

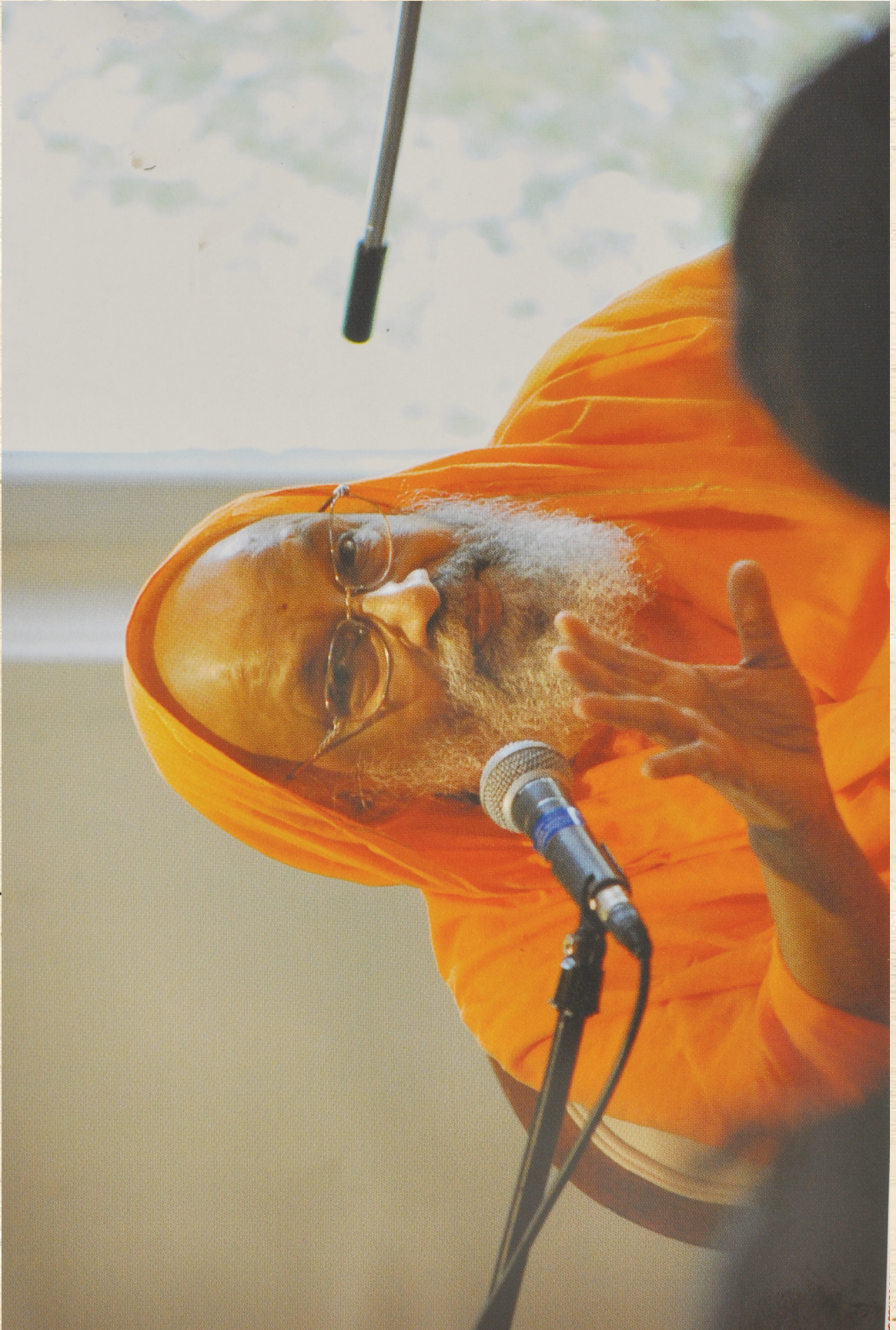


Arsha Vidya Newsletter

Rs. 15/-



"An aerial view of AVG, Saylorsburg"



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*Arsha Vidya
Newsletter*

In fearless voice may
we proclaim

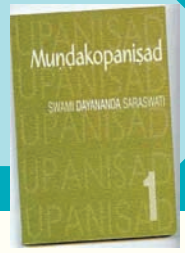
The Rishi's message
from all house-tops

And bring the men
of different claim

To a fold of Love
where oneness lasts!



Muṇḍakopaniṣad



If Brahman became many and continued to remain, but was separated from all the created things and beings, then also the opening statement is untenable. Again, if Brahman becomes many, like rice becoming many by taking various forms such as rice sticks and so on, then it is inert. It also becomes dual. But Brahman is taught as jñānam brahma¹, so it definitely cannot be inert. Since Brahman is a conscious entity, it amounts to saying that the cetana-brahman has become this manifold world.

The only option open to us is: everything here is Brahman and that Brahman is available for my knowledge as the only reality. Brahman happens to be satya and everything else is an effect of that Brahman, and hence mithyā. Therefore, it is possible to gain all knowledge by knowing one thing, Brahman. It is like knowing the world of pots by knowing its vcause, that is, clay.

The pot is something different from the original form of the clay, in a way. But then, the clay has no particular form. It can be in any form, including a pot form. Therefore, the pot form is but clay form. And pot form is not just a form. It is a form that has a certain meaning, a certain purpose, and therefore, is a deliberate creation.

Now, if the pot is something that is a deliberate creation, then there is some knowledge involved, like what is a pot. The word 'pot' has its own meaning. Between the word 'pot' and its meaning there is a certain relationship which is always there. Once you know the pot, the word 'pot' and its meaning cannot be separated. For the word 'pot' there is an object 'pot'. In that word is locked the knowledge of the pot, and that object is always going to be referred to by that word. There is a permanent relationship between abhidhāna, a word, and abhidheya, the object indicated by that word. The moment I utter the word 'pot', the one who knows that word is able to recognise the object. The one who does not know can be taught – 'This is pot'. Thereafter, wherever he sees a pot, he is going to recognise, 'This is a pot'. This relationship between the word and its meaning is something constant. Therefore, communication is possible.

¹ Taittiriyaopaniṣad 2.1

The clay, retaining its nature, has deliberately assumed the form of pot to serve a purpose. In this creation there is a certain knowledge of pot involved, and an act of creation involved. This pot is a creation from clay, and for that creation we have to find a cause which is 'more than what we see'. Clay is 'what we see' in a clay pot. But the clay itself is not the pot. Nor can clay itself become the pot. Being a deliberate creation, there is something 'more than what you see' here. That 'more than what you see', makes you always wonder, who can be the maker of this pot? The knowledge and skill involved here do not belong to the clay. Clay is inert. It cannot make itself into a meaningful pot, big or small. That 'more than what you see' in this creation is the jñāna, the knowledge and śakti, skill. Both of them are required in any creation. One who sees that is called a vivekin. Only a human being can see that. A cow cannot. A cow is not able to see 'more than what meets the eyes'. Therefore, we cannot make this too simplistic.

There must be a maker because of whose knowledge and skill alone, whose efforts alone, a pot can come into existence. There must be a nimitta kāraṇa, an efficient cause. We now have two different causes for the pot. One is the clay, the other is the pot-maker. A pot is not a complex creation. If the creation is a clock, you are able to see how complex a thing it is. It has got to be an effect, and it is an effect in which there is definitely 'more than what you see'. It is intelligently put together.

The expression 'intelligently put together' implies the knowledge and skill necessary for that production. They have to abide in a conscious being. The cause is not inert material here. A clay head cannot think about creating a clock. The clock is a cetana kārya, born of conscious activity. Therefore, there must be a cetana vastu, conscious entity as the cause. The bhūta yoni, cause of all things is the cetana vastu. Consciousness, and it is vibhu, pervading all effects. Vibhu is the upādāna kāraṇa, material cause, like clay that has become many in the form of pots, lids and so on. The word bhūta yoni can be taken as nimitta kāraṇa, the efficient cause where knowledge and skill abide. Thus vibhu indicates the cause that has become 'many', and bhūta yoni indicates the cause that has made the 'many'. These two causes are discussed here in this mantra.

That which has made this manifold jagat is one form of cause, and that which has become the jagat is another. Generally these two causes are located in two places. One is a cetana, conscious, and the other is acetana, inert. The conscious being is the pot-maker, and clay is inert. Using the inert clay, the pot-maker

makes the pot. In the hands of the pot-maker, the inert clay is shaped into many forms.

When we look into this jagat, naturally we are trying to find out the ultimate cause. As a human being you see more than what the eyes can see. The eyes see only a tree, but you see everything that the tree has, the scheme of every part in the tree, the purpose that each one serves, and so on. The roots, the trunk, the bark, the foliage, the flower, the seed – every one of them is important, everything has got its place. This is 'seeing more than what the eyes can see'. This becomes the basis for research and speculation.

