

SIVARATRI MAHIMA

(H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj)

Silent adorations to Lord Siva, consort of Parvati, the destructive aspect of Brahman, who is known by the names Sambhu, Sankara, Mahadeva, Sadashiva, Viswanatha, Hara, Tripurari, Gangadhara, Soolapani, Nilakantha, Dakshinamurti, Chandrashekhara, Nilalohita, who is the bestower of auspiciousness, immortality and divine knowledge on His devotees, and who does Tandava Nritya or the Dance of Death at the end of Time or the Cosmic Pralaya, and who is the real Regenerator but not the Destroyer,

Maha Sivaratri means the great night consecrated to Lord Siva. Maha Sivaratri falls on Trayodasi or the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of Kumbha month. In the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, Bhishma refers to the observance of Maha Sivaratri by King Chitrabhanu when he was giving the discourse on Dharma, resting on his bed of arrows.

Once upon a time King Chitrabhanu of the Ikshvaku dynasty, who was ruling over the whole of Jambudwipa, and his wife were observing a fast on the day of Maha Sivaratri. The Sage Ashtavakra came on a visit to the court of the King. The Sage asked: "O King! Why are you observing a fast today?" King Chitrabhanu had the gift of remembering the incidents of his previous birth, and he said to Sage Ashtavakra:

"I was a hunter by name Suswar in my previous birth. I eked out my livelihood by killing and selling birds and animals. One day, I

was roaming in a forest in search of animals. I was overtaken by the darkness of night. I was not able to return home and so I climbed up a Bilwa tree for shelter. I shot a deer that day but I had no time to take it home. As I was tormented by hunger and thirst, I kept awake throughout the night. I shed profuse tears when I thought of my poor wife and children who were starving and anxiously awaiting my return. I engaged myself in plucking and dropping down the Bilwa leaves. There was a Siva Linga at the foot of the Bilwa tree. The tears and the leaves fell upon the Siva Linga.

"The day dawned. I returned home and sold the deer. I got food for myself and for my family. I was about to break my fast. A stranger came to me and begged for food. I served him with food first and then I took my food. At the hour of death I saw two messengers of Lord Siva. They were sent down for the sake of conducting my soul to the abode of Siva. I learnt there for the first time of the great merit I had earned by the observance of the fast on the day of Maha Sivaratri, though I did it unconsciously and by accident, I lived in the abode of Siva and enjoyed divine bliss for long ages. I am now reborn on this earth as Chitrabhanu."

The Name of Lord Siva chanted in any way, correctly or incorrectly, knowingly or unknowingly, carefully or carelessly is sure to give the desired result. The glory of the Name of Lord Siva cannot be established through reasoning and intellect. It can certainly be experienced or realised only through devotion, faith and constant repetition of the Name and

singing His hymns with *bhava*. Every Name is filled with countless potencies or *shaktis*. The power of the Name is ineffable. Its glory is indescribable. The efficiency and inherent *shakti* of the Name of Lord Siva are unfathomable.

The mind is purified by constant repetition of Siva Stotra and Names of Lord Siva. The Stotras are filled with good and pure thoughts. Repetition of the hymns to Siva strengthens the good *samskaras*. "As a man thinks, that he becomes." This is the psychological law. The mind of a man who trains himself in thinking good, holy thoughts, develops a tendency to think good thoughts. His character is molded and transformed by continued good thought. When the mind thinks of the image of the Lord during His hymns, the mental substance actually assumes the form of the image of the Lord. The impression of the object is left in the mind. This is called *samskara*. When the act is repeated very often, the *samskaras* gain strength by repetition, and a tendency or habit is formed in the mind. He who entertains thoughts of a Divinity becomes transformed actually into the Divinity himself by constant thinking. His *bhava* or disposition is purified and divinised. When one sings the hymns of Lord Siva, one is in tune with the Lord. The individual mind melts in the cosmic mind. He who sings the hymns becomes one with Lord Siva.

Just as fire has the natural property of burning inflammable things, so also the Name of Lord Siva has the power of burning the sins, *samskaras* and *vasanas* and be-

stowing eternal bliss and everlasting peace on those who repeat the Name of the Lord. Just as burning quality is natural and inherent in fire, so also the power of destroying sins with their very root and branch and bringing the aspirant into blissful union with the Lord through *bhava samadhi* is natural and inherent in the Name of God.

O friends! Take refuge in the Name of Siva. Sing His hymns. *Nami* and *nama* are inseparable. Sing Lord Siva's hymns incessantly. Remember the Name of the Lord with every incoming and outgoing breath. In this Iron Age *nama smaran* or singing the hymns is the easiest, quickest, safest and surest way to reach God and attain Immortality and perennial joy. Glory to Lord Siva! Glory to His Name!!!

Ravana propitiated Lord Siva by his hymns. Pushpadanta pleased Lord Siva by his celebrated Stotra—Siva Mahimna Stotra—which is even now sung by all devotees of Siva throughout India, and obtained all *aiswarya* or *siddhis* and *mukti*. The glory of the Stotras of Siva is indescribable, why not you all sing the hymns of Lord Siva and obtain His grace and salvation not in the unknown future, but right now in this very second. You can please Lord Siva as easily. Fast on this Sivaratri. If you cannot do this, take milk and fruits. Keep perfect vigil the whole night and sing His Stotras. Repeat Om Namah Sivaya. May the blessings of Lord Siva be upon you all!

Om Shanti! Shanti!! Shantih!!!

To realise God is your duty. God-realisation is your birthright. Develop strong yearning for God-realisation, have confidence in yourself. Be self-controlled. Be fiery in your determination. Stick to your resolves tenaciously. Cultivate a strong faith in God. Do total self-surrender and obtain His Grace.

—Swami Sivananda

THE SUBJECTIVE DIMENSION OF PRAYER

(Sri Swami Chidananda)

Radiant Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! We will soon be observing the sacred annual worship of Lord Siva, Mahasivaratri. It is customary to regard and to speak of Lord Siva in terms of being a destroyer. The three aspects of the Supreme Being are Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Siva, the destroyer. They say *srishti*, *sthiti* and *layakartas*. The “destroyer” is usually not used by me. I use the word “dissolver,” because they do not refer to Lord Siva in mythology as *nasakarta* or *vinasakarta* (destroyer) but as *layakarta* (dissolver). *Laya* means subsiding back into the original state. *srishti* is emerging into variegated names and forms, the One becoming the many. *sthiti* is preserving, continuing in time, and *laya* is merging back into the original unmanifest state, the nameless, formless unified state.

But, quite apart from this concept of Lord Siva as dissolver, it is very widely held, especially in North India, that He is the boon-giver. Even though He is the highest of all gods, *devadi-deva* (Lord of lords), *Mahadeva* (the great God), yet He is easily pleased. He is very simple and prepared to give anything, to give *anything*. And He is also a saviour. He saved Markandeya, His boy devotee, from death by appearing before him and daring lord Yama to touch His devotee. So here, He is not so much the destroyer as He is the protector and saviour. There are innumerable such instances of His saving grace.

And it does not take much to please Him. Pour some water over Him, give a Bilva

leaf and chant His Name once. That is enough. So one of the terms with which He is referred to is *asutosh*, very easily propitiated, easily pleased—*asutosh mahadev*.

But, the most endearing term by which He is popularly referred to by devotees, in North India especially, is the term “*bhola*.” Bhola means simple-minded, one who has no complication in his thinking, feeling and acting. He has no complications, no crookedness, no cleverness. He is simple-minded. They call Him Bhola Nath. They call Him Bhola Sambhu. Bhola means simple. He believes whatever He sees. He does not look beyond. Even if a person asks for a boon with a wrong intention, He does not look to the intention.

If a person has taken His Name, or performed *tapasya*, He does not look into either the intention or the consequences. To anyone who propitiates Him, takes His Name, prays to Him, does *tapasya* and pleases Him, He asks: “What do you want?” Ravana did intense *tapasya* and just to indicate to what extent Lord Siva is simple, easy to please and prepared to give everything, He gave His divine partner, Parvati.

