



Shree Lakshminarayan Mandir

50th

Anniversary
1972 - 2022



धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः

वीहारलठ व्वाइहाते व्वाइहोव्वाके

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*Sincerely
Appreciated!*



EDITORIAL

Namaste, Jai Sri Krishna, Jai Sri Ram, Jai Mata Di, Vanekam and Hari Om to one and all. What an auspicious occasion, the celebration of Ramakrishna Vedanta Society and Shree Lakshmi Narayan Mandir's celebration of the Golden Jubilee. Congratulations for surviving this long and being relevant. This institution has played a central important role to hold the Hindu community together in religious, cultural and youth development in the days of, "Apartheid". It was a place to meet with the community for activities like festivals, weddings, meetings, religious discourses etc. Lenasia Yuvak Mandal was formed prior to the building of the complex and now it found a home to operate from and expand its activities. The whole community was involved and due to very little exposure to the likes of television, internet and mobile phones, gave ample time to pursue these activities like celebrating all festivals with gusto and most of the community was involved from the golden oldies to youth to the children. Shree Shivram Maharaj inspired the construction of the complex at a time when Lenasia did not even have proper roads. It was a hub of activity as there was no other places of worship and meeting culturally, socially or during festivities. Due to Apartheid, we as a community were close knit in many ways than one. Most people were living in the area; good understanding was prevalent between them and had common meeting places so activities could thrive. Although the caste system was entrenched, we as, "Hindus" were on one page and supported different communities and organisations.

Slowly this unity got eroded by different pinths and forgot that we are all still one but now all the occasions started to be divided by exclusivity. Thus, it was more like competition rather than complimenting each other. We have paid a heavy price for that. All the institutions teaching the vernacular languages and "Dharma Siksha" have almost become extinct. I think even some knowledge of the mother tongue is important in understanding our culture and heritage e.g., how would one translate, "Prasad" – Holy consecrated food. It does not give one the same emotion or connotation. The world has anglicised and even if we ignore the language, we can make progress but it will require a concerted effort. I am not saying that we should not use English but at least have some working knowledge of our vernacular languages. We need Spiritual Champions and Giants like Sri Sankara Acharya to bring about a revolution in our methods of thinking and bring unity again.

Rapidly the numbers to the Mandirs were dwindling. Only a few big festivals like Navratri, Diwali, New Year and Hanuman Jayanti were well attended but most days of the year these spaces were not being utilised to their maximum potential. Usually a few elderly people patronised them.

Then Covid 19 struck with Lock Down and then the World, as we know it changed forever for better or worse. People suddenly had a lot of time and started feasting on the TV News channels that was just spelling doom and gloom. Then there were the conspiracy theories about any and everything. Everyone was an expert on how to combat Covid 19 and then the vaccine. All gatherings stopped and almost everything came to a standstill. So it was time reflect on many things in one's life and learn how to do things differently. All the changes that were evolving to a virtual stage suddenly were forced to change overnight. A new world order was born. People lost their jobs, others lost proportions of their incomes and working from home became normal. A new set of entrepreneurs were born who were unscrupulous and made millions from contracts and exploited the whole world. Many people lost their lives, often just from the fear of the disease and just tuning into news channels, who were also exploiting the situation presenting statistics and pictures of all the ICU patients and the piling up of all the demised bodies, which the authorities could not deal with in an efficient, timely and effective manner. We are slowly recovering from the mess but the world now, is in a turmoil with political, social, cultural and conflictual upheaval. Presently, there is no real leadership on our planet and everyone that can exploit the situation, are doing so blatantly. We are at the crossroads for survival in many more ways than one. So what is the solution?

Rather than the solution lying outside, we have to within and ask ourselves who we are and what are we doing on this planet earth and larger the universe .If we looking us as an individual then we are not even a speck of sand. If you lose your body, the close friends and family will mourn but the time and the world roles on. Time and tide stops for nobody, no matter who one is! That is an even more important reason we need to search ourselves who we are and once one realises that the universe does not exist and we are timeless!

So our institutions are needed now where we need to give support, physical in the form of food hampers to the desperate and needy, mental support for the people who have lost their loved ones and their livelihoods and spiritual support generally to make one realise what is our true nature so that we can realise our true inherent divine potential of Satchitanada - Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

Our institutions need to recognise that our priorities have changed and with that, how to utilise our resources for helping the present needs of the society we live in. This epidemic has just highlighted the big divide between the Have and Havenots that was there already but precipitated it into an emergency. So let us pool our resources together and address the issues at hand. We have to feed humanity at large and look after their essential needs so that we do not destroy ourselves. We will have to face bitter truths and think out of the box for solutions that will create a win-win situation for all living creatures and the broader environment. We will have to minimise our needs and there is no place for greed as the whole universe is not sufficient for that! We will have to adopt the maxim of, "Simple Living and High Thinking" I do not think it going to be easy to change our ways. So I think that all our institutions should get involved in that by being involved in charitable acts of running food kitchens, how to cope with the epidemic of mental illnesses, helping people with education, to bring about changes in our behaviour so that it becomes environmentally friendly and sustainable and also to advance spiritually.

This is the challenge! Swami Vivekananda took up that challenge in our Motherland. To quote him, "Arise, Awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

Now we have to prioritise how we use our religious, cultural and religious institutions. We need to utilise to the maximum and do activities that are needed now. Therefore, we need to get a brain's trust to plot the way forward. To quote Eknath Easwaran, on the saying of Buddha- "*This life of separateness may be compared to a dream, a phantasm, a bubble, a shadow, a drop of dew, a flash of lightning.*" Time runs out so soon! In our teens and twenties, even our thirties, we have ample margin to play with the toys life has to offer. We should find out soon how fleeting they are, for the tides of time can ebb away before we know it. As we grow older and our family and friends begin to pass away, we see how relentlessly time is pursuing all of us. There is no time to quarrel, no time to feel resentful or estranged. There is no time to waste on the pursuit of selfish pleasures that are over almost before they begin. All-devouring time follows us always, closer than our shadow. As long as I live only for myself, as a little fragment apart from the whole, I cannot escape being a victim of time. It is good to bear in mind how evanescent life is so that we do not postpone the practice of Spirituality in any and every form e.g. Meditation.

"Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah" - *Those who uphold Dharma (Duty) are protected by Dharma*

Please reflect, digest and then plot the way forward for the brighter future for us and all our coming generations.

Hari Aum Tat Sat
Udai Kala



COORDINATORS

Message



This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society and the completion of the construction of the Lakshmi Narayan Mandir and the Ramakrishna Hall. This was one of the first Mandir in Lenasia and enjoyed a lot of support from the community at large. The first major event was when Kathakar Shree Shivram Maharaj from India rendered his programme . He attracted a huge audience from all over the country and Kingfisher street was abuzz . The initiators of the establishment and stalwarts of our community are remembered on this occasion . Their contribution can never be forgotten. Their names and photos appear many times In this brochure. The attached photo has the names of the main players in the early years of the establishment of the Mandir many of whom are not with us.



Back row Standing: Dahyabhai Haribhai (Trustee & Treasurer), Dhirajlal Nathubhai Mistry, Surendra Ramanlal P. Patel, Chhimabhai Naranbhai (Trustee & Vice-President), Bhanabhai Jairambhai Jhina (Trustee), Harshadrai Bhikabhai Master (Assistant Secretary), Harishchandra Jivanjee Arya.

Center row Standing: Dr Shashikant D U Mistry (Secretary), Sukhabhai Kalidas Mistry, Vallabhbai Gosaibhai Sookha, Ravjeebhai Ramjibhai Tavadia (Trustee), Ramanlal Raghunathji Daya, Khushalbai Vasanjee Mistry (Trustee), Natvarlal Pranjivandas (Trustee), Balubhai Vallabhbai (Trustee), Thakorbhai Dayabhai Patel, Amratlal Manibhai Parbhoobhai Patel.

Seated: Bhoolabhai Chhitabhai Patel (Trustee & Treasurer), Nathubhai Motiram Mistry, Venilal Maganlal Modi (Trustee), Manubhai Z V Parekh (Secretary), Hon. Swami Vandananandji, Bhulabhai Dayaljee Patel (Trustee & President), Hon. Swami Nishreyasanandji, Rajinikant Bhikabhai Master (Trustee), Maganlal Morarbhai Patel (Trustee & Vice-President), Umiyashanker Manishanker Jokhaker (Trustee & Vice-President), Govindbhai Nagarjee (Vice-President).

The arrival of our resident priest Jaidevbhai Sukhla in 2000 introduced a new dimension to the religious functions. Javiebhai Ravjee and Anilbhai Vallabh together with Jaidevbhai Shukla are doing a sterling job in motivating the interest of the youth in the Vedanta Philosophy. The dynamics of the society has changed with many families leaving Lenasia. Many people from all over the world are now able to follow in all the important functions of the Mandir with the introduction of the live relays via social media. May the society grow from strength to strength with the involvement and participation of the younger generation and celebrate 75 and 100years spreading the Vedanta Philosophy.

Arun Mistry



Hari Om Tat Sat
Truth is one: Sages call it by various names – Rig Veda

Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust

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GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION



Respected Members, Fellow Brother and Sisters - JAY SHIYA RAM. I deem it great honor and privilege to be afforded the opportunity to extend a congratulatory message on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary, which, in essence, represents 50 years of service to a vibrant community. Certainly a great achievement in the life of any organization.

The basis of sustaining an organization for 50 years requires the commitment of developed individuals, strong character, self-restraint, dedication, perseverance and certainly a long term positive view. It also requires individuals with strong leadership and drive to keep the organization afloat as well as members who contribute their time and effort to steer it in the right direction. These are very rare qualities and for that we certainly take our hats off to each and every individual that passed through the doors of the Organization and did what was necessary to keep the flame alive and burning bright.

The essential facts are that :

- we have people that have the willingness and inclination to extend their hand in support - indulge them
- we can co-exist as a family (pariwar) to make a difference in the lives of others and ourselves - together, we can work in harmony
- our elders have made great contributions and sacrifices and we must forever be thankful and grateful for that - honour, recognize and appreciate them with folded hands
- we have young dynamic youth who will be our future leaders and must be given the opportunity to take the lead to keep the flame alive - bring them on board today - tomorrow may be too late

It heartens me that I have been part of this journey with the organization for many years and will continue to Serve in whatever capacity I am able to. With a Smile on our face and Love in our hearts, let us together move forward towards a better tomorrow. Together we can make a difference.

I take this opportunity in wishing the Shree Lakshminarayan Mandir and the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust, all the best in their future endeavors and that the organization always grow from strength to strength for years to come. May the Almighty shower his priceless upon you all.

Yours In Service

Javie Ravjee
Chairman - Board Of Trustees

For the good of the many, for the happiness of the many.



RAMAKRISHNA HALL



AUM NAMO BHAGAVATE
VASUDEVAYA



Shree Lakshmi Narayan Temple

44-46 Kingfisher Street, Lenasia, Ext.1, 1827, Johannesburg, South Africa



PREM NAMASTE



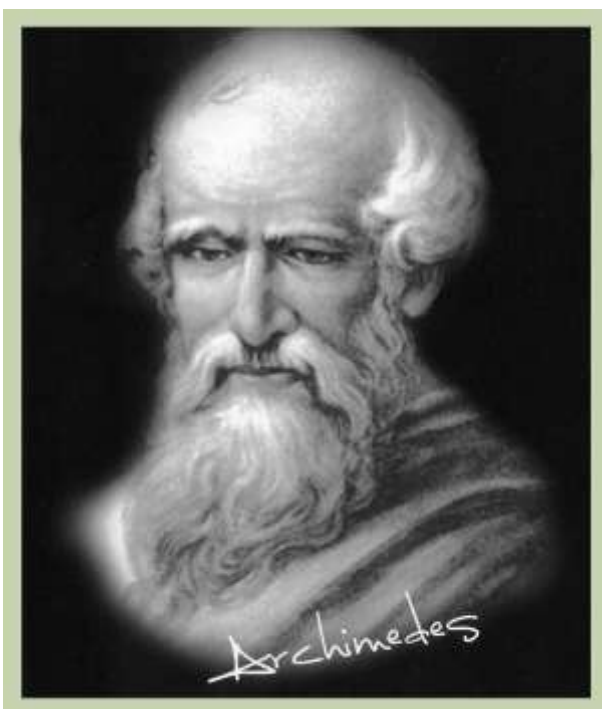
After the Indian community was forcibly relocated to Lenasia from the 1960's onwards, the elders of the Hindu community saw the need to have a place built to meet the religious, cultural and spiritual needs of the Hindus in Lenasia. Through their efforts, dedication and sacrifice the Lakshminarayan Mandir and Ramakrishna Hall were built and officially opened in 1972 under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society (RKVS). This was the first such Hindu mandir and hall in Lenasia.

At this 50th anniversary of the mandir and hall, I would like to pay tribute to all the members of the organisation and devotees of the mandir, who over the past 50 years, have served the organisation. It is through their selfless and devoted service, that the religious, cultural and spiritual needs of the Hindus in Lenasia continue to be served fifty years later.

The Grace of Bhagavan Shree Lakshminarayan has prevailed throughout this time enabling the organisation's many remarkable achievements. We pray to Bhagavan for this continuing Grace.

Prem Namaste

Anil M Vallabh
RKVST Exco Chairman



*“Always bear in mind
that your own resolution
to succeed is more
important than any other”
~ Archimedes*



લક્ષ્મીનારાયણ ભગવાનની જય



ભગવાન લક્ષ્મીનારાયણને આપણે આપણા ગામમાં લાવ્યા એ વાતને આજે પચાસ વરસ પુરા થવા જાય છે, જેની ઉજવણી આપણે સૌ કરી રહ્યા છીએ. જેમ ગામમાં મારુંએક ઘર હોય તેવી જ રીતે મારા ભગવાનનું પણ એક ઘર હોય એવી મધુર કલ્પનામાંથી મંદિર આવ્યું. આ મંદિરના વિચાર પાછળ આપણા ઋષિઓની દીર્ઘદૃષ્ટિ રહેલી છે. આપણા ઋષિઓએ માનવીય મનનો બારીકાઈથી અભ્યાસ કર્યો હતો. ઋષિ એટલે સાચા મનોવૈજ્ઞાનિક. ઋષિ નો અર્થ જ થાય છે સંસારં પારં દર્શયતિ ઇતિ ઋષિ જે દૂરનું જોઈ શકે, જે ઈલલોક અને પરલોકનું ભલુ શી રીતે થાય તેનો વિચાર કરી એનો ઉપાય પણ દેખાડે. ઋષિ એટલે માનવમાત્રના ભલા માટે ન બોલાવતા દોડ્યો જાય. આવા ઋષિઓના ચિંતન મનનમાંથી મંદિરનો જન્મ થયો. આપણે સૌ એક જ પિતા એક જ પ્રભુના સંતાનો છીએ એ ભાવના, એ વાત એ વિચારને દૃઢ કરવાની જગ્યા એટલે મંદિર, એ વાતને એ વિચારને અમલમાં મુકવાની જગ્યા એટલે મંદિર.

આપણે સૌ ભાગ્યશાળી છીએ કે, વરસો પહેલાં આપણા વડવાઓ ભારત દેશ છોડીને આવ્યા અને વિપરિત પરિસ્થિતિ તથા પ્રતિકૂળ સંજોગોમાં પણ આપણી આર્ય સંસ્કૃતિ-આપણી ભારતીય પરંપરા તથા વૈદિક સભ્યતાને ટકાવી રાખવા સતત પ્રયત્નશીલ રહ્યા. આપણા આ વડવાઓને હું ઉપરોક્ત વર્ણિત ઋષિઓ કરતાં જરાય ઓછા ગણતો નથી. જરાક વિચાર કરો કે આજના કરતાં અનેક ગણી આર્થિક સમસ્યાઓ એમની સામે આજથી પચાસ વરસ પૂર્વે હતી-હશે, છતાં એમણે ભાવિ પેઢીનો વિચાર કર્યો આપણા ધર્મનો વિચાર કર્યો અને થોડામાંથી થોડું બચાવી આપણા સૌના ભલા માટે આ મંદિર બનાવ્યું. આજે આ સૌ પૂર્વજો માટે હું કૃતજ્ઞતા વ્યક્ત કરું છું અને નતમસ્તક થાઉં છું.

આ તબક્કે આપણે સૌએ મનોમંથન કરવાનું છે કે, જો આપણા પૂર્વજો તે જમાનામાં એમની ખુશીનો ત્યાગ કરી આપણા માટે આ એક ધરોહર મૂકી ગયા હોય તો હવે આપણી ફરજ શી? આપણે આ ધરોહરને સંભાળવાની છે એનો વિસ્તાર કરવાનો છે. આપણા પૂર્વજો પાસે હતી એના કરતા અનેકગણી સગવડો અને સાધનો આજે આપણી પાસે છે જેનો ઉપયોગ કરી આપણે પણ આપણી ભાવિ પેઢી માટે કંઈક યોગદાન કરવું જ રહ્યું.

મંદિર ધર્મનું એક અંગ છે જે સમાજને એક તાંતણે બાંધી રાખે છે. આપણે મંદિર માટે જ્યારે જે કંઈ પણ સેવા કરીએ છીએ ત્યારે આપણે પરોક્ષ રીતે આપણી ભાવિ પેઢીને માટે કંઈ કરતા હોઈએ છીએ આ વાતને સદૈવ ધ્યાનમાં રાખીએ. આપણે આપણા

બાળકોને મંદિરમાં લાવીશું તો એમનામાં અપ્રત્યક્ષરીતે સંસ્કારનું સિંચન થતું જશે જે એને એના ભાવિ જીવનમાં પ્રતિકૂળ પરિસ્થિતિમાં ટકી રહેવાની હિંમત પૂરી પાડશે.

મને એ વાતનું ગૌરવ છે કે ભગવાન લક્ષ્મીનારાયણના ૩૦માં વરસ ૪૦માં વરસ તથા આ ૫૦ વરસની ઉજવણીનો પણ હું સાક્ષી બન્યો. મારી યત્કિંચિત સેવા આ મંદિરને, આ સંસ્થાને તથા સમાજને આપી શક્યો.

આ તબક્કે હું કૃતજ્ઞી છું સંસ્થાના વર્તમાન સભ્યો, પ્રમુખ તથા ટ્રસ્ટીઓનો એટલુંજ નહિ આ અગાઉના પ્રમુખ સભ્યો તથા ટ્રસ્ટીઓ પ્રત્યે પણ હું મારી કૃતજ્ઞતા વ્યક્ત કરી નતમસ્તક થાઉં છું.

સમાજના સૌ સભ્યો જેઓ એક યા બીજી રીતે મંદિરના સંચાલનમાં મને સહાયભૂત થયા એ સૌનો પણ હૃદયપૂર્વક આભાર માનું છું.

ભગવાન લક્ષ્મીનારાયણ આપણા સૌ ઉપર તથા ભાવિ પેઢી ઉપર પણ સતત અમી વર્ષા આવનારા વરસોમાં પણ કરતાં જ રહે એવી ભગવાનના ચરણકમળોમાં પ્રાર્થના.

Jai to Lord Lakshminarayana.

