



BALABHAVAN NEWSLETTER

SHIVA VISHNU TEMPLE, SAN DIEGO

February 2010



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SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

One of the greatest Indian saints in the 19th century was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. He was born in a poor family in 1836, in a small town near Calcutta, West Bengal. His original name was Gadadhar Chattopadhyay. He disliked going to school, and was not interested in the pursuit of money.

Sri Ramakrishna became the priest of the Kali temple at the age of 30. He questioned himself if he was worshipping a piece of stone or a living Goddess. He prayed to Goddess Kali to reveal Herself to him. One day he was so impatient to see Mother Kali that he decided to end his life. He seized a sword hanging on the wall and was about to strike himself with it, when he is reported to have seen light coming from the deity in waves. He is said to have been soon overwhelmed by the waves and fell unconscious on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna prayed to Goddess Kali for more religious experiences and he is believed to have experienced number of them.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa began to attract real seekers of God. People of all ages, caste, and religion visited him. He taught ceaselessly for fifteen years or so through the parables, metaphors and songs. Service to God in human kind is one of the foremost ideals of the Ramakrishna Order.

Sri Ramakrishna married Sarada Devi in 1859 and she was the first disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna attained Mahasamadhi on August 16, 1886. His disciple Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission.

The greatest contribution of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world is his message of the harmony of religions. He faithfully practiced the spiritual disciplines of different religions and came to the realization that all of them lead to the same goal. Thus he declared, "As many faiths, so many paths. The paths vary, but the goal remains the same".

- By Anugraha Panneerselvam

BBC Announcements:

Namaskaram,

A big THANK YOU to all the volunteers who helped bring life to all the classes in January. It is very heart-warming to see all the newcomers getting adjusted to the BB program. Please talk to or e-mail either the class coordinators or us if you have any questions.

MAHASHIVARATHRI puja will be led by the Panditjis and performed by the BB children on Sunday, February 7th at 4:30 p.m. Please grace this auspicious occasion with your timely presence.

Parents, please check the BB calendar online for your volunteer assignments and confirm your availability to the class coordinators well ahead of time. This will enable them to scout for other volunteers in time if you cannot make it. Thank you

BBC Team

February Birthdays:

Toddler:

Abhishek Kumar
Swetha Gopal

Juniors:

Karthik Kumar
Mathavan Ramanathan
Pramod Sastry
Meena Annamalai

Seniors:

Rohith Sudhakar
Sukruth Kadaba
Bharath Pradeep

Super Seniors:

Sakshi Madan



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Class Schedules

02-13-2010 -----

Junior Class:

Story: Kurma Avatharam
-Bala Adimurthy

Sloka: Bilvashtakam 4-6
-Veena Nagaraj

Bhajan: Review of Manasa
Bhajarey; Shambho Shankara;
Jaya Jaya Shankara
-Shubha Vijayasankar

Senior Class:

Story: Kancheepuram - TN
-Prasanna Madabushi

Sloka Revise both Shiva stotras
-Radhika Chari

Bhajan: Review of 4 Shiva
Bhajans
-Viji Ramanarayanan

02-27-2010 -----

Junior Class:

Story: Varaha Avatharam
-Venkat Maddipatla

Sloka: Bilvashtakam 1-8
-Nalini Natarajan

Bhajan: Bhaja Mana Ramam;
Ram Ram Bhaja Mana
-Priya Ram

Senior Class:

Story: Mathura, Vrindavan - UP
-Radhika Chari

Sloka: Vishnu shatpadi 1-3
-Sheela Ashok

Bhajan: Sri Lakshmi ramana
Narayana; Bhaja Mana Ramam
-Sangeetha Prahlad

BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER

Legend has it that Lord Brahma, creator of this universe, wanted to create his own son for the benefit of humanity and he chose sage Shantanu and his wife Amogha, as the rightful people to bring forth his son. Amogha bore Brahma's son (hence the name Brahmaputra) and Shantanu then placed him in the midst of four mountains, the Kailash, Gandhamadana, Jarudhi, and Sambaka. The son assumed the form of a large mass of water where the Gods and heavenly maidens would have their bath. Deriving from this myth, the Brahmaputra is considered a male river even today.

The Brahmaputra, also called Tsangpo-Brahmaputra, is a trans-boundary river and one of the major rivers of Asia. About 1,800 miles (2,900 km) long, the river is an important source for irrigation and transportation. Brahmaputra runs for about 800 miles in Tibet where it is called the Tsangpo. It bends to the south as it enters India and runs as River Siang for a while. The Siang falls to the plains at Pasighat in the easternmost state of Arunachal Pradesh. The banks on either side of the Siang are covered with lush green vegetation. As the rivers Dibang and Lohit join the Siang, it acquires the name of Brahmaputra and flows into Assam. The Brahmaputra passes through Dibrugarh, Neamati, Tezpur, Guwahati, and finally joins Padma, the easternmost strain of the Ganges. This combined stream then flows into Bangladesh where it joins river Meghna, one of the most important estuaries of the Ganges.

