

YUVA BHARATI

Voice of Youth

Vol.36 No.8 Phalgun-Chaitra 5110-5111 March 2009

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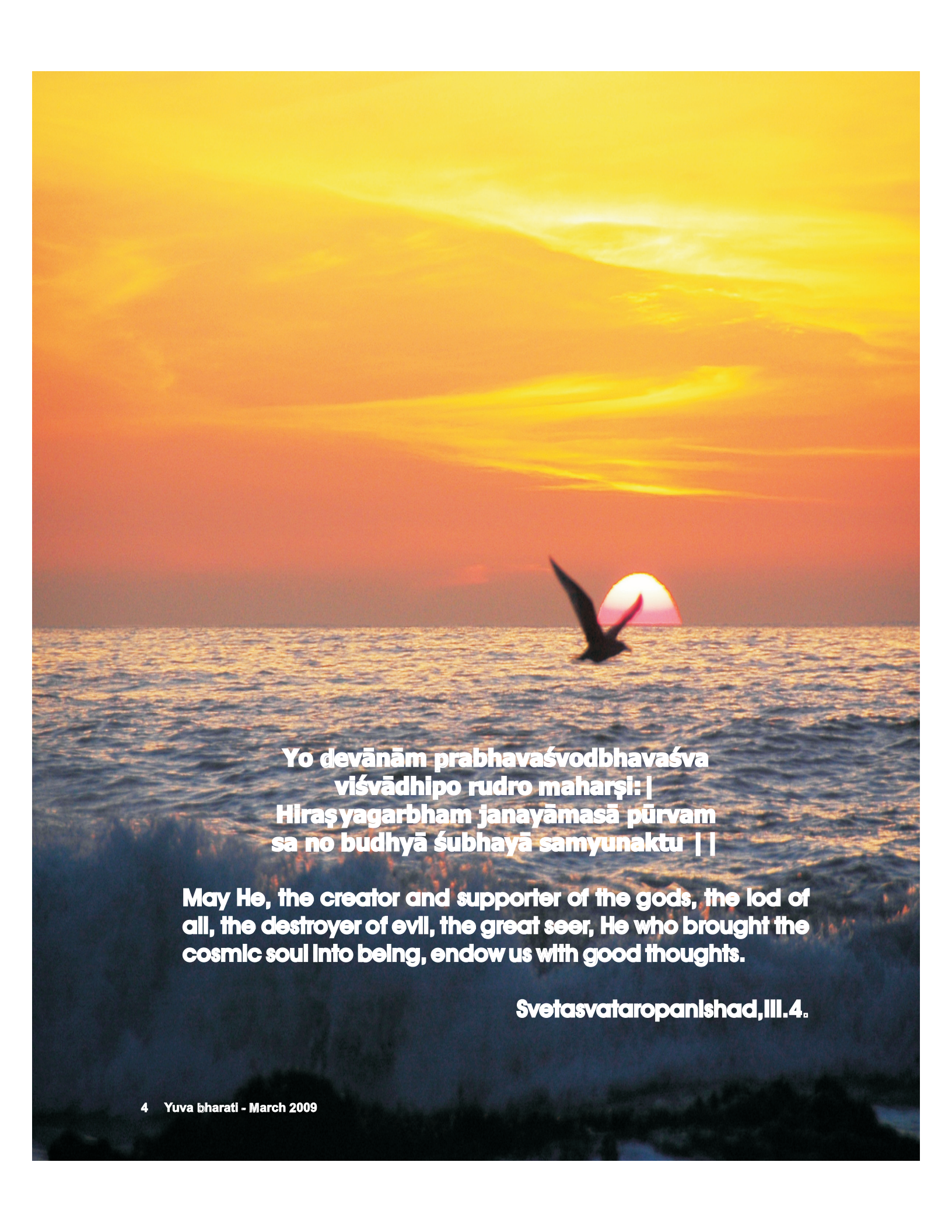
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Single Copy	Rs.	10/-
Annual	Rs.	100/-
For 3 Yrs	Rs.	275/-
Life (10 Yrs)	Rs.	900/-
Foreign Subscription:		
Annual	-	\$25 US Dollar
Life (10 years)	-	\$250 US Dollar
(Plus Rs.50/- for Outstation Cheques)		

Published and Printed by L.Madhavan on behalf of Vivekananda Kendra from 5, Singarachari Street, Triplicane, Chennai - 600 005. at M/s.RNR Printers and Publishers, 8, Thandavarayan Street, Triplicane, Chennai - 600 005.

Editor: P.Parameswaran.

A sunset over the ocean with a bird in flight. The sky is a vibrant mix of orange, yellow, and red, with the sun partially obscured by the bird's wings. The water below is dark blue with golden reflections from the setting sun.

**Yo devānām prabhavaśvodbhavaśva
viśvādhipo rudro maharṣiḥ |
Hiraṣyagarbham janayāmasā pūrvam
sa no budhyā śubhayā samyunaktu ||**

May He, the creator and supporter of the gods, the lord of all, the destroyer of evil, the great seer, He who brought the cosmic soul into being, endow us with good thoughts.

Svetasvatāropaniṣad, III.4.

SLUMDOG MATISM

For the last one month our news channels, magazines and other media were busy in their hailing of the supposedly great achievement of the Indians who were involved in the making of the film 'Slumdog Millionaire'. Deafening was the noise made by them, and people were pushed into a make-believe that, this is an achievement which is next only to getting independence. Our search in all the media for some saner voices proved futile, as the frenzy caught everybody, even those who didn't watch it. There were quite a few who questioned the motives of the film makers, but their voices were drowned by the gullible, ready to be goaded, ignorant masses who said it is a rare privilege for an Indian and it is shameful that someone is trying to cast aspersions on it. But if we analyze the events, we will get a proper perspective, and all the more predictable pattern which is not something new.

Though their hegemony has been thrown to trashcans, British still think that they are supreme and have an imperialistic outlook while looking at the cultures and traditions of other countries. Since they are no longer the power that they were, the only way to assuage their bruised ego is to make fun of all and sundry. Coupled with a market-driven western attitude which sees all traditions as their nemesis and to be rooted off so as to push their products in to the society, we get a fiendish mindset out to destroy anything good and ancient.

