TRAVELING THE LESS-TRODDEN PATH

We welcome you to the second issue of our monthly spiritual E-Magazine, Divine Ambrosia. Thank you for all the valuable appreciation, encouragement and insights that you shared with us about the first issue and the E-zine in general. We noted down your suggestions of ways to improve and will try to incorporate them. We are glad that you could take some time out of your busy schedule to peruse this monthly newsletter.

We had a wonderful satsang-filled month here in Milwaukee. We celebrated Lord Rama's Appearance with much gusto. We also participated in the auspicious Sri Rama Homam performed at the new Universal Temple grounds of Sri Ramakrishna Mission and Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago on April 26th. In the last week of April, there was a rich and wonderful three-day satsang with Swami Pratyagbodhananda Saraswati from Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, organized by Spiritual Enrichment Program (SEP) in Milwaukee. Summary of Swamiji's discourse can be found in Satsang section.

In this issue, we will continue our pilgrimage to Badrinath along with Swami Tapovan ji Maharaj, while he shares with us his pearls of wisdom. Two occasions to celebrate in the month of May are Appearance of Adi Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya, and Appearance of Lord Buddha. You can find a brief exposé of their lives in "Festive Moments". The fundamental and subtle differences between the life and approach of a Scientist and a Yogi are wonderfully presented to us by Swami Sivananda in this issue’s “Perspective”, which clearly tells us that we need to strive to be like a Yogi. This month our divine celebrity is Swamini Siddheshvari Deviji of Radha Madhav Society, who has graced Milwaukee several times with her presence, discourses, satsangs and retreats. Swadhyaya briefly presents "Upadesa Saaram" of Ramana Maharshi which unfolds the secrets of Karma, Jnana and Bhakti in attaining Self-Realization. You can find many other features, in addition, which are insightful, entertaining and fun.

Our current issue is titled "Traveling the Less-Trodden Path". There are only two paths infront of us – path of conditioning, limitedness, ignorance and darkness, and a path of Immortality, Wisdom, Divinity, Light and True Happiness. It is not always easy to choose which one we want to take, because often they are disguised in opposites. Thus, the materialistic or the external worldly path seems to be enjoyable, full of promises of richness, success and glory, but it ultimately leads to bondage and suffering. The spiritual or internal path sometimes wears the mask of fear, confusion, physical and mental pain, but leads us all the way to experience the Divine within us and bestows Peace and Freedom. We need to choose our path carefully at each point of our lives. We may stray away, as the world is a potent tantalizing charmer, but we need to come back, because unless we do so, we cannot discover the beauty and joy of looking within and beholding the Supreme Indweller who resides in the heart of everyone and everything. A vast majority of the humanity travels on the commonly frequented road to material and worldly goals. But out of our good fortune, there are always saints, sages, incarnations who have walked on the other less-trodden, stony and thorny path, leaving behind their footprints, so we too can follow them to God-Realization on this very rewarding journey.

We need to “Embark, Plod, Persevere, Conquer, Realize” as many Great Masters have said. The journey on the less-trodden path is difficult like walking on the edge of a razor-sharp sword, but the fruits are ever-lasting. Keeping in mind the challenges it presents, let us be cautious not to be like The Foolish Hare who lost the race by irregular activity, but be like the Wise Tortoise in being steadfast in our travel, conquering the distance bit-by-bit, always on the alert while donning the protective coat of dispassion and discrimination. Enjoy your spiritual journey, and while you are at it, have a cup of our soothing and invigorating Divine Ambrosia!

Om Peace,
At His Lotus Feet
The Editor
Self-realization or liberation from the rounds of births and deaths is the summum bonum of life. It marks the perfection of an individual in realizing the divinity within. It is the most worthy aspiration one can have. No doubt this is a very difficult goal to achieve. Fortunately, our ancestors have left us a rich legacy of directions and instructions to guide us along the path. Let us examine one such relevant message from our scriptures that describes the essential pre-requisites for a spiritual seeker.

A spiritual seeker must have the following four essential qualities: (1) Viveka or discrimination, (2) Vairagya or dispassion, (3) Shad-sampat or the six-fold virtues and (4) Mumukshutva or strong yearning for liberation. These four are collectively known as “Sadhana Chatushtaya”. A person with all these qualifications would be a ripe seeker and can attain realization quickly. It is the duty of everyone of us to strive to attain these qualifications.

Viveka is discrimination between the real and the unreal, between the permanent and the impermanent, between the Self and the non-Self. In the words of Swami Sivananda, “There is an eternal, changeless principle amidst the ever-changing phenomena of this vast universe and the fleeting movements and oscillations of the mind. The aspirant should separate himself from the six waves of the ocean of Samsara - birth and death, hunger and thirst, and exhilaration and grief. Birth and death belong to the physical body; hunger and thirst belong to Prana; exhilaration and grief are the attributes of the mind. The Soul is unattached. The six waves cannot touch Brahman, which is as subtly as the all-pervading ether. Viveka dawns in a man through the grace of God. The grace can come only after one has done unceasing selfless service in countless births with the feeling that he is an instrument of the Lord and that the work is an offering to the Lord. The door to the higher mind is flung open when there is an awakening of discrimination. Association with saints and study of Vedantic literature will infuse discrimination in man. Viveka should be developed to the maximum degree. One should be well established in it.”

Vairagya is dispassion for the pleasures of this world and of heaven. The Vairagya that is born of Viveka is enduring and lasting. The view that everything in the world is unreal causes indifference to the enjoyments of this world and the heaven-world also. Lord Krishna says in the Gita that one has to return from heaven to this plane of existence when the fruits of good works are all exhausted. Hence they are not worth striving for. Vairagya does not mean abandoning one’s social duties and responsibilities of life. It does not mean abandoning the world, for life in a solitary cave of the Himalayas. Vairagya is mental detachment from all worldly objects. One may remain in the world and discharge all duties with detachment. Remembering a few maxims that induce Vairagya is a good aid. Constant reading of works like Vairagya Satakam by Bhartruhari helps one to develop Vairagya.

Shad-sampat includes six divine virtues. All these six qualities are taken as one because they are calculated to bring about mental control and discipline, without which concentration and meditation are impossible. The virtues are: (1) Sama, which is serenity or tranquility of mind. It is brought about through the eradication of desires. (2) Dama is rational control of the senses. (3) Uparati is satiety; it is resolutely turning the mind away from desire for sensual enjoyment. This state of mind comes naturally when one has practiced Viveka, Vairagya, Sama and Dama. (4) Titiksha is the power of endurance. An aspirant should patiently bear the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc. (5) Sraddha is intense faith in the word of the Guru, in Vedantic scriptures and, above all, in one’s own self. It is not blind faith but is based on accurate reasoning, evidence and experience. As such, it is lasting, perfect and unshakable. Such a faith is capable of achieving anything. Lord Krishna says in the Gita, “Shraddhavan labhate Jnanam, Tatparah Samyatendriyaha” – the person is endowed with Shraddha and has mastered his senses, obtains Knowledge. (6) Samadhana is fixing the mind on Brahman or the Self, without allowing it to run towards objects. The mind is free from anxiety amid pains and troubles. There is stability, mental poise and indifference amid pleasures. The aspirant has neither likes nor dislikes. He has great inner strength and enjoys unruffled peace of mind, due to the practice of Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha and Sraddha.

Mumukshutva is intense desire for liberation or deliverance from the wheel of births and deaths with its concomitant evils of old age, disease, delusion and sorrow. If one is equipped with the previous three qualifications (Viveka, Vairagya and Shad-Sampat), then the intense desire for liberation will come without any difficulty. The mind moves towards the Source on its own accord when it has lost its charm for external objects. When purification of mind and mental discipline are achieved, the longing for liberation dawns by itself.

It is said that all people knowingly or unknowingly are progressing towards the ultimate goal of life. Why not accelerate the journey by finding out about the right pre-requisites and start to work on them?

The Three H’s focuses on the Yoga of Synthesis as emphasized by Swami Sivananda that includes developing the Head through the means of Knowledge (Jnana), working with Hand selflessly using principles of Action (Karma) and cultivating love in our Heart to the Divine within and surrounding us by Devotion (Bhakti).
The skill lies in doing the actions selflessly, accepting the results of the actions and neither getting elated nor upset. This will give us strength and removes much fear.

One of the very important skills that a spiritual aspirant could strive to develop is the skill of doing actions rightly. Lord Krishna says in the Gita that nature of action is inscrutable – “Gahano karmano gatih”. Actions that are done by an unskilled person contribute to deepening the impressions or samskaras, which are the seeds of future births. In a skilled person the same actions help in spiritual evolution. There are several hints in the Gita itself that clarify how one must act in order to evolve spiritually.

When Arjuna sees the universal form of the Lord and sees the warriors on both sides merging into Him who is Time personified, he is astonished. Lord Krishna explains to him, “Mayaiavete nihitaa purvameva nimittamatrnam bhava savyasachin”, meaning, “these warriors Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and others have already been slain by me; you merely be an outward cause, a nimitta”. How could the Lord have killed them but Arjuna again had to kill them outwardly?

