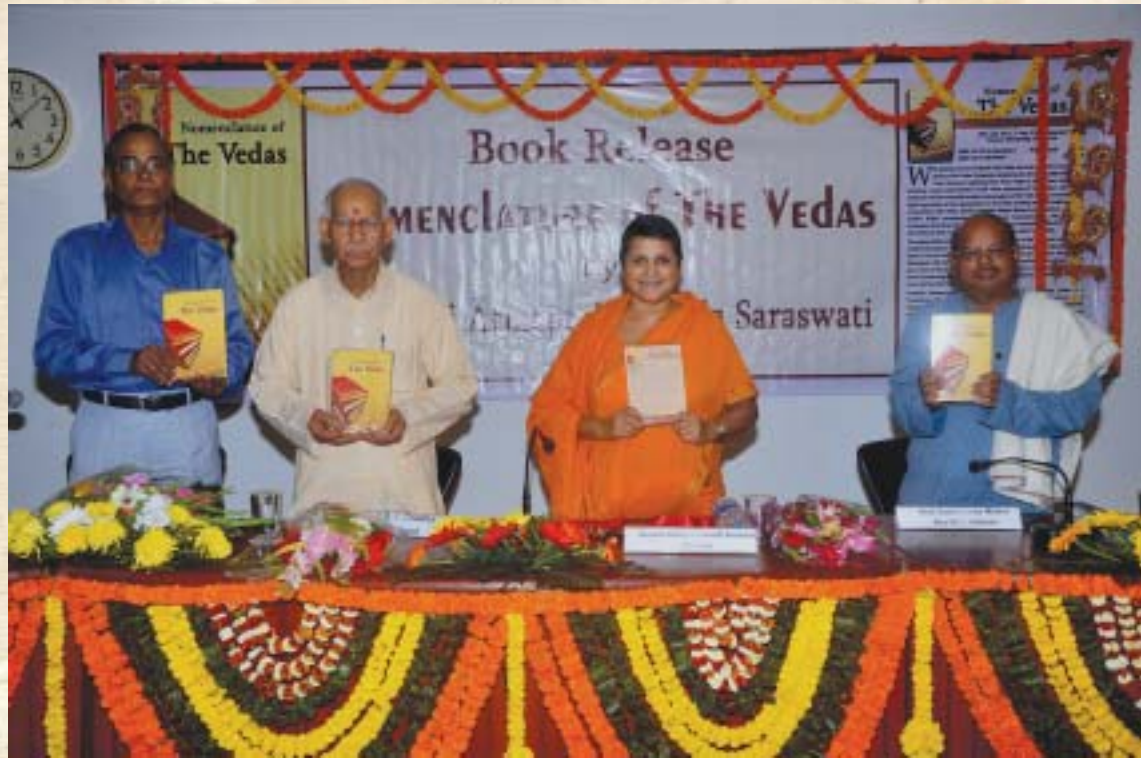
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