When we look into this human body, it is so complex. Each limb has its own place in the scheme of things. There are certain things that keep certain changes dormant, that maintain the system without any change. This is a homeostasis, keeping things exactly the same. Temperature is maintained in the same form, at 37 degree C, water is maintained in the same form at a fixed volume, the salts are maintained in the same form in a fixed ratio, and each factor helps the other. We have an airconditioning system in the human body. It is an amazing system. The body temperature is always maintained at 37 deg. C. If it increases even slightly, immediately there is great activity inside the body to bring that temperature down. This capacity is not an ordinary thing. This homeostatic system implies so much knowledge. Even to keep one room at the same temperature all the time, you require a thermostat system. This whole thing is too mind-boggling, and therefore, so much jñāna, knowledge, is involved.

There is knowledge in the creation. It is not chaotic and therefore, you can know it. If a system is chaotic, then you cannot understand it. There is such a thing as anatomy, pathology, physiology, biology and so on—all these are possible because there is so much knowledge manifest in the various life forms. So, the human mind that is able to see all these things is going to imagine a cause, and that cause is, cetana. Since we are talking about not one body or one thing, but about all that is here, therefore you can stretch your thinking further to infer that cetana to be all-knowledge and almighty, whom we call God. But we keep him safely away. We always see the material cause as different from the efficient cause in the world. Therefore, this jagat is going to be looked at as a piece of art or work done by God who is not available anywhere here. He has initiated the whole thing and has kept it going.

He is looked upon as another conscious being, who handles this almighty work. Therefore, two hands are not enough. So, in our images of this God, we add two more hands. We imagine him to be possessed of four hands or a thousand hands, and so on. We stretch our imagination to give him a special body with some special power and knowledge, and keep him somewhere beyond the world, because locally we do not see him;. We call that place heaven and give it different names such as Vaikuṇṭha, Kailāsa, and so on. Each one has his or her own image of heaven. In keeping with this belief he or she can claim that God is not in others' concept of heaven, but in his or her heaven alone. There is nothing to prove that anyone's claim is true. Anything can be accepted as a revelation as long as it is beyond reason. If one's thinking is against reason, then definitely it is wishful thinking.

Let us look at what the upaniṣad has to say about God whom we call Īśvara. What it has to say is also revelation. But it is a revelation that has a sampradāya, a tradition of handing down that revelation, and further, what is revealed is sensible. Anyone can initiate a sampradāya. That does not mean it becomes a tradition making sense. What is said and maintained by this sampradāya makes sense.

Here the opening statement is: 'What is that, knowing which everything is as well known'. If the two causes discussed above are separate, then by knowing one thing, you are not going to know the other. Here, however, knowing one thing, you know everything. That means that one thing must be everything. Thus both the causes must be one and the same. The words bhūta yoni and vibhu reveal Brahman to be the material as well as the efficient cause.

If that Brahman is to be known, what is its lakṣaṇa? The upaniṣad gives lakṣaṇa as adreśyam, agrāhyam, acakṣuśrotram, apāṇipādam, and so on. From this it is very clear that Brahman is talked about only as ātman, which is conscious. If Brahman being the cause is negated through the cause-effect analysis, what remains is Brahman as caitanya, pure consciousness. That caitanya is the material cause for the world, so that alone has become 'as though' many.

Dhīrāḥ paripaśyanti: those people who are qualified and who have this knowledge recognise Brahman as themselves alone. They see very clearly that Brahman does not exist in any other way except as the self. The

self is self-revealing, and everything else is revealed. Therefore, for the wise person there is no ignorance about the self being Brahman.

For gaining this knowledge a two-fold preparation is required. One requirement is cognitive skill, and the other is maturity. One who has this two-fold preparation is also called dhīra. A dhīra is a complete person. For him, the 'child' within is integrated with the 'adult'. Such a person is compassionate. Compassion stands for all the qualities like dispassion, non-hurting etc. I use the word 'compassion' because that is what I appreciate in sannyāsa. Sannyāsa is meant for the pursuit of mokṣa. So ahimsā, non hurting, and bhūta dayā, compassion, which are emphasised when you take to the life of sannyāsa, are to be understood as the prime qualification for gaining this knowledge. They are two sides of the same coin. Ahimsā is expressed in the form of compassion. So, compassion characterises the humaneness of the person. To be a human being is to enjoy humaneness. If you have that completely, then you are a complete human being. Any other qualification that the śāstra talks about amounts only to cognitive skill and maturity. A dhīra has these two qualifications. Naturally, when he is taught by the śāstra, he sees what is taught. Brahman is not something that cannot be recognised, something totally unknowable. When the mantra describes Brahman as adreśya, agrāhya, and so on, it looks as though it is not available for knowing. But it is not so. Brahman is available for knowing because it happens to be you. Therefore, the wise people clearly see.

Now the words vibhu and bhūta yoni can be analysed further. Vibhu means that which becomes many. Becoming many can occur in many ways. How Brahman has become many has to be understood. Everyone is born single. By the time this man leaves this world he has quite a few people around him. He is the cause for all of them. This is one way of becoming many. But afterwards he is gone. Similarly, did Brahman become many and disappear. Is Brahman bhūta yoni in this way? If it is so, the opening statement 'by knowing which, everything is as well known' will become untenable. By understanding the man who multiplied himself into many, I am not going to understand all his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren! Similarly, if Brahman has become many, then one has to understand everything to understand Brahman. Every object in the creation is going to be something unique, so it is neither humanly possible nor celestially possible to understand the entire jagat.

Śrī Rudram

नमो रोहिताय स्थपतये वृक्षाणां पतये नमः ॥९॥

nāmo rohitāya sthapatāye vṛkṣāṇām patāye namaḥ ||9||

namaḥ - salutation; rohitāya - to the one who is of red colour; sthapatāye - who remaining everywhere is the protector of all; vṛkṣāṇām - of all trees; patāye - who is the Lord; namaḥ - salutation

Salutation to the one who is of red colour, who remaining everywhere is the protector of all, and who is the Lord of all trees.

Namaḥ rohitāya - Here, rohita means the one who has lohita varṇa, red colour. Salutation to him who is in the form of rohita, blood, and who sustains everything. Therefore he is sthapati¹ - one who sustains and one who protects in the form of nourishment. He is the sustainer and protector.

Vṛkṣāṇām patāye namaḥ – Salutations unto him, the Lord of trees. As in other living beings, in trees also he is the sap, rohita, by implication. Staying in trees as sap, he protects them. So he is the sthātā and he is the protector, pātā. Unto him, (my) salutation.

नमो मन्त्रिणे वाणिजाय कक्षाणां पतये नमः ॥ १० ॥

namo mantriṇe vāṇijāya kakṣāṇām patāye namaḥ || 10 |

namaḥ - salutation; mantriṇe - to the Lord of all secrets; vāṇijāya - to the one who is revealed by the words (of the Vedas); kakṣāṇām - of inaccessible places; patāye - to the Lord; namaḥ – salutation

Salutation to the Lord of all secrets, who is revealed by the words (of the Vedas) and who is the Lord of inaccessible places.

¹ sthātā ca asau pātā ca praśodarādīḥ -

One who is sustainer and protector. This word falls under the group termed as praśodarādi by Pāṇini



A mantra is a Vedic hymn or a chant for repetition and contemplation. Besides the Veda-mantras there are crores of mantras in the mantra-śāstrās. It is said that there are sapta-koti, seven crores mahamantras. A mantra is always kept as a secret, gupta. All the gupta-vadas, secret statements, including the upaniṣads are called mantras since they are secret. The Guptas in India were accountants, as they are supposed to keep the details of others' accounts to themselves. The place where a serious and secret discussion takes place is called mantrāṇa. A minister is also called a mantri because he keeps to himself the secrets of the kingdom, mantrāṇam gupta viṣayaṇam svāmi iti mantri.

So the Lord of all mantras is also called a mantri. Every mantra invokes a deity. The one in whom all these deities are also included is devānam svāmi. Therefore, he is sarveṣām mantrāṇam svāmi. Not only is he the Lord of all mantras, he is revealed by the same mantras. He is the giver of the mantras chanted repeatedly in japa or used in rituals. Therefore, he is mantrāṇam patiḥ.

He is vāṇijaḥ - vāṇyā abhivyaktaḥ², revealed by the vāṇi, speech. He is revealed by the words. Tasmai vāṇijāya namaḥ, - salutation to him who is revealed by the words of Vedas.

Kakṣāṇām pataye namaḥ - - Unto the Lord of inaccessible places, my salutation. Kakṣā is a hidden place. All mantras are secret, but for whom? For the one who cannot understand. For the Lord there is no secret as he knows every hidden place and therefore kakṣāṇām pati means sarvajña, omniscient and sarva sākṣī, witness of everything. The unconscious, in particular, is hidden for us who are conscious. To the Lord the unconscious is not hidden. He is thus the Lord of the unconscious too. For whom there is no secret and from whom one cannot hide anything is the Lord. Because of his grace, all secrets can be unlocked. Unto him, who is the Lord of kakṣā, my salutation.