It would indeed be a highly beneficial thing if everyone would undertake an *anushthana* commencing tomorrow and concluding on Mahasivaratri day. Regularly repeat eleven *maalas* of Om Namah Sivaya dedicated to the welfare of humanity. If you cannot repeat eleven at least repeat five, one *maala* for each letter of the *panchakshari*

mantra. Om Namah Sivaya. It is very simple, very easy. In five minutes you can do it. It will not be a *purashcharana*, but it will be an *anushtana*. A *japa anushtana* you can do, and dedicate it to the welfare of mankind and the peace of the world.

Now, let us consider this ancient tradition in India, especially religious India, that is, praying for others, praying for the world, praying for the welfare of mankind, for the welfare of all-creatures, praying for peace on earth, not only for mankind and all creatures but also for everything that exists, praying for peace, wishing peace, desiring peace and sending out thoughts of peace to everything that exists, to all existence. "Peace be unto all the five elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether." It is desiring peace for the grass, herbs, plants and trees. It is desiring peace for the celestials, for the angelic host, for the gods right up to the creator, Brahma—*visvedeva santih* (peace to all the Gods), *brahma santih* (peace to Brahma), *santih eva santih* (peace for peace itself), wishing peace for peace itself. Let there be peace to all the Vedas, Vedic mantras, to everything. This is the ancient tradition.

Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu—May all beings in this universe be happy. *Sarvesham svasti-bhavatu*—May prosperity and welfare be unto all beings. *Sarvesham santir-bhavatu*—May peace be unto all beings. *Sarvesham purnam bhavatu*—May plenitude and fullness be unto all beings. *Sarvesham mangalam bhavatu*—May auspiciousness and blessedness be unto all beings. *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*—May all be happy. *Sarve Santu niramayah*—May all be free from disease, pain and suffering. *Sarve bhadrani pasyant*—May all behold that which is auspicious, pleasant, nothing fearful nor unpleasant. *Bhadra* is auspicious,

blessed, mild, pleasant. *Ma kaschid dukhabag bhavet*—May not sorrow fall to the lot of anyone. Thus, this has been an ancient tradition—wishing well, wishing peace, happiness, prosperity, freedom from disease and pain, plenty, fullness, blessedness and auspiciousness to everyone.

The desirability of such prayer is not only because the world needs all these things. There is also the subjective dimension of prayer that has to be considered. The process has a very important effect upon the one who prays. By wishing for all that is positive, creative, constructive, good, conducive to welfare, auspicious and blessed to all that exists—all creatures, mankind, the whole world—it makes us aware that our ancients expected us to make life an active, dynamic process of constantly working to bring about those very conditions which we wish for, pray for, intend and want for others. For, unless our prayer is backed up by suitable action to bring about these conditions, it has no meaning.

If we wish peace for others and at the same time we are actively engaged in robbing others of their peace by disturbing them, agitating them, causing them distress, then we stand as a living lie. We stand in terrible contradiction to what we mouth through such prayers. We say one thing, but we act in another manner. We succeed in doing something that is contrary to that which we pray for. It thus becomes a very serious situation, a very undesirable state of affairs. Every day we say *ma kaschid dukhabag bhavet*—May not sorrow fall to the lot of any being. Therefore, we have to be perpetually conscious, aware and careful that neither by thought, word nor deed do we create sorrow for others, grief for others.

“Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.” That is the sublime, noble prayer of Saint Francis. When we pray “May not sorrow fall to the lot of anyone,” then we should work in the way indicated by the simple prayer of St. Francis. “O Lord, where there is sadness, let me bring joy. Make me an instrument of joy to the lives of others. Make me an instrument of removing the sadness of others.” Axiomatically it means that if we wish happiness for others, joy for others, then we have to do something positively to bring joy to others; we have to also, simultaneously, engage in doing acts that remove the sorrow of others, lessen the grief of others, make people less sad. This is implied in this line from the simple prayer of St. Francis.

Apart from this, that such prayer is an indication of what we should work, live and act for, of what our great ancients have placed before us as an ideal for our life and the living of it, it also has still another aspect. By constantly thinking in such a positive manner of the happiness, welfare and peace of others, it brings about a change in our nature. Gradually we become so disposed to act in such a way, to live in such a way, that we become a centre of goodwill towards others, a centre of compassion and kindness towards others, a centre of peace for others. The constant repetition of such prayer, the constant dwelling upon these thoughts, and the constant harbouring of these feelings in our heart have a transforming effect upon our own nature. It tends to gradually make us grow in this quality of goodwill towards all, of ill-will towards none, of compassion and kindness towards all, of prayerfully ever wanting to live in order to bring peace, solace, happiness and comfort to everyone.

This constant prayer has this effect, but only if we pray feelingfully, not mechanically.

If, as a matter of routine, we go on uttering this prayer mechanically with lip-service, then of course, we will be deprived of this purifying, elevating and transforming effect. We will not benefit from it; we will not gain anything by it. It is only when, every time we pray, we pray with earnestness, with sincerity, with feeling, in a meaningful manner, then alone it is a great life-transforming power, it is a great purifying and uplifting power.

That is its effect upon the one who prays. It has this unfailing effect of making us grow into those very qualities we pray for. This is the subjective dimension of prayer—how it benefits the one who prays. Constantly having these thoughts, these feelings of goodwill, of kindness, compassion, friendliness, makes us a well-wisher of humanity, a being filled with loving kindness, with good thoughts, goodwill and love, wishing and praying for the peace of all.

Then indeed our life mission is being fulfilled, because we become a centre for radiating around us the quality which is of God, *daivi sampad*. Compassion, kindness, peace, light, joy all belong to God, and we make ourselves a channel for the manifestation of these God-qualities in this world of His. What greater blessedness can one have? What greater privilege than this can one have? And what greater satisfaction than this can one have in life than the satisfaction “I have not lived in vain; I have tried to make myself a true child of God, make myself a channel for manifesting the qualities of Him whom I address as father, mother, friend, relative, and Lord.” That indeed makes life worth living.

It is in this way that we must understand the incalculable value of prayer for the one who prays. Thus may prayer transform your life and make it Divine. God bless you all!

THE PASSAGE OF TIME FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF ETERNITY

(Sri Swami Krishnananda)

[Continued from the previous issue]

Anything can be known by some kind of observation or calculation. We can measure the distance of space. We can see space with our eyes in some manner; but we cannot see time. Time is not the movement of the watch or the timepiece or the clock; it is an inscrutable illusion cast upon us. If we know what an illusion is, it ceases to be illusion. We should be caught by the magic of the magician—only then it is entertaining. The magician cannot enjoy his performance; it is others who cannot understand what it is who enjoy it and are entertained by it. We seem to be somehow or other getting on in this world, with the satisfaction of being worthwhile or doing something worthwhile, because we do not know what time is doing to us. *Kalo jagat bhakshah*, is an old adage: Time is the consumer of all things. The greatest consumer is time. The work of time is eating, swallowing, digesting, destroying, transforming; this is the work of time. Birth and death are processes of time. As everything, every one of us, is involved in this process, we cannot know what is actually happening. We cannot know when we are born; we cannot know that we are growing after we have been born; we cannot know that death is near. Nothing is clear when it is a question of involvement in the time process. Yet, there is something above time which is working within us in the form of a joy that a New Year of betterment is before us.

Who told us that the New Year is something better than the previous year? We have not seen the New Year; the year has not yet come, yet every year we say, "The New Year is

a happy one. It has to be something better." We never feel that the next year will be worse than the previous one. We always know it cannot be worse; it has to be better. Who told us that it should be better? We are the witnesses of it. The trans-temporal, That which is above time working in us, operating in everyone, tells us that the future has to be something better than the past. Why should the future be better than the past? Observational science cannot answer this question. There is no method of experimentation by which we can know that the future is better. Even the study of history is not enough for this purpose. It is only our heart that says that the future is better. "Tomorrow it shall be better. Everything will be all right. All shall be well. Peace shall reign in the world. The millennium shall come. God shall rule the world." Does not a voice from within us speak in this manner? From where does this voice come? It is That within us which is not involved in time, which is not limited in space, though we are involved in time and confined to space. Spatially we are confined to one particular location; temporally we are limited to our age, our span of life. Yet we always feel that there is a grand thing before us, ahead of us.

