

YUVA BHARATI

VOICE OF YOUTH

Vol. XXXII No.11
A Vivekananda Kendra Publication

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Single Copy Rs. 7/-
Annual Rs. 75/-
For 3 yrs: Rs. 200/-
Life (20 Yrs) Rs. 800/-

(Plus Rs. 30/- for
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India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand
of her young men - men, mind, not brutes.

Swami Vivekananda

EDITORIAL


The Pope and the Sannyasin

Within a short span of less than a month two great religious leaders of the world have left us. Pope John Paul II, Head of the World Catholic Church passed away, and H. H. Swami Ranganathanandaji, President of the Sree Ramakrishna Mutt and Mission, entered Mahasamadhi on 25.04.2005. Hinduism is non-monolithic and has no sole supreme head comparable to Pope. Had it been otherwise, Swami Ranganathanandaji by virtue of his saintliness and scholarship would have occupied the same position as Pope does for Christianity. Incidentally, that points towards a crucially radical difference between the two world religions. Christianity, of which the Catholic church holds unparalleled sway is as much a hierarchical, monolithic, power-wielding institution, almost similar to an autocratic state, is the world's largest religious organization cutting across every country and continent. Though Vatican is the smallest state in the world, the Pope wields authority over a population of a hundred and ten crores of Catholics in the world. The Pope is the head of a theocratic state with subjects loyal to him transnationally. The clout is, that the Pope wields on account of his religion, a political authority which he wields in a manner which has no parallel in contemporary history. No country in the world can afford to ignore the demise of a Pope or the election of his successor. This was once again brought to the limelight not only by the media coverage but also by the ceremony of the late Pope's cremation attended by topmost dignitaries from every country in the world, except China which is a class by itself. China with its huge population and bludgeoning economic and political power alone

had the courage to adopt a stand driving home a message loud and clear.

Probably no major journalist, politician or statesman has ever considered it worthwhile to compare or contrast the two events mentioned in the beginning. Leave alone International media, even the National media was reluctant and shy, if not apologetic, in giving proper coverage to Swami Ranganathanandaji's Mahasamadhi and also projecting the great personality and priceless contribution which was only his legitimate due. Pope's media coverage started long before his passing away and continued long after his successor was elected. The entire world's, attention was on Vatican for weeks together. This is in sharp contrast with the media treatment of Swami Ranganathananda.

There is no wonder in it, and there is no need to get either excited about the one or worried about the other. Hinduism is a peaceful religion, poorly or not at all organized, wielding no political clout, ruling no country or reigning over any transnational empire, true to its understanding of religion and spirituality. It does not rule over the minds of its followers or influences people outside its fold by power or diplomatic manoeuvres. Swami Vivekananda had said that the impact of Hinduism is like that of a flower blossoming at the touch of the morning dew and spreading its fragrance unseen and unheard but bringing to blossom the fairest of flowers. This is in sharp contrast with the Roman Catholic Church backed by the Roman Empire whose military might enabled it to spread in the far off corners. In Hinduism, spirituality has a meaning and a value which is too subtle to be promoted by political and military power unlike

Christianity which promoted it over theological empire followed by worldwide colonization.

Catholic Church and Hinduism are unlike each other in certain vital respects. Hinduism has no tradition of officially bestowing sainthood on persons posthumously, nor has it a mechanism by which martyrdom is made a covetable ideal because right from Jesus Christ, the belief is that the church is built on the strength of the martyr's blood. These things have happened in the natural course in Hinduism. There is no dearth of saints of various shades of holiness and martyrs of unimaginable courage and commitment in the long history of Hinduism. These are not the outcome of any official policy; people discover, recognize and honour such ones wherever and whenever they are manifested. Before the heat and dust have settled down there is already a clamor from many quarters to bestow sainthood on the late Pope, John Paul II.

Vatican has inherited much of the tradition and also the regalia of Roman empire, whereas Hindu spiritual movements continue to deliver their message in a quite unostentatious way by personal touch and living models.

Swami Ranganathanandaji embodied the very spirit of Hinduism as exemplified by the great lives of Sree Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. During the several decades of his earthly sojourn, he spent every moment of his life in bringing out the Hindu spiritual values through thought, word and deed. Born in a small village in Kerala, not far away from Kalady, the birthplace of Adi Sankara, he was attracted by the Sree Ramakrishna movement at a comparatively young age.

Immediately after matriculation, he came in contact with the movement and left for the Bangalore centre of Sree Ramakrishna Mission. In due course, he was given initiation by Swami Sivananda, a direct disciple of Sree Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Through studious application of his sharp intellect and also by engaging in regular spiritual practices, he gradually evolved into an all-round aspirant and

his Guru anointed him with the now familiar name Swami Ranganathananda.

He made steady progress as a writer, as a speaker, and as an excellent communicator, simultaneously digging his feet into traditional scholarship in the Hindu scriptures like the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the various other texts and also the Puranas and Ithihasas.

It did not take long for the country to recognize the erudite scholar, the skillful communicator and the ideal sannyanin- all rolled into one in the personality of Swami Ranganathananda.

Apart from his academic contribution, he was a great builder of institutions. At the time of the partition of the country, he was heading a great center of the Mission at Karachi which was the focal point of spiritual seekers.

He was also the founder of the internationally reputed Sree Ramakrishna Mutt in Delhi, where his discourses on the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures were a perennial source of attraction and inspiration for the intellectual elite of Delhi.

It was Swamy Ranganathananda who set up the International Center, the Sree Ramakrishna Institute of Culture at Golpark, Kolkata, which is rendering enormous service to the cause of our culture and philosophy by way of lectures, publications, research and linguistic studies.

In Hyderabad the Swamiji built up a very prestigious center of the Ramakrishna Mutt which continues to be a source for dissemination of the spiritual wealth of India.

Swamy Ranganathananda was known as the spiritual ambassador of India all over the world. There is no country on which the Swamiji has not left an indelible imprint of our religion and philosophy, the culture and heritage of Bharath.

He had a wonderful style of delivering lectures, even on complicated philosophical themes, with comfortable ease and fascinating fluency. He could engage the most sophisticated audience with the incessant flow of his simple eloquence which astounded even great scholars and intellectuals.

His tour all over the world brought him in contact with great scientists like Julian Huxely and writers like Romain Rolland.

His correspondence with Julian Huxely will be remembered for all times because of the comparative approach to science and spirituality which the Swamiji had effectively conveyed to the great scientists on the basis of Vedanta Philosophy.

The Swamiji's greatness and his unique contribution are a literary legacy which he has left for the posterity. He was a voluminous writer. The four- volume publication, *Eternal Values for a Changing Society, The Message of the Upanishads, A Pilgrim Looks at the World*, his three volume commentary on the Bhagavad Gita and his insightful interpretation of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad will be treasured for all time.

The Swamiji had the rare quality of keeping cordial personal contact with countless number of people. His memory was prodigious.

He had a soft corner for everyone who came in contact with him. Innumerable are the people who cherish him as their spiritual mentor.

The number of disciples initiated by him may run beyond counts. They all feel gravely orphaned by his passing away. Though the body succumbed at a ripe old age, all realize that his spiritual presence can never be obliterated.

He had contributed enormously to the cultural vitality of the present and the future of our motherland and also the world at large. What this generation, that is indebted to him, will offer him as "Gurudakshina" is a matter for each one of us to deeply ponder.

The universal acceptance which the Swamiji received from the academics and the intellectual elite all over the world is a glowing tribute to the innate potentiality of the Swamiji which he assiduously cultivated in spite of the fact that his formal education was limited to the level of matriculation. The various books that he authored and the innumerable lectures he delivered stand testimony to the high caliber of his intelligence.

His interpretation of ancient scriptures in the background of the modern development brought him encomiums from great thinkers and scientists of the West as well as the East. His intellect was not shackled by blind orthodoxy. The freedom with which he explained ancient texts to meet modern requirements was refreshingly original. This free and liberal intellectual approach made the Swamiji feel a little sad about the intellectual bankruptcy of modern Indian elite who always delight in borrowing western ideas. This feeling was expressed by him on various occasions: "Pre-independent India had more number of free intellectuals than Post-independent India which lack in bold and original thinking". He always used to say that the nation can rise only in proportion to the quality of its intelligentsia.

The Swamiji's exposition of the Bhagavad Gita was so popular that huge crowds used to gather wherever he delivered lectures on the Gita. But he was no traditionalist in his interpretations. He had no great appreciation for people for whom the Bhagavad Gita was just an object of adoration. Once he wrote, "The Bhagavad Gita is not a text to be worshipped in the pooja room but a manual to be followed in the battlefield of life. Bhagavan Krishna gave Gita to Arjuna not in the pooja room but in the battlefield of Kurukshetra". Swamiji's life was a glowing illustration of the glorious Sanathana Dharma. Liberal towards every genuine religion, Swamiji's attachment and loyalty to the Hindu dharma was absolute and firm. He might have sugarcoated the pills but never compromised on their essence. It can be stated without fear of contradiction that after Swami Vivekananda it was Swami Ranganathananda who took the message of Hindu culture and spirituality across the world in a manner that earned appreciation, understanding and also a high level of respectability. Humanity will experience a void for a long time to come. A non-institutionalized religion with its boundless horizon will no doubt find enough spiritual resources to fill the void and march ahead, as it has done through the ages.

