

AMRIT

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Pt Satish Vyas
performing



Yoga for Harmony & Peace

अमृत



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From the Ambassador's Desk



Dear Reader,

Following the energetic call by PM Modi to declare June 21, the summer solstice, as the International Day of Yoga (IDY), 177 member nations co-sponsored India's resolution to that effect in the UN General Assembly last September. And thus, Yoga, already a globally recognised healthcare need, came to be inscribed in the pantheon of the United Nations as the entity which combines the requirements of the body-mind-soul, in synergy with nature. It was India's bequeath to mankind.

Born in the Yogasutras codified by Sage Patanjali some 4000 years ago, Yoga, as the ultimate recipe for healthcare and well-being, the triad, of exercise in the form of Hatha, Pranayama as breath control and Dhyana as meditation, has come to occupy an essential part of everyday living. No wonder, human beings having realized its utter essentiality have embraced it in very many forms all over the world.

The Modi government soon after announced that the first IDY was to be held on 21 June 2015 not only in India, but all over the world. Thus all 190 odd Indian Missions have been galvanized into action to have that day remembered in the annals of history by performing Yoga exercises beginning around the same time, all over the world. Being a UN resolution, it is incumbent upon all member countries, who co-sponsored the resolution, to partner the grand event.

Having given a lead to promotion of holistic medicinal systems in Hungary, we in the Mission have obviously been at the forefront. Thus IDY will be observed simultaneously in two capitals of Europe under this Mission's aegis, Budapest and Sarajevo, with a day-long commemoration participated by yoga associations as well as spiritual organizations who abound both the countries.

Being primarily India's gift to humanity, a unique contribution for health and wellbeing for all, we have carried IDY on our cover and brought to you all that is going to happen in both places. I would like to thank all the participants, and we expect thousands to throng both the venues, for taking their time off with the mission to join this noble task for the good of society as well as their own good, also to all the socio-cultural bodies who have lent their able hand in making the event a success. It does not need reiteration that this should not be restricted to a one-day event but a life-long engagement for all.

The phenomenon of 'Guru', the Master, is unique to Indian civilization and heritage. Every age in India's hoary history and tradition has produced Gurus of the highest order who have taken the Guru-Shishya parampara, the tradition of master-disciple in gaining and imparting knowledge, forward, thus consistently imparting Gyana, wisdom, in India's collective and distilled knowledge tradition. The most ancient and comprehensive of the world body of knowledge, a key to unravel the mysteries of oriental civilization, the Master has stood above all in denoting the wisdom and maturity of the times in which he is situated. It is believed that in the ancient Indian, and perhaps in all East Asian knowledge traditions, it is the Master who looks for his disciple, and not the other way round, and tasks himself with illuminating his ward with spiritual bounties, that which include a comprehensive training of the body, mind and soul. And in this, the science of Yoga is the most significant element.

Imbued with this thought, we have brought to you in this issue, some ten Gurus of our times who have contributed significantly to the growth of Indian knowledge and its dissemination in the country and beyond, through their countless disciples. Continuing on our exploration of Swami Vivekananda's contribution to Vedanta, establishing it as the most scientific path to understanding and practising religion, we bring in this issue his unique relation with his Guru, the Saint of Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna, a story which needs to be told and re-told for its essential dynamism and strength.


One of the greatest living masters of today, Sri Sri Ravishankar visited Sarajevo a few weeks ago and his appearance was feted by thousands in Bosnia and beyond. Director of our Cultural Centre was present on that occasion and brings in a lively account of that wonderful event. The Mission has continued to tread on various pursuits, visits from both sides, meetings with dignitaries and travel to interesting places which have enlivened our engagement as we have moved forward with renewed energy.

And now, when I penultimate my lines for Amrit, this wonderful creation which will forever be a part of my life, I am inspired by Gurudev Tagore's immortal lines,

“If no one gives you company –
march alone.....”

But then I look back and see a whole caravan behind. To paraphrase the gifted Urdu poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, a caravan of ideas, of creativity, of many visions intermingled together to give a new direction to life, as I move close to closing the final phase of my diplomatic career.

I take along all your good wishes and in turn leave behind mine, for this earth shall be blessed by a true communion of greetings, a meeting of hearts and souls, here and beyond.


Malay Mishra

Foundation Stone laying ceremony of Apollo Tyres



LEFT: At the laying ceremony of Apollo Tyres. **RIGHT:** Ambassador, PM and Chairman at the laying ceremony of Apollo Tyres

Ambassador, Shri Malay Mishra, attended the Foundation Stone laying Ceremony of Apollo Tyres' greenfield project at Gyongyoshalasz, Hungary, held on 10 April 2015. Prime Minister Viktor Orban was present on the occasion and unveiled the foundation stone as well as installed a capsule with an Indian and Hungarian newspaper. Chairman Onkar Kanwar and Vice Chairman Niraj Kanwar attended the event along with several senior executives from the Apollo Group.

PM Orban, in his address, talked about the new directions Indo-Hungarian bilateral relations were taking, particularly since 2010 when his previous term as PM started. He appreciated that more and more Indian investors were coming to Hungary. PM Orban mentioned about the mutual



Laying ceremony of Apollo Tyres

respect that India and Hungary have for each other. PM Orban appreciated Apollo's efforts towards contributing substantially to the education and skill development programme in Hungary for the perspective workers of the Apollo plant at Gyongyoshalasz. The plant would create 950 jobs and develop education and innovation programmes in a big way and overall contribute to nation growth in Hungary.

Chairman Onkar Kanwar and Vice Chairman Niraj Kanwar of Apollo appreciated the support of the Hungarian Government in having made the project possible and mentioned that the Hungarian plant would be the latest state-of-the-art unit of Apollo in their entire global operations. ■

BILATERAL—SPECIAL FEATURE

A study of the Roma Communities in Southern Hungary

Ambassador's visit to Cserdi, Kaposvar and Pecs (25 – 27 April 2015)

Cserdi

Ambassador paid an overnight visit to Cserdi village at the invitation of the Mayor, Laszlo Bogdan on 25 – 26 April. The

purpose of the visit was to conduct interviews with the Mayor as well some inhabitants of the village to prepare a research paper on Cserdi as a case study for having given a completely



Ambassador and Mayor of Cserdi

new dimension to the traditional Roma notion in Hungary.

What has happened in Cserdi since Mayor Bogdan took office in 2006 (this is the third consecutive term for him and he got through in the last municipal elections held in October 2014 beating his nearest rival, his namesake) is a complete transformation of the village. During the course of Ambassador's interviews with a cross section of people representing agriculture and entrepreneurship, teacher, student, political activist and a few others, everybody was unanimous in their praise for Mayor Bogdan for the tremendous contribution he has made to bring the village back to normalcy, in fact a new life. The people seemed to be highly satisfied with the present situation and lived quite well. The Mayor has contributed in giving training to people in raising their income levels.

The village has a total population of 425 including some 10% non-Roma sharing a geographical space of 6.5 sq. km. Out of that nearly 17 hectares are cultivable land where the Mayor has developed a unique greenfield model in which he grows vegetables of different kinds, mostly potatoes, onions, french beans and above all paprika, an astounding variety of 26. The surplus produce are taken in bulk to nearby villages, even to Pecs and Budapest and distributed free. Sometimes vegetables are sold as well and the money goes towards village development.

Most of the inhabitants have got two jobs – agricultural labour and public works. The first job gives them seasonal employment. They work in land given to them by the Mayor. Besides, he has been instrumental in providing them jobs under the public works programme for the Roma community. Thus they are totally content, the children go to school and some of them are going up to the University level as well. Besides, the crime rate, which was earlier very prominent, has nearly disappeared now. The population of the village, Roma and non-Roma (some 30%) are living peacefully, though the fact that the Roma constitutes an overwhelming majority speaks



Ambassador with Cserdi Mayor and School Teacher in Cserdi

volumes. Whenever there is a problem and people need counselling, they do approach the Mayor. In fact, the Mayor has put up posters of dos and don'ts suggesting guidelines for the people in his own office room so that they become aware of their social and familial responsibilities by reading them.

The Mayor, who studied up to school and then went on to do an assortment of jobs, even cleaning cigarette butts in a multi-national company yard, is highly intelligent, motivated and totally committed to his work of developing the village. Being a bachelor, he has devoted all his time to bring all round development. In the process he has got media limelight, though he does not hanker after it. He is invited by several universities in Hungary and even to countries like Germany to give lectures on Cserdi as a model village for the Roma community. Sometimes he gives the example of his own life and affronts political parties. He has become a media celebrity in the process and has been approached by a few parties though he wants to steer clear of them, having no particular political affiliation or ambition.

Laszlo Bogdan started his work among the Roma with the promise that the Roma are not bad and dirty people, that if they are given proper work, they can excel like others. This philosophy has carried the Mayor through his working life which has paid him handsome dividends. He is presently expanding the scope of his vision to cover Roma communities in other parts of Hungary and thinking of organizing a workshop for all Roma Mayors sometime later this year.

Ambassador paid yet another visit to Cserdi, the subject of an extensive study for him, on 3 June and met several Mayors of the neighbouring villages, among other important personalities, all touched with the dynamism of Mayor Bogdan. He also had chance to visit the unique greenfield cultivation of Cserdi which has transformed the village into a self-sufficient sustainable Roma entity in the whole country.



Ambassador in Kaposvar with Mr Imre Bogdan

Pecs

On 26 April, Ambassador had a lively interaction with two Roma NGOs in Pecs, the Khetanite Foundation and the Szent Marton Caritas Foundation. Khetanite is basically involved in education and looking for employment for Roma people. They have taken care of nearly 100 Roma families by now and have provided them basic facilities in case of displacement of those families. However many Roma people stay in the suburbs of Pecs, some even in the nearby forest areas. They do not want to be identified as Roma communities by the authorities and adopt a primitive way of life. The Foundation works for them and tries to make them aware of their social role, gets children to school and ensures that these children have a future. They run a Day Care Centre for children up to 14 years. The Foundation, set up in 1999, has been receiving generous EU funding and has performed fairly well, though is weak in book keeping. Some of the major projects are in the sectors of infrastructure building, training, education and healthcare.

The Szent Marton Foundation is a private foundation, set up in 2001, committed to providing work for the Roma. The Foundation is engaged in community development and education and is partly funded by the Catholic Church, and

also to some extent by EU. The Foundation works for small Roma children and works towards their integration in the rural areas as well as providing basic amenities for the Roma living in the rural habitats. They also run a Day Care Centre. They do not seem to be happy as the funds they get are not sufficient for all round Roma upliftment. Of late, they have also been receiving some funds from a German Catholic Foundation.

Kaposvar

The same afternoon Ambassador visited Kaposvar, nearly 65 kms. from Pecs, the capital of Somogy county, and met with Imre Bogdan, who runs a Foundation called Napkerek Roma. Imre seems to have done substantial work in picking a few Roma communities in Kaposvar town where the Roma constitute 10% of the total population of over 70,000. Being an educated Roma himself, he knows the value of proper education (his daughter is presently studying in the University of Kaposvar) and takes great interest in generating awareness among the Roma families for education. He runs a Day Care Centre as well as summer camps, gets doctors to give free treatment to Roma people and also spends time and money for the development of Roma slums.

Mr. Bogdan expressed his desire to provide proper jobs to Roma people which according to him, was the key to future growth of the Roma and their integration in the society. He also felt that the government should support integration of Roma as carrying any kind of prejudice would be harmful to the Roma cause. He also acknowledged that the municipality was unable to give proper jobs on the grounds of social discrimination. He gave an example of a recent murder of a girl by a non-Roma boy in a tobacco shop for which the Roma community was held responsible by the general population, though the criminal was found to be a non-Roma. But his daughter has not faced any such problem and these kind of incidents are on the decline now. ■

Meeting with Mayor, Pecs

On 27 April, Ambassador met with the Mayor of Pecs, Dr. Zsolt Pava who extended his hospitality despite his extremely busy schedule (the Prime Minister was visiting Pecs the following day). Both engaged in useful discussions on carrying forward the cooperation between the Mission and the Municipality of Pecs.

Pecs is one of the monumental townships of Hungary. The city was adjudged as a world UNESCO heritage site in the year 2000 and in 2010 was singled out to be the European city of culture. The city, though small

in size, has several wonderful art galleries, museums, artefacts and a mixture of Christian, Roma, Turkish and post-renaissance architecture. The Mayor felt that since Pecs has no major avenues for industrial development, its cultural strength needs to be highlighted which could generate income for the city.

It was decided that there would be a 'India Day' to be organized by the Embassy in collaboration with the Mayor's office, with a few cultural manifestations of India and a santoor recital by eminent Artiste Pt. Satish Vyas (details



Ambassador with Mayor of Pecs in Pecs



Ambassador in Pecs with Gandhi School Director

below). Coming in the wake of setting up a Gandhi bust in the University of Pecs botanical gardens, with the possibility of formalizing an Institute of Gandhian Studies in the

University, along with the Gandhi School set up since 1994 for educating Roma children, Pecs will have a prominent Gandhian imprint as part of its eclectic culture. ■

Ambassador meets new Mayor of Nagykanizsa and the just-appointed Chairman of Indo-Hungarian Friendship Society in the Parliament

Mr Sandor Denes took his office as the mayor of Nagykanizsa in October 2014. The Embassy holds very close and friendly relationship with the city of Nagykanizsa. The permanent paintings exhibition of the Brunner mother-daughter duo can be viewed in Nagykanizsa, as the city was also the birthplace of Elisabeth Sass Brunner. A 3-day India Day had been organized in Nagykanizsa a few years back.

Mr Peter Cseresnyes, former mayor of Nagykanizsa, has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Indo-Hungarian Friendship Society in the Parliament. The new Chairman is an Indophile and is eager to enhance cultural and economic ties between the two countries. ■



Chairman, H.E. Ambassador and Mayor H.E. Mr Peter Cseresnyes

7th India - Hungary Joint Defence Committee meeting 11-12 May, Budapest

The 7th Indo - Hungarian Joint Defence Committee Meeting was held on 11-12 May in Budapest. The Indian delegation was led by Shri G. Mohan Kumar, Secretary(DP), MOD and consisted of Shri Sanjay Garg, JS(DIP), Shri Gopal Bhushan, DIR(IC), DRDO, Shri S. Nateshan, FS(POL) and Gp. Cpt. Pawan Kumar, Defence Attache. The Hungarian delegation was led by Dr. Attila Puskas, Assistant State Secretary for Defence Economy and consisted of Brig. Gen. Istvan Filotas, Head of MOD Armaments Development Dept., Col. Attila Simon, Head

of International Armaments & Defence Industry Cooperation Branch, Col. Attila Illes, Director of Research-Development, MOD Defence Economic Bureau, Lt. Col. Attila Toth, Hungary's DA in Delhi and Lt. Col. Zoltan Szilagyi, Desk Officer, MOD, Budapest.

The main agenda of the 7th JDC Meeting was to undertake a comprehensive review and give impetus to the bilateral defence cooperation, explore possible areas of future cooperation and evaluate the progress made

since the 6th JDC meeting held in New Delhi on 30 Sept - 1 Oct 2013. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the present state of defence cooperation. It was felt that more projects need to be identified for joint cooperation. A presentation on the overview of the Indian Defence industry was made creating a strong pitch for Hungary to join the 'Make in India' initiative launched by the Government of India. It was noted that the participation of Hungary's Colonel Laszlo Pallos in the current 55th NDC course from Jan 2015 was a testimony to the growing recognition of each other's capabilities. An MOU on Defence S&T Cooperation is expected to be signed shortly.

The delegation visited Carinex Limited to see the

cutting-edge technology it has created in the field of IT, cyber security, satellite reconnaissance, encryption equipment and technologies. They also visited Bonn Hungary Electronics Limited, who have proven expertise in the field of electronic warfare systems and defence electronics technologies. The Research Centre for Natural Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences received the Indian delegation and held discussions to explore opportunities for common research projects in the field of functioning and performance of human brain in high mountains; research and development of bio-fuel technologies; research and development of hydrogen fuel cells. Both sides exchanged ideas on possible areas of joint research and pledged to move forward for mutually beneficial cooperation. ■

Haryana Delegation's visit

An 8-member delegation led by Shri Om Prakash Dhankar, Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture, Government of Haryana, visited Budapest from 27 – 30 May, 2015, to attend a Conference of World Union of Wholesale Markets. The members of the delegation comprised 3 MLAs and several senior officials of the State. Minister Dhankar had meetings with Dr. Sandor Fazekas, Minister of Agriculture, on the sidelines of the Conference, as well as with Mr. Istvan Nagy, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, in his office, both on 28 May. Matters relating to cooperation in the field of clean water technologies, university linkages, investment climate in the agriculture and food processing sector, and technologies for development of the proposed Gannaur agriculture market near Sonapat, Haryana, were discussed.

The Conference provided an opportunity to understand and see the working of the agriculture markets of Hungary and those of other countries. The

topics covered in the Conference included, Hungarian market scene, Economic impact of markets on communities, Retail markets – promotional campaigns and marketing, Excellence in real-time Market Renovation, Minimizing food wastage, etc. Minister Dhankar also met with members of the Indian community based in Hungary the following day, and discussed policies of the new Government led by Prime Minister Modi and also the State Government of Haryana. The Minister briefed the participants about investment opportunities available for NRIs / PIOs. The event also featured speeches by Ambassador Malay Mishra, Mr. Snehangshu Roy, President, Bharatiya Samaj of Hungary, and Dr. Amar Sinha, President of Indo-Hungarian Business Association. This was followed by an animated Q&A session. The office bearers of Bharatiya Samaj of Hungary and President of Indo-Hungarian Business Association were honoured by the Hon'ble Minister. ■

CII Delegation to visit Budapest, Hungary, on 29-30 June 2015

A high-profile delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industry is scheduled to visit Budapest, Hungary, on 29-30 June, 2015. The delegation would include industrialists / decision makers / business persons, from various sectors and cover both the trade and investment aspects. Various meetings and site visits are being planned for the visiting delegation in collaboration with the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hungarian Investment Promotion Agency, Hungarian National Trading House, and commercial enterprises

based in Budapest. The Embassy would organize an interactive B-2-B session for the visiting delegation during their visit.

The programme is being finalized and the details would be communicated shortly. The Embassy invites expression of interest for meetings with the delegation from the business organizations based in Hungary as also in Bosnia & Herzegovina, which may be sent on email ID: m.assistant@indianembassy.hu. ■

Seminar ‘Collectivity and Empowerment in Poverty Alleviation – India and the Roma’ at ASCC on June 24 2015

In collaboration with Corvinus University, Budapest, the Embassy organized a unique Seminar on the Roma community of Hungary at ASCC where several eminent scholars, social activists and NGO representatives from India, UK, Romania and Canada took part. The Seminar aimed to

bring together different scholars to exchange experiences and engage in discussions on poverty alleviation and social empowerment schemes. The Seminar explored the feasibility of applying Indian empowerment and poverty alleviation tools to the Roma situation in Central and Eastern Europe. ■

BOSNIA DIARY/SPIRITUALITY

Visit of Sri Sri Ravishankar to BiH on 27-28 April 2015

By Umesh Kumar



LEFT: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar arriving at Sarajevo. **RIGHT:** Sri Sri Ravi Shankar meeting with HE Bakir Izetbegovic, member of the Presidency of Bosnia & Herzegovina in Sarajevo

Gurudev Sri Sri Ravishankar visited Bosnia and Herzegovina on 27-28 April 2015 to bless the devotees of Art of Living (AOL) in Bosnia and neighbouring countries. Gurudev has a large number of devotees in that part of the world. I had the good fortune to travel to BiH to receive His Holiness Gurudev Sri Sri Ravishankar at the airport on 27 April. More than 300 devotees were waiting in the reception area of the Sarajevo Airport with reverence to receive Gurudev with rose bouquets in their hands. It was a carnival type scene at the airport. There were some media persons also with their cameras in position to capture every moment of his arrival. As soon as Gurudev came out of the terminal building, the crowd went ecstatic to have his darshan. Everybody presented flowers to Gurudev. After exchanging a few pleasantries, Gurudev left the airport for Hotel Europe, where he was staying for the rest of his visit.

