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BHAGWAN MAHAVEER

HINDU SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH, B-4, 6/F., MIRADOR MANSION,
54-64 NATHAN ROAD, TST., KOWLOON, HONG KONG.
G. P.O.BOX 11068
TEL: 27217444, FAX: 25412742
Email: sandesh_bharati@hongkong.com

INDEX

	Page No.
1. Our Holy Land – Ujjain	3 – 6
2. VHP News	6
3. Know your Hindi	7
4. HSS Hong Kong – Annual Camp Report	7 – 10
5. LOCAL Media Watch	11 – 12
6. 90% Kashmiris feel infiltration must be stopped instantly: Poll	13
7. Devout Muslim is Vedic Scholar, works for RSS	13- 14
8. Cover Issue – TIRTHANKAR BHAGWAN MAHAVEER	15 - 21
9. Know Your Hinduism- Misconceptions about the Caste System	22 – 31
10. The States of Bharat – Uttar Pradesh	32 – 33
11. Hindi Page - "BºEäò{É £òÉ¨É ¡ÉÉÊ±É¤ÉÉxÉ'	33 – 34
12. Hindi Page - ½þÉ®úiÉÉ ½èþ EòÉèxÉ ÊEòºÉEòÒ VÉÒiÉ ½þÉäMÉÒ	35 – 36
13. Children's Page	36 – 39

OUR HOLY LAND – UJJAIN

UJJAIN IS THE MODERN NAME FOR UJJAYINI. Legend has it that the Lord Shiva of Avanti commemorated his victory over the demon-ruler of Tripura or Tripuri on the banks of the Narmada by changing the name of his capital, Avantipura, to Ujjayini (one who conquers with pride).

Ujjain lay on the main trade route between north and south India and in the ancient times was the center for articles of trade such as precious stones and pearls, scents and spices, perfumes, silks and muslin going from Mathura via Ujjain to Mahismati (Maheshwar) ,on the Narmada, and on to Paithan on the Godavari, and western Asia and the West.

Today, Ujjain abounds in temples, hoary old tradition attached to each of them which form an integral part of the city and contribute to the continuity of Ujjain's tradition of greatness.

The magnificence and the awesome spectacle of the bathing ritual at the Simhastha defy description. Beginning on the full moon day in Chaitra (April), it continues into Vaishakha (May), until the next full moon day. Ujjain turns, amidst a riot of colours, into an India in miniature

The early history of Ujjain is lost in the midst of antiquity. Since the ancient days, Ujjain seems to have been a place of great importance. By the 6th century B.C. Avanti with its capital at Ujjaini, is mentioned in Buddhist literature as one of the four great powers along with Vatsa, Kosala and Magadha

Simhastha is the great bathing festival of Ujjain. It is celebrated in a cycle of twelve years when Jupiter enters the Leo sign of the zodiac, known as Simha Rashi. Ceremonial bathing in the holy waters of Shipra begin with the full moon day of Chaitra and continue in different intervals throughout the successive month of Vaishakha culminating on the full moon day. Tradition calls for ten different factors to be located for the grand festival at Ujjain. According to the Puranas, the legendary

churning of the ocean by the gods (Devas) and demons (Danavas) yielded, amongst other things, a jar (Kumbha) full of nectar (Amrita). The Devas did not like to share it with demons. At the instance of Indra, the master of devas, his son Jayanta tried to run away with the jar and was naturally followed by some of the demons. During the struggle for its possession lasting over twelve days in the heaven, a few drops of the nectar dropped at the four places, corresponding with Haridwar, Prayag, Ujjain and Nasik on the earth. The drops of nectar were well received by the holy rivers at these places. It is to commemorate the sprinkling of ambrosia into the sacred waters of Shipra that this festival, more popularly known as the Kumbh Mela is celebrated at Ujjain, as in the other three towns

Mahakaleshwar Mandir

Mahakala of Ujjain is among the twelve celebrated **Jyotirlingas** in India. The glory of Mahakaleshwar temple has been vividly described in various Puranas. Starting with Kalidasa,many Sanskrit poets have eulogised this temple in emotive terms. Ujjain used to be the centre point of the calculation of the Indian time and Mahaklala was considered as the distinctive presiding deity of Ujjain

The presiding deity of time, Shiva, in all his splendour, reigns eternal in Ujjain. The temple of Mahakaleshwar, its shikhara soaring into the skies, an imposing façade against the skyline, evokes primordial awe and reverence with its majesty. The Mahakal dominates the life of the city and its people, even in the midst of the busy routine of modern preoccupations, and provides an unbreakable link with past traditions. One of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India, the lingam at the Mahakal is believed to be swayambhu (born of itself), deriving currents of power (Shakti) from within itself as against the other images and lingams which are ritually established and invested with mantra-shakti.

The idol of Mahakaleshwar is known to be dakshinamurti, facing the South. This is a unique feature, upheld by tantric tradition to be found only in Mahakaleshwar among the 12 jyotirlingas. The

idol of Omkareshwar Shiva is consecrated in the sanctum above the Mahakal shrine. The images of Ganesh, Parvati and Karttikeya are installed in the west, north and east of the sanctum sanctorum. To the south is the image of Nandi. The idol of Nagchandreshwar on the third storey is open for darshan only on the day of Nagpanchami.

The **Mahakaleshwar** temple at Ujjain is located near a lake; it has five levels, one of which is underground.The temple itself is located in a spacious courtyard surrounded by massive walls. The shikhara is adorned with sculptural finery. Brass lamps light the way to the underground sanctum. It is believed that prasada offered here to the deity can be re-offered unlike all other shrines.

Other important temples are:

Bade Ganeshji Ka Mandir
This temple situated above the tank near the Mahakaleshwar temple, enshrines a huge artistic sculpture of Ganesh, the son of Shiva. An idol of this size and beauty is rarely to be found. The middle of the temple is adorned by an idol of the pancha-mukhi (five faced) Hanuman.