If we dive into the next level of the matter, we know that results of actions are always dispensed in accordance with the eternal laws of universe including the Law of Karma. The person who performs the actions has no control on their outcome, as we see in everyday experience. Technically, the Gita says there are five factors that influence the outcome of an action – Adhistanam (the place), Karta (the doer), Karanam (means), Chestas (actions) and Daivam (destiny). It is further reinforced in the famous instruction Lord Krishna gives us, “Karmanye Vaadhikaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana” meaning, “your control is only on the actions you perform; you have no control over their outcome”.

The problem comes when we do not accept this fact and falsely build expectations contrary to this. There is nothing wrong in doing actions; in fact actions cannot be avoided. Even for mere sustenance man must perform actions. Even a sanyasi performs actions. The skill lies in doing the actions selflessly, accepting the results of the actions and neither getting elated nor upset by them realizing that the result was not because of your doing alone. This is a wonderful fact laid bare before us. Truly, practicing even a little of this will give us lot of strength and removes much fear – “Swallamapasyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayaat”.

A commonly asked question is the role of destiny versus free will in determining the outcome of actions. Man is given the free will to perform actions of his choice. This is one of the factors that will dictate the result of the current action and it also defines the future destiny of the individual. Man is the maker of his destiny. Free will that we exercised in the past is bearing fruit now in the form of destiny that influences the outcome of our current actions.

Lord Krishna also cautions us to not resort to akarma or inaction. In today’s fast paced life, we usually find ourselves always working hard and in need of the wisdom to accept the outcomes. But still this is something to remember to avoid falling into Tamas (ignorance) thinking that since we do not control the outcomes, why perform actions at all. Actions are powerful means to evolve spiritually. The Lord again says in the Gita, “Swe swe karmanya bhiritah sam-siddhim labhate manah.....swakarmano tamabharyaaka siddhim vindati maanavah” meaning, “People progress along the path doing actions according to one’s nature, but the actions are to be done as a worship unto God”.

We have seen that we merely appear as outward causes but the true performer of actions is none other than Lord Himself. This is clearly seen by Jnanis who see that “Gunaa Guneshu varanta iti matvaa na saijate” meaning, “the Gunas (the triad of Sattva, Tamas and Rajas) as objects interact with the Gunas as senses and are not affected thereby”. Or, “Indriyaani Indriyaartheshu varanta iti dhaarayan”, meaning “Firmly believing that Indriyas (senses) merely interact with the objects of the Indriyas (sense objects), they can maintain equanimity”. Such Jnanis are unattached with the samsara, like a drop of water on the lotus leaf. They fully surrender to God who is the ultimate doer.

To incorporate the above wisdom in our day-to-day life, there are a few suggestions given by our saints and sages. (1) Perform all actions feeling like a Nimitta or a mere outward instrument; this is called Nimitta Bhav. There is no pride or feeling of doership (2) Treat everyone you come in contact with as personifications of God Himself. This is Narayana Bhav (3) Offer the fruits of all actions unto God; this is Narayana- Arpanamastu Bhav (4) Perform right actions with a spirit of Nishkamya or selflessness.

Work done with the above feeling becomes Nishkamya Karma Yoga. “Yogah karmasu kauhalam” says the Gita which means, “Yoga is skill in action”. Performing actions in this way will lead to purity of the mind, thereby paving way for knowledge. If we change our attitude towards performing actions, then even a monotonous and dull work like washing dishes or mowing a lawn will become free from the doership and fit to become a selfless service to the Lord.
A worldly mother often turns her small child’s attention away from her by giving him toys. She actually goes to the market and purchases toys with the intention that the child may get caught up in them and forget her for a while. The question is: Why does the mother give toys to her child? Does she not love her child? No, no, she does. But she has many household chores to perform. She has to take care of her in-laws, her husband and her older children, all competing for her attention. I wonder how it is that these mothers don’t go crazy.

The mother tries to solve some of the daily problems she faces. She brings toys to the child so that while he plays with toys, she can do household and her personal work. The toys purchased by the mother are of five types. There cannot be a sixth type of toy. Why only five, you may ask. Because each individual has five sense-organs through which he takes in the objects of the senses. These five senses of perception are eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. We also have five senses of action, such as hands and feet. But these do not possess any knowledge. If you give your foot a toy, the foot will not become entangled in the toy or attached to the toy. On the other hand, the eyes see a rattle, and they like it. The ears hear the sound of the rattle and the mind becomes attracted.

Now, this great big world we are living in, is a toy that belongs to God, and this toy is also of five types. There exist in the world the subjects of the five senses of perception. You look at the world. Someone asks you, “Tell me! Have you seen that?” “No.” “Oh! Then what have you seen?” “Have you been to New York?” “No.” “Oh, you haven’t seen anything then.” The desire to see is so strong that you can keep on seeing, and yet the desire to see is never satisfied. This creation is so vast that no one has been able to even understand it; what to speak of seeing it in its entirety! You have not even seen this planet earth, which is comprised of merely 200 countries. And then, this creation is vast. The planet we are living in is very small. The sun that we see in the sky is much bigger than the earth. The planetary system is much bigger than the sun. There are 3 billion suns in one planetary system, and these suns are thousands of times bigger than the sun we know of. There are billions of cosmic eggs created by God. There are some planets that are so far away that their light, traveling at the speed of 186,000 miles per second, takes millions of years to reach the earth. We live up to a maximum of 100 years. How far can you go, and how much will you see? The same can be said of objects you can hear, smell and taste. There are five senses, and each has unlimited subjects.

A poor man may buy only 3-4 toys for his child, whereas a rich man may purchase 100, 200, or even 500 toys for his child. God is the wealthiest and therefore his toy is so big that the person who plays with this toy gets so caught up with it that he is not able to get out of it. Alright! But my Guru, Sri Kripalu has a question for God. “Maharaj! A worldly mother brings toys for her child because she has much work to do. What household chores do you have to do that you have given us all these toys? You are sitting within everyone’s heart individually. Further, you are the divine inspirer; You are all-pervading, and You are ever blissful. Then why did you give us all these toys? First You give us toys and then say to us, “You are too caught up with toys. Therefore, you will have to revolve in 8.4 million life-forms after death.” Don’t you know that Your toys are so powerful that with Your exception there is no one in existence who will not become entangled in them?” These toys are collectively known as Maya Shakti of God. Maya is extremely powerful. Maya is so powerful that no one except God can conquer it. In Gita, Chapter 7, Verse 14 says:

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\text{maameva ye prapadyante maayametaam taranti te}
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God says in this verse from the Gita, “Only the individual who surrenders to Me and asks for My protection, can gain freedom from Maya.” Now, God is going to answer our question. God is not here; so I shall answer on His behalf. God says, “I did not ask Maya to overwhelm you; I did not make You forget Me. The fact is that your forgetfulness is of your own doing and it is eternal.”

*bhayam dvitiyaabhinivesatah syaadisadapetasayviparyayosmitih* (Bhagvatam) 11.2.37

This verse from the Bhagvatam says that the individual soul has always had its back towards God. It’s not as if it turned away from God one day. Because of our eternal forgetfulness of God, Maya has us under its control. The cure for the disease of Maya is for the individual soul to turn towards God. The individual soul must surrender to God and turn towards God by practicing devotion. In this way, we will be cured of our disease. The Bhagvatam says that the individual must accept God and Guru to be equal and turn towards God through the practice of devotion.

Small children play with dolls. These dolls may be made of cloth or plastic, and little children get the boy doll married to the girl doll. And children are very attached to these dolls. If someone snatches away their dolls, they scream and start kicking their hands and feet. But when the same child grows up he searches for a real person to get married to. Now that he has found the real thing, he renounces the toys. In the very same way, when we also come to understand that we are the soul and that only Shyamsunder belongs to us, that He is everything to us, then we will automatically turn away from the five types of toys in the world.

Thus, we must understand we are eternally turned away from God, and to face towards God we must practice devotion. We will attain Godly bliss through devotion. The world will then cease to attract us, and one day God will become ours, and we will belong fully to God. And by surrendering fully to God the individual soul will become eternally gratified.
If you cross the Alakananda here using the boulders of snow that stretch across the river just like a dam, and go westward, you reach a beautiful place called Lakshmi Vanam. Birch trees with their dark green foliage and slightly reddish bark and various kinds of plants, both big and small, covered over with flowers of different colors, flourish here making it fit to be Lakshmi Devi’s own garden. The beauty of the forest filled my heart with joy. I plucked a number of these fragrant flowers, smell them, and decked my head with them in reverence. It is a well-known fact that during summer months when the snow melts on the Himalayas, many rare kinds of plants and flowers, hardly met with elsewhere, make their appearance there. These flowers are capable of fascinating not only human beings, but even cows and other animals. In the eyes of the ignorant they appear to be quite ordinary plants, but the wise know them to be plants of great medicinal virtue.