--P.Parameswaran

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDAJI B. NIVEDITA

Swami Ranganathanandaji, born on 15 December 1908 at Silwan, Trikkur, Kerala, was named Shankaran. In retrospect, it appears to be prophetic - he became a world renowned Vedantist like the Shankara of yore.

He joined the Ramakrishna Order of Math at Mysore in 1926. Swami Shivananda, one of the foremost direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Pramahansa and the second President of Ramakrishna Math, initiated him into Sannyasa in 1933.

His service in various capacities for 12 years in the Mysore and Bangalore branches enabled him to shoulder subsequent assignments and render remarkable service as Secretary and Librarian at the Ramakrishna Mission, Rangoon, from 1939 to 1942 and thereafter as President of Ramakrishna Math & Mission at Karachi from 1942 to 1948.

He worked as Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, from October 1949 to March 1962 and of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, from 1962 to 1967. Later, he took over the Centre at Hyderabad and developed it as a premier institution in the city.

He was elected Vice-president of Ramakrishna Math and Mission in 1989 and later became the President in 1998. He visited many parts of the world as a cultural ambassador and popularized Vedanta wherever he went, by his great scholarship and oratory.

The Government of India honoured him with the first National Integration award.

He attained Samadhi on Monday, April 26, 2005 at 3.50 p.m.

He had authored a number of books which are of lasting value and many of his lectures are available in cassettes.

For Vivekananda Kendra, the passing away of Swami Ranganathananda is a very great loss. He was a friend, philosopher and guide to the Kendra since the inception of Vivekananda Rock Memorial. Swami Ranganathanandaji was very

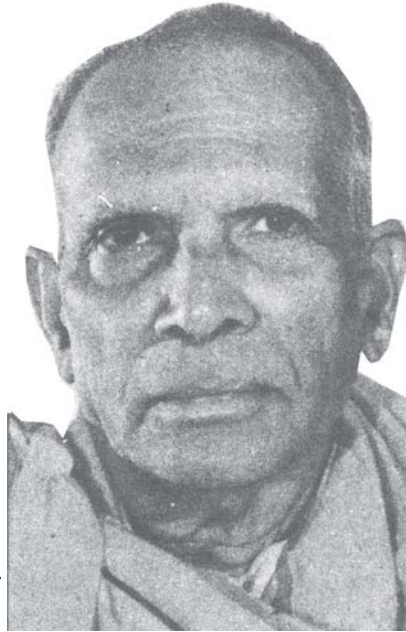
close to Sri Eknathji - the founder of Vivekananda Kendra- and gave valuable guidance to him at the time of construction of the Rock Memorial, and also for the establishment of Vivekananda Kendra. At various stages of the growth of the Kendra his speeches were very illuminating and inspiring.

He presided over the meeting held on 15 Sept. 1970 when Prime Minister Smt Indira Gandhi visited Kanyakumari to participate in the month-long inauguration celebrations organized by the Rock Memorial Committee. In his

presidential address, Swamiji referred to Kanyakumari as the new symbol of India.

In his blessings at the commencement of the second phase of Vivekananda Rock Memorial in the form of Vivekananda Kendra, in his inimitable style, he said that Vivekananda Kendra was 'The Need of the Hour'.

On 20 August 1972 while releasing the Vivekananda Kendra Patrika issue "Hill India" Swami Ranganathanandaji had said, "*A man like Eknath Ranade is an asset to any movement in any country. I have known him very intimately, and I have admired his energy, his quiet dedication, his capacity for calm, silent, team-work and a rare capacity to influence*



favourably persons and every intractable circumstance! No difficulties can thwart him. Mountain-high obstacles he will face with a calmness and gentleness suffused with determination. In the meaningful words of Sri Ramakrishna: the Kacca ami, unripe 'I' or ego, has been replaced by the Paka ami, ripe 'I' or ego. With him and his other dedicated colleagues behind the movement, it can look forward to a rich harvest of useful work for the good of man”.

In 1982, when Mananeeya Eknathji passed away, his message was a great consolation as well as inspiration for the Karyakartas of Vivekananda Kendra. He wrote, “Our Eknath Ranade was of the type of heroic patriots and workers of whom Swami Vivekananda would be proud; in fact Swamiji wanted India to produce thousands of them to enable her to take the fullest advantage of the possibilities of the modern period of her long and glorious history to raise every man, woman, and child, of our nation, irrespective of caste, creed, or sex, to the highest level of human dignity, freedom and equality. He considered this to be the supreme significance of the modern period of our history.

“Our Eknathji has not only lived and worked and died in that spirit but has also left an ever-increasing band of young workers to continue the great work he initiated. And that work will continue silently and steadily as shown by Swami Vivekananda:

‘It is not the work of a day and the path is full of the most deadly thorns. But Parthasarathi is ready to be our Sarathi, we know that, and in His name

and with eternal faith in Him, set fire to the mountains of misery that has been heaped upon India for ages- and it shall be burnt down. Come, then, look it in the face. Brethren, it is a grand task, and we are so low. But we are the sons of Light and children of God. Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. Hundreds will fall in the struggle, hundreds will be ready to take it up.... Glory unto the Lord — March on, the Lord is our general. Do not look back to see who falls — forward — onward! Thus and thus we shall go on brethren. One falls, and another takes up the work.’

“May this spirit of this inspiring letter of Swamiji to his dear Alasinga of Madras inspire all of you, is my prayer”.

He supported Vivekananda Kendra and personally guided Sri Eknathji, Dr.Lakshmikumari, and many other Karyakartas. Even after the passing away of Eknathji he visited Kanyakumari many time; in 1982 to inaugurate the training of a batch of Jeevanvratikaryakartas, in 1985 to lay the foundation stone for Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, and later in 1986 to open Vivekananda Mandapam. He had also donated in 1998, Rs one lakh from his pranami for the unique exhibition on the life of Swami Vivekananda -”VISHWABHANU” - set up at Vivekananda Kendra Vedic Vision Foundation at Kodungallur.

Great and pious souls like him never leave us but become immortal. His blessings, guidance and prayers will continue to help Vivekananda Kendra to proceed ahead in the service to our Motherland.



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FIRE ORDEAL

Dr. K. SUBRAHMANYAM

Sri Sita Devi was rescued by killing Ravana. There was no more a problem from Ravana who stole Sita away. She was freed. But she was unable to be united with Sri Rama, her lord and God. She found him to be still, serious and stern. She was not acceptable. She had to purify herself in the flames of fire. She should come out unscathed in the fire ordeal. Poor Lakshmana was full of sorrow with tears in streams.

Every person is but a combination of soul, mind and body. Every Indian is but a combination of Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana.

All the three are present in every individual born on the sacred soil of Mother Bharat. Sri Rama is the soul; Sita is the mind; and Lakshmana is the body striving always to keep the mind and soul together in comfort and peace. But the Indian mind was lured cunningly by Maricha of alien forces. She was forcibly stolen away by Ravana, the lustful materialist. She was imprisoned in a distant land. India was mischievously enslaved. Sita, India and Indian mind were no more free. With the death of Ravana, Sita however was released. With the return of the foreigner, India too was released from slavery in 1947. But Sita was not immediately accepted by her lord Sri Rama. Although India and Indian Mind were declared independent, they were not immediately able to become one with Bharat and Bharatheeya Atma, India of ancient heritage and the soul of India. Geographically, the body of India is broken, broken-hearted, and is in pieces. In 1950, India became a Republic, incomplete Republic, not the full country. Lakshmana was unhappy, unable to be composed.



Though freed, Sita was unable to be united with Sri Rama immediately. Though Independent, Indian mind was unable to regain the Indian spirit immediately. Nor was Lakshmana cheerful over the death of Ravana since Sita and Rama were not immediately united. Indian Republic too was neither full nor jubilant since Indian mind was not in tune with Indian spirit.

There was a war for Sita's release. There was a freedom struggle for India's independence. Neither Sita, nor Indian mind was happy with the physical release. It was only a political freedom that India had in 1947. Neither Lakshmana nor the Indian nation was happy since it was not an immediate reunion of Sita and Rama. There was a fire ordeal to be gone through. Neither in 1947 nor in 1950 India was happy since it was not the full body of Mother Bharat that was obtained with the mind and soul of India united in her.

There were tense moments before Sita could reunite with Sri Rama. It was an ordeal to all, including the onlookers. It was a fire ordeal to everybody. Now, for all in general and Indian mind in particular, it is but a tense period of fire ordeal until we the Indians are able to be one with the Indian spirit.

Sita is ever pure. So is Indian mind ever pure. Both of them are ever wedded to Sri Rama or the soul of India. But the ordeal became unavoidable to Sita then. And the tribulations to the Indian mind have now become inevitable. Although Sita was immaculate, she was clothed in the alien robes when she returned to Sri Rama, after her release. She was simple, pure and austere. But her garments were rich and luxurious, pompous and foreign. Sita bedecked in royal costumes of Lanka

arrived in the princely palanquin to rejoin Sri Rama. Indian mind with the Western habits and influences sticking to her, attempted in vain to be in tune with the Indian spirit, culture and heritage. Both Sita and India have failed to achieve their cherished goals. Fire ordeal therefore is a necessity for both to reestablish and prove their purity and fidelity to the ageless spirit of nobility and wisdom, all inclusive oneness and all embracing love, universalism and uniqueness. It is not enough if one is pure and good; they should be visible as well in one's appearance, expressions, habits and way of life.