² vāṇi vāg vācakādi svarūpāl tasyām vācyādi svarūpeṇa jataḥ vānijaḥ hrasvatvam chāndasam

Arsh Vidya Gurukulam Celebrates Its 26th Anniversary Day

The 26th Anniversary of the Gurukulam was held in Saylorsburg PA on August 19, 2012.

Approximately one thousand people gathered to celebrate this function, which took place under beautiful, sunny skies.

Two huge tents were erected, one for the ceremony and the other for dinning. Parking was regulated carefully on the premises. Outside the tents, tables were arranged for snacks and drinks available during the function. A banquet lunch prepared by the Gurukulam Kitchen was served on well-arranged tables in the tent. Programs and games for children were provided on the Gurukulam grounds and babysitting was also available. There were outdoor stalls for books, souvenirs and gifts.

The program started at 9:30 AM. Dr. Vandana Pradeep anchored the program as Master of Ceremonies.

Arsha Kula Bhushanam Sri Maharajapuram S. Ramchandranji inaugurated the ceremony with a Ganesa prayer followed by Pujya Swamiji's composition.

Pandit Mukesh Desaiji followed with an Indian Classical Music concert. He was accompanied by Aditya Narayan Banerjee on tabla and Jai Gandhi on flute. Panditji sang beautiful bhajans and a composition of Pujya Swamiji. The audience joined him with the Har Har Govinda bhajan.



Vandanaji announced the ongoing programs at the Gurukulam that included the yoga, music, Astrology Ayurvedic classes and Vedanta Retreats.

Mr. Deven Sharma, the chief guest and the former president of Standards and Poor's delivered the guest address. In his speech he said that he took over the Standard and Poor's organization in the year 2007. Mr. Sharma said it was easier to do things with courage than with fear. There were conflicting choices. A choice may not be

in the best interest of one individual but it should be in the best interest of all. The aim should focus on what you can do for others, and then it becomes easy to make decisions. "Therefore, do something that brings more freedom and happiness to all", he said.

Mr. Sharma was followed by New Jersey Assemblyman Upendra Chivakula. In his address Mr. Chivakula said that he had been a legislator for the last ten years and that meant being in a position where you could bring about a change.

The following books were released during the functions:

"Seeking Enlightenment" by Catherine Morrison

"Vivekananda: His Gospel of Man-making" by Swami Jyotirmayananda

"Yoga Sadhana" by Stanford Melancon and Susan Lalji

"Indian Origin of Ancient Civilization" by Niranjana Shah

"Vaidika Sukta Manjari" by Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati

"Tattvabodha" by Puja Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Puja Swamiji commended the books and honored the writers.

Mr. Piyush Shah, the treasurer of the Gurukulam, addressed the gathering. Mr. Shah said that the main purpose of the Gurukulam was to teach 'Self Knowledge' to all. He further said that several buildings were repaired and renovated and a new Auditorium was likely to be



built with community support. He said that the major donation to the Gurukulam came from the book store and the Yoga Studio.

State Representative Ms. Lorna O'Farrell along with Representatives Rosemary M.

Brown and Mario M Scavello acknowledged Arsha Vidya Gurukulam as a Center of Vedantic Teaching.

The following persons were acknowledged:

All Members of the Board of the Gurukulam

Suzanne McCool, County Commissioner of the Monroe County

Swamy Jyotirmayananda

Keshavananda

Bava Jain

Rajayashri Khandelwal

Dr. Ron Harris

Mani Shankar

Raghu Nandan

Mrs. Anjeli Sharma

Vandanaji then spoke about Pujya Swamiji, as a foremost authority on Vedanta, and requested him to address the gathering.

Pujya Swamiji in his speech said he never asked questions such as: what is God? or where is God? The Vedic vision of God is that He is in everything and everywhere. The creator and the creation are not separate. This is not a belief. Belief is subject to correction and change. This means belief can be wrong. There is nothing like one God or many Gods. All that is here is *only* God. It is all 'Idam Sarvam'. It is an equation. The equation is Jagat is Iswara. You see the Jagat, the manifest universe. It is not a matter of

belief. The jagat is a manifestation of Iswara. Everything is given to us. The Universe is given. The human being which includes the body, the mind and senses is given. The biological order, the psychological order and every emotion are manifestation of Iswara. You are given to be a human being. Dharma is also a manifestation of Iswara. It is given. Music, dance, the languages are all given to you.

Therefore all creation is the creator. They are not separate. Pujya Swamiji concluded his talk by saying "this is the knowledge that the Gurukulam teaches you".

It may be noted that the Gurukulam will make available a full transcript of Pujya Swamiji's speech.

Vandana Pradeep thanked all the staff and specifically the visitors for their participation. She thanked the volunteer coordinator, Mr. Raj Kuppuswamy, and all other volunteers who tirelessly helped to make the 26th Anniversary a grand success.

Pujya Swamiji acknowledged M.C. Vandana for her eloquence in conducting the proceedings of the ceremony.

Satsang with Pujya Swamiji followed. Pujya Swamiji answered all the questions from the gathering in a span of two and a half hours, once again showing Pujya Swamiji's love for students and devotees.

The program ended at 5:30 PM.

"Report by
Arvind Bagat"

Bhashyam Vedanta Retreat 2012 Report

You are limitless. The limitless is Iswara. The projection of samsara on atma creates the wrong perception of being limited. The self knowledge is the means to remove this perception.



The Bhashyam Vedanta Retreat was conducted from July 15 to July 21 at Arsh Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg P A .

Approximately sixty adults and four children attended the camp. Swami Viditatmananda Sarawati taught Brahadaranyaka Upanisad Passage 1-4-7 with Sankarabhasya. Swamiji held satsang sessions in the evenings. Savithri Maniji arranged a children program. Yoga classes were conducted by Mark Hertal.

The registration was complete on the 15th of July and Suddatmaji held an orientation in the evening. He explained the course schedule and the facilities available at the Gurukulam.

Swamiji taught this Bhashya mantra by mantra explaining the meaning and implications. The Bhashya is in the form of discourse and objections. It is essentially a discussion in which Sankara refutes the objections and the teachings of duality. Swamiji explained the concepts of the undifferentiated and the differentiated self. There were significant objections to the proposition that the supreme self entered into the universe. The argument was that a thing cannot enter itself. Sankara establishes advaita (non-duality) giving

various illustrations and supporting arguments. The whole presentation is a scholarly discussion on the Self and how it pervades the Universe. There was an elaborate discussion on prana and it's characteristic.

This is a brilliant work of Sankara and it is enjoyable when an accomplished teacher like Swamiji explains step by step the knowledge imparted by Sankara. The students attending this class have been taking courses at the Gurukulam for many years. At the end of the class, the students were pleased at the way Swamiji conducted the class and answered the questions. Many students expressed a wish that in future more courses based on this Upanisad will be taught at the Gurukulam.

Savithriji had very little time and a few students to put together a children's cultural program. She presented a small program.

The kitchen staff provided good food and served it on time. The priests Sri Ravichandran and Sri Ganesa performed the Pujas regularly.

Suddhatmaji and the Gurukulam staff, the teachers and the volunteers worked hard to make the camp a success.

The camp ended on July 21, 2012.

Family Vedanta Retreat III for the year 2012



Capacity to conform to Dharma is a big satisfaction.

It is freedom from conflicts. It is Purushartha.

Behind every desire there is a judgment that I am incomplete.

A total acceptance of yourself and a total acceptance of what is, is necessary. You are complete as you are.



The Final of the Family retreats, the Family Retreat III for the year 2012 was held at the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Saylorsburg PA from August 5 to August 12. Almost 70 participants and 60 children attended this camp.

Pujya Swami Dayanandaji taught Verses 10-12 from Kathopanishad 1.3 and Swami Viditatmananda Sarswati continued the Isavasyopanishad he was teaching during the Family Vedanta Retreat II. Savithri Maniji and Lance Daniels held the children camp. The children were grouped according to their ages as juniors, seniors and teens. Suddhatmaji taught chanting the Shanti Mantras and Pandit Mukesh Desaiji taught the music classes. Yoga classes were also available during the camp.

Registration was completed on August 5. Orientation was held in the evening. Suddhatmaji explained the course schedule and the facilities at the Gurukulam.

Orientation was followed by a satsang and bhajan with Swami Viditatmanandaji.

Pujya Swamiji was to be at the Gurukulam in the morning on the August 8. However, the plane he was travelling in arrived late. Pujya Swamiji came to the temple in the afternoon. Many students were waiting to see Swamiji at the temple. Swamiji came to the temple; he prayed to Lord Dakshinamurti, talked to the students and then conducted a satsang. Swamiji answered questions; he talked about some of his experiences in India and told the story about Niciketas and the three boons Lord Yama gave him.