Along the foot of Narayana Parvata you wend your way to the west and then turn south. From here it is all trackless. To move forward you have now to tackle clusters of rocks and masses of snow. From the high top of Narayana Parvata, you may see many waterfalls every one of which is regarded as a theertha by Hindus. On reaching the difficult and dangerous place your mind cannot but revert to Yudhistira and his perfect indifference to worldly comforts. Just think of a mighty emperor who could be rolling in worldly pleasures leaving his court and Kingdom and walking along these terrible gorges all alone. Great indeed is the power of Vairagya (indifference to worldly things). When Vairagya dawns, tenderness changes into hardness, weakness into strength and grief into joy. It makes the impossible easily possible. But true Vairagya is difficult to attain, because desire and attachment spring from multifarious sources. Desire is a Hydra-headed monster. Cut off one head and you find several taking its place. Overcome sexual desire and it is soon replaced by the desire for wealth. Overcome that too, then the attachment to the body shows itself with unprecedented strength. Get over that attachment also and then the desire for immortal fame calls aloud like a lioness from the caverns of the heart. Even the wisest and the most learned of mankind are ensnared by the desire for fame. Verily, desire for fame is the last infirmity of noble minds. It can be overcome by only wise and heroic efforts. Very often, common people are misled into taking this hankering after fame as the love of one’s community, of one’s country or religion. He who engages himself in national or religious work to perpetuate his name is no true patriot or saint. People may pretend that the prosperity of their country or religion is the sole objective but their real aim may be self-aggrandizement. In English there is a familiar saying, “Even the Devil knoweth not the mind of man”. The Omniscient alone knows the real motives of one’s conduct. Desire is something subtle and beyond the comprehension of the senses. Our surmises based on externals are therefore liable to go wrong, and they do often go wrong. But let us return to our subject.

True Vairagya is the result of thought. The other kinds of Vairagya, resulting from various other causes, can, at best, be only weak, temporary and halting. Yudhistira’s vairagya was of the true type. Stricken with remorse at the death of so many kinsmen and at the thought that he himself had been the cause of such massacre and misery, his mind turned inward. He now pondered over the vanity of worldly things – states, riches, and relationships like father and son – over the heatless crimes committed for the sake of such vain things and over the great sorrows man has to suffer in this world and the next, as a result of such thoughtless conduct. His mind thus turned away from wealth and pleasure and learnt to despise kingship and its paraphernalia. His mind rose to the most intense state of vairagya and he resolved to renounce everything and become a sanyasin. In an assembly where his brothers like Bhima, comrades like Krishna and teachers like Vyasa were present he announced his intention to retire to the forest this world and the next, as a result of such thoughtless conduct. His mind thus turned away from wealth and pleasure and learnt to despise kingship and its paraphernalia. His mind rose to the most intense state of vairagya and he resolved to renounce everything and become a sanyasin. In an assembly where his brothers like Bhima, comrades like Krishna and teachers like Vyasa were present he announced his intention to retire to the forest

Let us now follow the route he pursued on the great journey.
When we have traveled four or five miles up along the difficult route from Lakshmivanam, we reach a small, pretty lake Chakrathirtha, named so perhaps because of its shape. A mile or two hence is another lake called Sathyapatha. We then reach two pools called Suryakunda and Chandrakunda. The lakes are on a plain covered with rocks and snow and surrounded by mountains over 23,000 feet in height. Now a short trip over the snow brings us to the famous Swargarohini. The heroic Yudhistira, who no longer thought of his body and who had vowed not to look back or turn back, might have climbed up into that terrible expanse of snow in benumbing cold, but it remains inaccessible to all ordinary mortals. It is said that, in ancient days, people, determined to enter heaven, used to ascend into these regions and relinquish their bodies there.

Our educated moderns may laugh at these queer notions like heaven, ascent into heaven – use of Swargarohini as a ladder to heaven – a visit to the holy place as an act of merit and death at the spot as a passport to the realm of the gods. They may deride all that is said about such things as the ravings of fools. Yet even they cannot deny the natural attractions of the surrounding landscape. Neither skill in argumentation nor lack of faith can contradict the experience of our senses. The snow-clad peaks shining like silver or gold in the sunshine, and the noise of the avalanches that resembles the bursts of cannon, convert the region into a wonderland, and fill the hearts of theists and atheists alike with astonishment and admiration. As for me, my heart was dancing with joy at the divine splendor all around me. My mind was intoxicated with the glory of God. Lo! God Himself shines here as this mass of spotless snow, as lakes and springs, as these tall peaks and these powerful cold blasts and these crystalline streams. All I see is God. The Himalayas are God. The entire earth is God. Everything exists in Him. Everything shines because of His brightness. All beauty is His. I enjoyed the natural beauty of that divine region, realizing His presence everywhere whether in the snow or the snow-mountain, in lakes or rivers, in stone or soil, in sunshine or wind, in pleasure or sorrow. But I could not prolong my pleasant stay there and so I returned to Badrinath with a sense of disappointment. The best season for a journey to Swargarohini is from the middle of July to the middle of September. But my journey was in June and I had no guide. In the beauty of that divine region, realizing His presence everywhere whether in the snow or the snow-mountain, in lakes or rivers, in stone or soil, in sunshine or wind, in pleasure or sorrow. But I could not prolong my pleasant stay there and so I returned to Badrinath with a sense of disappointment. The best season for a journey to Swargarohini is from the middle of July to the middle of September. But my journey was in June and I had no guide. In the circumstances, I had to return with a distant vision of Swargarohini. Glory to thee, O Swargarohini! May the epic story of Yudhistira continue to inspire man to the end of the world!

From Hrishikesh to Badrinath it is 169 miles; from Kedarnath to Badri it is only 115. But in fact Kedarnath and Badrinath are situated much nearer on the same mountain range and a direct line of communication, if there was one, would have been much shorter. As it is, to cross the snow-clad ridges between the two holy places, is an impossibility for human beings and so pilgrims follow a circuitous route along the foot of the mountain, Gupta Kasi, the seat of Viswanath; Ukhimadhom, the court of Banasura; Thunganatham, the site of Ravana’s penance – these are but a few of the holy clad ridges between the two holy places, is an impossibility for human beings and so pilgrims follow a circuitous route along the foot of the mountain, Gupta Kasi, the seat of Viswanath; Ukhimadhom, the court of Banasura; Thunganatham, the site of Ravana’s penance – these are but a few of the holy

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From Hrishikesh to Badrinath it is 169 miles; from Kedarnath to Badri it is only 115. But in fact Kedarnath and Badrinath are situated much nearer on the same mountain range and a direct line of communication, if there was one, would have been much shorter. As it is, to cross the snow-clad ridges between the two holy places, is an impossibility for human beings and so pilgrims follow a circuitous route along the foot of the mountain, Gupta Kasi, the seat of Viswanath; Ukhimadhom, the court of Banasura; Thunganatham, the site of Ravana’s penance – these are but a few of the holy places on the way. Ukhimadhom, where the priests of Kedarnath reside, is believed to have been founded by Sri Sankara. The Thunganatha mountain, 12,000 feet high, is specially remarkable for the presence of the musk-deer and the bird, monal.

From Hrishikesh the route lies along the bank of the Ganga and passes through fine forests. There are five famous centers of pilgrimage along the route and they are collectively known as Panchaprayag. Devaprayag, Rudraprayag, Karnaprayag, Nandaprayag and Vishnuprayag make up the five. The first of these is situated forty miles from Hrishikesh. It is at the confluence of the Bhageerathi Ganga (coming down from Gangotri) and the Alakananda (flowing down from Badri). There is a temple here dedicated to Sri Ramachandra as a memorial to his penance performed in his old age at this holy place. The meeting of the two rivers which come down roaring from the mountain ranges as if clearing a way through them by sheer force, affords an attractive sight to all lovers of nature. If a visit to such holy places brings to the visitor the invisible favor of God, it also brings to him immediately another rewards still more tangible, namely, enjoyment of natural beauty.

At Devaprayag, paths diverge. One goes to Gangotri along the bank of the Alakananda. Twenty miles from Devaprayag is a small town called Srinagar. Twenty miles further on, in the east-north is Rudraprayag where the Mandakini (starting from Kedarnath) joins the Alakananda. Karnaprayag is 18 miles farther on, at the confluence of the Pindara and the Alakananda. If you travel a few miles more, up the Alakananda, you reach Nandaprayag. It takes still two or three days’ journey to reach Vishnuprayag. The famous Jyothirmadham is situated near Vishnuprayag. According to tradition it was Sri Sankara who founded the madham and one of his disciples, Throtaka, was its first head. Jyothirmadham is now the residence of the head priest of Badrinath for six months of the year. From here starts a route that leads to Tibet over the Neethi Pass, 17,000 feet high. Near the Pass stands Dronagiri which is described in the Ramayana as the home of medicinal plants with divine virtues, such as mritasanjeevini. Badrinath is 18 miles from Jyothirmadham. Beyond it are high rocky mountains that stretch uninterrupted, mile after mile. How the Alakananda found an opening to let herself down through these imposing rock formations, is really a problem. But there are several such rivers which emerge in this fashion from the mountain ranges through small, almost imperceptible clefts.