Despite the intrinsic spirituality and culture of unique Indian heritage, the mind of India is unfortunately clothed in the foreign garb of materialism. In language and religion, in life style and thinking patterns, we find the smoke or smell or wool of Western materialism sticking to the Indian mind. Indian art and architecture, music and dance, medicine and education and a host of others bear the unwanted and unholy filth of the foreign land. Although we are free for more than five decades from the abductor's yoke, we are unable to be rid of the dust and dirt that stuck to our feet during their reign. We are unable to breathe pure air, unpolluted by the foreign fumes in almost every field. Therefore it is essential, we should assert our oneness with our ancient spirit shedding all traces of the aliens, which have been unconsciously and innocently acquired from our captors. Let us be fully free in body, mind and habit.. Then only we will be truly Indians acceptable to Sri Rama, the soul of India.

Hanuman and a host of Vanavasis have facilitated the release of Sita from Lanka. Innumerable freedom fighters have struggled hard to obtain independence from the foreign yoke. But that was not sufficient. The physical release and political freedom are not enough. We have to be free in mind to be one with Indian Spirit. For that we have to face the fire ordeal of self purification



through self education. Sita Devi is able to burn the fire itself and is one with Sri Rama in no time. The Indian mind is not less capacitated to face any ordeal . Only, it has to reeducate herself and awaken herself, free herself from everything that is unnatural, artificial and alien.

This self-education is possible by opening the books of our age old heritage and culture. Commencing with a single external teacher, we culminate with the educative teacher from within in every one of us. Mother is our first teacher.

Motherland is our teacher all through our life and the soul of Mother Bharat is our eternal teacher from within always. This evolution in education is meant to take us from body consciousness to spiritual enlightenment, from materialism to spirituality, from selfishness to unselfishness, from transience to eternity, from narrow sectarianism to universalism. All expansion to infinity or oneness with the soul of India is possible through education, all round education, harmonious and wholesome education, Self education. And that process of unfoldment makes us truly Indians in every respect and that is universalism, spiritual enlightenment.

The fire ordeal of Self-awakening makes us one with the Soul of Bharat. Sita is united with Sri Rama. Lakshmana is happy. And there is the grand ceremonial celebration of Sri Rama's coronation at Ayodhya. All are together, happily together. Hanuman the vanara hero, Jambavan a forest dweller and Guha the tribal chief along with all other royal personalities have contributed to the glory of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana. All people of all areas, urban and rural, royal and tribal have only one thing in common and that is Indianness, the soul of Mother Bharat, the mind of Mother Bharat, the holy body of Mother Bharat —Sita, Rama and Lakshmana.

JAI SRI RAM. JAI MOTHER BHARAT.



VEERANGANAS OF SOUTH INDIA

N. KRISHNAMOORTI

India holds its women in great reverence. God appears to human beings as man as well as woman. Our women have been great scholars, mystics, rulers, persons of great charity and wisdom. In the field of battle too, there have been great exemplars.

But their valour has not been a brutal show of strength, but valour rising in defence of Motherhood, feminine honour and chastity. When the honour of the Nation and the society and our religion were in danger, our women have risen to risk their life to defend them all.

All these virtues are exemplified by the personalities of Parashakti and Sita.

Parashakti the supreme power has incarnated as the rider of lion---Simhavahini. But at the same time she has been named Lalita, graceful, tender and poised.

Similarly Sita is power and grace combined. She used to play with the Shivadhanush, when she was but six year old. Yet she refuses to apply her energy to kill Ravana, telling Hanuman, that to kill Ravana is Sri Rama's job.

Sri Krishna says in the Gita that in women, He shines as Kirti, Shri, Vak, Smriti, Medha, Dhriti and Kshama.

In South India the tradition of graceful yet powerful Viranganas is as old as history itself.

We give a few examples here but really speaking the list is inexhaustible.

Chennamma was a young and heroic girl. Later she became the queen of Kittur a small principality lying between Belgaum and Dharwar on the Pune-Bangalore Road. As a young girl, a teenager, she met her future husband Mallasarja of Kittur in a strange encounter. There was a man-eater tiger

roaming about in the nearby forests troubling the farmers. They approached Chennamma, by now a famous and unfailing archer, to save them from the tiger. She traced the tiger and shot an arrow into the body of the terrible beast. She found another arrow in the body, shot by a parallel claimant Mellasarja, the prince of Kittur. The dispute over the carcass of the Tiger blossomed into a love, which ended in marriage.

Along with Mellasarja and her co-wife Rudramma, Chennamma ruled the Kittur riasat justly. After Mallasarja's death, Rudramma's son became the ruler, the throne being ably guarded by Chennamma even as Bhishma guarded the throne of the Kurus. Chennamma proved to be a wise, heroic and just administrator. She was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and sought the advice of the monks of Kalmath Math often.

Chennamma's protégé, the ruler died young, and an adopted son of his was installed on the throne. Chennamma continued her role as the god-mother to the new ruler, herself being the de facto ruler. The British agents who did not approve of the adoption, thought that they can toy with Chennamma, a young widow. But Chennamma, the heroic, put the divisions of the British army led by one Thackeray to rout. A series of battles ensued, Thackeray was killed and his family members captured by the Kittur forces were mercifully released by the motherly Chennamma. Enraged at the defeat of the British forces, Elphinstone the governor of the Bombay presidency collected the forces from all over Bombay and appointed Chaplain the commissioner of Deccan to lead the army against Kittur. In spite of its great heroism, Kittur's small army could not



withstand the Imperial forces. In the night of 4th December 1824, Kittur was run over and its brave queen Chennamma captured. For the next five years Chennamma stayed in the Bailhongal prison-fort, praying to Shiva for the glory of our country. She died a martyr on 2/2/1829.

Today Chennamma's name is a part of Karnataka's folklore, history, legend and religious domain. She was born a heroine who lived and died like one.

Kannagi

Kannagi lived more than 2000 years ago. She was the daughter of a great trader at Poompuhar (in Tamil Nadu) the town known for its international trade at the point where river Kaveri enters the sea. She was virtuous, beautiful and was of unshakeable will. She was married to Kovalan, who unfortunately squandered their wealth in immoral company. At last Kovalan repented and returned to Kannagi. They wanted to go to the far-away city of Madurai to re-see their fortune. They were guided by Kavunti Adigal, a lady of great spiritual worth.

Kannagi's misfortunes followed her to Madurai. Her husband Kovalan went to the bazaar to sell her 'Noopur' and raise some money as capital for their new business. He was mistakenly caught as a thief of Madurai Queen's 'noopur' and was put to death.

Enraged, Kannagi went to the Pandya king's court. She charged the King with injustice and adharma. She proved that what Kovalan was carrying was her own noopur with inlaid stones of emerald. The Pandya Queen's noopur had the stones of pearls. Kannagi smashed her noopur on the floor of the assembled court of the Pandya King. Lo!, pieces of emerald flew out of the broken noopur. Repentant, the king gave up his life on the throne. The queen, a true Hindu wife, died with him. Kannagi caused the unjust capital of the Pandya's to be burnt and ascended to heaven to join her husband. Even today the people of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka revere Kannagi. A temple has been

built to commemorate her story in the Kerala-Tamil Nadu Border. Vaishakha Pournami is celebrated as the day dedicated to Kannagi. Her life story is immortalized in the Tamil epic 'Silappadikaram' (Noopurki Kahani) by the princely monk, Ilango.

Rani Mangammal

Mangammal was the daughter of Lingama Naicker the leader of the army of the Madurai ruler Chockanatha Naicker. Mangammal married Chockanatha who spent much of his next 23 years



in battling with his neighbours. He died then. Mangammal wanted to end her life, but held on, bound by her duty to bring up her son Muthuveerappa.

Muthuveerappa ruled Madurai from 1682-1689. He was ably guided by his mother Mangammal, but he too died young, leaving his mother Mangammal and his pregnant wife. Mangammal persuaded the young queen not to commit Sati. The princess delivered a boy, and joined her husband in Swargaloka. The child Vijayaranga was enthroned when he was only 3 months old. Mangammal, his grandmother was virtually the ruler. She knew where to fight and when to sue for peace. She had to wage wars, though unwillingly, against Mysore, Travancore and Tanjore.

Mangammal was a great administrator. The dharmasalas she built, the roads she laid and the civic amenities she created, have survived even now, today as a proof of her discretion being the better part of valour. When the tradition in Naicker kingdom was for woman to commit Sati, she lived for her very young son, and prevented her pregnant daughter-in-law from dying with Mangammal's son, so that the family could have son to rule the kingdom. In valour, charity and self-denial, Mangammal's name has few equals.

Manimekhalai the wielder of Amrita Surabhi

Manimekhalai was the daughter of Madhavi a professional dancer and Kovalan, the husband of legendary Kannagi. After Kovalan's death, both Madhavi and Manimekhalai took to the life of nuns. Young Manimekhalai, her beauty shining through her nun's robes - scorned the attention of princes, and lived the life a true woman of religion, great heroism indeed! She was gifted by the devas the Akshaya Patra, Amrita Surabhi, which would yield an endless supply of food for charity. But to begin with, a person of great virtue and charity should place a handful of rice in the Akshayapatra, so that the divine vessel would start yielding its gifts.