Gadkalika
Situated about 2 miles from the city of Ujjain, the deity in this temple is believed to have been worshipped by Kalidasa. The legend goes that he was an average person and it is by his devotion to the goddess Kalika that he acquired great literary skills.

Emperor Harshavardhan had this temple renovated in the 7th century AD. There is further evidence of renovation during the Paramara period.

Nagarkot Ki Rani
Nagarkot Ki Rani is the guardian deity of the south-west corner of ancient Ujjaiyini. This is a place of some archaeological importance. Many popular tales of Vikramaditya and Bharthihari

are associated with this place. The tank facing the temple is of Paramar-period. Both the sides of the tank have two small temples. The idol of Kartikeya in one of the temples is assigned to Gupta period. The Temple is situated on the ancient mud Rampart and hence is known as the queen of the city wall i.e. Nagarkot Ki Rani.

Besides being a city of remarkable cultural traditions, Ujjain is cited among the seven cities of sacred merit in India. Mahakaleshwar temple and the holy Shipra have always attracted countless people to visit Ujjain through out the ages. The crowd of pilgrims and saints of various sects running into millions during the Simhastha presents a picture of mini India at Ujjain and one can well visualise here, as to what invisible forces bind this great Nation together.

VHP NEWS

TEXAS, April 13, 2002: For a second time, the University of Texas Hindu Students' Council has been recognized as the best campus organization. HSC at the University of Texas has done a great job in making the campus aware of Hinduism and the issues affecting Hindus around the world. This year, the organization has put on several programs that have made an impact on campus, including a Diwali Pooja and Navaratri Garba/Raas (which drew over 800 people), a Hindu camp for younger children (to teach children to be proud of their Hindu heritage and culture), movie nights to raise money for Sept 11victims, SEVA projects, and several programs in support of the Dharma-Lifeproject. HSC has also been part of many cultural programs in coordinationwith other groups at UT, including ICA (Indian Cultural Association), ISA(Indian Students Association), and TUC (Texas Union Council).

KNOW YOUR HINDI

This is our third article about Hindi language. In our previous issue, we had mentioned that the so-called Hindi language is not spoken and written at its entire purity by the masses but is a mixture of mainly Farsi, Arabic and Turkish words. In Hindi movies, over 80% dialogues spoken use Farsi and Arabic words. In this issue, we continue the series of listing 10 such foreign words very commonly used in Hindi and have mentioned the apt Hindi word for it. It is about time that we should make an attempt to speak and write our national language as purely as possible.

WORD	ORIGIN	CORRECT HINDI WORD	MEANING IN ENGLISH
YAKEEN	ARABIC	VISHWAS	TRUST
EHSAN	PERSIAN	UPKAR	FAVOUR
ARMAAN	TURKISH	ABHILASHA	DESIRE
ADA	ARABIC	DANG	STYLE
ZAHAR	ARABIC	VISH	POISON
ANDAZA	PERSIAN	ANUMAN	GUESS
AMANAT	ARABIC	DHAROHAR	DEPOSIT
AKAL	ARABIC	BUDDHI	INTELLIGENCE
AKHIRI	PERSIAN	ANTIM	LAST/END
FAISLA	ARABIC	NIRNAY	DECISION

HSS ANNUAL CAMP – 2002

- Nitesh Sacheti

Our 21st annual camp was held in the relaxing countryside of Sai Kung. It took place from the 29th of March to the 1st of April. The sankhya (attendance) including both senior and young swayamsevaks added upto 40. Our adhikaries included Shri Kishori Lalji, Nirmalji, Deepakji, Manojji, Hareshji, Vijaiji, Sunilji and

Kamalj. I was selected to be the Mukhya-shikshak of the camp.

As soon as we reached the campsite, teams were made and captains chosen. Sunil Gopwani captained "Subash Chandra Bose" and the other team, which was called "Bhagat Singh" was led by Ravi Kalyandasani. Both the teams were in safe hands, under the guidance of senior swawayamsevaks. The team names had been taken after two great freedom fighters.

The daily schedule was very well planned before hand by our adhikaries who had been preparing every fine detail in their meeting two months before the camp. Swayamsevaks woke up at 5:30 in the morning and then exercises would be conducted by Sunilji after which came the Surya Namaskar. Then some games would be played and after that, Lathi or Samatha lessons were held. After all the exercises and games, the highlight of the morning would be the 8AM delicious breakfast. After breakfast, would be time for taking shower, cleaning and some free time. This would be followed by lessons on Bharat. Lessons were held by Nirmalji and Deepakji, who was also in charge of the Camp geet. This year the camp geet was "Vishwa Mangala Sadhana ke" and Deepakji taught the Geet in a very professional way so that by the 2nd day, everybody had memorized it. This time we learnt about Sikh history and the Mahabharata. Discussions were held on topics comparing Hinduism and Christianity. Debates were also done on topics such as "Should we approach Terrorism the hard or the soft way" and "Vegetarianism vs Non-vegetarianism". Both the teams won one debate each.

Also, games very played everyday with great excitement and enthusiasm. For the first time in all such camps, the swayamsevaks were taken to a nearby nature educational center. Most of the swayamsevaks loved this outing but being swayamsevaks, could not resist the temptation to

use the spacious lawns to play Kabbadi, Sitting kho and other lathi games there.

The 31st of March, a Sunday, was a special day as the camp was blessed with the arrival of Shri G.T. Gulji, the Sanghchalak (President) of HSS Hong Kong, Shri J.P. Goelji, the sah-sanghchalak (Vice-President) of HSS, Shri K.P. Daswaniji of the VHP, Brahamacharyani Nishita from Chinmaya Ashram and parents of the swayamsevaks who had come to see their children's progress in the camp and to have a first-hand account of how the camp was being run. Brahmacharyaniji gave a very inspiring talk which was liked by all. She emphasized on the need for all to appreciate everything around us. Also a patriotic geet was sung by Shri Goelji which was greeted with thundering applause by the audience.. The parents enjoyed the moment as much as the swayamsevaks did.