(Continued in Next Issue)

Source: “Wanderings In Himalayas” by Swami Tapovanam
Central Chinmaya Trust, Mumbai

TRAVELING THE LESS-TRODDEN PATH | DIVINE AMBROSIA | MAY 2008 | PAGE 6
A di Sankaracharya is one of the rarest spiritual gems who has walked on this plane of earth. Born into a poor namboodri brahmin family in the year 788 AD in a small village Kaladi in Kerala, he is considered to be the very incarnation of Lord Siva. The purpose of his advent was to revive Hinduism and hand over to the world the exemplary knowledge of Vedas, Upanishads and Brahma Sutras. Sankara was a child prodigy with a brilliant spiritual intellect. The Thread Ceremony (initiation into the Gayatri Mantra) was performed at his seventh year, and by 16 years, Sankara began writing commentaries on BhagavdGita, Upanishads and Brahma Sutras. He renounced the world at a very young age, and met his Guru Govindapada Acharya in Badarikashram. Upon the command of his Guru, he went to Kashi and carried on his work of founding Advaite (Monothesism) philosophy and successfully rebutted all the criticisms leveled at him. He travelled the length and breadth of India, propounding Advaite and in the course established mutts in Sringeri, Puri, Dwarka and Joshi. He revived the Vedic Dharma that was in deterioration at that time and re-established it in its rightful glory. He has also authored several marvelous devotional texts like Bhavani Stotram, Bhaja Govinda Stotram. Surely, in the words of Sri C. Rajagopalachari, “Sankara drank the Ocean of Knowledge and Devotion as easily as a drop in the palm of one’s hand.”

His intellectual and devotional works are filled with pure and supreme essence of all Vedas and Upanishads. Sankara Bhashya or commentary is considered the ultimate authority, which reveal the highest logic and metaphysics. Some of his works which contain practical spiritual instructions and devotional ways are Viveka Chudamani, Atma Bodha, Aparoksa Anubhuti, Ananda Lahari, Bhaja Govindam, Panchadasi etc. The very essence of Brahma, in Sankara’s words is unlimited Satya (Truth), Jnana (Knowledge), Ananta (Limitlessness), and Ananda (Bliss). Sankara is the exponent of “Kevala Advaita”. His teachings can be summarised in “Brahma Satyam, Jagat Mithya” and “Jeevo Brahmaiva Na Aparah”, which mean Brahma alone is real, this world is unreal; the Jiva is identical with Brahman.

After winning over a certain Shakta Commentator, Sankara proceeded to Himalayas, built a Mutt at Joshi and a Temple at Badrinath. From there he proceeded to Kedarnath higher up in Himalayas, and became one with the Lord Siva in 820 AD, in his thirty-second year. It is befitting to pay tribute to this unsurpassed World Teacher on this day of his advent, remember his life, be inspired by it, and sing whole-heartedly some of his compositions.

At a time when Vedic Religion was misunderstood and reduced to a mere set of rituals and sacrifices in the hands of pedagogical priests, the advent of Lord Buddha took place. On a full moon day in 560 BC, He was born as the only child of King Suddhodhana and Queen Maya in the beautiful groves of Lumbini, near the city of Kapilavastu in the foothills of Himalayas in Nepal. Many auspicious signs preceeded his birth. He was named as Gautama Siddhartha. Astrologers predicted that this child would either be a Supreme monarch or a wandering monk, renunciate and an Enlightened One. The king took utmost precaution and brought up the child in extreme richness, luxury and comfort, and keeping away any events or persons that represented old age, pain, suffering, disease and death. He married at sixteen years of age. By Divine Providence, in his twenty-ninth year, he set foot out of his rich palace and came across a decrepit old man, a diseased man, a corpse and a monk. He realized the transient nature of worldly life and was determined to transcend the mind and be enlightened.

He left home and engaged himself in severe Yogic practises and extreme self-mortification of denying the body food and water. He realized he should not go to extremes and torture the body and he started taking food in moderation. He sat under a Pipal Tree or the Bodhi Vriksha and took an iron resolve that until he is Enlightened, he would not leave the place. Maya tried to tempt him in many ways, but he did not yield. After seven consecutive days and nights, he came out as Enlightened Buddha. He said “I thus behold my mind released from the defilement of earthly existence, released from the defilement of sensual pleasures, released from the defilement of heresy, released from the defilement of ignorance.” He has travelled to many forests, the Kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala, teaching his doctrine. He told his disciples not to enquire into the world and the existence of nature and God, but be a silent witness, without any reaction. He spread his insightful meditation “Vipassana” to seekers and laymen far and wide, and made many his disciples. Buddha’s life is an exemplary presentation of Supreme Renunciation, Discrimination, Meditation and pure Compassion.

Buddha revealed the Noble Truth of Suffering. As a permanent remedy to suffering, he propagated the Eight-fold path- right opinion, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right employment, right exertion, right thought and right self-concentration as a way out of suffering. Let us celebrate the occasion of his advent by taking a resolve to try to be kind, compassionate and lead a pure and sorrow-free life.
Q1: If I say ‘Sugar’, ‘Sugar’, I cannot get sugar. If I say ‘Rām’, ‘Rām’, I cannot get God. Is it not?

A: You will have to earn money for purchasing sugar. Then you will have to go the bazaar to purchase sugar. Here also you will have to get rid of lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, jealousy and egotism and then repeat ‘Rām’, ‘Rām’ with feeling and single-minded devotion. Then you shall have Darshan of Lord Rāma. But, Rāma is within. Sugar is outside. You will have to give your whole heart to Rāma.

Q2: What is the easiest way for concentration?

A: Japa of the Name of the Lord. And a very important point to bear in mind in this connection is that perfect concentration is not achieved in just a day; you should never despair and give up your efforts. Be calm. Be patient. Do not worry yourself if the mind wanders. Be regular in your Japa. Stick to the meditation hour. Slowly the mind will automatically turn toward God. And once it tastes the bliss of the Lord, nothing will be able to shake it.

Q3: How can a person, who has been thinking in a negative way for a long time, change to positive thinking?

A: Let him start with some positive suggestive formulas: “I am hale and hearty. I am healthy. There is nothing wrong with me. I was under a misconception of my own abilities and capacities. Now I have realized my own, the will and intelligence of the Omnipotent Lord.” Let him do it with the help of some person advanced in Yoga or a devotee of the Lord. Let him start with a prayer to the Lord. Let him make prayer a part of his daily life and a must in life. All negative thinking will end and he will become quite natural.

Q4. What are the marks of spiritual progress? How can one know whether he is advanced in the spiritual path or not?

A: Peace, cheerfulness, contentment, dispassion, fearlessness, and an unperturbed state of mind under all conditions indicate that you are advancing in the spiritual path. Spiritual progress is not measured by Siddhis or powers, but only by the depth of your bliss in meditation. These are the sure tests of your spiritual progress:

* Is your interest in inner spiritual activity and outer Sadhana increasing day after day?
* Does spiritual life mean to your consciousness a matter of great delight, a delight far transcending the happiness that the world of vital pleasures affords you or offers you?

Q5. Difficulties and anxieties upset me in every way. Failure and troubles face me on every side. Domestic duties trouble my Sadhana. What shall I do?

A: Don’t be afraid. Remember the saying, “Even this will pass away.” Write this on a piece of paper in bold types and fix it on the wall in your room. Difficulties and troubles come and go. Read verse 14 in Chapter 2 of Srimad Bhagavd Gita. Become a hero. Stand firm as a rock. Live in the Centre. Live in Om. Love in Truth. Live in Atma. Nothing can shake you. Difficulties will make you more strong and endow you with more endurance. Mysterious are His ways. Say “Thy will be done”.

Q6: Whenever I try to concentrate on the Trikuti (between eyebrows) during meditation, I get a slight headache. Is there any remedy?

A: If concentration at the Trikuti produces headache, then practice Nasikagra Drishti or gazing at the tip of the nose. This will relieve you. Do not struggle with your mind. Take rest for half an hour. If you still feel the headache, close your eyes and then meditate.

Q6: What is the purpose of singing Kirtans constantly?

A: Singing of Kirtans incessantly will produce divine vibrations within and these vibrations are so powerful as to counteract all external forces distracting the human mind and arrest the wanderings of the mind, bringing peace and happiness to the individual. There is a mysterious power in the Divine Name that singing it purifies the heart and mind and makes the Kirtanist God-conscious.

Q7: What is your opinion of the Masters of the Himalayas?

A: There is a great Master of Masters, the Indweller of your heart. Turn the gaze inwards, withdraw the senses and seek His help. Rest in Him. Identify yourself with Him. Search Him in your heart. Don’t talk to me of these Himalayan Masters in the future. You will be deluded.

Source: “May I Answer That” by Swami Sivananda

Swami Sivananda was a Self-realized spiritual giant in the modern world. He was born in the lineage of Appayya Dikshitar in Pattamadai in Tamilnadu in the year 1887. From an young age, he exhibited divine qualities. He completed his studies in Medicine in India and went to Malaya to practise his profession and soon became a succesful, rich and a very kind doctor. At the age of 35, by Divine Dispensation, he renounced everything, went to Rishikesh and performed severe penance. He established Divine Life Society and disseminated spiritual knowledge to one and all, inspiring many seekers through his life and teachings to realize the Immortal Self within.
Brahma-Vidya is the Science of Sciences. The knower of Brahma-Vidya or Science of Brahman or the Science of Absolute knows everything. His knowledge is full. He has the whole experience through intuition or revelation. Take your firm seat on the rock-bottom of the Upanishadic truths and accept the findings of science only if they tally with the Upanishadic truths, otherwise reject them ruthlessly.

All secular sciences have their own limitations. A scientist works on the physical plane with a finite mind and with instruments. He knows the physical laws. He has some knowledge of the elements, atoms and physical energy. His knowledge is fragmentary. He has no knowledge of transcendental or super-sensual things. Science is only a partially unified knowledge. A scientist infers, investigates and draws exact conclusions from his observations. He understands Nature but he knows nothing of the origin or destiny of Nature.