A woman of great chastity, Ardhra, placed a handful of rice into the vessel and blessed Manimekhalai. A great flow of food came out of the vessel, curing people not only of their hunger, but also of their ailments.

Manimekhalai spent the rest of her life in charity, service and prayer. She is a heroine because, she claimed a victory over the greatest enemies, lust and selfishness.

Manimekhalai's life and work are glorified in a Tamil epic of her name "Manimekhalai" written 2000 years ago. Her story is a constant source of inspiration in Tyaga, Seva and Atmabodha.

Akkadevi (Ad 1010-1064) was a famous heroine and ruler of Karnataka, who ruled for 50 years, subjugating enemies and quelling local insurrections. Her devotion and charity matched her heroism.

Nayakuralu (12th century) is a Telugu heroine praised in folklore and legend. She lived a life of adventure.

Rudramba (13th century) ruled the Kakatiya kingdom for 3 decades, suppressed rebels and gave stability to the kingdom and prosperity to her subjects. Her welfare works were legendary. Her sister Ganapamba ruled the kingdom for another 40 years wisely and sagely. Marcopolo had recorded her glory in his memoirs.

Unniyarcha was the daughter of a teacher of the art of fencing (sword-fighting). She killed the criminals who came to molest her, and extracted promise from the rogue-community that all women would then on be treated honourably in North Malabar.

The list of great, heroic women of South India is endless. **Avvai** was a great mystic, poetess and peace maker. **Tilakavati** held great sway over the life of Appar the top-flight Shaivite saint.

Mangayarkarasi brought the Pandya Kingdom (7th century) back to life from the brink of atheism.

Karaikkal Ammai was a great saint and Lord Shiva addressed her as 'Mother'. Her poems are immortal. We have already discussed in these columns the greatness of **Kodai** (Andal).

Akkamahadevi (12th century) was a great mystic of Kannada, Virashaivism.

Rangapataka (6th) was a Pallava queen, a great temple builder. **Sembiyan Mahadevi**, a Malava princess married to a Chola king was a renowned temple builder and a women of charity. She controlled her senses totally after becoming a widow at a young age.

Kundavai (11th century) a Chola princess who earned the eternal gratitude of the people was the elder sister of king Raja Raja who built the famous Tanjore Temple. She was a true heroine in a family of heroes.

Shantala (12th century) of Karnataka was a queen who could shine as the up-holder of four faiths, Vaishnava, Shaiva, Jaina and Buddha.

Right from Sangam poets down to modern freedom fighters, South Indian women have shone well and adorned everything they touched--heroism, art, poetry, music, temple building, spirituality, administration and charity.



HARISCANDRA THE EMBODIMENT OF TRUTH

PROF.N.GANGADHARAN

The Vedas repeatedly glorify two important concepts – order (rta) and truth (satya). One of the verses of the Rgveda equates these two concepts with the Supreme Brahman and makes obeisance. Moreover, the Upanishads and other philosophical texts equate Brahman with Truth, Knowledge and Infinity. The general meaning of the word rta is order. It is referred to as the primary cause of the universe. Rta as nature includes all those comprising the universe--the sun, moon, heaven, earth, air, cloud, the course of the sun, and the different period of time. Along with the word rta the Vedas frequently mention the word satya denoting truth and glorify its practice. It may be remembered that we have our motto as ‘Truth alone triumphs’ (satyamevjayate). The first instruction given to a student in the Taittiriyaopaniṣad is that he should utter the truth, practise virtue and pay respects to the parents and preceptor. Manu lays down the rules governing the practice of truth.

Accordingly one is enjoined to speak always the truth that is pleasant, restrain from speaking the truth that is unpleasant and uttering lie that is pleasing. Among the Puranic characters, the person that stands foremost in our mind as an example for the practice of truth is Harischandra. He is well known for his adherence to the practice of truth even under the most trying situations.

Hariscandra was a king of the solar dynasty. He was the son of the famous king Trisanku, to satisfy whose desire Visvamitra managed to create an astral world. Hariscandra was well known for his firm adherence to munificence and truthfulness.

The legend of Hariscandra and Visvamitra are interwoven and it is rather a continuation of the legend of his father Trisanku. Trisanku desiring to ascend heaven with his physical frame requested the family priest Vasistha to perform a sacrifice for that purpose. Since the latter refused to comply with his request, Visvamitra, the arch-rival of Vasistha, accomplished the sacrifice. As a consequence when Trisanku was moving upwards, he was denied entry into heaven with the physical frame and was pushed down, Visvamitra arrested his downward fall and managed to create an astral world for his stay. Visvamitra did not like Vasistha continuing as the family priest of the solar kings. Though he had no personal animosity for the solar kings, this episode was the starting point for his confrontation with Hariscandra.

Hariscandra married Candramati, the daughter of Sibi. Since he had no

progeny he performed a penance on the advice of Vasistha to please Varuna to beget a son. Visvamitra did not like this. Hariscandra was blessed by Varuna and with a son. He was named as Rohita. As a token of gratitude the king promised to offer his son as a sacrificial beast to Varuna. It was put off till Rohita grew up and attained the age for his Upanayana. Rohita ran away into the forest fearing that he would be offered in sacrifice. Since the king was reluctant to offer his son as promised Varuna cursed him that he would be afflicted with a dreadful disease. The king sought the advice of Vasistha. Vasistha suggested a way out that he can buy a son and



offer in lieu of his own son. Knowing the sequence of events Rohita bought a Brahmin boy named Sunassepa, who was the middle one among the three sons of a greedy Brahmin Ajigarta. When he was brought to the palace for immolation, Visvamitra took pity on the boy and sought his release. The king replied him that the purpose of procuring the boy was to get rid of his disease by the immolation of the boy. Visvamitra sympathizing with the boy, taught him a mantra for pleasing Varuna. Accordingly, Varuna was pleased and blessed the king also, curing him of the disease.

The confrontation between Visvamitra and Hariscandra began at this state. Once his family priest Vasistha commended the virtues of Hariscandra in the presence of sage Visvamitra. Thereupon the latter disputed the claims of Vasistha and argued that one cannot stick on to truth under adverse circumstances. It was then agreed upon that Visvamitra may himself test the veracity of Vasistha's statement. Then Visvamitra subjected Hariscandra to several crucial tests. Visvamitra made a ruse to entice Hariscandra to go for hunting a hog and get stranded in the forest. Then Visvamitra appeared in front of him in the guise of an old Brahmin. The king introduced himself to him as Hariscandra, who had performed the Rajasuya rite and generously offered to give him whatever he wanted after returning to his capital. The old man was pleased and suggested that the king may make his gift after bathing in the nearby stream. The old man expressed his simple desire that he wanted money to conduct the marriage of his daughter and produced by illusion a young man and a young woman and showed them to the king that they were the son and daughter. He showed the king the way to get out of the forest. Later Visvamitra met the king and sought for the help in the form of his own kingdom including all paraphernalia. The king had no option but to concede to his request and quit the palace along with his wife and son.

Then Visvamitra sought for the daksina. Since Hariscandra had given away all his possessions he pleaded for some time to make up the amount. He then moved to Kasi. Visvamitra accompanied

him and was pestering him to pay the daksina. Hariscandra offered to sell his wife and son and pay the fees. Once again Visvamitra appeared as a Brahmin and bought Candramati and Rohita by paying Hariscandra the amount. Visvamitra subjected them to much hardship. Visvamitra once again approached Hariscandra asking for more money since the fees paid was not adequate. In order to make up the money Hariscandra offered himself for sale. Yama appeared as an outcaste and bought him to guard the cremation ground. Thereafter Rohita died of snake bite. The master did not allow her to go and see the dead child. At last at midnight he permitted her to go asking her to return in order to resume her morning duties. The lamentation of Candramati on beholding the dead child attracted the people. They mistook her to be a ghost and dragged her to the cremation ground tying her with a rope. They asked Hariscandra to cut her into pieces. When he refused to kill a woman, the outcaste master came there and gave him a sword asking him to cut her into pieces. When Hariscandra was about to obey the words of his master, Chandramati shouted at them stating that she had come to cremate her dead child bitten by a snake and offered to be cut after doing that work. Hariscandra permitted her to bring the child. After the child was brought Hariscandra sought from her the fees to cremate. Till then both of them had not recognized each other. When they recognized each other they decided to cremate the child with the available wood and decided to end their lives in the same fire. When they were about to light the fire the gods manifested and prevented them from their bid and restored the child to life. Visvamitra returned the kingdom to the king admiring his steadfast adherence to truth even under extremely miserable conditions.

The glorious nature of Hariscandra remaining steadfast in his truthfulness sacrificing all other comforts in life for the sake of truth is bound to exert influence on the minds of people.



GITA FOR THE YOUTH -FATALISM- CH.SATYANARAYANA MURTHY

In answering Arjuna, Lord Krishna answers every human being. In lifting the gloom of Arjuna, He lifts the gloom of every one that happens to taste the sweetness of his nectar-like words. We find answers for every problem of ours.