"Wish you a Happy New Year!" we cry loudly. Who is actually making this wish? Is it my wish or your wish? It is the wish of the Timeless Eternal in us. The non-temporal Eternity tells us that all shall be well with us, and not to be despondent. Everyone, even the most miserable man in this world, feels that a good day will come to him: "Somehow I shall be free from

this misery, this sorrow, this suffering.” The language of Eternity is the literature of joy, happiness, blessedness, irrespective of the fact that we seem to be shrouded in the limitations of space and time. We live a dual life: a life of death, mortality, and the life of deathlessness immortality.

We know that we shall not live in this world for a long time, and yet we feel that we should do good things. If tomorrow is the last day for us, what benefit is there in doing good things today? That which tells us that in spite of the fact that tomorrow may be the last day, today we should be good—that which tell us this, is the Eternity that is speaking to us: “You shall not perish.” Though the temporal encasement in us shall perish tomorrow, the Eternity in us shall not perish. The deeds that we perform have an eternal characteristic also in them, apart from their perishable nature. Every work that we do perishes when the work is over—it has an end, it comes to a close—but it produces an effect which shall not come to an end.

In the same way as we have a temporal vesture, which is this body, simultaneously with an Eternity that is a spark of Divinity within us, there is this temporality in the actions that we perform. All work is perishable in its nature; that is true. Yet, in this perishable framework of our actions, there is an eternal future embedded, a seed sown. It shall be an asset for us in our future. What do we mean by the future? If we leave this body tomorrow, where is the future for us? If all that we have done in this world, all our meritorious works are to cease together with the cessation of this body, what good is this life? This question may arise many a time when we are in a mood of despondency, but we forget that we are not merely mortal bodies and our actions are not entirely perishable or temporal in their nature. Perishable is this body, perishable are our deeds, yet immortal is our soul and deathless is the effect produced by our actions. This is the reason why we feel that tomorrow

shall be a better day. Otherwise, what is the rational ground for our feeling that tomorrow shall be better and the New Year is blessed? God speaks within us in the language of the Eternal that is operating within us and tells us, “All shall be well with you.” *Suhrdam sarva-bhutanam jnatva mam santim rcchati*. The Lord says in the Bhagavadgita, “Know me as your friend. Knowing this, you shall have peace.” Our friend is our Eternal in us; it is our real asset. Whatever we do in this world, if it has even a modicum of the Eternity in it, it shall be a credit for us to be carried forward to our future life.

Thus there are several series of New Years to come. Many New Years have already gone and many more are yet to come. All the New Years that are yet to come in the future are steps on the onward march of the eternal element in us towards its flowering efflorescence in the form of utter perfection. To the extent we are Eternal, we are happy; we smile and we feel that things are fine in this world. We feel that things are okay, fine, to the extent the Eternity is operating in us; but when the other temporal element takes care of us and catches our throat, we feel all is misery and nothing is of any worth in this world.

The God element is stronger than the Earthly element. We have seen this little movie where the power that was material, which is represented by Kamsa, was overshadowed by the Eternal which was Sri Krishna, which was light, radiance—this Eternal Light before which, all the radiation of matter is darkness.

So this New Year that is before us, ahead of us, gazing at us, speaks to us in a language of blessing and gracious abundance. May we therefore collect our thoughts, bring our minds into a focus of attention and realise our true destiny—what we are really and what we are going to be in the future. May we not be caught up by the illusions of the time process.

We have come alone to this world. Is it true that we have come alone to this world, with

no friends to accompany us? We came with open hands, with nothing on our palms. *Ekah prajayate jantur eka eva praliyate, eko'nubhunkte sukrta eka eva tu duskrta; namutrahi sahayartham pita mata ca tisthatah, na putradarah na jnatih dharmas tisthati kevalah.* This is a ringing message of the Manu Smriti. Alone does the Soul come into this world. It does not bring luggage, treasures, or friends and relations. Alone shall it depart from this world. It will not carry any luggage and bedding. It cannot carry with it one broken needle. Alone shall we reap the fruits of our deeds. Nobody will share our sorrows; our cry will be in the wilderness. And if we have done any good deed, we alone shall reap the fruits of those good deeds.

Eko'nubhunkte sukrta eka eva tu duskrta; namutrahi sahayartham pita mata ca tisthatah. Our parents will not come with us. Our relations will desert us. What will come with us? We will come with ourselves. When I go, what shall I take with me? I shall take only myself. This is good news. It is happy news indeed to hear that when I go, I carry only myself; when I go, I take only myself. What is this 'myself'? This body? It has been left here. The seed that has been sown in the form of a perpetuation of values by the deeds performed and thoughts entertained and also feelings of the mind—these will come with us. When I say, "I come with myself," my thoughts, my feelings, my deeds in their potentiality will come. These are the historical notes struck by the drama of time; and onward does it march, carrying every one of us like passengers in a railway train, in a single direction. Each one comes alone, each one goes alone—of course it is true—but everyone shall meet at one point, as pilgrims meet in a choultry or an inn when they are on their way to their destination. So we are not fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters or friends and relations here; we are pil-

grims on the path. We chat together, talk together, entertain ourselves by telling stories on the way, but we do not belong to one another.

Neither you belong to me nor I belong to you, but everyone belongs to something else. Nobody owns any property here, because all property belongs to one thing, to which we also belong. Towards that we are heading. This is the time process; this is the movement of the whole universe. The entire body of the cosmos is lifted up high above itself to its own destiny, which is what may be called Universal Self-realisation. The world is moving toward a Self-realisation of itself. This Universal Self-realisation, where the universe becomes conscious of itself as 'I am I', is the destiny towards which time is moving—reaching which, time extinguishes itself as a flame is extinguished when that which feeds it is no more there. The karmas cease, and time also ceases; Eternity reigns supreme. It is towards this glorious consummation of the values of all life, towards this blessedness, that we are moving in the passage of time for the experience of Eternity.

So, blessed is the New Year, and may we take this occasion especially to invoke the invisible presence of Worshipful Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj that the purpose for which we have come here to this Ashram, which is our Self-realisation, be fulfilled in our loving participation with the work of the whole cosmos in its Universal Self-realisation.

May this be our blessedness! May this be the blessedness of all humanity! May the world be in absolute peace! May be this our humble prayer at this moment of the coming of the New Year! God bless you all!

(Concluded)

The knowledge of everything through the knowledge of one thing means that everything is made up of that same thing.
—Swami Krishnananda

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF THE VEDIC WAY OF LIFE

(Sri Swami Atmaswarupananda)

The Vedic way of life says that our life should have four principal aims. Our first aim should be to live a life of *dharma*, which is often defined as righteousness. Righteousness really means that One alone is, and therefore the purpose of that One alone is in everything; there is nowhere Its purpose is not. We are meant to live in harmony with that purpose. Harmony comes from the same root word as heaven.

The second aim is to earn wealth. There was never any thought that we should live off someone else, that somehow spirituality was separate from the practical aspects of life. Indeed, spirituality is found in the practical aspects of life. Therefore, they also said that we should enjoy legitimate desires. And finally, the last and most important aim was to be liberated from the illusion that we are the body and mind, to be liberated from ourself, as Pujya Swami Chidanandaji used to express it.

These four aims were to be fulfilled in four stages of our life. Assuming we would live for a hundred years, they divided our lives into four 25 year periods. The first 25 years is the student stage, when we are meant to prepare ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually for the successful living of our life. The second 25 years is meant to be our productive years, the years of active married life and active working life, of raising a family, providing for them and also providing for elders. The third stage of life is meant to be a retired stage, a gradual letting go of all that has been accumulated both physically and emotionally. The final stage of life is to be a total retirement from normal secular life and a concentration on God, on liberation.

It is certainly not impossible for an ordinary human being to live a life of *dharma*, to fulfil the aims of earning wealth and enjoying legitimate pleasures and to seek liberation. It is not unnatural to go from the stage of the student life to a householder life. Finally, after 25 years of retired life, to retire to *sannyas* is quite natural. What is not easy, what is not natural and yet symbolizes

the whole of the spiritual life is to shift in middle age from *grihastha* to *vanaprastha*, from householder life to retired life.

What makes it so incredibly difficult is that we have spent nearly 50 years being trained, taking a lot of abuse, working hard to achieve success—success in raising our family, success in earning wealth, success in overcoming our limitations. Finally we have reached a point that we have been striving for all our life: We are being looked up to, instead of being looked down on. At this point, to walk away from it all is more than most people can even contemplate, let alone do. And yet, it is not only key from a practical spiritual point of view, it is key for the understanding of our spiritual life.