At the hotel, a large number of devotees were waiting to

receive Gurudev. They had come from neighbouring countries to Sarajevo to meet Guruji. After a brief rest in the hotel, Gurudev met with the devotees in groups and blessed them all. He then went around for a walk through the old town of Sarajevo. I was lucky to be part of the group. Later in the evening, I had the honour to have an exclusive meeting with Gurudev, when I conveyed Ambassador Malay Mishra's regards to Gurudev and presented him a letter from the Ambassador requesting the assistance of Art of Living in Bosnia for successful organization of the UN mandated International Day of Yoga (IDY) on 20 June 2015. I also presented copies of the last two issues of our bi-monthly magazine Amrit. Gurudev listened to my request indulgently, read Ambassador's letter and thoroughly glanced through the Amrit issues. He promised full help for the IDY and introduced me to the senior members of AOL in BiH for assistance in this regard. He said that a large number of AOL devotees would participate in the IDY activities to

make the event a resounding success. It was an unforgettable experience for me.

At 7 pm, Gurudev's public talk (pravachan) was scheduled by AOL for the devotees and others at the Bosnian Cultural Centre (BKC). I too availed the opportunity and attended the talk. As against the sitting capacity of 720 persons, there were more than 1200 people present. The programme included singing of spiritual songs (bhajans) by devotees, spiritual talk and conducting of mass meditation by Gurudev. The meditation lasted for about 30 minutes and there was pin-drop silence in the hall. People were told as to how to live a stress-free life in the present world full of violence and turmoil. The atmosphere in the BKC was mesmerizing. During the event, Guruji announced setting up of a new Art of Living centre in Sarajevo in addition to the two existing centres in Zenica and Tuzla cities. The new centre in Sarajevo will have the facility to learn Sudarshan Kriya (a special breathing exercise popularized by AOL), meditation, ayurveda consultation as well as availability of ayurvedic

wellness products. He requested the public to register for being members and teachers at AOL Sarajevo Centre. In view of the 35th anniversary of setting up of the Art of Living Foundation approaching next year, Guruji invited all the devotees to visit India for the big event. During the entire event, Gurudev's talk was constantly punctuated with loud cheers. After the talk, on way back from the BKC to the Hotel Europe, we walked back with Guruji. Next day morning at the registration time, I visited Hotel Europe lobby, the venue for the registration. In spite of rains, people were showing a lot of enthusiasm to be AOL members and coming in for registration at regular intervals.

During his stay in BiH, Gurudev met with member of the Presidency of Bosnia His Excellency Bakir Izetbegović and the Archbishop Cardinal Vinko Puljić. Coming days before the Pope's visit to Sarajevo, it was indeed memorable, both for Gurudev Sri Sri Ravishankar as well as for his myriad devotees in BiH. ■

—(The writer is the Director of ASCC)

COVER STORY

India - A World Soft Power

By Umesh Kumar, Director (ASCC)

In the modern day world, there are several countries which have carved a niche and brand of excellence for them in some aspect or the other of life like social, technological, political etc. For example, Germany stands out for automobiles, Japan for technologies, China for being the factory of the world, Singapore for cleanliness, South Africa for racialism and so on. India with its 5000 year-old civilization, philosophy, spiritual knowledge, culture, yoga, fine arts (classical dances/music), Ayurveda and now in a liberal, all-inclusive, democratic avatar with a fast growing free market economy, progress in the field of atomic research, spacecraft reaching Mars using the best brains, IT power, helping the UN in peace-keeping efforts in several trouble spots of world, Bollywood, cuisine and the birth place of a pantheon of great philosophers/thinkers in the past and contemporary entrepreneurs like Tata's, Mittal's, Murthy, Premji, etc., to name a few could combine to form India's soft power.

India is transforming itself continuously and in the present phase is overcoming the tag of land of snake charmers, red tapism and other clichés. India has made phenomenal strides in all fields of life in the last 60-65 years after independence from foreign rule. The Indian diaspora abroad is contributing to the progress of countries where they are living in a

significant way. In the field of tourism, India offers every traveler something or the other of his/her interest throughout the year. In 2002, the 'Incredible India' campaign was launched to position India as a wonderful tourist destination. The tourism campaign was successful as an economic tool as well as provided an appropriate platform for advancing geopolitical interests of India.

The present Government of India is making conscious efforts to brand India as a progressive, stable economy, with big ticket economic reforms, bid to woo investors for huge potential for infrastructure development, : 'Make in India' and Swach Bharat campaigns. India is tweaking and using its foreign policy to pro-actively create a positive image among the comity of nations and ensure a permanent seat for it in the reformed UN. India is a country which has balanced its ancient heritage and modern achievements. It is emerging as a country which wants to adopt the best global practices in every field and in turn offering its soft knowledge of yoga and ayurveda (a traditional/herbal medicine system) to the world for a holistic growth of mankind, free from stress, misery and tensions. Due to various proven positive qualities of Yoga, at the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the UN has declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga (IDY). ■

FIRST INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA IN BUDAPEST

The first International Day of Yoga will be celebrated in Bálna Budapest (Budapest, Fővám tér 11-12., IX.) on Sunday, 21 June 2015, in collaboration with the Municipality of Budapest.

The programme will start at 0830 hrs and will include yogasanas (yoga postures), knowledge sessions about yoga, meditation, devotional music and spiritual aspects of dance. A trained yoga instructor from India will conduct yoga sessions. A commemorative postage stamp on the occasion would also be released by Magyar Posta.

The Embassy has already held preparatory sessions with various Yoga Schools based in Hungary on 19 April and 7 May, 2015. Several Yoga Schools / Institutions have showed tremendous interest and enthusiasm in collaborating with the Embassy for organization of the event. A facebook page has also been created for wider dissemination of information and this page can be visited at <https://www.facebook.com/yogadayIDYbudapest>. Information about the event is also available on the website of the Embassy at www.indianembassy.hu. All readers are requested to visit the facebook page and share the contents.

The event is free of charge and all yoga enthusiasts can



Bálna, the venue of the IDY in Budapest

take part in it. Those who are interested in visiting the venue and seeing the yoga practices or listen to knowledge sessions may also do so. The yoga enthusiasts are requested to bring their own yoga mats and be dressed in clothes conducive for doing physical exercises.

You may express your interest in participation either through facebook or by sending an email at cultur@indianembassy.hu. ■

Preparation for International Day of Yoga in Sarajevo (BiH)

By Umesh Kumar, Director (ASCC)

In connection with organising a successful International Day of Yoga (IDY) on 21 June 2015 in Sarajevo (BiH), the preparations are in full swing.

- Preparatory arrangements for of the IDY programme:
 - a) Mr Umesh Kumar, Director, Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Centre, travelled to Sarajevo on 27 April, met His Holiness, Sri Sri Ravishankar, and requested for the assistance of Art of Living (AOL) devotees in BiH for their support for IDY. AOL is now an important partner for the mission.
 - b) A meeting at Cafe Vienna, Europe Hotel with all stakeholders was organised by the Director on 28 April. The attendees included Mrs. Fatima Cita Somun, President of the Indo-Bosnian Friendship Society and her assistant, Ms Duniya, Mr Mike Zulovich from Ashtanga Yoga Centre, Yogi



Dom Mladih, venue of IDY in Sarajevo

Jadranko, Head of Yoga in Daily Life Centre in BiH, Mr. Dhira-Prasanta, Head of ISKCON in BiH, a journalist and a couple of Indians in Sarajevo. The meeting deliberated on all aspects of organising IDY in Sarajevo.

- Dom Mladhi, Skenderija Complex, Sarajevo, has been selected as the venue for the programme of the IDY. The programme will start with prayers, messages from Ambassador and PM of India, screening of a couple of short documentaries on yoga, a workshop on yoga in which 3-4 speakers will speak for 10 minutes each on various aspects of yoga, practising yoga postures

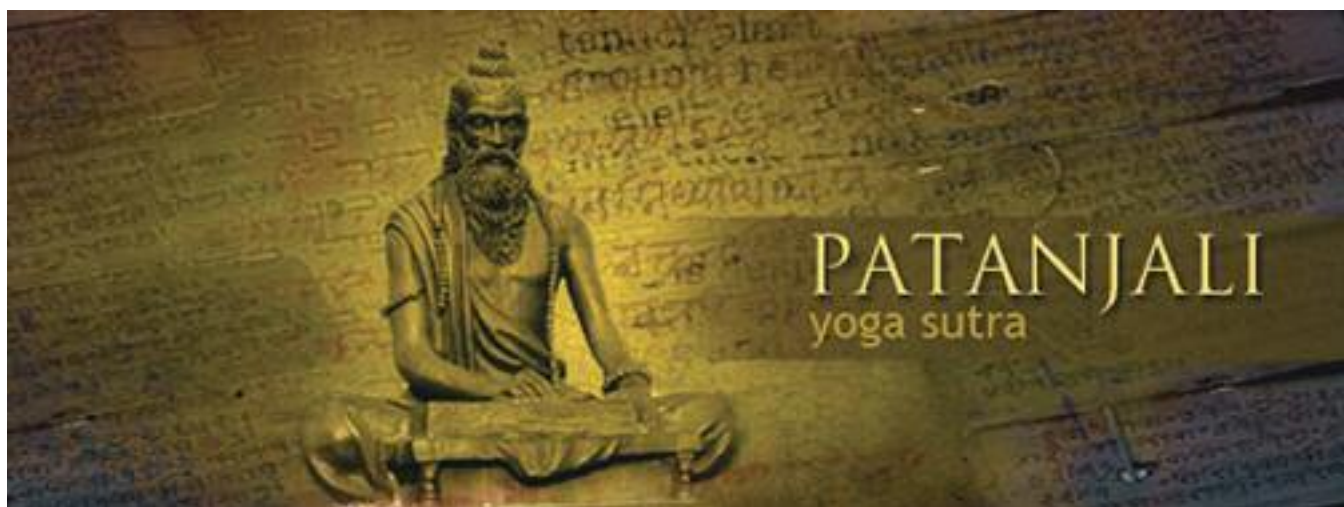
approved by the Government of India and will end with an interactive question-answer section of the public with yoga experts. The proposed programme will be organised from 9.30 am to 1 pm. ■

—Jointly contributed by Sh. Umesh Kumar, Dir (ASCC)
and Sh. Vijay Khanduja, First Secy (Comm & Eco)

YOGA FEATURE

Legacy of Patanjali

By Umesh Kumar



There are several myths about the birth of Patanjali, the father of Ashtanga (8-limbed path) Yoga. According to one of the myths, in order to teach Yoga on earth, Patanjali fell from heaven in the form of a little snake in the palm (a gesture known as Anjali) of his virgin mother, Gonika, who was herself a powerful yogini, when Gonika was praying for a son to whom to impart her wisdom and was offering a handful of water to the Sun God. She named him 'Pata' (fallen) and 'Anjali' (hands folded in prayer). In pictures, Patanjali is shown with the upper body of a human and the lower body of a coiled serpent. The three and half coils represent the triguna (satva, rajas and tamas) and the gunatita, the transcended state that lies beyond the influence of the gunas. Patanjali uses the three weapons, a conch, a disc and a sword to restrain the Chitta Vrttis, the movement of consciousness, to remove the obstacles and eradicate the afflictions.

It is believed that Patanjali compiled Yoga Sutras (195/196 aphorisms or statements) which are the foundation or a guidebook of classical yoga, approximately 2300 years ago. The word Yoga means a

method of discipline. Some people credit Patanjali with works on Ayurveda (the ancient Indian system of medicine) and Sanskrit grammar as well.

Yoga was already there in various forms. Shiva, the Adiyogi or first Yogi, transmitted yoga to the Sapta Rishis or the seven sages many thousands of years ago. He had the highest understanding of human nature, but he did not put anything down in writing. He found it was too difficult to put everything he knew into one person, so he chose seven people and put different aspects of yoga into them. These became the seven basic forms of yoga. Even today, though these have branched off into hundreds of systems, yoga has still maintained seven distinct forms.

It is believed that Patanjali wrote his work in 400 CE and was influenced by teachings of Buddhist and Jainism. The epic Mahabharata also contains writings on Yoga (especially Karma Yoga). Along with his works and other knowledge on Yoga, he collated Patanjala yoga sastra (The Treatise on Yoga according to Patanjali). Patanjali assimilated knowledge on Yoga as he saw that it was getting

too diversified and complex for anyone to understand in any meaningful way. So he assimilated and included all aspects into a certain format – as the Yoga Sutras. He understood humanity inside out – not as people but as a total mechanism of the human body, mind and consciousness. Sutra literally means a thread. Thus Yoga weaves the physical, mental and psychic process of the human being in one thread.

Yoga Sutras consist of eight parts of yoga (Ashtanga): yamas (restraints), niyamas (observances), asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing), pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (absorption). The first five are called external aids to Yoga (bahiranga sadhana). The practice of yamas in our daily life give us basic guidelines for living a life of personal fulfillment that will also benefit society and those who do not follow them suffer. Yamas and niyamas are suggestions as to how we should deal with people around us and our attitude toward ourselves. The five Yamas are: Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (continence), Aparigraha (non-covetousness). The five Niyamas are: Saucha (cleanliness), Santosa (contentment), Tapas (heat spiritual austerities), Svadhaya (study of the sacred scriptures and of one's self), Isvara Pranidhana (surrender to God).

While practicing eight parts of Yoga, we begin by improving our external senses, behaviour and limbs. Ultimately we focus inwardly until we reach the stage of samadhi (liberation, enlightenment). Most of the people practice the third stage of Yoga only, i.e., asanas or physical postures prescribed to rejuvenate the body and make it flexible as well as provide the physical strength/stamina for meditation and those that have mastered yoga. However, it is important to understand and practice all the eight components to have full mastery of yoga as leading towards liberation of the soul, which is the final goal of every human being.



Patanjali Statue (indicating Kundalini or incarnation of Shesha)

Yoga is unique because we connect the movement of the body and the fluctuations of the mind to the rhythm of our breath. Connecting the mind, body, and breath helps us to direct our attention inward. Yoga samadhi, i.e., resting in one's real identity is the ultimate goal of Yoga and in other words means union with one's real identity after controlling all thoughts of the mind. Yoga literally means union.

Yoga is not a religion. It is a philosophy that began in India an estimated 5,000 years ago. The Yoga Sutras are the scriptures which provide a framework for spiritual growth and mastery over the physical and mental body. Yoga sometimes interweaves other philosophies such as Hinduism or Buddhism, but it is not necessary to study those paths in order to practice

or study yoga. It is also not necessary to surrender your own religious beliefs to practice yoga.

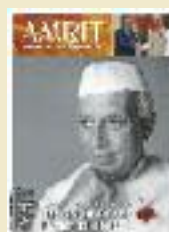
Yoga became more popular in the 19th century, when the practice of yoga according to the Yoga Sutras was regarded as a science of supreme contemplative path to self-realization. Vivekananda also popularized yoga, as the means to understand and practice Vedanta.

Patanjali played a variety of instruments and was a great musician and singer. Veena seems to have been his favourite instrument and he composed many ragas. His intellect was such that he could find his way through anything.

The Samadhi of Patanjali Maharshi is believed to be in Tiruputtur Brahmapureeswarar Temple, near Trichy where Lord Brahma installed 12 Shiva Lingams and worshipped Lord Shiva to get back His tejas.

Patanjali presented Yoga in a scientific and systematic fashion. His “Yogadarshana” is a spiritual treatise showing the path by traversing which an individual soul merges with the universal soul. Two methods selected by him are “Practice” and “Renunciation”, one leading to the other. ■

Some of the previous issues of *Amrit*



MODERN DAY GURUS

— PORTRAITS —

ANANDMURTI GURUMAA

Anandmurti Gurumaa born in Amritsar, Punjab, is a modern day spiritual master. She has followers of many faiths including Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

Anandmurti means "an embodiment of Divine Bliss" and Gurumaa means "Master Mother" in Hindi. Gurumaa teaches the disciplines of meditation, yoga, present moment awareness and self-realisation, using meditation techniques from Yoga, Zen, Tantra, Sufism, Sikhism, Buddhism and devised methods. Gurumaa's core teachings include meditation, self-realization, evolving consciousness and non-duality. Although born into a Sikh family, Gurumaa, as she is called, is passionately syncretic, quoting liberally from Buddhism, Sufism, and Jainism, while being trained in Vedanta. Even though she broadcasts the timeless truths, she is remarkably contemporary, offering new and innovative meditative methods, blending science with spirituality and championing women's empowerment, which she supports through education of the girl child.

Her syncretic approach is her own unique world view which might baffle many people but to her it is as natural as human nature, as life is all about living and celebrating, about all that has happened to anyone human which can in return open up the possibility for others. She also sees a universal oneness in humankind, as she says "Wherever the eternal flowering has happened, it is the same consciousness". In all sentient beings we can find the passion to experience happiness, the fear of death and there is also the great curiosity for truth, or what happens at the time of death and why does it happen? As these questions arise in every human, the answers also come in a whole unified field of consciousness. Essential questions, passion and beliefs, which can be found throughout the world, whether you believe in Buddhism, Jainism etc.

She is said to have found enlightenment at the age of 16, and since then she has had a long journey much resembling to that of the seed to bloom into a rose. She was about 12 years old when she heard a satsang in the neighbourhood, then she engaged in a conversation the mahatma was giving about the ever changing nature of the world where nothing is permanent and where what we actually need is permanent happiness. This is when she started listening and taking part



Anandmurti Gurumaa

in meditations where once she sat in the perfect state of no-mind for four hours while all the others left. She did not understand where those four hours had gone and that was the moment when her mahatma embraced her and encouraged her to keep on doing it.

The fundamental thoughts of her philosophy are the awareness of the inner self. "Whatever you are or however you are, in the very existence you are the Divine." You don't have to do anything or become anything, because you are already it. Total sheer silence, not even a ripple of darkness in the mind, like the sun coming out. However, reaching this perfect state of peace and light does not come easy as so much rubbish can be found inside. According to Gurumaa, that is all the game of the mind. All the darkness and messiness within is a mind created dream world, which is not easy to wake up from. Because people love sleeping and dreaming, desires and modifications of the mind. Therefore

they do not want to wake up and crucify masters who tells them 'You are the Truth.' People choose this darkness and to sleep you need darkness.

At her ashram, there is a basic structure with the foundation of a healthy body, which is a quintessential part of spiritual life. Therefore, they practice yoga asanas, breathing technics and always remain conscious of their surroundings. A strong and erect spine is also very important as without that people develop low immunity, fall sick and have many psychological problems. As many other gurus, Gurumaa also takes part actively in the betterment of society focusing her energies on woman empowerment, a cause which she took up almost by coincidence. One day she met a girl, the daughter of a widow, who wanted to study but did not have the funds to do so. She decided to help the girl, and today her Institute educates 22,000 children and has opened up five institutes. She bravely challenges the male chauvinistic sadhus who refuse to accept a woman spiritual leader, whilst being the first person to write a book and openly talk about the purity of the menstrual cycle, encouraging women to do their daily chores, cooking and go to puja even during their cycle. She also started a new trend of celebrating the birth of a girl child with a lohri, a bonfire and feasting which is held when a boy is born.

Her programme, Shakti, is a mission started by

Anandmurti Gurumaa to empower female children in India and stop female foeticide. Shakti supports the education of the girls from poor and needy families until 12th standard. Shakti gives financial support for education without any colour/caste/creed discrimination. It was started informally in 2000. Besides spiritual teaching and humanitarian works, Gurumaa has translated the Sufi love poems of the Turkish Sufi dervish Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi into Hindi language, for the first time in India. These poems were published in the book *Prem ka Chhalakta Jaam*. As a gifted singer, Gurumaa intersperses her discourses with Sufi songs, Sikh shabads and bhajans, and has produced many CDs of her songs including one in which she sung few of Rumi's poems, translated to Hindi.

As a teacher, just as a human being Anandmurti Gurumaa believes in evolving and the need to grow, always keeping in mind what the subject, the student, requires as you cannot address a student from an engineering college the same way as a student from a medical school.

Gurumaa says she does not wish to leave any legacy behind as legacy is for blind followers who tend to destroy their master's work. As an individual cannot leave behind a legacy, all her followers need to do is to see and observe the world. "What I received is Truth, what I leave behind is Truth. Truth was, is and will eternally be". ■

CHIDANANDA SARASWATI

Chidananda Saraswati, spiritual head of Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh was put on the path of sanyas at the age of eight by his first guru, Swami Brahma Swaroop. In 1985, when the reins of Parmarth were handed over to him, he started managing ashram activities as well as innumerable projects to serve humanity. His practical and pragmatic approach gets reflected in his quick stride which complements the compassionate softness of his personality. When asked about his unique contribution to spirituality and humankind, he confesses he sees himself as a tool in the hand of the Divine. He believes everyone has been assigned a role to play, a dharma to fulfil the divine design – but above all, everyone's dharma is to serve, share and care as much as they can. At the core of his philosophy lies a simple foundation, love; love for humanity, love for all creation pervaded by divinity. His philosophy is worshipping the Creator and loving and serving all creation. He strives to see the Divine in everyone without barriers or boundaries of caste, creed and colour, region or religion with neither an agenda nor a tag, nor even hoping to leave behind any signature. As humankind is the creation of the Creator, his service to humankind, e.g. creation is in fact the worship of the Creator. Moreover, as the Divine pervades all creation, it

is about serving all living beings, to care for, protect and preserve all of it.