One such problem is fatalism. Many people lapse into sloth and idleness thinking that they are play-things in the hands of fate. They say to themselves thus, "What need is there for me to work and exert myself when everything comes to me according to my fate. If I am destined to be rich, riches come to me. If I am destined to be poor, even if I strive hard, my lot will not be bettered. Hence let me sit still and let things take their own course". This trend of thought is dangerous and it breeds idleness. Fatalism paves the way to ruin. Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna and through Arjuna the whole humanity to do duty. The path of duty leads to glory. One should not neglect one's duty. As a Kshatriya it is Arjuna's duty to subdue the evil forces and uphold 'Dharma'. In the discharge of his duty, he has to rise above sentiments and attachments.

Lord Krishna himself can put an end to all the enemies of Arjuna and lift the benefits of victory to his lips on a platter. But he doesn't do so. He helps Arjuna to fight well and gain victory. He sets store by human effort. A wise father does not like to give millions to his son and make him idle. He would rather give him the training or the capacity to earn millions. Anything got without working for

it is not worth having. That is why the heavenly father Lord Krishna preaches wisdom to Arjuna and makes him do his duty and gain credit for conquest and realms.

First he answers Arjuna's depression at the worldly level thus, 'O Arjuna, the whole world knows you to be valiant and heroic. If you now flee from the battlefield you become a laughing stock. The enemies do not care to probe into the noble

sentiments that prompt you to abstain from fighting. They simply brand you a coward and they gloat over their superior powers, which they think have brow-beaten you. None praises you for your so-called softness, gentleness, and human sympathy. Your love for your grand-father and Guru are misplaced. They are bankrupt of any kindly feelings for you. They have been silent spectators to all the indignities and miseries you

suffered at the hands of your cousin. They have not even an iota of decency or sense of justice in joining war on the side of that sinful Duryodhana. Even if you flee they pursue you and humiliate you. That humiliation is worse than death. So your mistaken love regard and sympathy for those sinners will bring about your fall from the pedestal of glory as a warrior and hero.

So even the ordinary worldly people unexposed to high spiritual ideals or philosophy must not shirk their duty and refrain from their effort. One has to put forth human effort and rise above fatalism.



AS THE KING, SO THE PEOPLE

In ancient times, even the kings of small kingdoms performed their duty of ruling over their subjects with broad-mindedness and a spirit of sacrifice. One such king ruled over his kingdom, considering the welfare of his subjects as his greatest good fortune. He, therefore, took all steps for the welfare and happiness of his subjects. The people of his kingdom considered the king as their own body while the king considered the people as his heart. Such was the intimate relationship of love between the king and his people. The king worked very hard day and night to do the greatest good of his people.

One day, the king asked his queen to apply oil to his hair. In those days, it was not customary to have too many servants. The wife attended to the personal needs of the husband. Accordingly, the queen personally attended to even the smallest needs of the king as part of her sacred duty. She was a queen for the people of the kingdom but for her husband she was a dutiful wife. So, she applied oil to king's hair. While doing so, she noticed a few grey hair on the king's head. She thought that the king had stepped into old age and that God had already sent the first notice to remind the king that his end was drawing near. God sends a second notice in the form of cataract that blurs the vision. Then the teeth start falling one after another. That is the third notice. The fourth and final notice comes in the form of wrinkles on the face. Lost as she was in these thoughts, tears started trickling down her cheeks. On seeing the queen in tears in the huge

mirror in front of which he was sitting, the king asked, "What is the matter? Why are you weeping?" The queen stated the truth. The king smiled and said, "My dear, it is good that you have told me the truth. The body is like a water bubble. Sooner or later it is bound to perish. We should, therefore, hand over the responsibility of the kingdom to our ministers and go to the forest to spend the rest of our life in contemplation of God."

Both of them decided that they would leave the kingdom the next day.

The king at once called a meeting of all the ministers and told them of his decision. The news spread like wild fire and all the people came running to the palace. The ministers and the people requested the king not to leave them. They told him that if he left them, they would be as lifeless as a body without the heart. The king tried to convince them about the inevitability of death and how man should prepare himself to meet it, by leading the life of an ascetic



in the forest.

The people said, "O King, we will go to the forest and pray to Lord Siva to grant you a long life. Until we return, please do not leave the kingdom." The people went to the forest and offered sincere prayers to Lord Siva. When He appeared, they prayed, "O Lord! Please grant our king a life-span of a hundred years more." The Lord was pleased with their love and loyalty to the king and granted two hundred years to the king. The people returned with great joy to the palace and informed

the king of God's boon. The king was very much pleased.

The queen however got ready to go to the forest and took leave of the king and the people. The people thought that the queen must be angry because they had secured the boon from the Lord only for the king.

The queen went into deep meditation and God did appear before her. The queen questioned the Lord with all humility. "Is it true, O Lord, that you have granted two hundred years of life to the king?" The Lord said, "Yes". Then the queen asked, "O Lord! Of what use is this long life for the king unless the people who love him so much are also granted long life?" The Lord said, "Be it so. I grant long life to your people also. Not only to your people, I am granting long life to you also, even though you have not asked for it."

The queen returned and informed the king and the people of God's blessings and the boons. Such was the spirit of sacrifice of the people, of the kings and queens in ancient India.

(Courtesy : "Sanathana Sarathi" January '05 issue)



Do you hear Swami Vivekananda saying:



Then only will India awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desire of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost, for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen. Are you among those whom Swamiji had in mind? Come, dedicate yourself for the service of the nation as a fulltime worker of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari - a spiritually oriented service mission.

It is not a career - but a mission. Your Yogakshema would be taken care of by the Kendra.

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Contact at the following address with full biodata and a postal order of Rs. 10/-

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Kanyakumari - 629702

For detailed information, visit us at

www.vivekanandakendrakanyakumari.org

SHIBIR CALENDAR - 2005		VIVEKANANDA KENDRA, KANYAKUMARI	
NAME OF THE SHIBIR	DATES	AGE	DONATION
1. Spiritual Retreat (Eng.)	12 th - 18 th Aug.	40-70 Yrs.	Rs. 700/-
2. Spiritual Retreat (Hindi)	20 th - 26 th Oct.	40-70 Yrs.	Rs. 700/-
3. Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Eng.)	1 st - 15 th Dec.	20-55 Yrs.	Rs.1000/-
4. Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Hindid)	17 th - 31 st Dec.	20-55 Yrs.	Rs.1000/-

FATE AND FREEWILL

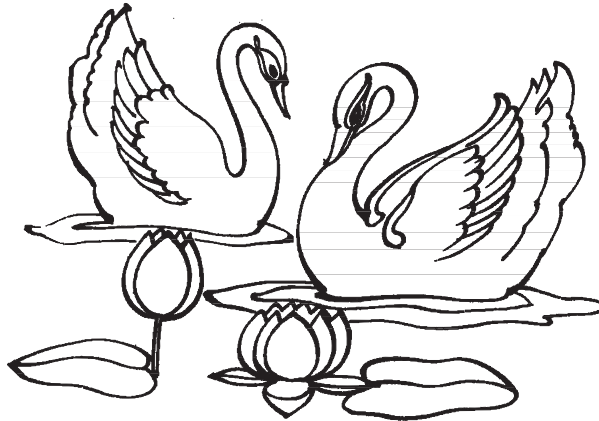
S.BALAKRISHNAN

“**F**ood, sleep, fear and desire for procreation are common to both human beings and animals. Intelligence alone discriminates a man from animals, in the absence of which he is equal to an animal”.

In the above, in place of the word “intelligence” we can substitute “free will”. Human beings have free will whereas animals are programmed to act in a certain manner. They generally do not exercise any free will. No one asks an animal whether it is a vegetarian or a non-vegetarian, whereas you are required to answer such a question when you go on a flight or when invited to a dinner. Even in ordinary activities such as crossing a road in heavy traffic, a man has to exercise his free will and cross carefully; if he leaves it to fate and darts across heavy traffic he may not reach the other side alive. But a buffalo can nonchalantly stand in the middle of the road and will not be hit by any vehicle because those who drive the vehicles have free will which they will use in the case of a buffalo. But in your case the free will of the driver and yours may clash and the end may not be predictable.

The example was only to show that even in such an ordinary activity as crossing a road your free will comes into play and you do not leave everything to fate or destiny. But then Lord Krishna seems to contradict this when he tells Arjuna in Chapter 11 verse 33 that he is only an instrument in the hands of fate. He also contradicts here his earlier statement in Chapter 6 verse 5 where it is told that one must lift himself up by one’s own efforts. In fact there is no contradiction here as will be explained further in this article.