Who made the sun and gave power to its rays? Who combined four parts of nitrogen with one part of oxygen? Who gave power to electrons? Who gave power to the atoms to combine into molecules? Who or what made and bestowed upon the ultimate particles of matter their marvellous power of varied interaction? Science does not know this great mystery. On the contrary, Yoga is completely unified knowledge. A Yogi gets inner, divine realisation. He clearly sees with his inner Yogic eye the subtle rudiments of matter. He identifies himself with the Supreme Being who is the Lord of Prakriti or matter. He gets control over the five elements. He clearly understands the whole mystery of creation through direct intuitional knowledge. The scientist lacks this sort of knowledge. He has only experimental knowledge.

In the matter of evidence in psychological questions, the sense-perceptions with which science naturally deals are only second-rate criteria and are therefore to be received with caution. The closing of the external channels of sensation is usually the signal of the opening of the psychic and, from all evidence, it would seem that psychic sense is more extensive, acute and in every way more dependable than the physical.

The business of science is generalisation of phenomena; it is the function of philosophy and Yoga to explain. Religion is the practical aspect of philosophy. Philosophy is the rational aspect of religion. The scientist tries to answer the “how” of the problem; the philosopher and the Yogi attempt to answer the “why” of it. It is a mistake to say that such and such an event occurs because of certain laws of Nature. The laws of Nature do not give any real explanation of the phenomena. A law of Nature is simply a statement, in terms as general as possible, of what happens under given circumstances in a natural phenomenon. Science is only concerned with the phenomena. Science shows a marvellous harmony of Nature. But it is the problem of philosophy and Yoga to solve the “why” of Nature’s harmony.

Scientists possess a partial knowledge of the universe. They have not understood the whole code of Nature’s laws. They have no knowledge of the occult side of things. They have no knowledge of the astral, mental and higher planes such as Brahma-Loka or the world of Brahman. The unseen world is of far greater importance than the sense-universe which is visible to the naked eye. A fully developed Yogi can function on all planes and so he has full knowledge of the manifested and unmanifested Nature. The senses, by which you get a knowledge of the external objects, are not fully developed. Therefore, the knowledge obtained is partial. The external senses are exact counterparts of the internal astral senses. Scientists have no knowledge of the subtle rudiments of matter. Life will become fuller and richer when one develops this inner eyesight by the practice of Yoga. Just as blood, when seen under microscope, reveals many mysterious things such as leucocytes, nuclei, pigment, germs and bacilli, so also the inner Yogic eye reveals many a mystery to the hidden side of things.

Scientists have to learn many things from the seers of the East. Who gave power to the electrons to revolve? What is at the bottom of these electrons? Who gave life to the cell or protoplasm? Who gave intelligence to the cells to secrete milk or bile or gastric juice from the blood? The scientists are still observing and experimenting. They are still groping in the darkness. What is the cause of the origin of an impulse? Who is the director of the mind? What is the cause of origin of thought? Even if all the living scientists were to put their heads together to solve these questions, they cannot give definite and conclusive answers.

The mind of a scientist cannot work on higher spiritual planes. It is gross and impure. It has outgoing tendencies. It is filled with desires, passions and worldly impressions. The scientist cannot look within, introspect and meditate. He can analyse the atoms of different elements, but he cannot do self-analysis. He can bombard the atoms, watch the movements of the electrons and make discoveries in Nature. But the mind of a Rishi or a Yogi is subtle and pure. It is free from worldly desires and passions, from selfishness, lust and hatred. It is equipped with the instructions of the sages and the Srutis. It is filled with purity. It is free from outgoing tendencies. It is fit for divine contemplation. It is properly disciplined in a variety of ways through rigorous austerity and self-restraint. The Yogi undergoes a discipline, a rare discipline – through the practice of tranquility of mind, control of the senses, restraints, internal and external purification, etc – which cannot be had in the universities.

Can scientific inventions make us really happy? That is the question of questions now. What has science done to us? No doubt it has added a fund of knowledge on the physical plane. But this knowledge is mere husk when compared to the knowledge of the Self or Brahma-Vidya. All sciences are founded on the knowledge of Atman.

Source: “Kingly Science & Kingly Secret”
Satsang Notes
Srimad Bhagavatam – Canto 11

The subject matter of Srimad Bhagavatam is “Bhagavan”. Bhagavan is unlimited. “Bhagavatata Brahmani Proktam iti Bhagavatam” – That which the Lord Himself told to Brahma is the Bhagavatam. The paramparaa of this teaching starts with the Lord to Brahma to Narada to Vyasa to Suka to Parikshit.

King Nimi enquires of Parivrajakacharya (a wandering ascetic) the qualities of a Bhagavata or the devotee of Lord. Whatever is the spontaneous expression of a wise man, that becomes the Sadhana for seekers. Some of the glorious qualities of Bhagavatas are below –

“Sarva Bhuteshu Yah Pasyed Bhagavadbhavatmanah… Bhutani Bhagavatymanyesha Bhagavatottamah” – He who sees his own self (who is Hari himself) existing in all beings as Brahan and realizes that all creations are established in his own Self which is Brahman or Hari is the foremost of all devotees.

To illustrate the above, imagine a mirror-room that has multiple mirrors so if a person enters the room, a hundred reflections of the person appear. An intelligent person knows that the reflection is his but he is not in them. He sees the unity in the diverse forms. By contrast if a dog enters the room, it might take the room to be full of other dogs and start quarreling with them. The foremost devotee sees the Self or the Lord in all the forms in the universe.

“Gruheetvapeendriyairarthan Yo Na Dveshi na Hrushyati…. Vishnor Mayamidam pasyan sa vai Bhagavatottamah” – Even though the sense organs receive their objects of enjoyment he feels neither repulsion nor joyous attraction towards them and looks upon this universe as the Maya of Vishnu, such a devotee is of the highest order.

We have no control over most of the sensory stimuli that come to us. For example the climate, behavior of other people, etc. Accepting facts will avoid much internal pain. We cannot change our height, our parents, our siblings, our looks, in fact our spouse, our history, etc. Accepting facts that we cannot change is called “Prasada Buddhi”. Fact is born out of Order. Order is born out of Laws. These Laws are the phenomenal laws as well as the Law of Karma. For example, ageing is a fact, caused due to the Order named “Time” which is due to the Law of Karma. Resisting the ageing process will only cause inner pain. Accepting facts is a life long process; it comes by knowledge of the Order and Laws.

SOME TIPS ON MEDITATION:

- Always sit erect, straight. Take support if required but do not bend the back. Make shoulders broad – it increases breathing
- If sitting on the floor, both knees should touch the ground (as in Padmasana) to give most stability.
- Choose a quiet place or a quiet time. Choose the same time and place for meditation.
- Have an asana for you alone – in time a “samskara” will be built between you and the asana.
- Best time for Meditation is Sandhya – morning, noon, evening and midnight.
- Be relaxed. Relax the body from top to bottom after sitting for meditation. Focus on each part and tell it to relax (as we do in Savasana).
- Observe the breath. Since breath is formless, mind also becomes formless. Breath becomes long, subtle and rhythmic. Be like a breathing statue.
- Chant your mantra thrice in different tune silently. Increase the silence between two chants.

SOME TIPS ON PRAYER:

- To pray we must remember three things – (1) God is Omniscient, he knows everything; (2) God is Omnipotent, all powerful (3) God is most merciful and all-compassionate.
- If anyone is on the verge of dying with failed limbs and struggling, don’t chant Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra. Instead chant Vishnu Sahasra Nama or others.
- If you ask anything of the Lord, tell Him “please grant this only if You deem it is good for me. If it is not good for me, please don’t grant it”.
- Don’t chant any Sanskrit mantras you come across; they may not be good for you and incorrect pronunciation might change the meaning of the prayer. Take it from a Guru. Samputa mantras (recited periodically in between other slokas) must be picked carefully.
- Science of Mantras is dealt with in “Mantra Maharnava” and “Mantra Mahadadhi” treatises. Some mantras need Aachamana, Some need to be told with the Chandas and name of Rishi.
- Do not reveal your mantra to anybody.
The term “Practice” can’t be considered a translation of the sanskrit term “Sadhana”. If we have the understanding of the practice in Advaita Vedanta as “Sadhana with immense faith and conviction with one-track mind”, then such a practice will be most effective. Here, we are presenting “Upadesa Saaram” of Sri Ramana Maharshi, which rightly talks about all Yogas.

By the will of the Creator, action bears fruit. Is action, then, supreme? No, it is inert, unconscious.

The fruit of actions are not everlasting and they pass away. But action leaves behind a seed for further action leading one into the endless ocean of action or Karma. This is not the way to Liberation and it blocks all our spiritual progress.

An action which is done with disinterestedness, not motivated by personal gain, and which is surrendered unto the Lord, will purify the mind and lead us to Liberation.

Ritual worship, repetition of sacred names, and meditation are done with the body, the speech and the mind, and they progress to excellence in that order.

To serve the world, looked upon as the manifestation of the Lord, is to offer worship to the Lord of the eight forms.

