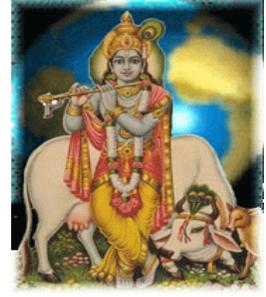


ଚିରନ୍ତନ

Chirantan ଭଜନ ପତ୍ରିକା



ଓଁ ଜୟ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଜୟ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଜୟ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଓଁ

ପଞ୍ଚମ ସଂଖ୍ୟା, ଅଗଷ୍ଟ ୧୯, ୨୦୦୦

<http://www.bme.jhu.edu/~bdas/bhajan.html>

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It is our great pleasure to bring the fifth issue of this religious newsletter **CHIRANTANA**. This issue contains various articles, and news since the last issue published in February 2000. Chirantana is a biannual religious newsletter published in the month of February and August. If anybody is interested to publish his/her articles in the newsletter, please send it by the end of January and July, to be published in the February and August issues respectively.

We would like to express our deep sense of appreciation for Baltimore ISKCON temple president Nrusingha Chitanya Dasa and the priests Mahasakti Dasa, Sudhansu Dasa, Niranjana Dasa, Mahasringha Dasa for their sincere help. We invite everyone residing in Washington DC vicinity to attend this monthly bhajan program organized by Oriya bhajan mandali, and chant bhajan, listen and participate on religious discourse.

Children's Month:

As we did it in the past, next month (September, 2000) bhajan program will be observed as children's month. Please help your child to practice one religious character's role to present on that day. You could also help your children learn a bhajan in pure Odia or Odishi "raga". That way the child will be exposed to Oriya literature. Please contact Meera Mohapatra by second Saturday of September about your child's plans for the presentation.

Holi festival and Rathayatra:

Holi festival was celebrated at Mangal Mandir on March 25, 2000. "Gitinatya" Prahald was performed by the children. The young members presented the drama "Jibanara Ranga" and pala "Kichaka badha" was performed by Pitamber Sarangi and group.



(A scene in Gitinatya Bhakta Prahald during Holi festival)

Rathayatra was celebrated in Nashville during the OSA convention. Rathayatra was also celebrated in Washington DC on July 8th, 2000. For the first time arrangements were made to engage two temples in the Rathayatra and Bahuda Yatra ceremony. The credits go to Shrikanta Nayak and Dharendra Kar of Maryland.

What's Inside:

Childrens Corner: Poem by Rajashree Mishra and answers to questions by Satish Mishra, Prerana Pradhan and Bagmi Das

About our religion: 'Vedantic Evolution' by Manoj Panda
'Holi Ganga' by Padmanava Pradhan

Doctor's Corner: 'Stress and how to handle' by Lipishree Nayak
Comments/Suggestions: Meera Mohapatra and Arun Ojha

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Children's Corner:

I Wonder How...

I wonder how a cow says moo moo

I wonder how a ghost says boo
I wonder how a bull is always tough
And I wonder how a dog says ruff-ruff
I wonder how a cat says meow
I also wonder how a rooster goes kaka-doodle-doo
I wonder how a bird goes chirp chirp
I wonder how a frog goes burp burp
I just wonder how...

by Rajashree Mishra, Daughter of Bandita and Nrusingha
Mishra, Germantown, MD

What our children say ?

The children were asked the following five questions and responded to questions without being influenced by other's answer.

Q1. Do you like to attend bhajan program? Give reasons for your answer

SM: Yes, I like to attend bhajan programs because they are entertaining and very organized.

PP: Yes. I can learn more bhajans and my mind will be fresh with my friends.

BD Yes, a chance to worship, kids to play with, good food (sometimes).

Q2. Do you believe in God? Give reasons for your answer.

SM: Yes, I believe in God because when we pray to God we can feel an inner strength.

PP: Yes. I believe in God because if he wouldn't exist neither would we.

BD: Yes, who else could have created us? Who controls fate? What is the meaning of destiny? We're all here for a reason and it is God who sent us to pursue our destiny.