Well, where did all the food come from to keep the swayamsevaks fit enough? Well, it was prepared by the adhikaries, the adhikaries wives, and the helpful maids of Shri Kishoriji. They were responsible for all the food that was served during the camp. It was mouth-watering and during the bidai (farewell) program, most of the swayamsevaks thanked everyone involved in doing so.

On the last day of the camp, tests were conducted for Geet, Lathi/Samatha, Prathana, and most importantly the TEST paper. The test paper had questions about whatever we learned in the camp plus other general knowledge questions about Bharat. One of the most interesting questions asked was "What was the role of Shri Krishna in the Mahabharat war?" In addition to these tests, marks were also given for overall discipline and participation throughout the camp.

The highest mark achieved in the written test was by Gurmit Singh and he also was given the Ideal

Swayamsevak award. Gurmit had attended the camp for the first time and this is what he had to say about it, "I had a great time and I am looking forward to next year's camp".

The highest overall mark was achieved by Praneet Shah, who had a higher average in all the activities of the camp, including games, geet, exercises, written test, prarthana, etc. Praneet has been continuously winning prizes in our camps. He said, " I thank shaka as it has brought us Hindus together"

The most upcoming swayamsevak award was given to young Vivek Patel and he said "…the camp was a lot of fun but a bit too short". Vivek had shown keen interest in all the activities of the camp and was very well disciplined.

The Best Sportsman Award was given to a very young swayamsevak, called Sarang Parwal who despite his age, eagerly participated in all the games.

Finally I would like to thank everyone, including the adhikaries, shishaks and especially Shri Kishorilalji, who has been the main pillar of our Shakhas and camps in Hong Kong since so many years and who has been tirelessly working to bring together the Hindu community living in Hong Kong.

(THIS REPORT WAS WRITTEN BY NITESH SACHETI, 16 YEARS, WHO HAS BEEN ATTENDING SHAKHA SINCE THE PAST FIVE YEARS AND WHO IS ONE OF OUR MOST BRILLIANT SWAYAMSEVAKS)

LOCAL MEDIA WATCH

Hong Kong's leading newspaper, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, continues in its mission of negative reporting on matters concerning India. It is a pity that despite the size and the prestige that the local Indian community enjoys, such one-sided articles keep on appearing. Between 16th – 19th May, the paper's correspondent, Maseeh Rahman, carried extremely provocative articles on Gujarat. What is more, the paper DIDN'T BOTHER to publish a letter written by Shri Kishori Lal in response to the above articles. If you wrote a letter to South China Morning Post concerning negative reporting on India, and if they didn't publish it, you could forward it to SANDESH BHARATI so that we can publish it after checking. SANDESH BHARATI is distributed free of charge to 300 people all over the world.

Letters sent by Mr. Kishori Lal on 21st May to the Letters to the Editor column, South China Morning Post, Hong Kong

This is in reference to your articles on the Indian state of Gujarat by your correspondent, Maseeh Rahman between 16th May ("Where religion divides and rules") and 19th May (Women Singled out for Sexual Barbarity), I have never seen anyone writing so partially, it seems your correspondent has a personal axe to grind in this issue.

The proof of this lies in his mentioning the Godhra incident – because of which the violence in Gujarat began – in passing footnotes. In fact, never before in independent India has such an incident ever occurred. Three bogies of the Sabarmati train, full of Hindu pilgrims including men, women and children, were set ablaze by a Muslim mob in Godhra where the train had been forcibly stopped, killing 57 people. This was the only reason for the Gujarat riots and mayhem to follow and all neutral experts agree on this point, though they differ in their opinion on whether the riots could have been brought to control at a faster pace. But

Mr Rahman cunningly underplays the very root cause of the riots, that is the Godhra incident.

And it is not just the Muslims who have suffered. Mr Rahman's article of the 16th has a captioned photo of a Hindu woman and her child weeping because Muslims looted and burnt her home in Ahmedabad. Like Muslims, many Hindus are also staying in the refugee camps. Also, even a neutral magazine, India Today, acknowledged that the Gujarat Police did play its part in saving the lives of many Muslims. Any loss of life is bad, whether Hindu or Muslim but to exploit such incidents for propoganda purposes in order to tarnish the image of a community or country is worse.

Gujarat is no Afghanistan. Despite all the international outcry, no untoward incident occurred in 18,300 villages in the state. About 12 million students appeared for examinations throughout the state during the recent problems. There was a call by some politicians to the students to boycott the exams but the boycott call was a total failure. Government-run buses plied normally on all the state's 19,481 routes. Production remained uninterrupted in all big industrial units and even General Motors, the automobile giant made an additional capital investment of 5 billion Indian Rupees in their Gujarat unit. Actually, Gujarat remains one of the most prosperous states in the country and the economy is fairly intact, though it is true that Ahmedabad city still remains tense but it is hoped that it will just be a matter of time before the situation normalizes there

On May 31st, the leading newspapers and TV channels in India carried an important news – a leading UK research company had carried out an opinion poll in Jammu and Kashmir. Among other important things, the opinion poll says that 61% of the people in Kashmir want to remain with India.

Considering that Kashmir has so much been in the news recently, it was expected that the South China Morning Post would be covering this report in its paper. The paper had been covering many articles on Kashmir, but NO, this report

was never covered!!! So any positive news is just left aside, so much for unbiased reporting!!!

90% Kashmiris feel infiltration must be stopped instantly: Poll

A survey conducted in Jammu and Kashmir by a leading UK based market research company, MORI, has indicated that India's position on Kashmir and particularly cross border terrorism has received strong support from the people in the state.

The poll says: "Most Kashmiris, 65 per cent of them feel that the presence of foreign militants has damaged their cause."

The poll goes on to say, "Nearly 90 per cent of the Kashmiris say that cross border infiltration must end."

On the issue of citizenship, "61 per cent of the people surveyed say they will be better off with India, only 6 per cent favour being with Pakistan, while 33 per cent were undecided. However, the survey has not touched upon the question of independence and how many people favour that as an option.

