

Ammaji's Message



Mahasivaratri is celebrated during the krishnapaksha, 14th day of Phalguni month. It is a time of prayer, japa, fasting, and contemplation of Lord Shiva. His devotees spend day and night in his worship. The puranic stories describe this night as one which brought blessings from Lord Siva to devotees, even though they had unknowingly worshipped the Shivalinga, such as king Chitrabhanu. Then what to talk of devotees, who express their devotion all day and all night!

The puranas describe Lord Shiva as Ashutosha, the one who is easily pleased by devotion and hence protects his devotees readily. It is said that once the devas and asuras were churning the ocean for the nectar of immortality. During the churning, many desirable things emerged from the ocean, which everyone wanted to partake. But when the hot burning poison emerged, which would bring destruction to the universe, no one was willing to receive it. All rushed to Lord Siva for help. Lord Siva drank the poison, to prevent destruction of life and thus protected the devas and asuras. He was hence known as Lord Neelakantha.

All of us seek amrtatvam – the nectar of immortality! We all want eternal happiness! And we, the devas and asuras, churn the universe for various gains, possessions etc., for this. But before the awakening to the eternal, sacred, immortal being within us takes place, one would have to face the challenges and obstacles that would prevent us from our goal and sometimes even destroy us! How would we receive Lord's grace and protection from these obstacles? Only through the prayers and surrender to him! Whatever maybe our desires, small or big, worldly or otherwise, may it find its fulfilment by us earning the grace of Lord Siva!

For seekers, yogis, sannyasis who like Goddess Parvati desire oneness with the Lord, spend this day in contemplation of the highest truth. They seek his divine grace to awaken to his presence, as 'I' in one's heart. In Arunachala-pancaratnam, Sri Ramana Maharishi describes "Hridi aham iti atmatayaa nrtyasi Bho! You abide, you dance in our hearts as 'I'. Te vadanti hrdayam nama - Hence the wise speak of you as the very 'Heart'. The light of 'I' is the light of Siva, Param jyoti, Arunachala jyoti, Atma jyoti that seekers seek to awaken to! Chant 'Om Namah Sivaya', surrendering to the Lord who is Om, who is Auspicious, who is I! May the akhanda-nama-japa of Panchaksari bless all the devotees of Lord Siva on this Mahasivaratri day!

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THE SYMBOL WORSHIP OF ĪŚVARA

Continued from Volume 17



The Lord, as revealed by scriptures, is non-separate form the creation. When the whole creation is Lord, every form in the creation is the Lord's form. When one is unable to see this fact, it becomes necessary to have the bhāvanā, attitude of bhagavad-buddhi in a given form. For this purpose, one invokes the Lord in an idol. The tradition has handed down the generations, specific forms and the bhagavad-buddhi - seeing any form as the Lord - is associated with those forms in one's mind.

For generations, the Lord has been worshipped in certain forms and those forms have been coming down for generations, which is a great blessing. The tradition did not just begin yesterday. When one sees Lord Gaṇeśa, one recognises the form as the Lord, not as a strange creature with an odd head and a big belly. This is what is known as tradition, sampradāya. One should understand this as a treasure. Through this tradition, one is fortunate to have inherited this particular legacy of forms without any effort on one's part. The idol invokes in everyone the devotee and that is a great heritage.

When a person worships, he is not worshipping an idol. Everybody worships the Lord. The sculptors who make the idol do not look upon the idol as a stone or marble, once the Lord is invoked in it. To quote an instance: once an idol of Lord Śiva was supplied by a sculptor to a temple. Certain parts of the idol - the eye lashes, the lips, the snake etc., - were colour-painted by the sculptor. In course of some five or six years, the painting got erased. The manager of the temple wrote to the sculptor asking him repaint the idol. The latter replied that he could not paint the Lord. He agreed to make another idol, but not paint the existing one. Why should he refuse, if he only created a statue, an idol and not the Lord?

Only until the installation ceremony, the idol is a stone and not the Lord. During installation, prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā - imparting life to the idol - is done by mantras, by saṁskāra. It is like how a person is made a twice-born through saṁskāra. By the dīkṣā of Gāyatrī-mantra, he is made a different person. Similarly, here, even though it is a stone idol, it is given life by saṁskāra and the last act of the sculptor is to open the eyes. He brings a fine chisel and a hammer with him and when the saṁskāras are done, he opens the eyes of the idol. Till then, the eyes are covered. The sculptor removes bits of stone covering the eyes. And then he is the first person to fall at the feet of the idol which is no more a stone for him. Now it is the Lord and he worships the Lord.

continued ...