Q3. Do you like to learn Oriya, the language of your parents and grandparents and heritage? Give reasons for your answer.

SM: Yes, I like to learn Oriya because if I know how to speak Oriya it will be easier to communicate with my parents, grandparents, and other relatives.

PP: Yes, because I am interested in the Oriya culture. It is interesting to me. I can speak and read a bit.

BD: Yes, kids at school think it's cool. I enjoy being bilingual as it makes me feel proud.

Q4. Do you like to spread the culture and traditions of Orissa among your peers and how do you believe you can do it? Give reasons for your answer.

SM: No, I usually don't spread the culture and traditions of Orissa with my peers because they maybe from another culture or religion and might misinterpret our culture. SM

PP: Yes I would. Orissa isn't very popular. I would like people to learn how good it is.

BD: Yes, once I took some of the Oriya/Indian/Hindu items to school for my international club meeting to show to some kids.

Q5. Any other suggestions you have to make bhajan program/any other types of program enjoyable to you.

SM: Hopefully I answered all of your questions.

PP: It will be enjoyable when we can listen to stories about Orissa and play games about it.

BD: More food, giving us solid items from our culture.

SM: Satish Mishra, Germantown, MD

PP: Prerana Pradhan, Rockville, MD

BD: Bagmi Das, Columbia, MD

About Our Religion:

VEDANTIC EVOLUTION

In an ocean there are huge waves, like mountains, then smaller waves, and still smaller, down to little bubbles, but back of all these is the infinite ocean. The bubble is connected with the infinite ocean at one end, and the huge wave at the other end. So, one may be a gigantic man, and another a little bubble, but each is connected with that infinite ocean of energy, which is the common birthright of every animal that exists.

Wherever there is life, the storehouse of infinite energy is behind it. Starting as some fungus, some very minute, microscopic bubble, and all the time drawing from that infinite storehouse of energy, a form is changed slowly and steadily until in course of time it becomes a plant, then an animal, then man, ultimately God. This is attained through millions of aeons, but what is time?

An increase of speed, an increase of struggle, is able to bridge the gulf of time. That which naturally takes a long time to accomplish can be shortened by the intensity of the action, says the Yogi. A man may go on slowly drawing in this energy from the infinite mass that exists in the universe, and, perhaps, he will require a hundred thousand years to become a Deva, and then, perhaps, five hundred thousand years to become still higher, and, perhaps, five millions of years to become perfect. Given rapid growth, the time will be lessened. Why is it not possible, with sufficient effort, to reach this very perfection in six months or six years?

There is no limit. Reason shows that. If an engine, with a certain amount of coal, runs two miles an hour, it will run the distance in less time with a greater supply of coal. Similarly, why shall not the soul, by intensifying its actions, attain perfection in this very life? All beings will at last attain to that goal, we know. But who cares to wait all these millions of aeons? Why not reach it immediately, in this body even, in this human form? Why shall I not get that infinite knowledge, infinite power, now?

The ideal of the Yogi, the whole science of Yoga, is directed to the end of teaching men how, by intensifying the power of assimilation, to shorten the time for reaching perfection, instead of slowly advancing from point to point and waiting until the whole human race has become perfect. All the great prophets, saints, and seers of the world, what did they do? In one span of life they lived the whole life of humanity, traversed the whole length of time that it takes ordinary humanity to come to perfection.

In one life they perfect themselves; they have no thought for anything else, never live a moment for any other idea, and thus the way is shortened for them. This is what is meant by concentration, intensifying the power of assimilation, thus shortening the time. Raja-Yoga is the science which teaches us how to gain the power of concentration.

COMPLETE WORKS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
Contributed by Manoj Panda, Michigan

HOLI GANGA

From time immemorial, GANGA has been regarded as the holiest of rivers by Hindus. For most of its course it is a wide and sluggish stream, flowing through one of the most fertile and densely populated tracts of territory in the world. Rising in the Himalayas and emptying into the Bay of Bengal, it drains a quarter of the territory of India, while

its basin supports an immense concentration of people in northern India.