The survey indicates that "55 per cent want more autonomy" for the state. The people in the Valley are more in favour of this option than those in the Jammu region.

According to the survey most people, 86 per cent feel that free and fair elections will help bring peace to the region.

Devout Muslim is Vedic scholar, works for RSS

Syed Husain Shastri, a devout Muslim, is a walking encyclopaedia on the Vedas. As the bell chimes at 8 am every morning in the RSS-run Saraswati Shishu Mandir in Malihabad, about 30 km from here, Syed Husain Shastri recites Vedic chants to begin the day.

In Malihabad, populated mostly by Muslims, he is popularly known as Pandit Syed Husain Shastri. Not many would believe that his knowledge of Sanskrit and Vedas is better than many famous scholars of Sanskrit. He is a devout Muslim and offers prayers at mosque everyday. But he calls the Azaan in a different language – Sanskrit. Every morning, he renders Vedic chants at the Saraswati Shishu Mandir. It is ritual that he has been following for the last 22 years.

He got his initial lessons in Sanskrit from renowned Sanskrit scholar Pandit Gokaran Prasad at the age of ten. Later he joined the Aminabad College in Lucknow to pursue further studies in Sanskrit.

Born on April 4, 1933 in an orthodox family of Syeds, he was criticised throughout his life by his parents, relatives, friends, ulemas of Muslim-dominated Malihabad.

Although he is devout Muslim, he is variously branded as a Kafir (non-believer in Islam) and a man who is pursuing "Kufra" (anti-Islamic activity) but he remained undeterred.

His friend Pandit Padmadhar Malviya helped him get recognition in society as a Sanskrit scholar. It was Malviya, a staunch RSS man, who gave him a job in the Saraswati Shishu Mandir in 1977.

Pandit Syed Husain Shastri is always surrounded, not only by students at the RSS-run Saraswati Shishu Mandir, but also by scholars who flood him with queries regarding grammar and the meaning of difficult shlokas.

He is known as the walking Veda. He can recite hundreds of shlokas and mantras and is able to explain their complex meanings with clarity. A brilliant student he is equally well versed in Hindi, Urdu, Arabic and Persian.

He is among the few who has worked for Sanskrit theatre and wrote dialogues for the Sanskrit film "Saree".

TIRTHANKAR BHAGWAN MAHAVEER

Tirthankar Mahaveer was the last and the twenty-fourth Tirthankar of the Jain faith. There were twenty-three Tirthankaras before him e. g. Rishabhdeo and others.

Jains believe that Bhagwans (Gods) are infinite, but Tirthankaras in one epoch and in Bharatkshetra are twenty-four only. Every Tirthankar, as a rule, is a Bhagwan, but every Bhagwan is not a Tirthankar. A soul can attain godhood without being a Tirthankar. Every soul can become a God. That which leads to the attainment of perfection is called Tirtha and those who reach that supreme state themselves and show others the path of emancipation are called the Tirthankaras.

Though the principles enunciated by Bhagwan Mahaveer are very deep, intricate, impressive and acceptable, his life is very easy, straight and eventless; there is no place for varieties in it. The story of his life, in brief is that he spent the first thirty years of life in the midst of wealth and splendour indifferently as a lotus in water. For the next twelve years he was engaged in the pursuit of the supreme soul and lived in jungles in deep meditation and during the last thirty years, he expounded Sarvodaya i.e. the welfare of all living beings, propagated it and spread it throughout the four corners of the land.

Mahaveer was born in Kundgram from the womb of queen Trishala, the wife of the Lichhavi King Siddhartha, the famous leader of the Vaishali Republic. His mother was the daughter of King Chetak, the President of the Vaishali Republic. He was born in the Nath family of Kshatriya clan, 2600 years back, on the thirteenth day of the second fortnight of Chaitra month. Looking at his constant growth, his parents named him Vardhman.

The festival of his birth was, celebrated with great zeal not only by his parents, relations and subjects of the kingdom, but also by gods and their lords, since he was going to be a Tirthankar. This festival is called Janma Kalyanak Mahotsava. The lord of the gods, Indra seated him on the elephant Airawat and performed the anointing ceremony with great pomp and show. The Jain epic texts give a vivid description of this event.

Even before his coming in the womb of his mother, it was known that a Tirthankar was to be born. One night, in the last hours, mother Priyakarini Trishla in her quiet sleep saw the following sixteen dreams indicative of a very auspicious happening .-

1. An elephant mad with intoxication.
2. A white ox with high shoulders.
3. A thundering lion.
4. Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, seated on the lotus throne.
5. Two fragrant garlands.
6. Moon in the assembly of stars.
7. Rising sun.
8. Two gold pitchers covered with lotus leaves.
9. Two fish playing in the tank.
10. A tank full to the brim with clean water.
11. The roaring ocean.
12. A throne inwrought with jewels.
13. A chariot of gods illuminated with gems.
14. The spacious sky touching the abode of Dharnendra.
15. A pile of gems, and
16. Fire without smoke.

All in all, these dreams indicate that the son to be born to Trishla would be as soft as leaves of flowers, as cold as the moon, as illustrious as the sun, a destroyer of the darkness of ignorance, powerful as an elephant, active as a bull, deep as an ocean, pure as the pile of jewels and bright as the flame of a smokeless fire.

Th boy Vardhman entered his mother's womb on the sixth day of the second half of Ashad month. He was healthy, handsome and possessed of an attractive personality, since birth. He justified the name Vardhman given to him, growing like the digit of the moon on the second day of the bright fortnight. His gold like physique attracted all and sundry. The lord of gods himself assumed a thousand eyes to drink deep the beauty of the frame of the Lord.

He was a sentient, thoughtful, discriminate and fearless boy. He did not know any fear. He was an embodiment of courage. He was, therefore, known as Veer and Ativeer since his childhood. Five of his names are famous -Veer, Ativeer, Sanmati, Vardhman and Mahaveer. He was prompt and ready-witted and never lost his balance in difficulties. One day, he was playing in the garden with other princes. He climbed a tree in his playful spirit. Meanwhile a terrible black snake encircled the trunk of the tree and began to emit fumes out of a fit of anger that would shake even the very strong. Finding themselves in adverse circumstances, the children began to shiver with fear, but that terrible snake could not disturb patient and strong child Mahaveer. Seeing Mahaveer fearlessly and without hesitation coming near it, the furious snake left the fury and went his way.