It is key from a practical point of view because after putting 25 years into the world, conquering the world, it takes at least 25 years to get it out of our system, to let it go. Therefore, it should not be postponed, if we don't want to run out of time. But it is also very important because it symbolizes what the whole of the spiritual life is all about, and that is letting go of all the things that we think are important. It is seeing life from, as Gurudev said, another angle of vision.

It is almost impossible to overestimate the difference between Arjuna's angle of vision and Lord Krishna's angle of vision. That is why it was such a struggle for Arjuna to change his mind. That is why Lord Krishna had to work so hard on him. God's point of view and our point of view are like the difference between night and day. God is not something we can understand from our angle of vision. We have to renounce our angle of vision in order to gain God's angle of vision.

Therefore, at some point in our life we have to accept this challenge, and it is actualized and symbolized by leaving behind *grihastha* life and embracing the life of *vanaprastha*—sooner rather than later. As Gurudev said: "Do not postpone!"

LUST AND PASSION

(H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj)

[Continued from the previous issue]

A clerk who gets a salary of Rs. 500 has six children at the age of 30. Every two years there is an addition. He never thinks, "How shall I maintain such a big family? How shall I educate my sons and daughters? How shall I arrange for the marriage of my daughter?" At the heat of sexual excitement, he repeats the same ignoble act again and again. He has not a bit of self-control. Lions visit their partners only once in a year. It is only man with his boasted intellect that breaks the rules of health and has become a criminal in this direction. He will have to pay a heavy penalty in the near future, for violating the laws of nature.

You have adopted various habits from the West in matters relating to dress and fashion. You have become a vile imitation. They, in the West, do not marry unless they are able to maintain a family decently. They have got more self-restraint. They first secure a decent station in life, earn money, save something and then only think of marriage. If they have not sufficient money, they remain bachelors throughout their lives. They do not want to bring forth beggars into this world just in the same manner as you do. He who has understood the magnitude of human suffering in this world will never bring forth even a single child from the womb of a woman.

When a man with a poor salary has to maintain a big family, he is forced to take bribes. He loses his sense and power of understanding and is prepared to do any kind of mean act to collect money. The idea of God is forgotten. He is swayed by passion. He be-

comes a slave to his wife. He bears with a shrug of his shoulder her taunts and scolding when he is unable to supply her demands. He has no knowledge of the theory of Karma, Samskaras and the working of the inner mental factory. The evil habits of taking bribes, cheating others and telling lies, are imbedded in the subconscious mind and is transferred to every physical body in its future births. Will a man who knows this immutable law of Samskaras ever do wrong deeds? A man by his wrong actions spoils his mind and becomes a thief or a cheat in the coming births also. He brings in his old thoughts and feelings which are by nature devilish. He should be very careful in his thoughts, feelings and actions. He should always watch his thoughts and actions and entertain divine thoughts, sublime feelings and do noble actions. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. One should understand and remember this law. Then he will not do any wrong action.

Throughout the Gita the one ringing note that arrests the imagination and mind of the readers is that the man who has calmed his passionate nature is the most happy man in this world. It is also very, very easy to control passion which is your deadliest enemy if only you take this subject very seriously and apply yourself to spiritual Sadhana wholeheartedly with single-minded devotion and concentration.

Nothing is impossible under the sun. Dietetic adjustment is of paramount importance. Take Sattvic food such as milk, fruits, green dal, barley, etc. Give up pungent foods

such as curries, chutneys, chillies, etc. Take a simple diet. Do Vichara. Chant 'Om'. Meditate on Atman. Enquire 'Who am I?' Remember that there is no Vasana in Atman. Passion belongs to the mind only. Sleep separately. Get up at 4 a.m. Do the Japa of Maha Mantra or 'Om Namah Shivaya' or 'Om Namo Narayanaya' according to your taste, temperament and capacity. Do meditation on the Divine attributes such as Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, etc. Study one chapter of the Gita daily. Make it a point not to tell lies even at the cost of death itself. Fast on Ekadasi days or whenever your passion troubles you. Give up novel-reading and cinema-going. Spend every minute profitably. Practise Pranayama also. Study my book 'Science of Pranayama'. Do not look at women with passionate intents. Look at your toes when you walk along the streets and meditate on the form of your deity. Repeat always your Guru Mantra even while walking, eating and working in the office. Try to see God in everything, keep the daily diary regularly and send it to your Guru for review at the end of every month. Write down your Guru Mantra daily in a clean note book for an hour and send the notebook to your Guru.

You will be able to control passion if only you strictly adhere to the above instructions, to the very letter. You can laugh at me if you do not succeed. Blessed is the man who has controlled his passion for he will soon have God-realisation. Glory unto such a soul!

Practise Sirshasana, Sarvangasana and Siddhasana simultaneously with Pranayama. These are all highly useful in the conquest of passion. Do not overload your stomach at night. Night meals should be very light. Half a seer of milk or some fruit will constitute a good regimen or menu at night. Have the motto: 'Plain living and high thinking' engraved in letters of gold in the forefront of your conscience.

Study select works of Sankaracharya such as Bhaja Govindam, Maniratna Mala or Prashnottari, Viveka Chudamani, etc. Read with care 'Vairagya Shataka' of Bhartrihari. They are all very elevating and inspiring. Practise always Atma Vichara. Have Satsanga. Attend Kathas, Sankirtan and philosophical discourses. Do not be too familiar with anybody. Familiarity breeds contempt. Do not multiply friends. Do not court friendship with women. Do not also be very familiar with them. Familiarity with women will eventually end in your destruction. Never forget this point. Friends are your real foes.

Avoid looking at the opposite sex with lustful intents. Entertain Atma Bhava or the Bhava of mother, sister or Devi. You may fail many times. Again and again try to realise this Bhava. Whenever the mind runs towards the opposite sex with lustful thoughts, have a definite clear-cut photo in the mind, of the flesh, bone, urine and faecal matter of which man and woman are composed. This will induce Vairagya in the mind. You will not commit again the sin of unchaste look at anybody. It takes some time, no doubt.

Inflict self-punishment if the mind runs towards the opposite sex with lustful idea. Give up night meals. Do twenty Maalas of Japa more. Hate lust but not women or men. Always wear a Koupeen (Langoti).

Gradually give up salt and tamarind. Salt excites passion and emotion. Salt excites and strengthens the Indriyas. Renunciation of salt brings in a cool condition of the mind and the nerves. It helps meditation. You will suffer a bit in the beginning. Later on you will enjoy a saltless diet. Practise at least for six months. In this way you will be able to realise your own Svarupa very quickly. All that is wanted of you is sincere and earnest effort. May Sri Krishna give you courage and strength to tread the path of spirituality and attain the goal of life! *(To be continued)*

Sivananda's Gospel of Divine Life

FOUNDATION OF YOGA AND REALISATION

THE UNSEEN COMPANION

An old South Indian couple were on a visit to Rishikesh. They had remained at the Ashram for a few days and were leaving for South India. After a trip to Lakshmanjhula, they came into the office and prostrated to the Master.

"How do you like these places? Did you enjoy your trip to Lakshmanjhula? Did you see all the shrines?"

"Yes, Swamiji, wherever we go in Rishikesh, we discover immense peace of mind. We have never enjoyed this peace before. This Ashram is full of peace and bliss. There is no place like it anywhere else in India. When we think of the happiness that we derive here, our minds yearn to settle down here itself."

"What about your family?"

"We have no one else, only we two," replied the lady. "He also has retired long ago. We lead a lonely life. There is no hindrance. We can easily come and settle down here. He has already transferred his pension papers to Dehra Dun. We shall go to South India only to wind up the family affairs and then come here once for all."

"H'm! There is no one else for you?"

"No, Swamiji, only we two."

"But you have forgotten the third member of your family—God. He is your constant companion. You can never be absolutely alone. God is always with you."

KINDS OF VANITY

In the course of a conversation one of the visitors referred to an old acquaintance of the Master and said, "He has now fifteen cars, Swamiji, and he is rolling in wealth."

Quick came the reply, "What good is all this? It only increases his vanity."