Namaste,

This year completes 50 years since Bhagwan Lakshmi Narayan was brought to our suburb, Lenasia. The thinking behind building a Mandir is that just as I have a home, so should Bhagwan. Our sages had a far-sighted view when they brought about the concept of a Mandir. They had deeply and thoroughly studied human behaviour and human psychology. Sage (Rushi in Sanskrut) means “quote” i.e. one who has the ability to see what the world will benefit from, and puts that into practice. A sage is someone who is always involved in activities for the welfare of everyone, without being asked to do so. After much reflection by these Rushis, the idea of a Mandir was conceived. Mandir is a place which affirms and practices the philosophy that we are all children of One God (with many names and forms).

We are all very fortunate that our forefathers, after having moved to a new country, far away from family and friends, against all odds, strived to keep our traditions and heritage alive. I don't consider our forefathers any less than the Rushis that I described in the above paragraph. Despite innumerable financial struggles all those years back, they kept us, the future generations, in mind and built a Mandir for our welfare. To all our forefathers, I bow down in eternal gratitude.

This is the ideal time for us all to introspect and delve within - our forefathers, at the expense of their comforts, built and left behind such an invaluable inheritance for us. Should our duty not be to preserve and enrich it? We have many more amenities

and facilities now than they did back then, hence it is our duty to expand what we have inherited, and ensure that we leave behind something of value for the future generations.

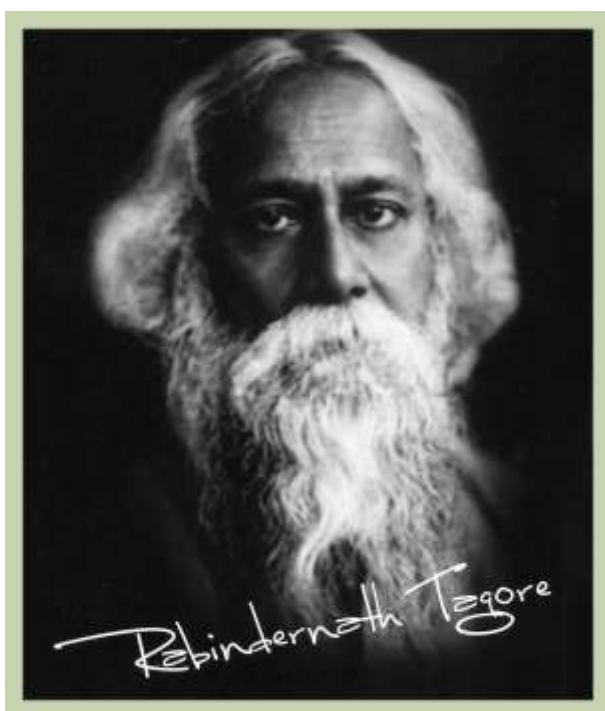
Mandir is a fundamental facet of our Dharma. It is the thread that holds the fabric of the entire society together. Whenever we perform any Seva at the Mandir, we are indirectly contributing towards to the wellbeing of the future generations. If our children accompany us regularly to the Mandir from a young age, they will imbibe virtues, and a sense of community and culture, which will help them stand strong and unwaveringly against adverse circumstances in the future.

I am so very fortunate to have been a part of, and contribute to, the 30th, 40th, and 50th anniversary celebrations of the organization. I am indebted to the current and past chairpersons, committee members, and trustees, for affording me this honour. I bow down to them in gratitude. To all the members of our community, who have in one way or another, assisted me in the day-to-day running of the Mandir and/or planning of events, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I pray to Bhagwan Lakshmi Narayan to continue showering His choicest blessings upon all of us, and on the future generations to come.

Namaste.

Jaydevbhai Shukla



*“Love is the only reality
and it is not a mere
sentiment. It is the
ultimate truth that lies
at the heart of creation”
~ Rabindernath Tagore*



TRUSTEES (2022-2028)

Back Row: Champak Lala (Secretary), Kiran Parshotam, Vinod Bhikha (Treasurer)
 Front Row: Javie Ravjee (Chairman), Vayjanti Naran (Assistant Secretary), Arun Mistry (Vice Chairman)



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2022-2028)

Back Row: Rajen Vallabh (Treasurer), Rohit Mistry (Assistant Treasurer), Hitesh Kanjee (Events & Brochure Committee)
 Front Row: Shailesh Ravjee (Vice Chairman), Jyotsna Valab (Assistant Secretary), Anil Vallabh (Chairman)
 Inset: Rakhi Mistry (Secretary), Videsh Nana (Vice Chairman)



Back Row: Dimple Gosai, Vishana Kanjee, Nayna Mistry, Bhavshila Jivan, Ela Gosai, Sadhna Jivan, Savitha Jivan, Fulvanti Vallabh, Jyotsna Valab, Nila Ravjee, Joshna Govind, Manisha Rowjee
Front Row: Pratibha Shukla, Daksha Vallabh, Kala Lala, Santi Goolab, Shakuntala Jivan, Neeru Hansjee, Manjula Vallabh, Hansa Bhima, Vayjanti Naran



Back Row: Rajen Vallabh, Shailesh Ravjee, Dependra Ambelal, Rohit Mistry, Jayant Valab, Prakash Jivan, Mahendra Jivan, Hemant Mistry, Mahesh Mistry, Tanveer Rowjee
Front Row: Anil Vallabh, Champak Lala, Arun Mistry, Magan Jivan, Goolab Goolab, Jaydev Shukla, Javie Ravjee, Ramesh Bhima, Hitesh Kanjee



PREM NAMASTE



The values my parents instilled in my siblings and I, is what drove my wife and I, to get involved in building our community in South Africa.

Harmony and unity with others, keeping a strong connection with our community and families and promoting our religion and culture are the essence of our values and what it means to be a Hindu.

Our goal was to provide a support system that our community can rely on.

I am delighted to see that after 50 years, the foundation on which we built the Shree Lakshmi Narayan Mandir still prospers today - to bring communities together and uphold our traditions and culture.

I would like to congratulate the founding members and members throughout the years for upholding these traditions and selflessly supporting the Mandir and the community at large.

My wish is to see the new generation of youth continue to preserve our cultural identities and heritage as well as embrace new ideologies. In doing so, we will all grow with meaning and purpose.

- Rajnikant B. Master





A Tribute to the Life of Mr Chima Naran



To say that Mr Chima Naran was an extraordinary man would be an understatement. His story is one of triumph, triumph over adversity and triumph over the many obstacles that were placed in his path. His is a story of what the Human spirit is capable of if the will and determination to improve your life and the life of those around you is what drives you.

He was born in December 1932 in Jalalpore, Navsari in India to farmer parents. He was brought to South Africa at the tender age of 13 by his dad to learn the art of tailoring. He was left in the care of relatives in Pretoria, and his father returned home to India. There was little care, and even less of the promised training in the trade of tailoring. He was made to sleep on the shop counter do menial jobs around the shop. Such was his start in life, and although he did not openly share his dreadful experience, it was evident in the pained expression of his eyes when he did speak about it. But he persevered and never gave up. In those early years, he had to take care of himself and his family in India, which comprised of his parents, five sisters and a younger brother.

Being the strong, principled and determined young man he was, he had an unrelenting intent to improve his life despite the poor circumstances, and he put himself to work, taking every opportunity that was made available to him. In doing so during those early years, he studied, he worked, sometimes two or more jobs and continued to improve life for himself and those around him. He endured the cruel hardships of apartheid and hearing the stories of him and his peers running down the streets of Pretoria whilst people chased them and threw stones at them was heartbreaking. He married Dayabhen at the age of 25 in 1956, by which time he had relocated, and was working as a clerk at a firm in Johannesburg. They lived in Ophirton for a period, a time in his life which he recalled with immense fondness. He made lifelong friends whilst living in Ophirton participating in cricket and community events. All the while he continued his self study, imbibing the Scriptures and practicing Dharma. Unfortunately, with the advent of the Group Areas Act, they were forced out of Johannesburg and moved to a dusty township in the western areas of Johannesburg, called Lenasia.

He quickly realized that there was a great need in the Lenasia community for cultural and spiritual activities and to facilitate this, he began Bhajan classes at his home and then at a nearby school where children could come and learn bhajans and receive religious tutelage. This was the genesis of the Ramakrishna Cultural and Religious Institute. He had made it his aim in life to start projects that would build a community, based on the selfless service principles extolled in Hinduism. He together with several like minded colleagues visualised and created an amazing concept that would leave an undeniable legacy. Every Sunday, he would collect children from their homes in all parts of Lenasia so that they could partake in morning prayer classes. He started at his home, progressed to a classroom when the number of children increased, and eventually to having classes in the newly built Laxmi Narayan Mandir. What an accomplishment it was.

In those conservative days, contrary to the community attitude at the time, he did not believe in the caste system, and felt that the system was divisive and unnecessary and all efforts should be directed at uniting the community as Hindus. To this end he welcomed everybody to the classes, irrespective of caste or status, and children looked forward to attending. And with that vision, he worked to improve and educate the children so that they grew up as proud Hindus. The activities of the institute were vast and many, a testimony to his vision. In addition to the classes, there were spiritual talks by Swamis, plays, shows, cultural exhibitions, dance classes, eisteddfods and the first brigade in Lenasia, complete with uniforms, all manner of instruments, marchers, musicians and maces. High on the list of his priorities was the distribution of food hampers and bursaries. The number of lives touched by the above activities and the number of families who have benefitted are too numerous to count.

However, his involvement in the community did not end with the Ramakrishna Cultural and Religious Institute. He was instrumental in the formation and involvement of some of the following organisations which he served with great distinction:

- Sarvajanic Bhajan Mandal
- Ramakrishna Vedanta Society
- Human Service Trust
- Hindu Crematorium Committee
- Hindu Seva Samaj
- Hindu Coordinating Council
- Sri Adi Shankara Ashram



Chimabhai Naran addressing his committee members.

These organisations are essential to the upliftment of Hindu Dharma and to the maintaining the wellbeing of the Hindu community. Through serving these organisations, he was able to practice the famous Gandhian slogan that he was so fond of repeating: “Service to Man is Service to God”; and ultimately, that was his life, a life of service.

In addition to his unwavering service to the many organisations that he served on, he also had family obligations that he took care of. Again, through hard work and determination, he was able to bring his younger siblings to South Africa from India, and even managed to bring his elderly mother to live with him in her last years. He was also a husband and father of five children, whom he was totally devoted to. He also ran a business, which at times was very challenging. Yet, despite all this, he handled it with aplomb. He never complained of his lot and continued in his inimitable way to navigate through all the trials, tribulations and triumphs that life tossed at him.

He was a humble man, who always said:

“I do not want speeches at my funeral, I do not want accolades. I lived a beautiful, and fruitful life of service. I was given the opportunity to serve my people and for that opportunity I thank The Almighty! There was challenge, purpose and goals set out for my generation; there was a need to take a community forward. It was important to take the reins of the cart of Dharma and steer it in the direction of a better future for our children.”

As a family, all this service, the meetings, people in and out of our home, Saturday night bhajans was not strange to us. Each of his children together with our mum grew up in a hub of activity and people and we did not know any different, the constant activity and a house full of people was normal. When we reminisce about our childhood and our years at home we look fondly on those moments. We learnt and we grew not only through the talks with our Dad but mostly through his example, watching him put into practice what he believed and talked about.

Dad's journey ended on the 12th August 2021 at the age of 87 years. He lived an amazing and generous life, fulfilled in the divine grace of selfless service. His legacy lives on through his wife, his five children, their families, 10 grandchildren and three great grandchildren. We have enormous boots to fill and a rich heritage to uphold. Whist we fervently wish that he was here to guide us, we are eternally grateful to have had a Father like him.

On behalf of our family, we would like to thank every person who touched our dad's heart, to awaken his ambition to help humanity in every way he could. To mention the names of those who worked with him is not possible but if we look around we can see people who are capable of continuing the work of upholding righteousness and Sanatan Dharma.

The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society has pivotal part of dad's service within the community and one that he shared so fondly with us all. We like to take this opportunity to wish the organisation the very best for all the future endeavours. May Sri Laxmi Narayan Bhagwan grant you with the knowledge and strength to keep our dharma and culture alive.



Shree Lashminarayan Mandir A Brief History

Bhagavad Gita: Ch 4 verse 6

Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, ruling over My own Nature, I am born by My own Maya.



The Purpose of the Divine Incarnation

The text below is by Sri Shankaracharya
Translated by Sri Alladi Mahadev Sastry

When, owing to the ascendancy of lust in its votaries, religion was overpowered by irreligion caused by the vanishing faculty of discrimination, and irreligion was advancing,- it was then that the original Creator (Adi-karta), Vishnu, known as Narayana, wishing to maintain order in the universe, incarnated Himself as Krishna, begotten in Devaki, by Vasudeva, for the preservation of the 'earthly Brahman' (the Vedas, the Brahmins and Yagnas or sacrifices), of spiritual life (Brahmanatva) on earth. For it was by the preservation of spiritual life that the Vedic Religion could be preserved, since thereon depend all distinctions of caste and religious order. [Note: Kshatriyas and others require the help of the Brahmins, the spiritual class, in the performance of sacred rites and in the study of scriptures.]

Mandir dedicated to Lakshmi Narayana

Shivram Maharaj told donors and officials of Ramakrishna Vedanta Society that Lord Narayan is Vishnu and Lord Krishna is also Vishnu. Shivram Maharaj suggested that the Mandir should be dedicated to LakshmiNarayana, and this suggestion was accepted.



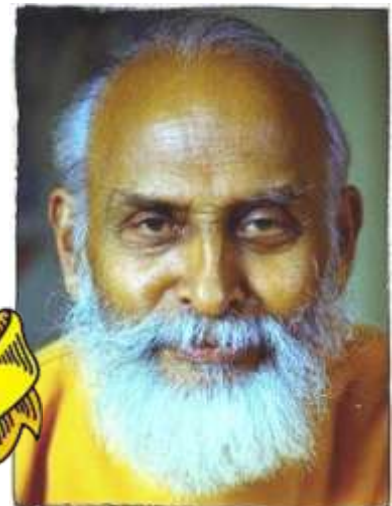
Ramakrishna Paramhansa



Swami Vivekananda



Shree LakshmiNarayana Temple was officially opened on 25th December 1972 by Swami Venkatesananda of the Divine Life Society, India.



Ramakrishna Hall opening prayer was performed by Swami Nisreyananda of Belur Math on 25th December 1972.

Foundation Stone -Bhumi Pujan

We take a fascinating journey back into history to highlight some events, people, organisations, happenings that culminated into Shree LakshmiNarayana Temple and Ramakrishna Hall being completed and consecrated over the Christmas holidays in 1972 and officially opened on 25th December 1972.

Like a spider's web all the different strands are inter-connected or like the different tentacles of an octopus that work independently and yet they are all connected with the main body of the octopus.

In 1970 the foundation stone (Bhumi Pujan or Khaat murat) for the Temple and Hall was laid. Shivram Maharaj from India performed the relevant ceremonies together with local priests Umiashankar Jokhakar (as freelance) and Harishbhai Arya(as freelance).

Swami Nisreyasananda placed copper yantras under the foundations of LakshmiNarayana Mandir and Ramakrishna Hall.



Swami Vandananadjee visiting from Belur Math



Bhulabhai Chhitabhai



Bhulabhai & Lakshmibhen Dayaljee





8 Types of Meditation Explained

By Roger Gabriel
(Raghavanand)

The word *meditation* covers a fairly wide spectrum of practices, from walking and eating meditation to mantra-based meditation. Some meditators find that one style works best for them—and they stick to it. Others like to experiment with the different styles. The important thing to remember is that one style isn't better than another; they are all different and offer their own unique benefits.

Let's take a look at some of the main types of meditation and the value they can bring to your life.

Reflection

Reflection or recapitulation is to refer back over past events and situations. This can be a useful technique to practice at the end of the day—to meditate on the events of the day. It should be done without evaluation or judgment but rather as a process of witnessing the main events of the day and your reactions to them.

As you practice this you will find yourself saying things like, “I ate breakfast, I went to work, I met my friend.” You will see that the events came and went but the one constant was “I.” You begin to appreciate that who you really are is the witness in all experiences, the timeless Self in the midst of all time-bound events.

Contemplation

Contemplation is to think about something, to ponder it, and explore all its aspects. It can be a process of self-reflection, where you ask questions such as:

- Who am I?
- What is my purpose?
- What do I want?
- What I am most grateful for?

Contemplation is where you look to your inner world for answers, asking the questions, and then listening for the answers and insights that rise from your deepest Being. Contemplation helps you lead a life directed by your inner wisdom.

Prayer

It has been said that prayer is when you talk to God, and meditation is when you keep quiet so God can speak to you. Prayer itself can take many forms, from the “shopping list” of desires to prayers of praise and gratitude. Prayer can be a way of expressing your love and devotion for the Divine, both essential aspects of your spiritual journey. Prayer is often something you only turn to in times of need or great challenges. Fortunately, the Divine is patient and accepts all comers. The ultimate prayer and expression of surrender is, “Thy will be done.”

Eating

The air you breathe and the food you eat are what keeps you alive, so eating is a sacred act and should be a meditative experience. Try to follow these tips to make sure you're eating mindfully:

- Eat in a settled environment, not working, watching TV, or checking Facebook.
- Sit down to eat.
- Avoid eating if you are upset.
- Practice gratitude: The first part of your digestion takes place in the mouth so take a moment to appreciate the food in front of you—the color and smell. Think of everything that went into bringing that food to you—the rain and sun that helped it grow, the farmer who tended the crop, and the love and care that went into the preparation.
- Place the food in your mouth and enjoy the taste. Put your utensil down until you have fully chewed and swallowed each mouthful.
- Avoid cold liquids during the meal as these will extinguish your digestive fire.
- Be mindful of your appetite so you don't overeat. A good rule is to fill one-third of your stomach with food, one-third with liquid, and leave the remaining third empty for digestion.
- Take a few minutes to remain seated after finishing.

Walking

Many people enjoy making their activities a meditative experience. Whether walking, dancing, bicycling or any other activity, be fully aware of the activity. You could coordinate your movements with your breath or repeat a simple phrase such as, “I am walking, right leg up, right leg down” or something more meaningful such as, “peace and love.” Whenever you find yourself distracted by something in the environment, pause, enjoy that experience, and then return to the meditation. Next time you go for a walk, try being fully present in the walking, not thinking about what you have to do next.

Guided Meditation

In guided meditation, you are led through a series of experiences. Usually you will be instructed to see, to feel, or be aware of different things. While this is easy for some people, it can be quite difficult and frustrating for others. If you fall into the second group, when asked to “see yourself walking in a beautiful meadow,” don't worry if you can't see a picture of the

meadow in your mind. Just imagine what you would be feeling if you were in the meadow. Awareness and imagination are really the same thing.

Many people enjoy guided meditations because someone else directs and you just have to follow along. While guided meditations do keep the mind engaged in activity, they can be useful in helping to relieve physical, mental, and emotional challenges. The Internet is packed with guided meditations of all types for you to try.

The meditations discussed to this point have all involved some degree of activity—mental, physical, or both. While these can all have great values in helping to restore harmony and wholeness to your life, it is important to take time each day to enter totally into the experience of inner silence. These final two types of meditation are specifically for this purpose.

Breath

The vast majority of your thoughts take you into the future or the past. Consequently, this is where you spend most of your lives. In essence, you miss the present moment entirely. Your breath can never be in the future or the past, it is always right here, in the now. By simply sitting quietly with eyes closed and effortlessly observing your breath flowing in and flowing out, you are immediately brought into the present moment. This can have a profound effect on centering and grounding you and, more importantly, allowing your thoughts to settle down to their deepest level—silence.