The religious importance of the Ganges may exceed that of any other river in the world. While places of Hindu pilgrimage, called tirthas, are located throughout the subcontinent, those that are situated on the Ganges have particular significance. Among these are the confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna near Allahabad (Prayag), where a bathing festival, or mela, is held in January and February; during this ceremony, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims immerse themselves in the river. Other holy places for immersion are at Varanasi (Benares), or Kasi, and at Haridwar. The places of pilgrimage on the Ganges also include Gangotri and the junction of the Alakananda and Bhagirathi headstreams. The Hindus cast the ashes of their dead upon the river, believing that they thus will go straight to heaven, and cremation ghats (temples at the summit of riverside steps) for burning the dead have been built in many places on the banks of the Ganges.

According to a mythological legend, Vishnu once heard Shiva play the flute and was so entranced by the music that his feet began to melt. Brahma caught the liquefied portion of Vishnu in a pot and from it created Ganga, the river-goddess. Hence Ganga is also known as Vishnu-padi (she-who-was-born-out-of-Vishnu's-feet). She is depicted bearing a pot and riding a makara that is sometimes identified as a crocodile, sometimes as a dolphin and sometimes as a Capricorn like sea-monster that is half fish and half elephant.

Ganga is also regarded as the sister of Parvati, and has been linked as a consort of Agni, Vishnu, and Shiva. She is the mother of Jalandhara through a union with the ocean. Hindus believe that by bathing in her holy waters, one's sins will be washed away. Repeated ritualistic washings in the river will secure one a place in heaven. The ashes of the dead are spread over her.

According to the legend, Ganga once flowed in the heaven but came to earth due to a mortal king, Bhagiratha. Sagara, a king and grandfather of Bhagiratha, desperately wanted sons. He prayed and performed rituals and penances, so that his two wives both became pregnant. They gave birth to many sons. Some time later, to thank the gods, Sagara made ready to perform a horse sacrifice, a very solemn and powerful ritual, but the horse was stolen. Sagara's sons went searching for the animal, and they began to dig into the earth, thinking it might be underground. When their excavations became too large, Vishnu turned all of them to dust. Sagara learned that his sons would be allowed to go to heaven only when the sacred River Ganges flowed to the earth. The sage Bhagirathi, Sagara's grandson, performed rigid penances, and Brahma agreed to allow the river to fall to earth in the Himalayas and flow through India. Ganga was not at all happy about this, however. She was perfectly happy to stay in heaven. She consented to flow to the earth, but promised she would flood the whole world and destroy humanity. To prevent this, Shiva stood under the spot where she fell from the sky and cushioned her fall. Her stream was divided into seven rivers, which are the Ganges and her tributaries. Since then, Ganga resides on top of Shiva's head as his second wife, the first being Parvati.

Padmanava Pradhan, Rockville, Maryland

Questions and comments for Chirantan:

dasf@home.com

9535 Ridgeview Dr.
Columbia, MD 21046

Doctor's Corner:

Stress & How to Handle

A constant amount of stress is inseparable and even is necessary in our life. But allowing stress to accumulate & over responding to it can affect health & can cause serious physical, psychological & social consequences. Therefore it is important to learn how stress is generated, so that we may identify it early & take appropriate measures to control it.

In our modern society the pace of events & occurrences around us often leave us breathless. Standards of behavior of individual freedom, of relation with one another, and attitude are being altered so rapidly that their impact on people & society is more profound than at any time in history. We seem to have endless string of chores to do and there are only 24 hours a day. From the moment we wake up until the movement we hit the bed we seem to be on the go. Even high tech amenities and gadget won't help. In fact, we feel trapped by them.

We eat, sleep & relax fast. We react situation without thinking through. We have less time to interact or get involved with others. Hence we get isolated, increasingly anxious and stressed. There are several other causes of stress. Insufficient sleep, poor eating habit, morning traffic, difficult client, demanding boss, nagging spouse, raising children, troubled marriage, and unsatisfying career are only a few of the many factors that contribute the pressure of daily living. Here are ten tips to handle stress.