Turning to the aspirants present, the Master added, "The other form of vanity is 'I have performed six lakhs of Om Namah Shivaya Japa.' All these kinds of egoism and vanity should be ruthlessly eradicated."

COMPASSION IN ACTION

It had been said by the Sadhu contemporaries of the Master that during his Sadhana days at Swarga Ashram, even if he had shut himself up in a room, he could be easily brought to his heels at the least sign of suffering in the neighbourhood. To him, God was more profoundly manifest in the afflicted patient outside than anywhere within the four walls of his own room.

The Master was deeply engaged in a conversation at Ram Ashram with his European devotees.

Suddenly the wail of a mother was heard nearby. He immediately lost all interest in the conversation, hurried to the patient and at once knelt at her side. The patient herself felt great relief and stopped crying. She explained her condition. The Master quickly diagnosed that it was labour pains.

"Get Sridharji quickly! Run!" One Ashramite was thus despatched.

“Fetch a horse-cart immediately!” he commanded to a second.

A third was sent to the kitchen!

After some initial treatment the lady was rushed to the Rishikesh hospital. The husband obviously had enough money with him, but the Master’s solicitude was always blind to these facts. Padmanabhanji came running with a ten-rupee note, which the Master, as though duty bound, handed to the husband. Within an hour of the Master hearing the weeping sound the lady was in hospital. She delivered a child a few minutes after admission!

A SURPRISE GIFT

Sri John D’Cruz was hesitating to ask for a copy of the book, ‘Diamond Jubilee Commemoration Volume.’ He had no money. A very diligent and earnest aspirant, yet God had placed him in poor circumstances.

The Master quickly perceived his immediate hunger to peruse this beautiful volume.

“Padmanabhanji. bring a copy of the ‘Diamond Jubilee Commemoration Volume’ for D’Cruzji.”

D’Cruz was beside himself with joy. He modestly asked the Master, “Is this volume for me, Swamiji? It is such a costly and precious book.”

“Of course it is for you, my dear D’Cruzji. The book is not worth anything to me in terms of money. You are more valuable to me than money. And if the book elevates you, I am much more satisfied than if you had paid me a hundred rupees in return for it.”

SOLICITUDE

An old lady was coming up to attend Satsang. As the meeting was being held on the roof of the building adjacent to the Ashram kitchen, a step had been improvised with a small table, to make it easier for people to ascend to the roof. The old lady was trying to look for a way to get upon the roof. The Master, perceiving this, immediately got up from his seat, and with great solicitude guided her to the place of Satsang.

Make the mind one-pointed by collecting all the dissipated rays of the mind. Withdraw the mind from all sense-objects again and again and try to fix the mind on your Lakshya or point of meditation or centre. Gradually you will have concentration of mind or one-pointedness. You must be patient and persevering. You must be very regular in your practice. Then only you will succeed. Regularity is of paramount importance.

—Swami Sivananda

Children's Page

THE SPRING OF PEACE

(*Sri Swami Ramarajyam*)

In the year 1857, when the Indians were all set to oust the British rulers from India, a Sadhu reached a military camp of the British by mistake. The Sadhu had taken the vow to observe silence and to speak only at the time of his death. On discovering the Sadhu there, the soldiers began to investigate him on the suspicion of his being a spy sent by the Indian fighters for freedom. The Sadhu gave no reply because of his vow of silence. His silence made them even more suspicious. When even after a long interrogation, the Sadhu did not speak, a strong suspicion fell on him. A soldier's bayonet pierced his chest. A stream of blood gushed out.

Thinking that his death was imminent, he broke his vow of silence and said "Tatvamasi". In spite of being in great pain, he looked smilingly at the soldier, whose bayonet lay pierced in his chest. He folded his hands and said to him, "O God! It is you who has come in the guise of this soldier. I recognise you. Why are you hiding behind this false identity? I salute you again and again."

Having said this, the Sadhu breathed his last. The soldiers did not know the meaning of "Tatvamasi" or of anything else he had said, but what surprised them most was his smile despite severe pain.

Dear children, perhaps you might also be wondering about what the Sadhu had said. 'Tatvamasi' means—'You are That (God).' The Sadhu saw God even in that soldier who did not hesitate to take his life and he saluted him before dying. His smile was the expression of the joy of seeing God before him.

We learn a lot from that Sadhu. We must remember God in every situation—good or bad. We should face all the situations gladly taking them as the will of God. We should also realise that God appears in various forms to create such situations. If we could think like that, a spring of peace would start flowing inside us. Our hearts and minds would be bathed in this spring. Its cool effect would always keep us cheerful.

The inner secret of the true law of prosperity is to affirm your plenitude, to affirm your abundance and live in that ever-present condition of lacking nothing, of having God and, therefore, of having everything. This is the only way. —**Swami Chidananda**

Yoga in Daily

BHAKTI YOGA

(H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj)

[Continued from the previous issue]

MANTRA FOR JAPA

Select any one of the following Mantras. Repeat it with concentration from 10 to 50 Malas from 4 to 6 a.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. regularly, everyday.

| Mantras | Deities |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Om Gam Ganapataye Namah</i> | —Ganapati |
| <i>Om Namah Sivaya</i> | —Lord Siva |
| <i>Om Namo Narayanaya</i> | —Lord Narayana |
| <i>Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya</i> | —Lord Krishna |
| <i>Om Klin Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijana Vallabhaya Svaha</i> | —Lord Krishna |
| <i>Om Sri Rama, Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Ram</i> | —Lord Rama |
| <i>Om Ram Ramaya Namah</i> | —Lord Rama |
| <i>Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare</i> | —Mahamantra |

Yugal Mantra

1. Sita Ram
2. Radheshyam
3. Sri Sita Ramachandrabhyo Namah

Saranagati Mantra

1. Sri Rama Saranam Mama
2. Sri Sita Rama Saranam Mama
3. Sri Ramachandra Saranam Prapadye
4. Sri Krishna Saranam Mama

BHAKTI YOGA SADHANA

God is the Inner Ruler of your heart and mind. He is the silent witness of your

thoughts. You cannot hide anything from Him. Become guileless and straightforward.

A devotee of Hari is always meek and humble. Name of God "Hari" is always on his lips. He sheds profuse tears when he is alone. He is very pious. He is friendly towards all. He has equal-vision. He does good always. He never hurts the feelings of others. He has a spotless character. He never covets the property of others. He sees Hari in all beings.

Bhakti can move mountains. Nothing is impossible to it. It was the devotion of Mira that converted a snake into a flower garland, poison into nectar and a bed of nails into a bed of roses. It was the devotion of Prahlada that turned fire into ice.

A devotee should become an embodiment of goodness. He must be ever ready to do good to living beings. That devotee who is intent upon the welfare of all beings obtains the peace of the Eternal. He who rejoices in the welfare of all, gets the Darshan of the Lord. He develops Advaitic consciousness eventually.

Service of Bhagavatas, repetition of God's name, Satsanga, singing His name, study of the Bhagavata or the Ramayana, living in Brindavan, Pandharpur, Chitrakuta or Ayodhya, are the six means for developing Bhakti.

(To be continued)

NEWS AND REPORTS

NEWS FROM THE HEADQUARTERS

SEVA THROUGH SIVANANDA HOME

By the profound Blessings of Sri Gurudev and the immanent Grace of Sri Swamiji Maharaj, the Divine Life Society Headquarters continues rendering its humble service through Sivananda Home, situated in Tapovan near Laxman Jhula. It provides medical facilities for homeless people who have become ill and are in need of in-patient treatment.

The fiery cold of this January month has taken the lives of many people who have their homes on the side of the road, in a forlorn corner, under a plastic sheet or hidden under a few dusty blankets. To be houseless, hearthless and homeless is not a small assignment in this season of the year. When the body cools down, the extremities become numb, one is not able to get up any longer, and the mind stops functioning. This happened with one of the patients who was brought in for admission this month, completely under cooled, anemic and in a state of mental shock. He must have been about eighty years old, according to his looks, and a couple of hours after admission he breathed his last. May his soul find rest and eternal peace. Om Shanti Shanti Shantih.

Another patient who found shelter at the Holy Feet of Sri Gurudev was a young lady, suffering from juvenile Reumathroid Arthritis. During more than ten years of her disease she had developed fixed contractions of both

her legs and arms. At present she is doing quite well, undergoing medical treatment, daily massage and physiotherapy and in her free time she started Mantra writing and has even joined the other female patients in knitting scarves.