Chidananda finds inspiration for his life in the example of Mother Ganga which flows without any discrimination, expectation, hesitation or vacation he strives to lead his life just the same. As he respects all aspects of creation, he firmly believes that rivers must be revered and respected and they should have rights just as a person has rights. Indeed, he sees life in everything. Therefore, he feels quite positive and enthusiastic about Modi's new government and welcomes with great joy the Ganga cleaning project.

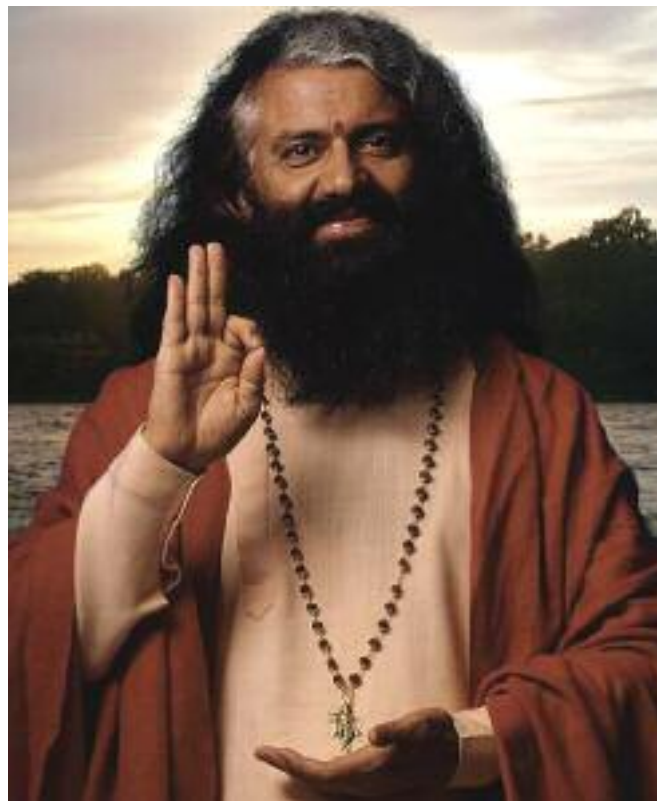
Swami Chidananda Saraswati is the founder or co-founder of several humanitarian and environmental organizations which serve a number of causes, including: Ganga Action Parivar, to preserve and protect the Ganga River and its tributaries; India Heritage Research Foundation (IHRF), which provides education, health care, youth welfare, and vocational training and has done yeoman service in bringing out a 11-volume Encyclopaedia of Hinduism; Divine Shakti Foundation, which provides education and assistance to widowed and impoverished women and children, as well as

the protection of street animals in India such as cows and dogs; the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA) to provide access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation and proper hygiene; and Project Hope, an umbrella organization that brings together various humanitarian and environmental organizations in times of disaster to provide both emergency relief and long-term rehabilitation.

Indeed, he believes that in all temples, churches, mosques and gurudwaras, all congregations must be given education about sanitation.

His environmental projects are not the only contribution he is giving to the world. One of his laudable initiatives is the setting up of youth session camps running across USA, Europe and throughout Asia to uplift and empower young minds. However, he does not believe that youth is the future; youth is the now generation, not the next, he says. Chidananda sees all the energy, inspiration and brightness in youth, but also recognises all the confusions and problems the younger generation face in their everyday life.

With his universal equality amongst all creation, no wonder Chidananda Saraswati is one of the most popular faces at interfaith conclaves. He is also interested in interfaith dialogue and currently sits on the Board of World Religious Leaders for the Elijah Interfaith Institute. In his views, inter-faith should work for inner faith, which should work to bring about outer change and inner change. His humanitarian work is the living testament to that. The one teaching he imparts to thousands of devotees who come to see him in Parmarth each year is to connect with God, to find the Divine and worship Him in any form. He sees all the stress and problems in our every-day life as the result



Chidananda Saraswati

of drifting without anchor to God. He hopes to leave the legacy of removing all the suffering from the world. It is a daunting task which he does not intend to complete all alone, but to remove all the thorns from the path on which he is walking, that which is an honourable and huge contribution not only to humankind but to all creation. ■

DADA VASWANI

"The grace of my guru and God. That sums up my whole life" says Dada Vaswani, head of the Pune-based Sadhu Vaswani Mission who is the embodiment of simplicity, humility, wisdom and goodness. Dada Vaswani, born Jashan Pahlajrai Vaswani was born on 2 August 1918, at Hyderabad, Sindh, in a Sindhi family. He passed the Bachelor of Science examination at the age of 17 years. For his Master's degree, his thesis was on "The Scattering of X-Rays by Solids", which was assessed by C.V. Raman. He also worked as a Fellow in the D.J. Sind College, Karachi. He then followed his guru and his saintly uncle Sadhu Vaswani, a mystic, philosopher, humanitarian, educationist and apostle of Indian Culture.

The sea was his first love and as a young man he would sit on the rocks by the sea and watch the waves. That's when he decided to join nautical training to become a

sailor. When his mother disapproved of his plans, he prayed, fasted but his plan did not work out. Finally, his mother sent him to his uncle, Sadhu Vaswani to decide over his son's fate. However, uncle Vaswani felt that the path was not meant for his young nephew.

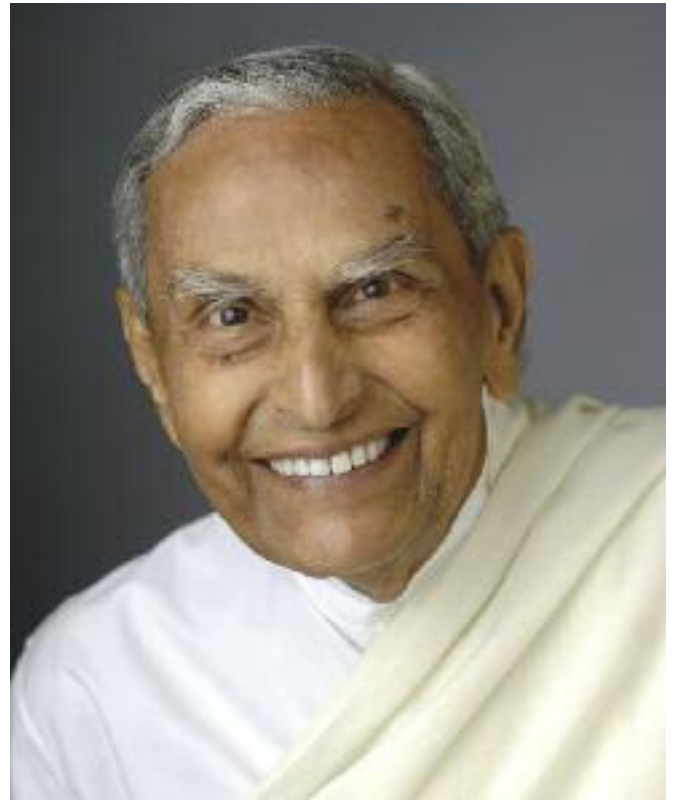
The core of Dada Vaswani's belief is total surrender to a higher power. It is often that we plan ourselves and we think that if these plans worked out, we would be extremely happy. But he does not believe so because there is a higher plan for everyone and the sooner we surrender to it, the happier we will be. 'Plan nothing, win everything' – a gift of wise words of his guru, Sadhu Vaswani to a man retiring from government service which Dada Vaswani has kept dearly for himself as a mantra throughout his life. Although he believes in total surrender, he also says

that the ego is not to be completely vanished as it has its own place in life. As the ego passes through experiences of life it learns to surrender itself. And as the ego is also in search of true happiness, the sooner it finds that true happiness lies in surrender it will surrender very easily.

Although being head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission he does not regard himself as a master, not when he thinks of his Guru. He regards himself more as one of the disciples. Unlike other gurus who travel with large entourage that deny you access, Dada merely has about three or four women who travel with him everywhere. Devoted to him, they would easily sacrifice their right hands to spare him a moment of pain, but they are never seen as being obsequious before him as other disciples are before their gurus. Their relationship is more that of a loved parent or uncle. Laughter flows easily and there is no brittle air of being around some sacred figure before whom they cannot be themselves. Indeed, his training by Sadhu Vaswani taught him humility and the surrender of his ego, as he believed his young apprentice should not be under the influence of his own ego.

Reaching 97 years in August this year, for Dada Vaswani pain is an unfamiliar feeling, however he accepts and also welcomes it with the same sweet, loving and gentle acceptance as he lives his life. He regards every dart of pain as a call from the Divine, a calling that you must now be prepared to put off this outer covering. It does not scare him but rather fills him with rapture. It is no wonder he does not fear death as he does not accept it as the end of all things but rather as examination after studying hard for a class. It is the examination of life. "Every time I speak a falsehood, I fail. Every time that I turn away a poor man with a rough word, I fail. Every time I get an impure thought, I fail. Every time I get an emotion of lust or of greed, I fail."

Dada Vaswani describes an incident in the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa which sums up perfectly for him what death really is. On one night, at around midnight Sri Ramakrishna uttered the name of the mother three



Dada Vaswani

times and then entered eternal sleep. His wife, Sarada Devi, who is also revered as a saint, proclaimed herself a widow who had no right to wear bangles anymore. However, as she had them on her wrist since childhood, she had great difficulty getting them off. As she tried to break them off with a hammer she heard a voice calling her, then Ramakrishna appeared standing before her. He said 'What are you doing? I have only moved on from one room to another.'

Behind his warm smile is the foundation of life that is love, the thread of love that unites all beings as one. "Life without love is dry as desert. Therefore, give love to all. There are no enemies. Only friends and friends to be. We all are one. Keep on smiling at everyone you meet." ■

MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI DEVI

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi or simply known to her devotees as Amma ('Mother') was born in 1953 as Sudhamani in a fisherman's house in Alappad, Kerala. Since her childhood she was discriminated against even by her own parents for being black and female. She was made to work harder than a farm bullock and subjected to severe scolding. Yet Sudhamani, instead of ruining her fate, developed a

longing for the Divine which only increased alongside with the taunts and hardships of her life. As her work involved collecting food for the family cows, she roamed the local villages gathering grass and asking for vegetable peels and other leftovers from neighbours. During these journeys of collecting she faced many times the hardships of other people; families starving in their own home, sick people who

could not afford any medicines or the elderly abandoned by everyone including their family. Even as a child, she could not help but ease the suffering wherever she could, and although she was taught that people's fate is determined by their karma, she still strongly believed that it was the duty of others to help alleviate the suffering of fellow human beings.

Amma is known to the world for hugging her devotees or indeed anyone who comes to her for love. It is said that once she hugged 50,000 people a day by sitting for 20 hours at a stretch. Affectionately called the hugging Amma: her never fading energy comes from pure love, which has become the centre-point of her life. Hugging people is as natural to her as the river flows or the sun shines. As a result of her never-fading love, many people started to report miraculous healings as Amma hugged them in her divine fervour.

The secret of her life is a secret known to everyone, love which is the source of all transformation. She teaches that love is a power which transforms; indeed it can change people's perception and bring about external changes as well. The truth is that only love can achieve the changes in both the world as well as in individuals which they need so much.

Being a woman, she broke rules and chartered new paths in a society that shackles women since birth and she did it by growing in the realisation of being divinely feminine, which is under no compulsion to conform to the standards laid by patriarchy. In fact, she is seen as the embodiment of God's unconditional love for his children and as her name reflects is regarded as the divine mother. Indeed, she regards pure love the heart of motherhood, therefore manifesting it is not something that is only important for women, as pure love is everyone's true nature. Due to a special relationship between them, the mother becomes the child's first guru, who teaches him love, patience, acceptance and forgiveness, or passes on hatred, anger and revenge. In doing so, mothers have an extremely important role to play in today's world as they shape its nature through their children. In her view the conditions put by patriarchy on womankind is changing. She believes that men and women should work together as equals, because only then will a society as a whole flourish. An oppressive, dominating and controlling relationship is not good, neither for women nor for men.

Although she sees desire as the root cause of all suffering, she does not believe in renouncing all our desires as the problem really is when people let their desires run wild and act on them without any thought. As people fulfil one desire, very soon another will rise in its place, therefore, she says, people need to discern which desire is harmful for them or the world and nip those in the bud. Desires are natural part of human existence and those not harmful are accepted just as long as it does not consume us. However, fulfilling these desires are not enough to truly make us



Mata Amritanandamayi Devi

happy, so we need to strive to attain the higher goals of life and cultivate a mind-set that allows people to be happy whether their desires are fulfilled or not.

In spirituality the goal is not something external; it is your very nature – your True Self. The nature of Self-knowledge is that although things may look difficult externally, to look within anything comes spontaneous and effortless. Self-knowledge is not like any material attainment, which – even after it has been attained – leaves the person wanting and unhappy. Therefore, in knowing your True Self, can you really achieve true and everlasting happiness and live effortlessly. In this state, you don't even have to think – this is how it happens once you have established your existence in consciousness.

In 1981, the Mata Amritanandamayi Math (MAM), a worldwide foundation, was set up. Amritanandamayi continues to serve as chair of the Math. Today the Mata Amritanandamayi Math is engaged in many spiritual and charitable activities. In 1987, at the request of devotees, Amritanandamayi began to conduct programs in countries throughout the world and has done so annually ever since. In 2014, for the first time in history, major Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox Christian leaders, as well as Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist leaders (including Amritanandamayi), met to sign a shared commitment against modern-day slavery organized by the Global Freedom Network; the

declaration they signed calls for the elimination of slavery and human trafficking by the year 2020.

Amma has built homes for the homeless, constructed schools and hospitals, and run pension schemes for the poor.

She also gives scholarships and self-employment schemes for poor students, funds for scientific research and runs disaster relief programmes. She is indeed the personification of the universal mother who turns nobody away from her loving bosom. ■

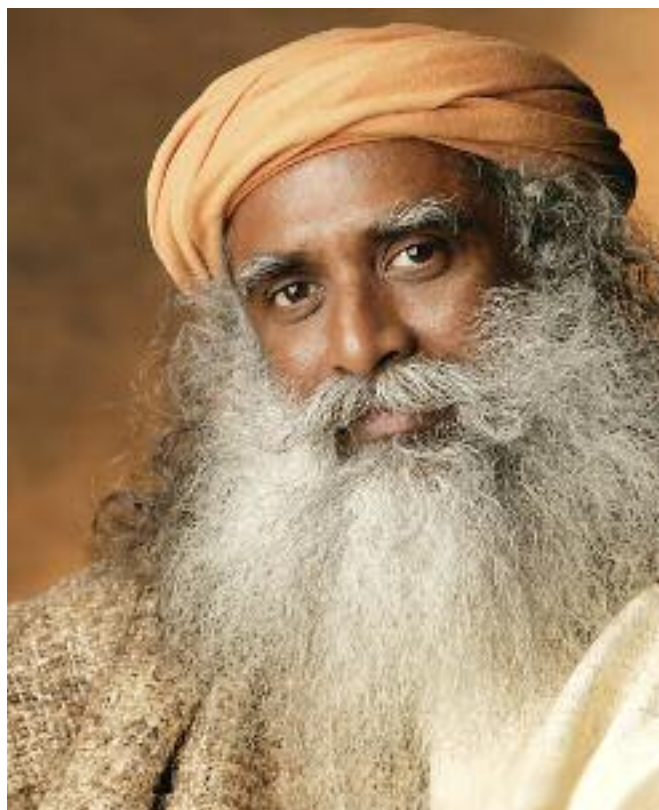
SADHGURU JAGGI VASUDEV

At the age of twenty-five on 23 September 1981, Jaggi Vasudev rode up his motorbike to Chamundi Hill and sat on a rock, when he had a spiritual experience. Sadhguru describes his experience, "Till that moment in my life I always thought this is me and that's somebody else and something else. But for the first time I did not know which is me and which is not me. Suddenly, what was me was just all over the place. The very rock on which I was sitting, the air that I breathe, the very atmosphere around me, I had just exploded into everything. That sounds like utter insanity. This, I thought, lasted for ten to fifteen minutes but when I came back to my normal consciousness, I realised it was about four-and-a-half-hours that I was sitting there, fully conscious, eyes open, but time had just flipped."

He had always lived the way he wanted, being peaceful and happy he never had issues. Growing up in the 60s, the era of the Beatles and blue jeans, he read Dostoevsky, Camus and Kafka, yet with his unprecedented experience he was exploding into a completely different dimension, basking in something so beautiful, he never wanted to lose.

These experiences became more frequent and within six weeks it changed into his normal way of being. When he could not reconcile his experience of utter happiness and unity with the cosmos with that of his logic, he realised that life is the ultimate intelligence. Human logic is mere smartness to ensure our survival, but is not the ultimate tool with which life can be understood. This experience of nameless ecstasies without any particular reason made him realise that it was yoga, the ultimate union. This experience changed his life completely. Six weeks after this experience, he left his business to his friend and travelled extensively in an effort to gain insight into his 'mystical' experience. After a year of meditation and travel, Sadhguru decided to teach yoga to share his inner experience.

In 1983, he conducted his first yoga class with seven participants in Mysore. Over time, he began conducting yoga classes across Karnataka and Hyderabad travelling from class to class on his motorcycle. He lived off the proceeds of his poultry farm rental and refused payment for the classes. A usual practice of his was to donate the collections received from participants to a local charity on the last day of the class. These initial programs were the basic format on which



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

the Isha Yoga classes were later built.

Sadhguru recognises a universal longing in every human being to become not only more than they are but to become all, "we're seeking to become infinite", he concludes. As this longing can be found in every human being, it is logical that such an experience of Sadhguru's can be a living reality for everyone who is willing, in fact he calls it "the birth right of every human being".

As a guru he does not associate himself with any traditional lineage or scriptural knowledge, indeed, to him the word sadhguru is a description, not a title meaning a person, who comes from inner experience, from clarity. As opposed to people who take an established position about everything, he directs his eye to see what is around without looking for something or someone. Many people think spirituality is about looking for God or the Ultimate Truth,

but Sadhguru believes that as they already defied what they are looking for, the mind by its nature will create making it impossible to see what really is around. Therefore, he teaches people to look inward in their pursuit of happiness, rather than upward, which can lead to wars or outward, which can destroy the planet. Your inner self is not in conflict with anybody.

Sadhguru established Isha Foundation, a non-religious, non-profit organisation entirely run by volunteers. The Isha Yoga Center near Coimbatore was founded in 1992, and hosts a series of programs to heighten self-awareness through yoga. Isha such as its founder offers methods, not teachings. The work he does is 'at the deepest core of the human being.' It's not on the level of personality; it's on the level of life. What is done on the level of life doesn't have to be tailored differently for different personalities, because the fundamental life process works the same way for

everyone.' The foundation works in tandem with international bodies like the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Sadhguru feels that his real work in life is to 'make people flower'. 'How you and I feel within ourselves, is determining how the world is right now. If you flower within there will be fragrance in the world.'

Sadhguru believes that if you have mastery over your physical body, 15 to 20 per cent of your life and destiny will be in your hands. However, if you have mastery over your mind, 50 to 60 per cent of your life and destiny will be in your hands. Moreover, if you have mastery over your life energies, 100 per cent of your life and destiny will be in your hands. Of course, it doesn't mean complete control over one's external reality, therefore the cosmos will not start to shape to one's way, but rather the self becomes cosmic. ■

SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is indisputably one of the most popular gurus of our times who wins everybody's heart with his playful, childlike smile and gentle voice. And what is the secret of this charming smile? Where does his humility come from? "I am a child who refuses to grow up", is his answer, adding "There are two kinds of joys. As children, we have all experienced the joy of receiving. As we grow in life, we have to move towards the joy of giving."

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was born in Papanasam, Tamil Nadu, to Visalakshi Ratnam and R. S. Venkat Ratnam on 13 May 1956. He was named Ravi because his birth was on Sunday, and Shankar after the eight-century Hindu saint, Adi Shankara as it was also Shankara's birthday. Even as a child, he showed great talent. It is said that at the age of four he was able to recite verses from the Bhagavad Gita. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Bangalore University. After graduation, he travelled with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi giving talks and arranging conferences on Vedic science, and setting up meditation and ayurveda centres.

He says that his rhythmic breathing practice, Sudarshan Kriya, came to him in 1982, after a 10-day period of silence on the banks of the Bhadra River in Shimoga, in the state of Karnataka, adding, "I learned it, and started teaching it."