One does not even need a stone for worship. Even in a lump of turmeric powder, one can invoke Lord Gaṇapati before beginning a pūjā. In a bucket of water, one can invoke all the deities of holy rivers everyday and bathe in the Gaṅgā, Yamunā and so on - one need not go to these rivers. All that is required is the attitude.

The depth of attitude behind a symbol is experienced very well in our day-to-day life. For instance, when one stands before the picture of one's departed father, what is in front is just a black and white photograph. When a person places a flower there, his offering is not to the piece of paper, but is a mark of respect to his father. Without such forms of expressions of respect, of friendship, of love, life will be void.

Why do people worship the Lord? - one may ask. One cannot ask why do people worship the idols. Because one never worships idols, but the Lord. One worships the Lord, as it brings about antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi, purity of mind, which is needed to understand that the Lord is everywhere. For this purpose, a person seeks the Lord's grace by worship, which is an action, an act of devotion.

Until one knows that the Lord is everywhere, one has to keep one's ego under check. In fact, the Lord being everything, this ego is swallowed by the Lord. Since one thinks one is different from the Lord, one places a flower at the feet of the Lord and one's ego is kept under check. A symbol, such as an idol, plays an important role in this worship.



Addressing and Overcoming Enemies within

As we live and interact with the world and deal with people we often find ourselves in situations that are quite challenging. While it is possible that we run into people who appear to be inimical to us we are usually be able to deal with them or if this is not possible protect ourselves by staying away from such situations or people.

In life we also have to deal with our own thoughts and feelings that can become difficult to surmount. It is much more complex and difficult to deal with our 'enemies' that are there within us. The enemies within may be experienced by us in the form of various emotions and thoughts that lead to distress, suffering, anxieties, stress, unhappiness and more. They disturb our peace and both emotional and physical well being. They can also as a result of our words and actions disturb the peace and cause distress and even sorrow in those who are around us and close to us.

These inner enemies are our own tendencies that are picked up and cultivated by us within our own minds as we grow up. They very often arise from misunderstandings that occur in our interactions with others and misinterpretations of the world and our experiences. They are influenced by our values, priorities, and patterns of behavior that neither serve our long term interest nor are helpful to others. If they are not dealt with properly or worse, if they are encouraged and nurtured, they can cause us great harm that may sometimes be irretrievable.

Dealing with these enemies that have become a part of our own psyche is a task that cannot be performed by anyone other than our selves. Neither should it be considered a responsibility of another (as in "I am what I am-you deal with it"). The latter approach does not really help a person grow emotionally or spiritually.

continued ...

The Journey Within



It is said in Bhagavad Gita:

*Uddharet Aatmanaa Aatmaanam, Naatmaanamavasaadayet
Atmaiva Atmano Bandhuh Atmaiva Ripuraatmanah*

Raise yourself by yourself, do not demean yourself. (Your) mind alone is your enemy (your) mind alone is your friend.

For a human being to live in the world is more than to exist, to survive, to relate or even to be successful. It is to grow to our maximum potential both emotionally and spiritually. To achieve this end the enemies in our psyche become major obstacles and barriers. We have to work on ourselves with our own mind. In fact the so called enemy within is our own mind. Our mind can function as an enemy to us or as a friend. In fact I can say a mind that causes in me distress and unhappiness, which is not conducive to my emotional and spiritual well-being is a mind that is inimical to me. On the other hand when my mind is responding and functioning in a manner that leads to happiness and peace within me and others around me it is mind that is a friend to me, and is conducive to my emotional and spiritual growth.

Knowing one's enemy is the first necessary step to overcome the enemy. Our spiritual tradition identifies six such 'enemies'. While there are many tendencies that are inimical these six are significant. Dealing with them helps us also deal with and overcome others connected to them. They are called in Sanskrit 'shadripuh', the six fold enemy.

They are, Kaama (Desire), Krodha (Anger), Lobha (Greed), Moha (Delusion), Mada (Pride), Maatsarya (Envy). We will examine and get to know the characteristics of each one.

- Sri Dhira Chaitanyaji

to be continued ...