Pujya Swamiji taught two classes and conducted a session of satsang every day during the camp.

Swami Viditatmandaji continued teaching Isa Upanishad teaching one class every day. Swamiji explained the shanti mantra and the fullness and completeness concept of

the self. He elaborated on the concept of renunciation and Karma and the choice of performing good karma.

Suddhatmaji conducted chanting classes during the camp on alternate days. He explained the significance the akshar shudhi, the matra shudhi and the swara shudhi. Suddhatmaji also answered questions from the student.

Pandit Mukesh Desaiji taught music on alternate days during the morning and presented classical music in the evenings every day. The campers were pleased with Punditji's melodious renderings.

Three significant programs took place during this retreat as follows:

On August 7th the Nakshatra Puja was performed for Pujya Swamiji in the Homa Building. Priests from various places participated in chanting stotras. The ceremony lasted almost for five hours.

On August 9th the Sri Krishna's Janmastami celebrated. Children and adults gathered in the evening at the Yoga Studio for a delightful evening. Children chanted the Krishna Ashtothram. Children and adults danced the garba and the dandia. The program lasted till eleven PM.

On August 12th Pujya Swamiji's Birthday was celebrated at the temple. It was a big gathering. Swami Veditatmananda gave a key note speech. Pujya Swamiji in his speech said that a birthday reminds you of one more year of growth. Every experience in life adds to inner growth.

The Cultural evening was presented by Savithriji on August 11th. Pandit Mukesh Desai's students presented Ganesa's bhajan in Raga Kedar. Junior and senior children chanted mantras. A dance sequence Navarasa was presented. This was followed by a junior children tableau on Lord Rama's life entitled Bala Ramayana. Finally the teens presented a play titled Navarasa Ramayana.

The kitchen staff worked hard to serve good food on time. Priests Sri Ravichandran and Sri Ganesa were very busy during this camp. They performed well. Yoga classes were well attended.

This was a very busy camp for everyone. Suddhatmaji and the staff, teachers and volunteers worked hard to make it a success. Pujya Swamiji's return was awaited for and everyone was happy to see him back.

The camp ended on August 12th 2012.

"Report by Arvind Bagat"

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सुभाषितम् Subhāṣitam

मनसा चिन्तितं कार्यं वाचा नैव प्रकाशयेत् ।
मन्त्रेण रक्षयेद् गूढं कार्यं चाऽपि नियोजयेत् ॥
manasā cintitaṁ kāryaṁ vācā naiva prakāśayet ।
mantreṇa rakṣayed gūḍhaṁ kārye cā'pi niyojayet ॥

What plan you have thought of in your mind should not come on your tongue. Contemplate and rethink over it, keeping it guarded. Put the idea or plan into action without voicing.

न विश्वसेत् कुमित्रे च मित्रे चाऽपि न विश्वसेत् ।
कदाचित् कुपितं मित्रं सर्वं गुह्यं प्रकाशयेत् ॥
na viśvaset kumitre ca mitre cā'pi na viśvaset ।
kadācit kupitaṁ mitraṁ sarva guhyaṁ prakāśayet ॥
A friend who is no good, should not be trusted and a friend who is not proven bad should also be not trusted with your secrets because he might reveal them when he is not on good terms with you.

नदीतीरे च वृक्षाः परगेहेषु कामिनी ।
मन्त्रिहीनाश्च राजानः शीघ्रं नश्यन्त्यसंशयम् ॥
nadiṭīre ca vṛkṣāḥ parageheṣu kāmīnī ।
mantrihiṇāśca rājānaḥ śīghraṁ naśyantyasaṁśayam ॥
The following take no time to perish: the trees growing on a river bank, a woman who lives in other man's house and a king who has bad ministers.

बलं विद्या च विप्राणां राज्ञां सैन्यं बलं तथा ।
बलं वित्तं च वैश्यानां शूद्राणां परिचर्यकम् ॥
balaṁ vidhyā ca viprāṇāṁ rājñāṁ sainyaṁ balaṁ tathā ।
balaṁ vittaṁ ca vaiśyānāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ paricaryakam ॥

The power of Brahmins is their knowledge, the power of kings is their armies, the power of traders is their money and the power of the lower classes is their service.

शैले शैले न माणिक्यं मौक्तिकं न गजे गजे ।
साधवो न हि सर्वत्र चन्दनं न वने वने ॥
śaile śaile na māṇikyaṁ mauktikaṁ na gaje gaje ।
sādhavo na hi sarvatra candanaṁ na vane vane ॥
Every hill does not contain gems, every elephant has no mani—pearl in its forehead, every place is no home of nobles and every forest does not grow sandalwood trees.

कष्टं च खलु मुखत्वं कष्टं च खलु यौवनम् ।
कष्टातूकष्टतरं चैव परगेहनिवासनम् ॥

kaṣṭaṁ ca khalu mūkhatvam kaṣṭaṁ ca khalu yauvanam ।
kaṣṭātūkaṣṭataraṁ caiva paragehanivāsanam ॥
Supidity is a woe, the youthful days are woleful, but living on other's
mercy is woe extreme.

कान्तावियोगः स्वजनापमानः ऋणस्य शेषः कुनृपस्य सेवा ।
दरिद्रभावो विषमा सभा च विनाशिनैते प्रदहन्ति कायम् ॥

kāntāviyogaḥ svajanāpamānaḥ ṛṇasya śeṣaḥ kunṛpasya sevā ।
daridrābhāvo viṣamā sabhā ca vināśninaite pradahanti kāyam ॥
The following things burn a man without fire and silently eat him; the
separation from wife, contempt by kith and kin, serving an evil master,
indebtedness, poverty and living amongst selfish and rogue people.

परोक्षे कार्यहन्तारं प्रत्यक्षे प्रियवादिनम् ।
वर्जयेत्तादृशं मित्रं विषकुम्भं पयोमुखम् ॥

parokṣe kāryahantāraṁ pratyakṣe priyavādinam ।
varjayettādṛśaṁ mitraṁ viṣakumbhaṁ payomukham ॥
A friend who talks flatteringly sweet things overtly but covertly tries
to harm should be gotten rid of without any delay. He is like a pot
that is filled with poison but is topped with cream to deceive.

ते पुत्रा ये पितुर्भक्ताः स पिता यस्तु पोषकः ।
तन्मित्रं यस्य विश्वासः सा भार्या यत्र निर्वृतिः ॥

te putrā ye piturbhaktāḥ sa pitā yastu poṣakaḥ ।
tanmitraṁ yasya viśvāsaḥ sā bhāryā yatra nirvṛtiḥ ॥
The true son is one who is obedient to his father, a true father is one
who looks after his sons, similarly true friend is one who is trustworthy
and true wife is one who makes her husband happy.

भोज्यं भोजनशक्तिश्च रतिशक्तिर्वराङ्गना ।
विभवो दानशक्तिश्च नाऽल्पस्य तपसः फलम् ॥

bhojyaṁ bhojanaśaktiśca ratiśaktirvarāṅganā ।
vibhavo dānaśaktiśca nā'lpasya tapasaḥ phalam ॥
Only great penance can earn one: the rich food to eat, a good digestive
power to dispose it, a beautiful woman for wife and virility to ravish
her and riches with charitable disposition to use the money for good
causes.

कौटिल्यस्य नयः
kauṭilyasya nayaḥ

Report Labor Day Patrons' Vedanta Retreat II 2012



The Labor Day Patrons' Vedanta Retreat II was held at Saylorsburg PA from August 31st to September 3rd.

It was a large gathering. Approximately 500 adults and 120 children participated in this camp. Pujya Swami Dayanand Saraswati expounded the fifteenth verse from Bhagavad Gita Chapter 15. Pujya Swamiji held satsang sessions every day. Swami Tattvavidananda continued his discourse on Ayodhyakandam from Valmikiramayana. Suddhatmaji taught chanting. Pandit Mukesh Desaiji conducted music classes. Maharajapuram Sri Ramachandranji presented a concert and Savithri Auntie presented a children's cultural program. Yoga classes were available during the camp.

Registration was complete during the day on August 31st. In the evening Suddhatmaji held the orientation. Suddhatmaji explained the schedule for the camp and the facilities available at the Gurukulam.

Pujya Swamiji taught verse 15 of Chapter 15 from Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. It is on Purusottamayoga. Lord Krishna says he is in the heart of every being. A person feels he is limited because he is ignorant of this knowledge. There is a total order in everything in the universe. There is an order in Dharma. The Lord is manifested in everything as the Knowledge. So

Krishna who is Iswara says I am the knower of everything, I know all Vedas, I am the author of Vedas, I am the knower of the knowledge and I am that knowledge. The knowledge is that every being is limitless. Pujya Swamiji explained Lord Krishna's this teaching with various illustrations with a profound clarity.

Pujya Swamiji held satsang everyday and answered questions from the students.

Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati continued the Valmikiramayana from last camp, the Patrons' Vedanta Retreat I. Swamiji taught the Ayodhyakandam which is about Bharata's visit to Lord Rama. Lord Rama is in exile. The verses are in the form of questions to Bharata from Lord Rama but they are intended to advice Bharata about the qualities of a good king. Lord Rama advices Bharata how a king should act, perform his duties and have good relationship with his subjects. Swamiji said Ramayana was a majestic epic, a poem and an expression of love. Swamiji said that Ramayana glorifies the dharma and that life is a simple truth but it is difficult to live. He said that one should ask questions and think. One finds his own answers. It is knowledge. The advice Lord Rama is giving to Bharata is not necessarily for the king, it is for all of us.





Swamiji conducted guided meditation every day.

On September 1st Ramchandranji presented a delightful Carnatic Music Concert enthralled the campers. Everyone appreciated the presentation.

It was a large gathering of children. The children were divided according to their ages as juniors, seniors and teens groups, for the purpose of teaching. Teachers Lance Daniels, Rajana Deshmukh, Angie. Shreya, Jayanthi, Janani and Swami Vilasananda taught various classes.

On September 2nd Savithri Auntie presented a children's cultural program. About 60 children participated. In the Junior group the children performed a tableau depicting how so much can be learned from the nature. The senior children presented a new approach to 'Dasavataras' as suggested by Pujya Swamiji. The teen group presented a short play carrying the message 'God is our constant companion'. A dance was also presented by girls based on the AIM for Seva Anthem 'Bharat Desa Hitaya'. It was a delightful evening. Everyone enjoyed the program.

Suddhamtmaji taught the chanting on Durga Suktam.

Pandit Mukesh Desaiji taught the Indian Classical Music. For this camp Panditji presented Raga Kedar, a beautiful evening raga in teen (3) taal and sixteen beats. Kedar is an enchanting raga and it was a pleasure to learn and hear it from Panditji.

The kitchen staff works hard to serve good food to the large gathering and meals were served on time.

Pujaris Sri Ravichandran and Sri Ganesa performed the pujas regularly. Suddhatmaji and the staff, the teachers, and volunteers worked hard during the camp and to make it an enjoyable event.

This was the last long weekend of the summer. The Gurukulam was full of campers, children and visitors. All had gathered to be entertained by renowned artists and to learn from Pujya Swamiji and Swami Tattvavidanandaji. It was all achieved so very well during this camp.

Suddhatmaji thanked all Patrons for their continuous support to the Gurukulam for last twenty Six Years.

The camp ended on September 3rd 2012.

"Report by Arvind Bagat"

Purna Vidya Teachers' Training Camp and Carnatic Vocal Music Workshop 2012



This camp was held at Saylorsburg PA from August 12 to August 17 2012. Approximately forty adults and twenty children attended the camp. Pujya Swamiji held satsang everyday, Savithriji Mani organized the Purna Vidya teacher's camp and Maharajapuram Sri Ramachandran conducted the Carnatic Music Workshop. Suddhatmaji taught chanting. Yoga facilities were available during the camp. Meditation was conducted by Janani and Bhajans were presented by Jayanthi

The Purna Vidya Teacher's Training program was conceived by Pujya Swamiji for children and youth growing in the modern world. The native forms of culture and religion are challenged by other forms reaching the children through global media. They have to choose. This program provides knowledge and insight into the vision of Vedas, the literature and religious culture of India. In this retreat the adult students were taught how to offer this program to their own communities.

Savithri Auntie administered this program. During the orientation on the first day Savithriji spoke about her long association with The Gurukulam and Pujya Swamiji. She has been organizing the cultural programs for the Gurukulam for last twenty one years. She talked about her early days and Pujya Swamiji's invitation to be part of the Gurukulam. She told the students about her anxieties and worries about the programs and how she eventually overcame the problems. Today she is a very confident and experienced person thanks to her years of experience and Pujya Swamiji's continuous support.

The goal of the camp was to teach the students a method to organize programs especially for children and expose them to the Vedic culture and knowledge. Savithriji decided to put together a play based on one of the Mahabharata sequences. She selected the actors from the students who would play various roles in this play. Almost all the

students had some role to play. The teaching progressed in exposing the students to various aspects of this cultural event including planning, arranging the scenes, props, acting, directing, music and other techniques involved. The students were practicing several hours every day.

Because of the lack of time the actual play was not presented on the stage but the purpose to teach the students was well accomplished. All students were very happy at the end of this program.

The Carnatic Vocal Music Workshop was designed to facilitate the understanding and appreciation of Carnatic Music. Sri Maharajapuram S. Ramachandran is a renowned Carnatic Vocal Musician. Ramachandranji explained raga, bhava and tala aspects of the music with practical demonstrations. He answered several questions from the students during the camp.

Sri Ramachandranji presented a program based on music he taught during the camp. A group of children sang compositions they have been practicing during the camp including Pujya Swamiji's compositions. The children were very well prepared and performed nicely.

Suddhatmajji taught the chanting of the Shanti Mantras, Guru Vandanam, Sri Hanuman Calisa and the Kshama Parthian. The teaching was intense and stressed the technique as well as the meaning of the mantras. Suddhatmajji answered several questions from the students. The Chanting classes are very



much liked by the students and the students expressed hopes that the classes will continue at the Gurukulam for a long time in future.

The Kitchen Staff worked hard to serve good food. The food was served on time. Priests Sri Ravichandran and Sri Ganesa performed the pujas regularly.

It was a busy camp with variety of programs offered within a short framework of time. All the goals set for the programs were achieved. The general impression of the campers was that such camps should continue in future.

Pujya Swamiji answered all questions from the students during the camp. The satasangs with Pujya Swamiji were informative and enjoyable.

The retreat ended on August 17th 2012.

"Report by Arvind Bagat"

Ramayana Sites in Sri Lanka

By Stephen Knapp

The Ramayana is an ancient Sanskrit epic attributed to the poet Valmiki and an important part of the Hindu canon. One of the most important literary works of ancient India, the Ramayana consists of 7 chapters (Kanda), and narrates the story of Rama's wife Sita being abducted by Ravana, the demon (Rakshasa) king of Lanka.

According to the Ramayana, King Ravana brought Sita Devi from India in a "Pushpaka Vimana" which is widely known in Sri Lanka as the "Dandu Monara Yanthranaya," or Large Peacock Machine in Sinhala.

The Ramayana has fascinated many generations, and had a profound impact on art and culture in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.

For over thousands of years, the Ramayana, epic of Asia, has had an unshakeable hold on the beliefs of vast multitudes of Asia's teeming millions. As diverse span of humanity as Kashmiri pandits and Cambodian fishermen, it is the universal heritage of all humanity.

A rich legacy of sites and temples in the country where the most significant events of this epic took place - Lankapura - Sri Lanka. Though some people do not believe that the present Sri Lanka is the one mentioned in the Ramayana, when we investigate the area, there is still much convincing tradition therein and many sites identified with the Ramayana.



Sri Lanka is the proud custodian of more than 50 Ramayana sites from the place of Sita Devi's captivity to the battlefields where vast armies clashed, to the groves of exotic herbs dropped by Hanuman, to the ultimate theater of war where Lord Rama slew Ravana, the ten-headed demon-king.

People living in the areas where great events took place remember to this day the connection of their soil to the great epic. An oath taken at the spot where Sita Devi undertook "Agni Pariksha" is still considered valid in village courts or grama

sabhas. The color of the soil of the ancient battlefield is still red today, and is still surrounded by lighter colored earth. One of the airports of Ravana, torched by Hanuman when he came looking for Sita Devi, still has a scorched-earth look. A patch of darker soil surrounded by brown earth. Exotic alpine Himalayan species are found suddenly amidst tropical Sri Lankan vegetation, the legacy of Hanuman's heroic voyage carrying a mountain with life-restoring herbs.

Incredibly, the names of places have come down to modern times unchanged. Though great social, cultural and religious changes have taken place in Sri Lanka since.

Sri Lanka shares a special bond with India geographically, historically, culturally and spiritually. The Ramayana begins with Ayodhya in India and climaxes at Lankapura.

People in Sri Lanka through generations believed that king Ravana ruled this country. There are many sites in Sri Lanka which are connected to the Ramayana. Below is a list of places which have been identified as connected to the Ramayana and listed in sequential order.

The Kidnapping of Sita by Ravana

Ravana was the king of Lanka and another 9 kingdoms. He was known as Dasik (or Dasa Shirsha) meaning 10 heads, because he had ten crowns, one each for his ten kingdoms.

His sister Surpanakha went to Jambudweepa for some business. Surpanakha chanced upon Rama at his hermitage and became enamored with the handsome prince. Rama being faithful to his wife, Sita, did not respond and asked Surpanakha to approach Lakshmana who

was unmarried. Surpanakha, who felt humiliated by this, tried to attack Sita in anger saying Sita was the cause of the men's contempt for her. Lakshmana then intervened and cut off Surpanakha's nose.