Mantra

Mantra means vehicle or instrument of the mind and there are many different types of mantras, which can be used for a variety of purposes.

The mantras referred to here are specific sounds or vibrations, which have no particular meaning. Most thoughts have a sound and a meaning. It's the meaning that keeps your awareness on the active thinking level. When you introduce this type of mantra, it acts like a thought with no meaning. With nothing to keep you at the active level of the mind, your awareness turns within until you reach a point where you transcend thought completely and slip into the silent field of infinite possibilities. These mantras are best learned from a qualified teacher such as those certified by the Chopra Center to teach Primordial Sound Meditation.

Making the journey regularly back and forth from activity to silence gradually integrates these qualities into your life, bringing profound benefits in all areas.

Meditation essentially means to be aware, and to have focus or direction. When you learn to live your life with awareness, to live consciously, and to make conscious choices, your whole life becomes a meditative experience. Try practicing different types of meditation at different times of the day until you find the practice, or practices, that work best for you.

NAVARATRI

over the
years



This Page is kindly sponsored by Javie & Nila Ravjee and Family

Now, I know what you're thinking: “no exercise can make me smarter”, right? Well, I was a little sceptical at first too. Until I started doing research and saw the results. This exercise, being called “Superbrain Yoga” is meant to pump up cell and neuro activity in the brain, and it seems to be working amazingly. Improved brain function has been seen in the elderly, those with autism, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Down syndrome, Alzheimer's, or other development challenges. It's even helped those who are just “foggy” sometimes and those who have a problem with short-term memory.

Based on the research of Dr. Joie P. Jones of the Dept. of Radiological Sciences at the University of California, the exercise works using the body's energy centres which absorb, digest, and distribute energy to different parts of the body. These primary energy centres are actually major acupuncture points. Acupressure energy points for the brain, eyes, forehead, mouth, ovaries, parotid, temples, and testes congregate around the area of the ear affected by pressure from the exercise. In addition, the finger pads used in the exercise stimulate neuropathways into the brain by activating acupuncture points on the earlobes. According to Dr. Jones, after doing the exercise, an EEG scan shows the right and left hemispheres of the brain have synchronized.

When done correctly, the Superbrain Yoga exercise helps the energy trapped in the lower energy centres move up through the physical body's other major centres. As the energy travels upwards, it passes through the practitioner's heart centre and fills it with feelings of calm and inner peace. When the energy moves up further into the throat and beyond, the practitioner's intelligence and creativity are improved. Other benefits include regulation of the sex drive, which is especially important for teenagers.

Here's how to do it (7 steps):

1. Face East. For the elderly, face north.
2. Remove any jewellery and connect your tongue to the roof of your mouth. Leave it there throughout the exercise.
3. Take your left hand, cross your upper body to take hold of your right earlobe with thumb and forefinger. Make sure that the thumb is in front.
4. Now take your right hand across your upper body to take hold of your left earlobe. Again, make sure that the thumb is in front. At this point you're pressing both earlobes simultaneously. Make sure your left arm is close to your chest and inside your right arm.
5. Inhale through your nose and slowly squat down to the ground.
6. Hold your breath and exhale as you start making your way back up to a standing position.

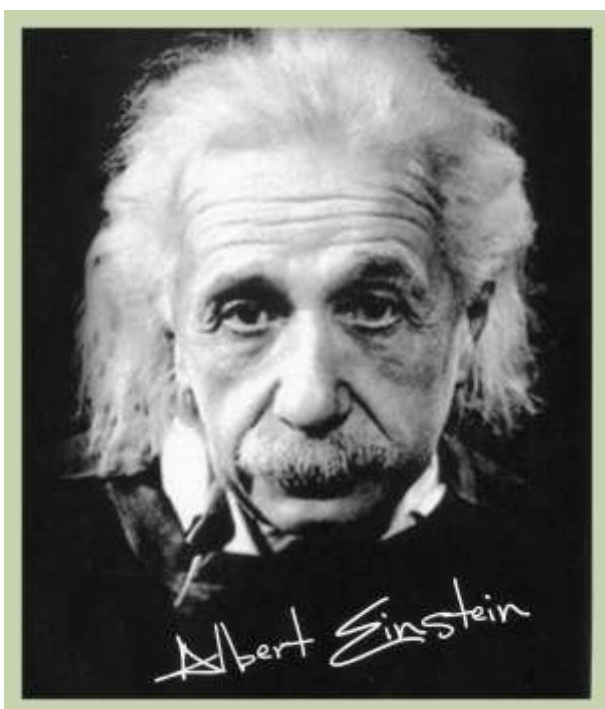
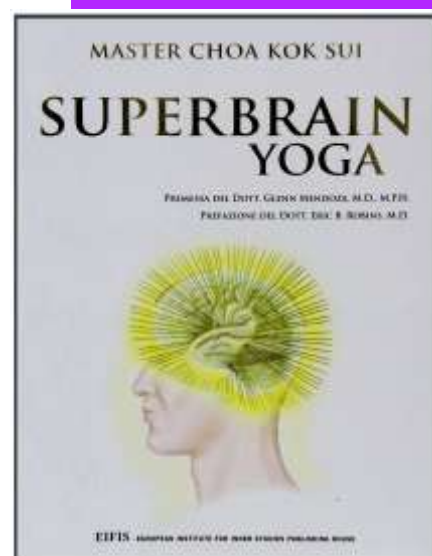
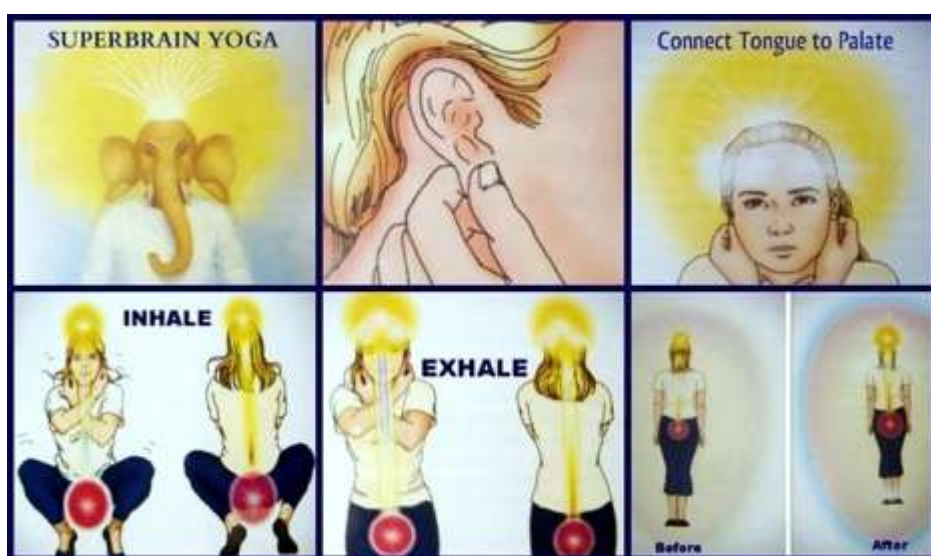


One Simple Move to Make You Smarter

SUPER BRAIN YOGA

7. Repeat this squatting action 14 times. Remember to keep holding your earlobes and to keep your tongue touching the roof of your mouth throughout the entire exercise.

To maximize the benefits of this practice, make it a fun daily habit with your child when getting ready for school or even after school when they need a re-charge. For teenagers, the best way is to lead by example and also make the first 30 days a together practice (proven by first-hand experience). You will start to see results in the first three months of daily repetition, and in seven months your child will improve their cognitive abilities (and average in school) by 20 – 35%, but by that time what once was just an exercise will become a great habit you'll want to keep all your life – one that will ensure your next generations grow up healthy and smart.



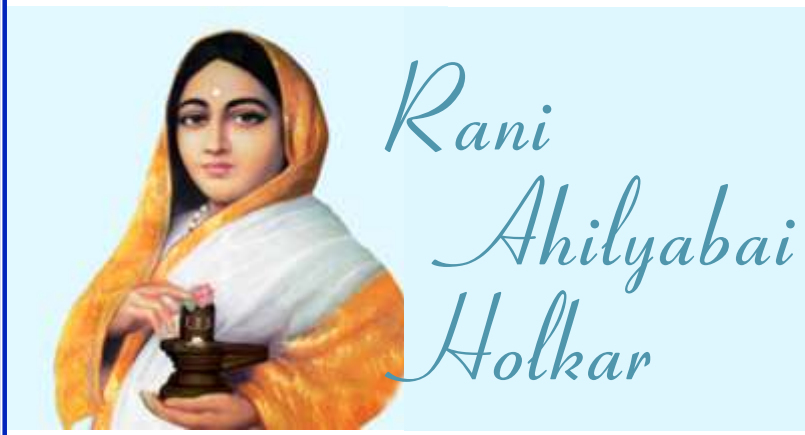
*“Everybody is a genius.
So if you judge a fish by its
ability to climb a tree, it will
live its whole life believing
that it is stupid”
~ Albert Einstein*

GENERAL

over the
years



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Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar
(31 May 1725 – 13 August 1795)

was the Holkar Queen of the
Maratha Malwa kingdom, India.

Ahilyabai's husband Khanderao Holkar was killed in the battle of Kumbher in 1754. Twelve years later, her father-in-law, Malhar Rao Holkar, died. A year after that she was crowned as the queen of the Malwa kingdom. She tried to protect her kingdom from plundering invaders. She personally led armies into battle. She appointed Tukojirao Holkar as the Chief of Army.

Rani Ahilyabai was a great pioneer and builder of Hindu temples. She built hundreds of temples and Dharmashalas throughout India.

. She was married to Khanderao Holkar in 1733. In 1745, she gave birth to their son Malerao and in 1748, a daughter Muktabai. Malerao was mentally unwell and died of his illness in 1767. Ahilyabai broke another tradition when she married her daughter to Yashwantrao a brave but poor man after he succeeded in defeating the dacoits.

Her father, Mankoji Rao Shinde, was the Patil (chief) of the village. Despite women's education being a far cry in the village, her father home schooled her to read and write.

While Ahilya did not come from a royal lineage, most deem her entry into history a twist of fate. It dates back to when the acclaimed Lord of the Malwa territory, Malhar Rao Holkar, spotted an eight-year-old Ahilyabai at the temple service feeding the hungry and poor, on his stop in Chaundi while travelling to Pune.

Moved by the young girl's charity and strength of character, he decided to ask her hand in marriage for his son Khanderao Holkar. She was married to Khanderao Holkar (1723–1754) in 1733 at the tender age of 8.

But distress was quick to befall the young bride when her husband Khanderao was killed in the battle of Kumbher in 1754, leaving her a widow at only 29.

When Ahilyabai was about to commit Sati, her father-in-law Malhar Rao refused to let it happen.

He had been her strongest pillar of support at the time. But a young Ahilyabai could see her kingdom fall like a pack of cards after her father-in-law passed away in 1766, only 12 years after the death of his son Khanderao.

The old ruler's death led to his grandson and Ahilyabai's only son Male Rao Holkar ascending the throne under her regency.

The last straw came when the young monarch Male Rao too died, a few months into his rule, on 5 April 1767, thus creating a vacuum in the power structure of the kingdom.

One can imagine how a woman, royalty or not, would suffer after losing her husband, father-in-law and only son. However, Ahilyabai stood undeterred. She did not let the grief of her loss affect the administration of the kingdom and the lives of her people.

She took matters into her own hands. She petitioned the Peshwa after her son's death, to take over the administration herself. She ascended the throne and became the ruler of Indore on 11 December 1767.

While there was indeed a section of the kingdom that objected to her assumption to the throne, her army of Holkars stood by her and supported their queen's leadership.

Just a year into her rule, one saw the brave Holkar queen protect her kingdom – fighting off invaders tooth and nail from plundering Malwa. Armed with swords and weapons, she led armies into the battlefield.

There she was, the queen of Malwa, slaying her enemies and invaders on battlefronts with four bows and quivers of arrows fitted to the corners of the howdah of her favourite elephant.

Her confidante on military matters was Subhedar Tukojirao Holkar (also Malhar Rao's adopted son) whom she appointed the head of the military.

The Queen of Malwa, apart from being a brave queen and proficient ruler, was also an erudite politician. She observed the bigger picture when the Maratha Peshwa could not pin down the agenda of the British.

In her letter to the Peshwa in 1772, she had warned him, calling the British embrace a bear hug: "Other beasts, like tigers, can be killed by might or contrivance, but to kill a bear it is very difficult. It will die only if you kill it straight in the face, Or else, once caught in its powerful hold; the bear will kill its prey by tickling. Such is the way of the English. And given this, it is difficult to triumph over them."

From a tiny village to a flourishing city, Indore prospered during her 30-year rule. She was famous for having built numerous forts and roads in Malwa, sponsoring festivals and giving donations to many Hindu temples.

Even outside her kingdom, her philanthropy reflected in the construction of dozens of temples, ghats, wells, tanks and rest-houses stretching from the Himalayas in the north to the pilgrimage centres in the south. The Holkar queen also embellished and beautified various sites including Kashi, Gaya, Somnath, Ayodhya, Mathura, Haridwar, Kanchi, Avanti, Dwarka, Badrinarayan, Rameshwar and Jaganathpuri as recorded by the Bharatiya Sanskritikosh.

Her capital at Maheshwar was a melting pot of literary, musical, artistic and industrial achievements. She opened her capital's doors to stalwarts like Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Anantaphandi and Sanskrit scholar, Khushali Ram.

Her capital was known for its distinct crafts men, sculptors and artists who were paid handsomely for their work and kept in high regards by the Queen. She also moved on to establishing a textile industry in the city.

Ahilya, the compassionate ruler

Ahilyabai held public audiences every day to help address the grievances of her people. She was always available to anyone who needed her ear.

Historians write how she encouraged all within her realm and her kingdom to do their best. During her reign, the merchants produced their most elegant clothes and trade flourished to no end. No more was the farmer a mere victim of oppression but a self-sufficient man in his own right.

"Far and wide the roads were planted with shady trees, and wells were made, and rest-houses for travellers. The poor, the homeless, the orphaned were all helped according to their needs. The Bhils, who had long been the torment of all caravans, were routed from their mountain fastnesses and persuaded to settle down as honest farmers. Hindu and Musalman alike revered the famous Queen and prayed for her long life," writes Annie Besant.

A woman ahead of her times, Ahilyabai's greatest sorrow continued to remain the irony that her daughter jumped into the funeral pyre and became a Sati upon the death of her husband, Yashwantrao Phanse.

She was 70 when she died and was succeeded by her commander-in-chief, Tukoji Rao Holkar 1.

"Indore long mourned its noble Queen, happy had been her reign, and her memory is cherished with deep reverence unto this day," writes Besant.

Centuries later, the brave and just queen's legacy lives on in the form of the numerous temples, dharamshalas, and the large amount of social work for which she dedicated her life.

A commemorative stamp was issued in her honour on August 25, 1996, by the Indian government. As a tribute to the ruler, Indore's domestic airport has been named Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Airport. The Indore University too was renamed Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya.

An English poem written by Joanna Baillie in 1849 in honour of one of the greatest Maratha woman rulers of Malwa reads:

"For thirty years her reign of peace,
The land in blessing did increase;
And she was blessed by every tongue,
By stern and gentle, old and young.
Yea, even the children at their mother's feet
Are taught such homely rhyming to repeat
"In latter days from Brahma came,
To rule our land, a noble Dame,
Kind was her heart and bright her fame,
And Ahilya was her honoured name."

GENERAL

over the
years



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7 Mantras

for Creating the Life You Want



Successful, happy, adventurous, safe - we are all dreaming of an amazing life for ourselves!

Whether you think that the grass is greener in a stable nine-to-five job or you find the freedom of roaming gypsy life more appealing, next time you ask yourself, What kind of life do I want?, remember that there's a mantra for that!

What is A Mantra?

Mantra, or vehicle for the mind, is the ancient practice of repeating a word or phrase multiple times. You may unconsciously work with mantras on a daily basis. For example, do you ever catch yourself saying, “I hate my body” or “This is never going to work” or “I'm not good enough”?

Those are indeed mantras; though negative ones, which only serve to feed the thousands of other Automatic Negative Thoughts in your mind. In fact, most of the thoughts you think are ones repeated from the day before, and the day before that. Each thought you think creates a little groove in the circuitry of the brain. Since that's the case, you really ought to be more selective about which ones you're polishing!

In *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Health, Happiness, and Wisdom*, author Rick Hanson explains that you can change your mind ... to change your brain ... to change your mind! What luck! This means if you intentionally choose positive, more expansive thoughts, you can change your life for the better.

Since the thoughts you think create the reality you live in, singing, chanting, speaking, or repeating the following mantras silently can make a difference. As author Thomas Ashley-Farrand writes in *Healing Mantras: Using Sound Affirmations for Personal Power, Creativity, and Healing*, mantras can be used by people of any religion or spiritual practice, or during any activity—of course during meditation, but they can also be used as you walk, clean, cook, and during other mindless tasks.

1. AUM or OM

AUM or OM is the universal vibration, with each sound (Aaa-Uoo-Mmm) said to represent creation, manifestation, and destruction. Consider what are you sending out into the world on the sound waves of your AUM and focus on an intention. Dedicate your AUM to your own well-being, to your family, to your community, or to the world. Like a pebble dropped into a still pond, allow your AUM to ripple out.

Practice suggestions:

Chant one to three times before beginning your yoga asana practice

Chant one to three times to close a yoga asana practice

Chant before or after seated meditation

Chant anytime, anywhere

2. Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu

A sweet Sanskrit chant with a lovely translation: “May all beings everywhere be happy and free. May our thoughts, our words, and our actions, contribute in some way to that happiness and freedom.” This mantra may be chanted or sung as an offering of loving-kindness to all beings, including yourself.

Practice suggestions:

Chant before or after yoga asana practice

Chant before or after seated meditation

Sing it with kids as a lesson in compassion, inclusivity, and tolerance

Write it down in your journal after a challenging day

3. So Hum

Translated from Sanskrit, this mantra means “I am.”

“I am” is a complete sentence!

This mantra is great for balancing the Root Chakra, getting grounded in self-love and connecting with your “enoughness.”

Try taking on further affirmations if it feels right for you: I am here now. I am exactly where I am supposed to be. I am safe. I am becoming. I am enough.

Practice suggestion:

Say it five times out loud before an interview

Say it while standing in a power pose

Do a journaling “free write” and fill three pages with add-ons to “I am ...”

4. Asato ma sadgamaya Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya Mrtyorma amrtam gamaya Om shanti shanti shanti

This mantra comes from the Upanishads. It translates to “Lead me from the untruth to truth, lead me from darkness to light, and lead me from death to immortality, Om peace, peace, peace.”

Practice suggestion:

Chant it in Kirtan with a group of people

Chant before embarking on a journey

Chant at the beginning of the year, change of the season, or birthday

5. Lam-Vam-Ram-Yam-Ham-Aum-(silence)

Use the bija mantras, or one-syllable seed sounds, to stimulate and unblock each chakra. Respectively, each sound aligns with the seven major energy centers: Muladhara, Svadistana, Manipura, Anahata, Visshudha, Ajna, and Sahasrara. Chant these mantras when you're feeling out of balance in any area of your life.