No more evidences are required than their trail, which has debased and sullied the image of many a country's traditional life styles. One gets a doubt whether the 'International awards' have any other intentions other than this. Is poverty confined to India alone? Aren't there poor in other countries? Doesn't the social security smack on their faces, projecting their 'culture's' inability to take care of their own elders?

There is no denying the fact that poverty is one among the several issues to be addressed by us in our resurgence towards becoming a super power. Yet equally important is the fact that among all the nations of the world, including the perpetrators and the victims of this social and cultural calumny, our country has more to give to humanity than any other country or civilization. It's not the vested interests which bother us, but the dispassion of the masses who feel proud to decry their own traditions. Several decades of macaulayan education has insulated our people from truth. The more anti-national you are, the more accolades you will get, seems to be the mantra to fame. Masqueraders of liberty and rights really don't bother for our society and its development. They thrive by keeping the gap between the masses and truth unbridged. Bridging it is the only way for alleviation from the disease.

V.V.Balasubramanian
YB-ET

From this issue onward, YuvaBharati is taking a leap to newer heights. With a whole slew of exciting columns and themes, YB is taking an important step forward to keep the youth current and up-to-date on topics and issues that matter for them and for our nation. A few columns, "Know Thyself, Grow Thyself", "Our Heroes" and 'Man-making" have already started appearing. The content will be a blend of spirituality and nationalism, true to the message of Swami Vivekananda. Let us know what you think of these new columns. We can be reached at vkpt@vkendra.org. Looking forward to your response!

Grey Matters

A non-political commentary on vital issues in current affairs. With so many channels with vested interests giving their views, it becomes necessary to cut through the clatter and get to the substance of issues that are really important.

Outstation Check

News from beyond our borders: A lot of patriotic Indians work for our dharma and nation outside of our geographical borders. Outstation check will report inspiring efforts in this direction from outside our country.

The Saffron Quark

As science evolves, we see more and more scientists using mathematical equations and difficult jargon repeating what our rishis have been saying all along. The Saffron quark will document and present "modern" discoveries that really are not such modern discoveries at all...

Husk

It has been made fashionable among today's youth to deride our cultural practices. What is not recognized is that the practices are in fact like husks that protect the grain. The practices are meant to convey something deeper, and this inner grain is what Husk will present.

Among the 100,000

Swami Vivekananda said a hundred thousand men and women should take up the national work to revive this nation to her old glory. There are many who do just that to sacrifice and strive for a better society. But not many will hear about them as the media will not cover them. This column is



dedicated to bringing to light their contributions.

In-verse

Many a verse from our holy texts has been maliciously and wantonly misquoted to confuse and mislead. In-verse will attempt to put them in perspective and explain the real essence of such verses.

Lest we forget

The victors' version is the history we read. There are, however, scores of incidents that changed the course of events which is not on top of public memory. Lest we forget focuses the spotlight on such events, reminding us of important turning points that inspire and those that warn not to repeat the same mistakes again.

Web-trotter

Web-trotter is a pleasant stroll around the maze of the internet giving interesting snippets about people and happenings related to our culture and nation from the web.

Eco-Dharma

An indulgent lifestyle is what is choking our planet. Eco-Dharma presents the Dharmic perspective on utilization of resources and living in harmony with nature.

Nationalist's calendar

There are many other days in the calendar that should be remembered and celebrated other than just our friends' and relatives' birthdays. The Nationalist's Calendar marks the days of the month that should not be forgotten by any patriot.

Perspectives

There are very important people who influence great events, but many of whose voices are rarely heard, if ever. "Perspectives" presents their expert opinion and point of view.

We serve..

...no strings attached...



Chennai witnessed a rare and happy coming together of many Hindu spiritual organizations in the month of February, from 6th to 8th. The three day program was intended to showcase the various service activities carried out by Hindu organizations, which were hitherto unknown to public. This wonderful program was an initiative by the Global Foundation for Civilization Harmony. Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati inaugurating the Hindu Spiritual and Service Fair - 2009 in Jaigopal Garodia Vivekananda Vidyalaya at Anna Nagar in Chennai said, "Hindu Dharma has its soul in 'contribution' i.e giving. One should not stop oneself with being a 'consumer' and should also contribute. Every human being must be a contributor and that is Hindu Dharma. The Dharma of religion, culture, society and government is to convert every human being from a 'consumer' to a 'contributor'. Teachers, gurus and religious leaders must make the people think what they should contribute"

He also added that, "We have to develop the habit of 'giving'. The incapacity to give must be given

up and the capacity to give must be nurtured. We should learn to give and it could be learnt only by giving, like how we learn to swim by swimming and drive by driving. Similarly, we should give to grow into a giver. Once we start giving, we become contributors. There are two ways of earning Adrishtam to understand the Hindu Dharma and to control the hidden variables. One is through prayer and rituals and the other is through Poortha Karma, that is serving the society through many activities like water harvesting, digging wells for the public and ponds for the cattle, constructing hospitals, etc. Annapradhanam, that is to create a situation where people take care of their livelihood is very important for the development of a Dharmic society"

Earlier Swami Mitrananda, Director of Chinmaya Yuva Kendra and Organizing Secretary of the fair said, "This concept, which was conceived a year back, evolved into Global Foundation for Civilizational Harmony (GFCH) with an aim of establishing peace and harmony through dialogues with various faiths. Every prayer is valid, every faith is valid and every civilization is precious. Right to retain faith is also a part of human

rights'. About the fair, he said, '33 organizations, which have a combined membership of 22 crores have taken part in this exhibition and all these organizations have given to the society more than 30,000 schools and an equal number of medical centres, underlining the importance of education and health care. This fair is a good beginning of the progress of collective service and every exhibitor and visitor must see the exhibition with the feeling of 'my religion, my culture'.'