1. Talk it out. Something worries you, find a reliable person & ventilate.
2. Tackle one fact at a time. When a pile appears it is impossible to tackle. Start with the easiest one. The slow progress encourages you.
3. Escape for a while, running away or avoiding a situation is ok as long as you are prepared to return & face it again.
4. Yield, give once in a while. Remember if you do, others will do too, usually.
5. Give yourself a break; learn that life is a race. Instead of competing, learn to cooperate.
6. Learn to relax. Recalling a pleasant experiences or a day dreaming or pursuing a hobby can help you relax.
7. Controlling anger: meditate or yoga or any sort of physical activity like gardening, exercise or "do it yourself" project will keep you occupy & help with anger.
8. Stay in touch with reality. Learn to accept the situation you cannot change.
9. Be available. Instead of shrinking away make yourself available to help.
10. Last but not the least make time for yourself. You are the most important person in your life; learn to take care of your needs first.

Hopefully these will help relieving the stress and enjoy your life.

Lipishree Nayak, Lanham, MD

Comments/Suggestions:

For the past few months, I have been involved with our children at the ISKCON temple at Baltimore. Our children's bhajan program starts at 6 pm in which everyone has a chance to sing prayers to the Lord. Afterwards, we go upstairs to discuss religious stories together such as the Sri Krishna Leela, the Mahabharata, and many other short tales. During this time, our children learn to practice self-control by

refraining from yelling, calling names, or causing general mishaps. Sometimes, our children even help in temple chores like making flower garlands for God and setting up for prasad. In other activities, our children engage themselves by playing games like Chess, Checkers, and our very own Ludo. Our younger children participate in quizzes and entertain themselves while coloring.

Our children are also learning to help our elderly members like Maa by serving her food and taking care of any of her needs. In return, they expose themselves to her pure Oriya language and receive blessings from her. On Father's Day, our children did something extra special for their fathers by serving them their meals. One dad quoted, "I felt very happy."

In the future, we are hoping to expand our curriculum and growth in understanding Oriya culture. We need support from parents and other Oriya members for this to be a success.

Sujata Mohapatra, Silver Spring, Maryland

I divide my comments into three major sections, the purpose of the bhajan program, how to consider these purposes and why should we consider.

Purpose:

- a) To use our Bhajan Sandhya time more effectively for our children.
- b) To give a proper feedback of our language, culture and life style which will make them feel proud and help in future not to be a detached part from Indian culture.

How to consider these purposes?

Many of the following descriptions are in practice. But I would like to summarize.

* A child learns by example. To teach the children something we have to set the example ourselves. And this is day to day process. If we want that our children should be familiar with Oriya, we should try to speak Oriya at home in daily basis. What we can do in temple is to follow certain standard procedures to enhance this learning.

* Children are fond of stories and they learn from stories a lot. Let us start from story telling. We have beautiful educative stories which we can tell to our children. I feel this will be really helpful in many ways.

* The children in Orissa enjoy social togetherness, though they may not have this western luxury or standard of living. There are a lot of functions and social events. We celebrate some of these here, not the way we celebrate there, but we still celebrate. To give a clue on our festivals to our children we have to celebrate. We have some celebrations like Kumar Purnima, Sarswati pooja. But my thinking is that we can state the values of a Hindu Festival to children by their participation and involvement. Let the children participate and get involved. It is not necessary to have a big festival. Somethings we can do at our home. For example: decorate your home with help of your children, do some special food for that day, present a new dress etc. That is the way we celebrate in India. That is the way people celebrate here (Thanksgiving or Christmas). And I hope doing this we can tell more about our festivals to our children. I would like to suggest one more thing: Let the July month Bhajan sandhya is dedicated to Children. They will pull a small chariot for Jagannath, Balavadra, Suvadra. We can make or guide to make a small chariot. They will decorate and pull just Outside of the temple.