Practice suggestion:

Use this mantra as pranayama: inhale fully and then chant all the sounds on the exhale

Sing this mantra seven times, once for each chakra

Choose one sound that really resonates with you and repeat that one several times

6. Om Namoh Lakshmi, Om Namoh Lakshmi, Om Namoh Lakshmi, Prema Devi Mataji

This mantra calls on the Goddess Lakshmi for abundance, beauty, health, luminosity, and love. There are many chants for Lakshmi. This mantra translates to “Oh Mother Lakshmi! Goddess of good fortune, prosperity, and beauty. Goddess of love, I bow to you.” Call on Lakshmi when you're feeling dull or preparing for a big change.

Practice suggestion:

Say before or after a heart-opening yoga asana practice

Say before or after meditation focused on abundance

Chant this mantra with a group of women

Sing when starting a new business

7. Om Gam Ganapataye Namaha

This mantra summons the Deity Ganesha, the beloved elephant-headed trickster known as the remover of obstacles and master of knowledge. This mantra translates to “Salutations to Ganesha, the remover/breaker of obstacles, we call your name!” Call on Ganesha to clear your path when you feel stuck or creatively blocked, when you need a change of perspective, or when life feels especially challenging and you're not sure why.

Practice suggestion:

Say before embarking on a journey

Say when you feel afraid

Say silently during a difficult work meeting

Say during a tense period in a close relationship

If you would like, set up a dedicated time of day to practice mantra with an altar. Place items on your altar associated with the life you desire. Consider areas of change and areas that are already working. Move your fingers across a mala necklace or use your fingers to track the number of times you chant your chosen mantra.

These powerful sounds can be practiced just about anywhere. How about on a walk or a bike ride? What about in the shower or in the car? Or chant while you move through asana. It truly does not matter where or when you practice mantra, the question to ask is: What is the intention behind the chant? The act of repetition is meditative in itself. And if none of these are doing the trick, make up your own mantra to create the life you desire!



*“Being happy doesn't mean
that everything is perfect.
It means that you've
decided to look beyond
the imperfections”
~ Anonymous*

MAHA SHIVRATRI

over the
years



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Exercise Chart

Sneak these simple exercises into your normal daily routine...

Tone your abs with the Side Twist

- Sit upright and pull your stomach in.
- Twist your upper body slightly to the left and then slightly to the right. This motion should be done as slowly as possible while continuing to face forward. The important part of this exercise is to make sure that the abdominal muscles are contracted throughout the workout.
- Repeat 10 times.



Steering wheel crush for the chest and upper arms

- At a red robot - while the car is stationary, grasp the wheel firmly in both hands. Push in like you are trying to crush the wheel.
- Now lean forward and pull out like your are trying to stretch the wheel.
- Repeat 5 times

Beat that double-chin

- Lift your chin slightly.
- Open and close your mouth in a chewing action.
- Repeat this 5 times.

Exercise at your desk...

Calf Raises

- Sit on a chair with both feet on the floor at shoulder width apart.
- Raise your calves slowly while tightening the calf muscles.
- Hold for thirty seconds then lower and repeat the calf raise.
- Repeat 10 times.

Buttock squeezes

- Sit on a chair with both feet on the floor at shoulder width apart.
- Squeeze your buttock muscles and hold for thirty seconds
- Repeat 10 times.

Hip flexions

- While sitting in your chair, lift your right foot a few centimetres off of the floor.
- Keep your knee bent at a 90 degree angle and hold the position as long as you can.
- Repeat 5 times.

Chair squats

- Lift your buttocks off of your seat and hold for a few seconds.
- Repeat 5 times

Arms

- Sitting on your chair, place your arms under your table like you're going pick it up.
- Now try lift the table off the ground slightly.
- Hold for 10 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.

The 10 Yamas

Restraints or Proper Conduct in Hinduism

As interpreted by
Sadguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami



First Restraint - Ahimsa or Non-injury

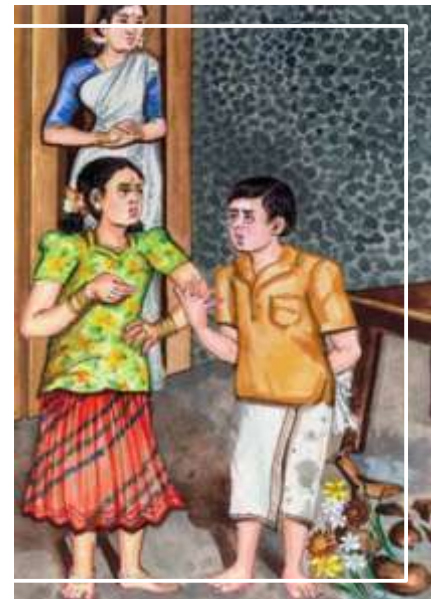
One man is beating a small boy, while an onlooker rushes forward to intervene and stop the injury.

What does living virtuously mean to Hindus? It is following the natural and essential guidelines of dharma and the twenty ethical guidelines called 'yamas' and 'niyamas,' or 'restraints' and 'observances' - ancient scriptural injunctions for all aspects of human thought, attitude and behavior. These "do's" and "don'ts" are a common-sense code of conduct recorded in the Upanishads, the final section of the 6,000 to 8,000-year-old Vedas.

The second restraint, Truthfulness (Satya) - refraining from lying and betraying promises.

A boy has broken a vase and is denying the mischief. Mother watches, hoping he will learn to tell the truth.

Adhere to truthfulness, refraining from lying and betraying promises. Speak only that which is true, kind, helpful and necessary. Knowing that deception creates distance, don't keep secrets from family or loved ones. Be fair, accurate and frank in discussions, a stranger to deceit. Admit your failings. Do not engage in slander, gossip or backbiting. Do not bear false witness against another.



Third Restraint - Asteya or Nonstealing nor coveting nor entering into debt.

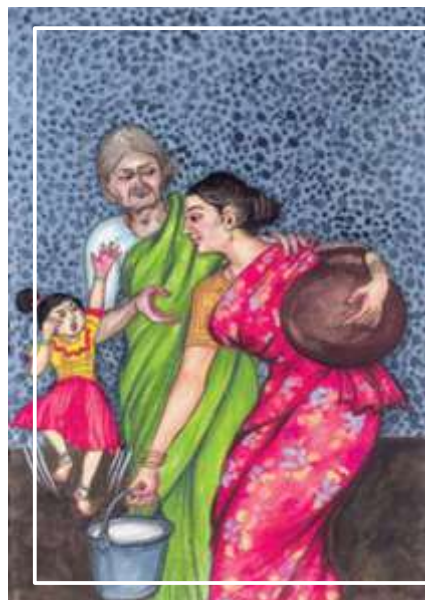
Two boys conspire to break the principle of asteya as one distracts merchant while the other steals a book.

Uphold the virtue of nonstealing, neither thieving, coveting nor failing to repay debt. Control your desires and live within your means. Do not use borrowed resources for unintended purposes or keep them past due. Do not gamble or defraud others. Do not renege on promises. Do not use others' names, words, resources or rights without permission and acknowledgment.

Fourth Restraint - Brahmacharya or Sexual Purity

A brother guards his sister's purity, brahmacharya, from a rogue who has approached her immodestly.

Practice divine conduct, controlling lust by remaining celibate when single and faithful in marriage. Before marriage, use vital energies in study, and after marriage in creating family success. Do not waste the sacred force by promiscuity in thought, word or deed. Be restrained with the opposite sex. Seek holy company. Dress and speak modestly. Shun pornography, sexual humour and violence.



Fifth Restraint - Kshama or Patience restraining intolerance with people and impatience with circumstances.

Kshamâ is epitomized by a mother's patiently setting aside her urgent duties to tend to her daughter's tears.

Exercise patience, restraining intolerance with people and impatience with circumstances. Be agreeable. Let others behave according to their nature, without adjusting to you. Do not argue, dominate conversations or interrupt others. Do not be in a hurry. Be patient with children and the elderly. Minimize stress by keeping worries at bay. Remain poised in good times and bad.

Sixth Restraint - Dhriti or Steadfastness overcoming non-perseverance, fear, indecision, inconstancy and changeableness.

The worker on the left works steadily and energetically, exemplifying dhriti, while the other is less productive.

Foster steadfastness, overcoming non-perseverance, fear, indecision and changeableness. Achieve your goals with a prayer, purpose, plan, persistence and push. Be firm in your decisions. Avoid sloth and procrastination. Develop willpower, courage and industriousness. Overcome obstacles. Never carp or complain. Do not let opposition or fear of failure result in changing strategies.





Seventh Restraint - Daya or Compassion - conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings.

The man beating his dog has little compassion, dayâ. A friend urges him to cognize the cruelty of his actions.

Practice compassion, conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings. See god everywhere. Be kind to people, animals, plants and the Earth itself. Forgive those who apologize and show true remorse. Foster sympathy for others' needs and suffering. Honour and assist those who are weak, impoverished, aged or in pain. Oppose family abuse and other cruelties.

Eighth Restraint - Arjava or Honesty - straightforwardness, renouncing deception and wrongdoing.

Two students re cheating on a test while a peer admonishes them to follow ârjava, honesty.

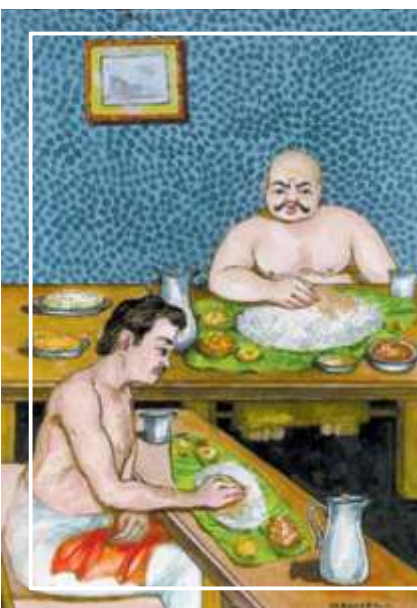
Maintain honesty, renouncing deception and wrongdoing. Act honorably even in hard times. Obey the laws of your nation and locale. Pay your taxes. Be straightforward in business. Do an honest day' work. Do not bribe or accept bribes. Do not cheat, deceive or circumvent to achieve an end. Be frank with yourself. Face and accept your faults without blaming them on others.



Ninth Restraint - Mitahara or Moderate Diet neither eating too much nor consuming meat, fish, fowl or eggs.

Be moderate in appetite, neither eating too much nor consuming meat, fish, shellfish, fowl or eggs.

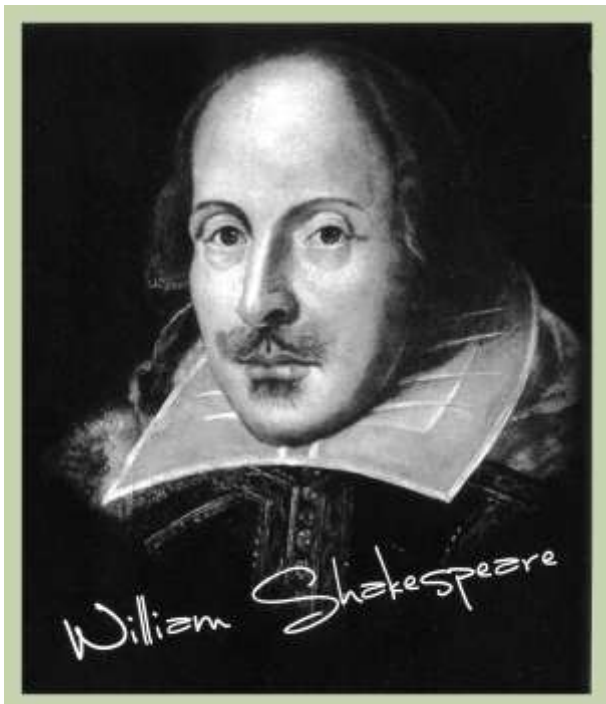
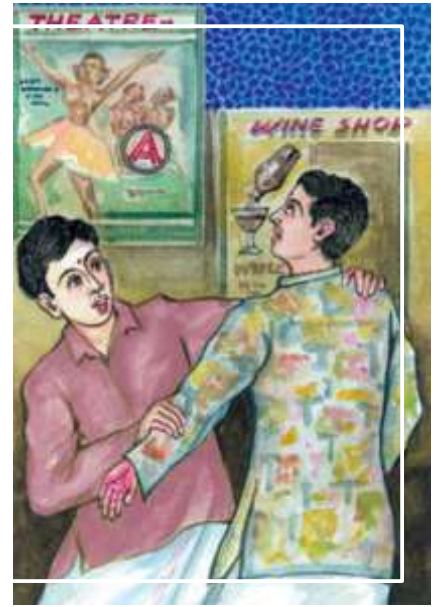
Enjoy fresh, wholesome vegetarian foods that vitalize the body. Avoid junk food. Drink in moderation. Eat at regular times, only when hungry, at a moderate pace, never between meals, in a disturbed atmosphere or when upset. Follow a simple diet, avoiding rich or fancy fare.



Tenth Restraint - Saucha or Purity avoiding impurity in body, mind and speech.

A man finds his friend outside an X-rated theater and urges him not to sink into a low-minded sensual life.

Uphold the ethics of purity, avoiding impurity in mind, body and speech. Maintain a clean, healthy body. Keep a pure, uncluttered home and workplace. Act virtuously. Keep good company, never mixing with adulterers, thieves or other impure people. Keep away from pornography and violence. Never use harsh, angered or indecent language. Worship devoutly. Meditate daily.



*“Some are born great,
some achieve greatness,
and some have greatness
thrust upon them”
~ William Shakespeare*

GENERAL

over the
years



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The Essence of Hinduism



To really understand Hinduism, one can study the following two articles:

1. Founder of Hinduism
2. The Nature of Reality

Founder of Hinduism

Question: Was there a specific founder of the religion (Hinduism?)

Reply:

Hinduism cannot be described as an organized religion. It is not founded by any individual. Hinduism is God centred and therefore one can call Hinduism as founded by God, because the answer to the question 'ho is behind the eternal principles and who makes them work?' will have to be 'osmic power, Divine power, God'

Swami Vivekananda wrote:

There are these eternal principles, which stand upon their own foundations without depending on any reasoning, even much less on the authority of sages however great, of Incarnations however brilliant they may have been. We may remark that as this is the unique position in India, our claim is that the Vedanta only can be the universal religion, that it is already the existing universal religion in the world, because it teaches principles and not persons.

[The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, III,
Topic 'The Sages of India']

Swami Vivekananda wrote:

If you want to be religious, enter not the gate of any organised religion. They do a hundred times more evil than good, because they stop the growth of each one's individual development.... Religion is only between you and your God, and no third person must come between you. Think what these organised religions have done! What Napoleon was more terrible than those religious persecutions? If you and I organise, we begin to hate every person. It is better not to love, if loving only means hating others. That is no love. That is hell! If loving your own people means hating everybody else, it is the quintessence of selfishness and brutality, and the effect is that it will make you brutes.

-The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume I,
Topic 'The Gita III']

Swami Vivekananda wrote:

Truth is of two kinds: (1) that which is cognisable by the five ordinary senses of man, and by reasonings based thereon; (2) that which is cognisable by the subtle, super-sensuous power of Yoga.

Knowledge acquired by the first means is called science; and knowledge acquired by the second is called the Vedas.

The whole body of super sensuous truths, having no beginning or end, and called by the name of Vedas, is ever existent. The Creator Himself is creating, preserving and destroying the universe with the help of these truths.

The person in whom this super-sensuous power is manifested is called a Rishi, and the super-sensuous truths, which he realises by this power, are called the Vedas.

This Rishihood, this power of super-sensuous perception of the Vedas, is real religion. And so long as this does not develop in the life of an initiate, so long is religion a mere empty word to him, and it is to be understood that he has not taken yet the first step in religion.

The authority of the Vedas extends to all ages, climes and persons; that is to say, their application is not confined to any particular place, time and persons.

The Vedas are the only exponent of the universal religion.

Question: How did Hinduism start and when did it begin?

Reply

Hinduism is God centred. Other religions are prophet centred.

Hinduism is based upon Eternal Principles. Eternal principles apply to all human beings everywhere. The laws of physics exist and work all the time. The healing principle will get to work immediately the moment a little cut is sustained on a finger. No one can tell when this healing principle began or when it will end. It is there existing eternally, all pervading (available everywhere), omniscient (aware all the time and therefore healing principle gets to work when injury is sustained). (These simplified examples serve to understand God' power: omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent).

Hinduism is based upon Eternal Principles. If a great scientist like Einstein, discovered or realized laws of physics, Hinduism would call him a great Rishi (Maharshi or seer of truth.) Such seers of truth are not confined to any one age or country. Self realized persons like Jesus Christ would be called Rishis (seers) and their teachings would be readily acceptable to those who properly understand the principles of 'induism' From the ancient times, many great Rishis achieved self-realisation through such practices as meditation and austerities and they realised knowledge concerning Eternal Principles. Their knowledge, taught to disciples, and eventually made available in written form, is known as the Vedas (Ved = knowledge), the scriptures upon which Sanatan Dharma (Hinduism) is based. Sanatan means eternal and Dharma means religion.

The word 'Hinduism' does not appear anywhere in Hindu scriptures, The proper name for Hinduism is 'Sanatan Dharma' Sanatan = eternal Dharma = religion.

Hinduism is God centred whereas other religions are prophet centred. For this reason the whole of mankind has to abide by (or is affected by) the eternal principles. The question of acceptance or rejection of Hinduism by any individual simply does not arise, or is irrelevant. It is illogical to talk of conversion to Hinduism. It is like saying that the laws of physics (e.g.gravity) will apply to you only if you belong to an organization or organized religion.

[The ceremonies and rituals connected with Hinduism (and other religions) are designed to cultivate increased spirituality. At advanced level of spirituality, rituals and ceremonies are dispensed with]

Sri Madhusudana Sarasvati Wrote:

(Commentary Gita Ch.3, Shloka 16)

But he who has realised the Spreme Entity and does not derive pleasure from the senses, he on account of being self-fulfilled, does not incur sin even by not performing the rites which are thus the cause of the movement of the Wheel of the World.

From Brahadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10:

Even the gods cannot prevail against him (he who has realised the Spreme Entity). There need be no performance of any action even in the form of worship of gods for averting obstacles

Gita Ch. 3 Shloka 17:

The Blessed Lord said: But that man who rejoices only in the Self and is satisfied (only) with the Self, and is contented only in the Self - for him there is no duty to perform

Swami Vivekananda wrote:

[The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, III,
Topic 'The Sages of India']

The very fountainhead of our religion is in the Vedas (Srutis) which are perfectly impersonal; the persons all come in the Smritis and Puranas- the great Avatars, Incarnations of God, Prophets, and so forth.

[Note: Srutis means revealed knowledge; Smriti means memory, history]

And this ought also to be observed that except our religion (Sanatan Dharma; Hinduism), every other religion in the world depends upon the lives of some personal founder or founders. Christianity is built upon the life of Jesus Christ, Mohammedanism (Islam) upon Mohammed, Buddhism upon Buddha, Jainism upon the Jinas, and so on. It naturally follows that there must be in all these religions a good deal of fight about what they call the historical evidence of these great personalities.

If at any time the historical evidence about the existence of these personages in ancient times become weak, the whole building of the religion tumbles down and is broken to pieces. We escaped this fate because our religion is not based upon persons but on principles. That you obey your religion is not because it came through the authority of a sage, no, not even of an Incarnation. Krishna is not the authority of the Vedas, but the Vedas are the authority of Krishna himself. His glory is that he is the greatest preacher of the Vedas that ever existed.