For the purpose of better clarity and easier explanation I shall borrow two expressions from western philosophers. We shall term ‘fate’ as universal intention and ‘free will’ as individual intention. The total or universal intention in combination with particular or individual intention gives birth to different Jivas. The incarnations of the Lord on the other hand are born of total intention only as there is no specific Karma to cause the incarnation. We know from the scriptures that the birth of a Jiva is the result of his previous karma – punya and papa – which have their source in ignorance of self knowledge. He is



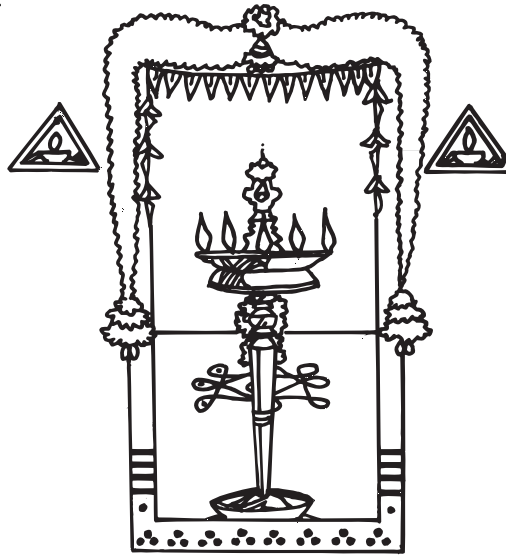
given a body appropriate to his karma which we term his individual intention. The incarnation of the Lord is born of total karma or universal intention as He has no ignorance. In fact He uses the total ignorance or Maya to take a suitable body for the purpose of his incarnation. All these are

discussed in our Scriptures, Puranas and in Bhagavat Gita.

Returning to the verse quoted in the beginning, free will is given to man as different from animals to fulfil a purpose in life. We talk of the four Purusharthas (Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha), the ultimate and primary goal being liberation from the transmigratory existence. No such purpose is prescribed to animals; their role is only to exhaust the fruits of karma accumulated by them in their earlier lives. They reap no punya or papa by their actions during the present life; their present karma have no fruits which will fructify now or later. Therefore a lion does not earn papa in killing a cow; nor will a cow earn punya for providing milk for abhisheka of the Lord. (The punya goes to the

owner of the cow). Therefore it is clear that human beings alone can exercise their free will or particular intention if they want to lead a meaningful life.

The free will is already ingrained in your origin which we termed individual intention; it is present in the DNA at the very conception of the Jiva. Our body structure, mental acumen, growth potential – everything is there already. One has only to acknowledge its presence and help to manifest the same at the right moment. This field of intent, inevitably present in everyone struggles to manifest through our thoughts and actions. Some of us refuse to recognize this power because of our ego which suppresses the same by giving out negative and opposing vibrations. Our natural urge is to move towards the infinite, the universal intention which we call God, in other words. Thus when the individual intention coincides with the universal intention, both complement each other. Your free will and fate move in the same direction in harmony. The philosophy of Visista-advaitins that we are part of God helps us to appreciate this concept. Being part of God all of us exhibit an innate desire to become the whole and this intention manifests in our free will. You are an infinite being or a spiritual being in a physical body. This infinitude has two sides – the active and the inactive. When you develop positive thoughts that you are going to fulfil a purpose in life, which is potentially present in you even from birth, you cooperate with your fate and move in the right direction. On the other hand those who do not believe in themselves nor in this universal force, but live in pessimism and lack of self-confidence invite more and more negative thoughts and move away from their goal. This is caused by negative forces in your ego, dominating and pulling you away from the right direction.



Keep an open mind and accept the universal intention as the presence of God in you. As you progress in life, thoughts about your purpose in this world will surface again and again. You will meet the right people and the right opportunities at the proper time. Do not ignore or stifle such thoughts. Understand that you are not here by chance. You were born with ideals and dreams which are meaningful. Your purpose is sure to find you and assist you in need. We have innumerable examples of great achievers who have aligned their fate with their free will, when they got a hint of their purpose in life. They used this opportunity presented to them in their life. I shall recount some of them from many fields.

Adisankara's encounter with a crocodile in a river paved the way for his taking to sannyasa. This must not be taken as an accident. It was a manifestation of his particular intention and was only a means to get his mother to agree to his sannyasa, but for which turning point in his life, we would have been denied of his great teachings. Swami

Vivekananda's meeting his teacher Sri Ramakrishna was no chance. It showed the way for him to fulfil a great mission of spreading this wonderful culture all over the world. Ramana Maharshi's encounter with death experience and his subsequent travel to Tiruvannamalai even as a boy and renouncing everything to do penance there was a great event not only for him, but for the entire humanity. That was his only purpose in life. Even in modern times, there are many such examples of someone suddenly getting a flash in his mind as a result of which, he changes his life style and shuns material wealth or selfish ends and embraces a career for social uplift or spiritual achievements like the story of Nachiketas in the Katha Upanishad.

Looking at fields other than spiritual, we have tales of Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi,

Rabindranath Tagore and other illustrious persons who recognized their purpose in life and aligned their individual intention with the universal. The same is the case with great scientists and inventors like Archimedes, Thomas Edison, Marconi, Leonardo Da Vinci, Einstein, etc., Even in the field of sports and politics we have such great achievers like Gavaskar, Tendulkar and Bradmans – of cricket, the Samprasas, Navratilovas and Williamses of Tennis, the Anands and Fischers of Chess who would not have been there, but for their working hard is unision with their fate and free will.

W.W.Dyer a well known writer from the west has a novel way of looking at the achievements of such notable personalities. They assume that their goal is achieved and work backwards to fulfil the intention. A record maker in high jump or pole-vault sets his mind firmly on the record mark and has tremendous self will to work it out. Or a century hitter or a Tennis champion believes that he has target. When the thoughts are very firmly set on the goal the spirit of universal intention will collaborate with you and make possible the seemingly impossible.

Coming back to the Bhagavat Gita, where the Lord's words to Arjuna in the two contexts appeared contradictory, we must understand that Arjuna was only told by the Lord to fall in line with fate without remonstrating, so that his free will coincided with his fate because that was his purpose as a follower of Dharma.

We can now easily see how a Jnani has no fate separate from his free will. They totally fall in line or coincide. Therefore he has no conflict, and as the Lord says in Chapter 12, the Jnani is none other than the Lord Himself.

This positive attitude of looking at fate and freewill as complementary to each other is well brought out in the words of a western philosopher, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe. He says, "The moment one definitely commits oneself, providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never have occurred otherwise--unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would come his way".

(Courtesy : "Self-knowledge" April 2005)



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SWAMI RANGANATHANANDAJI

DR.M.LAKSHMIKUMARI

When we think of His Holiness Swami Ranganathanandaji who held the august position as the Head of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, two sayings of Swami Vivekananda stand out clearly before our mind.

1. Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.
2. Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.

These profound expressions pointing to the immense potentiality held in reserve in each human being, which is to be tapped by concentrated self-effort, aptly portray Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji's life. Coming to hear of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his great disciple Swami Vivekananda, reading about the immaculate life of the Holy Mother, the simple village boy from Trikkur, in the outskirts of Trissur, Kerala, found himself tuning up to replay the symphonies set in tune by these great masterminds and the result was what we had before us in His Holiness Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, a treasure-house of knowledge and spiritual wisdom combined with the best manifestation of spirituality highly compatible with the most modern demands of contemporary world.

Born on 15th December 1908 as the son of a great Sanskrit scholar Sri Neelakantha Sastri, he had his school education in the village school where his excellent teachers became his first gurus. Like any child born to noble parents in the early years of the last century, it is not surprising that his first education in-inter human relationships, traditional culture and religion was from his simple, truth embodied and peace loving parents. For example, in one of his reminiscences Swamiji remembered



how his mother chided him for using some foul language by reminding him that one's tongue was the abode of Vani Devi Saraswati and one should not soil it by using foul language against others. Swamiji added that his advice went straight to his head and heart and always checked him from repeating the mistake. Love for his mother was a dominant character of his early life which made him once undertake a hazardous river journey to go to an Ayurvedic doctor living a mile up the river to fetch medicine for her. Love for adventure and dislike for easy life became the hallmarks of Swamiji's life from early childhood.

Even while at school he became attracted to Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature and started to absorb the wonderfully illuminating expositions of Vedanta enshrined therein. It was while in class eight that a friend brought him "*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*" from Trissur library. Swamiji recalled the instantaneous and tremendous appeal the book had on him. This was followed by the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda and the inspiring true-life sketch "*The Master as I saw him*" by Sister Nivedita. It was Swami Abhedananda's beautiful hymn "*prakrutim paramam*" that took him to Holy Mother. The sum total was a deep yearning to dedicate his life for experiencing God as also loving His creation around. Caste, creed, race and gender had no place in this scheme of love.

In the year 1926 Swamiji left home to join Ramakrishna Math and became an inmate of the Mysore Ramakrishna Ashram. In 1933 he took sannyas from Swami Shivananda, (Mahapurush Maharaj) one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who at that time was the President of Ramakrishna Math. The first twelve years of his monastic life were in Mysore and Bangalore

where he had occasions to be under the direct observation of most holy and lovable Swami Siddeswarananda who was later instrumental in establishing the center Vedantique Ramakrishna in Paris. The Swamiji had occasions to meet Mahatma Gandhi three times at Mysore and Bangalore.

One key utterance from Swami Vivekananda, which had become his own life's refrain was "can you combine seriousness with childlike naiveté"? That summed up also the extraordinary charm of Swamiji's personality. The farsighted views of Swami Vivekananda always inspired Swamiji in his monastic life and transformed him into a true to life imitation of the Great Master. Today the whole world understands the message of Swami Vivekananda in all its depth and scope as it comes magnified and updated through the knowledge, wisdom and life experiences of this Great Saint among Saints.