Swami Athma Shraddanandaji of Ramakrishna Mutt read out the speech of Swami Gouthamananda, President, Ramakrishna Mutt, in which he said, "religion is not mere belief on any dogma, but realization and realization leads to spiritual enlightenment. Service to man becomes worship of God and the services can take many forms such as social, educational, medical, relief and rehabilitation."

Paramahansa Nithyananda, founder of Nithyananda Dhyana Peetam said, "Freedom is the foundation for growth and such a freedom in Hinduism has grown into different traditions and different concepts. Hindu Dharma has been there since time immemorial and it doesn't require marketing. This fair is organised to make people understand the concept of service. One should learn to serve and the success of this exhibition is going to be a milestone in the successful journey of modern day Hindu Dharma."

The stall put up by Vivekananda Kendra elicited very good response from the public. Nearly 4000 students took part in the spot quiz conducted by Vivekananda Kendra. Vivekananda Kendra Patrika titled 'Green Foot Prints' was released

during the fair along with another book titled 'Character', written by Sri B.P.Singhalji. Both the books were released by Mananeeya Suryanarayana Raoji, Akhil Bharatiya Kariya Karini Sadasya of RSS, and the first copies were received by Pujya Mata Viveka Prana Ambaji of Sri Sarada Ashram from Ulundurpet, Sri S.Gurumurthyji, columnist and



Pujya Mata Viveka Prana Ambaji receiving Green Foot-Prints from Mananeeya Suryanarayana Raoji



Sri S.Gurumurthy ji receiving the book Character from Mananeeya Suryanarayana Raoji.



Sri Vijayakumarji, Principal of Jaigopal Garodia Vivekananda Vidyalaya receiving first copy from Ma.Suryanarayana Rao ji

Sri Vijayakumarji, Principal of Jaigopal Garodia Vivekananda Vidyalaya.

Youths of various organizations enjoyed the event, the highlight of it being the two dramas played by Chinmaya Yuva Kendra and Vivekananda Educational Society. An estimated 50,000 people visited this event.

Swamini Pramananda of Purna Vidya Trust, being received by Ma.Nivedita Didi



Didi interacting with Chinmaya Yuva Kendra volunteers.

Fair Voices...



Longjam Prakash Singh – Seva Bharati

Such a fair is very helpful for the younger generation which is only shown fashion shows and western dance shows. Parents of youngsters, now have an opportunity to introduce children to our culture. Even if this event can bring a change and benefit 10% of the visitors, it will be a very big number.

Manisha Makhecha - Chinmaya Yuva Kendra

This is what our country really needs, Hindu organizations coming together. To fight against the outsiders we need to come together to face their challenges.



Aishwarya Kalyan-- Chinmaya Yuva Kendra

The very concept is beautiful. Such events should be continuously organized. This shows the unity and oneness in our society.

Jyoti Basu – Seva Bharati

Not only people working for Hindu organizations, but even the general public should be made aware of the huge service efforts of the Hindu organizations. When we enter a cinema, the crowd has a different feel; this gathering has a mission – a spiritual mission. It creates a feeling of togetherness among the volunteers of all organizations and the public.



Rajkumar – Mata Amritananda Mayi Mutt

I am very happy to be part of this event. Not only to be in service of our Mata, but I am also happy that all organizations have come together. This should happen every year.

Shanmuga Priya, Geeta – Brahma Kumaris

The event was well organized and systematic. Usually in a crowd, each will have a different thought, but here people have gathered with a single spiritual thought. The whole place seems to have a spiritual vibration. It is a great effort to bring all organizations, which are in service of society.



Bhavatharini – Rashtra Sevika Samiti

In a situation where people are even afraid to utter the word 'Hindu', this event is a great and brave attempt.

Vineeth Kumar M – Oneness University

This is a very new concept. It used to be that people didn't know where to approach for if they needed to come to spiritual organizations. This is like a one-stop-shop for all spiritual organizations. It makes people's life a lot easier. It has been long overdue.



Ganesh Shetti – Sanatan Sanstha

This is so important as Hindus are getting united. Only such events can bring us together. The first step is to bring Hindu organizations together; then bring the entire Hindu community together – this is what gives strength to fight against those who want to cause us harm.



Shiva Subramanian – Art of Living, Vyakti Vikas Kendra

Such an event gives the best awareness to people about the great heritage of India. The message has now come to their doorsteps. Many more such programs are required everywhere to bring our heritage back.



Prabhakar – Samvit Sagar Trust

This is amazing and great in all respects. This has to be taken to the global audience and fairs have to be conducted all over the world.



Aravind – Arya Samaj

It is so nice to see all organizations together in one place. Though I'm involved in service activities for quite some time, many things were new even to me. Such events should be organized frequently to spread awareness.



Sumathi – Nithyananda Dhyanapectam

This has been unfairly called just a book fair in some places. This is a very special event. I am very happy to know that I'm part of a much bigger Family.



Subhashini – Samskrita Bharati

The overwhelming response from the public shows that this has been their desire which was hidden for so long. This event should have happened earlier. This should be a regular event in our calendar.



More Voices...



Kalidas – Advocate

It is a great opportunity to know more about all the organizations. Our weakness has been our lack of publicity for all the service activities which has been addressed through this event. I came on the first day. What I saw compelled me to come again and again everyday. I have seen that the propaganda of “other” organizations is hundred times more than the volume of their work. But the work of our Hindu organizations is hundred times more than the propaganda.



Vaidehi - Student

Nowadays people are very shy even to accept that they are Hindu. Such programs help to overcome this shyness and say that they are Hindus with pride. This helps bring such topics as conversion to discussion and helps against the conversion of Hindus to other faiths.



Ganesh Pautz

It's a great opportunity to see a number of organizations. It is important to see the similarity in the goals of each organization – there is only a slight difference in the points of emphasis.