So with the other Incarnations; so with all our sages. Our first principle is that all that is necessary for the perfection of man and for attaining unto freedom is there in the Vedas. You cannot find anything new. You cannot go beyond a perfect unity, which is the goal of all knowledge; this has been already reached there, and it is impossible to go beyond the unity. Religious knowledge became complete when Tat Twam Asi (Thou art That) was discovered, and that was in the Vedas.

What remained was the guidance of people from time to time according to different times and places, according to different circumstances and environments. People had to be guided along the old, old path and for this these great teachers came, these great sages. Nothing can bear out more clearly this position than the celebrated saying of Sri Krishna in the Gita : "Whenever virtue subsides and irreligion prevails, I create Myself for the protection of the good; for the destruction of all immorality I am coming from time to time."

What follows? That on the one hand, there are these eternal principles, which stand upon their own foundations without depending on any reasoning, even much less on the authority of sages however great, of Incarnations however brilliant they may have been. We may remark that as this is the unique position in India, our claim is that the Vedanta only can be the universal religion, that it is already the existing universal religion in the world, because it teaches principles and not persons

No religion built upon a person can be taken up as a type by all the races of mankind. In our own country we find that there have been so many grand characters; even in a small city many persons are taken up as types by the different minds in that one city. How is it possible that one person as Mohammed, or Buddha or Christ, can be taken up as the one type for the whole world, nay, that the whole of morality, ethics, spirituality, and religion can be true only from the sanction of that one person, and one person alone?

Now the Vedantic religion does not require any such personal authority. Its sanction is the eternal nature of man, its ethics are based upon the eternal solidarity of man, already existing, already attained and not to be attained.

The Hindu can worship any sage and any saint from any country whatsoever, and as a fact we know that we go and worship many times in the churches of the Christians, and many times in the Mohammedan mosques and that is good. Why not? Ours, as I have said, is the universal religion. It is inclusive enough, it is broad enough to include all the ideals. All the ideals of religion that already exist in the world can be immediately included, and we can patiently wait for all the ideals that are to come in the future to be taken in the same fashion, embraced in the infinite arms of the religion of the Vedanta.

"Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions"
- Rig Veda [Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah]

The Nature of Reality

(Note: Reality experienced at the transcendental level is called Brahman. This term denotes the non-dual Pure consciousness; not to be confused with Brahmin, a human being who performs religious ceremonies and rituals)

The nature of Reality was investigated from two levels of experience

The Nature of Reality

By Swami Nikhilananda

Sri Ramakrishna Centre, New York, USA.

As early as the Vedic times, the Rishis investigated the nature of reality from two levels of experience, one of which may be called the absolute, acosmic or transcendental level and the other relative, cosmic or phenomenal level. At the phenomenal level one perceives the universe of diversity and is aware of one's own individual ego, whereas at the transcendental level, the differences merge into an inexplicable non dual consciousness. Both of these levels of experience are real from their respective standpoints, though what is perceived at one level may be negated at the other.

Reality experienced at the transcendental level is called Brahman. This term denotes the non-dual Pure consciousness which pervades the universe yet remains outside it. (Just as the sun pervades all life on earth yet remains outside it). Brahman is described as the first principle; from it all things are derived, by it all are supported, and into it all finally disappear. In Brahman alone the apparent differences of the phenomenal world are unified. Brahman is identical with the self of man, known as atman.

The word Atman signifies the consciousness in man which experiences gross objects during the waking state, subtle

objects during the dream state, and the bliss arising from absence of the duality of subject and object in dreamless sleep.

The Upanishads speak of the transcendental Brahman as devoid of qualifying attributes or indicative marks, and of the phenomenal Brahman as endowed with them. The attributeless Brahman is called the supreme or unconditioned Brahman, and the other the inferior or conditioned Brahman.

When the sense perceived world is regarded as real, Brahman is spoken of as its omnipotent and omniscient Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. But when the world is not perceived to exist, as for instance in a deep meditation, then one experiences Brahman as the unconditioned Absolute; the idea of a Creator, omnipotent and omniscient, becomes irrelevant. The transcendental Brahman appears as the cause of the universe in association with maya, and becomes known as the conditioned Brahman or Brahman with attributes, or by such other epithets as the Lord and the personal God.

The unconditioned Brahman is free from the limiting adjuncts of space, time and causation.

In describing Brahman as infinitely great and infinitely small, the Upanishads only point out that it is absolutely spaceless. It is 'one and infinite: infinite in the east, infinite in the south.....The Supreme Brahman is not to be fixed; it is unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, not to be conceived.'

The Rishis often describe the unconditioned Brahman as existence-Knowledge-Bliss pure and absolute. Existence, Knowledge and Bliss are not attributes of Reality, they are its very stuff. Brahman is Knowledge or intelligence. The identity of Brahman and Atman or the Self, has been expressed in the well known Vedic dictum 'That thou art'. The very conception of Atman (Self) in the Upanishads implies that it is the knowing subject within us. It is the inner Consciousness and the real agent of perception, the senses being instruments. The Upanishads repeatedly say the realisation of the unconditioned Brahman is the supreme purpose of life, because it bestows immortality.

From the relative standpoint, however, the Vedas concede the reality of the phenomenal universe with all its limitations, and of finite living beings, who need an object of prayer and worship. A phenomenal creature needs a liberator, a saviour to whom he can pray, a personal God, benign and compassionate, to whom he can stretch out his hand for succour in the hour of stress and trial. By means of its inscrutable power called Maya, the unconditioned Brahman becomes the conditioned Brahman endowed with attributes (eg. has four hands holding mace and discus, conch shell and lotus etc.)- the personal God, always ready to bestow His grace upon all who pray to Him in distress.

It is the conditioned Brahman called Ishwar, by whom the universe has been created, and by whom, after being created, it is sustained and into whom in the end, it is absorbed. Creation, preservation and destruction are the activities of the conditioned Brahman or the personal God which can never affect His transcendental nature; they are mere waves on the surface of the ocean which cannot touch the serenity of its immeasurable depths.

According to the non-dualistic Vedanta, this conditioning of Brahman is not real, but only apparent. The conditioned Brahman is a part of the phenomenal world and appears to be real as long as the universe is regarded as real. In the infinite ocean of pure consciousness, He is the biggest wave. But the unconditioned Brahman and the conditioned Brahman are not two realities. The wave is not essentially different from the ocean; the sea is the same sea, whether it is peaceful or agitated.

The conditioned Brahman is called Ishwar (the Lord), because He is the all powerful Lord of all, the ruler of the universe. He, the Lord, is the bestower of blessings, the adorable God.

Vedanta philosophy often uses the word Maya to describe the creation. Maya, which is not essentially different from Brahman, is the material cause, and Brahman, as pure intelligence, is the efficient cause of the universe. After projecting all material forms, Brahman enters into them as life and consciousness and animates them. Thus Brahman, which is transcendental, becomes immanent in the universe.

A unique manifestation of the conditioned Brahman is the Avatar or incarnation of God, to fulfil a cosmic need whenever such a need arises.

The nature of Reality was investigated from two levels of experience.

Level 1	Level 2
Absolute Acosmic Transcendental	Relative Cosmic Phenomenal
Differences merge into an inexplicable non-dual consciousness.	One perceives the universe of diversity. Is aware of one's own individual Ego.
In the Vedas, reality experienced at transcendental level is called Brahman. This term denotes a non-dual pure consciousness which pervades the universe and remains outside of it.	The conditioned Brahman is called Ishwar (the Lord). By means of its own inscrutable power called Maya , the unconditioned Brahman becomes the Conditioned Brahman endowed with attributes. Creation, preservation and destruction are the activities of the conditioned Brahman.
The word Brahman denotes an entity whose greatness, powers of expansion no one can measure. The word Atman signifies the consciousness in man. Brahman is identical with the Self of man, known as Atman the embodied soul.	The word Atman signifies the consciousness in man which experiences gross objects during the waking state, subtle objects during the dream state, and the bliss arising from the absence of duality of subject and object in dreamless sleep.
The transcendental Brahman is devoid of qualifying attributes, devoid of indicative marks, and is called Supreme or Unconditioned Brahman or Pure Being .	Phenomenal Brahman is endowed with attributes of indicative marks, is called inferior or conditioned Brahman.
Described as ' Not this, not this ' (neti-neti) when the world is not perceived to exist, as for instance in contemplation, then one experiences Brahman as the unconditioned Absolute. The idea of a creator, omnipotent and omniscient becomes irrelevant.	Described by such positive statements as whose body is spirit, whose form is light, whose thoughts are true, whose nature is like akasha (space), from whom all works, all desires, all odours proceed. When the sense-perceived world is regarded as real, Brahman is spoken of as its omnipotent and omniscient creator, and destroyer.
One loses one's individuality in the experience of the unconditioned Brahman. (It can be experienced)	One worships the conditioned Brahman in the ordinary state of consciousness. (It can be experienced)
Unconditioned Brahman is indicated by the Vedas as that 'from which all speech, together with the mind, turns away, unable to reach it. It is unperceived (by any sense organ), unrelated to (anything), incomprehensible (to the mind), uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable.	From the relative experience Brahman is described as the cause of the universe. The transcendental Brahman appears as cause of the universe in association with Maya , and becomes known as the conditioned Brahman, or Brahman with attributes, or such other epithets as the Lord the personal God, saguna (with form) personified.
The unconditioned Brahman is free from the limiting adjuncts of space, time and causation. Brahman is not born, It does not die.	

Brahman is unknown and unknowable. To be known, a thing must be made an object. Brahman as pure consciousness, is the eternal subject, and therefore cannot be made an object of knowledge. Unconditioned Brahman is described as **Satchidananda** (Sat-Chit-Ananda) existence-knowledge-bliss pure and absolute. Existence, knowledge and bliss are not attributes of Reality; they are its very stuff. Pure existence is the same as pure knowledge and pure bliss. Just as a mirage could not be seen without the desert, which is its unrelated substratum, so also the universe could not be seen if Brahman did not exist as its substratum.

GENERAL

over the
years



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Seniors Club

Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust

On behalf of the RKVST Senior Citizens Club, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust and Shree Lakshmi Narayan Mandir in the celebration of their 50th Anniversary. May you grow from strength to strength and prosper on all your endeavours. We certainly feel proud to be associated with such an organisation.

Kindly find herein, a brief synopsis of the Senior Citizens Club.

Subcommittee: Senior Citizens Club

In September 2019, a group of five individuals (Who are seniors themselves) embarked on a mission to establish a Senior Citizens Club for the Community of Lenasia. They had observed that there was a lack of facilities for senior citizens to socialise and make productive use of their time.

The group approached the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust (RKVST) for permission to host the Seniors Club at their premises. The RKVST unanimously accepted our request for the usage of the hall and its facilities on a GRATIS basis, on the 6th of November 2019.

Mission Statement

The primary objectives of the seniors group are to create opportunities for seniors to meet and socialise, to play indoor games, to discuss or listen to informative talks –be they community based, religious or political issues. We will create a platform to promote home cooking industries within the group for the sale of savouries and sweet meats.

In the future we are planning to introduce health screening for basic things such as sugar levels and blood pressure. We are also looking into day excursions and picnics.

There are no joining fees. The only costs incurred will be for excursions, picnics, transport costs and entry fees. Our first meeting took place on the 29th of December 2019. We had meditation by the Brahma Kumaris. A video clip was presented with bhajans and other entertainment. Thereafter there was refreshments and socialising.

Our second group meeting took place on the 22nd of February 2020. We had the following agenda:

- Yoga and meditation – Tarabhen Morar
- Health and wellness issues regarding the elderly – Dr. Vayjanti Naran
- Mental and physical wellbeing of the elderly – Jenita Chiba
- Refreshments and socialise

With the advent of Covid 19, our group meetings were suspended. However, we have 44 members in our Whatsapp group. The Whatsapp group is very active and daily informative and entertaining clips are forwarded by members.

Lastly, we extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Javiebhai Ravjee for his unstinting support during our application to RKVST for permission to host the Senior Citizens Club. We are also grateful to have been inducted as a sub committee of the RKVST.

We thank you all.

HARI OM TAT SAT, PARMATMA NE NAMO NAMAH

Ansuya Daya
Raman Bhowan
Hiroo Jina
Arun Jasmath
Chhagan Chiba

Tense Situation?

*These
Crystals
can help*

Overwhelming, seemingly insurmountable stress seems to be an inevitable part of life at times; the car won't run, the checks are bounced, a job is lost- or even a loved one. Approximately one sextillion varied types of tension exist in life, and can enter our lives in a flash and a whirl.

Fortunately, there are many metaphysical practices that can ground us and keep us balanced during times of upset and chaos. Astrology, numerology, tarot, sage, yoga and chakra-balancing are all wonderful ways to keep your energies in check. Did you know that crystals are incredibly powerful and effective for cleansing and renewing our energies?

Crystals are ancient gifts from the universe, harnessing properties that assist us on our earthly journeys. Their gifts are expansive and selfless; they can absorb negative energy, promote physical healing and send celestial positivity rocketing through your veins.

You can carry them with you, meditate near them, place them around your home or even infuse your water with their heavenly aura - the possibilities are nearly endless! Nearly. Don't eat them. Let's explore the best crystals for relieving tension.

Amethyst

Amethyst is a healing stone both physically and emotionally. It can relieve tension in your muscles due to external challenges. Place this on those concrete, stiff shoulders and feel the releasing energy of this stone melting your muscular rigidity away.

Lepidolite

This stone is like a warm, love-infused cup of milk for the mind. When worries have your head trapped in a negative cycle, it becomes increasingly hard to sleep. Place a piece of lepidolite under your pillow or on your nightstand and let the sleepy, relaxing effects take over.

Aventurine

When meditating, aventurine is an enhancing stone that will promote inner stillness and help you find your footing again, amidst a chaotic world. Place aventurine in your left palm, close your eyes and focus your attention on the peaceful properties pouring into you.

Lithium Quartz

Lithium quartz is uniquely helpful for feelings of depression and anxiety. Allow it to wash you over with a sense of content, an appreciation for life and a feeling of gratitude.

Selenite

Selenite is an extremely powerful stone, and it relaxes the senses. Selenite is a perfect stone for tension-induced headaches, as it grasps your pain and releases it into the atmosphere as a harmless, neutral substance. It dislodges stagnant energy and leaves you feeling refreshed.

These five crystals will greatly reduce stress and tension during times of duress. Let their buoyant, uplifting energies fill you with a sense of trust, knowing that the universe will take care of you and embracing the steps on your path to enlightenment.

12 Life Lessons Everyone Must Learn

Have you begun to realize that there is much more to learn about life than what you were taught in school? If so, you will find the following 12 life lessons to be some of the most important lessons you have ever learned. In fact, after you are finished reading these, it might be a good idea to save this email somewhere on your computer or print it and read it every day.

1. Paying Cash Is Better Than Borrowing

The purpose of credit and borrowing money is to make a profit for the lender. Every time that you borrow money to buy something; you are agreeing to pay more money for it later so that someone else can make a profit.

Therefore, it is best to buy what you want with cash and to save the extra money for helping yourself instead of someone else.

2. Your Health Is Your Life

You only have one body and it has to last you for the rest of your life. Therefore, your life and your health are directly linked and you should guard your personal health with your life. This means refusing to give in to the temptation to eat junk or to live an inactive lifestyle. Make proper nutrition, consistent, balanced exercise and stress management parts of your lifestyle and you will have a good, healthy life.

3. You Must Give to Get

One of the major causes of unhappiness is expecting to get something for nothing. In life, you will receive only according to the quality and quantity with which you give.

This is true in your relationships, health, career and financial life.

4. Being Right Does Not Build Relationships

The best way to build empowering relationships with other people is to understand them.

Getting into disputes, debates or arguments about who is right and who is wrong is a dead end. Focus instead on being compassionate and treating people the way you would like to be treated.

5. Most of Getting What You Want Is Being Bold Enough to Ask

Things that keep people from getting what they really want out of life: either they do not know what they want, or they are too afraid to ask for it.

Learn to ask for the things you want. If people say no, you've lost nothing. However, if you make it a habit to ask for what you want, you will be surprised at how often you get it.

6. Fear Can Be Your Best Friend

Fear is not always bad, and sometimes it can be your best friend. If you are afraid of being in poor health, you will work a lot harder at keeping yourself healthy. If you are afraid of having someone else (like the government) responsible for your financial life, you will work harder to build your financial safety net. In fact, the only time that fear becomes bad is when it keeps you from doing something you really want to do.

7. Knowledge Is Only Power When It is Used

Some of the smartest people in this world never use their knowledge and therefore never benefit from it. However, when knowledge is applied it becomes active and powerful. It also increases your learning because you begin to learn from experience. When you learn something useful, put it to use as soon as possible.

8. There Are Seasons in Life

You will have times in your life when everything seems to be happening at once; you will also have times when nothing seems to be happening. Learn to endure the seasons of life by working hard when you have plenty to do, and by saving your financial resources for times when you may not have as much. Also, learn to use the slower seasons to rest and recharge yourself.

9. Marry Your Best Friend

Looks fade. So does physical attraction and so does the romantic "puppy love." If you want to have a lasting courtship and to raise your children as a couple, marry your best friend.

10. Collect Memories

Keep a journal, take pictures and keep them somewhere safe. Someday you will be very glad that you did, and so will the generations after you.

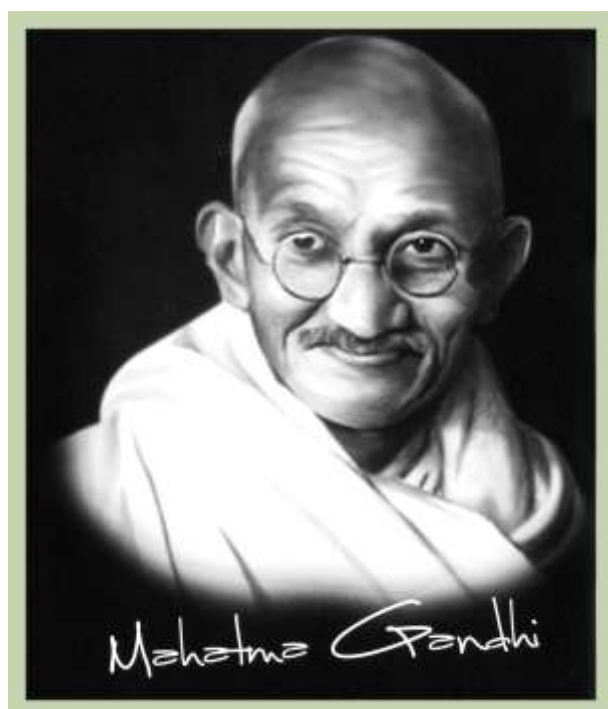
11. Choose a Career That Makes You Happy

Life is too short to be unhappy with what you are doing 40 to 50 hours a week. Not to mention that unhappiness in your career will filter into other areas of your life.

Choose a job that you love, and you will never have to work another day ... and you will be paid for it. Not a bad deal.

12. Higher Standards Mean Higher Rewards

Having high expectations for your health, your relationships, your career and your financial life might mean you will have to work harder. It might also mean you will be disappointed more often. However, the rewards that it will bring in strength of character and in success will far outweigh any price you had to pay. Keep your standards high, and do not settle for less than what you really want.