The first words which came from his shivering lips when he was made to lie down in the emergency section of the home were: "The Lord has saved me." Forty five years old, round and about, frozen up to the bones, undernourished and completely paralysed below the neck was his condition upon arrival. After consultation of a Neurosurgeon, he was diagnosed with a fracture located at the cervical spine and conservative treatment was advised. Unimaginable happy is this gentleman, in spite of his severe handicap, and therefore needing assistance with each and every aspect of his physical existence. But a wonderful smile can be seen on his face and the sparks in his eyes contain a secret, a fulfillment of a higher order.

"When you have no support or shelter, when there is no hope left, when your body is fully tired and breaks down, when your mind ceases to function, then your Atma becomes free to meet Him. The bulb or outer shell breaks down and the energy returns to the powerhouse or source."

(Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati)

"Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Serve the sick. This is Divine Life." (Sri Swami Sivananda)

CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATIONS AND THE CHRISTMAS RETREAT

Holy Christmas was celebrated on December 24, 2009 in the Swami Sivananda Auditorium Annex "Satsang Hall" of the Ashram. Devotees from the entire area joined ashramites and guests in the joyous function that began with Jaya Ganesh Kirtan at 7.30 p.m. and concluded with the distribution of sacred Prasad well past midnight.

The nativity scene, illustrating the birth of the new child, was installed in a temple in the centre front of the Satsang Hall. A beautifully decorated tree was placed at the front right of the Hall.

The evening featured many songs in German, Spanish, French, Tamil, Hindi and English. Many of the devotional songs were offered in *kirtan* and *bhajan* style which added to the beauty of the evening. The Bible readings and accompanying songs began at

11.00 p.m. and continued till midnight. The evening concluded with silent meditation and closing prayers.

From December 26th to January 1, 2010, the 14th Annual Christmas-New Years Retreat for Devotees from Abroad was held at the Headquarters. Sixty devotees from nearly twenty countries attended the rewarding sessions. Morning talks were given by senior swamijis of the ashram in the Swami Sivananda Auditorium Annex "Satsang Hall." The speakers offered their wisdom and insight on this year's theme: The Power and Usefulness of Integral Yoga. Morning meditation and evening *satsanga* as well as optional sessions on yoga asanas and chanting were also included in the very successful programme.

ANNOUNCEMENT

2ND ZONAL SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE AND 2ND ANNIVERSARY OF SIVANANDA ASHRAM, CHANDIGARH 7TH AND 8TH MARCH 2010

The Divine Life Society, Chandigarh Branch will be celebrating the 2nd Anniversary of Sivananda Ashram, Chandigarh on 7th and 8th of March 2010. A Zonal Spiritual Conference is proposed to be held on this occasion. Senior saints from Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh will grace the occasion with their holy presence. All devotees are cordially invited to participate in the function.

For enrolment and information please contact:

Sri F. Lal Kansal, President, 09814015237

Dr. Ramneek Sharma, Secretary, 09814105154

Address: Sivananda Ashram, Divine Life Society, Chandigarh Branch,
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—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

CULTURAL TOUR OF H.H. SRI SWAMI NIRLIPTANANDAJI MAHARAJ

H.H. Sri Swami Nirliptanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Divine Life Society Headquarters, went on Cultural Tour during December, 2009 in India. Swamiji visited Chhattisgarh State to attend the All-Chhattisgarh 3rd Divine Life Conference. He also visited D.L.S. Branches and took part in their programmes.

On 11th December Swamiji visited D.L.S. Ahiwara Branch. The Branch had arranged a holy procession of devotees in the town with chanting of the Divine Name, singing and music for the occasion. Swamiji participated in it. There was great enthusiasm among the devotees. He also inaugurated the newly set up Vachanalaya or Reading Room with holy books for the benefit of the general public. Swamiji also attended the public Satsanga organised in the recently constructed Satsanga Hall of the Branch. There was a good gathering of devotees and Swamiji gave a discourse on the occasion.

The 3rd State-level D.L. Conference of Chhattisgarh was held at Nandininagar from 12th to 14th December. This was organised by D.L.S. Nandininagar Branch on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee. Started in 1985, the Branch entered the 25th years of its existence this year. Hence the Branch was celebrating its Silver Jubilee, and holding the State-level Conference was part of the activities of the Silver Jubilee Year. It is one of the dynamic Branches and in these twenty-five years many laudable activities have been taken up on behalf of the Branch. Its office-bearers and devotees have been taking part in its programmes with great sincerity. As a result, one Spiritual Conference, one State-level Divine Life Conference, 24 Yoga Camps, 3-day Spiritual Conferences for the

Youth, recitals of Ramcharitmanas, adoption of village Potia and many social welfare activities in it, etc., have been conducted by the Branch.

Swamiji attended the 3rd Chhattisgarh State-level Conference and presided over it. Everyday he gave discourses in the morning meditation session as also in the other sessions during the day. The Conference was attended by delegates from all the Branches of the State and also from other States. It gave good inspiration to the devotees and a great thrust for the Divine Life movement in the State. Revered Sri Swami Sivachidanandaji Maharaj, Sri Swami Vaikunthanandaji Maharaj, Sri Swami Dharmanishthanandaji Maharaj, Sri Swami Vijnananandaji, Sri Swami Devabhaktanandaji, Sri Swami Anandaswarupanandaji, Sri Swami Visuddhanandaji and other saints also attended it.

Swamiji Maharaj visited Kalyan Mahavidyalaya, Sector 7, Bhilainagar on 14th December and addressed the Post Graduate Students of its Education Department. The Head of the Deptt., faculty Members and students were present. Swamiji spoke on Indian Spiritual Culture and Ethical Values. There was very good response and interest from the students' side. The talk had a good impact on the audience.

From Nandininagar Swamiji proceeded to Dongargarh on 15th December. There Swamiji had Darshan at the famous holy temple of Goddess Bamleswari. He also visited Sivanand Kutir Yogashram of Swami Vidyandaji Maharaj. Swamiji also paid a visit to government Higher Secondary School Dongargarh and addressed the students.

In the afternoon of 15th Swamiji visited Mithila Dham Ganesh Mandir at Rajnandgaon. He participated in the Satsang arranged on the occasion and gave a discourse for the devotees present.

Then Swamiji went to Bhilainagar and visited the D.L.S. Branch (Sivananda Yoga Niketan). There was a very good gathering at the Satsanga organised by Sivananda Yoga Niketan. Swamiji gave a discourse on Bhakti Yoga. The next morning Swamiji attended their prayer-cum-meditation session and gave another talk on "Yoga in Daily Life" for the Yoga-practitioners present.

At Bhilainagar on 16th December Swamiji also visited Jnana Darshan Yogashram under the Bihar, School of Yoga, Munger, at their earnest invitation. A large number of devotees of the Yogashram and Revered Sri Swami Sheelanandaji Maharaj, the In-charge, were present. Swamiji gave a talk at the Satsanga.

Thereafter Swamiji attended the Public Satsanga organised by D.L.S. Bhilainagar at Lord Jagannath Temple. There was a good gathering of devotees. A discourse was given by Swamiji at the Satsanga.

Next Swamiji visited Raigarh. On 17th December Swamiji gave a discourse at the Public Satsang arranged by the D.L.S. Raigarh Branch at the local Dharmashala.

Swamiji also visited Balco City (Korba) on that day. The local devotees are keen to open a Branch of the D.L.S. at Balco City. Swamiji gave a short talk at the local Sri Ram Temple in Sector-4 in the Satsang arranged for the occasion.

On 18th December Swamiji Maharaj visited Bilaspur. The D.L.S. Bilaspur Branch which is an active Branch had arranged a

Public Satsang on the occasion of Swamiji's visit. It was well attended by sincere devotees. Swamiji gave a discourse at the Satsang.

Then Swamiji visited Raipur. At the house of Smt. Mehta in Shankarnagar there was a Satsang. The local devotees are keen to open a Branch at Shankarnagar, since the existing Branch in Raipur City is quite far away and they find it difficult to attend Satsang there. Swamiji participated in the Satsang and gave a discourse for the benefit of the devotees present.