In the same way, once, an elephant became mad and began to spread havoc in the city, breaking away from the pillar of the building in which elephants were being kept. The whole city was agog and people began to run from one place to the other in panic. Prince Vardhman, however, did not lose his presence of mind and controlled the elephant with his power and cleverness. The bravery and patience of the prince became a talk of the common men in the city.

He was a genius and could solve great problems easily. He was quiet by nature; the seriousness grew with his entry into youth. He loved loneliness. He was always busy pondering over the fundamentals of life and death and indulged in deep discussions. Those eager to get to truth, placed their misgivings before him and he solved them in no time. Most of the doubts and misgivings were resolved by the sight of his calm posture. The big doubts about the fundamentals of religion of the big monks were removed by just having a look at his physical frame. He was himself a solution of these misgivings.

The world tried to persuade him to follow their path but Mahaveer was engrossed deep in the depths of his soul and so the world could not entangle him to follow their path. Youth threw its die on him, but in vain. The parental affections tried to block his way, but he did not float on the flood of his mother's tears.

Accordingly he left his home in the thirtieth year of his youth, on the tenth day of the first half of Magsir. He became naked and engaged himself in the pursuit of his self in that solitary forest. The Laukantik gods came from the heavens and praised him for his resolve with great reverence. Vardhman used to remain silent and did not talk to anybody. He was always engrossed in the contemplation of his soul. He did not even remember that he needed a bath or the cleaning of his teeth. He used to rest in the caves of the mountains, holding friends and foes alike, and was not disturbed by the fury of the inclemencies of weather.

The cruel animals of the forest saw his calm posture, natural ease and non-violent life and forgot their natural enmity and became friends. Snakes and mongooses, tigers and cows used to drink water from the same wharf. Wherever he stayed, the whole atmosphere was full of peace and quiet.

If sometimes he happened to have a liking for food, he would go to the nearest town with strange mental reservations. If some householder gave him pure food according to the scriptures' command and with nine types of rituals, he would take his meals and soon return to the forests. He also accepted food once at the hands of grief-ridden Sati Chandanbala.

Thus engaged in external and internal penances, he spent twelve years. At the age of forty-two in this state of deep self-absorption he annihilated subtle attachment and attained the completely detached state of his being. With this state of spiritual development he attained omniscience also. He became real Mahaveer having conquered the enemies of delusion, attachment and aversion completely. He became a Bhagwan being an omniscient and a completely detached being. His divine message was delivered first on the first day of the. month of Shravan, on account of which this day has been celebrated in the whole of India as Veer Shasan Jayanti.

Kuber was ordered by the Lord of the gods to construct a huge meeting-hall called the Samavsharan for the worldly creatures to meet and hear the divine message of Lord Mahaveer. Every being was entitled to go there and hear the message. There was no distinction of big or small. One whose conduct is non-violent, who has touched the intrinsic nature of substances, who has dived deep in his own self, is greater than not only human beings but also gods, though he may be born in a low family.

In his religious congregation kings and the commons, rich and poor, black and white, all sat together and listened to his message. Animals along with gods and humans also sat there and listened to the divine teachings of the Lord. Such equality amongst the creatures of this world is difficult elsewhere. In the fourfold federation of the Lord, there were monks, she-monks, male and female householders.

Many learned scholars opposed to him, became his disciples shunning their own wrong conceptions, after being influenced by his message of universal love and goodwill. The chief amongst them was his chief disciple Indrabhuti Gautam. He was accepted as the first preceptor of the Lord and became famous as Gautam Swami. Amongst his householder disciples Maharaj Shrenik (Bimbsar), the king of Magadh, was the chief.

He traversed the length and breadth of India continuously for thirty years. Different beings understood his teachings in their own languages. His sermons were called Divya Dhwani. He has upheld the independence of the soul and all other substances. He declared that every soul is independent; none depends upon the other; self-reliance is the way to achieve complete independence. Self-reliance is nothing but centralisation of one's vision on one's soul only, different from colour, attachment and division. Independence can only be achieved on one's own strength; you can't get infinite bliss and independence in charity or achieve them on others' strength. All souls are separate and independent, not one, but like one, similar, none big or small. He, therefore, ordained :-

1. Regard other souls as your own.
2. All souls are equal, but not one.
3. If our efforts are directed towards right direction, every soul can attain godhood.
4. Every creature is unhappy on account of his own mistakes, and can become happy by removing the mistakes.

Mahaveer did not propagate any new truth; there is nothing like old or new in truth. Whatever he said is true and eternal. He did not establish truth; he only inaugurated it. He did not found any new religion. Religion is the nature of substances. The nature of

substances cannot be built. Tirthankar Bhagwan knows and exposes the nature of things, does not create them.

He was a Tirthankar. He propounded the Tirtha i.e., the way to the liberation of the soul. Acharya Samant Bhadra has called his teachings Sarvodaya Tirtha (religion that preaches the welfare of all living beings). That which leads to the welfare of all is Sarvodya. The religion for the welfare of all as propounded by Lord Mahaveer and his exposition of truths of life and immortality, have no narrowness or limits. The religion of the soul is for all creatures. It is a kind of narrowness to associate religion with human beings only. It is a religion of all the living beings. The term "religion of man" is also not liberal enough. It limits the scope of religion to the community of human beings only, while religion extends to all the sentient world, for all the creatures want to live in peace and happiness.

Bhagwan Mahaveer expounded the complete independent existence of every substance and that every substance changes its modifications itself. No other substance can interfere in this natural procedure. Even God, the almighty, is not the creator or the destroyer of, this existence of the things. The preachings of Mahaveer upheld the independence not only of the living beings, but of all the atoms, which are the smallest (indivisible) particles or units of matter substance and which cannot be further divided.