*“The weak can never forgive.
Forgiveness is the
attribute of the strong”
~ Mahatma Gandhi*



Decision-making

Eight steps to help you make better decisions

1. Use both sides of your brain.

- What is the first step in the decision making process? Well, when making a big decision, feel empowered to use both sides of your brain (instead of just your logical, left side). It is important to find balance between emotion and reason.
- The right brain / emotional intelligence is intrinsically linked to our behavior and the important decisions we make throughout our lifetime.
- Both your decision-making and idea generating processes start in your left prefrontal cortex, and if there is not enough emotion behind these processes, the part of your brain called the nucleus accumbens (NAc) does not activate. If the NAc is not activated, dopamine (the feel-good neurotransmitter that recognizes reward) will not be released into your body, and you will likely remain unmotivated back in your comfort zone. Decisions made from the comfort zone rarely end up benefiting you in the long run.

2. Visualize your future, successful self.

- If you want to know how to make successful decisions, take a moment to think about what success means to you. How do you define personal success? Write your answer down in a journal or on a piece of paper.
- Next, visualize your ideal, future self. Do this by getting into a relaxed position, close your eyes, and allow your mind wander into a daydream.
- What do you see and feel? Are you beaming with energy? Do you have a healthy glow about you? Are you in the best shape ever? Are you in love? Do you have a supportive community and a fun circle of friends? Are you financially independent? Do you get along well with your business partners, colleagues, and employees? Take notes, if you would like.
- Creative visualization is an important technique for those of us on the path of great success. When you have a positive mental image and see yourself as a successful person, you begin to believe you are capable of perfect health, happiness, and wealth. Seeing is believing, right! You must believe in order to achieve.

3. Recognize the power behind each decision you make.

- Before you make a decision, you have to understand the effects of your choice. Any decision that you make causes a chain of events to happen.
- For example, if a company you would love to work requires you do a presentation for key stakeholders before you are hired and you decide not to go through with it because you have a fear of public speaking, that decision might result in you missing an opportunity to have your own multi-million dollar company in the future.
- In this case, it all boils down to first making the decision to overcome your fear of public speaking, so you can do what you love and be financially independent for the rest of your life.

4. Go with your gut.

- When you find yourself wavering between multiple options, your intuition is one of your most powerful decision-making tools. To hone in on your gut feeling, stop for a moment and don't think about the pros and cons simply sit in a quiet place and notice what feelings come to the surface.
- Do you feel tight in the chest area or an open lightness in your heart? Do you feel relief? Excitement? What other physical sensations do you feel?
- Research shows that our instincts often first hit us on a visceral level, telling us what we need to know well before our consciousness catches up. Neuroscientist and one of the world's leading authorities on human consciousness, Dr. Joel Pearson, recently discovered that intuition does in fact exist. Pearson and his research team have demonstrated that unconscious emotions improve the speed and accuracy of decision-making, a discovery that could prove important for investigations into how conscious and unconscious information combine to shape and influence behaviors.
- When making big decisions, you have to tune in to your inner wisdom. The best ancient advice for figuring out what you truly want is to look within.
- Before making any major moves, take some time to explore that "funny" feeling. You have most likely had a hunch before; an inkling that steered you in the right direction? That is your sixth sense communicating with you. Pay attention to it.
- Be still and know.

5. Do not ask other people what you should do.

- You do not have to ask people what they think. It makes it even more difficult to make a decision when you are caught up in other people's opinions about what is best for you. If you ask four people what they think you should do, you will most likely get four different rants of advice. And the feedback will likely lead to confusion and second-guessing.
- Feel free to consult the people who will be directly affected by your decision and then confidently let everyone know what you have decided.

6. Ask yourself the right questions.

- Once you know how you feel about the decision, it is time to ask your brain the right questions: What do I want in this lifetime? Will the outcome of my decision move me closer to what I truly want? Does the benefit outweigh the cost? Is the level of risk worth the reward? How committed am I to this change?
- As Dr. David Welch, professor of political science at the University of Waterloo in Ontario and author of *Decisions, Decisions: The Art of Effective Decision Making*, explains, "People who are not self-reflective are going to end up making bad decisions because they do not really know what they want in the first place." Before you tie the knot, ask yourself: do I really want to marry this person? Do I just want to be married with kids someday?

7. Align your choices with your core values.

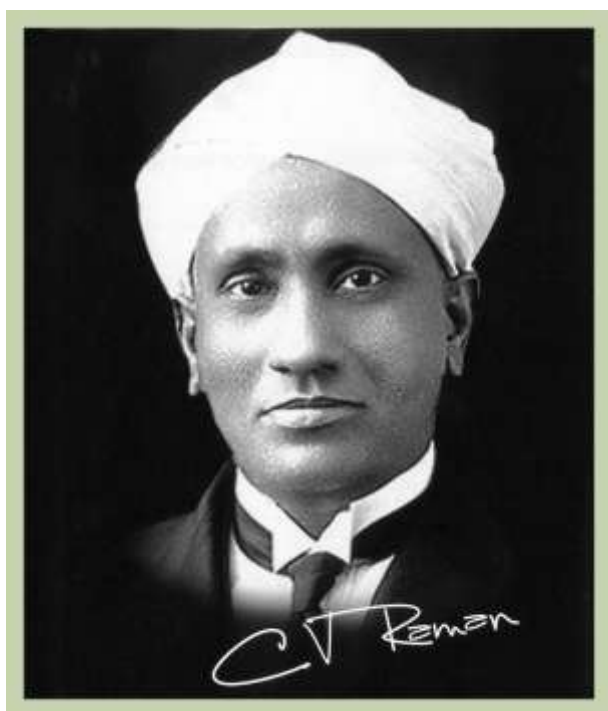
- Decisions you make based on your core values—along with a clear vision of what you want to accomplish, create motivational alignment.
- You want any decision you make to be aligned with your values, passions, and priorities, or it is not going to feel like you made the right choice. However, before you can figure out if the decision is united with the things that mean the most to you, you first need to get clear about what those values are.
- Once you are clear, make a list of all the ways the choice aligns (or doesn't align) with your core values.

8. Whatever you decide to do, have grit and gusto.

- Have you ever met a gritty person you did not like? Even if you have, were not you somewhat in awe of their drive to succeed?
- When it comes to taking action in your life, you have to have a strong backbone. So before you start your own business, make sure you are doing something that motivates you to persevere (despite failure).

Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but also for years, and working hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like the one in a marathon, not a sprint.
Angela Lee Duckworth

- Along with grit, having gusto is an equally important trait of successful people.
- You have to be passionate about the life choices you make. There is power in passion.
- When it comes to making the right decision, do not fall back into the comfort zone and stay in a career you cannot stand. Find ways to fire up your spirit and take giant leaps toward your dreams.
- When you have passion and perseverance for your long-term goals, you can accomplish anything.



*“There is nothing worth in
this world that can
come without
the sweat of our brow”
~ C.V. Raman*

Lord Dhanvantari is believed to be the Vedic God of medicine.

If searching the web, you will find many legends and myths woven around his powers, influence and existence. He is credited for having laid the foundation of Ayurveda.

Like many other lesser-known gods, most Hindus know very little of him, besides his link to the ancient system of medicine in India. Here, we list out some rare facts about Dhanvantari:

1. Physician Dhanvantari was one of the 14 great jewels that emerged upon churning of the primeval cosmic life substance of the ocean. He emerged with a pot of ambrosia during the *saagar-manthan*.
2. Physician Dhanvantari was the one who trained the Sushruta sages, the very first surgeon in the world. He taught them the science of Ayurveda and thus began the practice of surgeries in the Vedic age. Sushruta, known as the father of Indian surgery, was the foremost disciple of Dhanvantari. He wrote the famous 'Sushruta Samhita'.
3. He is believed to have the power to prevent diseases that could be deadly and offer relief from ailments that have been classified as incurable.
4. He is the one who saves heavenly beings from death, disease and old age. He has also been called Divodasa and Kasiraja in the 'Mahabharata'.
5. Among other things, he holds a leech in one of his four hands. According to an old Sanskrit work called 'Vishnudharmottara', he is believed to be a handsome man and in most of his depictions, he has four hands. One of them carries a pot of amrit. The other three hold the shankha, jalauka, and chakra; jalauka is a leech.
6. Many Hindus celebrate his birthday every year on Dhanteras, which falls two days before Diwali. Ayurveda practitioners celebrate his birthday with vigor and joy.
7. There are no temples of Dhanvantari in North India. There is a single statue in the Central Council for Research in Ayurveda in New Delhi and another one in an ashram in Haridwar.
8. However, there are temples dedicated to him in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where Ayurveda is still patronized and preached.
9. The oldest shrine dedicated to Dhanvantari dates back to the 12th century; it is in the courtyard of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple. Visitors here are offered a herbal concoction as prasaad.
10. Most of his followers believe, and it is also mentioned in old scriptures, that he can negate the effect of all kinds of poison and snakebites.
11. Dhanvantari incarnated as Prince of Kashi (Banaras) to set masses free from their physical sufferings. Besides being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the patron of all branches of medical science, he is also revered as the Prince of Kashi.
12. Search for the oldest books written on Ayurveda and you will come across 'Dhanvantari Nighantu' – a book written by the physician of Gods himself.



Save the Soil

If we do not save this precious soil
This earth will heat and boil
Extremes of climate will prevail
Where no life will survive to tell the tale
Of this planet earth as we have come to know
The evolution, revolution and pollution to sow
The seeds of destruction and choke all in toe
Joining all the other planets with no life to show

The planet can either freeze like a gentle evening breeze
Or turn into a ball of ocean that will drown everything with ease
Or scorch this earth with fires causing death destruction pyres
The atmosphere will be so polluted
That all the oxygen will be depleted
Causing mass extinction
Without any discrimination or distinction

So let us slow down and minimize our needs
To the essentials without any greed
For all life and our children
To enjoy this beautiful earth's diversity and beauty indeed

The Life of Ashtavakra and his father Kahola



The life of Ashtavakra is narrated in the Ramayana of Valmiki, the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata, the Ashtavakra Gita and Bhavabhuti's play Uttararamacharita.

Rishi Uddalaka, mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad, had a disciple called Kahola. Uddalaka offered his daughter Sujata in marriage to Kahola, and the newly-wed couple lived in an ashram in the forest. After some years Sujata became pregnant. The child, while still in the womb, one day told its father Kahola that he was making eight errors in each Vedic Mantra while reciting them at night. Enraged, Kahola cursed the child to be born with eight body parts of him (feet, knees, hands, chest and head) deformed.

Meanwhile, there was a drought in the forest and Sujata sent Kahola to Mithila, the kingdom of king Janaka, to earn some money.

A Brahmin's Challenge of Shastrarth

A brahmin from Varunloka (loka of water bodies) challenged king Janaka to send anyone from Mithila, capable of defeating him in Shastrarth (verbal duel on the meaning of scriptures), failing which the defeated learned ones would be taken to Varunaloka.

Everyone who accepted the brahmin's challenge were defeated. Kahola who considered himself as well-versed and correct in the Vedas, too accepted the challenge. The brahmin questioned the same mistakes which the baby in the womb had asked his father to correct which he ignored, and Kahola was eventually defeated. All the defeated rishis were immersed under water using the Varunapasha. Uddalaka apprised Sujata of her husband's fate and asked her to keep the events secret from her child. After a while an enlightened baby was born to Sujata with his body crooked in eight places, and was named Ashtavakra (one with eight deformations) by Uddalaka. At the same time a son was born to Uddalaka who was named Shvetaketu. Ashtavakra and Shvetaketu grew up like brothers, and learnt the scriptures from Uddalaka. Ashtavakra considered Uddalaka to be his father and Shvetaketu his brother.

Ashtavakra Decides to Liberate Kahola

At the age of ten years, on learning that his real father was imprisoned by Vandi (Bandi), Ashtavakra decided to go to Mithila to free his father. Because Ashtavakra's body was so deformed, even with the help of a walking stick, it took him thirty days to reach the King's court at Mithila, a journey which would have taken a normal bodied person only one day to walk.

Ashtavakra first faced the gatekeeper who tried to keep the young boy out. On convincing the gatekeeper that he was well versed in the scriptures and hence wise enough, he was let in.

Jeered at, Ahstavakra's Wisdom Shines Through

When Ashtavakra entered the king's court, everyone looked at him and started to laugh because of his physical deformities. Ashtavakra just looked about with silence and then broke into such laughter that everyone became shocked at the intensity of his laughter.

When questioned about his identity by Janaka, Ashtavakra replied he was disappointed to find only shoemakers in the assembly instead of wise men. Ashtavakra told the king that his counsellors were only seeing skin. They did not see the Atma. They have no realization of the soul and the Supreme Soul. They were simply seeing the skin and they were making their judgements on this basis only. This was the occupation of the shoemakers; they only looked at skin. 'This skin is good; that skin is not good. This one is smooth; that one is rough.' Ashtavakra concluded he had wasted his time coming to the assembly.

Janaka and everyone in the assembly became deeply affected and very ashamed on hearing the words of Ashtavakra. So simple were his words, but so true. Janaka bowed down to Ashtavakra and touched his lotus feet. He escorted Ashtavakra to his own throne and washed his feet and begged his apologies.

Ashtavakra's Shashtraath with Vandin

Janaka decided to let Ashtavakra face Vandin. Vandin and Ashtavakra began the debate. They alternately composed six extempore verses on the numbers one to twelve. Then Vandin could only compose the first half of a verse on the number thirteen. Ashtavakra completed the verse by composing the second half and thus won the shashtraath against Vandin.

Ashtavakra and Kahola Liberate One Another

The condition of the contest was that if Vandin were to lose he would grant any wish of his vanquisher. Ashtavakra demanded that Vandin be drowned in water just as he had done his vanquished opponents. Vandin then revealed that he was the son of Varuna (the Lord of all water bodies), and was sent incognito to land to get rishis to conduct a ritual that Varuna wanted to perform. By this time Varuna's ritual had been completed. On Vandin's request, Varuna bade the sages and brahmins be brought to the surface of the waters they had been held in.

Ashtavakra worshipped his father Kahola and was in turn praised by all the freed sages. Kahola was extremely pleased with his son. On their way back home, Kahola made Ashtavakra bathe in the river Samanga and Ashtavakra was freed of the eight deformities in his body.

Much later, Ashtavakra, inspired by the sage Vashishta, arrived at the court of Rama, and was elated to be honoured in the assembly of Ayodhya.

Ashtavakra, the Enlightened Master

Ashtavakra grew into a spiritually advanced rishi and self-realised soul. He went again to Mithila and instructed King Janaka about the Self and showed him the path to enlightenment. These teachings form the content of the Ashtavakra Gita or Ashtavakra Samhita meaning the Song of

Ashtavakra, which is a classical Advaita (non-dualistic) Vedanta scripture. It was written as a dialogue between Ashtavakra and Janaka.

An Extract from the Ashtavakra Gita

You are really unbound and action-less, self-illuminating and spotless already. The cause of your bondage is that you are still resorting to stilling the mind.

You are unconditioned and changeless, formless and immovable, unfathomable awareness, imperturbable-such consciousness is un-clinging.

You are not bound by anything. What does a pure person like you need to renounce? Putting the complex organism to rest, you can go to your rest.

Chapters of the Ashtavakra Gita

There are 20 chapters in the Ashtavakra Gita, as enumerated below:

1. Sakshi – Vision of the Self as the All-pervading Witness
2. Ascharyam – Marvel of the Infinite Self Beyond Nature
3. Atmadvaita – Self in All and All in the Self
4. Sarvamatma – Knower and the Non-knower of the Self
5. Laya – Stages of Dissolution of Consciousness
6. Prakrteh Parah – Irrelevance of Dissolution of Consciousness
7. Shanta – Tranquil and Boundless Ocean of the Self
8. Moksha – Bondage and Freedom
9. Nirveda – Indifference
10. Vairagya – Dispassion
11. Chidrupa – Self as Pure and Radiant Intelligence
12. Svabhava – Ascent of Contemplation
13. Yathasukham – Transcendent Bliss
14. Ishvara – Natural Dissolution of the Mind
15. Tattvam – Unborn Self or Brahman
16. Svasthya – Self-Abidance through Obliteration of the World
17. Kaivalya – Absolute Aloneness of the Self
18. Jivanmukti – Way and Goal of Natural Samadhi
19. Svamahima – Majesty of the Self
20. Akincanabhava – Transcendence of the Self

In a conversation between Janaka and Ashtavakra, pertaining to the deformity of his crooked body, Ashtavakra explained that the size of a temple is not affected by how it is shaped, and the shape of his own body does not affect himself (or Atma the soul). The ignorant man's vision is shrouded by names and forms but a wise man sees only himself.

A learned man
was once asked
to explain...

the difference between Religion and Spirituality

His response
was profound:

- Religion is not just one, there are many.
- Spirituality is one.

- Religion is for those who sleep.
- Spirituality is for those who are awake.

- Religion is for those who need someone to tell them what to do and want to be guided.
- Spirituality is for those who pay attention to their inner voice.

- Religion has a set of dogmatic rules.
- Spirituality invites us to reason about everything, to question everything.

- Religion threatens and frightens.
- Spirituality gives inner peace.

- Religion speaks of sin and guilt.
- Spirituality says, "learn from an error".

- Religion represses everything which is false.
- Spirituality transcends everything, it brings you closer to your truth!

- Religion speaks of a God; It is not God.
- Spirituality is everything and therefore, it is in God.

- Religion invents.
- Spirituality finds.

- Religion does not tolerate any question.
- Spirituality questions everything.

- Religion is human. It is an organization with rules made by men.
- Spirituality is Divine, without human rules.

- Religion is the cause of divisions.
- Spirituality unites.

- Religion is looking for you to believe.
- Spirituality you have to look for it to believe.

- Religion follows the concepts of a sacred book.
- Spirituality seeks the sacred in all books.

- Religion feeds on fear.
- Spirituality feeds on trust and faith.

- Religion lives in thought.
- Spirituality lives in Inner Consciousness.

- Religion deals with performing rituals.
- Spirituality has to do with the Inner Self.

- Religion feeds the ego.
- Spirituality drives to transcend beyond.

- Religion makes us renounce the world to follow a God.
- Spirituality makes us live in God, without renouncing our existing lives.

- Religion is a cult.
- Spirituality is inner meditation.

- Religion fills us with dreams of glory in paradise.
- Spirituality makes us live the glory and paradise on earth.

- Religion lives in the past and in the future.
- Spirituality lives in the present.

- Religion creates cloisters in our memory.
- Spirituality liberates our Consciousness.

- Religion makes us believe in eternal life.
- Spirituality makes us aware of Eternal Life.

- Religion promises life after death.
- Spirituality is to find God in our interior during the current life before death.

**We are not human beings, who go through a spiritual experience.
We are spiritual beings, who go through a human experience.**





50th ANNIVERSARY



Greetings and Salutations!!!

Congratulations to the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society and the Lakshmi Narayan Temple complex in reaching their milestone 50th Anniversary.

From its humble beginnings in 1972, due to the legacy of apartheid and the group areas act, the community needed an organisation that would cater for the upholding of the Hindu culture and values based on the principles of the Vedanta treatise and to cater for religious functions - from Holi to Navratri, Krishna Janmashtami, Ram Navami, Hanuman Jayanti to Diwali, New Year celebrations as well as many other festivals and activities that benefitted the community at large. These events provided a platform for meetings and social occasions. The venues also provided a premise to host events such as weddings, lectures, concerts, and many other functions.