Sri Sri says that every emotion has a corresponding rhythm in the breath, and that regulating the breath can help elevate the individual and relieve personal suffering. This breathing technique called Sudarshan Kriya is the founding component of the courses offered by the Art of Living Foundation, an organisation founded by Ravi Shankar.



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

It was in 1983 Sri Sri held the first Art of Living course in Europe, in Switzerland. In 1986, he travelled to Apple Valley, California, to conduct the first course in America. Today Art of Living has its presence in 152 countries across the globe, which has the highest number of youth followers. He has inspired millions of people to lead positive and

creative life based on spirituality. Shankar teaches that spirituality is that which enhances human values such as love, compassion and enthusiasm. It is not limited to any one religion or culture. Hence it is open to all people. He feels the spiritual bond we share as part of the human family is more prominent than nationality, gender, religion, profession, or other identities that separate us.

In Shankar's view, "Violence-free society, disease-free body, quiver-free breath, confusion-free mind, inhibition-free intellect, trauma-free memory, and sorrow-free soul is the birth right of every human being." As a guru, his purpose in life is to inspire people to enquire about the purpose of their life. According to him, science and spirituality are linked and compatible, both springing from the urge to know. The question, "Who am I?" leads to spirituality; the question, "What is this?" leads to science. Emphasizing that joy is only available in the present moment, his stated vision is to create a world free of stress and violence. When he was asked about the destiny of mankind's journey, he answered "Everyone has love at the core within them. To go deep within yourself, you don't have to go anywhere else. Wherever you are, you can just sit for a few moments and be silent. These few moments add a lot of value to our life."

His programs are said to offer practical tools to help accomplish this. He sees breath as the link between body and mind, and a tool to relax the mind, emphasising the importance of both meditation/spiritual practice and service to others. In his view, "Truth is spherical rather than linear; so it has to be contradictory."

Ravishankar is not only a guru who lives in an ivory tower proclaiming his wisdom and spiritual teachings to the masses. He also addresses many social issues working for farmer's upliftment, water conservation, education, disaster relief management, youth and women empowerment, and conflict resolution. Testament to the latter is his recent journey to Iraq where he oversaw the humanitarian relief effort in aid to the Yezidi community which has suffered one of the worst genocides of the 21st century under the onslaught of ISIS in Iraq.

And he does not work alone, AOL has countless volunteers taking up different service projects wherever they are. As it happens, many times, even their leader comes to know about it much later. Among other achievements, the volunteers have revived seven rivers in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, among those some had been dry for decades. As part of their Rural Development Programme they have distributed over 10,000 solar lights in remote areas where there is no electricity.

Part of his mission is to reach out to every corner of the world and give people a broad multi-cultural education which is based on human values, so that children do not grow up harbouring a prejudice against a community or a religion. "The world is one big family. Love and belongingness, a worldwide unity and education offer a way to fight corruption, violence, terrorism and make the world a better place", he says. ■

—Sri Sri Ravi Shankar will be guiding a yoga session at the United Nations on IDY

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a name synonymous with a liberal, moderate and tolerant interpretation of Islam. He is a renowned Islamic scholar whose life mission is to promote humanism and truth as the true message of Islam. Internationally recognized for his contributions to world peace, he has received, among others, the Demiurgus Peace International Award, the Padma Bhushan, the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award and the National Citizen's Award. A recent book, The 500 Most Influential Muslims of 2009, by Georgetown University, Washington DC, has named him "Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world". He was also conferred with the Sayyidina Imam Al Hassan Ibn Ali Peace Award (2015) in Abu Dhabi. He has translated the Quran in simple and contemporary English and written a commentary on the Quran. He gives lectures on ETV Urdu, Zee Salaam, Bridges TV, ITV, ARY Digital, QTV, Aaj TV, etc.

Khan was born in Uttar Pradesh in the town of Azamgarh in 1925. He graduated from a seminary of traditional Islamic learning and then went on to contribute

to articles and journals before opening an Islamic Centre in Delhi in 1970. The al-Risala Urdu magazine was started in 1976 consisting almost entirely of his articles and writing. An English edition of the magazine was started in February 1984 and a Hindi version in December 1990. Some of his notable articles include 'Hijacking - A Crime', 'Rights of Women in Islam', 'The Concept of Charity in Islam' and 'The Concept of Jihad'. He is a noted Islamic Scholar in India and has published several books. His advice to Muslims has been to not treat unpleasant or unwanted situations as problems as this would only yield negative results. That is, one must not try to eliminate them or lodge complaints or protests against them. In fact, one should take such situations as challenges, and positively work towards overcoming them.

His ability is to connect with everyone, interacting with, and answering the queries of everyone, especially the young. He resembles the spiritual greats who have always understood that the spirit of the young must be given the right direction so that their energy and drive are not misused.

Through his writings he is completely abreast of current events, and tries his best to correct the distorted image of Islam that has overtaken the religion the world over, even among the believers. His analogy is Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha as the true symbol of jihad which achieved something remarkable through non-violence. According to his writings, the role of religion and faith in today's world is to develop a person's spirituality. Thus he is able to live with a positive mind and is duty-conscious rather than right-conscious. Such a person is free of greed and hate, and is capable of assessing things objectively. He is one who possesses a predictable character. This kind of personality is the greatest need of the present times.

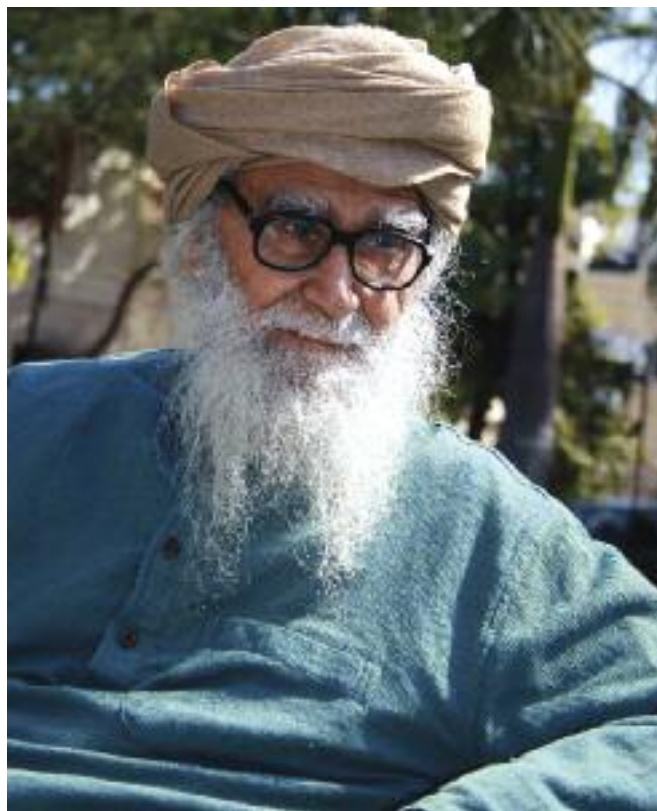
According to him it is totally wrong to divide people in terms of Muslim and kafir. According to the Quran, every person is insaan, or a human being. All people have common ancestors, that is, Adam and Eve. This means that all people are blood sisters and brothers. According to Islamic teaching, Muslims have no right to declare a person and a community as kafir. This matter belongs to God's domain. The duty of Muslims is only to treat others as human beings.

As for jihad, his opinion is that it is said by the Quran to be a peaceful struggle for a noble cause. Jihad has no relationship with the sword or the gun. For example, a person is doing jihad if he or she fights against sentiments such as greed, tries to come out of negative thinking or strives to peacefully end social evils, or bringing human values to society. In later days, the word jihad was extended to mean qital (war). This interpretation of jihad is not found in Quran. Qital is not permissible in Islam for a purpose other than defence. If someone wages a war in the name of qital for a purpose other than defence, then that is going against the teaching of Islam. Islam disowns such an act.

The first clause of Islam, he says, is that every person has been bestowed freedom of choice by the Creator. Whether a person is making the right or wrong use of freedom shall be decided by God. No person has the right to make this decision about another.

According to Islam, there are two types of education: religious and secular. Religious education is the need of every believer. Secular education has a universal domain and is thus the need of the whole human society. Islam accepts the importance of both these forms of education. Islam leaves it to people on how to organize these two aspects of their education.

About freedom, he says that it is the right of both men and women. As far as for example burqah is concerned, it is not an Islamic teaching. It was innovated in the later period of Muslim history. Music is also not prohibited in Islam. It is a matter of a person's own choice. There is no ban on music according to the Sharia law.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Muslims are not required to implement the Sharia law by force. It is a matter of option and not a matter of implementation. The word "revision" is not very appropriate in this regard. The better word is ijtihad. Ijtihad means to re-apply the Spirit of the Sharia according to the circumstances. Muslims must follow Sharia in their personal issues, but as far as national issues are concerned, every Muslim must follow the law of the land as established by the Parliament.

There is no concept of theocracy in Islam, he says. Islam believes in democracy. The Quranic word for democracy is Shura. Shura means deciding social and political matters by way of national consultation. The concept of blasphemy is alien to the scheme of things described in the Quran. No country has the right to institute a law on blasphemy and implement it by force on people. There is no concept of "thought-crime" in Islam. The Violence in the Muslim world in the name of Islam has no relation to Islam, he says. It is entirely a form of tribal culture, rather than being derived from Islam. Some people started it for their personal interest and gave it the name of Islam.

According to him, the future of both the Muslim and non-Muslim world is only one, that is peace. We have to adopt peace as a universal norm, and not adopt the way of violence in any circumstance. After the invention of weapons of mass destruction, the option for violence does not remain. In present times, the entire world has peace as the only option. ■

RAJA YOGINI DADI JANKI

Dadi Janki joined the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) as a founding member in 1937 at the age of 21. In the 1950's she established numerous Brahma Kumari (BK) centres throughout India. In 1974 she established the first BK centre outside India, in London. Under her guidance and inspiration, BK centres now exist in nearly 100 countries. She was appointed Additional Administrative Head of the BKWSU in 1983.

Dadi Janki maintains an unrivalled daily lecture and touring schedule even today, at 99. She has travelled world-wide, almost incessantly over the past two decades, engaging with people from the grassroots to government leaders.

Controversially, Janki was responsible for bringing the large Trance Light images of Brahma Baba to BK Raja Yoga centres worldwide contrary to the teaching of the Murlis. Once said to be “the most stable mind in the world”, Janki is widely considered to be “one of The Eight” and a future Golden Aged Emperor.

As head of the Brahma Kumari movement, attributes her equanimity to purity of thoughts, words and actions. Dadi Janki, the administrative head of the Brahma Kumari movement she epistomes this phenomenon. She has spread Raja Yoga throughout the world and maintains a gruelling daily routine. She has travelled the world almost relentlessly over the past decade, engaging with people from the grassroots to the top brass. Dadi Janki refuses to set limits and boundaries to human achievement, and by doing so, she inspires millions to believe that they too can make the impossible, possible.

Before she speaks, she always says Om Shanti three times. The first Om Shanti is to become self-aware – “Who am I?” The second is to become aware of the Supreme – “Who do I belong to?” The third is to remind myself, “What kind of actions do I need to perform in the world?” One can be helped tremendously in a practical way in life, from the awareness of these three Om Shantis.

Her opinion on the role of religion and faith in today's world is that we have to speak of religion as dharma. Actually the basis of human life is swadharma (to act according to one's original nature). Swadharma is peace, love and truth. Nowadays in the world, people don't have faith in the self, God or each other. Dharma means to have faith. When there is faith, there is truth, love and unity. In fact, there are five things that result from faith: truth, love, patience, humility and sweetness. Faith brings these five things into our life in a practical way.

She was 21 when she embarked on the spiritual journey and received the introduction of the Supreme Soul and the



Raja Yogini Dadi Janki

understanding that we are in a special time in the cycle of humanity – The Confluence Age – a confluence between the old world of Kaliyug and the new world of Satyug (age of truth). Since receiving the introduction of the Supreme, she began to experience what spirituality really is. It is nothing showy, but a quiet internal process of self-realisation; of knowing yourself, knowing God and performing elevated actions. She has always paid attention to karma. Whatever actions she performs, others on seeing her will do the same, she says. Good karma means action without the arrogance of the body, without desire, anger, greed, attachment.

According to Dadi Janki, we have to keep our thought power pure and peaceful. There is no need to think wasteful thoughts. Where there isn't waste, the mind remains stable.

When she was younger, she practiced devotion. For her, to be devoted to God meant to interact honestly and with love. She never distinguished between her family and her friends. All were the same to her. However, she had a deep longing for God, the Supreme. She experienced this through Brahma Baba, who was also a sincere devotee, never did devotion in a “showy” way. She says that we need knowledge to discover purpose – an introduction of who I am, who I belong to, what I have to do. When we receive an introduction, things become easy. So we have to recognize this for ourselves and

then share it with each other. This is our duty.

About education, her opinion is that when people think of the word education, they think in terms of livelihoods like becoming a doctor, a lawyer. She has been educated in the scriptures and received only three years of formal schooling from age 9. Education means to take what is necessary in life for us; what is useful for our interactions; and for keeping our accounts in life accurate.

About including spirituality in one's normal day-to-day life, she says that it is not a question of how but what consciousness we remain in as we continue our daily activities.

She introduced Raja Yoga to the entire world. She has often deeply felt how the Supreme Soul has given her such teachings to live a practical spiritual life. People have been inspired by the practical life and proof of these teachings. No matter what religion or culture we are from, we can focus on increasing self-awareness. Raja Yoga means to have the sanskaras of self-sovereignty. This brings reality and royalty in one's character. Yoga means relation, connection and communication with the One. This is essential for everyone – young and old. With the practice of Raja Yoga your awareness stays clean and remembrance stays good. Happiness and

sorrow; respect and disrespect; insult and praise; victory and defeat – all are dualities that exist in life. However, one has the power to remain in equanimity in the face of all this.

Dadi Janki's religion is simply truth and love. Violence is happening because of leaving that, and becoming attached to limited identities of being a Hindu or a Christian or a Muslim. When someone holds on to limited identities, he/she experiences fear, fear of other religions. If truth is religion, there is no fear. Dadi Janki always maintained the practice of remaining unshakable, immovable and stable. The power of concentration has kept her going until today and remain a well-wisher to others. Her advice is to have clean intentions, then thoughts will manifest practically.

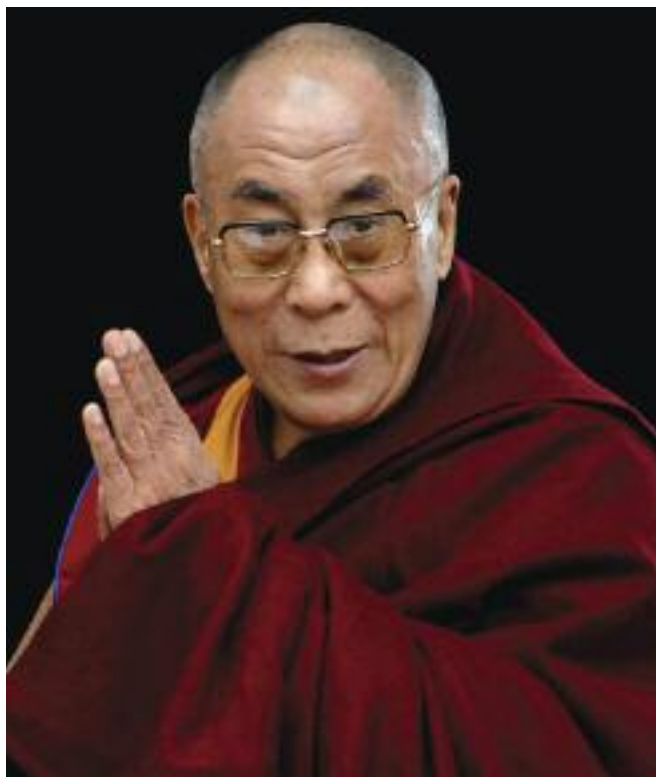
Her vision for the future is being revealed in human life as Brahma Kumars and Kumaris.

As a detached observer, even before adopting spiritual knowledge, she never wasted her time, money or energy. She still has great value for time. She has never had to ask money from anyone. She always had the pure wish to remain simple, and become a sample. ■

THE DALAI LAMA

Without a shadow of doubt, the Dalai Lama is the most popular spiritual teacher in the world. His benevolent, chuckling demeanor, and his commitment to non-violence in the face of the annexure of Tibet by China, as well as a growing fascination for Buddhism, has made him a phenomenon the world over. The Dalai Lama has become synonymous with spirituality today. His compassion, humility and ability to be free in exile have drawn millions of people over the world to his spiritual tradition, Buddhism. For them, the 14th Dalai –Lama personifies faith, hope and non-violence. The magic of the Dalai Lama: he connects with everyone, young and old, and inspires reverence, and a desire to lead a guided life.

The Dalai Lama was born Lhamo Thondup in 1935 to a peasant family in Taktser, Tibet. He was recognized as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama at the tender age of two, and was said to be a manifestation of Avalokiteshwara, the bodhisattva of compassion. Traditionally, in Tibetan Buddhism, Dalai Lamas functioned as the 'monk-kings' of Tibet, embodying a unique synergy of monastic life and state affairs. He has been the ideal Dalai Lama in today's times, proving through his actions that only spirituality and spiritual principles can bring success. He has been successful in winning Western support for the cause of greater Tibetan autonomy or independence, including vocal support from numerous



The Dalai Lama

Hollywood celebrities, most notably the actors Richard Gere and Steven Seagal, as well as lawmakers from several countries. He was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989.

The Dalai Lama is a monk of the Gelug or "Yellow Hat" school of Tibetan Buddhism, the newest of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism founded by Je Tsongkhapa. The 14th and current Dalai Lama is Tenzin Gyatso. During the 1959 Tibetan uprising, the Dalai Lama fled to India, where he denounced the Chinese Communist Party and established the nongovernmental Central Tibetan Administration. He has since traveled the world, advocating for the welfare of Tibetans, teaching Tibetan Buddhism, investigating the interface between Buddhism and science and talking about the importance of compassion as the source of a happy life. The policy of the Dalai Lama until he retired from politics in 2011 was that he did not seek sovereignty for Tibet, but would accept Tibet as a genuine autonomous region within the People's Republic of China. He has spoken about the environment, economics, women's rights, non-violence, interfaith dialogue, physics, astronomy, Buddhism and science, cognitive neuroscience, reproductive health, and sexuality, along with various Mahayana and Vajrayana topics.

He always considered himself, even in his dreams as a simple Buddhist monk feeling that it is the real him, feeling that the Dalai Lama as a temporal ruler is only a man-made institution. People accept him as the Dalai Lama, but naturally he feels himself as more of a religious person. He spends 80 per cent of his time on spiritual activities and 20 percent on Tibet as a whole. He has confidence in religion with a great interest in it. Regarding politics, he has no modern education except for a little experience. This is not voluntary work for him but something that he feels he must pursue because of the hope and trust that the Tibetan people place in him.

As for the lineage of the Dalai Lama tradition, his opinion is that whether or not the institution of the Dalai Lama remains, it depends entirely on the wishes of the Tibetan people. In 1963, after 4 years of exile, they made a draft constitution for the future Tibet which is based on a democratic system. The constitution mentions that the power of the Dalai Lama can be removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the

Assembly. However, the Dalai Lama's institution now is very useful to Tibetan culture and Tibetan people. Personally he feels that the Dalai Lama has served its purpose. Since 2001 there is a democratically elected head of their administration, the Kalon Tripa, which runs the daily affairs of the administration and is in charge of the political establishment, so the Dalai Lama is now in 'semi-retirement'.

The Dalai Lama is optimistic about his return to Tibet. Thanks to the global interdependence, especially in terms of economics and environment, it is impossible for nations to remain isolated. China is a part of the world community and has changed already. Besides, he is not seeking separation from China, but committed to his Middle-Way approach whereby Tibet remains within the People's Republic of China enjoying a high degree of self-rule or autonomy. It would be a mutual benefit both to the Tibetans as well as to the Chinese.

The Dalai Lama has three commitments in his life: the promotion of human values such as compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment and self-discipline; the promotion of religious harmony and understanding amongst different religious traditions; being a free spokesperson of the Tibetans in their struggles for justice. Among the Dalai Lama's personal challenges, achievements and lessons are the understanding of shunya (lack of independent self-nature), and the experience of bodhicitta, altruism. He could become a new person by these lessons, seeing things from another perspective. Also it gives him strength, to accept situations and living with inner courage.