Silent meditation, in the mind, is higher than the best devotional praise, or the uttering of sacred names, loudly or softly.

Like an unbroken flow of oil or a stream of water, continuous meditation is better than that which is interrupted.

Meditation on the identity of the individual and the Lord, “I am He”, is more purifying than meditation which assumes difference between them.

By the power of meditation, devoid of thoughts, one is established in true Being, and this is supreme devotion.

The practice of fixing the mind in its own source in the Heart is, without doubt, true bhakti, yoga and understanding.

The mind may be subdued by regulating the breath, just as a bird is restrained when caught in a net. This practice controls the mind.

Mind and breath, manifesting in thought and action, branch out from a common source, the Sakti.
There have been multiple times when I participated in one religious function or another, attended lectures on a spiritual topic, and came back with a myriad of feelings: "What should my relationship with God be? Should I go to Him when I am in trouble? Should I go to Him so that I can stay out of trouble? How do the apparently disconnected concepts/philosophies given by different speakers relate to each other? I have a lot to learn but I don't know where to start. I am not well versed in shlokas. I don't understand Sanskrit well, so what can I do and what should I do to make spiritual progress. My mind wanders all over the place when I am supposed to passively witness a ceremony. People around me are talking, discussing politics, recipes or children. This cannot be the right way to pray, can it?"

I found my spiritual foundation to be shaky. Spiritual discipline was not part of my daily life. I was aware of that, but did not know how to fix it. This meant that I would not be able to pass on the right essence of Hindu Scriptures to my children.

And then I met DidiJi purely by chance. Answering any question of mine in a very logical manner was not at all difficult for this vibrant and eloquent speaker. Her 14 day lecture series at the Hindu Temple of Wisconsin (HTW) in 2005, followed by another 14 day lecture series in 2006 seemed to take a completely ignorant person like me from "What is the purpose of life?" to "How to achieve perfect happiness?" This was done in a sequential manner in a series of 90-minute talks on each day. An eloquent speaker, her mission is to simplify the eternal message of Vedas and Shastras and awaken love for God within the hearts of seeking souls. Her profound lectures not only impart deep knowledge of various Upanishads, Vedas, Puranas, Gita, Ramayan etc with precise references, but they also contain humorous anecdotes and examples from the modern context that really cater to the audience. When speaking to the children she gives examples that they can understand and relate to. In a casual setting, she is very competitive when it comes to playing board games such as "charades" or participating in the "Moorkh Shiromani (The Biggest Fool)" contest with children. The fact that she grew up in Canada helps her relate to teenagers and the challenges they face growing up in the west while preserving their cultural heritage and values.

DidiJi was born in India and spent her formative years in Canada. She graduated from York University in Toronto with a degree in languages. DidiJi speaks Spanish and French in addition to Hindi, English and Sankrit. She is a poetess. Her bhajans are as melodious as her talks are inspiring. Through simple examples, she drives the point home and makes a long lasting impression. It is easy to remember her quotes in daily life, and I feel motivated to apply them. She is easily accessible to an aspiring devotee via the information below.

The Divine Celebrity for this month's issue is Siddheshvari Devi (fondly known as "Didi Ji"). Didi Ji is the founder of Radha Madhav Society, a branch of the worldwide organization, Jagadguru Kripalu Parishat. She has spent the last 20 years traveling the world and sharing the profound wisdom of the Scriptures. A vibrant speaker, she combines deep knowledge of the holy texts with simple analogies and humorous anecdotes, bringing clarity and understanding to the subject. She visits Milwaukee each year enlightening us with her talks at the Temple and holding 2-3 day spiritual retreats, which benefit seekers immensely in making progress on their spiritual paths. We are very indebted to this great teacher and present to you her message that has helped thousands of people, including, Dr. Deepti Dhingra, here in Milwaukee. Here is what Deepti has to say.

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“Be devoted to your Guru. Merge your intellect in His, serve him in every possible way. Obtain His Grace, for without His grace, you cannot obtain any spiritual progress and hence unable to realize the Supreme Lord.”

-Didi ji
It was one very nice sunny Sunday afternoon when Tutu, the Song Bird hurriedly flew into Appu’s hut making all noise possible with her wings to wake Appu, who was taking a good nap. He was reclining on his bamboo chair and covered his face with the newspaper “Jungle Jazz” so he can have a really good sleep. But Tutu screamed on top of her voice “JIMBO and KWIRL are having a verrry nasty fight!! They are almost tearing each one’s tails apart! Appppppuuuuu! Get UP! You are the ONLY ONE who can calm them down. COME ON!”

Appu got up and for a moment he felt like going back to sleep. But that his little friends Jimbo - The Baby Elephant and Kwirl - The Tiny Squirrel were having a fight made him determined to get up, and to sort it out. He has to see to it that they have a good friendly Sunday before going to school tomorrow. So, he put on his hat, grabbed his walking stick and said surprisingly, “Tutu! Fight between Jimbo and Kwirl? I don’t believe it. They are best of pals. Where are they now? What happened?” Amidst her mumbling jumbling, Tutu managed to give some details about the case.

“Those little guys were out there in the Forest Fill-Bill in the morning collecting some wild mushrooms and chestnuts, and some other little treasures, when Kwirl came across the biggest mushroom anyone could ever see. And he was so proud. Samba, Qutie, Bambli, Rani, Buddy and myself agreed that since Kwirl found it, he should have it. But Jimbo wanted to have a small share, for it looked so sweety and yummy. Kwirl then promised to him that if he could give Kwirl a bushel of chestnuts, he can take a share. Poor Jimbo, he has worked so hard to collect a bushel of chestnuts and that little guy took it all and stored in his hole, and asked Jimbo to come back in the afternoon. So we all went and guess what Appu!! He says “Sorry Jimbo! I finished all of the mushroom, may be you can have it next time.” Jimbo was so disappointed and angry. How could Kwirl go back on his promise? He took it to heart that his buddy would say such a thing, and so he started tramping on Kwirl’s house, and all his belongings, and Kwirl in turn is jumping here and there and escaping in every possible way. And now, it seems that they can no longer be friends,” said Tutu sadly.

By this time, Appu and Tutu reached the place where all the kid-buddie group assembled watching Jimbo and Kwirl chasing each other. When Appu came, everyone shouted and ran to him. Even Jimbo stopped chasing Kwirl and walked gracefully to Appu, his eyes full of tears. “Did you see Appu, what Kwirl did. He took all my chestnuts, and did not give me my share of the mushroom!” Appu saw Kwirl hiding in his hole, and listening to every word. Appu then walked to a nearby huge tree with a good shade, sat there, and all his pals sat around him. He got out from his magic pocket, some peanuts and some sugar-candy, and gave to each of them. They were so delighted to have a sweet! And when they started eating, Appu said “To keep a promise, to stick to truth are the greatest wealth anyone could have. Even enemies become friends when one sticks to one’s promise. Do you know the story of The Truthful Cow?”

Everyone was excited about the story, even Jimbo forgot about his share and Kwirl also strained his ears, sitting in his hole, to listen. “Tell us please, Appu. Who is the cow? How was she truthful?”

**The Story Of A Truthful Cow**

Appu started telling the story of a cow, who was truthful even in life-threatening situations, and who kept her promise.

“There was a Cow in a village, a cow noted for her kindness, soft and calm nature. She had a baby, a calf just three days earlier, and she was very happy when the calf came to her, nuzzled her and drank her milk. She was so proud of her little calf. One day, along with other cows, she went for grazing on a green pasture, hoping that eating such healthy long tall grass would enable her to give more milk to her calf. And so, even though it was a bit far-away, she went with others. But before she left, she told her calf, “My dear child, don’t worry. I will be back by evening time, and will give you milk and sing you to sleep. You, in the meanwhile, play with others.” So, saying she went off.”
The Green Pastures were so beautiful and all the cows were having the grass to their heart-content. So engrossed they were in the delicious grass, that they did not notice a Tiger hiding to pounce upon them and have them for a meal. Now, this Tiger was very very hungry because he could not get anything to eat that day. He noticed that our kind Cow was a bit separated from the rest; he slowly moved towards her.

“Oh, Such a poor Cow ! I am sure The Tiger must have had her,” said Jimbo sadly.

Appu continued. “Our Cow ran swiftly. She was so afraid and all the while thinking about her calf. But The Tiger overtook her, and stood threateningly before her. The Cow was so frightened, and so much out of breath. Just when The Tiger was about to pounce on her, she said “O Dear Kind Tiger !” No one has ever greeted him, The Tiger, with such words; he stood there amazed, and decided to hear what The Cow had to say. The Cow repeated “O Dear Kind Tiger. I have a plea to make. Please hear it and then decide if you want to kill me now. I have a calf who is just over 3 days old. He is still learning to walk, and to drink milk, and have a good laugh. I came to these green pastures, so I can be healthy, give more milk to him and make him stronger. But my fate seems to be otherwise. If I don’t return to him, my son will be very sad and worried and I am afraid he will stop eating the grass altogether.”

The Tiger growled, “So, you are asking me to just leave you and die myself our of hunger. NEVER !”

The Cow said “No, No, Dear Tiger. Please give me an hour time. I will go to my calf, tell him not to worry and give him some last instructions as to how to live nobly and wisely, entrust him to others’ care, and I will return as soon as possible and then you can eat me. This is my promise to you.”