In the end, at the age of seventy-two, on the Dipawali day, the last Tirthankar of this epoch Bhagwan Mahaveer, abandoned this physical frame and attained Nirwan (complete liberation). The same day, his chief disciple Indrabhuti Gautam achieved omniscience. According to Jain tradition, the great festival of Deepawali is celebrated in honour of the liberation of Bhagwan Mahaveer and attainment of complete sentience by his chief disciple Gautam.

KNOW YOUR HINDUISM...

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CASTE SYSTEM

The caste system or *varna-ashrama* has been one of the most misrepresented, misinformed, misunderstood and misused aspect of Hinduism. It is a serious mistake to view caste from the European Christian and imperialistic viewpoints since they were hostile to Hindu civilization and society which they were trying to undermine to serve their own interests. To properly study the role of caste, we must look at it from the perspective of Indian history and culture. Here we present to you this topic in a simple question-answer format to make it easy for all to understand.

WHAT IS THIS CASTE SYSTEM ???

According to the Vedic scriptures, in the Vedic times the society was divided into four sections. This division was called Varna (Sanskrit word—meaning class) Vyavastha. The word Varna was mistakenly translated by the Portugese during their period in India, as Caste. (Which actually means *Jaati*).

A text in the Mahabharat categorically states that originally there were no classes; all people were Brahmanic in the beginning. The existing distribution arose from character and occupation. Four orders of society were recognized, based upon the four main goals of human beings. These four orders of society were called " Varna". The Varna system of the Vedas was designed to achieve division of labor and help society operate efficiently.

WHAT ARE THE FOUR DIVISIONS????

Brahmins: Brahmins are the priests. They should neither have property or executive power. They are the seers and conscience of the society.

Kshatriyas: Are the administrators, they have the duty of protecting the country and preserving the high courage and manhood of action.

Vaishyas: Are the traders and craftsmen, men of technical ability who aim at efficiency.

Sudras: Routine workers, the proletariat, who carry out instructions. They perform the humble duties of service without which the other castes could not perform their share of labor for the common good.

WHY THIS VARNA VYAVASTHA WAS REQUIRED ???

This was introduced in the Vedic times as a social organization based on free choice of vocations in accordance with one's vocational aptitudes determined by vocational training. Its purpose is not to divide people into caste or classes (as it is generally supposed to be) but to integrate the society into a whole by giving each type of individual a suitable vocational place in it. It aims at efficiency and co-operation.

Modern society in the West is in a chaotic condition. There is a great struggle for existence, power and wealth. All people seek for one and the same thing, that is wealth and power. The ancient Indians who planned society on the basis of varna understood human nature better and planned a pattern of society in which there

would be less chaos, less struggle and less dissatisfaction.

IS IT TRUE THAT ONE CANNOT CHANGE HIS VARNA ??? (CASTE).
IS THERE ANY MENTION OF IN RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES??

"***One is a Brahmin not on account of birth or the performance of rites, not by study or family, but on account of his behavior***"---**ANUSASANPARVA**

"***Even one who is born as a Sudra, by good conduct can raise himself to the highest status***".: **ARANYAPARVA**.

"***There is no superior caste. The universe is the work of the Immense being. The beings created by him were only divided into castes according to their aptitude***.." **MAHABAHRAT**.

This is what our ancient scriptures said, and following are some the practical examples given in our ancient scriptures about innumerable personalities that clearly illustrate that the Varna system of the Vedas was based upon one's aptitude and natural capabilities, NOT BY BIRTH:-

VED VYASA: He was the son of Satyavati, a low caste fisherwoman. Vyasadev's deep knowledge of the Vedas later determined his caste as a Brahmin sage and not as a Shudra, since he was born to Satyavati. Vyasdev's contribution to Hinduism is legendary, having compiled the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas and writing the Mahabharat.

RISHI VALMIKI: The author of Ramayana was a low caste robber. He came to be known as a Brahmin sage on the basis of his knowledge and his masterly work of writing the Ramyana.

SAGE AITAREYA: He wrote the Aitraeya Upanishad, he was born of a Shudra woman.

RISHI PARASHAR: the famous lawgiver was the son of a Chandala, the lowest of the Sudras. And yet, he was considered one of the foremost Brahmanas.

VIDURA: he gave religious instruction to King Dhritarashtra, even though he was born to a low caste woman servant of the palace.

KAURAVAS & PANDAVAS: were the descendants of Satyavati, a low caste fisherwoman, and the sons of sage Vyasa. But the Kauravas & Pandavas were known as Kshtriya on the basis of their occupation.

If some of the greatest sages and seers, some of the greatest kings in Hinduism came from a low-caste background, HOW COULD THE BIASED HISTORIANS AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES CLAIM THAT THE CASTE SYSTEM IN ANCIENT INDIA WAS BASED ON BIRTH??? IT IS NOTHING BUT TOTAL IGNORANCE OF OUR SCRIPTURES!

Besides the above, there were so many other famous Saints who came from a lower caste background, like KABIR, SURADAS, RAMDAS, TUKARAM, THIRUVALLUVAR.

BUT GENERALLY IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE SCRIPTURES SANCTION THE ADVISE TO STRICTLY FOLLOW THE CASTE SYSTEM???? IS IT CORRECT?

There are many many examples in the religious texts, which are contrary to the general perception, being spread around in the Western & Communist controlled media. The following examples clarify this.

In the Mahabharata, Yudishtra defines "a Brahmin as one who is truthful, forgiving and kind and a Sudra is not a Sudra by birth alone nor a Brahmin is a Brahmin by birth alone".

The author of one of the hymns of the Rig Veda says: " I am a composer of hymns, my father is a physician, my mother grinds corn on a stone. We are all engaged in different occupations".

Upanishads clearly states that " the soul, whether of a Brahmin or a Chandal, is divine".

In the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna says (Ch 4 Verse 13) " The fourfold caste has been created by Me according to the differentiation of Guna (attributes) and Karma.