Being told to be the reincarnation of the bodhisattva, he cannot definitely say, which of the four types of reincarnation he belongs to. He sees the role of a divine teacher as a benefit, being helpful to him. The karmic relationship with the Tibetan people in particular and the karmic force of his ability to assume this role as well as the force of his wish to do so is important. The Dalai Lama believes that to remove others's suffering is his aim in this lifetime and was his aim in past lives too. But according to the Middle Way approach of the Lama: "If it is fixable, then there is no need to worry. If not, there is no benefit in worrying." ■

—Source: *Life Positive – Anniversary Special issue, April 2015*

The Unforgettable Soul of Swami Vivekananda

By Éva Markovits

"The basis of knowledge is fear from God".

This quote with its completeness and refined manner has been captured by the Old Testament. Strange as it is, this thought goes far beyond religion and cultures, it belongs to the universal truth. It also suggests that religions

are bound together with a sacred, mystical power. By many, this tie has been seen, nurtured and honoured. Today it is even more valid than ever.

Swami Vivekananda, a prodigy of his time with a deep interest in the reason of the world throughout his life, had planted religious

thoughts first into his being and then tried to light the fire of knowledge reaching out to others in different parts of the world.

Deep minds usually have simple and eternal ideas and it has always been the art of the genius to convert the supernatural into simple words. Swami Vivekananda's lectures and speeches at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 are proof to the above and are still understood and felt as a revelation. Vivekananda's teachings are as transparent as clear water. He suggests and explains the Godly nature of man and the equality of one person with the other. As a proud Indian he also emphasizes his country to be a world spiritual power encapsulating and giving birth to world religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism while noting that India has also been an oasis for the ones escaping war.

By understanding the nature of mankind, approaching

human beings with humanity can bleeding wounds be healed, suggests the teaching of Swami Vivekananda. As a religious Hindu showing openness to India's ancient, traditional Vedantic knowledge and philosophy and being a universal personality of the 19th century, he was also accustomed to reading the writings of his European contemporaries and scholars. He travelled from one country to the other, from continent to continent restlessly with teaching becoming his religion and with a passion for building spheres where others may escape to find relief.

The question arises: how can man be the recipient of such fervent, intellectual powers?

The answer is simple: he has been created by God. ■

—Presented on the occasion of a special event
on Swami Vivekananda at ASCC

Narendranath's 'Conversion'



Vivekananda's first meeting with Ramakrishna was hugely significant. Here is Ramakrishna himself, as quoted by Gupta, on his initial meeting with Vivekananda at Dakshineswar:

When I met Narendra for the first time, I noticed that he did not have body consciousness. I just touched his chest with my hand and he lost all external consciousness. When he returned to his normal state, he exclaimed, 'I say, what did you do to me? I have my father and mother!' (Gupta,



'Sri Ramakrishna').

Gupta, the narrator, reports Ramakrishna's own description of his meeting with Vivekananda. But in his introduction, Gupta frames the encounter in terms of a classic face-off between mundane, if modern, rationality and superiorly-endowed spiritual power.

Gupta is already skewing his narrative away from 'cold and

bloodless' reason and 'mere abstraction' towards something greater and more ambitious. The crisis of colonial reason, the somewhat paler and watered-down version of the Universal Reason of the Enlightenment, is evident here in its full-blown form, with Sri Ramakrishna shown as the classic mind-bender that a fully awakened guru was supposed to be.

Again, in his second visit, Gupta records how suddenly, at the touch of the Master, Narendra felt overwhelmed and saw the walls of the room and everything around him whirling and vanishing. "What are you doing to me?" he cried in terror. "I have my father and my mother at home." He saw his own ego and the whole universe almost swallowed in a nameless void (ibid.) Interestingly, Narendra, who has a strong will, considers natural causes for his altered state of mind, including hypnotism, but not satisfied, returns home "more confused than ever, resolved to be henceforth on his guard before this strange man" (ibid.).

The stage is now set for Narendra's conversion by which the supremacy of the mystical, even occult, supra-rationality of Sri Ramakrishna is established over conventional reason. During the third visit, Narendra loses consciousness entirely:

While he was still in that state, Sri Ramakrishna questioned him concerning his spiritual antecedents and whereabouts, his mission in this world, and the duration of this mortal life. The answers confirmed what the Master himself had known and inferred. Among other things, he came to know that Narendra was a sage who had already attained perfection, and that the day he learnt his real nature he would give up his body in yoga, by an act of will (ibid.).

By now we have left the terrain of modern reason entirely, entering the mysteries of spiritual realities quite beyond our mundane, historical verities.

Ramakrishna's slipping out of historical time into mythic time is seamless. But even if there is no division or break for him, for the modern bhadrakalok, such a flip is only possible through a process of validation through eye-witness accounts and verifiable experience. The pre-modern, non-historical, mytho-poetic world into which Ramakrishna draws Vivekananda is thus ratified empirically, by modern, contemporary and rational means. It is in this emphasis on actual experience that scholars like Jeffrey D. Long locate the modernity of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda neo-Vedanta. Long argues that the official doctrine of the Ramakrishna Mission is not Vedanta, but neo- or Ramakrishna-Vedanta, which is different from Sankara's and other traditional ideas of Vedanta. The difference is that in Ramakrishna-Vedanta, *anubhava* or direct experience is given the highest validity, higher even than the Vedas. According to Long, this is in keeping with modernity which places the highest value on 'direct experience – and reasoning based on that experience – over the authority

of a text, institution, teacher, or oral tradition' (2007:18). Scholars like Long are wrong in thinking that traditional Vedanta set little store by direct experience. It always valued direct experience, but in scholastic traditions, this primacy was often overshadowed by intricate debates over doctrinal niceties and speculative hair-splitting. Yet, at least throughout the classical period, spiritual experience was not considered unavailable or unamenable to rationalistic expression or articulation. It was largely in the medieval period that an ecstatic celebration of spiritual union was taken out of the pale of dry reason and mental gymnastics. This period also coincided with the decline of classical scholarship and its supporting institutions, largely as a consequence of the Sanskrit knowledge. Bhakti was a way of by-passing the inferiority of the unlettered by attaining to a direct, higher spiritual realisation through fervent longing and loving surrender rather than painstaking scholarship. Sri Ramakrishna, the unlettered savant as he was made out to be, was himself a representative of this tradition, perhaps its final flower. On the other hand, modern Vedanta, as championed by Swami Vivekananda, after a long gap, once again made spiritual practice and experience amenable to rational analysis and expression. After centuries of the dominance of Bhakti, characterised by emotional surrender and pseudo-feminine anti-intellectualism, modern Hinduism tried to reintroduce a robust rationality into the spiritual quest without denying the latter altogether as has happened in the West. No wonder Swami Nikhilananda, Vivekananda's biographer is quick to point out that

the Master never once asked Naren to abandon reason. He met the challenge of Naren's intellect with his superior understanding, acquired through first-hand knowledge of the essence of things. When Naren's reasoning failed to solve the ultimate mystery, the teacher gave him the necessary insight.

Not accidentally, this account of the taming of Vivekananda occurs in a chapter called 'Training of the Disciple'. Vivekananda's training is not complete till he recognises a source of knowledge superior to sense and perception and rational deduction. These two sources of knowledge recognised by modern science are shown to be subordinate to a mystical or non-dual, unmediated apprehension of reality, which can only happen in supra-normal if not supernatural states of consciousness. While this 'conversion' is quite remarkable, it is not entirely without basis in tradition. Aptavachana or Sabdapramana, translatable as the reliable authority of a spiritual master, was also considered a valid epistemological category in traditional Indian logic, along with direct sense of perception and inference. What distinguishes modern thought from tradition is clearly its rejection of authority as a reliable source of knowledge. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, once again, rather than breaking with tradition on this score, actually insists on continuity by recognising spiritual authority as a valid source of knowledge.

What is happening in such official accounts of the Ramakrishna–Vivekananda relationship is not just the reinforcement of the Guru–Sisya parampara or the Master–Disciple paradigm. It is nothing less than a careful rearrangement of the value-chain of epistemological hierarchy with Enlightenment rationality not rejected, but reordered as second to gnosis or spiritual insight. It is this reordering or rearrangement of reason that is at the heart of the Indian inflection or tweaking of modernity. Such a re-placement of reason, I believe, has never seriously been challenged even by the proponents of modernity in India; instead, they simply dismiss it or refuse to engage with it. On the other hand, it has been continuously reinforced by almost every major spiritualist including Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, J. Krishnamurti, Nisargadatta Maharaj, the Dalai Lama, and so on, not to speak of poets like Rabindranath Tagore, scientists like Jagadishchandra Bose, and political leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. Reason below illumination or realisation is, thus, the hallmark or canonical formula of Indian modernity, which makes it quite different from its European parent. I do not wish here to set up a dichotomy between Western and Indian modernity. On the contrary, I am deeply concerned with the differences, especially with the spaces, though Indian modernity too is an invention of a special version of tradition, just as European modernity, it is possible to argue, too was. Elements from the classical past were combined with other features derived from the modern West to shape Indian modernity. In so doing, we were distanced not only from our medieval, but also from our immediately prior Muslim pasts. Interestingly, perhaps, it is upon such a formulation that the hopes and fantasies of India being the jagatguru or the teacher of the world rest. After all, if modernity needs to be rescued from itself, only something other than reason, might do the trick.

It would appear that Narendra is already speaking his Master's language; like preaching to the converted, Ramakrishna merely reinforced what was not totally erased from the Indian psyche. Indian modernity had not quite given up its ancient spiritual leanings. Beneath the varnish, the old orientation continued, merely waiting for a quickening agent.

As if to prove that no matter how modern, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission actually subscribes to an ideology that runs counter to the basic thrust of Western modernity, we only need to read their mission statement, as published on their website. Of the official tenets of their faith, Avatarhood of Sri Ramakrishna bears special examination: –

According to the Hindu religious tradition, God incarnates himself as the Avatar in every Age in order to give a new message to humanity. In the Ramakrishna Movement, Sri Ramakrishna is adored as the Avatar of the Modern Age. What this means is that his life and teachings have opened a new way of salvation for humanity. The uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna's Avatarhood is that it embodies the

spiritual consciousness of earlier Avatars and prophets, including those who are outside of the Hindu fold, and is in harmony with all religious traditions. In all the institutions of the Ramakrishna Order, worshipful reverence is shown to all Avatars and the founders of all religions.

'Avatar of the Modern Age' would seem like a contradiction in terms, modernity, after all, being predicated upon the epistemic destruction of every form of authority. The only room for such a figure is sociological, as in Weber's idea of charismatic authority. But here too it is the function and the effect of such figures that is examined, not their experience or the content of their self-expression. On the contrary, such leadership is seen as liable to be cultic and dangerous.

Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal argue that anti-colonial modernity was not only: (a) an assertion of a unique and romantic Indian past; (b) critique of Western modernity; but (c) consisted of imaginative borrowings and exchanges with the latter in order to escape the oppressive present. The debates were between tradition and modernity within India on the other (Bose and Jalal 2004: 90-92). I believe that Ramakrishna and Vivekananda worked together to help forge such an alter-if not anti-colonial modernity.

In this context A. Raghuramaraju makes an astute observation about the difference between them. Pushing Ashis Nandy's characterisation of Vivekananda as a more divided man (than Ramakrishna) 'dealing with more divided men, he considers him much more troubled than Ramakrishna, precisely because Vivekananda, having gone to the West and understood its material superiority, recognised not only the magnitude of the challenge for India but also the extent to which modern Indians had become divided men as a consequence. According to Raghuramaraju (2013), this trouble is the key to understanding Vivekananda's inconsistencies, confusions, ambiguities. The assertion of Indian spiritual or religious superiority was that Ramakrishna in his pre-modern or folk self-sufficiency and confidence did not need. One might, from somewhat firmer faith-location, even venture that Ramakrishna's self-confidence, mistakenly characterised as natural and innocent, did not rest on the fragile and easily undermined ignorance of colonialism or modernity but on the firmer footing of self-realisation and Samadhi. His avataric intervention, choosing of suitable vehicles such as Vivekananda, and resolve to 'save' India, derived not from naiveté or lack of acquaintance with the engines of colonialism, technology, and modernity, but from knowing their destructive power only too well. ■

—The above article is an excerpt from the book titled *Swami Vivekananda – a contemporary reader* edited by Dr. Makarand R. Paranjape, 2014

ASCC ACTIVITIES

Film Club

On every first and third Friday of every month film evenings are arranged at the Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Centre. Four films were screened at the Cultural Centre in May and June in 2015 under the aegis of the

Cine Club:

Club 60 (2013) Hindi 08.05.2015

Yaaran Naal Baharaan (2005) Punjabi 22.05.2015

Highway (2014) Hindi 05.06.2015

Goynar Baksho (2013) Bengali 19.06.2015



Introduction to the world of Yantra – family programme for everybody, 5 May 2015



Forming a Yantra



Colouring

Continuing the tradition of workshops on Yoga and philosophy matters, Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Centre organised a programme for families on 5 May 2015. The programme started with a brief introduction by Ms Éva Gálos,



Ms Melinda showing a Yantra to the participants



Practicing Asanas

member of the Ashtanga Yoga Foundation of Hungary on the meaning of the Yantras, the philosophy and background of using these tools for meditation. It was followed by physical practice: Ms Melinda Irtl held a workshop on the Yantra topic connecting that to Yoga asanas. The participants could involve in forming a Ganesh Yantra by

themselves on the ground. During and after the exercises, the Ganesha Yantra, which may be considered as a means to meditation, was coloured by the participants. The workshop concluded with a question-answer session.

Visit of the students of Miskolc University, 8 May 2015



Having a look at a Sitar class held by Mr Szabolcs Tóth



Mr Khanduja speaking on the occasion



At the conclusion of the programme



Audience listening to the lecture

On 8 May 2015 afternoon a group of students from Miskolc University, Faculty of Economics led by Mr Balázs Illyés visited the Centre. One of the goals of their College is to support young intellectuals in their professional life by creating sensitivity and interest for social and economic challenges around the world. That is the reason why they think that the recognition of India, one of the most important actors of today's economy and culture, is inevitable for an open minded and well prepared economist. The group was very much interested in the actual cultural, economic and social topics of India and in the relation of Hungary and India in these fields.

The visit started with a cultural programme as Sitar class was going on in the Exhibition Hall. The teacher showed them some tricks of the instrument, performed a small sequence of a Raga and then they asked questions in Indian music and possibilities for Hungarians to learn in India. This was followed by the lecture of Mr Vijay Khanduja who prepared a powerpoint presentation for the occasion, talking about the economy

and the present situation of India's trade in the world. The lecture was followed by the introduction of cultural matters by Ms Anita Adamecz and Ms Eszter Berki. They summarized the continuously growing activities of the Centre, illustrating the talk with pictures at the background.

The event concluded with a visit in the Embassy building, spiced with questions and free talk by the students.

Shirayan Vajramutthi Martial Art performance by the Shirayan Vajramutthi Martial Art Group, 12 May 2015



Martial Art performance in the ASCC

Shirayan Vajramutthi is a branch of martial arts of Indian origin which was founded during the years of 150 AD in the South-East territory of the Himalayas. The founders were the king

of an Indian ethnic group (Devasharmi Maharaja) and three Hindu warriors (Dhani, Pindu, Charaka) who were the masters of the Vajramushthi self-defence of that time. The founding gurus left their knowledge to their disciples, who were the sons (Aiykivara and Surayan) of Devasharmi. The latter systematized the teachings and began to teach, organizing small practicing groups. The groups conducted an itinerant lifestyle, preserved and perpetuated the teachings within the family, so they were never widespread around the world. The teachings were always handed over in an oral form, so there are no written records that have survived.

The style arrived at Hungary in 1977 by a Hungarian-born person living in India (Vayasya Gyomrai Endre), who was a disciple of Guru Anjavi, adopted by him as a son, so the teachings were entirely rendered to him. In Hungary Mr Endre left the teachings to his disciple, Ajanayana Leányfalvi Attila, who is currently the leading master of the style.

During the performance that was held on 12 May 2015, both the empty-hand techniques and the instrumental techniques of Shirayan Vajramutthi exercises were explained. The practices were accomplished both individually and in couples. The typical feature exercises like shakuthiyamashaktayana and fighting with bare hands and weapons (rod-danda, sword-amlika) also were shown. Also the techniques of paired exercises were introduced, which are integral part of practicing methods. The audience had the possibility to try some of the traditional practicing methods (Gadaa, Mudgara) and see two short video compilations screened in India by the group. This was the first time that such type of programme was organized in the Centre.

Roma fusion music by Csőke Renáta Quartet, 26 May 2015

The Csőke Renáta Quartet was formed in January 2010 in Pécs,



Csőke Renáta Quartet

Hungary due to a fortunate encounter of four musicians of different musical backgrounds. Their music is rooted in the Lovari Roma culture: they take ballads from different folk collections and shape it to their taste which focuses many styles (e.g. jazz, funk, rock and Latin). The members of the group were Ms Renáta Csőke (vocal), Mr Roland Ferenczi (guitar), Mr Balázs Krommer (drums) and Mr Péter Baksa (double bass).

The heart of this project was the singer, Renáta, who has a unique “inner touch” on this culture and in the songs. The intention of their performances is to create a colorful, improvisational musical environment which allows for enhancing the beauty and timeliness of this musical material. For their concert at our Centre, the Quartet was spicing up its repertoire with some Indian surprises as well, including the cover of the Mahishasuramardini mantra in Jazz style.

The Quartet won special prize at the Fringe Festival 2010 and won the first prize at the Athe Sam (“We Are Here”) contest (held in Budapest) in the modern music category in 2011, while in the same year they toured Granada, Spain as well.

This was an initiative to give opportunity to Roma fusion music in the Centre. The bonus song of the evening was the adaptation of Mahāmṛtyunjaya mantra in jazz style.

Mythological stories for children

by **Rajashree Tope, Performing Artist and Keertan storyteller, 29 May 2015**



Rajashree Tope performing in the Centre

Rajashree Tope, Performing Artist and Keertan storyteller from India had a performance on 29 May, 2015 starting from 5 pm in the Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Centre. On the occasion of Children’s Day she performed mythological stories for 5-10 years old children in front of the home crowd.

Rajashree usually performs in Marathi, Hindi and English, however in the absence of a common language with the Hungarian children the stories were performed exclusively with music, singing, musical instruments, gestures, facial expressions and expressions of emotions.

The theatre began with Ganesh, Saraswati Bandana and Bhavan to the accompaniment of an electrical tanpura and tabla. Three Indian stories were told with keertan tools: the story of two brothers, King Ravan and his brother Kumbhakarna, and two stories of Krishna. Between the stories Rajashree sang two songs. The performance ended with Prarthana (devotional song), Ganesh Aarti and Mantrapushpanjali (mantra). The 45 minutes performance was based on the so-called „taan”. If Indian classical music is a musical language than „taan” is the sentence, the theme of the melody that inspires the performance. The mode of the performance was the raga, the genre of performance of Indian Classical Music.

As the genre was presented in Hungary for the first time, the performance was followed by several questions.

Classical Indian music by Dipak Chakraborty (Tabla) and Partha Pratim Roy, 2 June 2015



Dipak Chakraborty performing

Dipak Chakraborty was born in a family of music lovers. His Talim has flourished under the guidance of Late Sri Ranjit Kr Barua (worthy disciple of Late Ustad Keramattullah Khan) and finally he came in contact with the Tabla wizard Ustad Sabir Khan. He belongs to great Farrukhabad Gharana and has also captured the style of other Gharanas in the Indian Tabla Tradition. He is a B.Sc. graduate from Calcutta University.

Dipak performed in many prestigious musical concerts & festivals in various places in India and abroad. He accompanied several top graded artistes such as Late Pandit V.G. Jog, Pt Kartick Kumar, Pt Goverdhan Mishra, Pt Kamal Mullick, Ustad Saheed Jafar Khan, Baul Samrat Purna Das and several others. He played Tabla Solo in Kolkata Doordarshan and is a musical interviewer and empanelled artiste of the All India Radio.

He is also an empanelled artiste for the Indian Council For Cultural Relation (ICCR). In the year 2004-05, he was selected as International Artiste of the year for Tabla to represent Indian Culture in worldwide, by the Govt. of India. He is completely involved in his music and has been

working on World Peace & Harmony, ISISAR. His famous book "Tali Theke Taal" has been published in Kolkata Book Fair-2001. He is the Secretary of "Swami Haridas Sangeet Sammelan" Kolkata. He is the Principal of "Jagacha Aikatan" International Institute of Music, for the last twenty five years. Dipak has introduced various young artistes and given them opportunity to perform Indian Classical music. He has been awarded "Sangeet Gourav" as pride of West Bengal-2012, from "Award Council of India."