The Tiger said “O Cow ! How can I believe you that you will come back. It is unwise of me to let you go, as I am sure you are telling me all this so you can escape and be with you son. For anyone, their comfort and happiness is more than to ease someone else’s hunger.”

The Cow again pleaded with the tiger, eyes full of tears, “All my life I have abided by the Truth and nothing but the Truth, O Tiger. I will return soon. Give me just an hour or so, so I can see my calf for the last time and return to you. You please wait here. If I go back on my promise, I consider myself unworthy of any respect from anyone.”

The Tiger replied, “Okay. You can go and come as soon as possible.” But he did not believe in his heart that The Cow would come back.

“The Cow hurried to her calf in fast steps. When she reached, she hugged her calf, licked his face softly, and told him all that has happened between her and The Tiger. The calf was very sad, but The Cow told him “Dear son, always stick to Truth. Be kind, Be gentle. Never hurt anyone. Never find fault with anyone. Treat everyone with Love. Don’t create any trouble to those who look after you. These are my teachings to you. I have to leave you now.” So saying she went to other cows, and told them “O dear sisters and brothers. My calf will soon become an orphan. Please take care of him and treat him as your own son.” Knowing how kind and loving the cow is, everyone felt very sorrowful. And she hurried back to the tiger to become his prey.

“In the meanwhile, The Tiger has scolded himself for giving away such a tasty piece of meat for some silly little words from The Cow, and he was about to go back into the forest when The Cow came and stood before him, and said, “Thank you dear Tiger, for allowing me to see my son. Please kill me and satiate your hunger.” When The Cow said this, The Tiger was wonder-struck at her power of Truth and said, “O Cow, You are the Noblest and Truthful of all. You have taught me the value of truth. You are my teacher, so I cannot eat you. Thank you. I will find my meal somewhere else, please go back to your calf.” So saying The tiger went into the forest.”

Appu finished telling the story and everyone was so amazed at how The Cow kept her promise even in such dangerous situations. The Cow has become their hero now. Everyone was discussing among themselves about how nice it would be to have that little calf amidst them, whose mother was so brave and truthful.

Kwirl was also listening to all the story and tears came to his eyes. How stupid and untrue he was today, and how he hurt his best friend Jimbo, for such a little thing like a stupid little mushroom. He immediately came out of his hiding, went to Jimbo straight, and wiping his tears, said bravely, “Jimbo, I am sorry. Please forgive me. I went back on my promise and cheated you. From now on, I will always be good and Truthful, and will always keep my promise.” Jimbo took Kwirl in his trunk and kept him on his big ear and said, “Kwirl, you are my best friend. Sorry for being such a fool today over nothing.” Appu was glad that Jimbo and Kwirl have become friends again. Kwirl got his big mushroom out from his hole, and everyone had a wonderful Party on such a nice sunday evening.
Comfortable Vedanta

Swamiji graciously turned to the devotees and jovially remarked: “See, today is the first day of the New Year. If, everyone of you gives me something, yours will multiply like anything. Come on….Who comes first?”

Sri Pushpaji of Dehra Dun came forward and offered twenty rupees to Swamiji. “What about you,” Swamiji pointed to a devotee.

“These are all Anithya Vastu (temporary) Swamiji. Why to give all these things?”, she replied.

“Comfortable Vedanta indeed! If you really feel they are Anithya, why don’t you throw them away?”, Swamiji remarked.

All had a hearty laugh.
Chakra or Wheel Pose is considered one of the best exercises for back and spinal muscles, giving flexibility and suppleness to the body muscles and increasing the strength in the arms and back. This can be regularly performed as a part of the daily yoga routine. After performing this asana, it is advised either to perform a small version of forward bend or to take a 30 sec to 1 minute rest in child’s pose to give some rest to the back muscles. Swami Sivananda said “He who practices this asana will have perfect control of his body.” This Asana is considered very revitalizing to all the chakras or energy centers in the body starting from the base of the spine extending to one’s head. At the completion of the Asana, one is sure to feel relaxed, revitalized, and exhilarated. When you first learn to arch backward into the pose you want to minimize the distance you have to drop down. Bring your body down as low as possible by spreading your legs wide apart and bending your knees. Most importantly, center your weight in your knees as you arch back. Place your hands and feet the same distance apart and hold the pose steadily for one to two minutes.

**STEP 1:** Lie down on the floor with hands resting on your sides and knees bent. Bring your feet into your buttocks as close as possible, but all the time taking caution that the soles of the feet are not bent and the feet is flat on the floor.

**STEP 2:** Raise your arms, bend them backward and place your hands down behind your shoulders, fingers pointing toward your feet. See to it that the distance between your feet is the same as the distance between your hands.

**STEP 3:** Inhale, and lift your hips and pressing down your head on the floor. Make the body tangential to knees and rest in this position.

**STEP 4:** Lift your hips further up, bend your back and draw your head in touching with the ground while supporting your body weight with the feet and arms. Imagine yourself as a table with four legs well placed.

**STEP 5:** Inhale and straighten your arms, lifting your head. Raise your hips up high and breathe normally in the pose. Rest in this pose for a period of 1-2 minutes and slowly draw yourself down to come out of the pose.

**BENEFITS:**
- Tones the whole body
- Strengthens the shoulder, upperback and spinal muscles
- Revitalizes the Energy Centers

**NATURAL REMEDIES ON YOUR KITCHEN SHELF**

India is home to a wonderful treasure of medicinal plants, and is also the origin of a well-documented system of Ayurveda for a healthy life. The Himalayas, the spiritual center of India is an amazing collection of rare gems of horticultural varieties, that possess miraculous powers in curing diseases and saving life. Indian Cuisine also incorporates several herbs and spices, a method which has been handed over from many generations. In this issue, we focus on some of the medicinal healing properties of several common items found on our shelves, which can be successfully used for treating small ailments.

1. **BASIL:** Holy and medicinal, the leaves are said to be of high purificatory and cleansing value. Two to three leaves taken orally daily will help scavenge the oxygen radicals accumulated in the system and thus protects cells from death.

2. **GINGER:** A widely used root, it is said to improve upper gastrointestinal symptoms, gastric emptying and motility in humans. It is also used as a safe relief from pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting, and motion sickness. It is also believed to inhibit cell growth in cancer-causing cells.

3. **TURMERIC:** Most commonly used in Indian cuisine, it is one of the powerful natural anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial medicines. Turmeric paste is a popular home remedy for treatment of inflammation and wounds and other skin lesions. It is also evaluated for its anti-cancer and anti-diabetes properties.

4. **CLOVE:** Referred to as Lavanga, it is used widely for adding aroma to the food. It is used for reducing any toothaches by acting as a local anaesthetic. It is also reported to possess anti-oxidant and vascular protective properties when consumed in moderation.

5. **FENUGREEK:** Recently medical journals have published that fenugreek is also effective in treating cholesterol, gastric ulcers, thyroid problems, diabetes, and believed to promote endurance capacity of the body to stress and exercise.

6. **CURRY LEAVES:** Apart from adding flavor to Indian cooking to add flavor, the poultice of curry leaves is used for treating skin irritations, poisonous bites. Taken orally, they are proven to reduce stomach upsets.

7. **FENNEL SEEDS:** Very commonly used for its treatment of digestive disorders. Add a pinch of salt to two to three teaspoons of these tiny seeds and chew them well, which will really ease the stomach.

8. **PEPPER:** There can be nothing like a cup of hot milk mixed with pinch of powdered pepper and turmeric when one has a cold spell. It is also used effectively for constipation, indigestion, toothache.
**KINGLY SCIENCE KINGLY SECRET by Sri Swami Sivananda**

True to its name, this book is an encapsulation of wonderful gems of wisdom from the mighty pen of Sri Swami Sivananda. The world is seen differently and correctly only by the realized souls. When such an exalted person out of compassion to mankind shares his insight into the workings of the universe, that is an epic and a treasure to be cherished. Great facts that are usually hidden for the common man are thus revealed.

“Kingly Science Kingly Secret” is such an epic that reveals numerous secrets about life. It is written in the form of a commentary on various topics taught in the Bhagavad Gita by Lord Krishna. Spanning 230 pages and with 44 chapters, the secrets taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita are brought out with detailed explanations and relevant examples. The fiery spirit of renunciation and Vedantic wisdom are found in every paragraph of this book and is a must read source of inspiration for all spiritual seekers.

The glory of Swadharma, the technique of Karma yoga, the mystery of death, a dying man's thoughts, the four types of devotees with examples are just some of the topics covered in detail in this book. Sri N. Ananthanarayanan has done a remarkable job of compiling this volume from the works of Swami Sivananda. Published by Divine Life Society, Rishikesh in 1981. This book is also available for free download at [www.dlshq.org](http://www.dlshq.org) website.

**SONG OF IMMANENCE OF RAM by Sri Swami Sivananda**

OM Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram, Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram

In earth, water, fire, air and ether is Ram - In the heart, mind, Prana and senses is Ram !

In the breath, blood, nerves and brain is Ram - In sentiment, thought, word and action is Ram !!

Within is Ram, without is Ram, in front is Ram - Above is Ram, below is Ram, behind is Ram !