The most practical demonstrations of Swamiji's extraordinary vision and organizing power are the centers which have been established or updated by him during his tenure as the head of the various mission centers within the country and outside. The centers developed and brought to international standard and reputation by Swami Ranganathanandaji in his early monastic life were at Rangoon and Karachi. From 1949 to 1962 he was the president of R.K.Mission at New Delhi, which gave him a wonderful chance to interact with the cream of the ruling elite including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Indira Gandhi and earn their respect and confidence. Later for five years he was the secretary of the Ramakrishna Institute of Culture at Calcutta. This was the time when he could expand the work of the Mission at the international level.

A most telling example of the great dynamism and the organizing capacity of Swami Ranganathanandaji is the Hyderabad Math of which he was the president from 1973 to 1993. From 1969 till 1989 Swamiji was one of the trustees of the Ramakrishna Math. In 1989 he became the Vice President of the Math till he took over as the President in August 1998.

As an ambassador of our spiritual heritage Swamiji had toured all over the world spreading the message of harmony of religions and universal brotherhood. His most extensive tour was in 1968-69 from 18th July 1968 to 31st December 1969. The wonderful heart warming experiences of Swamiji are available for all of us from his famous book 'A Pilgrim Looks at the World'. During this tour he delivered 934 lectures and question and answer sessions of which 90 were television, radio and newspaper interviews, 30 were in churches and temples, 141 were in Vedanta Societies and Ramakrishna Ashrams, 156 were in private parlors, 197 were in public forums, and 320 were in 115 universities and colleges. Stimulating question and answer sessions followed every lecture. The media were unanimous in extolling the great impact Swamiji made on the public. A few examples are worth reproducing. "*On the one hand, his incredibly vast knowledge not only fascinated me but thrilled and excited me intellectually. On the other hand, his words reached a depth within me which literally caused me to tingle inside with the realization that each of us, there, was really alive and really dynamic*" (Ann Curtis in American Reporter, Feb. 1969)

David Milofsky, Chairman of Wisconsin Union Literary Committee of the University of Wisconsin said, "*Your visit helped to broaden our horizons and to see that, although we are separated by great distances physically, there is a universal spiritual kinship between all peoples. I feel that the distances between India and the United States and between Vedanta and Western thought were decreased because of your lecture*".

In His Holiness Swami Ranganathanandaji we can sense the universal dimension of the Great Master Swami Vivekananda. Listening to Swamiji we could transport ourselves into those days when the Great master thundered for the first time the universal message of Vedanta to a universal audience.

This author vividly remembers how in the late seventies Swamiji brought her attention to the urgent need for selfless and efficient action in every

field of activity in modern India when she was contemplating to leave her career. To quote, “our society’s body is full of wounds, blood and pus. There is hardly any healthy tissue anywhere. There is great need to create healthy tissues through people like you doing their swadharma with selflessness, patriotism and dedication to God. Be such a worker, remain where you are, make yourself an example for your colleagues. There is no need to leave your job and get into any organization.” A few years later when the occasion demanded greater sacrifice, with equal emphasis Swamiji gave his blessings to leave the profession adding, “Now organisation’s need is greater and more urgent and you may leave your worldly pursuits”. True to Vivekananda style he wanted each Indian to work with dedication and selflessness in their respective field of activity so that each one can make his or her contribution to the prosperity of our nation.

He was always concerned about human relationships specially when we worked in an organization. During one of his casual conversations he pointed out, “Do you know which is the best way to keep human relationships warm and strong? Through tyga and seva. Relinquish your personal interests and be ever ready to look for an opportunity to serve others.” Adherence to truth and scientific rational approach to problems formed part of his life’s methodology. Foolish sentimentalism, superstitious beliefs, etc., had no place in him. Once seeing the huge noisy crowds at Kanyakumari temple he remarked that he would be more peaceful in the bazaar outside than within the temple and we need not arrange for his trip to the temple hereafter.

Another remarkable trait that amazed everybody who went to him was his extraordinary optimism. Even the greatest problems that confronted our nation did not shake his faith in our people and their capacity to face them. He was of the view that after years of tamas we were just moving on the rajas. The confused riotous behaviour of the mob was just a forerunner of the good days ahead. Suddenly our nation was charged with a new energy. With a little care our leaders could divert

this energy into constructive channels for national good. In these days of encircling gloom let us also affirm his words and keep our hopes alive. “The present total erosion of values at high levels is a passing phase; we had such experiences before also...our nation will build up, during the next century, a progressive, humanistic and peaceful democratic polity and society”.

Talking to Swamiji, one was wonderstruck at his encyclopaedic knowledge and memory. Reading his treatises on various subjects helped us to update our own knowledge in any field, be it physics, chemistry, psychology, economics, politics or science. He could remember who said what and when and the implications of it for our understanding of our own Shastras.

Last but not the least was the unbounded love and concern, which he bestowed on each and every one who went near him. All he expected was our own deep interest and concern for the progress and well being of our country and its heritage. His own love for the country is summed up in the following words, which also teach us a great lesson in expansion. To quote: “Though born and brought up in Kerala my feeling of identification was never confined to that one state but had become national and international; to every State I go for lecture programme, I have felt I belong there; the same in the international sphere also”.

Kerala is blessed today that among the very many luminaries it had gifted to the nation is the Most Revered Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji whose spiritual wisdom is shedding its luster on the great Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission and through it on the whole nation, nay, the whole world. Blessed indeed are those who have known him from near and twice blessed are those who have been blessed by Revered Swamiji. May this Abhinava Vivekananda’s teaching continue to spread far and wide so that we lesser mortals may feel that we are one with God and are truly brothers and sisters.



AKSHAYA TRITIYA NARAYANAN

On the third day (tritiya) of the bright half of the moon in the Tamil month of Chittira or in the month of Vishaka in the National calendar, falls Akshaya Tritiya. It comes in the Gregorian month of May. A good work done on this day will prove a boon eternally, is the belief. Puranas elaborate on the auspiciousness of the day. In the North the day is called Akshaya Teej. In the Vedic calendar the event is marked as one of the holy festivals. The sun is at its maximum brilliance on this day. Astrologers say that the sun, the only source of energy, sheds its maximum on the earth on this day. Rishis selected this day to conduct the aadhya yagna.

Akshaya means eternal, that which will not undergo decay. So the day represents the beginning of a never ending gain. A good work done on this day is considered a windfall for the future.

Many incidents together have added to the holiness of Akshaya Tritiya. Krita and Threta Yugas began on this day. It is the birthday of Parasuram, an avatara of Vishnu. It is considered the most suited day to propitiate departed souls.

In the Puranas, Akshaya Tritiya is described as the beginning of a golden era. Devas celebrate it and in one of the Puranas there is a narration of the celebration. The day is considered auspicious for marriages. That means, every father wishes to bestow the most of his life's earnings on the best and the holiest of human relations on the earth on this day. So the day is a witness to the most liberal of sacrifices. This very event repudiates the common notion that one can attain riches by buying a coveted thing, especially gold, on this day. Abandon, and be free from desires is the way Akshaya Tritiya shows as the way to prosperity. Any other idea attributed to it is shrewd

commercialism. What else could one attribute to the gold rush on that day when nearly 30 tons of it worth Rs. 1800 crore were sold in one city? When asked about what he wanted to buy a man remarked humorously, "I cannot afford to prosper this way". Child marriage is another blot on the day. Parents in medieval India of foreign invasions used to betroth their daughters to ensure their security. This practice is now gone.

Any long run project began on Akshaya Tritiya will flourish, is the belief. Many industries and buildings and even temples in the country had their foundation stone laid on this day. One example is the Balaji temple at Tirupati. Adi Shankara, while



passing through the hillocks of Andhra Pradesh spotted a small structure far away and thought that to be a Siva temple, from its poor condition, and all the time a disciple insisting that it was a Vishnu temple. On approaching it the disciple was proved right. Soon Shankara chanted a mantra and placed some symbol there saying, "A Vishnu temple should not be so poor." It was

on an Akshaya Tritiya day. The pilgrim flow began after this incident. It is also said that the foundation stone of the present day temple was laid on a similar day.

A comparison of modern astronomical findings with ancient Indian knowledge will reveal the erudition our ancestors had attained on the subject. Astrology was accepted as a branch of it and had its acceptance outside India. There were business ties with Egypt in those days through the Red Sea. The pharaohs consulted Indian astrologers for auspicious days for laying foundation for constructions.

Back in India, the Akshaya Paatram (vessel) of Draupadi is well known to all of us. Though the dates mentioned in scriptures do not tally with

Tritiya, the similarity in their names augmented people's faith in the result of a good work done on the Tritiya.

Then how did the day renegade as a day of shopping? This is modern salesmanship, a clever twist given to an event steeped in devotion. It is simply this: temples used to present gold coin engraved with spiritual shapes to devotees on the Akshaya Tritiya as a symbol of prosperity. Never was the belief that it would multiply in coming years. The coin was a source of inspiration for devotees. The coin represented endless prosperity because gold as a metal never undergoes corrosion like other metals. Gold has the power to energise human body. So palace doctors prescribed gold flour to kings in minute quantity. The kings were served food on gold plates.