The Brahmaputra valley is closely associated with lores from the great Indian epic Mahabharata and with Shaivite traditions (worship of Lord Shiva, the destroyer in the Hindu pantheon). Every few yards there is a ruin or a site that brings mythological associations with this river.

-by Akash Sridhar

Class Schedules

02-06-2010 -----

Toddler Class:

Story: Mahabharat and Delhi
Sultan's wish
- Aruna Janakiraman

Sloka: Shiva sadakshara 5-6
- Sapna Chandrashekar

Bhajan: Review: Shankara
Sadhashiva; Ganga Jatadhara;
Chandra Shekaraya NamaOm
- Sapna Chandrashekar

Super Senior Class:

Discussion: Tirupathi-AP
-Ramanarayanan

Sloka: revise shiva shlokas
- Lakshmi Srinivasan

Bhajan: Review: Jaya Jaya
Shankara; Shambho
Shankara; Nandeeshwara
- Lakshmi Srinivasan

02-20-2010 -----

Toddler Class:

Story: Story of Seetha
- Magesh Hariharan

Shloka: Kasturi tilakam lalaata
phalake
- Sangeetha Prahlad

Bhajan: Rama Nama Tarakam
- Sangeetha Prahlad

Super Senior Class

Discussion: Viveka Deepika
-Lalitha Kodandapani

Shloka: Vishnu Shatpadi/
Lakshminarasimha
pancharatnam
- Lalitha Kodandapani

Bhajan: Shri Rama Chandra
Kripalu
-Latha Sundar



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GANGA RIVER

The name of the Ganges is known all throughout the land of India. This river that runs for 1,560 miles from the Himalayas all the way to the Bay of Bengal all the way to the Bay of Bengal is more than just flowing water. This river is life, purity, and a goddess to the people of India. This river is popularly known as Ganga Ma, "Mother Ganges." According to Hindu religion a very famous king Bhagiratha did Tapasya for many years constantly to bring the river Ganga, then residing in the Heavens, down on the Earth to find salvation for his ancestors, who were cursed by a seer. Therefore, Ganga descended to the Earth through the lock of hair (Jata) of god Shiva to make whole earth pious, fertile and wash out the sins of humans.

The Ganges is a place of death and life. Hindus bring the dead body or just ashes since it is believed that the waters of the Ganga are needed to reach Pitru-loka, the World of the Ancestors. Also, anyone who touches these purifying waters even today are said to be cleansed of all sins. The waters of the Ganges are called *amrita*, the "nectar of immortality". The Ganges Basin with its fertile soil is instrumental to the agricultural economies of India and Bangladesh. Three towns holy to Hinduism - Haridwar, Allahabad, and Varanasi - attract thousands of pilgrims to its waters. Thousands of Hindu pilgrims arrive at these three towns to take a dip in the Ganges, which is believed to cleanse oneself of sins and help attain salvation.

-By Akul Athmaram

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



Swami Vivekananda was born on January 12th, 1863 in Calcutta. His real name was Narendranath Dutta. His father's name was Vishwanath Dutta and his mother's name was Bhuvaneshwari Devi. He was the chief disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa who was a priest in the temple of Kali in Dakshineswar. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was not a scholar but was a great devotee. As a child Narendra had great respect for sanyasis (ascetics). In 1879, Narendra passed matriculation and entered Presidency College, Calcutta. After one year, he joined the Scottish Church College, Calcutta and studied philosophy. He studied western logic, western philosophy and history of European nations.

As he advanced in his studies, his thinking faculty developed. Doubts regarding existence of God started to arise in Narendra's mind. This made him associate with the Brahma Samaj, an important religious movement of the time, led by Keshab Chandra Sen.

In 1890, Narendra set out on a long journey.. Narendra acquired the name of Swami Vivekananda during the journey. It is said that he was given the name Vivekananda by Maharaja of Khetri for his discrimination of things, good and bad. In 1893, Swami Vivekananda went to America to attend the Conference of World Religions in Chicago. Swami Vivekananda started Sri Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 in service of the poor. He played a major role in spiritual enlightenment of Indian masses and also spread Vedanta philosophy in the West. Swami Vivekananda died on July 4, 1902 at Belur Mutt near Calcutta.

- By Sudarshan Srinivasan

Class Presentations

Junior Class:

02-13-2010

Lord Vishnu

--Shekar Krishnamurthi

02-27-2010

Goddess Lakshmi

--Arjun Kumar

Senior Class:

02-13-2010

Would you rather be Karna or Arjuna?

-- Siya Sharma

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Would you rather be Kunti or Ghandari?

--Shreya Gopala

Super Senior Class:

02-06-2010

Purandara Dasa

- Dvaita Lakshmin

02-20-2010

Suradas

- Anjana Srinivas

Festivals of the Month:

Feb 11: Maha Shivarathri

Feb 28: Holi

Please visit the website for more details ...

(<http://www.shiva-vishnu.org>)

Newsletter Editors

Srikanth Kalluri

Bhairav Chidambaram

Topics of the Month

Anugraha Panneerselvam

Akash Sridhar

Sudarshan Srinivasan