To the right is Ram, to the left is Ram, everywhere is Ram - Vyapak is Ram, Vibhu is Ram, Poornam is Ram !!

Sat is Ram, Chit is Ram, Anand is Ram - Santi is Ram, Sakti is Ram, Jyoti is Ram !

Prem is Ram, mercy is Ram, beauty is Ram - Bliss is Ram, joy is Ram, purity is Ram !

Refuge, solace, path, Lord, witness is Ram - Father, mother, friend, relative, Guru is Ram !

Creator, preserver, destroyer, redeemer is Ram !!

The goal ultimate of one and all is Ram - Attainable through Sraddha, Prem, worship is Ram !

Accessible to devotion and surrender is Ram - Approachable by prayer, Japa and Kirtan is Ram !!

Hosanna to Ram, glory to Ram, victory to Ram - Adorations to Ram, salutations to Ram, prostrations to Ram !!

OM Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram, Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram

**RAM AND NAM - IMMORTAL TWINS by Sri Swami Tejomayananda**

"Ram and Nam – Immortal Twins" is a set of two audiocassettes that contain a discourse by Sri Swami Tejomayananda on the power of God's Name. Based on Goswami Tulasi-dasji’s Ramcharit Manas this discourse dwells on one of the most potent means of obtaining self-realization in modern times, which is, taking the name of the Lord. The glory and power of "Nam" is one of the best-kept secrets and has been revealed by God and His messengers. It cannot be easily understood by a dry scientific mind.

Goswami Tulasidas deals with the greatness of God's Name at length at the start of Bala Kanda in Sri Ramcharit Manas giving many logical reasons supporting the supremacy of Ram. Swami Tejomayanandaji has handled this topic in his usual inimitable, expert way and does a great service to mankind by sharing this sublime knowledge.

Interspersed with examples and humor, the talk is very riveting and uplifting. Listening to this discourse is sure to bring into our hearts devotion to the Lord. We have listened to these cassettes numerous times and every time we are filled with great joy. In this discourse Swamiji gives several practical hints to devotees, for example the importance of building a relationship with God.
Thus we spent three wonderful days in the holy place of our Gurudev Swami Sivananda, by His grace. I have so many memories to pen down that our flight was not delayed, unlike a general case in the winter weather. We got down at the airport around 9:30 AM, ate some sweets we packed, our destination to be embraced in thick fog and chill. But to our surprise, that day seemed to be the best of sunny days in the area and we were glad. We also met several seekers, Swamijis, brahmacharis and others in the ashram. During the day we had darshan of Swami Vimalananda ji Maharaj, who is the General Secretary of Divine Life Society. We had a wonderful Satsang with him in the evening in the new Auditorium Hall. We had good sumptuous meals in the Annapurana Dining Hall in the ashram. The next day we went outside to visit Ram Jhula, Laksham Jhula, Kali Kamali Vala Maharaj, who is the General Secretary of Divine Life Society. We had a wonderful Satsang with him in the evening in the new Auditorium Hall. We had good sumptuous meals in the Annapurana Dining Hall in the ashram. The next day we went outside to visit Ram Jhula, Laksham Jhula, Kali Kamali Vala Kshetra, Devi Vanamaali’s Ashram. We bought a Conch for our altar and returned to the Ashram.

We met here an old Swami, who hailed from near my place, and who was very kind to us. His face shone with simplicity and child-like love. He took us to the Bhajan Hall where 24-hour non-stop “Hare Rama” Sankirtan is held from 1945. We then went to Ananda Kutir, the abode of Gurudev Swami Sivananda, where his dynamic presence is always felt. We were not strangers there. Everyone – Swamijis and Brahmacharis alike – came forward to us and talked to us. When we were in doubt, it was as though Gurudev himself would send someone to answer our question and direct us to proper place. We participated in the Akhanda Mahamantra Kirtan in the Bhajan Hall where 24-hour non-stop “Hare Rama” Sankirtan is held from 1945. We then went to Ananda Kutir, the abode of Gurudev and we felt so much of peace and joy in this little dwelling. All his belongings were very well-preserved for people like us. We met Swami Harshananda who was in charge of the Kutir maintenance, and asked him about Ganges bath. Sivananda Ghat is on the backside of Ananda Kutir surrounded by the holy Bilva (Bael) trees. Swamiji kindly provided a bucket and a mug, as the steps are sometimes considered dangerous. We sat near the ghat, took a small dip in Ganges, filled our buckets, and poured on our bodies, while doing Pranams to Mother Ganga that our ignorance be washed away by her pure waters. We met here an old Swami, who hailed from near my place, and who was very kind to us. His face shone with simplicity and child-like love. He took us to the Bhajan Hall and introduced us to another very loving Swami who asked our whereabouts, and said “You have boarded Sivananda Express, and you are certain to reach your destination”. Such kind and assuring words!! We felt Gurudev himself had spoken to us through Swami ji!!

Next morning, we payed our respects to Gurudev Sivananda in the Samadhi Shrine, where his dynamic presence is always felt. We were not strangers there. Everyone – Swamijis and Brahmacharis alike – came forward to us and talked to us. When we were in doubt, it was as though Gurudev himself would send someone to answer our question and direct us to proper place. We participated in the Akhanda Mahamantra Kirtan in the Bhajan Hall where 24-hour non-stop “Hare Rama” Sankirtan is held from 1945. We then went to Ananda Kutir, the abode of Gurudev and we felt so much of peace and joy in this little dwelling. All his belongings were very well-preserved for people like us. We met Swami Harshananda who was in charge of the Kutir maintenance, and asked him about Ganges bath. Sivananda Ghat is on the backside of Ananda Kutir surrounded by the holy Bilva (Bael) trees. Swamiji kindly provided a bucket and a mug, as the steps are sometimes considered dangerous. We sat near the ghat, took a small dip in Ganges, filled our buckets, and poured on our bodies, while doing Pranams to Mother Ganga that our ignorance be washed away by her pure waters. We met here an old Swami, who hailed from near my place, and who was very kind to us. His face shone with simplicity and child-like love. He took us to the Bhajan Hall and introduced us to another very loving Swami who asked our whereabouts, and said “You have boarded Sivananda Express, and you are certain to reach your destination”. Such kind and assuring words!! We felt Gurudev himself had spoken to us through Swami ji!!

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Thus we spent three wonderful days in the holy place of our Gurudev Swami Sivananda, by His grace. I have so many memories to pen down and this small page is not enough, but they are deeply ingrained into our being. We are waiting for a second chance to visit Rishikesh, and this time we plan to extend our trip to Kedarnath, Badarinath and Mt. Kailas.
Likhita Japa constitutes an important part of spiritual sadhana. The groove of our Mantra is etched in more deeply in our minds with repetition and concentration. Rama Koti is a very widely used book for writing Likhita Japa. Each month in this section, we will provide a design of Rama Koti, which you can fill with the Lord’s name of your choice. Interesting designs to sustain interest in our Japa along with an inspiring caption will be given in this box below. All you need to do is to complete your Likhita Japa, tear it along the dashed lines and keep it in your Rama Koti record. ENJOY!

"Write down daily in a notebook your Ishta Mantra or Guru Mantra for half an hour. When you write the Mantra, observe Mouna or Silence. Write the Mantra clearly in ink. On sundays and holidays, write this for one hour. This is Likhita Japa. It brings about purity of heart, concentration of Mind, control of Asana, control of Senses and power of endurance."

- Swami Sivananda
UNIVERSAL PRAYER

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love!
Salutations and Prostrations Unto Thee
Thou Art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient
Thou Art Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss)
Thou Art the Indweller of All Beings!

Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, Devotion and Wisdom
Grant us Inner Spiritual strength,
To resist temptations and to control the mind
Free us from egoism, lust, greed, anger, jealousy and hatred
Fill our hearts with Divine Virtues!

Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms
Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms
Let us ever remember Thee
Let us ever sing Thy glories
Let Thy Name be ever on our lips
Let us Abide in Thee forever and ever!

- Swami Sivananda

ॐ सर्वेदं स्वस्तितम्भेतु सर्वेदं शान्तितम्भेतु
सर्वेदं पूर्णं भवतु सर्वेदं महंगतं भवतु ॥
सर्वेदं भवत्तो सुखिनः सर्वे सत्तो निरामयः
सर्वेदं भद्राणि भवत्तुं मा कष्टं दुःखं भाग्मच्छेदं ॥

Om Prosperity be unto All, perfect Peace be unto All
Fullness be unto All, Auspiciousness be unto All
Happiness be unto All, perfect Health be into All
May All see good in everyone, May all be free from suffering.

We would like to hear from you about our new E-Magazine, any tips, suggestions and feedback for improvement. Your contributions are very welcome to be published in this magazine. We will appreciate if you can send us your contributions for the third issue on June 22nd, 2008. Please note our email ID below and let us know what articles you would like to contribute for the next month's issue. If you want to subscribe to this monthly E-Magazine, please email us to the below ID. In the meanwhile, if you think anyone will benefit from this E-Magazine, please send it to them. We hope you enjoyed this issue. Our issue is also available online at: http://saranaagathi.wordpress.com. Thank you for your time!

Om Peace.
Yours, In Service,
The Divine Ambrosia Team,
DivineAmbrosia.ezine@gmail.com