To wear at least a small piece of gold is an Indian tradition. It is considered to have the power of protection and for women a small piece as a *thaali* is a symbol of family prosperity. These possessions were symbolic and not a display of wealth as some people want to make it today. Here a question is relevant. What was the source of so much of gold in India? It was called the Golden Bird of British

Empire. There were temples built of gold. Fa Hsien and Hiuen Tsiang had written that they saw children in India playing with gold and diamond marbles.

Our ancestors never looted other countries. Somewhere in an epic or a purana there was a narration that in places where men lived without flinching from moral thought and conduct, there, in the soil gold could be found. So the quality of men was the secret of the prosperity. They were of robust health and were hard working. So hard work and faith promoted the wealth of India.

This is another message of Akshaya Tritiya. Here we also find a perfect balancing of material prosperity with moral uprightness. Any spurt in wealth had to be sanctioned by codes of right conduct. Culture kept a guard on the growth of civilization. Whenever the latter tended to go awry the former curbed it.

We have that culture left with us today. Only its impressions in material forms have disappeared. The spread of the messages of that culture is necessary to educate people once again on right social conduct.



AN APPEAL FROM YUVA BHARATI

To All Readers, Subscribers, Well-wishers, Advertisers, and to the Youth. . .

Yuva Bharati is one of the very few monthly magazines which is being regularly posted for the last 33 years without any break. In the history of Yuva Bharati many twists and turns happened reminding us of the verse "men may come and men may go.. but I go on for ever"

The mounting cost of production compels us to change our tariff rates. We appeal to all to support, sustain and to nourish Yuva Bharati by generously participating financially, and most important, by enrolling at least 5 more subscribers from your side. The new Tariff is as below:

Particulars	Per Insertion
Back Cover (Multi Colour)	Rs.4,500/-
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Full Page Black & White	Rs.2,000/-
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Page sponsorship: **Rs. 1,000/- {Sponsor's name and address will be printed at the bottom of the page in bold letters}**



VIVEKANANDA KENDRA SAMACHAR

GAYA

The center conducted a week long Yoga Siksha Satra from 3 April to 17 April '05. Sri Govardhan Prasad Saday, a well-known scholar of Gaya inaugurated the camp.

Participants were taught the basic set of Asanas, Pranayama and Kriyas.

BALASORE

The Balasore center runs the Sister Nivedita Nursery school which has a strength of 28 students and 3 teachers.

The center conducts Yoga, Pranayama, Bala Samskar and meditation classes regularly. Ramakrishna Jayanti was observed on 12 March '05 at the Kendra premises. Swami Bhagabatananda from Puri was the main speaker.

CHANDIL

The Chandil Kendra observed Hanuman Jayanti on 24 April 2005. People from Chandil and near by villages participated. The programmes started at 8 a.m. with a puja and concluded at 3 p.m.

Competitions in Hanuman Chalisa recitation, patriotic songs and Kabaddi and other games were conducted and prizes distributed

RDP

Activities in April

1. Through 75 Balwadis 2,153 rural children were fed. Hygienically prepared highly nutritive lunch was served with vegetables, vitamin rich cereals were given daily in the evening.
2. In the health care programme through 14 rural medical centers, 3,485 patients were examined and treated for various common ailments.
3. 6,359 students actively participated in 203 Bala Samskara Vargas. In the Vargas based on Indian cultural values and norms, patriotic songs and

games, the feeling of oneness is strengthened with each participant.

4. Under Adopt-A-Granny Scheme, monthly solatium was distributed to 57 destitute old people in the form of rice, dhal, oil, etc., for their maintenance, supported by Help-Age International.

On 25.04.2005 Help Age India conducted a Capacity Building Workshop at Chennai. Two persons from V.K.R.D.P. participated in the workshop.

5. Eye Screening Camps were organized at 5 places through which patients were examined and 229 patients were operated for cataract with the help of Aravind Eye Hospital.
6. Village level Deepa Poojas were organized in 266 places in which 11,225 women offered their prayers to God. One mass level Deepa Pooja was conducted at Shencottah in which 602 women from 18 villages had participated. The entire expenditures were sponsored by the local community.
7. Swami Vivekananda Jayanthi Day was celebrated in 5 places. Competitions, cultural programmes and speeches marked the celebrations.
8. Under Amrita Surabhi scheme 1,345 kg. rice was collected.
9. Through various branch centers and stalls Rs.15,084/- worth literature was sold.
10. Annual Subscriptions were collected from 71 people for Vivekavani.
11. 73 students are getting tailoring training through five units.
12. Parents Meets were conducted at 5 places in Kanyakumari and Ramnad Districts.
13. Patron Donation was received from 13 persons.
14. Two Personality Development Camps were conducted in Thoothukudi and Aruppukottai. 62 children participated.

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15. Nine Yoga Varga, were organized in Kovilpatti, Ramnad and Virudhunagar Units. 521 participants were benefited.
 16. With the help of Department of Public Health Services, Tamil Nadu, for the eradication of T B distributed medicines to the patients in nearby areas.
 17. With Nine Self Help Groups (SHG's) 180 women are working at various places.
 18. One hand pump donated by Swami Mukthanandaji, Anandashram, Kerala, was installed at Camp Thattaparai in Thoothukudi District.
 19. Anna Pooja was organized at Thoothukudi in 2 places on 14.04.2005 on Tamil New Year day 74,500 kgs. of rice and Rs.31,634/- were collected by a special campaign. In this drive 5000 families came to know of the Kendra's activities. Om Stickers, SRK, SD & SV pictures were pasted in all these 5000 houses.
 20. Paddy collection drive was conducted at Valliyoor and nearby areas. 350 kgs. of paddy, 410 kgs. of rice and Rs.651/- were collected.
 21. In memory of Kendra's senior worker Mrs. Saraswathi Srinivasan on 13.04.2005, Payasam was distributed to all Balwadis. In memory of Smt.Rambai Ammal, mother of our donor Shri G.J.Raman, on 24.04.2005, Chitra Pournami, Payasam and banana were distributed to Balwadi children of Kanyakumari District.
 22. Six-month Free Residential Tailoring Training aided by Kamlaben and Raojibhai Patel Family Foundtion, NJ 076677 was started on 30.03.2005 at Toovipuram in Turicorin District. At present 22 girls from nearby villages are getting free residential training.
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CROSSWORD - 16

SWADESHI HUMOUR

—A KENDRA WORKER

The Swadeshi versus Globalisation issue has spawned a number of jokes and humorous situations. We present a bunch of such telling jokes to highlight the issues.

The tale of learned technology versus country wisdom:

A newly educated agricultural scientist once visited a village. He found the methods employed by the illiterate farmers are crude and unproductive.

“Why! I will be surprised if this mango tree yields a hundred fruits per crop! The methods are so ante-diluvian,” said the scientist.

“Why sir! I will be amazed if this tree yields even one mango per crop. For it is a coconut tree!” said the illiterate farmer.

The message:

Once Dr. Kumarappa the Swadeshi technologist went to meet Gandhiji to take leave of him before proceeding to England for studies. Gandhiji told him, “with very little efforts you can be a first rate Indian. With all your efforts, you will only be a third rate Englishman”.

That is the message of Swadeshi. “Be yourself”.

New discoveries:

Recently I read a snippet in a magazine. An American scientist was standing in his kitchen watching his wife frying doughnuts. He found the central portion of the doughnuts was not well-cooked. An idea struck him, that his wife should put a hole in the doughnut before frying it so that more area is exposed to the hot oil. He took a patent on the idea”.

We Indians know for so many centuries the art of making a *Vada* with a hole at the center. For the American it is a discovery worth patenting.

At this rate, we Indians should go about patenting our Upanishad, Yoga, Bhagawad Gita, Neem preparations, Ayurveda, all our household recipes, Arabic numerals, etc. These are according to Hindus the common inherited wealth of the whole mankind, India’s gift to humanity. Nobody will think of the ridiculous step of patenting them.

Common sense versus specialization:

An American tycoon specializing in the manufacture of edible oils once visited a village in Maharashtra. A management expert accompanied him. Their factory in America presses oil out of groundnut using a variety of machines and solvents under controlled temperature condition. The village from Maharashtra boasts of no such paraphernalia. He has a country press (Ghami/Chekku) powered by a bullock and manned by himself.

The American expert noted down accurately the size of the wooden mortar, the length and thickness of the pestle, the time taken by the bullock to press oil out of one quintal of groundnut, etc.

The management expert was curious to know of a tiny bronze bell strung to the bullock’s neck. The bell was making a continuous jingling sound. The expert asked the simple press owner, “Is there any relation between the sound of the bell and the oil productivity of the press?”

The villager suppressed his grin and said, “I would yoke the bullock to the press lever rod, set the bullock on its circular path and doze off. The ringing of the bell would tell me that the bullock is moving. When the bell stops ringing, it means that the bullock has stopped”.

The expert questioned him, “How do you know if the bullock stands at a place without moving or shakes its head ringing the bell?”

The villager replied” My bullock won’t do that. It is not a management expert”.

The effect of TV on children:

A child too much under the influence of TV and its commercials was once taken to the church. The Choir was in attendance; many hymns were sung between sermons delivered by the preacher.

At the end of the programme the kindly preacher asked the child, “How did you like the programme today?”

In all innocence the child replied, “The cultural programmes were all right. Your commercials flashed in between were a bit off”.