Also in the Gita, Lord Krishna adds " Of Brahmins, Kshtriyas and Vaishyas, as also the Sudras, O Arjuna, the duties are distributed according to the qualities born of their own nature".

BUT WHAT ABOUT " MANU SMRITI" WHICH IN ONE VERSE TELLS TO POUR MOLTEN LEAD IN THE EARS OF THE SHUDRA WHO LISTENS THE VEDIC SHLOKAS ???

There are many other verses in the Manu Smriti, which are contrary to the much-publicized above saying. They are as follows:

"*A Brahmin who departs from the Rule of Noble Conduct, does not gain the fruit described in the Veda, but he who duly follows the Rule of Noble Conduct, will obtain the full reward*" (Manu Smriti 1 , 109)

"*He who possesses faith may receive pure learning even from a man of lower caste, the highest law even from the lowest, and an excellent wife even from a base family*" (Manu Smriti II, 238)

Moreover, Manu Smriti is a sociological treatise and not a religious or theological work. It has never been held on par with the Vedas and has never been claimed to be a Holy book whose authority is unquestionable. Manu Smriti is as this worldly as the Arthashatra written by Kautilya (Chankya)

SOME MORE EXAMPLES FROM THE EPIC RAMAYANA & MAHABHARTA

In both the above epics the life of society of India as it existed in those days is well portrayed. They are our standards. Oppression or exploitation of weaker sections of society is nowhere in them.

Ramayana has many incidents of interaction of different sections of society. Like the one incident in which Lord Ram has to cross the Ganga River when he started his vanvas (exile), he has used the services of Kevat, a low caste Mallah. Ram highly praised his services and was much thankful to Kevat.

There is another incident of Ram eating the wild berries, which are already half eaten by the lower caste woman " Shabri". Ram happily eats those berries and tells

Laxman not to see the status of the person, but to see the love behind that act.

There is a beautiful harmony and co-operation that prevailed in society not just in Ayodhya but also through out Bharat Varsh. There was no whole scale massacre of defeated people. That is our standard. Only because of such values, the great champion of Hindus in recent times, Shivaji, following the foot steps of Sri Ram, not only freed the captured wife of the Subedar of Kalyan Durga but also honored her calling her as his mother and sent her with honors and presents as one sends his sister to her in law's home.

ALL THE EXAMPLES OF GOOD POINTS OF CASTE SYSTEM ARE FROM THE ANCIENT TIMES??? BUT HOW ABOUT MORE RECENT TIMES, WHERE WE FIND MORE EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINTATION AGAINST THE LOWER CASTE, AND THE SUPPRESION OF LOWER CASTE BY THE BRAHMINS ETC??

The Varna System was started with very good intentions of division of labor, and to ensure harmony and peace in society, but as a result of exploitation by some people and socio-economic elements of society, this system became hereditary and degenerated over the centuries.

The Caste (Varna) System is a indeed a splendid thing, It is quite flawless. But the defect came from somewhere else. The classes gradually neglected their duties. The test of ability and character slowly vanished. Birth became the chief consideration in determining castes. All castes fell from their ideals and forgot all about their duties. The higher castes, including the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas refused to interact with the Sudras, whom they considered as

engaged in impure activities. This degenerative process started around 2,000 years back and further accelerated since then.

The Caste system could not have been part of Hindu religious philosophy, since it violates fundamental Hindu doctrine, according to which there is no absolute distinction between individuals, since the atman dwells in the hearts of all beings. There is no religious sanction whatsoever to the concept of caste system in Hinduism.

But even during that period, there was no lack of reformers and religious leaders who fought against the injustice. Gautam Buddha, Mahavir, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ramanujacharya, Madhavacharya, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Narsi Mehta, Surdas, just to name a few. Also, casteism in its ugly form did not exist in many kingdoms even during that period.

IS IT THE PORTRYAL OF BRAHMINS AS THE OPPRESSORS WAS STARTED BY THE BRITISH DURING THEIR RULE IN INDIA??? WHAT WERE THE BRITISH TO GAIN FROM IT ????

The British were not wrong in their distrust of educated Brahmins in whom they saw a potential threat to their supremacy in India. The predominance of the Brahmins in the freedom movement confirmed the worst British suspicions of the community. In an attempt to rewrite Indian history, Brahmins began to be portrayed as oppressors and tyrants who willfully kept down the rest of the population. Their role in the development of Indian society was deliberately removed. Apart from misrepresenting the Indian past, the British actively encouraged anti-Brahmin sentiments. As a result of these, non –Brahmins turned on the Brahmins with a ferocity that has few parallels in Indian history.

But actually if any community could claim credit for driving the British out of the country, it was the Brahmin community. 70% of those who were felled by British bullets were Brahmins.

IF THE PRESENT CASTE SYSTEM IS SO STRONG IN HINDUISM THESE DAYS, IS IT POSSIBLE TO CHANGE ONE'S RELIGION TO COME OUT THE RIGID CASTE SYSTEM ?????

For decades Christian Missionaries have used malicious propaganda against the caste system in India and abroad. They claim that the oppressive caste system is keeping Hindus in spiritual darkness and mired in poverty.

Their main idea is to paint Christianity as the ideal egalitarian and compassionate religion, in order to lure Tribals, Dalits and other oppressed in India to convert. Inspite of the lofty claims, Christianity has failed to eradicate the caste system. Dalit Christians are still discriminated even in the Church. According to reports 70% of the Tamil Catholics are Dalits. It is reported that out of 14 Bishops in Tamil Nadu only one is a Dalit. In addition, the existence of separate churches for Dalits in Kerala makes a mockery of the tall claims of Christianity. The same is the case even with the Muslims in India.