Surpanakha, terrified and in pain, flew at once to Lanka to seek the protection of Ravana. When Ravana asked his sister for the cause, Surpanakha said that she had seen Sita, a lady of incomparable beauty, and wanted to bring her for Ravana. Ravana resolved to take revenge for the insult his sister had suffered, as well as to get lovely Sita for him self, and set out to abduct Sita and bring her to Lanka.

Ravana, using a golden deer as a decoy, visited Sita when she was alone. In the guise of an old sage, he abducted and brought her to Weragantota in Lanka in his plane, the Pushpaka vimana.

Weragantota means the "place of aircraft landing" in Sinhala. This is the first place Sita Devi was brought to Lankapura (capital city of king Ravana). These jungles are the place where the city of Lankapura once stood. The city had a beautiful palace for Queen Mandothari surrounded by waterfalls, streams and varieties of flora and fauna. Sita Devi was kept at Queen Mandothari's palace at Lankapura. The place Sita was held captive is called Sita Kotuwa, which means "Sita's Fort" in Sinhala. It is believed Ravana had an aircraft repair center at Gurulupotha close to Sita Kotuwa. Sita devi was kept in queen Mandothari's palace until she was moved to Sita Kotuwa and then on to Ashoka Vatika. The remains that are found here are the remnants of later civilizations. In Valmiki's depiction, King Ravana's vimana resembled a huge peacock. The vimana in Sinhala language means "Dhandu Monara" which is known as "flying peacock," and hence the name

Gurulupotha, which means “parts of birds” in Sinhala. This is also called Gavagala.

Sita Taken from Sita Kotuwa to Ashok Vatika (also known as Ashoka / Asoka Vanam)

Ravana moved Sita from Sita Kotuwa to Ashok Vatika the salubrious garden in the mountains. The route too was said to be spectacularly beautiful, as Ravana wanted to show Sita the beauty of his kingdom. The barren land atop the mountain range is believed to be the route in which King Ravana took Sita devi from his capital city Lankapura to Ashoka Vatika, which was a paradise on earth. The Chariot Path atop the mountain range is still visible. Till date no vegetation grows on this passage except grass. King Ravana is believed to have taken this passage on top of these hills to show Sita devi the beauty of his kingdom.

Ashok Vatika is the garden where Ravana held Sita captive. This is in the area of Sita Eliya, close to the city of Nuwara Eliya. The stream that runs from the hill catered to the needs of Sita devi during her stay at Ashok Vatika. She is said to have bathed in this stream. The Hakgala Gardens located at the base of the Hakgala Rock forms part of the famed Ashok Vatika. The Sita Pokuna is a barren area atop the Hakgala Rock Jungle where Sita was kept captive. The Sita Amman Temple is located at this spot. It is interesting to note that foot prints akin to Hanuman’s are found by this river and some are of small size and some are of large size, which tells us of the immense powers of Hanuman transforming himself into any size.

About a century ago three images were discovered in the stream, one of which was that of Sita. It is believed that the

deities have been worshipped at this spot for centuries. Now there is temple for Lord Rama, Sitadevi, Lakshmana, and Hanuman by the side of this stream.

The summit of the mountain next to the mountain range overlooking Frotoft Estate in Pussallawa is the place where Hanuman first set his foot on mainland Lanka. This mountain known as Pawala Malai is visible from this mountain range. These hills stand tall in-between King Ravana’s capital city and Ashoka Vatika.

The Sita tear pond is found en route by the chariot route, and is believed to have been formed by the tears of Sita devi. It has not dried up since, even during severe droughts when the adjoining rivers dry up. Visitors could also see the famed Sita Flowers which are endemic to this area. In this area there are many large trees whose bright red blooms add color to the scenery. These flowers are called Sita flowers. The peculiarity of these flowers is the configuration of the petal’s, stamen and pistils, which resemble a human figure carrying a bow, and is said to represent Lord Rama. These flowers are unique only to this area in the whole of Sri Lanka.

Search for Sita

Sugriva, ruler of the Vanara or special monkey kingdom, ordered his monkey armies to search for Sita in all four corners of the earth. Hanuman, Angada, Jambavan and other heroes traveled southwards. Hanuman was the only one strong enough to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. Whilst crossing the ocean, Hanuman was tested by Surasa Devi, the Naga maiden en-route to Lanka. This place is now called Nagadipa.

Hanuman meets Sita at Ashok Vatika and is Captured by Ravana

Hanuman after meeting Sita at Ashok Vatika, decided to test the strength of King Ravana and his army of Rakshasas. He invited battle by uprooting trees and destroying the garden. Upon being captured by the Rakshasa guards, Hanuman was brought in the presence of Ravana. As a punishment, Hanuman's tail was set on fire. Hanuman in turn set fire to the houses in the city. Ussangoda is one such torched area.

On the way back to India Hanuman rested at Mani Kattuthar. The hilltop where Hanuman is believed to have rested after meeting Sita devi is known as Mani Kattuthar. This is a rock in the Labookelle estate. Hanuman met Sita devi and on his way to announce this happy information to Lord Rama, rested on this hilltop. Today an open temple with statues of Lord Rama, Sita devi, Lakshmana, and Hanuman stands on top of it. Locals visit the temple often.

Near by is the village of Kondagala, known as Kondakalai in Tamil, where Sita is said to have deranged her hair whilst passing the place. Kondakalai (Kondagala), like many other cities and villages in Sri Lanka, also derives its name from the Ramayana. When King Ravana took Sita devi in a chariot to Ashoka Vatika, her hairs got deranged because of the speed of the chariot. "Konda kalai" in Tamil means "deranging of hair." Till date the villagers live with the legacy of this event.

The village also contains Sita Gooli which are rice balls offered by Ravana to Sita; which she refused and threw away. When King Ravana carried Sita devi on his chariot to Ashoka Vatika, he provided her with vitaminized rice balls for refreshment. But Sita devi who did not want to

consume anything provided by King Ravana, scattered the rice balls all over the place during her journey, and they are found till date along the chariot track. The local people call these rice balls Sita Gooli and they prescribe them for their children as a cure for stomach disorders and headaches. The farmers too keep them in their cash boxes or grain pots for prosperity. It is claimed that carbon dated testing has been done in Tokyo and Delhi on these rice balls and ascertained them to be more than five thousand years old.

Sita is Hidden after the visit of Hanuman

Upon hearing Hanuman's threat and seeing his capabilities, King Ravana decided to hide Sita at various secret locations as a precautionary measure. Ravanagoda, which means Ravana's place in the Kotmale area, is one such complex of tunnels and caves.

Istripura is another ingenious network of paths which are interconnected with all major areas of king Ravana's city. Istripura means "Area of Women" in Sinhala. This refers to the retinue of ladies Ravana made available to look after Sita.

Konda Kattu Gala refers to the many intruding tunnels and caves in this area. This seems to be a part of a great ingenious network of paths, which is interconnected to all the major areas of King Ravana's city. Sita devi took bath in this very stream and had dried her hair sitting on a rock and put clips to her hair, hence this rock is known as Konda Kattu Gala. This is situated in the Welimada Area.

Tunnel Network

This tunnel network proves beyond doubt the architectural brilliance of King Ravana.

These tunnels served as a quick means of transport through the hills and also as a secret passage and networked all the important cities, airports and dairy farms. A close look at these tunnels indicates that they are man-made and not natural formations. The Buddhist shrine at Kalutara was once where King Ravana's palace and a tunnel existed. Additional existing tunnel mouths are situated at Welimada, Ravana cave at Bandarawela, Senapitiya at Halagala, Ramboda, Labookelle, Wariyapola/Matale, and Sitakotuwa/Hasalaka, along with many more tunnels. Some have also said that Ravana had a tunnel that went all the way to South America, in which he had stored much of his gold and treasury.

Preparing for Battle

Gayathri Peedum is believed to be the place from where King Ravana's son Meghanath propitiated Lord Shiva with penance and pujas, and in turn was granted super natural powers by Lord Shiva prior to the battle. Neelawari is located in the North of the country in the Jaffna peninsula and is where Lord Rama shot an arrow to the ground to obtain water for his army upon arriving at Lanka.

Dondra, Seenigama & Hikkaduwa are places in the South of Lanka where Sugriva (king of Vanaras, the special species of monkeys) prepared for his onslaught on King Ravana's forces from the Southern flank.

War Breaks Out

During the height of the battle Indrajit, elder son of Ravana beheaded a lookalike of Sita Devi in front of Hanuman to break his spirit. This place is known as Sitawaka in the Avissawella area.

Yudhaganawa, meaning battlefield in Sinhala, is a place in Wasgamuwa where the major battles took place.