Swami Mitrananda talking to Ma.Nivedita Didi, Vice President Vivekananda Kendra and Shri Sudarshan, Saha NagarPramukh, Chennai



The Lion called Lajpat

"Every blow aimed at us today is a nail in the coffin of British imperialism"

The day was October 30, 1928. A large gathering had assembled at the Lahore train station. It was the "unwelcome" party. They were there to protest the Indian Statutory Commission, better known as "The Simon Commission", whose members would arrive shortly. The protest gathering grew in numbers by the time the members arrived. It appeared like an army of black flags. And they started shouting slogans: "Simon, go back!" There was no space even to move. The British Officer Scott gave a plain order to his police men: "Charge!". There was total mayhem.

The gathering was led by Punjab Kesari Lala Lajpat Rai along with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Being the leader, Lalaji was at the forefront and so bore the severe brunt of the police lathi. Though he was surrounded by Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan and others, he became a specific target of the British atrocity. He sustained severe injuries, especially to the head.

Even under great pain and suffering, that very evening, he addressed a huge public meeting. There in front of attending British authorities, he uttered "Every blow aimed at us today is a nail in the coffin of British imperialism".



"What right does the British parliament have to frame a constitution for India?"

The Indian Statutory Commission chaired by John Simon consisted of seven members of the British parliament. It was constituted by the Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin to explore the prospect of an Indian constitution. However, it was an outright outrageous setup, since the commission did not include even a single Indian member. Various organizations including the Indian National Congress had resolved to boycott the commission and challenge its validity.

Lala Lajpat Rai led the agitation in Lahore (which was then part of Punjab). He moved a resolution in the Punjab Legislative Assembly in February 1928 against the commission. He gave a stirring speech on that occasion: "The present constitution of the Commission and its terms of reference are unworthy of acceptance by this House; therefore, this House advises the Government that it should have nothing to do with the Commission."

"Every blow aimed at us today is a nail in the coffin of British imperialism"

And the Lion roared "What right does the British parliament have to frame a constitution for India?" Was not he right in telling us that it is **WE**, who have to decide our future?



The youth of India has waited long enough for a leader with a vision. At a time when hundreds of misguided youngsters are choked in search of meaning in practices that date back to bullock cart ages, heartening is a central minister's rousing call to fill the pubs, to get drunk and loose their senses. With this clarion call, it appears that, every modern Indian leader starting from Vivekananda, through Tilak till Gandhi seems to have failed miserably in leading the youth to build a forward thinking and developed India. While Gandhi tried to instill in the youth, a motivation to Do or Die through his "Bharat chodo andolan"; this new leadership calls for inculcating an attitude of Do till you die through its "Pub Bharo andolan".

To deny individual freedom is violence of one kind; to defy established customs is another kind. Which among these is greater violence is judged only by the popular culture of any society. Countless debates can be conducted to

conjecture if it were part of Indian culture to attack women. Numerous articles may be written arguing the case of degradation of the preserved Indian culture. Many of these interactions may even be hijacked by argumentative Indians to end up as Men vs. Women disputes. The grossly unseen queries remain unanswered; how free are we to draw our own extents and limits of freedom? What are the factors that limit our freedom? What are the urges that push our boundaries to freedom?

The line of separation between the western and the Indian cultures becomes bold and visible while trying to answer these questions. Both Indian and western approaches remain common till the conclusion that individuals are not fully free to draw their freedom as every act, word and thought of the individual directly or indirectly influences others to lesser or larger extent. While the canvas for individual freedom is drawn by the family, community and society in Indian life, the fencing in the western life is very tightly built by the state, religion or market

forces. Whatever noise we hear about degradation of Indian culture or the influence of western culture on Indian life, arises out of friction due to shift in the factor that influences individual behavior from family or society to other reasons namely, state, religion or global market forces.

These forces conceal themselves so smartly and keep the individual intoxicated in the mindset that his rights are the ultimate product for which they exist. The modern Indian youth who choose to define their life in their own terms fail to realize, in this inebriated condition, that the architects of their thought are not themselves but these strong, abstract market forces. They shunt to pressures from peers who are equally fickle minded and submit themselves to the notions of "development" and "modern" as painted by these forces.

The pressured mindset is certainly not due a single transfusion. Toxins are being slowly and steadily injected at every stage. Initially, any ideal that could conflict with the ends of excess sense gratification are demeaned. Then, alternatives are fed in all walks of life through all forms of media. The youth are drawn to a consumerist culture forged by the capital powers to create and sustain market.

Swami Vivekananda sensed this attack on Indian mind in its initial stages, when the youth started to fall into the colonial trap. His call to the youth is more relevant today than ever as the dimensions of the problem has only increased multifold.

"... too much of hypnotism has been and is upon our race. O ye modern Hindus, dehypnotise yourself... power will come, glory will come and everything that is excellent will come..."





Among us, there are many who are obsessed with the thought that this country is not an ideal place for humans to dwell, and the country's culture is the main reason for all the evils which we have to deal with now. Many bloggers, scribes and columnists have this notion, which they seldom care to verify whether it is true. With the Oscar euphoria drenching our country, the time is right to throw some light on the real slumdog who became a millionaire by robbing others. It will be a startling revelation to many if they come to

know that the much touted Empire where the Sun never sets, actually thrived by robbing one of its colonies. And that colony, is now being painted as the home for slumdogs.

Many in our country give credit to the British Administration for the advent of railway and postal services. But historians feel that it was mainly for smooth functioning of its military and not done to serve the public. It must be remembered that the East India Company