The artist was on a European tour and performed with Mr Partha Pratim Roy Sitarist in the Centre and gave a full-house successful concert in front of the Hungarian audience.

Odissi fusion performance by Ms Virág Túri and Parvati Odissi Group, 9 June 2015



Ms Virág Túri

Parvati Odissi Group has performed several times in ASCC, but this was the first occasion that they prepared a fusion show for the audience.

"If anyone asked me, what is the thing I like most in dance, I would reply: movement. The secondary



Parvati Odissi Group

motivation made me choose this profession is that I like to deal with people and teach them. These two things lead me on the path of my self-realization.", Virág Turi says.

Virág Túri has learned the basics of Indian Odissi dance at Budapest. Later in Jagannath Puri she found her master, Guru Bijay Kumar Senapati, from whom she learnt the skills of Odissi in an authentic environment and in the inseparable spirituality of the dance.

Ms Virág is interested in all kinds of dances and different cultures, nonetheless modern and contemporary tendencies. India's ancient dance forms, their fixedness, sophisticated isolation give her the same freedom as a modern dance that seems to have simpler still delicate focus in its motion.

Ms Virág has just returned from a few months' stay in Odisha. All the fresh movements and items shown in her performance depicted the motion, liveliness, femininity and beauty of Odissi dance.

Closing Ceremony of Hindi classes and orientation courses, 11 June 2015-06-07



Closing Ceremony of Hindi Classes

The Closing Ceremony of Thursdays' orientation courses and Hindi classes was held on 11th June, 2015 in the Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Centre. After the opening Odissi item performed by Ms Virág Túri, Dr Mária Négyesi said a few words of greetings. Mr Umesh Kumar addressed the audience before the thanksgiving of the students. After the thanksgiving Mr Roland Ferenczi played the guitar singing Hindi songs. As usual, the best students and participants of the courses were given small gifts for encouraging them to do further studies.

The programme concluded with free talk and refreshments.

Pt. Satish Vyas concert tour, 17-20 June 2015, Pécs, Budapest, Miskolc & Eger



Satish Vyas performing in Pécs

Renowned Santoor maestro Pandit Satish Vyas, blessed with a formidable musical background and training, thanks to both his father and his guru, continues to build an outstanding reputation as a soloist on the Santoor (hammered dulcimer). His first fortune was to be born the son of Padma Bhushan (Late) Pandit C. R. Vyas, one of the most respected vocalists on the Indian music scene, a fine and highly knowledgeable performer who were the young Satish's first teacher. His second fortune was to be accepted as a disciple by the great legend Padma Vibhushan Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma - a man so identified with his instrument that classical Indian Santoor playing is unthinkable without Shiv Kumar Sharma's contribution to the art.

Before taking the decision to make music his profession, Satish Vyas had completed his education with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in science & Management Studies, and even begun to establish a career in the business world. This background is no doubt of use to him in his work as a major and one of the most successful organizers of classical music festivals in India, and indeed as Artistic Director of Navras Records in India.

Pandit Satish Vyas has been a regular concert artiste for over 27 years, performing and recording all over the world, more extensively in the USA, UK & Europe, Japan and Australasia. In 1997, he was the only non-Western instrumentalist invited to perform in Venice, Italy at the "Mostra Mozart Festival", organized by the prestigious European Mozart Foundation. Vyas had also manifested his versatility by performing as a "guest musician" with the Jazz / World Music Fusion Group, "Silk" accompanying the renowned vocalist Shankar Mahadevan, the Percussion maestro Shivamani, well known Composer /Pianist / Keyboard artiste Louis Banks and Karl Peters (Bass Guitar) at a Barbican Centre concert in London few years back. He also had the privilege of performing at the world famous EDINBURGH Festival in Scotland.

The Government of India has honoured Pandit Satish Vyas with Padmashri in 2003. He is also bestowed upon with "Kumar Gandharva Rashtriya Sanman" by Kumar Gandharva Foundation, Mumbai in 2010. Recently in January 2015 Satish Vyas was honored with the prestigious Award SWARSAGAR SANGEET PURASKAR by Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation.

The artiste visited Hungary for the first time. His first performance was held in Pécs, Zsolnay Negyed, within the frame of a Mini India Day organized there with great success. The second performance was held in ASCC, in front of a full-packed room. After Budapest, the group visited

Miskolc and gave a performance within the frame of the Miskolc Opera Festival. They performed in the main programme on Friday evening with huge success. The last stay of the tour was Eger where he performed at a Summer Folk Festival titled Szederinda Festival held at the prestigious historical Eger Castle. Mr Satish Vyas was accompanied on Tabla by Mr Satyajit Talwalkar.

Night of Museums Programme, 20 June 2015



Ambassador and Ms Györgyi Fajcsák,
Director lighting the lamp



Ms Melinda Irtl conducting
children programme



Shirayan Vajramutthi Martial Art

On 20 June 2015, ASCC in collaboration with the prestigious Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern



Performance by Sivasakti
Kalananda Dance Theatre



Packed garden gathering

Asiatic Arts, Budapest, organized a colourful programme in the garden of the museum. In this annual event, over 40 Museums, Galleries and other Cultural Institutes participate in various programmes. On this day, the venues are open until midnight (up to 2 am). About 500,000 persons visit the exhibitions and programs organized in various venues in a single night.

Our programme at Ferenc Hopp Museum started with the welcome address by H.E. Mr. Malay Mishra, Ambassador of India and Ms Györgyi Fajcsák, Director of the Museum, followed by traditional lighting of the lamp. Admirers of gastronomy tried various culinary dishes put up by Mr Róbert Bede, master chef in the garden. Ms Melinda Irtl Földiné, Yoga teacher of ASCC, opened the evening with her programme. Then a little tuning up with Mr Szilágyi Sándor Mana charmed the audience, with Tibetan sound massage through the musical journey of the so called Bells instrument. Also the members of Shirayan Vajramutthi Martial Art Group performed in the garden, amusing the children and the adults as

well with their performing of martial art both with weapons and hand techniques. They were followed by Mr Juhász Gábor guitarist and Mr Szalay Péter tabla player. Later Sivasakti Kalananda Dance Theatre performed a fusion of traditional and modern forms of Bharatanatyam through dance picturesque scenes.

The last part of the main programme was a performance by the Korai Öröm group. Following the route of the great ancestors like Korosi Csoma and Baktay, they have reached India flashing several peoples' culture and music, wandering through India, from the southern areas of the sea to the foot of the Himalayas. To create the atmosphere, guest musicians

helped them with their special musical instruments like Tabla, Electrical Violin etc.

Also tea serving by a Tea House, Indian salad and Henna painting were arranged. These programmes continued during the whole evening with full interest from Hungarians till mid-night. The Confucius Institute arranged handicrafts programme in the corner. The night attracted nearly 4000 persons.

Festival of Indian Film Classics, 25 June – 1 July

Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Centre of Embassy of India, Budapest, continuing the practice is organizing an Indian Film Festival titled "Festival of Indian Film Classics" from 25 June to 1 July 2015 at

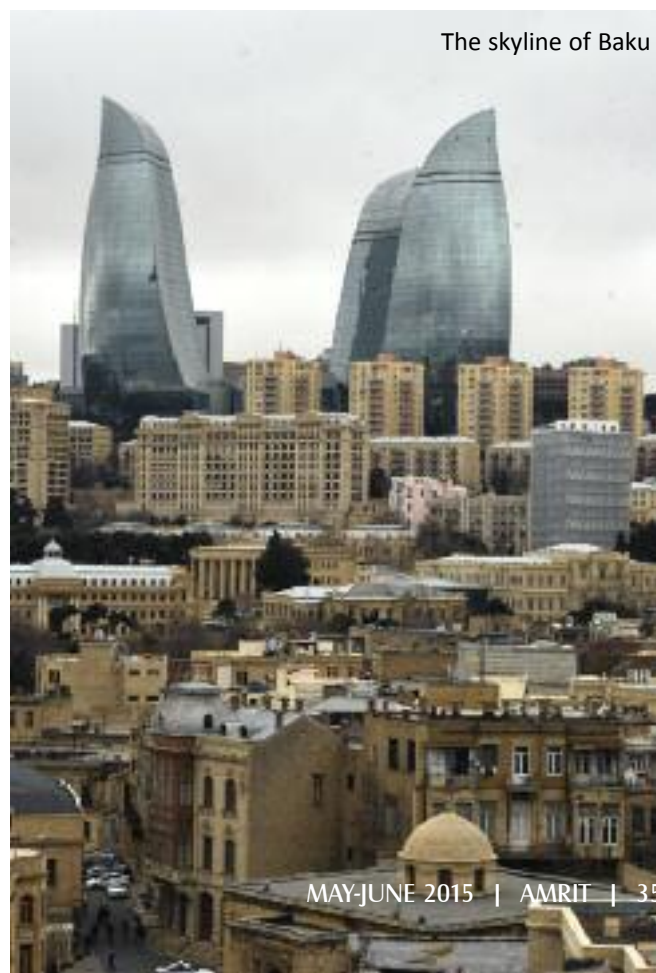
the prestigious Pushkin Theatre. The films in Hindi and Bengali languages to be screened at the Film Festival offer a panorama of the best Indian films dealing with various social and contemporary issues. The films to be screened are: K. Asif's Mughal-E-Azam (25 June) – Urdu 1960, Heman Gupta's Kabuliwala (26 June) - Hindi 1961, Bimal Roy's Bandini (27 June) – Hindi 1963, Kamaal Amrohi's Pakeezah (28 June) – Urdu 1972, Kumar Shahani's Char Adhyay (29 June) – Bengali 1997, Karan Johar's Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (30 June) – Hindi 1998 and Vikas Bahl's Queen (1 July) – Hindi 2014. The Film Festival is an attempt to showcase the classic Indian films from the 1960s to the present times to Indian film buffs in Hungary. ■

Indian relics in Azerbaijan

Text by Adam Lazar; Pictures by Sonja Lazar

'Good morning. My name is Nurcan. I will be your guide today. The meaning of my name is Soul full of light'. You could judge by the end of the day whether it is a fitting name or not. Partly because in Azerbaijan in some way most things are connected with light or fire, that is why the country is called 'Land of Fire' and partly because we are celebrating the beginning of our New Year today. So I wish you Happy Nowruz. First we will visit the Fire Temple then the Burning Hill, followed by a place where people will be jumping over a campfire and finally you could sample the special dishes prepared for our Nowruz."

She is small, with black hair, shiny eyes and with a big, warm, open smile. It is still early in the morning and the previous day was long just like the one before with many interesting things to see, to film, to take note of. It is time to wake up as we are driving through the Old City of Baku with green parks, and well restored old and newly erected buildings. Nurcan indicates that we should look up to the top of the hill surrounding the Bay of Baku. There stand the latest, biggest and most noticeable sign of Azeri fire worship, the Flame Towers. They were completed in 2012 for the European Song Contest and they became a symbol of modern Baku. The highest of the three buildings is 190 metres. It cost USD 350 million to construct these apartment, hotel and business centres. The building work had to stop several times,



The skyline of Baku



A garden restaurant

challenging the engineers to rethink how to combat the formidably furious winds of Baku, while taking into account of the seismic activity of the area. One can see the Towers from almost any part of Baku. The best time to see them is after dark as they have a special coloured lighting design that creates the impression that flames are running up on them.

We are driving through the semi desert outskirts of the capital. Forests of 'Nodding Donkey' oil pumps are standing or nodding at us. We are told that most of them are no longer functioning, but this is how the oil fields looked like not so long ago. Now most of the oil is pumped directly from the sea into ships or onto goods trains. Looking around reminds me of the diary of the great 13th century Italian traveller Marco Polo. It is believed that he was referring to Baku when he wrote: There is a spring from which gushes a stream of oil, in such abundance that a hundred ships may load there at once. This oil is not good to eat; but it is good for burning and as a salve for men and camels affected with itch or scab. Men come from a long distance to fetch this oil and in the neighbourhood no other oil is burnt but this. “

We arrived at our first stop at The Fire Temple at Atashgah. In the Middle Ages, there were significant Indian communities throughout Central Asia. In Baku, Indian merchants from Punjab controlled much of the economy.



Most of the woodworking for ships on the Caspian was also carried out by Indian craftsmen. Some historians have theorized that Baku's Indian community may have been responsible for the construction or renovation of the Atashgah.

Fire is considered sacred in both Indo-Iranian branches of Hinduism and Zoroastrianism: there has been debate on whether the Atashgah was originally a Hindu structure or a Zoroastrian one. The trident mounted atop the structure is usually a distinctly Hindu sacred symbol and has been cited by Zoroastrian scholars as a specific reason for considering the Atashgah as a Hindu site. However, an Azeri presentation on the history of Baku, which calls the shrine a "Hindu temple", identifies the trident as a Zoroastrian symbol of "good thoughts, good words and good deeds".

As European academics and explorers began arriving in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, they documented encounters with dozens of Hindus at the shrine as well as Hindu pilgrims en route in the regions between North India and Baku. To make it even more uncertain some scholars have speculated that Atashgah may have been an ancient Zoroastrian shrine that was decimated by invading Islamic armies during the Muslim conquest of Persia and its neighbouring regions. It has also been asserted that,



A cremation ground



"according to historical sources, before the construction of the Indian Temple of Fire (Atashgah) in Surakhani at the end of the 17th century, the local people also worshipped at this site because of the 'seven holes with burning flame'. At the Fire Temple natural gas was running upon the surface through fissures in porous limestone.

Just like at our next destination. One of the best-known tourist attractions in Azerbaijan is Yanar Dag, the 'Burning Mountain'. True to its name, the mountain has been burning for as long as anyone can remember. Situated 25 kilometres from the capital Yanar Dag is a 116-meter hill located on top of a pocket of natural gas that constantly erupts into flames. These flames jet out into the air, through a porous layer of sandstone. Unlike the other mud volcanoes of Azerbaijan, Yanar Dag has no seepage of mud or liquid, so the fire always burns. A 10-meter long wall of fire burns continuously alongside the edge of the hill. This makes for the most spectacular view, especially at night. The air around this open fireplace is always thick with the smell of gas. The strong wind, twisting the flames into bizarre shapes, adds to the mystery of the region. Tongues of fire also rise from the surface of the streams located around the hill. These streams are called Yanar Bulaq, or 'Burning Spring'.

The 'seven holes with burning flame' sticks in my mind

and I ask Nurcan to tell us about their New Year's customs as I remember that number seven is also significant in the celebrations. She tells us that the New Year festivities used to last for seven days. Just like the Parsis celebrate in India. Preparation for Nowruz usually begins a month prior to the festival. Each Tuesday people celebrate one of the four elements - water, fire, earth and wind. They do house cleaning, plant trees, make new dresses, paint eggs, make national pastries and a great variety of national dishes on the holiday eve the graves of relatives are visited and tended. So they perform seven activities. The decoration of the festive table, a big silver or copper tray with Samani, green shoots from wheat seeds placed in the centre and candles and dyed eggs by the number of family members around it. The table should be set, at least with seven dishes. As a tribute to fire-worship every Tuesday during the four weeks before the holiday children jump seven times over small bonfires and candles are lit. As she talks it becomes obvious that there is some special significance to the number seven. Even more curious is the fact that the 25 of us visiting journalists from Europe's various countries are seven different nationalities. I wish Nurcan, our 'Soul full of light', could illuminate the mystery of the significance of number seven in Azerbaijan. Especially since at Hindu weddings the newly-wed couple have to go around the fire seven times also. It is time to go to bed. Tomorrow we start the day at seven. ■

Folk, modern, oriental, dramatic or communist: The case of Tagore translation in Central Europe

The article is a shortened secondary publication of the original paper

By Dr Imre Bangha

The cultural encounter between “East” and “West” has been the subject of an enormous amount of scholarly work in recent decades. Most studies, however, investigate British, French and German “Orientalisms” while the cultures of East Central Europe, roughly the Eastern part of the European Union, with languages hopelessly decorated with diacritics and inaccessible for most of the academic cosmopolis, have received relatively little attention in post-colonial discourse. However, this colourful region, often perceived to be part of the Orient during past centuries, has much to offer to a student of cultural encounter or of reception history.

The response to Tagore in various countries in East Central Europe has long been the subject of academic studies done mostly in a national framework.¹ In 2007 I also produced a book that included investigating Tagore’s connection to Hungary. In this paper, partly relying on some recently discovered material, I am revisiting the question of Tagore’s reception in a broader light. Using the high amount of “national” Tagore studies allows us to take into consideration the similarities and dissimilarities of Rabindranath’s reception in these geographically small but culturally rich countries.

A cursory look at the national studies shows that Tagore’s popularity in the region came in three waves between which there were periods of amnesia. The Indian poet was discovered right after the Nobel Prize in 1913 and celebrated as a person who heralds the end of Europe’s cultural hegemony and widens the cultural horizon of the Europeans. During the years of the First World War not much attention was given to Tagore. (The staging of his *Chitra* in October 1915 in Zagreb is an important exception.) In the years following the war he was celebrated not just as an outsider who denounces the warmongering of the Europeans but rather as a “Sage, Prophet and Poet” with a message from the spiritual East. His visit to the region in 1926 was the last phase of a popularity that hardly any intellectual enjoyed in Europe. In sharp contrast with the early 1920s, he fell into oblivion in the region up until 1955. (One should, however, mention that in countries such as Bulgaria and Latvia many new translations appeared between 1927 and 1930.) The third wave of popularity came when Rabindranath was rediscovered in 1955 under entirely different circumstances. At his centenary in 1961 he was celebrated as an anti-imperialist hero in the communist block. The interest since then has been moderate again.

The following figure will illustrate the popularity in the region in terms of Tagore-books published up to 1961.

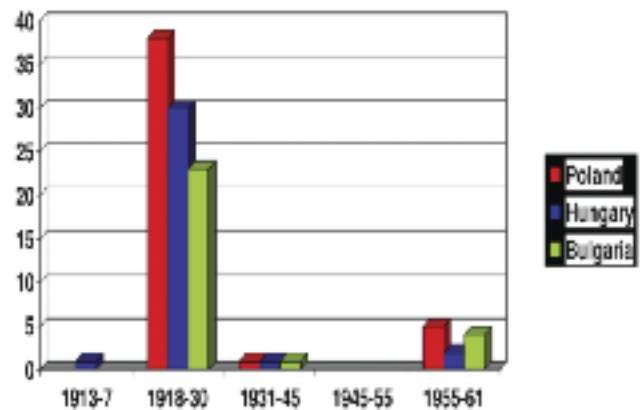


Figure 1 — First editions of Tagore books published in Poland (44), Hungary (34) and Bulgaria (28) between 1913 and 1961.²

As can be observed from Figure 1 the initial enthusiasm for Tagore in East Central Europe was rather moderate in the three countries examined here but they made up for their lack of interest in the twenties. The amnesia at the wake of World War II is in sharp contrast with the Tagore cult after the First World War. However, Tagore witnessed a renaissance there after 1955.

POPULARITY AND AMNESIA IN HUNGARY

The dominant Hungarian literary movement of the first half of the 20th century was the one marked with the name of the literary magazine *Nyugat* (Occident) that endeavoured to modernise Hungarian literature by taking inspiration from the best achievements of modern Western European literature. Even if the leading exponents of this movement, Babits and Kosztolányi, were enthusiastic about Tagore in their first reactions their generation did not pay much attention to Eastern literatures and East of Hungary only Russian literature formed part of their literary horizon. The western orientation of this powerful movement can be taken as one of the reasons responsible for the emerging negligence or antipathy towards Tagore.

After a short phase of enthusiasm in 1913-14 the self-assured orientalism returned to discourses about Tagore. In

the twenties, a disillusion from European culture did not allow Orientalist discourse to creep in so easily. There was also a small number of writers from Hungarian territories lost in the war who found in Tagore a powerful critic of western warmongering and imperialism. As has recently been demonstrated by Ana Jelnikar, the positive approach to Tagore of people who felt oppressed by western Imperialism was an example of what Patrick Colm Hogan calls situational identification, “where we develop an immediate sense of intimacy with someone as we intuit shared feelings, ideas, references, [and] expectations.”²³

This phase of extraordinary popularity was followed by a period of amnesia starting in the late twenties. (It is however, important to mention that this amnesia also had remarkable exceptions. In 1937 Karel Čapek's radio-broadcast *Message of Goodwill* from Czechoslovakia was addressed in Asia to Tagore and in 1942 the Polish-Jewish children's author Janusz Korczak staged Tagore's *Post Office* in the Orphan House of the Warsaw Ghetto — just a few days before their evacuation to an extermination camp.)