Upon being hit by Indrajit's Brahmastra, both Rama, Lakshmana and the monkey army lay unconscious on the battle field. To cure them, Jambavan the veteran monkey instructed Hanuman to go to Sanjeevani Parvatha, the hill of herbs between Rishhaba and Kilasa peaks in the Himalayas and bring the necessary medicinal herbs. As he could not identify which herbs to select, Hanuman uprooted the entire peak with all the herbs growing there from the mountain and returned to Lanka.

Parts of the hill fell on five places in Sri Lanka; namely Rumassala in Galle, Dolukanda in Hiripitiya, Ritigala close to Habarana on the Habarana Anuradhapura road, Talladi in Mannar, and Katchchathivu in the north.

Lord Karthikaya Subramaniam was requested to go to battle by Lord Indra to protect Lord Rama from king Ravana's Brahmastra. This was at Kataragama, which is now a very popular place for worship among Sri Lankans.

The Fall of Ravana

Dunuville lake is a place from which Lord Rama fired the Brahmastra arrow at king Ravana who was directing the war from Laggala. It is here that King Ravana was killed by Lord Rama's brahmastharam. The top of Laggala is flat and is believed to have been affected by the power of the brahmastharam. "Dhunu" means "arrow" and "Vila" means "Lake," so it gets its name from this pastime.

The name Laggala is derived from the Sinhala term "Elakke Gala", which means Target Rock. Laggala served as a sentry point to observe Lord Rama's army. The

cartels behind the Dunuvila lake are called Laggala. It was from this rock the first glimpse of Lord Rama's army was sighted and informed to King Ravana. This hill is geographically the highest part of the northern region of King Ravana's city and on a clear day the north east side that is Thiru Koneshwaran and north west side that is Talai Mannar can be seen even today. King Ravana is believed to have done meditation on this rock and prayed to Lord Shiva at Thiru Koneshwaran from this point.

After Ravana's death, his body was kept at Yahangala, meaning "Bed Rock" in Sinhala. This is situated along the Mahiyanganaya - Wasgamuwa road. King Ravana's body was kept upon this rock so his countrymen could pay their last respects to their dear departed king. Geographically this rock is visible from miles away on its 3 sides.

After the War

Sita met Rama after the war, and Divurumpola is the place she under went the "Agni" test of fire where she proved her innocence and purity to Rama. Divurumpola means the "Place of Oath" in Sinhala. She came out unscathed and proved her innocence and purity.

The message of Rama's victory over Ravana was sent to Sita. After a bath and adorned with jewels she was taken on a palanquin before Rama. Meeting her husband after such a long time she was overcome with emotion, but Rama seemed lost in thought. At length he spoke, "I have killed my enemy. I have done my duty as a true king. But you have lived for a year in the enemy's abode. It is not proper I take you back now."

Sita was shocked. "You have broken my heart" she said, "only the uncultured

speak like this. Have you forgotten the noble family I come from? Is it my fault Ravana carried me off by force? All the time, my mind, my heart, and soul were fixed on you alone, my lord!"

She turned to Lakshmana and said with tears streaming from her eyes, "prepare for me a fire. That is the only remedy for this sorrow of mine." Lakshmana, in suppressed anger, looked at Rama's face, but there was no softening, he lighted a big fire. Sita reverently went round her husband and approached the blazing fire. Joining her palms in salutation, she said, "if I am pure, O fire, protect me." With these words she jumped into the flames. Then arose from out of the flames, Agni the fire-god, whom she had invoked. He lifted Sita from the flames unharmed, and presented her to Rama. "Don't I know that she is spotless and pure at heart?" cried Rama, standing up to receive her. "It's for the sake of the world that I made her go through this ordeal of fire, so that the truth may be known to all."

The spot was initially fenced and walled to protect it from the surrounding wilderness. Then a sapling of the Anuradhapura bodhi tree (one of the 30 original saplings) was planted as a mark of respect for the place. A small pagoda was built subsequently under the Bodhi tree. The temple depicts paintings of the Ramayana epic.

Today the temple is revered for the oath taken by Sita devi and even the legal system permits and accepts the swearing done at this temple while settling disputes between parties.

Vantharamulai is a place that Lord Rama, Sita Devi, Lakshmana, and Hanuman rested after the turmoil of the war. Amaranthakali is believed to be the place

where they had the first meal after the war.

When returning to India in one of King Ravana's vimanas, Rama felt he was followed by a Brahmahasti Dhosham, a malevolent black shadow or dark cloud capable of taking His life, as He had killed Ravana, a Brahmin. When the vimana was passing over Munneswaram, He felt the vimana vibrating, and at Muneswaram realized the "Brahmaasthi Dosham" was not following him at this particular point. So Rama felt safe from the "Brahmahasti Dhosham" at Munneswaram. So Lord Rama stopped the vimana at this juncture and asked Lord Shiva for a remedy. This is the place where Lord Rama prayed to Lord Shiva and where Shiva blessed Lord Rama and advised installing and praying to four lingams to get rid of the Dhosham. The first Lingam was installed at Manavari about 5 Km from here, near the banks of Deduru Oya. This was followed by the lingams at Thiru Koheneshwaram, Thiru Ketheshwaram, and Rameshwaram in India.

It is believed that Munneswaram predates the Ramayana and a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva was located here. Munneswaram means the first temple for Shiva (Munnu + Easwaran). A Shiva Lingam was already here when lord Rama visited the place.

After King Ravana's death, Ravana's brother Vibhishana was coroneted as a king of Lanka by Lakshmana at Kelaniya. Kelaniya is the closest site to Colombo connected to the Ramayana.

There exists a Buddhist temple, the Kelaniya Buddhist Temple and shrine for King Vibishana. There are murals enshrined outside the Buddhist temple depicting the crowning of Vibishana. Vibishana is considered one of the four

guardian deities of Sri Lanka, and temples for Vibishana are found throughout Sri Lanka. A painting of King Vibishana also adorns the new Parliament of Sri Lanka. In fact, there are no temples dedicated for Ravana, but many exist for Vibishana; this goes to prove that his stand towards Vedic Dharma & justice made people to revere him as a god in Sri Lanka.

The Kelani River is mentioned in the Valmiki Ramayana and Vibishana's palace was said to be on the banks of this river. The reason Lakshmana crowned Vibishana was because Lord Rama had to return to India to continue his self-exile of 14 years to honor the commitment to His father, King Dasarath of Ayodhya. King Vibishana was considered a fair king, as he supported Rama against his own brother's injustice. Many devotees that visit King Vibishana's shrine pray to him asking his intervention to a fair recourse to their problems.

Other Places of Interests Connected to the Ramayana in Sri Lanka

1. Kanniya - The place where King Ravana carried out the last rites for his mother.

2. Gavagala or Ghoushala - King Ravana's dairy farm.

3. Airports of King Ravana:

Thotupolakanda (means "Mountain Port" in Sinhala) at Horton plains

Weragantota (means "Place of Aircraft" landing in Sinhala) in Mahiyangana

Ussangoda (means "Area of Lift" in Sinhala) in the Southern coast

Wariapola (means "Aircraft Port" in Sinhala) in Matale and Kurunagala.

4. Neelawari — A place where Lord Rama aimed an arrow to obtain water.

5. Panchamukha Anjanaya Temple, Kalubowila – This is the first Anjaneyar Temple in Sri Lanka and also the only

Panchamukha (five faced) Anjaneyar Temple in Sri Lanka. It is the only temple in the world to have a chariot for Ajanyar. The chariot festival is held annually at end of December to the beginning of January. Hanuman's mother is Anjan. Hanuman is known as Anjan + Aiyar = Anjaneyar in South India (Hamuman in North India).

6. Rama Temple at Rattota — One of the few Rama's temple in Sri Lanka.

7. Maha Ravanagoda / Kuda Ravanagoda — Ravana's places in the south.

8. Veedurupola - Buddhist temple dedicated to research on Ramayana.

9. Sri Baktha Hanuman Temple — on the hills of Ramboda is a place where Hanuman was searching for Sita Devi. The name is also associated with Rama's army. Rampadai means Rama's force in Tamil. The Chinmaya mission of Sri Lanka built a temple with Hanuman as the presiding deity. On every full moon day special pujas are conducted and witnessed by thousands of devotees.

10. Manavari Temple is the first lingam installed and prayed to Lord Rama and till date this lingam is called as Ramalinga Shivan. Rameshwaram is the only other lingam in the world named after Lord Rama.

11. Rama Temple - Rattota. There are a few Rama temples in Sri Lanka, this is one of them. This is the only Rama temple in this area. This is a privately managed temple. This is one of the most scenic routes to travel from Matale to visit Laggala (on the northern side of Knuckles).

12. Kataragama Temple – This is the temple of Lord Karthikeya Subramaniam at Kataragama. Lord Karthikeya was requested to go to the battlefield by Lord Indra on the last day of war. This was done to protect Lord Rama from the wrath of the Brahmastra aimed by King Ravana

which otherwise would have weakened Lord Rama. The benefit was that the most powerful brahmasthra weapon aimed at Lord Rama for the second time was rendered useless by the presence of Lord Karthikeya.