British found when they came.”¹

Renowned historian Will Durant gives a vivid account of the 'appropriation', which he terms as Rape of a Continent. He narrates with evidences that whatever 'development' India got through British, it was mainly to facilitate their military operations and commercial interests. And the so called Empire where the Sun never sets fought nearly one hundred and eleven wars with the Indian soldiers and India taking the financial burden of all those wars. Every fraudulent method known to human society was employed to usurp the wealth from our country. The price India had to pay for the 'development' was very high. We were politically very weak at that stage, which enabled the Britishers to sneak in to our land without any difficulty. Will Durant writes in his book, *“...the expropriation of state after state from the native rulers by war or bribery, or the simple decree of Lord Dalhousie that whenever a Hindu Prince died without leaving a heir, his territory should pass to the British; In Dalhousie’s administration alone eight states were absorbed by this peaceful way.... In the seventh decade of the Nineteenth century England added 4000 sq miles; in the eighth 15,000sq miles; in the ninth 90,000; in the tenth 133,000... Certainly it was a remarkable, if not magnanimous, achievement, to steal in forty years a quarter of a million square miles and make the victims pay every penny of the expense. When at last in 1857 the exhausted Hindus resisted, they were suppressed with 'medieval ferocity'; a favorite way of dealing with captured rebels was to blow them to bits from the mouth of cannon.”²*

entered this land for the wealth it possessed and those who invaded India were mostly pirates. Dr J.T.Sunderland observes that *“This wealth was created by the Hindus’ vast and varied industries. Nearly every kind of manufacture or product known to the civilized world-nearly every kind of creation of man’s brain and hand, existing anywhere, and prized either for its utility or beauty- had long, long been produced in India..... She had great commerce and trade by land and sea, which extended to all known civilized countries. Such was the India, which the*

At least one lakh lives were lost by adopting such methods during the first War of Independence, which our students are being taught as Sepoy mutiny. Even conservative estimates say that the illegal expropriation took

away nearly \$ 4,000,000,000,000 (4 trillion dollars)³ from our country. The burden of running such a huge empire fell squarely on India's shoulders. Prof. Maddison says that, "...British salaries were high: the Viceroy received £25,000 a year, and governors £10,000... From 1757 to 1919, India also had to meet administrative expenses in London, first of the East India Company, and then of the India Office, as well as other minor but irritatingly extraneous charges. The cost of British staff was raised by long home leave in the UK, early retirement and lavish amenities in the form of subsidized housing, utilities, rest houses, etc."⁴

Prof Maddison writes that as late as 1936, the bulk of government expenditure was focused more on ensuring the stability of the empire than anything else: "Even in 1936, more than half of government spending was for the military, justice, police and jails, and less than 3 per cent for agriculture"⁵. The following excerpt from



robbers became millionaires...

Prof Maddison's essay squarely debunks the notion that the British did a lot for education and were conscious of the wealth of ancient knowledge – some of which was still extant at the time. The contempt that Macaulay felt towards the knowledge and wisdom of ancient Hindus is evident from this quote:

"We are a Board for wasting public money, for printing books which are of less value than the paper on which they are printed was while it was blank; for giving artificial encouragement to absurd history, absurd metaphysics, absurd physics, absurd theology

*...I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic... But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value...Who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia ...all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England."*⁶

Unsurprisingly, "The education system which developed was a very pale reflection of that in the UK. Three universities were set up in 1857 in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, but they were merely examining bodies and did no teaching. Drop-out ratios were always very high. They did little to promote analytical capacity or independent thinking and produced a group of graduates with a half-baked knowledge of English, but sufficiently Westernized to be alienated from their own culture."⁷ Prof. Maddison says that, "...the great mass of the population had no access to education and, at independence in 1947, 88 per cent

were illiterate... at independence only a fifth of children were receiving any primary schooling. Education was used as a tool ...to turn a tiny elite into imitations of Englishmen and a somewhat bigger group into government clerks."⁸

"Few would doubt that Indo-British trade may have been unfair - but it may be noteworthy to see how unfair. In the early 1800s imports of Indian cotton and silk goods faced duties of 70-80%. British imports faced duties of 2-4%!

As a result, British imports of cotton

manufactures into India increased by a factor of 50, and Indian exports dropped to one-fourth! A similar trend was noted in silk goods, woollens, iron, pottery, glassware and paper ...millions of ruined artisans and craftsmen, spinners, weavers, potters, smelters and smiths were rendered jobless and had to become landless agricultural workers.”⁹

Like all other commentators, Maddison too has mentioned the debilitating effect of the drain of funds from India. “Another important effect of foreign rule on the long-run growth potential of the economy was the fact that a large part of its potential savings were siphoned abroad.

This ‘drain’ of funds from India to the UK has been a point of major controversy between Indian nationalist historians and defenders of the British raj. However, the only real grounds for controversy are statistical. There can be no denial that there was a substantial outflow which lasted for 190 years. If these funds had been invested in India they could have made a significant contribution to raising income levels.”¹⁰

In their preface to the research, Profs. Clingingsmith and Williamson have this to say: “India was a major player in the world export market for textiles in the early 18th century, but by the middle of the 19th century it had lost all of its export market and much of its domestic market...While India produced about 25 percent of world industrial output in 1750, this figure had fallen to only 2 percent by 1900.”

Atrocious is a mild word to describe the manner in which they governed us. The people who claimed it was their duty to civilize us were

concerned about their homeland and did all that was possible, even if it had to starve the natives. In the first half of the 19th century, there were seven famines leading to a million and a half deaths. In the second half, there were 24 famines (18 between 1876 and 1900) causing over 20 million deaths (as per official records). W.Digby noted that “*stated roughly, famines and scarcities have been four times as numerous, during the last thirty years of the 19th century as they were one hundred years ago, and four times as widespread.*”¹¹ While another historian Mike



...robbed are slandered as slumdogs

Davis points out that, “*there were 31 serious famines in 120 years of British rule compared to 17 in the 2000 years before British rule.*”¹²

These famines were engineered by the British rule, as the export of food grains had increased by a factor of four just prior to that period. And export of other agricultural raw materials had also increased in similar proportions. Land that once produced grain for local consumption was now taken over by former slave-owners from North America, who were permitted to set up plantations for the cultivation of lucrative cash

crops exclusively, for export. Particularly galling was the continued export of food grains from India to Britain even during famine years by the British colonial rulers.

Annual British Government reports repeatedly published data that showed 70-80% of Indians were living on the margin of subsistence, that two-thirds were undernourished, and in Bengal, nearly four-fifths were undernourished.