The second phase of the organisation, post-independence of SA, was one of growth to cater for the people coming to terms with old traditions and adapting to a new reality i.e., one where the religious and community-based focus needed to be redirected to the Provincial and National level and re establishing the roots to our Motherland (India). This newfound freedom from the past led to an uplifting of one's experiences and readjustment within the community.

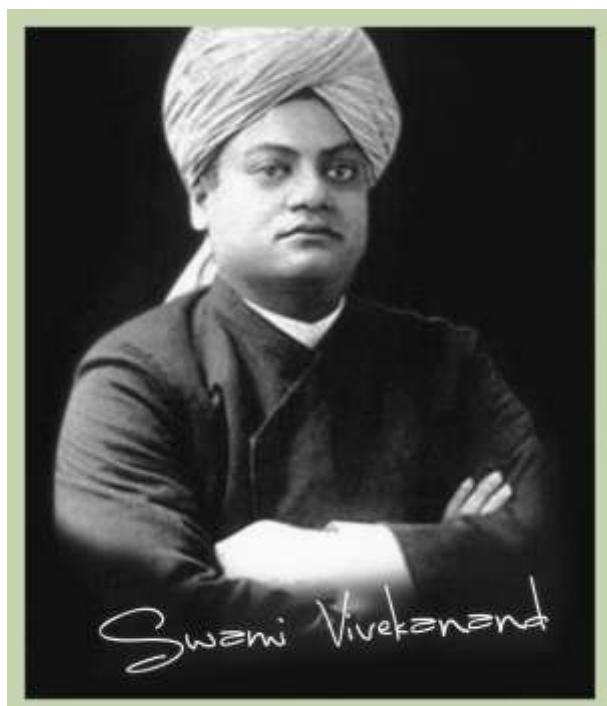
Going forward, the Organisation should adapt to the needs of the 21st century. The areas of focus from my humble opinion are the following:

- Environmental changes facing the World - What are we as a community doing to meet the complicated challenges faced?
- Pedalling of fake news and the role of social media in all aspects of our lives – As a society, we tend to do things the way we've been taught without questioning it. One should not be gullible, always be curious and have an enquiring mind. Question the statements and opinions that you are not sure of, don't just accept opinions without verifying the facts, especially in today's times. If you are unsure, do a bit of research in understanding the basis of such statements / opinions presented and please do not hesitate in voicing your thoughts / opinions if you disagree.
- Technological advances and the impact of these in the migration of the society away from the religious and social structures of the past.
- Covid has given us an opportunity to adapt and reset our lives. The organisation should move with the times and use this to reevaluate its significance in society.
- Expression of freedom for one to choose a path based on freedom of thought, life experiences and life mentors; not to be dictated by the various organisations that have now become businesses that act as agents of God.
- The development of individuals based on morals, ethics and integrity. South Africa is facing extreme rates of corruption, greed and service delivery challenges. Let's play our part in abstaining from all forms of corruption.

- Organisations should not be wasting funds on building new Temples and spending excessive amounts of money renovating current community complexes that will just become “White Elephants” in the future. These funds and/or community financial resources (including existing buildings) can be better used in the upliftment of the community in terms of providing educational bursaries, free medical services, retirement facilities, assisting with drug abuse victims, providing suicide counselling, providing tools required to assist people suffering from the pressure of society’s expectation of what is considered successful.

One should not forget as to why these institutions were originally founded – the fundamental core being for the benefit of the community and not for individual pursuits, status and financial gain. From my observations being involved in the community - It doesn’t matter what religion, institution, or organisation you belong to; fundamentally “Be good and Do good”. Overcoming one’s base human nature (driven largely by greed) is the greatest challenge that faces us humans from the time that we are born (past, present and future). Those human beings that have overcome their base human nature have gone on to become saints.

- Prem Namaste – Raju Kala



“You have to grow from the inside, out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher than your own soul”
~ Swami Vivekanand

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22 August 2022

Message

We are glad to know that the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society is commemorating its Golden Jubilee with suitable programmes which would benefit the community at large. At this time I join you in gratitude to the Lord for blessing the Society with a constructive and eventful history and pray that the future would be bright and rewarding to all.

I cherish memories of the inauguration of the Society. I also recall several milestone functions that I attended with revered Swami Nisreyasanandaji Maharaj and several other visiting dignitaries at both the Shree Lakshmi Narayan Temple and the Ramakrishna Hall Lenasia.


After fifty years the Society continues to pursue its goals of promoting religious and cultural activities, development and empowerment projects for youth and children and social cohesion events which foster goodwill and harmony in the community. Due to vision and foresight on the part of your officials you are one of the few Societies that can claim credit for having a resident priest that is routinely engaged with the community in significant religious and educational activities such as Bhagavad Gita Classes, Vedic Chanting, Havans and congregational singing (satsangs). This flow of activities is evidently infusing spiritual and dharmic richness into the people of Lenasia and its surroundings.

May I heartily congratulate the officials and members of the Society for their vision, leadership and dedicated labour serving the community. Swami Vivekananda pointed out that selflessness alone brightens and gives real meaning to life:

"They alone live who live for others. The rest are more dead than alive."

With prayers

Yours in the service of the Lord


Swami Saradaprabhananda
(President)





Jai Sri Krishna, Prem Namaste,

Greetings and warm wishes to the members, management and trustees of the Lakshminarayan Mandir and the Ramakrishna Hall on the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the temple and its hall.

It gives me a great sense of joy and pride to pen a message on this historic milestone. 1972 was a momentous occasion in the history of Saptah Mandir and Shree Surat Arya Bhajan Mandal when we travelled down to Lenasia to participate in the Pran Pratishtha and Temple opening ceremony.

Members of the Lenasia community were treated to a spectacle that surpassed their imagination. First time in history a Rath Yatra procession took place where the murtis were escorted through the streets of Lenasia accompanied by members of Saptah Mandir and Bhajan Mandal, fully attired in traditional, colourful clothing, singing and dancing joyously, joined by various organisations and members of the public as they made their way to the temple for the Pran Prathishtha and Murti installation ceremony. A wonderful spiritual atmosphere prevailed as members joined in the garbas on the streets in total abandonment, relishing the power and energy of the occasion.

The opening ceremony of the Ramakrishna Hall was marked with a presentation of bhajans by Saptah Mandir. The highlight was a live garba presentation led by our Late Ishwar (Shippy) Naran and members to the singing of the favourite "Maiya Ho Ambe Maiya" garbo expertly sung by music maestro Bhagoobhai Parag and members. The vibrations created will be firmly etched in the memories of every devotee present.

A wonderful well organised celebration. We have had opportunity to participate in many functions hosted by Lakshminarayan Mandir over the years notably the Hanuman Chalisa Recitals.

We pay our tributes to the past members, executive, management and trustees for their commitment and sacrifices for keeping the flag of Hindu Dharma flying and upholding the values of our culture, education and religion. Under the current leadership and led by resident priest, Jaydevbhai Shukla, we are certain that the organisation will grow from strength to strength.

At this juncture I also wish to acknowledge the efforts of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society ably led by Anilbhai Vallabh and its membership in promoting the knowledge of the Gita.

To an individual who was inspired by our participation in the opening ceremony and witnessed first-hand all the activities, took upon the mantle in providing a much-needed bhajan and kirtan service at the mandir. To Kiranbhai Parshotam and members of the Ramjee Bhajan Mandal who continue to support and inspire many devotees.

Finally, I want to record my sincere thanks and appreciation to Javi Ravjee who has been an outstanding ambassador and leader whose interaction with us and the many organisations that led to an awakening of a spiritual renaissance. Together with other members whose selfless seva, dedication and commitment can never be underestimated.

In conclusion, we pray to Paramatma to grant the membership, the Vision and the Shakti to continue this wonderful Seva.

God Bless,
Kanayabhai
Shree Surat Arya Bhajan Mandal and Saptah Mandir



SRI ADI SHANKARA ASHRAMA

(Registered as Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Society and affiliated to the Divine Life Society of India)

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P.B.O. Number 930 019 986

7th November, 2022

The Chairperson, Trustees, Officials & Devotees of Sri Lakshmi Narayan Mandir, Lenasia

Om Namō Narayanaya! Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya! Om Namō Bhagavate Sivanandaya!

We are extremely overjoyed that your esteemed organization is currently celebrating 50 years of its religious, cultural and spiritual involvement in the community.

On behalf of the officials and devotees of our Centre, we would like to take this wonderful opportunity of congratulating your organization upon this important milestone in your attempts to promote the lofty ideals of Sanathan Dharma, through the multifarious activities of your Centre.

Hinduism is deeply indebted to organisations such as yours for the indefatigable efforts by each and everyone of you to keep the banner of Hinduism aloft and we, as an Ashrama, are indeed extremely proud of you and your noble Seva rendered to struggling humanity.

The Bhagavad Gita is an important scripture which contains the universal teachings of Lord Sri Krishna, meant for the spiritual edification of the entire human family, and we are very delighted that Bhagavan Sri Krishna's sublime teachings are also being promoted and propagated at the Mandir.

We invoke the Blessings of our Holy Master Satguru Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, First President and illustrious founder of the Divine Life Society of India to give each and everyone of you the requisite inner spiritual strength to forge ahead with the wonderful work that you have begun fifty years ago. Hari Om and God Bless !

Yours in the service of God and humanity

Swami Shivashankarananda

Swami Shraddhananda Mataji

**“Feel the unity of life and the
immanence of the one Spirit in all”**

– Sri Swami Sivananda

The RKVST and Lenasia Yuvak Mandal (LYM) have always shared a long history and bond together stemming from the RKVST providing a home to LYM throughout our existence. In reciprocation, the LYM made it its duty to be actively involved in many of the RKVST initiatives thus building a close relationship between these "sister" organizations. This bond and love for the Lakshmi Narayan Mandir can be seen by many of our members transitioning into the RKVST membership.

Also, very diverse in our views and thinking, this indirectly allowed us to cover a more broader need of the community than LYM could have ever done. The support of the RKVST has undoubtedly contributed to the success of LYM and we are forever grateful to them. Thank you for all your support!

A 50-year anniversary celebrated by any organization is a milestone and accomplishment. A notable achievement is that the RKVST is also still reinventing and innovating to be relevant in today's times. A very difficult task especially during these times. LYM would like to congratulate and salute the RKVST on its 50th anniversary. We wish you all the success for the next 50 years (and more)!

The work, services, and knowledge available through the RKVST is invaluable and instrumental in keeping our Hindu Religion and Culture alive. It also helps ensure that the Hindu community always has a place to identify with in the greater community.

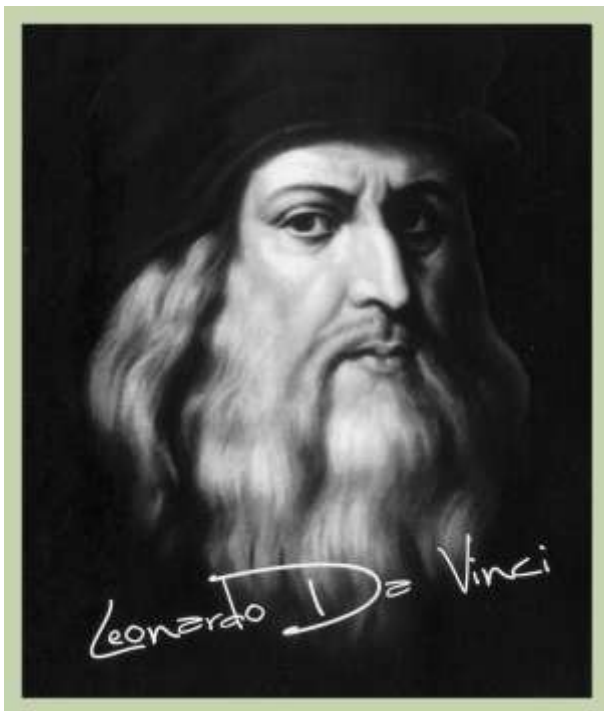
We wish the trustees, past and present committee, priest, volunteers, and members of the RKVST the very best on this momentous occasion.

Prem Namaste

Trustees, members, volunteers, and executive of the Lenasia Yuvak Mandal



LENASIA
YUVAK
MANDAL



*“I have been impressed with
the urgency of doing.
Knowing is not enough,
we must apply.
Being willing is not enough,
we must do”
~ Leonardo Da Vinci*



PREM NAMASTE



The members of the Shiv Shakti Bhajan Mandal would like to congratulate The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust on its 50th Anniversary.

The Shiv Shakti Bhajan Mandal has a long-standing relationship with The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust (RKVST). Over the years the RKVST has served multiple generations of the Hindu community ranging from religious to social needs. The facilities provided by the RKVST are crucial to the survival and growth of the Hindu Youth. The Centre serves as a home for many organisations like the LYM and Ramjee Bhajan Mandal as well as the Shiv Shakti Bhajan Mandal and various dance academy's that originated at the RKVST facilities. For many of us I'm sure the journey of our lives would read something like this.

We went to the Mandir as children attending many religious functions like Shiv Ratri, Krishna Janmashtami, Navratri, New Year Havan etc. As we grew older, we joined the LYM, attended Friday classes, participating in cultural dance shows and plays and most recently the 108 Hanuman Chalisa recitals that inaugurated at the Lakshmi Narayan Mandir and now hosted country wide.

For some, the journey included starting the next stage of life and hosted your wedding at the Rama Krishna Hall. As the Journey of life continued our children's journeys were influenced in a similar way and the next generation continued in the footsteps of their parents.

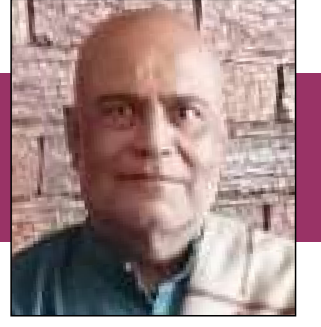
The members of the Shiv Shakti Bhajan Mandal would like to take this opportunity to wish the current RKVST management team and volunteers' strength and courage to continue to be the structure that facilitates a religious journey for generations to come.

Om Namah Shivay

Shree Jitendrabhai Natha



Associate Priest



Bharatbhai Radheshyam Dave

Namaste.

Lakshmi Narayan Bhagwan ki Jai.

My heartfelt wishes to all devotees on this historic occasion of the 50th anniversary celebrations of The Shree Lakshmi Narayan Mandir. My association with the Mandir dates back 35 years. I was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to serve as the priest from 1988 to 1993. Naturally, I feel a sense of pride and joy on this occasion.

My best wishes and congratulations to the past as well as current committee members, as well as trustees.

Namaste.

ભરતભાઈ રાધેશ્યામ દવે.

નમસ્તે

લક્ષ્મીનારાયણ ભગવાનની જય.

આપણે સૌ શ્રી લક્ષ્મીનારાયણ મંદિરની સુવર્ણ જયંતી ની ઉજવણી કરી રહ્યા છીએ. આ પ્રસંગે સૌ ભક્ત જનોને મારા હાર્દિક અભિનંદન પાઠવતા આનંદની લાગણી અનુભવી રહ્યો છું. આ મંદિર સાથેનો મારો સંબંધ પાંત્રીસ વરસ જૂનો છે. ભગવાન શ્રીલક્ષ્મીનારાયણની સેવા કરવાનો મોકો મને પણ મળ્યો હતો. ૧૯૮૮ થી ૧૯૯૩ સુધી હું પૂજારી તરીકે ભગવાન શ્રી લક્ષ્મીનારાયણની પૂજા-અર્ચના કરતો હતો.

આપણા નગરમાં જ્યારે એક મંદિર પચાસ પૂરા કરી રહ્યું હોય ત્યારે સ્વાભાવિક જ એક હિંદુ તરીકે હું ગર્વની લાગણી અનુભવી રહ્યો છું.

મંદિરના વર્તમાન તથા ભૂતપૂર્વ ટ્રસ્ટીઓ તથા સભ્યોને અનેક શુભકામનાઓ પાઠવું છું.



FROM THE SHORES OF PAST



It is said that the past never dies, but it always has history attached to it. A man is never rich enough to purchase his own past. Like everyone else, I'll never be rich enough to purchase my past; I can merely positively ruminate on the memories thereof. A western philosopher, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, has written a book, titled "Living to tell a tale." In it he mentions, your life is not what you have lived, your life is a sum total of all the happy memories that you have experienced. Looking back into my past, I have such vivid memories of my time associated with this Mandir. This is my humble attempt at translating those memories to words. Let us first take a look at the history of this Mandir.

Lenasia is situated approximately 30 km south of Johannesburg. It is a suburb with a sizeable Indian population, many following the Hindu Dharma. With this in mind, the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society took it upon themselves to build The Lakshmi Narayan Mandir. This was possible through the generous contributions and donations of all community members. As a result of their efforts, a beautiful, splendid Mandir was built. A major contribution was made by Bhagvat kathakaar, Shri Shivraam Maharaj, who, through His katha, raised a generous sum and donated that to the Mandir. He was involved in the Praan-pratishthaa (consecration) of the murtis. Thereafter, the Mandir started celebrating festivals such as Holi, Navraatri, and Diwali, and was open to the general public.

The very same Mandir is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, and at this golden moment I cannot help but think back to past and all the brilliant memories I have of my time spent there. I was with the Mandir, as the resident priest, from the year 1994 to 2000. I had fully devoted my time to the seva of Bhagwan Lakshmi Narayan. Together with carrying out Mandir duties, I had also attempted to awaken our Vedic dharma within the community. But change of such magnitude happens over a course of years, not overnight. I had started running children's classes to draw young minds towards our religion. During my time at the Mandir, many sages had been invited as well, such as Morari Babu, Swami Sachchidanandji, Swami Agnivesh, Didi from Swadhyay Pariwar, Shri Shivraj Maharaj, and Prafulbhai Shukla. I had a rare opportunity of being part of constructive discussions with them. Additionally, I had an opportunity to go to Vishwa Hindu Mahaasabhaa in Durban, where I met the famous Santoor player Shivkumar Joshi, and music director Hridaynath Mangeshkar. All of this was possible only through Bhagwan Lakshmi Narayan's grace.

Within my personal life, I was fortunate enough to get the support of many members of the community. Many became family over the course of the years and remain so today. To name a few, Dr Shashikantbhai Mistry, Dr Pramodbhai, Sombhai Jivabhai Patel family- these families have given me a home away from home. I am truly indebted to all the above mentioned, as well as those whom I have not mentioned due to space constraints. In the short space of time that I spent at the Mandir, I'm grateful to have formed bonds to last a lifetime. I'd like to aptly quote a verse from Shree Ramcharit Manas:
"Sunahu Bharat Bhaavi Prabal, bilakhi kahe Muniraai,
Haani, laabh, jivan, maran, yash, apyash, bidhihaath."

Oh Bharat! Loss, gain, life, death, success, and failure are in the hands of the Almighty. Oftentimes, someone who performs the greatest of acts doesn't get any credit for it, and sometimes a person who doesn't put in any effort succeeds. As per the principles of Bhagwad Gita, I had performed my duty (karma) with full devotion and dedication, without ever focusing on the fruits thereof. I was content with having performed my duties to the best of my abilities, without ever seeking validation or appreciation from anyone. My motto is, "teraa tujko arpan" which means, I offer to you that which is already yours to begin with...

After some time, Jaydevbhai Shukla joined the Mandir as my successor. Jaydevbhai is a loyal and devoted person. He is a part of the Swadhyay Parivar, founded by Shree Pandurang Shashtri Athavale. He is working relentlessly to quench the thirst of knowledge of religion amongst our community. He is a true Karma yogi. He is also a very dear friend of mine. I congratulate him on this momentous occasion of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Mandir, and I pray to Bhagwaan Lakshmi Narayan that he may be blessed with a long, healthy life.