Swamiji visited Mahasamund on 19th December. Two Satsangas were arranged by Sivananda Yoga Mitra Mandal, Mahasamund, on that day (1) for the School Students and (2) for the Public and students of Adarsh Shasakia Kanya Uchchatar Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Mahasamund, at the Yoga Vedanta and Spiritual Shivir in the local Town Hall. Swamiji attended them and spoke on both the occasions.

On that day in the evening Swamiji also visited Patan Town and attended the Satsang organised by Sri Devangan of that place. The devotees are very eager to open a Branch of the Divine Life Society at Patan. There was great devotion among the people. Swamiji gave a discourse at the Satsang on the need for spiritual life.

All the programmes in Chhattisgarh State were organised and coordinated by Sri K.S. Thakur of Nandinagar, President of Chhattisgarh Divine Life Society. Sri Thakur accompanied Swamiji Maharaj all along for all the programmes. The programmes provided great inspiration and boost for the activities of the D.L.S. in that State.

From Chhattisgarh Swamiji went to Jharkhand State to attend the Shodashi Cer-

emonymy of Parama Pujya Sri Swami Satyanandaji Maharaj at Rikhia, to represent the Holy Ashram of Gurudev. Sri Swami Satyanandaji Maharaj was a direct disciple of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and was in our Ashram for about ten years during Gurudev's time. He had served in our Ashram in many departments. He was in charge of our Hindi Section for some time and wrote many articles in Hindi. He was also greatly responsible for the bringing out of Gurudev's English commentary on The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. With the blessings of Sri Gurudev he engaged himself in the propagation of Yoga and set up the Bihar School of Yoga at Munger and many other similar institutions. In December he attained Mahasamadhi and his Shodashi function was held on 22nd December at Rikhia, where he spent his later years. Swamiji attended this function and paid respects to the sacred memory of Parama Pujya Sri Swami Satyanandaji Maharaj.

Thereafter Swamiji proceeded to Orissa to attend the 32nd State Level Conference of Divine Life Society at Polasara in Ganjam District.

Together with the State Level Conference, a State-level Youth Camp was also organised at Polasara simultaneously, from 27th to 31st December 2009. Swamiji Maharaj inaugurated the Youth Camp on 27th and attended the different sessions on all the days. More than 700 students both boys and girls, had joined the Shivir. Swamiji gave discourses to the participants on various topics like "Mind Control, Concentration and Meditation," "Life and Ideals of Swami Sivanandaji", "Divine Life and Swami Chidananda", etc. There was great enthusi-

asm among the Youth and they were immensely inspired and benefited by the Youth Camp.

The 32nd All-Orissa State D.L.S. Conference was from 29th to 31st December. Swamiji Maharaj presided over the Conference. Parama Pujya Gajapati Maharaja Sri Dibya Singha Deb, Revered Sri Swami Sivananda Gurusevanandaji, Sri Swami Sivachidanandaji, Baba Sri Kishori Charan Dasji, Sri Swami Vaikunthanandaji, Sri Swami Dharmaprakashanandaji, Sri Swami Dharmanishthanandaji, Sri Swami Vivekarupanandaji, Prof. Hrudananda Rayji, Sri Swami Devabhaktanandaji, Sri Swami Brahmasakshatkarandaji, and others attended it. Revered Sri Niranjana Pradhan, the M.L.A. of Polasara was the Chairman of the reception and he played a very vital role in organising the Conference, making arrangements for it, and its conducting, from inception to conclusion. Revered Smt. Renubala Pradhan, Member, Rajya Sabha also addressed the Conference on the concluding day. More than 2000 delegates from various parts of Orissa participated in the Conference. Everyday, including the members of the general public, about 6 to 7 thousand devotees were attending the Conference. Swamiji Maharaj gave discourses in the early morning meditation session, and also in the other sessions. Swamiji spoke on "Meditation", "The Spiritual Heritage of India and Swami Sivananda", "Vedanta Philosophy", "Swami Chidananda, the embodiment of Divine Life", etc. The Conference was very well organised and was a grand success. The participants were greatly inspired and got immense benefit.

REPORTS FROM THE D.L.S. BRANCHES

INLAND BRANCHES

Ahiwara (Chhattisgarh): During the month of December 2009, the Branch conducted daily Puja, prayer and recitation and on Ekadasis collective Japa of Mahamrityunjaya Mantra. December 11 was a memorable day for the Branch. After Nagar Sankirtan Yatra led by H.H. Sri Swami Nirliptanandaji Maharaj and other revered Sannyasis, Swamiji Maharaj inaugurated the newly built Swami Sivananda Bhajan Mandir and Swami Sivananda Library. All the saints present on this occasion gave talks expressing their good wishes. On 31st December, the New Year was greeted with 6-hour Akhanda Kirtan of Mahamantra till midnight.

Ambala (Haryana): The Branch conducted daily Satsanga with meditation and recitation of hymns or Japa. The monthly programme of video show was on 13th December, and 2-hour Akhanda Japa of Mahamrityunjaya Mantra on 3rd December. It continued daily Yogasana class for women and Seva through two Homoeopathic clinics.

Bangalore (Karnataka): The weekly Satsanga on Thursdays included Paduka Puja and Svadhyaya of Gurudev's teachings, the Friday Satsanga included recitation of Sri Vishnu-sahasranama and Sri Lalita-sahasranama Stotras. The programmes on Sundays were Abhishekam, recitation and Svadhyaya of Gurudev's teachings on the first Sunday, 3-hour Akhanda Kirtan on the 3rd, devotional music on the 4th and Free Medical Camp on the 5th Sunday of November. Earlier, it organised 6-day Skanda Puja, Bhajans and worship of 6 boys on the concluding day.

Bargarh (Orissa): The Branch conducted daily 2-time Puja, Svadhyaya, meditation, and Yogasana-Pranayama. The weekly activities were Satsanga on Saturdays, Paduka Puja on Thursdays and Srimad Bhagavad Gita Patha Chakra (both recitation and discourses) on Sundays. It held Sadhana Day on December 11 and 23. The Charitable Homoeopathic Dispensary treated 200 patients during the month.

Baripada (Orissa): The Branch held two Satsangas, the monthly Sadhana Day and Paduka Puja on Sundays. Medicines were pro-

vided free to the Leprosy inhabitants. Narayana Seva was done in the old-age home on 13th and in the Leprosy colony on 18th December. Sweets and blankets were distributed to 70 inhabitants of the Leprosy Colony.

Bellary (Karnataka): In addition to the daily Puja, the Branch held the weekly Satsanga and Paduka Puja on Sundays, and Sri Vishnu-sahasranama Stotra Parayana on Vaikuntha Ekadasi.

Bhawanipatna (Orissa): The Branch conducted biweekly Satsanga on Thursdays and Sundays, Sadhana Day on 6th December, and Paduka Puja and other programmes on Sivananda Day. Sri Swami Vaikunthanandaji and Sri Swami Devabhaktanandaji performed Bhumi Pujan for Swami Sivananda Bal Vihar Vidya Pith on 25th December.

Bhimkand (Orissa): The Branch conducted daily morning Paduka Puja, weekly Satsanga on Sundays, the monthly Sadhana Day on 20th December, and one mobile Satsanga. Sri Bhagavad Gita Jayanti programme included Paduka Puja, Havan and Narayana Seva.

Bhongir (A.P.): The Branch conducted daily Puja and Sri Vishnu-sahasranama Stotra Parayana. In the special Satsanga on Sri Bhagavad Gita Jayanti, Gita Puja and Parayana were done.

Bhuj (Gujarat): The Branch arranged a discourse on Sri Bhagavad Gita and Svadhyaya of Gurudev's teachings on 10th October, and a special Satsanga on Dipavali. On 14th November, Revered Swami Dharmanishthanandaji addressed the Branch members in the morning and a public meeting in the evening.

Bikaner (Rajasthan): In addition to 2-time Puja and daily Svadhyaya and Satsanga, the Branch conducted two Matri-Satsanga with Sri Sundarakanda Parayana and reading of a Sikh scripture, Sivananda Day programme of Paduka Puja and Bhajan-kirtan, and Chidananda Day of Yajna. The special activities were: Mahamantra Kirtan on 3rd December. 'Om Namah Sivaya' Mantra Kirtan on 31st, Sri Dattatreya Jayanti; Sri Sundarakanda Parayana on 7th; Havan and distribution of snacks to school children on 9th; and a special Satsanga with a talk on Lord Jesus's

teachings on the Christmas Day. It continued its social service through Sivananda Library, Yogasana and meditation class, and Scholarships to the deserving students.