Contrast this data with the following accounts of Indian life prior to colonization:-

Tavernier writing in the 17th century "...even in the smallest villages rice, flour, butter, milk, beans and other vegetables, sugar and sweetmeats can be procured in abundance..."¹³ Manouchi - the Venetian, who became chief physician to Aurangzeb (also in the 17th century) wrote: "Bengal is of all the kingdoms of the Moghul, best known in France... We may venture to say it is not inferior in anything to Egypt - and that it even exceeds that kingdom in its products of silks, cottons, sugar, and indigo. All things are in great plenty here, fruits, pulse, grain, muslins, cloths of gold and silk..."

The French traveller, Bernier also described 17th century Bengal in a similiar vein: "The knowledge I have acquired of Bengal in two visits inclines me to believe that it is richer than Egypt. It exports in abundance cottons and silks, rice, sugar and butter. It produces amply for it's own consumption of wheat, vegetables, grains, fowls, ducks and geese. It has immense herds of pigs and flocks of sheep and goats. Fish of every kind, it has in profusion. From Rajmahal to the sea is an endless number of canals, cut in bygone ages from the Ganges by immense labour for navigation and irrigation."

The poverty of British India stood in stark

contrast to these eye witness reports and has to be ascribed to the pitiful wages that working people in India received in that period. A 1927-28 report noted that, "all but the most highly skilled workmen in India receive wages which are barely sufficient to feed and clothe them. Everywhere will be seen overcrowding, dirt and squalid misery..."

Most disturbing than all, is the mental slavery to which our people are subjugated, as a result of the education having a colonial legacy. The recent rousing reception given to the film Slumdog Millionaire makes even an optimist to hang his head in shame. If we cherish and respect our freedom, the ways and means to protect it should also be followed. The psyche of our nation should never be allowed to weaken.

1. Dr J.T.Sunderland, *India in Bondage*,
2. Will Durant, *The Case For India*
3. *Ibid*
4. Prof.Maddisson, *The Economic and Social Impact of Colonial Rule in India*
5. *Ibid*
6. *Ibid*
7. *Ibid*
8. *Ibid*
9. *Ibid*
10. *Ibid*
11. W. Digby, *Prosperous British India*
12. Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*
13. Tavernier, *Travels in India*.

Illustrations :

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Cover Page | : Robert Clive. |
| Page 18 | : Sepoys tied to the mouth of the canon and blown to pieces during first war of Independence. |
| Page 22 | : Victims of the Bengal famine created by British. |



The Narmada Parikrama

(Clockwise Circumambulation of River Narmada)

K.K.VENKATRAMAN

11

Unshakeable Faith

Mother Narmada - **M o t h e r**
Anusuya

The Parikrama experiences were initially serialized in "Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam", the Tamil monthly published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai. After reading the Tamil version of the matter "Keep the promise and save the day" (appeared in September 2008) issue of the Yuva Bharati), 2 readers got in touch with me and requested me to arrange for the soil from Anusuya Mata Temple for curing their skin disease. I told them that I did not know about the efficacy of the soil in curing skin diseases. I was astonished when they insisted that it was a matter of faith.

Now, 20 years have elapsed since I completed the Parikrama and I did not have any acquaintance in Anusuya Mata Temple, as I spent only a very short time there collecting the soil and did not meet anyone. I was really sad as I felt that it would not be possible for me to fulfill their genuine need. However, the desire to help them was deep in my heart. This thought was occupying my mind when I went to sleep that night. Next morning, when I woke up, I suddenly remembered that Shri K.K.Sundaram, younger brother of Shri K.K.Ramasubban, a close friend of mine in Chennai was running his business at Ankleshwar on the South Bank of Narmada. Anusuya Mata Temple is on the North Bank and about 100 kms. from Ankleshwar by a motorable road. I contacted my friend and enquired whether it would be possible for his brother to get a small packet of the soil (say about 1 kg.) and send the same

through parcel service. My friend was surprised at the unshakeable faith of the people and assured me that he would arrange for the soil.

He informed his brother at Ankleshwar who had a sack-ful (about 50 kg.) of the soil collected by sending a vehicle and dispatched the same to Chennai through Lorry transport. My friend arranged to deliver it to me at my home. The people who were in need of the Holy soil were overwhelmed with joy to receive the same. Both my friend and his brother were very happy that they got an opportunity to render service to the devotees of God.

Subsequently, a lady who by chance happened to read the Tamil version got in touch with me to know how she could get the Holy soil. She wanted it for a different purpose. She said that the husband of her friend was not keeping good health and that she would advise her friend to keep the Holy soil in her Pooja Room and worship the same. She had a firm belief that Anusuya Devi being a faithful wife totally devoted to her husband Atri Maharishi, the Holy soil would ensure the longevity of the husband of her friend.

Enthusiasm of Readers

Some readers of the Tamil version evinced keen interest and enthusiastically perused my Parikrama Diary containing details of the villages I passed through, distance covered each day, the persons who had extended hospitality, the Route Map; the Letters received by me from the schools during the Parikrama and from the banks of Narmada after the Parikrama and the

विशेष क्षेत्र विकास प्राधिकरण, अमरकंटक
(SPECIAL AREA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, AMARKANTAK)

अमरकंटक
जिला, जाबलपुर (म.प्र.)
पिन कोड - 481007
विशेष क्षेत्र विकास प्राधिकरण
अमरकंटक, म.प्र.

प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि...
C/O [Name] [Address] [Pin Code]

की नकल उपरोक्त स्थान अमरकंटक के पिनकोड- 481-10-87 से उत्पन्न कर रहे हैं।
कृपया यह प्रमाण पत्र के आधार पर किया जा रहा है।

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Certificate of Identity carried by me while on the Parikrama on which organizations / Trusts, which had provided raw food items and affixed their seals.

Looking Back

Ours, perhaps, is the only country, where pilgrims undertake a divine mission depending solely on "Bhiksha". They have complete faith that the basic needs would always be met, if one totally surrenders to the Divine. The people revere such pilgrims and serve them with the firm belief that "God helps those who serve His devotees". The hospitality extended to the pilgrims is to be personally experienced to be believed.

I deem it a great blessing to have undergone this unique and memorable experience. I would consider the sharing of my Parikrama experiences with the readers to be rewarding, if they gain an insight into our rich traditions and are motivated to undertake such spiritual journeys.