Basic point here is that a child should enjoy learning. And it is not easy. But let us give a try. Out of 3/4 hours stay in the temple let us think how to split our time in different activities. These are some of my thoughts:

1: Prayer (as we are doing it now, it may be repeated in English). Our first teaching is to pray to the almighty.

2. 30 minutes of Oriya Language / Oriya song/... teaching: Note: Learning Oriya is a continuous process and we can not enforce a learning of language unless they are interested in it. To create interest we have to think of songs or stories. I feel that parents should talk a little bit Oriya with their kids daily. One day in a month will not be fruitful. Also those who feel talking Oriya is stupid, they can never learn Oriya.

3. Let them play for some time.

4. Story telling (Panchatantra, Puranas, Jahnamamu ...): One of Us will tell them story while they are taking food. Story teller should change. Everybody should volunteer for story telling. Topics are mainly from our country, culture. Also give a chance to the interested child to tell a story.

5. Before this there may be a quiz or some activities.

6. Let the child bring some items (picture, etc.), explain a little bit about that. This may be in English or Oriya.

7. Child Involvement: This is very important. If we do everything ourselves and they do not participate probably we will fail to communicate our ideas. We have to involve them in decoration or food distribution. Remember how we took part in our school celebration. We have to guide to make them feel the responsibility. Above all, we have to ask for volunteers from the children, not to force them to work.

It is not mandatory to do all the things at one evening. We can do it by rotation. If we are successful, we can share our experience to other OSA units, other Indian communities. Let us feel pride what we are, where from we came and let us share this idea with our children. It is a simple rule: invest some time with our children, we will get the result.

Why should we do the above?

We have come from a rich culture. We know what is good or bad in our culture and this culture (though personal perspectives may differ from person to person). The question is: should we just live our children to adopt this culture and life style here? Some of us may say yes and some of us no. Actually I do not know the answer. I am confused, so also many of us. It only depends what we accept. When something is accepted, its value increases. So do we accept or value our culture or life style? If we know something is good with our culture or our life style, then we should share some of this to our children, who are likely to adopt this culture. Some of us may ask question, why we should teach something to our children which we have left behind and come here. But have we left those values which we have practiced for years? Don't we feel happy if some body recognizes us as we are from other culture? Probably. As I personally analyze all these, I feel that it is our duty to spend some time to tell our children about our culture, and the value of our culture. If we do not tell, nobody is going to tell or teach that. It only depends on us and we should justify what and why we should teach our children. We can not altogether stop our children to adopt this culture. But we can educate them a little bit of our values. If we do not value ourselves, who else?

Arun Ojha, Towson, Maryland

Dinner Discussion:

An important part of the bhajan program is dinner time discussion. We thank everyone who participated in dinner discussion. Special thanks to the following persons for sharing their thoughts with us.

Manoj Panda: Karmayoga
Nrasingha Mishra: Alternative Medicine
Lipishree Nayak: How to manage stress

Dhirendra Kar: The questions about Gita

Bhajan Schedule:

3rd Saturday (preferably) of the month:

Bhajan by Children: 6.00 PM
Bhajan by all the participants : 6:15 PM
Arati: 7.0 PM
Prabachan: 7.45 PM
Prasad sevan and discussion: 8.30 PM

Be Good and Do Good: Lord Budha

Thank You

Thanks to all the families for their contributions for bhajan program. We are sorry, we could not publish everyone's name who have attended the bhajan program as we did in earlier issues, because of space limitation. Our heartfelt thanks to the following families for sponsoring the feast on different months. May God bless you all.

***Madhumita and Dhirendra Kar
Sushim Dalabehara
Liza and Pramod Tripathy
Urmila and Devraj Sahoo***

Volunteers for bhajan program:

Bhajan moderator: Bigyani Das (301) 498 3729
Internet Library coordinator: Dhirendra Kar (410) 238 3221
Children's class: Sujata Mahapatra (301) 879 8188
Illa Ojha (410) 498-1189
Dinner Discussion: Nrusingha Mishra (301) 540 4641