My best wishes to all and may Bhagwaan Lakshmi Narayan' grace forever be upon us all. In my journey of reminiscence, I have made a humble attempt at narrating and describing my feeling and experiences through words. I like to end of with a beautiful shaayri:
"guzar jaate hai khubsurat lamhe, yun hi musaafiro ki tarah,
Yaade wahi reh jaati hai, jo umrabhar yaad aati hai."

Bharat Mata ki Jai!
Sanatan dharma ki Jai!

અતીતના ઓવારેથી...

શ્રી વિવેકાનંદ પંડ્યા

કહેવાય છે કે ભૂતકાળને મૃત્યુ નથી હોતુ, પરંતુ ભૂતકાળને ઈતિહાસ હોય છે. દુનિયાનો કોઈ પણ આદમી પોતાનો ભૂતકાળ ખરીદવા જેટલો અમીર ક્યારેય પણ થઈ શકતો નથી. આ વિધાન એટલું તો સચોટ અને વાસ્તવિક છે જે મને પણ સ્પર્શી જાય છે. હું પણ ક્યારેય મારા ભૂતકાળને ખરીદવા જેટલો પૈસાદાર થઈ શકીશ નહિં, માત્ર સ્મૃતિઓને ગાય-ભેંસની જેમ વાગોળી શકું. પાશ્ચાત્ય વિદ્વાન લેખક શ્રી ગ્રેબીયલે એક સુંદર મઝાનું પુતસ્ક લખ્યું છે, જેનું નામ છે, **"Living to tell the tale"** એમાં એમણે એક સરસ વાત લખી છે. આપણે જે જીવ્યા એ જીવન નથી હોતુ પરંતુ એમાની જે સુખદ સ્મૃતિઓ બચી છે એ જીવન છે. વિદેશની ધરતી પર મારા જીવનમાં ઘટેલી ઘટનાઓ સ્મૃતિરુપે અત્રે તાદૃશ્ય થઈ રહી છે. જેને મારી કલમ દ્વારા શાબ્દિક દેહ આપવાનો અહિં નમ્ર પ્રયાસ કરી રહ્યો છું. મારી સ્મૃતિ સાથે જે મંદિર સંકળાયેલું છે એનો ઈતિહાસ પહેલા આપણે વાંચી લઈએ.

લેનેસિયા નગર-જોહાનિસબર્ગ શહેરથી ત્રીસ કિલોમીટરના અંતરે આવેલું છે. આ શહેરમાં ભારતીય સમુદાયની વસ્તી સારા પ્રમાણમાં વસે છે. અહિં વસતી હિંદુ બહુમત પ્રજાની ધાર્મિક આસ્થાને ધ્યાનમાં રાખીને અહિંની રામકૃષ્ણ વેદાંત સોસાયટી દ્વારા શ્રી લક્ષ્મીનારાયણ મંદિર બાંધવાનું બીડુ ઝડપવામાં આવ્યું. એમના ઉમદા પ્રયત્નોથી હિંદુ પ્રજાએ ઉદાર હાથે દાન આપ્યું. જેના કારણે સુંદર-ભવ્ય મંદિરનું નિર્માણ થઈ શક્યું. મંદિરના નિર્માણ કાર્યમાં ભાગવત કથાકાર સ્વ. શ્રી શિવરામ શર્મા મહારાજ-નવસારીવાળાએ ખૂબ મોટું યોગદાન આપ્યું હતું. એમણે આખ્યાનો-કથા દ્વારા માતબર રકમ ભેગી કરી આપી હતી. એમના વરદ હસ્તે જ ભગવાન શ્રી લક્ષ્મીનારાયણની સુંદર મનોહર મૂર્તિની પ્રાણ પ્રતિષ્ઠા થયેલી- ત્યારબાદ મંદિરના માધ્યમથી ધાર્મિક ઉત્સવો ઉજવાવવા લાગ્યા. માતાના ગરબા, હવન યાગ, હોળી, દિવાળી જેવા ઉત્સવોમાં પ્રજા ઉલ્લાસભર ભાગ લેવા લાગ્યા. ભગવાન શ્રી લક્ષ્મીનારાયણના દર્શન કરી લોકો કૃતાર્થ થયાની લાગણી અનુભવવા લાગ્યા.

આ એજ મંદિર એની યશગાથાના પચાસ વર્ષ પૂરા કરી ભવ્ય સુવર્ણ જયંતી મહોત્સવ (**Golden jubilee year**) વર્ષ ઉજવવા જઈ રહ્યું છે એ સોનેરી ક્ષણે મંદિર સાથે અનુબંધિત સ્મૃતિઓને મારી કલમ દ્વારા તાજી કરી ધન્ય લાગણી અનુભવી રહ્યો છું, મારા જીવનના અતીત સાથે મંદિર જોડાયેલું છે.

વીસમી સદીના ઉત્તરાર્ધ વર્ષ ૧૯૮૪થી સદીના અંત ભાગ સુધી મારું જીવન મંદિર સાથે જોડાયેલું રહ્યું. એ સમય દરમિયાન મંદિરના પુરોહિત તરીકે મારી સેવા સમર્પિત હતી. મેં પૂર્ણ ભાવથી ભગવાન શ્રી લક્ષ્મીનારાયણની સેવા અર્ચના કરી હતી. સાથે સાથે હિંદુ પ્રજામાં ધર્મ જાગૃતિ અને એકતા લાવવાનો પૂર્ણ પ્રયાસ પણ કર્યો હતો. સમાજમાં પરિવર્તન એક દિવસમાં આવી જતું નથી-સમય માંગી લે છે. નાના નાના બાળકોમાં ધર્મની રુચિ ઉત્પન્ન થાય એ માટે પ્રાથમિક ધોરણે ધર્મ શિક્ષણના વર્ગો પણ ચલાવેલા. મારા કાર્યકાળ દરમિયાન ભારતથી અનેક મહાપુરુષોનું આગમન થયેલું, જેમાં સંતશ્રી મોરારી બાપુ,સ્વામી સરિ ચદાનંતજી, સ્વામી અગ્નિવેશ, આદરણીય દીદ્દિસ્વાધ્યા પરિવાર, રામકથાજ્ઞી હરેશ્વરીજી, ભાગવત કથાકાર શ્રી શિવરાજ મહારાજ તથા પ્રફૂલ્લભાઈ શુક્લ પ્રમુખ હતા. એમની જોડે વિચાર વિમર્શ તથા સત્સંગ થયેલો. એ સિવાય ડરબન ખાતે વિશ્વહિંદુ મહાસભામાં પણ હાજરી આપવાનું શક્ય બનેલું ત્યાં ભારતના ખ્યાતનામ સંતુર વાદક શ્રી શિવકુમાર જોશી તથા સિનેમા જગતના વિતેલા જમાનાના શ્રી હૃદયનાથ મંગેશકર જોડે પણ એક અતિ દુર્લભ મુલાકાત થયેલી. આ બધું ભગવાન શ્રી લક્ષ્મીનારાયણની કૃપાથી જ શક્ય બનેલું

મારા આંતરિક-સામાજિક જીવનમાં પણ ઘણી નામી અનામી વ્યક્તિઓનો સાથ સહકાર મળતો રહ્યો. ઘણી વ્યક્તિઓ જોડે પારિવારિક સંબંધો પણ સ્થાપિત થયા હતા, જે આજે પણ જીવંત છે. જેમાના મુખ્યરુપે ગણાવી શકું તો ડો. શશીકાંતભાઈ મિસ્ત્રી, ડો. પ્રમોદભાઈ-ગાયનેકોલોજીસ્ટ, સોમભાઈ જીવાભાઈ પટેલનો પરિવાર- તથા અન્ય સ્વજનો- જેમણે મારા પરિવારની ખોટ પુરવાનું કામ કર્યું હતું. આ શ્રેયના ભાગીદાર સૌ ને મારા હૃદયપૂર્વકના પ્રણામ. બીજા ઘણા પરિવારો છે જેને સ્થળ સંકોચના કારણે અહિં સમાવી શકતો નથી છતાં પૂરી આસ્થા સાથે યાદ કરું છું. મંદિર સાથેના ટૂંકા ગાળા દરમિયાન મહત્વપૂર્ણ સંબંધોથી લાભાન્વિત થયો છું, એ અવસરને ક્યારે ભૂલી શકુ એમ નથી. તુલસીદાસજીએ રામચરિત માનસમાં એક સુંદર દોહરો લખ્યો છે જે અહિં પ્રસ્તુત કરવાનું મન થાય છે.

**સુનહુ ભરત ભાવિ પ્રબળ, બિલખી કહે મુનિરાય,
હાનિ,લાભ,જીવન,મરણ,યશ,અપયશ,બિધિહાથ.**

અર્થાત્ હે ભરત ભાવિની પ્રબળતાની વાત સાંભળ, જીવનમાં હાનિ-લાભ-જીવન-મરણ તથા યશ-અપયશ આ બધું વિધાતાના હાથની વસ્તુ છે. આવી ઘટનાઓ ઘણીવાર બતાવે છે કે સારામાં સારા ઉત્તમ કાર્યો કરનાર યશ વિનાનો રહી જાય છે અને કશું જ નહિ કરનારને પુષ્કળ યશ મળે છે. એમની આ ધ્રુવ પંક્તિ મને ઘણી જ સ્પર્શી ગઈ, મેં ગીતાના સિદ્ધાંત પ્રમાણે મારી ફરજ (કર્મ)ને પૂરી નિષ્ઠાથી અનુસરી હતી. કર્મના ફળની

આશા ક્યારેય સેવી ન હતી., પરંતુ કર્મ કર્યાનો સંતોષ જરુર હતો. **તેરા તુઝ્કો અર્પણ** ન કોઈના પ્રમાણપત્રની અપેક્ષા ન કોઈની પ્રશંસાની ખેવના હતી. ...

થોડા કાલાંતર બાદ મારા ઉત્તરાધિકારી તરીકે મંદિરને જયદેવભાઈ નામની હસ્તી મળી. જયદેવભાઈ શુક્લ એક નિષ્ઠાવાન, સમર્પિત મહાપુરુષ છે. પૂ. પાંડુરંગ શાસ્ત્રીની સ્વાધ્યાય પ્રવૃત્તિની વિચારધારાને લઈને આફ્રિકા આવ્યા છે. એક સ્વાધ્યાય વિભૂષણ એવા ભાઈશ્રી જયદેવે ઘરે ઘરે ફરીને સ્વાધ્યાય સંદેશને પહોંચાડવાનું ભગીરથ તપ કર્યું છે. હિંદુ પ્રજાની ધર્મભૂખને સંતોષવા અથાક પ્રયત્ન કરી રહ્યા છે. એક અર્થમાં સાચા કર્મયોગી પણ છે. મારા ઉમદા મિત્ર છે સાથે લાગણી સભર સ્વજન પણ છે. એમને મંદિરના સુવાર્ણ મહોત્સવ પ્રસંગે હાર્દિક શુભકામના એવમ્ અભિનંદન પાઠવું છું. સાથે એમના દીર્ઘાયુ અને કુશળ સ્વાસ્થ્ય માટે ભગવાન લક્ષ્મીનારાયણને હૃદયથી પ્રાર્થના. દક્ષિણ આફ્રિકામાં વસતા તમામ હિંદુ ભાઈ બહેનોને પણ ખૂબ ખૂબ શુભકામના. ભગવાન લક્ષ્મીનારાયણની કૃપા સર્વપર બની રહે તેવી અંતરથી પ્રાર્થના-

મારી સ્મૃતિયાત્રા (**My journey of reminiscence**) માં વ્યક્ત કરેલી મારી સ્વાનુભૂતિ છે. જેને મારી કલમથી આલેખવાનો નમ્ર પ્રયાસ કર્યો છે. અંતમાં આ સુંદર પંક્તિ સાથે મારી કલમને વિરામ આપુ છું-

**ગુજર જાતે હૈં ખૂબસુરત લમહૈં, યું હી મુલાફિરો કી તરહ.
યાદે વહી રહ જાતી હૈં, જો ઉમ્રભર યાદ આતી હૈં.**

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સનાતન ધર્મકી જય
ગર્વસે કહો હમ હિંદુ હૈં.**



*“I have many problems
in my life. But
my lips don't know that.
They always smile”
~ Charlie Chaplin*



Musician and Community Artists



Namaskaram , Vanakkam, Divine greetings,

My most heartfelt recollections of the illustrious Ramakrishna Temple and Hall bring tons of beautiful and positive emotions to me.

In the early 1970s.

It was one of the very few Halls where Indian weddings were held, my father the Late Legendary Vella Padiachi of Ranjeni Orchestra fame played there for hundreds of Indian weddings, I use to take the opportunity to attend all weddings uninvited (you never really need a invite in those grand old days).

For me it was mainly to listen to the Ranjeni Orchestra music and then walk to the Mandir and just stare at the power of the deities in the temple (not know much in those days about religion), but this may have triggered the religious flame in me that' burns bright today.

By the mid 70' I use to attend Sunday Bhajans meticulously without fail, the powerful and divine voice of Chibu Bhai Naran and his melodious harmonium playing would grip you from start to end. The old legendary singers from the mandir would pour out melodious songs from the heart, (even if they were not learned musicians they sang from deep in the heart and soul).

Tabla masters like the late Kiran Mistry and the late Natwarlal Mistry use to blend in. I never performed any music then or sing I was not yet learning.

By 1978 Mahalingam and Sathyabhama Kolopen started Karnatic music and Dance classes and soon used the Hall and the small rooms at the back adjoining the hall for classes, it was then when I started learning Karnatic music. I also use to visit the library at the hall and the great knowledgeable Dhaya Bhai Hari, a legend in his times, he never stop teaching me all about Hinduism and the great saints and sages of India. He had a endless memory of information. In the later years I use to visit him at his home in Sunbird Avenue to order religious books from India and other parts of the world.

In the shortness of time I went to India to study music and upon returning I had most of my music concerts at The Ramakrishna Hall with much assistance from temple and hall members as well as the then Lenasia Yuvak Mandal members also helping at no cost.

I had two two Karnatic music arangetrams at the Ramakrishna Hall in the early 1990s and they officially offered me the hall sound and décor free of charge, since I was teaching music free as well and arangetrams were held at no cost to the student.

The Mandir and the Hall remains a landmark for Lenasian'.

Rajan Padiachie





Weekly Activities

Day	Event	Time
Daily	Aarti	06:30 and 18:30
Tuesday	Vedic Chanting	19:45 – 20:45
Wednesday	Gita Classes	19:45 – 20:45
Thursday	Bhagwat Classes	19:45 – 20:45
Friday	Lakshmi Haven	18:45 – 19:15
Saturday	Hanuman Haven	06:45 – 07:15
Sunday	Children's School	09.00 to 11.00

Religious Activities and Information:

- Shree Jaydevbhai Shukla (Resident Priest)
Tel: 011 854 6372
Email: jaydevshukla@telkomsa.net.
- Website: Shree Jaydevbhai Shukla – priestji.wordpress.com

Hall Bookings:

Rajeevbhai Jivan
Tel: 083 676 7275
Email: rajeev.jivan@gmail.com

Secretaries:

- Rakhi Mistry (Secretary) – Email: rmistry015@gmail.com
- Joshna Valab (Assistant Secretary) – Email: joshnavalab@gmail.com

Postal Address:

- P O Box 3042
Lenasia, 1820

Physical Address:

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Our best wishes to Ramakrishna Vedanta Society Trust for the 50 year Golden Jubilee, A special thank you and appreciation to the members, Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee members.

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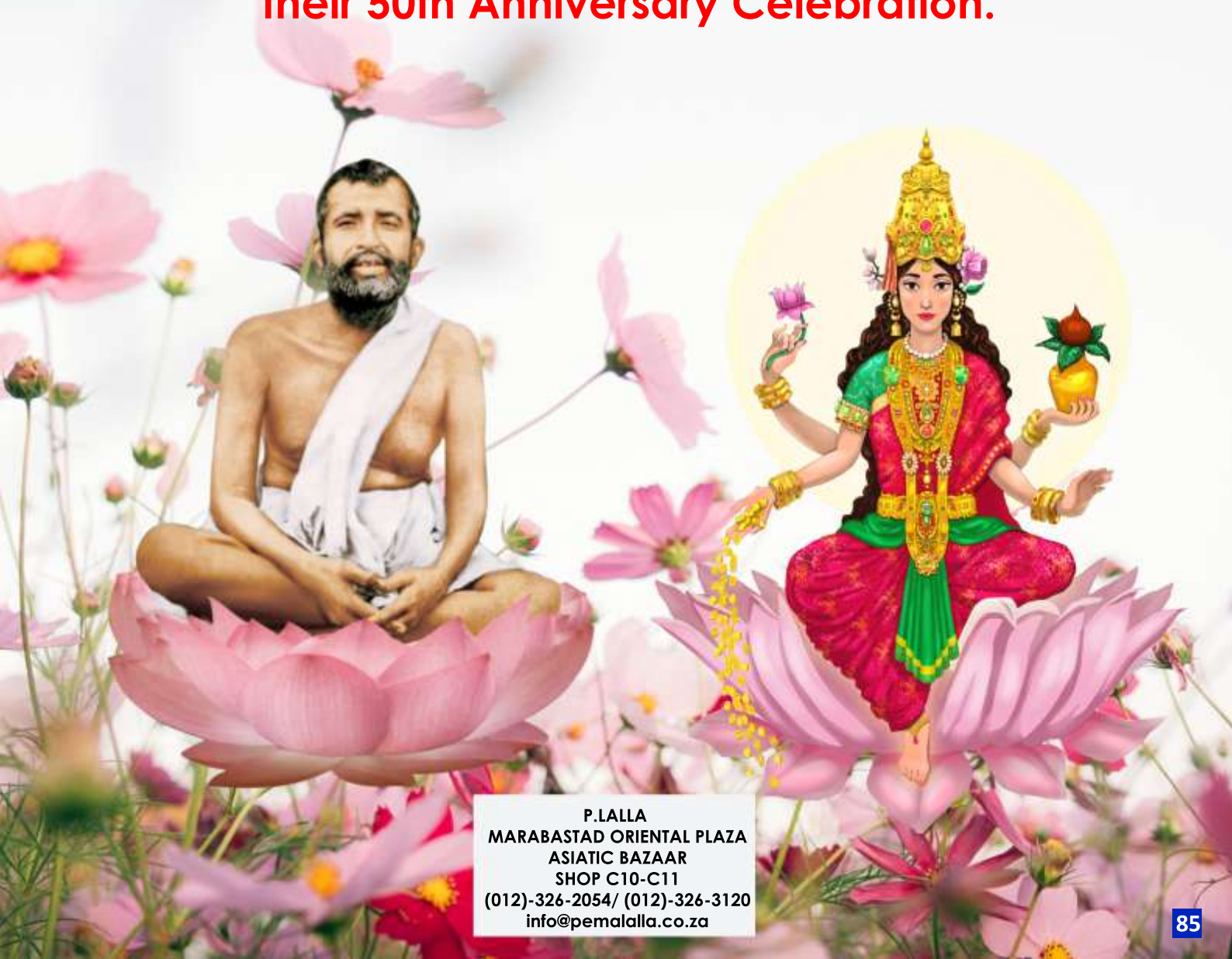
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