Narmada, the Destroyer of sins Trekking Along with the Pilgrim

(1)

The experiences that have been put down covering a period of 131 days around the banks of the holy river Narmada tell not merely of the physical endurance, that is a part of such journeys but of an all pervading invisible presence where the hand of divinity shines supreme.

The experiences prove beyond doubt how Nature works and takes care of one who has thrown himself on her lap. Did not Wordsworth write, "Nature never did betray, the heart that truly loved Her"?

It emphasizes the innate goodness of the people who live on the banks of the river, in simplicity, of faith and charity beyond words.

To have been in their midst is to learn the gift of sharing, a lesson in the art of living with joy and cheer in the heart, unmindful of the hardships of their daily toil. Their spontaneous warmth to pilgrims on the move is an enduring tribute to the soil of our country.

There is a time to live, a time to reflect a time to do and the enrichment of our lives thereafter asserts clearly what William Shakespeare wrote, "There's a divinity that shapes our lives, Rough hew them, how you will."

The recorders, especially the young beginning the journey of life, it is hoped will find in the experiences recorded, on inspiration and a fruitful search for peace and tranquility.

--R.Ganesh

Indian Oil Corporation (Retd.), Chennai

(2)

An account of a pilgrimage has, for generations, been a thrilling experience for the ordinary Indian, whose life was, till recently, moulded in a large measure by stories from Puranas, mythological tales and folk wisdom revolving around our unique cultural heritage. This was no different experience two decades back, for us living in the Himalayan lap of Arunachal Pradesh, when our dear brother-worker, Venkatramanji (Captainji to hundreds of Arunachali school children and their parents) undertook the not so-widely known pilgrimage along Holy Narmada and started sending us detailed accounts of his barefoot-trekking and enjoying the hospitality extended by the local people with reverence, love and affection, thousands of kilometers away in the western India. And as we went on reading these closely packed handwritten narratives, the children and adults who gathered around to listen looked, as if transported to a different world all together. The unique experiences that he narrated where man respects man and rises above all differences to manifest universal brotherhood, touched the simple hearts of the Arunachali children; and these letters were eagerly looked forward to by

Fountain of Life

S.Aravindh

He was a senior government official whom they were taking to a self help group meeting organized in a village. The car was going around a small hillock that was particularly covered with greenery in an area where such hillocks were fast moving out of the landscape thanks to quarrying. The accompanying person explained to the official how the people venerate the hillock as part of the legendary Sanjivini mountain that Hanuman was carrying which accidentally fell down here. Later that person told me how the government official visibly smirked and remarked that fools would believe any stupid thing told to them. If you are traveling to Kanyakumari by National Highway 47, you will definitely see it on your left hand side.

This small hillock harbors in it 113 plant species whose parts have therapeutic value and are used in local indigenous medical system. Of these 113 medicinal plants 8 plant species are used quite extensively in the rural and tribal household medicines. And even the indigenous codified systems of medicines in India have not reported or recorded these uses. In other words, what we have here is an open treasure chest of valuable medicines well preserved in the heart

of a fast modernizing district – all thanks to the “stupid story”.

Such “stupid stories” dot the entire landscape of this ancient nation. They have preserved countless animals and plants. The sacred geography which emerged out of national mythology has cut down the national spending on medicine. But what is happening today to such stories? Our children, who know the names hundreds of brand items advertised in the television, seldom know the names of five local plants.

India is one nation where the mythology has never had any tension with science as we have never given a literal meaning to the mythology. Instead, we have evolved the mythology into both ecological and psycho-spiritual narrative. Thus a mythology confers sacredness to a natural formation or a plant or an animal. Once made sacred the entity becomes something to be conserved through veneration. It enriches the humans by establishing ecological relations with the day to day life. Cow, Neem, Tulsi and Turmeric are a few examples how mythology has shaped the relationship of Indian humanity with the surrounding biosphere in a way

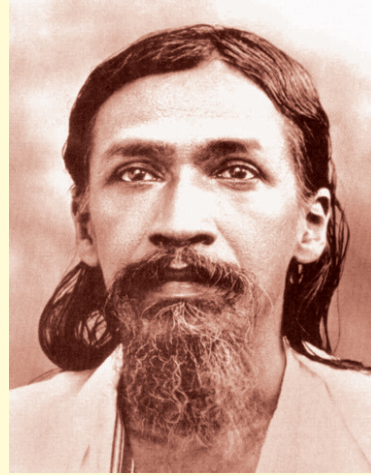
beneficial to humanity. Yet it is not mastery and control over the environment; rather feeling humanity as but one of the strands in the web of life.

I have heard the story of hillock falling from Hanuman's hand from my grand mother and she should have heard it from her mother or grand mother and though I know pretty well the geological evolution of hillocks and mountains I will definitely pass on this mythological story to my posterity. We humans are a story telling species, and there are definitely strong evolutionary reasons why we are so. As in the case of the hillock in question, We call it Marunduvalmalai or the hillock where medicines live, all the 113 medicinal plants in one place live by the power of the myth – the power of the sacred.

[For details on the medicinal bio-diversity of the hillock see: Dr.B.Parthipan, Biodiversity of medicinal plants of the Marunduvalmalai Hills, Kanyakumari District (p.305) in *Biodiversity in Indian Scenarios* (Ed. N. Ramakrishnan) Daya books 2006]



Thus Spake...



Sri Aurobindo writes to his wife Mrinalini...

While others look upon their country as ancient piece of matter - a few meadows and fields, forests and hills and rivers - I look upon my country as the Mother. I adore Her, I worship Her as the Mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother's breast and start sucking her blood?..I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength - I am not going to fight with sword or gun - but the strength of knowledge..August 30, 1905)

LET US SALVAGE THE PILLARS OF TOMORROW

(Original in Tamil by S.A.P. Varadan, aged 101 years.
Renowned astrologer and philanthropist).