Rabindranath was rediscovered in 1955 in communist Hungary as the representative voice of colonies oppressed by capitalist imperialism.

As for translations in Central Europe one can observe marked differences from the English translation from the earliest times on. While most Tagore translations outside India were directly or indirectly done from the English prose versions of Tagore's rhyming melodious Bengali verses, there has been an urge to go back to the Bengali originals. The first direct translation of Tagore from Bengali after English was done into Czech by Vincenc Lesný in 1914. The same year also saw verse translations into Hungarian. In the 1920s the Sanskritist H. Glasenapp produced verse translations in German. As an example of the search for Tagore's voice in East central Europe I am following up the Hungarian translating attitudes to Tagore's poetry.

TAGORE TRANSLATIONS IN HUNGARIAN

Tagore has been widely translated into Hungarian and one can distinguish various patterns of translation. Although the importance of forms was recognised by Hungarian critics, hardly any translator followed the original Bengali forms.

Tagore's lyrics are as much of an erudite piece of work as folk poetry. His poems were written to melody and it is this melody that defines its form and characteristics. (Sóter 1961)

Prose Translations

Among the earliest translators Mihály Babits preferred the naïve prose versions to the elaborately simple Bengali originals because they reminded him of the straightforward unornate

poetry of Saint Francis of Assisi to whom he likened Tagore even though he was aware of the fact that Tagore was an extremely conscious poet.

This fine poet is naïve and thinks that the entire world is a beautiful toy given by God as a good father to his big children. This saint is naïve as a thirteenth-century Italian saint...

Stains of influences soaked into his originality and philosophy into his religion. He sings his thoughts in the most sophisticated Indian poetic forms and — what is more, he searches for new forms. In Bengali, he is probably not so naïve as in English prose that reminds us of the prose of the *Cantico del Sole*. (Babits 1913)

Verse Translations

There were others who made an effort to move closer to the Bengali original by introducing strophic pattern with metre and rhyme in Hungarian. As early as 1914 the journalist-translator Vilmos Zoltán (1869-1929) published some Hungarian versions in verse that he claimed reflected the Bengali. Later, encouraged by having heard Rabindranath reciting his poems in Vienna, Zoltán came out with a whole volume of similar translations, the *Hindosztáni virágok* (Flowers of Hindostan), selected from the *Gitanjali and the Gardener*. The forms of his translations rely on traditional Hungarian patterns close to the rhythm of folk songs.

Bringing Tagore close to folk songs is a step towards the original, although it reflects only one facet of his Bengali poetry and the elaborate or the experimental aspect of his forms is lost. There are several reasons for the emergence of these folk-song type translations. The rhythmical pattern of Hungarian folk songs is in some ways similar to the Bengali *dalabritta* rhythm, where syllables are counted. The most popular Hungarian patterns consist of lines of 12 or 16 syllables divided into two equal units with stressed syllables at their beginning. The folk songs suggest a naïve, unsophisticated approach to life so much longed for by urban people. Thus Tagore could be presented as someone who is not detached from nature. Hungarian conservative critics, influenced by nineteenth-century romanticism, held poetry inspired by folk literature in high esteem and in all probability welcomed such translations. In fact, it was such circles in which the Indian poet's visit to Hungary was prepared.

IAMBIC TRANSLATIONS

Making verse translations, however, was not exclusive to the conservative writers. It was followed by one of the leading Hungarian poets, Dezső Kosztolányi (1885-1936), who attended Tagore's lecture in Budapest and came out with three verse translations from English. He felt free not only to create Hungarian strophes, but also to change Indian proper names to more exotic-sounding ones and to deviate from the original text. He made the poems sound more explicit and more

palpable. Kosztolányi may also have felt justified in his creative approach to the text by the fact that in English Tagore had deviated in form from the Bengali. The Bengali original of the poem *The Dancing-girl* (*Fruit Gathering XXXVII*) — *Abhisār* in the collection *Kathā* — is based on an old pious Buddhist story of Upagupta, the alleged guru of king Ashoka and a dancing girl. The Buddhist story celebrates the discipline and steadfastness of the monk Upagupta and shows that the problem of momentary happiness being turned into suffering is solved by a renunciation of the world before suffering comes and thus becoming aloof. In his Bengali poem, Tagore followed the story's teaching but he retold it in melodious strophic verse. In the Hungarian translation entitled *A bajadér*, Kosztolányi used ten iambic four-line stanzas. The names *Upagupta* and *Mathura* have been softened to *Ugaponta* and *Madera* respectively. Kosztolányi discarded the name of the dancing girl, *Vāsavadattā*. The young ascetic disciple of Buddha became "the priest of Buddha" and a saint. Kosztolányi was neither deeply acquainted with nor interested in the ideals of Buddhism and he removed the didactic layer.

Kosztolányi's melodious translation also inspired people to set Rabindranath's poetry to music as is testified by a letter of a person called György Káldas who was a composer of some Hungarian songs in the folk style. Káldas set to music Kosztolányi's translation of the *Blind girl*. This was another attempt to present Rabindranath's poems as songs close to folk literature.

It should also be mentioned that Kosztolányi was not alone in his approach. One of the leading poets of a later generation, Sándor Weöres (1913-1989), used a similar attitude, translating into iambic strophes and changing the content freely. Weöres, however, in spite of his interest in Oriental cultures and of the similarity between his poetic world and that of Tagore translated only one poem.

Tagore was a unique presence in as much as he was a modern poet to be translated into Hungarian while before the mid-twentieth century only poetry of the antique east was given attention in Hungarian. Tagore was, however, often presented as the living representative of the ancient Orient. In his appearance he himself became an old man, a symbol of timeless East.

COMMUNIST TRANSLATIONS

Although put on index during the Stalinist regime of the early fifties (Vértesy 1987) Tagore was rediscovered in 1955 when Soviet relationships with India underwent an unexpected change. The establishment of Indo-Soviet friendship was marked by Khrushchev's visit to India in 1955. Together with the political reconciliation came the rediscovery of Tagore as an emblematic figure of India's anti-imperialistic struggle. In the Hungary of 1956 Tagore had an outstanding career. In February a representative exhibition of modern

Indian paintings included Tagore's art, in May an appreciative article was published about him in one of the leading dailies announcing that "after all Tagore served progressive forces" and in October a bust of his was installed and an alley was renamed after him in Balatonfüred near the sanatorium where he was recovering in 1926. The attitude established in 1956 was maintained at the Tagore centenary when Tagore, the progressive, anti-fascist writer was celebrated.

Some new translations of Tagore's poetry appeared presenting him as the poet of the workers. The following one is my English rendering of the Hungarian version of the *People at work* (*Orā káj kare*)⁴,

*Although their power grew enormous
Coincidence helped and later
The people cut through with united force
The dark web of colonies.*

*This fettered word is over for ever;
And in spite of useless rumbling of weapons
We take our people to the great perspective
Of centuries, where it will shine forth.*

On the front of translations much less happened during the fifty years that have passed since. The most important development is that direct contact with the Bengali language produced translations that are closer to the originals not only in content but also in form.

CONCLUSION

In 1913 Rabindranath surprised European readership as an Oriental Old Man heralding the end of Europe's cultural hegemony. The initial enthusiasm lasting only for a few months in Hungary, when leading writers wrote enthusiastically about him, gave way to perplexity and then to oblivion. In the 1920s Tagore became a prophet with a spiritual message showing hope to a civilisation immersed in materialism and drenched in blood. In the 1950s he became an anti-imperialist thinker with progressive social message.

The fluctuations in Tagore's fame show how vulnerable the reputation of the first bestselling modern Asian poet was to European fashions and ideologies. At the same time the fact that Tagore's oeuvre lends himself to interpretations so different from each other shows the truly universal nature of the Indian poet.

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HUNGARIAN SECTION

A cselekvés és a szeretet jógája

-A Védánta filozófia és Vivékánanda tanításai- Részletek Borbély Mária írásából

A Védánta filozófia útmutatásai és Szvámi Vivékánanda tanításai teljességgel összhangban állnak egymással. A védánta filozófia szerinti spirituális ösvény a cselekvés útja, a karma - joga, melyet Szvámi Vivékánanda mélyrehatóan ismert.

Hogy ki is volt Szvámi Vivékánanda, eredeti nevén Naréndra Náth Datta, aki 1863. január 12-én látott napvilágot egy előkelő kalkuttai család legidősebb fiúgyermekéeként?

Oly röviden van most rá mód válaszolni, hogy csak a legfontosabbakat igyekszem megemlíteni. Naren már gyermekkorában erős transzcendens élményeket élt át, melyek egyre egyértelműbben hozták tudomására a sorsát. Igen tehetséges volt művészetekben, sportban, vitázásban egyaránt...Naren mélységesen vágyott arra, hogy közvetlenül tapasztalhasa meg Isten valóságát. Személyes mestere Srí Rámakrisna lett; aki felismerte Őt. „Naren rendkívüli lélek, tökéletes a meditációban.” – jelentette ki Srí Rámakrisna „tanítványáról”, akivel mélységes barátságot éreztek egymás iránt. Naren a Vivékánanda („kiválasztott - üdvözült”) nevet Khetri maharadszájától kapta. A fiatalember széleskörű tudással bírt; többek között Patanjali jóga szútráival is ő foglalkozott behatóan. Mindenkinek ajánlom, hogy ismerje meg életét közelebbről a saját kezű írásai alapján is (A cselekvés és a szeretet jógája című könyve által).

A továbbiakban szeretnék rávilágítani Szvámi Vivékánanda gondolatai és a Védánta filozófia közötti egységes látásmódra. Elsőként a karma-joga mibenlétét szeretném tisztázni. Ő igen tisztán fogalmaz: „a Karma-joga olyan etikai és vallási rendszer, amely a szabadság elérését tűzi ki önzetlenség és jó munka által.”

A Védánta filozófia szerint az ember célja a mulandó földi boldogságon eredendően túlmutat, hiszen az - természeténél fogva - nem lehet tartós állapot. Az emberi létnek köszönhetően lehetőséget kaptunk, hogy valódi tudásra tegyünk szert s a folytonos ráébredések által megvilágosodjunk.

E filozófia meglátásai szerint az öröm, a fájdalom, a boldogság és a boldogtalanság tanítómesterek a tudás útján. A fájdalmas élethelyzetekből is sokat tanulhatunk, ha éberek vagyunk, hiszen érlelődünk általuk. Minden, amit átélünk és amit tudatosítunk magunkban jellemformáló erővel bír. Igaz tudássá pedig az válik bennünk, amit átélünk, amire valóban rászolgálunk

A Védánta filozófia azért is emeli ki ily egyértelműen a karma jellemre gyakorolt hatását, mivel az ember az a lény, aki önmaga felé vonzza a világegyetem erőit, képes egyesíteni azokat. Így születik az igazi ember, aki az egész világot magába fogadja.

Swami Vivékánanda élete igaz példázat. Egyéni életútja,

könyvei, nyílt előadásai és tettei híven tükrözik meglátásait. Kortársaira is rendkívüli hatással volt. Vallástól és származástól függetlenül a belőle sugárzó igazság ereje sokakat megérintett. Teljes életutat tudhat magáénak, pedig mindössze 39 esztendeig tartózkodott ebben a világban.

Vivékánanda szerint csupán két kiút van ebből a világból:

- „Az egyik az, hogy feladjuk e gépezettel való mindennemű foglalatosságunkat, az csak hadd menjen tovább, mi pedig félreállunk, feladva minden vágyunkat.”
- „A másik út az, hogy belemerülünk a világba, és megtanuljuk a munka titkát. Ez a karma-jóga útja. Ne szálljunk ki a világ gépezetének kerekai közül, hanem maradjunk benne, és tanuljuk meg a munka titkát. Azáltal, hogy megfelelő munkát végzünk a világban, lehetséges kijutnunk belőle.”

Hogy ez mit is jelent pontosan? A karma- jóga tekintetében a karma szó magát a cselekvést, a munkát jelenti, melyet önzetlenül, minden elvárás nélkül teljes odaadással végzünk, tiszta szívünkéből. A Védánta filozófiában a karma-jóga ugyancsak az önzetlenül „végzett” cselekvést jelenti, melyet önmagáért teszünk. Örömmel leljük abban, hogy cselekedhetünk, s a viszonzás gondolata fel sem merül bennünk. Eközben valódi tudásunk gyarapodik s belső békénket is megleljük.

E tanítások felhívják a figyelmünket arra is, hogy mindannyiunknak más az életfeladata s meg kell találnunk saját helyünket, hogy egyéni utunkat járva megtapasztalhassuk a nem-kötődő cselekvést. Erősnek, bátornak kell lennünk, hogy nekilássunk feladatunknak s beteljesítsük azt, amit kötelességünknek érzünk.

Tisztában kell lennünk azzal, hogy ezek a feladatok, éppúgy, mint képességeink hozzánk tartoznak; következésképpen nem szükséges aggódnunk amiatt, hogy mi lesz a világ reakciója. Ez a meglátás azt hiszem valamennyiünk számára örömdetes.

Jó, ha a tudatában vagyunk annak, hogy minden tettünk egyszerre eredményez jót és rosszat (*még akkor is, ha nem tudunk róla*). A cselekedetet pedig, amit megtettünk, - mint tudjuk - nem lehet semmissé tenni, amíg az meg nem teremtette „megérdemelt” gyümölcsét.

A Védánta filozófia szerint is - az elvárások nélküli - jó cselekedetek hozzájárulnak ahhoz, hogy egyre tisztábbá váljunk; de ezen is túlmutatnak.

Lényeges azt is megértenünk, hogy a „jót” éppúgy el kell engednünk, mint a rosszat!

Amint ezt valóban meglátjuk egy magasabb rendű felszabadult állapotot tapasztalhatunk meg.

A Védánta filozófia arra int bennünket, hogy amikor valakinek adunk valamit – bármiről is legyen szó – soha se várjunk érte viszonzást, illetve hálát, hiszen azt adhattuk csak oda a számára, amit a karmája által megérdemelt. Amint elérjük a nem-kötődés érzetét ez magától értetődő lesz. Ugyanakkor a jó és a rossz is megszűnik számunkra. Rájövünk, hogy csak az önzés – vagyis a „nézőpont” volt az, ami a különbséget okozta.

Aki valóban eljut idáig, annak elméjét se a jó, se a rossz szerencse nem téríti el: minden körülmény között ugyanolyan nyugodt fog maradni.

„A karma jógát az kérdezi, hogy miért kívánunk egyéb motivációt a munkára, mint a szabadság velünk született szeretetét. Haladjuk meg az általános világi önzéseket. A munkához megvan a jogunk, de nem annak gyümölcseihez.” írja Swami Vivékánanda a Karma – jóga című írásában.

Majd még hozzátesszi, hogy: „Tegyünk jót azért, mert nagyszerű dolog jót tenni.” A Bhagavad Gíta is felhívja erre a figyelmünket a második énekben, ahol Krsna így szól Ardzsunához:

„Maga a tett legyen célad, milyen gyümölcsöt hoz, ne nézd; baj, ha jutalmadért buzdulsz, de tétlenül se élj azért.”

„Jógában cselekedj mindig, hogy tetteid ne fűtse vágy, hogy sikert és bukást megvesz; közömbösség és jóga: egy.”

S vajon mi a jó cselekedet, minként tudjuk felismerni?

Amikor eldöntjük, hogy valamilyen cselekedetet véghezviszünk-e vagy sem, alapvető szempont, hogy kötelességünknek érezzük-e azt megtenni. Azon cselekedet, ami Isten felé visz bennünket, jó cselekedet, és a kötelességünk; bármilyen cselekedet, ami lefelé visz, az gonosz, és nem kötelességünk.

Minden bizonnyal ismeretes az egyetemes törvény: Ne bánts egyetlen élőlényt sem; bármely élőlény nem-bántása erény, és bármely élőlény bántása bűn.

Aki pedig a karma – jógát gyakorolja, megvalósítja benső indíttatású törekvését s teljesíti kötelességeit, mégpedig oly módon, hogy közben javára van mindenneknek.

Vajon képesek vagyunk-e jót tenni a világgal? Swami Vivékánanda válasza:

„Abszolút értelemben nem, relatív értelemben viszont igen. Semmilyen állandó vagy örökké tartó jót nem tehetünk a világgal.” – ez egyértelmű.

Majd új kérdést tesz fel s menten válaszol is rá:

„Adható-e bárminemű állandó boldogság a világnak? Nem indíthatunk el az óceánban egy hullámot anélkül, hogy valahol máshol hullámvölgyet ne keltenénk.”

Vivékánanda rávilágít arra is, hogy a világ segítése valójában magunkon való segítést jelent, vagyis:

„Mindig meg kell próbálnunk segíteni a világon, ennek kell a legmagasabb ösztönző erőnek lennie bennünk; de ha jól meggondoljuk, rájövünk, hogy a világ egyáltalán nem igényli segítségünket. Az egyetlen segítség az, hogy erkölcsi gyakorlatra teszünk szert.

A világ se nem jó, se nem rossz; minden egyes ember a maga világát építi [...] Az élet tudatállapotom szerint jó vagy rossz, attól függően, hogy hogyan nézem, sohasem önmagában.”

Swami Vivékánanda folytonosan munkálkodott, rengeteget utazott (Amerika, Anglia, Európa), hogy nyilvános előadásokat tarthasson, ugyanakkor könyveket is írt, melyek a védánta filozófiáról, valamint a jóga különböző útjairól szólnak. A nyugati olvasóközönséget is magával ragadták –e művek. Megalapította a Védánta Társaságot, a Rámakrisna Missziót s végre létrejött az áhított himalájai ásrám is. Mindezen külvilágban megvalósuló cselekedetek során a Mester maga „mutatott példát” a karma-jóga útjára lépőknek.

Swami Vivékánanda egyedüli hiteles példaként Buddhát nevezte meg, aki mélységesen gyakorolta a karma - jógát:

„Végezetül hadd ejtsek néhány szót egy olyasvalakiről, aki valóban gyakorlatba ültette a karma-jóga tanítását. Ez az ember Buddha. Ő az egyetlen, aki valaha is tökélyre vitte ezt a gyakorlatban. A világ össze prófétája, Buddha kivételével, kívülről kapott ösztönzést az önzetlen cselekedetre.”

Krsna szavai így hangoznak a saját maga által „végzett” karma – jógájáról:



„Óh, Prthá fia, Számomra nincsen előírt munka a három bolygórendszerben.

Semmire sincs szükségem,
és nincs semmi, amit el kellene érnem - mégis
végzek munkát.”

Most már minden bizonnyal egyértelműen láthatjuk, hogy Swami Vivékánanda és a Védánta filozófia számára is ugyanazt jelenti a karma – jóga gyakorlati alkalmazása.

Összegezve:

„Az dolgozik a legkiválóbban, aki mindenféle indítéktól mentesen munkálkodik, s nem pénz, hírnév vagy bármiféle egyéb hajtja. Amikor valaki képes ezt megtenni, Buddhává lesz, és megszületik benne az a képesség, hogy oly módon dolgozzon, hogy átalakítsa a világot. Ez az ember képviseli a karma-jóga legfőbb eszményét”

Mikor Vivékánanda figyelme a világi feladatokról egyre inkább az Istenanya felé fordult; a Belur Mathi ásrámban tartózkodott s többnyire meditációba merült, vagy sétált a kertben. Tudatosan készült az eltávozásra.

„Összecsomagoltam, és várok a nagy szabadítóra. Ez az én igaz természetem. A munkák

és a tevékenységek, jót tenni és így tovább – mindezek csupán külsődleges dolgok.

Örülök neki, hogy megszülettem, örülök, hogy így szenvedtem; örülök, hogy nagy hibákat vétettem, és örülök, hogy belépek a békébe. Végül is én csak az a fiú vagyok, aki elragadtatott bámulattal hallgatta valaha Rámakrisna csodálatos szavait Daksinésvárban a banjan-fa alatt. Nem hagyok hátra és nem viszek magammal kötelekeket. A munkám mögött becsvágy, a szeretetem mögött személyiség, a tisztaságom mögött félelem, az útmutatásom mögött hatalomvágy nem volt. Most ezek eltűnnek, s én tovalibbenek. Jövök, Anyám, jövök...” ■

Saint Kabir Jayanti 2015 - June 2

Saint Kabir Jayanti is celebrated in honor of Sant Kabir Das, a mystical saint and poet predominant in North India. Kabir was born to Muslim parents in Benaras (erstwhile Varanasi) who turned to spirituality and religion at a very young age. Saint Kabir Jayanti is observed as an auspicious day dedicated to Kabir. His life took a major turn after he started following the teachings of Guru Ramananda, a 15th

century Hindu mystical guru who coined the name Kabir Das. However, the most difficult part about Kabir Das is that it is impossible to categorize him as Brahmin, Sufi or Vaishnavite. Kabir Das used to describe himself as the child of Allah sometimes and as child of Ram during other times.