13. Ussangoda – According to the Ramayana, after meeting Sita devi, Hanuman dedicated to test the strength of the mighty King Ravana and his army of Rakshasas. In the events that unfolded, Hanuman's tail was set on fire by the Rakshasas, who in turn went on to torch some parts of King Ravana's empire. Ussangoda is one of the torched areas, which is said to have been an airport used by King Ravana.

14. Vishnu Devala, Dondra – These are the places from where King Sugriva of the Vanara's started his onslaught on King Ravana's force.

15. Ravana Goda – This is a place where Sita devi stayed during her transit. This area is also linked with tunnels and caves, which runs through to other parts of King Ravana's kingdom. This is situated in the Kotmala area opposite to Ramboda rock. The main cave entrance was closed by an earth-slip in 1947. Locals believe this part of the complex was used as a prison by Ravana. The cave complex has not been fully explored.

16. Ravana's mummy – An additional site connected to local belief, but yet to be discovered is the place where locals believe Ravana's mummified body is hidden within the mountain range of Harasbatha, Ragala and Walapane.

References

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Aim for Seva Chatralaya at Kottur

The 93rd Chatralaya of AIM for Seva was inaugurated on the 18th of July 2012 at Kottur in Bellary District, Karnataka.

Smt. Vanith G. Harish and Dr. G. Harish from Virginia, USA had come to complete the formalities on the 18th of July 2012.

We had organized the inaugural function at the AIM for Seva Chatralaya campus.

The Chatralaya's built up area is about 3000 sq. Ft. And vacat land is 8000 sq.ft. There are 10 spacious rooms and we have built four extra toilets and bath. Right now it can accommodate 25 students.

Swamini Swatmabodhananda Saraswati from Bangalore had graced the function and spoke on the early days of AIM for Seva organization, how it started and who all had worked for the development, AIM for Seva had reached the 93rd chatralaya today and how Pujya Swami Dayanandaji went around the world and running 93 chatralayas and schools, hospitals etc.

Our Chief Guest Sri Sridhar Setty who is the Director of Sri Gurudeva School had promised to help us in future under RTE Act in Karnataka/

Dr. Harish Gorli had spoken how the days were during his student time. His parents helped a lot of students to continue their education. One such citizen Sri Swaroopananda who is now a leading Advocate who was present and spoke about the generosity of Dr. Harish's parents.

The Chatralaya is named after Dr. Harish's mother late Smt. Rudramma Gorli.

Swamini Swatmanishtananda, a regional coordinator, spoke about how chatralaya has come up and spoke about the donors.

Lunch was served to one and all. The students of Chikkamagalore and Bellary chatralaya added colour to the Kottur function.

Swami Paripoornananda conducts mammoth Hindu Sammelana - Sep 21, 2012

Swami Paripoornananda assembled a massive congregation of people in the city of Kakinada to bring awareness among all Hindus about the greatness of Hinduism and need to preserve and protect it by working together. The whole city was made into a sea of saffron flags. As many as 35,000 people assembled to hear the message of peace, truth, dharma, tolerance, love, accommodation, adaptation, nonviolence, freedom and independence – the unique characteristics of Hindu religion. The spiritual climate pervaded the entire city as thousands and thousands of Hindus ascended the scene from many parts of the State.

Swami Paripoornananda delivered a thundering message of Swami Vivekananda and others who spoke eloquently about the importance of our culture across the globe and asked the assembled people to follow in his footsteps. Due to negligence Sanatana Dharma is not being adhered to. One does not have to think too much to give an example of the negligence and indifference to Vakulamata Temple. The Vakulamata Temple is in dilapidated condition due to our apathy. The saffron philosophy has never advocated the extreme position; it only promotes truthfulness. Only if Hinduism is safeguarded, all the religions can take shelter under its umbrella without discrimination. Conversion is creating dissension and hurting the sentiments of Hindus and creating mental havoc in the community. He reminded the people that Hinduism is known for its tolerance and non-violence and never involved in conversion tactics. He remembered Swami Chinmayananda's experience in USA. When an American approached Swami Chinmayananda to change his religion to Hinduism, he politely

declined and advised him to do the service to community.

He also announced that he would organize a project called "AMMA VODI" (Mother's Lap) that will invite all the converted Hindus back to the lap of their mother. No religion should take advantage of the conditions of the people and convert them with bribes and allurements.

Swami Paripoornananda said that Hindus respect other religions, respect the people who do namaz three times a day as well as people, who go to churches every week. Hinduism has been generous and invited other religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and even atheists with open hands to India. Similarly it should be the responsibility of other religions to respect the people who worship their deities every day. He even challenged other religious people to have a dialogue on the ancient scriptures of Hinduism. In order to preserve and propagate, he is going to undertake Ratha Yatra starting on November 1, crisscrossing the State. He also announced that in 2013 he would organize a huge Global Hindu Sammelana in Hyderabad with 11 lakh people attending the function. Efforts will be made to unite all Hindus and organize groups in each district. He exhorted all the Hindu leaders to fight for the survival and protection of Hinduism.

Dr. Ghazal Srinivas, the Honorary Brand Ambassador of Save Temples organization, thrilled the audience with his powerful speech, and highly patriotic and emotional ghazals extolling the virtues of Hindu culture. He said that the mountain where Vakulamata Temple is located is being mined illegally and nearly three-fourths of the mountain has already been mined with

no action from any one. Hindus must develop self-pride and self-respect; honour and practise their religion. He enchanted the audience with his ghazals titled "Gudi Edi Aa gudi edi." The song describes the agony of an NRI, who goes to his village after many years, after seeing the temple in dilapidated condition.

Dr. Ghazal Srinivas expressed his disappointment at the situation where Hindus are fearful of declaring themselves as Hindus while other religious people take pride in announcing the religious identity. These days Hindus are afraid to take the Bhagavad Gita to their offices or any public place while other religious people carry their scriptures with pride. Hindus cover their scriptures either with some cloth or newspapers to avoid the condemnation by others as being Hindu fundamentalist. He urged all Hindus to practise their religion, wear their traditional costumes, apply tilak on their forehead and be proud of their heritage. If we fail to recognize the onslaught of other religions, Hindus may end up in museums. He also exhorted all Hindus to donate ten percent of their income for the preservation of their faith like the other religions.

Sri Aravinda Rao also spoke about the importance of preserving the roots of Sanatana Dharma. He said that the Hindus were failing in establishing their identity with their religion. Other religious people say with pride that they were either Muslims or Christians while Hindus identify with their caste instead of identifying with their Hindu faith.

On this occasion all the assembled Hindus were soaked in the appreciation of the diverse talents unique and distinctive to the region. Ladies performed Kolatam(a version of Rasa Lila). Colorful dances were conducted highlighting the kirtans of Tyagaraja, Annamayya and others. Haridasas attracted the crowd with their chanting and singing of Lord Hari. Songs, inviting people to come and extolling them to preserve our rich and glorious culture, had

drenched them in emotions. Numerous songs were sung as the procession moved from Balaji Cheruvu Center to Anand Bharati Grounds.

Swamijis and Matajis, who spoke on this occasion, include Tridanda Sriranga RaamanujaJeeyar Swami (Kakinada), Ashtakshare Jeeyar Swami (Vijayawada), Shiva Chaitanyananda Maataji (Guntur), Jyotirmayaananda Maataji (Palakollu), Paravidyananda Maataji (Tenali), Sthiryaanand Saraswati Swamiji (Gudivada), Sampooranada Swamiji (Hyderabad), Maarkendeyaanandagiri Swamiji (West Godavari District), Skanda Devananda (Guntur), and Sivanand Swamiji of Satyavada. Many of them talked about the importance of preserving Hindu faith and the need to concentrate in the Dalit community to avert illegal conversions.

Sri Narendra Chowdary of NTV, addressed the gathering. He said this movement should continue further to highlight the importance of Hinduism.

Also in attendance were Sri Kuranala Kannababu, MLA; Sri Kudipati Chittibabu, YSR Congress Party; Sri Somu VeeraRaju, BJP; Sri Enimireddy Mala Kondaiah; Sri Kadali Ramapandu from Amalapuram; and many others.

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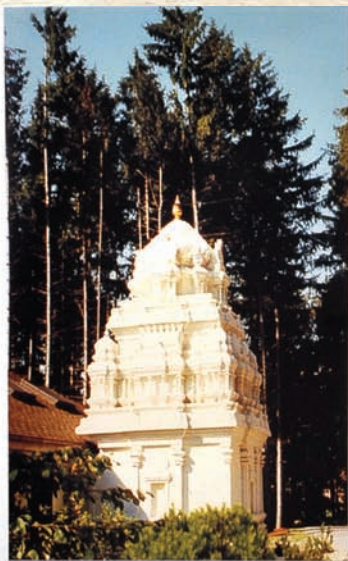
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