Translated by K.P. Shivkumar

Students of the same college or university indulging in shooting spree is a frequent incidence in America. The main reasons for such incidence are easy availability of guns in the U.S., and the atmosphere in which children grow there. One fears whether such a gun culture has made inroads into India too. In the recent past, at Gurgaon, near Delhi, a student was shot dead. Today's runaway growth of technology is responsible for such misuses, as much as it is conducive to positive or constructive work.

Besides movies and television, things like the cell phone and computer pull young students in the wrong direction. A certain prisoner escapes from jail. Noticing him, the policemen chase him to track him down. But the prisoner, using a variety of guns, shoots down the policemen. This is one kind of computer game. Who is the prisoner here? The very same person who is playing this computer game. What will such computer games teach young minds other than violence? Such violence-related themes dominate the computer games.

The hero in a popular TV serial performs acts of bravado. Imitating the hero's actions, there are reports of instances in which children have got injured or even lost their lives. For such occurrences, it is not fair to blame only one

particular set of people. Ignorance of the young students is the main cause. They do not know what is real. The violence-filled scenes in today's movies are unimaginably unrealistic. They are surrealistic thrillers. After tainting the whole movie with blood, they flash the moral, "he that raises the sword shall perish by the sword", and there ends their moral responsibility.

The movie industry has a great social responsibility. As it has the power to easily influence the masses, it should not restrict its role to mere entertainment. The society should be corrected, but not spoiled. Besides, the western lifestyle is also on the increase in India. Today's fast food culture eats away people's equilibrium also, that is, the sense of balance. A fast world indeed!

To meet the economic needs, in many families, both husband and wife go for job. For want of time they are unable to spend time with their children. As a result, there are more chances of the solitary children picking up unwanted habits. Many parents think that their responsibility ends with sending their children to school. It is the duty of the parents to know about the association of their children, and the conduct and habits of those associates. If any blemish is found in the association, it should be

looked into and the children's ways should be mended. We hear of petty thefts or small offences. Children learn these habits without knowing that they are offences. Parents should be watchful about such behaviours. Parents should spend more time with children, speak to them loving words and instil in them the feeling that they are being looked after with proper care and attention. This is the common advice of psychologists. In the rush for accumulating wealth, the much greater wealth, namely, children, should not be neglected or sacrificed.

The computer which brings home the whole world has very many benefits. But there is also the danger of young students going astray by falling prey to the undesirable things it supplies. When the computer has become an indispensable gadget in every home, it is important to see that the vulgar or the obscenities in it are strictly kept away.

On the one hand there is a view that students need not have cell phones. But on the other hand, mobile phones with camera lure young minds. Misuse of such cell phones with cameras tends to become widespread. This is to be nipped in the bud.

Student life is a blissful stage of life. But at the same time it calls for greater care and caution. Parents and teachers should impress this fact on the minds of the young. Today's students are the pillars of tomorrow. Our greatest responsibility is to mould them into ideal students.

Courtesy:

THUGLAK, 28-1-2009



Web trotter

India's multitude of temple goers and professional priests can no longer understand the ethos that had decreed motherland to be more exalted than the heavens. Therefore, the ritualistic, cult based, habit reinforced and temple oriented Hindu today is oblivious of the environment he lives in. The insularity of ritualistic behavior has degraded a deep worship tradition to "customary practice" severing philosophic continuity with our children - while outsiders have hardly been subtle in their contempt. For almost a thousand years jeering Islamic armies destroyed temples telling the Hindus that their Gods were mere idols who could not protect themselves, while the Hindu kept rebuilding his temples.

-Subroto Gangopadhyay in his blog:
<http://www.blogs.ivarta.com/Reclaiming-India-Indian-History-Heritage/blog-249.htm>

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA SAMACHAR

Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture, Guwahati, celebrates the Foundation Day

Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture, Guwahati, celebrated its Foundation Day on 31 January at its majestic premises situated on the

Assam State Council conferred the prestigious VKIC Sanman on Shri Mati Lal Kalai, a well known sculptor and reputed social activist belonging to the Kalai Sub-community of the Halams of Tripura.



banks of the mighty River Brahmaputra.

Shri Dipok Kumar Barthakur, Chairman, VKIC, welcomed the gathering. The Chief Guest, Dr. Bhupati Kumar Das, Managing Director, Numaligarh Refineries Ltd. and Chairman Confederation of Indian Industries,

In his address Shri Mati Lal Kalai, who is also working for the preservation of indigenous culture and languages, urged the VKIC to start its activities in Tripura.

Mananeeya Shri D. Bhanudasji, General Secretary, Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari, released the second issue of VKIC's research-



Cultural Programme by Rabha Community from East Garo Hills, Meghalaya

based Journal "Quest" containing contributions by eminent scholars and intellectuals.

He also released the much-awaited report on the Sattra Institutions of Assam. The report meaningfully titled '*Sattra Institutions of Assam - a Report Towards Understanding Our Heritage*', uncovers the stupendous work undertaken by VKIC through documentation and field survey from December 2007, to present a clearer picture of this great institution started by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva in the 16th century.

The function was rounded off with a meaningful cultural programme of dance, drama and music, presented by the well known Rabha community from East Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

VKSPV Abhibhavak Shibir Report

Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Bokuloni, added a feather to its crown by holding 4th Abhibhavak Shibir, 2009 conducted by VKSPV,

Tezpur. The school premise with its air of grandeur, just robbed the heart of everyone participating. 'Family and National Security' was the theme of the shibir. 47 Abhibhavaks along with their families and 14 Principals participated. A spectacular job was done by the student volunteers who worked day and night silently, and made this ceremony a grand success.

Abhibhavak Shibir is conducted every year by VKSPV with an idea to tighten the bond between the parents and the Vidyalaya. The unique feature of this Shibir was



that instead of a single parent, the whole family's presence was encouraged. the enthusiastic response of this idea gave all of us an opportunity to witness a mixed crowd of mothers, fathers, children and grandparents. The school magazine, souvenir and wall magazine of VKV (NEEPCO) Bokuloni, was also released. The outcome far exceeded the expectations, given the tiny number of staff and students.