Past Events



Early 2020 Swamiji and Ammaji's travels began with the Middle East. A dedicated Community of Vedanta Seekers enjoyed a weeklong Classes in Vedanta, Meditation and Sanskrit. Children studying Purna Vidya won medals in the Gita Chanting Competitions and proudly displayed to the Gurus. It was the most memorable beginning of a new year for one and all.



Past Events



Past Events



It was a delight to see devotees participation on auspicious day of Mahasivaratri at Purna Viday Ashram. It is a time of prayer, japa, fasting, and contemplation of Lord Shiva. Event was well received with prayers and chanting.





Past Events



Shivapuranam retreat

For a long time now, I have, wanted to recite Tamil Thirumurai verses knowing their full meaning. The Nayanmars have put their heart and soul in to the Tamil classics. Merely watching snapshots of these verses in yesteryear movies like Thiruvilayadal, Thiruvārutchelvar brings tears to the eyes and evokes strong feelings of endearment to the lord. What can we say about this retreat that expounds the Nayanmar teachings by our own Parampara teacher in Tamil? Arulji practically packed the essence of Manikkavachagar's teachings in this short session, Arulji excelled in drawing comparisons from Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads. For me, it was great escape from my daily routine and a great way of connecting again with our favorite Purna Vidya Ashram and our Gurus. Looking forward to more such retreats. Thank you all

- Janani

(Reflections from our devotee)



Hari Om,

Purna Vidya ashram conducted slogan writing contest during the month of Jan-Feb for National Youth Day (Birthday of Swami Vivekananda) and we are excited to have received quite a number of entries. Congratulation to all the participants and we are delighted to share some of the prize winning entries. Prizes will be distributed during Purna Vidya Utsav 2020. Please stay tuned and follow us closely for the schedule and venue for Purna Vidya Utsav 2020.



We also welcome your participation in upcoming months on the following topics.

March - April: Limericks/hykoos on wildlife safety for World Poetry Day

May - June: World Turtle day - Paragraph writing contest on 'Turtle and My thoughts'

The last date for March-April articles will be 31/03/2020. These articles should be sent only to 'purnavidya.newsletter@gmail.com' with all the other details as above. We look forward to your participation in large numbers

- R. Ramadevi. Editor, Purna Vidya Newsletter

New year resolutions from students of Amrita Vidyalayam, Tirupur

A.B. Vishnu Priya VI C

I want to become more confident as good dose of self-confidence will help me lead a much happier life overall. I want to become more polite as it makes it easier to connect with others, not to offend people and ensures that others perceive me as a good and trustworthy person. I want to start saving money so that I could support my parents when they are in need. I hope to stand by my resolutions with determination.

S.SUVETHA VI C

Resolution means a person makes a promise on himself / herself to do or not to do something in their life. Some people make a promise to change a bad habit such as eating junk food, fighting etc. It is a goal that you want to accomplish over a short period of time. It came from Latin word it means "resolve". "My resolution in 2020 is try to live a simple, sincere life, learn a new skill and, exercise more. Save more money, to help others, spend more time with family and friends and get good grades and be merry forever with what I have now. These things will help me to lead my life cheerfully. Don't just dream-do, Don't just hear – listen, Don't just feel – show, Don't just talk – act.

S.SAPARNI VI A

Work properly and neatly to be appreciated. Keep the place clean to remain healthy. Help the poor to bring in happiness in their lives. Work hard to realise your dreams as well as obey your parents to show your gratitude. Avoid using mobile without purpose to save your vision. I assure that I will definitely keep up my resolutions

P.GEETHA LAKSHMI VIII B

Every year I take a resolution. This year also I have taken a resolution. My resolution is to be a good reader. I have heard that reading is a good habit, but I hardly take the time to read, even if I have time. So this time I have decided that I would spend some time in a day to read some matter or a book that would improve my knowledge and interest in reading. Another area that I would like to improve myself is with the excess time spend on the internet. Hours together I sit in front of the system, though I know it is just wasting my time unnecessarily. I have decided to cut down the time I use for surfing and make it more productive, rather than just visiting social networking sites and chatting. Along with the internet, the other electronic item that has addicted me is the cell phone. I spent hours taking over the phone, not realizing the harmful effects it causes and waste my time and money. I have decided to cut it down only for essentials and spent the remaining time for some useful work or to spend more quality time with my family. This time, I am determined to stick to my resolutions and get myself corrected to be a better person, both for myself and to the society.