Brahmapur, Lanjipalli (Orissa): The Branch conducted weekly Satsanga on Saturdays and Sankranti, and monthly Sadhana Day and Narayana Seva on the last Sunday every month.

Chatrapur (Orissa): In addition to the daily Satsanga, the Branch conducted weekly Satsanga on Thursdays, five mobile Satsangas, two Satsangas in nearby villages, two special Satsangas with discourses in two temple premises, Paduka Puja on Sivananda Day and Chidananda Day, and Sri Sundarakanda Parayana on Sankranti.

Special Activities: (1) Sri Bhagavad Gita Jayanti: Complete Parayana of the Divine Song for three days; Gita recitation competition for school children—42 participants. (2) Poornahuti the monthlong Sri Rama-charit Manas concluded on 2nd December with a special function and a talk by Revered Sri Swami Arpanandaji.

Jaipur, Raja Park (Rajasthan): Regular Activities: Daily morning Sri Devi Bhagavat Katha; daily evening Satsanga with Mahamrityunjaya Mantra Japa on Thursdays, Sri Sundarakanda Parayana on Saturdays and 3rd November and Svadhyaaya on the remaining days; weekly Satsanga on Sunday morning with Havan, recitation of various hymns and Svadhyaaya of Gurudev's writings; Matri-Satsanga on Monday afternoons; Homoeopathic clinic—1498 patients treated during November; daily Yogasana class; monetary aid of Rs. 150/- each to 26 poor widows; daily Narayana Seva with special items on Sundays to 300 destitutes; distribution of 108 Kg. dry ration in a leprosy colony; Rs. 45,000/- per month scholarship to 105 students; and Swami Sivananda Library.

Special Activities: (1) Parayana; Sri Vishnu-sahasranama Stotra Parayana daily from November 1 to 9. (2) Sri Bhagavad Gita Jayanti: (i) Havan, special Pujan of Navagraha, Sri Krishna, Bhagavan Vedavyasa and the scripture on 22nd November. (ii) Katha: Sri Bhagavad Gita Mahatmya Katha in the forenoon from November 22 to 25. (iii) Recitation competition: the participating students were given training and guidance by a Sanskrit scholar, all the participants were given two books, and special prizes to the three winners. (iv) Discourses: 6 distinguished scholars

gave discourses on Srimad Bhagavad Gita from November 22 to 27. (v) Srimad Bhagavad Gita Parayana on 27th November. (vi) Yajna: 55 participants gave 10,000 oblations along with Slokas of Srimad Bhagavad Gita. All these programmes were given wide coverage by various newspapers.

Kakinada (A.P.): The Branch organised Satsanga at three different centres on all Sundays afternoons and evenings and Tuesdays, and medical camps on 2nd and last Sundays. Revered Swami Gurucharananandaji participated in the Satsanga on 27th December and gave a talk. In November saints gave talks on 1st and 22nd on Srimad Bhagavad Gita and on 29th on the life teachings of Gurudev Swami Sivananda.

Kantabanji (Orissa): The Sunday Satsanga of the Branch included Svadhyaaya of Bhagavad Gita.

Phulbani (Orissa): The Branch conducted twice-a-day Puja, weekly Satsanga on Sundays, and Paduka Puja on Sivananda Day and Chidananda Day. It organised special Puja, and Havan with oblations after each Sloka of Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

Raigarh (Chhattisgarh): H.H. Sri Swami Nirliptanandaji Maharaj accompanied by Revered Swami Dharmanishthanandaji, Sri Swami Vaikunthanandaji and Sri Swami Devabhaktanandaji visited the Branch, and gave a talk in a public gathering on 17th December. This 4-hour programme was attended by a very large number of devotees.

Raipur (Chhattisgarh): The Branch conducted weekly Satsanga on Sundays, and Puja and Sri Vishnu-sahasranama Stotra Parayana on Ekadasis. A special Satsanga was arranged on the visit of Revered Sri Swami Sivachidanandaji on 12th November. H.H. Sri Swami Nirliptanandaji Maharaj and party visited the Branch on 20th December and conducted Mantra initiation to the devotees.

South Balanda (Orissa): The Branch continued its regular activities of 2-time Puja, weekly Satsangas on Fridays, special Satsanga on Sivananda Day and Chidananda Day, Paduka Puja in the morning and 3-hour Akhanda Japa of Mahamrityunjaya Mantra in the evening, and monthly 3-hour Akhanda Sankirtan of Mahamantra on 29th December.

Sunabeda, Ladies Branch (Orissa): Regular Activities: Daily Puja, Srimad Bhagavata Path

and Japa in the morning, and 1-hour Mahamantra Sankirtan and Bhagavad Gita Path in the evening; Satsanga on Wednesdays and Saturdays; Satsanga for Children on Sundays; common Satsanga on Sundays; Paduka Puja and Sri Vishnu-sahasranama Parayana on Ekadasis; 12-hour Akhanda Japa of Mahamrityunjaya Mantra, Paduka Puja and Prasad Sevan on Chidananda Day; and Narayana Seva on Tuesdays.

Special Activities: Kartika Purnima: 12-hour Akhanda Sankirtan of Mahamantra, Paduka Puja and Prasad Sevan.

Vadodara (Gujarat): The Branch continued its regular activities of weekly Satsanga on Thursdays, Paduka Puja and 9-hour Akhanda Japa on Sivananda Day and Chidananda Day, Homoeopathic Dispensary (4 days a week), Ayurvedic Dispensary (2 days), acupressure treatment (once a week), and distribution of medicines to the poor patients.

Varanasi (U.P.): The Branch held the fortnightly Satsanga on the second and fourth Sundays and mobile Satsanga on the remaining three Sundays.

OVERSEAS BRANCHES

Hong Kong (China): The Branch held monthly Satsanga on second Sundays (188 participants in 4 Satsangas in August, September, October and November 2009), and one hour Mahamantra Japa on other Satsangas (88 participants). 1004 trainees took part in the regular Yogasana class, 33 in 3 Yogasana workshops for teaching techniques each of 4 sessions, and 23 in 29-days advanced class.

Special Activities: (1) First Punyatithi of H.H. Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj: 36 participants

in the special programme including Paduka Puja. (2) Chidananda Jayanti (i) A special programme on the previous Sunday included bhajans, 4-hour Akhanda Japa of Mahamrityunjaya Mantra, Arati, Prasad (40 participants), (ii) Paduka Puja on 24th September (34 participants). (3) 'Yoga Gala': a special programme of Yogasana demonstration.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Diamond Jubilee of Vadodara Branch

The yearlong programmes of the Diamond Jubilee of Vadodara Branch began with inauguration of 'Satsanga Hall' by H.H. Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj who was accompanied by H.H. Sri Swami Padmanabhanandaji Maharaj, Revered Sri Swami Tyagavairagyanandaji, and Revered Swami Dharmanishthanandaji on 1st November. Swamiji presided over a Religious Conference on the theme 'Role of Spirituality in our personal, social and National Life', in M.S. University Auditorium. Scholars and saints of Jain, Islam, Christian and Hindu religions spoke on the subject.

Swamiji and party visited "Shram Mandir" situated at 15 Km. from Vadodara on 3rd November forenoon. In the evening H.H. Sri Swami Padmanabhanandaji Maharaj addressed college students on "Relevance of Ancient Indian Culture in Modern Times".

H.H. Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj inaugurated "Swami Sivananda Study Centre for Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of India" at M.S. University. H.H. Sri Swami Padmanabhanandaji Maharaj delivered the first talk in the centre on "Eternal Message of Indian Scriptures to Mankind".

All the Saints participated in the special Satsanga at night.

GRATEFUL THANKS

Devotees, seekers and friends had sent their loving greetings and good wishes to me for the New Year 2010. They are too numerous in number to write and acknowledge them individually. Therefore, I offer to all of them my sincere thanks and appreciation through this Divine Life Magazine. I wish them all that is best, joyful and auspicious in life. May the benedictions of Sat Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj ever be upon them



Swami Vimalananda
President, The Divine Life Society

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