Throughout his life, Kabir Das maintained such a unique

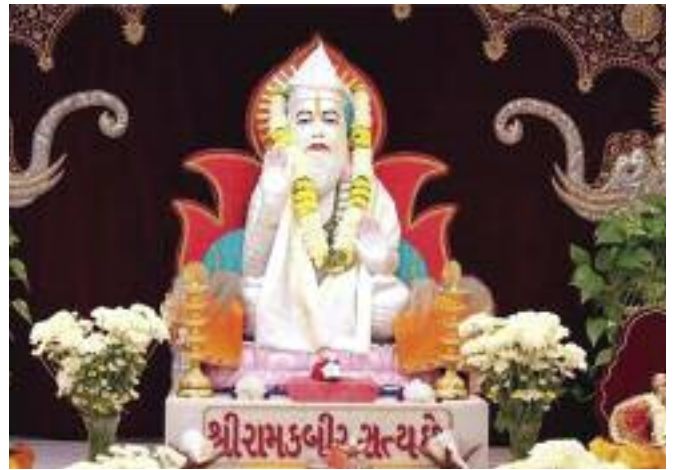
distinction of not following any particular religion that it has created a confusing state among people as to term him a Hindu or Muslim. However, he is credited for his artistic acuity with which he used to express divine feelings with beautiful arrangement of words. Professionally, Saint Kabir Das was a weaver who used to spend most of his time at the loom, but the way he had woven magic in traditional realms of Hindus and Muslims equally is something that can never be ignored.

Legends of Sant Kabir Das

Saint Kabir Das reached the abode of God in Maghar close to Gorakhpur in 1518. However, immediate dispute began regarding the way in which his final rites must be performed. It is believed that both Hindus and Muslims claimed the body to perform the funeral rites. To their utter surprise, Kabir Das stood up and asked them to lift his body and view beneath. Lying there was nothing but a beautiful array of flowers. Devotees and his followers were speechless with Hindus along with some flowers leaving to Varanasi and the rest of the flowers taken by Muslims to Maghar.

Kabir Das was influenced with various incidents throughout his life that made him even more popular. In order to break his spiritual path, a beautiful courtesan had been sent to him with no effective results. Similarly, he was taken to the court of Sikander Lodi after having been believed that he possessed some magical powers. Eventually, he was made to leave the city of Varanasi in the year 1495 after which he never returned. During this period of his life, Kabir toured entire North India spreading oneness among people.

Mystical odes from Kabir Das made him an iconic character during the 15th century. Displaying a mature way of thinking, he is best remembered for some of the one-liners he uttered in response to various queries from people in his own inimitable style. For instance, he expressed his feelings beautifully in words such as “The Purana and The Koran are mere words” and God is “neither in Kaaba nor in Kailash”. All over his life, Kabir actively denounced both temples and mosques maintaining that God is in everyone and exists everywhere.



The Lord is in me...

THE Lord is in me, the Lord is in you, as life is in every seed. O servant! put false pride away, and seek for Him within you.

*A million suns are ablaze with light,
The sea of blue spreads in the sky,
The fever of life is stilled, and all stains are washed away;
when I sit in the midst of that world.*

*Hark to the unstruck bells and drums!
Take your delight in love!
Rains pour down without water,
and the rivers are streams of light.
One Love it is that pervades the whole world,
few there are who know it fully:*

*They are blind who hope to see it by the light of reason,
that reason which is the cause of separation--
The House of Reason is very far away! p. 143*

*How blessed is Kabir, that amidst this great joy he sings within his
own vessel. It is the music of the meeting of soul with soul;
It is the music of the forgetting of sorrows;
It is the music that transcends all coming in and all going forth.*

*—Songs of Kabir is a 1915 book consisting
of 100 poems of Kabir, the 15th-century Indian poet
and mystic, translated to English by Rabindranath
Tagore. II. 90. sāhab ham men, sāhab tum men*

HINDI SECTION

सच्चा धर्म

अक्सर ऐसा होता है मंदिर में दर्शन हेतु जाने वाले दर्शनार्थी मांगने वाले गरीब बच्चों के जमावड़े से पीछा छुड़ाते हैं, उन पर झल्लाते हैं और बिना उनकी मदद किए आगे बढ़ जाते हैं।

भगवान की मूर्ति के समक्ष मेवा प्रसाद चढ़ाते हैं, उन्हें वस्त्र आभूषणों से सजाते हैं। दान पेटी में डालने के लिए उनकी जेब से 10, 20 या 50-100 के नोट भी निकल जाते हैं। मानो ऐसा

करने ईश्वर उन्हें आशीर्वाद देंगे और उनके कष्टों को हर लेंगे। ये तो ऐसा हुआ जैसे ईश्वर के घर में भी बस पैसे की पूछ है तो फिर इंसान और ईश्वर में क्या अंतर रहा?

मंदिरों के निर्माण कार्य में कई लोग करोड़ों का दान कर देते हैं ईश्वर को खुश करने और समाज में अपना मान सम्मान और रूतबा बढ़ाने के लिए। पर जब प्रश्न किसी गरीब का उठता है तो उस समय कुछ लोगों की मानसिकता उस गरीब की गरीबी से भी ज्यादा गरीब बन जाती है।

कई बार मेरे जहन में ये प्रश्न उठते हैं कि मंदिरों और अन्य धार्मिक स्थलों के निर्माण कार्य पर करोड़ों रुपये बहाना धर्म है या फिर दर-दर भटकने वाले निराश्रितों के लिए आश्रय का कोई स्थल बनवाना धर्म है? भगवान की मूर्ति के सामने मावे-मेवा का प्रसाद चढ़ाना धर्म है या फिर किसी भूखे गरीब के लिए दो वक्त के खाने की व्यवस्था करना धर्म है? एक पत्थर की मूर्ति को नये आभूषण और वस्त्रों से सजाना धर्म है या फिर एक फटे कपड़ों से ढके अधनंगें तन को कपड़े पहनाना धर्म है? आखिर क्या है सच्चा धर्म?

हिन्दू, मुस्लिम, सिख, ईसाई और न जाने कितने धर्मों में मनुष्य और भगवान को बांट कर हम अपनी ढपली अपना राग बजाते रहते हैं। पर अगर ये सब करने की बजाय हमने मानवता को अपना धर्म बनाया होता और ईश्वर को मंदिरों और अन्य धार्मिक स्थलों में सजाने की बजाय अपने दिल में बसाकर समाज के दीन-दुखी, निर्धन, निराश्रित तबके के उत्थान के लिए कुछ कदम उठाए होते तो आज हमारा समाज कितना खुशहाल होता और तब शायद हम सच्चे अर्थों में अपना धर्म निभा पाते।

कुछ गरीब लोग की गयी मदद का अनावश्यक फायदा उठाते हैं और भीख मांगने को ही अपना पेशा बना लेते हैं। गलत कार्यों में धन का उपयोग करते हैं। ये सब तर्क अपनी जगह सही है पर इन सब तर्कों से हम अपने कर्तव्यों से भाग नहीं सकते। इन सब बातों को ध्यान में रखते हुए ही हमें अपना मानव धर्म निभाना चाहिए। इसके लिए पैसे का दान करने की बजाय हम उनके लिए कुछ ऐसा करें जिससे वे स्वाभिमान के साथ अपना जीवन यापन कर सकें।

-मोनिका जैन 'पंछी'

CHILDRENS' CORNER

Mese a Vétálapancsavimsatikából

Vikrama-széna király elért a sinsapá-fához, és levette róla a holttestet. Amint a hátán vitte, megszólalt a szellem:

- Király, hadd szórakoztassalak egy újabb mesével. Hallgasd meg figyelmesen!

A Gangá folyó partján épült Kanakapura, azaz Arany-város. Lakói sohasem hágták át a Törvény határait, és ezért a Rontás szelleme nem tudott beférkőzni a városba. A város uralkodója, Jasó-dhana király, méltó volt nevére, amelynek jelentése: Dicsőség Kincse. Úgy őrizte birodalmát a bajok tengerétől, mint tengerparti szikla a földet az óceán hullámaintól. Amikor a Sors megteremtette Dicsőség Kincse királyt, a Holdat egyesítette a Nappal: mert a király nyájas volt az egész világhoz, mint a Hold, ám ereje izzott, mint a Nap tüze, s birodalmának területe csorbitatlan volt, mint a Nap korongja. Járatos volt minden tudományban, járatlan volt mások megszólásában; szegény volt hibákban, gazdag volt kincsben és hatalomban. Népe



dalokban énekelt meg, hogy csak egytől fél: a büntől, egyben mértéktelen: az igazságban, egyben nem férfi: mások feleségével szemben, s vitézség, nemesség, szeretet sugárzik minden tettéről.

Élt a király városában egy gazdag kereskedő, akinek volt egy leánya. A leány az Unmádiní, azaz Észbontó nevet kapta, mert aki megpillantotta, esztét veszttette páratlan szépségétől, amellyel magát a Szerelmet is lázba tudta volna hozni. Amikor a leány hajadonna serdült, atyja a

király elé járult, és életbölcességben tapasztalt ember lévén, bejelentette a föld urának:

- Istenség, van egy eladó leányom, a Három Világ gyöngyszeme. Nem akartam máshoz adni, mielőtt felségednek fel nem ajánlottam volna; mert a király a gyöngyök és gyémántok ura az egész földkerekségen. Akár elfogadja felséged, akár visszautasítja, mindenképpen kitüntetésnek tekintem.

A kereskedő jelentése hallatára a király elküldte papjait, hogy gondosan vizsgálják meg, vajon szerencsét ígérő jelekkel ékes-e a leány?

A papok elmentek megtekinteni a Három Világ legszebb ékszerét, ám amit tapasztaltak, fenekestül felkavarta lelki nyugalmaikat. Mikor valamennyire össze tudták szedni gondolataikat, töprengeni kezdtek:

"Ha király feleségül veszi ezt a leányt, birodalma a romlás szélére jut, mert ez a szépség megfosztja esztétől, és nem fog a

kormányzás gondjaival törődni. Jobb lesz, ha letagadjuk a föld ura előtt, hogy a leányon szerencsét ígérő jeleket tapasztaltunk."

Így határoztak a bráhmaanak, és a férfiak parancsolója elé járultak:

- Baljós jelek vannak a leányon, istenség - vezették félre a királyt. - Emiatt az uralkodó nem fogadta el feleségül a kereskedő leányát. Parancsára fővezéréhez, Bala-dharához - azaz Hadirányítóhoz - adta feleségül leányát a kereskedő. A leány boldogan élt férje házában, tudomásul véve a megszegyenítést, hogy balszerencsével fenyegető jelek miatt visszautasította királyt.

Telt-múlt az idő. Megjött a Tavasz-oroszlán, lesújtotta a Tél-elefántot, amiért jázminbimbó-fehér hó-agyarával feldúlta a lótusztavak virágrengetegét. Hímportól sárgálló virágfürt-sörényével, rózsaszín mangó-hajtás karmaival vidáman játszadozott az erdőkben. Dicsőség Kincse király elefántjára szállt, hogy megtekintse városában a nagy tavaszi ünnepséget. Hangos dobszó figyelmeztette az asszonyokat, hogy vonuljanak vissza ablakaikból, nehogy a férfiak urának szépsége kísértésbe ejtse erényüket.

Észbontó, a fővezér felesége is meghallotta a dobszót, s ekkor szándékkal felment palotája tetejére, hadd lássa meg a király, aki megszegyenítette a visszautasítással!

A király csakugyan meglátta, s beleremegett a látványba. Olyan volt a leány, mint a szerelem tüzeinek sugárzó lángnyelve, amelyet a Tavasz lobbant fel lágy maláji szellők fuvallatával. A leány szépsége, amelyet a király ámulattal csodált, ellenállhatatlan fegyverré vált a Lelkekben-születő istenség kezében, és halálosan megsebezte a férfiak urának szívét.

A király egy pillanat alatt elveszítette eszméletét. Szolgái magához térítették, és palotájába támogatták. Kérdősködni kezdett a nő felől, és megtudta, hogy Észbontónak hívják, akit felajánlottak neki, de ő visszautasította. Erre számúzte országából a papokat, akik baljós jelek ürügyével visszatartották a leánytól, s éjszakáról éjszakára a leány felé szálltak sóvárgó gondolatai:

- Ó, a Hold nem ismer büszkeséget: nem állja minden este feltolni az égre rücskös képét, pedig láthatja kedvesem

folttalan szépségű arcát, az egész világ szemének gyönyörűségét! Tömör aranykorsó vagy az elefánt homlokán a két dudor nem fogható két keményen duzzadó kebléhez. Nincs férfi, akit ne őrljéne meg a Szerlem hátaselefántjának büszke fejéhez hasonló tompora, amelyet öve mint sziporkázó csillagkoszorú vesz körül!

- Ne kínozd magadat! Alattvalód az asszony, miért nem élsz hatalmaddal vele szemben? - biztatták barátai, a törvénytisztelő uralkodó azonban nem hajlott tanácsukra.

Fővezérének is fülébe jutott a hír. Hűséges szíve sugallatára rögtön felkereste urát, és lábához borulva kérlelte:

- Rabszolgád feleségét tekintsd saját rabnődnak, ne más férfi asszonyának, istenség! Vagy ha úgy akarod, neked ajándékozom az asszonyt, fogadd el tőlem! Azt is megtehetem, hogy a templomban az isten szobra előtt eltaszítom magamtól: akkor szabad nő lesz, s királyi kötelességedet teljesíted, ha oltalmadba veszed.

Így könyörgött makacsul urának a fővezér, a népek kormányzója azonban haragra gerjedt, és így válaszolt:

- Király létemre hogyan tiporhatnám lábbal a törvényt? Ha én is áthágnám a határokat, ki maradna meg a helyes úton? S ha te hívem vagy, hogyan biztathatsz bűnre, amely percnyi örömet szül, és végtelen túlvilági gyötrelmet okoz? Ha hites feleségedet eltaszítod, megbüntetlek érte; az én helyzetemben senki sem tűrne meg ilyen törvényszegést! Jobb, ha meghalok.

Így a király elvetette a miniszter ajánlatát; mert nemes lelkek hamarabb hagyják el életüket, mint az igazság ösvényét. Városa polgárai is hiába gyűltek elébe: szilárd elhatározásán semmit sem változtatott könyörgésük. Nem telt bele sok idő, és a szerelem lázának forró tüze elemészttette testét, s nem hagyott mást belőle, csupán dicső emlékét. A fővezér nem bírta elviselni, hogy urának így kellett elpusztulnia, és ő is máglyára lépett; mert igaz hívek tettei meghaladják a józan ész.

A démon a csodálatos mese végén megint feltette a kérdést:

- Föld támasza, mondd meg: melyikük adta tanújelét nagyobb nemeslelkűségnek, a fővezér-e vagy a király? Szólj, különben tudod, mi vár rád!

A férfiak őrizője megtörte hallgatását,

és felelt a szellemnek:

- Kettejük közül a király tanúsított nemeslelkűbb viselkedést.

A szellem nem nyugodott bele, és gúnyosan megkérdezte:

- Hogyan, maháradzsza? Hát nem a fővezérrel illeti az elsőbbség, aki olyan hűséggel ragaszkodott urához, hogy felajánlotta páratlan szépségű nejét, noha ismerte ölelésének édességét, hiszen sokáig élvezte társaságát? S midőn ura távozott az életből, követte őt a máglyára! A király viszont olyan nőről mondott le, akinek csábjait még nem ízlelte.

Az emberek őrizője nevetve válaszolt a szellemnek:

- Ha így áll a dolog, akkor is természetes, hogy a nemes származású fővezér ilyen módon tett bizonyosságot hűségéről. Hiszen a szolgák kötelessége, hogy urukat életük árán is oltalmazzák. A királyok ellenben rendszerint felfuvalkodottak, gőgösek és fékezhetetlenek, mint a megvadult elefánt, s élvezeteik kedvéért szétépítik a törvény és igazság kötelékét. Gondolataik fennhéjázóak, s a királlyá kenés szertartásakor fejükre öntött víz lemos róluk minden mértéktudást, mintha megáradt folyó sodorná el. A trónjuk mellett lengetett jakfark-legyező szele nemcsak a legyeket és szúnyogokat hajtja el, hanem a vének tanácsának és a szent könyvek tanításának porszemeit is lefújja róluk. A fehér napernyő egyaránt távol tartja tőlük a nap sugarait és az igazság fényét. A hatalom forgószele elvakítja szemüket, és nem látják a helyes utat. Elvakultságuk előbb-utóbb romlásba sodorja valamennyiőjüket, még ha hatalmuk alá hajtották az eget és a földet is, mint a legendás Nahusa. Ezt a királyt viszont sem a csalfa Szerencse, sem a szépséges Észbontó nem fosztotta meg esztől, pedig az egész föld az ő jogának hódolt. Inkább megvált életétől, mintsem hogy lábát bűnös útra tegye. Ezért értékelem többre az ő önfeláldozását.

Így ítélte a bölcs király, s szava nyomán legott eltűnt a szellem. Mint a szél, tovasuhant, s ott volt helyén, fenn a fán. Már ismerte a cselt a nagy fejedelem, s elindult ismét a tetemért. Mert a férfi, habár nehéz a feladat, ha megkezdte, véghezviszi!

(Forrás: Terebess Ázsia E-Tár)

PHOTO GALLERY



At the Apollo Foundation Laying Ceremony



Ambassador in Kaposvar



Ambassador with Ms Erika Varga, Romani Designer at her studio



Visiting Pharma delegation meeting in the auditorium



Mr Vijay Khanduja speaking on the Indian economy



Ambassador with Mr David Ambrus, Asia Director General, MFAT



With former Nagykanizsa Mayor (along with spouse) and Balatonfured Mayor at a farewell party hosted at India House



With Mayor and Prof. Karunanithi in Cserdi after a local dance performance

SANTINIKETAN



Santiniketan is a small town near Bolpur in the Birbhum district of West Bengal, India, approximately 180 kilometres north of Kolkata (formerly Calcutta). It was established by the famous Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, whose vision became what is now a university town (Visva-Bharati University) that attracts thousands of visitors each year. Using the money he received with his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, the school was expanded and renamed Visva-Bharati University. It grew to become one of India's most renowned places of higher learning, with a list of alumni that includes Nobel-winning economist Amartya Sen, globally renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray and the country's leading art historian, R. Siva Kumar, to name just a few. Santiniketan is also a tourist attraction because Rabindranath Tagore wrote many of his literary classics here, and his house is a place of historical importance. In 1951, Vishva Bharati became one of India's central universities. Many world famous teachers came to be associated with it, including C.F. Andrews and Alex Aronson. Some of its illustrious students are Gayatri Devi, Indira Gandhi, Abdul Ghani Khan, Sukriti Chakraberti, Jamini Roy and famous Hungarian painters Elisabeth Sass Brunner and Elisabeth Brunner.

Besides Kala Bhavana, still considered one of the best art colleges in the world, other institutions include Vidya Bhavana; the Institute of Humanities, Shiksha Bhavana; the Institute of Science, Sangit Bhavana; Institute of Dance, Drama and Music, Vinaya Bhavana; Institute of Education, Rabindra Bhavana, Institute of Tagore Studies and Research, Palli-Samgathana Vibhaga; Institute of Rural Reconstruction, and Palli Shiksha Bhavana; Institute of Agricultural Sciences. There are also other centres, affiliated to major institutions such as Nippon Bhavana, the Indira Gandhi Centre for National Integration, Rural Extension Centre, Silpa Sadana; Centre for Rural Craft, Technology and Design, Palli-Charcha Kendra; Centre for Social Studies and Rural Development, Centre for Biotechnology, Centre for Mathematics Education, Centre for Environmental Studies, Computer Centre and Indira Gandhi Centre for National Integration.

Numerous social and cultural events take place throughout the year. These include - Basanta Utsav, Barsha Mangal, Sharodutsav, Nandan Mela, Poush Mela, Magh Mela, Rabindra Jayanti to name a few. Of these, the *Poush Mela* deserves special mention, this being a major tourist attraction. It is a 3-day fair (Bengali, *mela* means a fair), starting on the seventh day of the Bengali month *Poush* (usually, last week of December). It fetches not just tourists, but also artisans, folk singers, dancers, and the wandering Bauls (for whom Tagore had a great admiration) from the neighbourhood.

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