2020 Program Calender

**Purna Vidya
Foundation**

*2020
Program Calendar*

Month	<i>"Open your heart and recognize God's reflection in you."</i> Ammaji's Travels	Ashram's Events
Jan	Jan 29-Feb.12 : Vedanta Teachings & Meditation (Middle East)	8-9 : Teachers' Training Camp 23-24 : Outbound Learning Camp
Feb	Feb -22 - Mar - 1 : Bhagavad Gita & Vedic Heritage Teaching (Sydney, Australia)	19-21 : Siva Puranam Retreat (in Tamil) 21 : Mahasivaratri Celebrations
Mar	2-13 : Bhagavad Gita & Vedic Heritage Teaching Program	
Apr	2-13 : Bhagavad Gita & Vedic Heritage Teaching Program (Brisbane, Australia)	16-18 : Teachers' Training Camp (Purna Vidya Foundation, Coimbatore)
May	May 25-Jun 2 : Ganga Dasahara Vedanta Retreat (Tapasyalayam, Uttarkashi)	
Jun		21 : International Yoga Day Celebrations
Jul	10-12 : Gita Utsav, Family Retreat (UK) 13-15 : Vedanta Sadhana Retreat (UK) 16-23 : Vedanta Workshops (Germany) 24-26 : Vedanta Sadhana Retreat (Munich, Germany) July 28-Aug.2 : Vedanta Yoga Philosophy TTC, (Germany)	5 : Guru Purnima Celebrations 11: Leadership & School Management Camp (Purna Vidya Foundation, Coimbatore)
Aug	7-14 -: Bhagavad Gita Workshops (Florence, Italy)	15-16 : Narayaneeyam Retreat (Purna Vidya Foundation, Coimbatore)
Sep		6 : Purna Vidya Utsav (Chennai) 12 : Purna Vidya Utsav (Coimbatore) 19 : Leadership & School Management Camp
Oct	17-27 : Navaratri Puja Retreats (Tapasayalayam, Uttarkasi / Purna Vidya Foundation , Coimbatore)	
Nov	Nov. 1-Dec.1 : Vedanta Course (Purna Vidya Foundation, Coimbatore) 25 : Gita Jayanti Celebrations	
Dec	4-15 : Vishnu Sahasranama Retreat (Purna Vidya Foundation, Coimbatore)	
Jan. to Apr. : Outbound Learning Camps May to Aug. : Teachers' Training Camps / Workshops Sep. to Dec. : New School Orientation Workshops		



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I am an Indian who grew-up in the Middle East. Given that I grew-up outside India, it was not too difficult for a growing child to lose touch with his heritage. The Purna Vidya classes I attended every Friday morning for many years helped me stay in touch with my heritage and culture. When it was time for me to move to the USA for higher education, I was a grounded young adult. The values instilled in me helped me navigate through many American university and cultural norms and experiences that are un-common in India and the Middle East. Purna Vidya was one of my earliest forays into India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. I was exposed to epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and Vedic values such as appreciation and respect for the environment, respect for elders, compassion, charity, and These values, in addition to the stories in the Ramayana and Mahabharata have served as a guide and have shown me that the lessons I learnt are applicable to all scenarios and situations in the modern world.

Akshay Sundaram, Dubai

Message from Editorial Team

Namaste Dear Friends!

The festival of Mahashivaratri is celebrated every year. On this day, devotees visit Shiva temples to offer Sacred Waters and Bilva-leaves at the Sanctum, observe fast and keep awake all night chanting the Shiva-pancaksari Mantra. There are innumerable temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. The image of Lord Shiva is symbolized as a linga, which represents the Lord as the Formless One, shown as 'All Forms in One' viz., Linga. He is the Infinite Light. The twelve famous Lord Shiva temples in India known as Jyotirlinga Shiva-Mandir, signify the Lord as a form of Infinite Light.

According to Hindu traditions a devotee who performs sincere worship of Lord Shiva on the auspicious day of Shivaratri is absolved of all sins and attains moksha. Let us celebrate Shivaratri in the true spirit by knowing its real spiritual significance and receive Divine blessings.

We hope that you have enjoyed this volume of our newsletter. We warmly welcome your feedback and contributions through purnavidyaprograms@gmail.com

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Under guidance of Ammaji

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