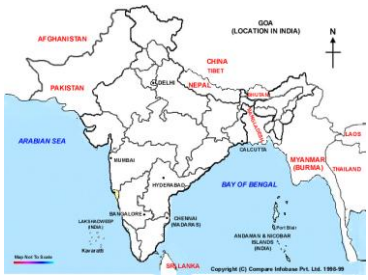
CONCLUSION

Caste system in its present form is inhuman and it exploitative aspects must be abolished. Institutions and practices that lead to the disintegration of society require to be scrapped. Whatever might have been the historical basis for the development of the caste system,

it has degraded the great ideal of the ancient Upanishads, which affirm that an individual as such is a spark of the spirit, a ray of the Divine. The Current caste system is something which has to be changed.

At present, most educated Indians, most Indians familiar with their religion, with their culture DO NOT ACCEPT THE CASTE SYSTEM and do not distinguish between a high-caste person and a low-caste one, though it is true that politicians try to create differences where there are none, or keep the pot boiling in places where there are some tensions, in order to further their vote-bank politics. Officially, untouchability was abolished in 1949. The Indian constitution guarantees 22.5% of these seats for people of lower castes. Affirmative action has increased to the extent of 50% in a few states.

The President of India, Sri K. R. Narayanan is from the so-called lowest class and the Chief Minister of India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, Ms. Mayavati is also from the same lowest caste. Compare that with the United States of America, which is yet to elect a Black president. In fact, no other country in the world has constitutional safeguards for the disadvantaged as India has. Thus, the problems that have come out from the misuse of the caste system must be handled by the society itself, by the people itself and by the country itself. And there is no doubt that one day these differences will disappear, considering that the people of all the castes are of the same racial and ethnic origin and that there is no religious sanction for the perverted caste system.



The states of BHARAT

UTTAR PRADESH

Area:- 238,053 sq.km, Population:- About 140 million
State capital:- Lucknow Main language:- Hindi
Famous pilgrimage centers:- Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Goverdhan, Varanasi, Prayag, Sarnath
Famous touristic places:- Lucknow, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Kalinjar, Deogarh, Jhansi

UTTAR PRADESH IS BY FAR BHARAT'S MOST POPULATED STATE. THE MAJOR RIVER OF UTTAR PRADESH IS THE SACRED GANGA, THE MOST HOLIEST RIVER OF THE HINDUS. THIS RIVER IS NOT ONLY SACRED BUT IS ALSO VALUABLE FOR IRRIGATION. THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IN AGRICULTURE, THIS STATE IS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR PRODUCERS OF SUGARCANE. OILSEEDS, POTATOES AND COTTON ALL OCCUPY LARGE ACREAGES. UTTAR PRADESH CONTAINS SOME OF THE HOLIEST PLACES OF THE HINDUS – AYODHYA, WHERE LORD RAM WAS BORN; BRIJBHOOMI AREA (INCLUDES MATHURA WHERE KRISHNA WAS BORN AND VRINDAVAN WHERE HE GREW UP); AND VARANASI WHICH IS EXTREMELY SACRED TO LORD SHIVA. THE CITY OF VARANASI, CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE OLDEST CITIES IN THE WORLD, WAS KNOWN AS KASHI IN THE ANCIENT DAYS AND IT IS SAID THAT THIS CITY COMBINES ALL THE VIRTUES OF ALL OTHER PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE. EACH YEAR, WELL OVER 1 MILLION PILGRIMS VISIT THIS CITY TO BATHE IN ITS GHATS ON THE RIVER. THERE ARE MORE THAN HUNDRED GHATS IN VARANASI. IT IS ALSO FAMOUS

FOR THE VISHWANATH TEMPLE, DEDICATED TO LORD SHIVA AND THE MOST IMPORTANT TEMPLE IN THE CITY. THE ORIGINAL TEMPLE WAS DESTROYED BY AURANGZEB AND A MOSQUE BUILT OVER ITS SITE. VARANASI STANDS AS THE CHIEF CENTER OF SANSKRIT LEARNING IN NORTH INDIA. THE SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY LOCATED OVER HERE HAS OVER 150,000 RARE MANUSCRIPTS. THE CITY IS ALSO HOST TO THE BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY, ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS UNIVERSITIES IN THE COUNTRY, FOUNDED BY MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA. VARANASI IS ALSO FAMOUS FOR SILK SAREES AND FOR ALL KINDS OF HANDICRAFTS. ANOTHER IMPORTANT TOWN IN UTTAR PRADESH IS ALLAHBAD (ITS ORIGINAL NAME IS PRAYAG), WHICH IS ONE OF THE FOUR PLACES WHERE THE KUMBHA MELA TAKES PLACE.

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Children corner

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JOKES

TEACHER: Why are you late?
WEBSTER: Because of the sign.
TEACHER: What sign?
WEBSTER: The one that says, "School Ahead, Go Slow."

TEACHER: Cindy, why are you doing your maths sums on the floor?
CINDY: You told me to do it without using tables!

TEACHER: John, how do you spell "crocodile"?
JOHN: K-R-O-K-O-D-A-I-L"
TEACHER: No, that's wrong
JOHN: Maybe it's wrong, but you ask me how I spell it!

TEACHER: What is the chemical formula for water?
SARAH: "HIJKLMNO"!!
TEACHER: What are you talking about?

SARAH: Yesterday you said it's H to O!

TEACHER: Willy, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago.
WILLY: Me!

TEACHER: Tommy, why do you always get so dirty?
TOMMY: Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground then you are.

SILVIA: Dad, can you write in the dark?
FATHER: I think so. What do you want me to write?
SYLVIA: Your name on this report card.

TEACHER: How can you prevent diseases caused by biting insects?
JOSE: Don't bite any.

TEACHER: Ellen, give me a sentence starting with "I".
ELLEN: I is...
TEACHER: No, Ellen. Always say, "I am."
ELLEN: All right... "I am the ninth letter of the alphabet."

Teacher: "Can anybody give an example of COINCIDENCE?"
Johnny : "Sir, my Mother and Father got married on the sameday same time."

Son : Daddy, have you ever been to Egypt?
Father : No. Why do you ask that?
Son : Well, where did you get THIS mummy then?

Teacher : What a pair of strange socks you are wearing, one is green and one is blue with red spots!
Kirk : Yes it's really strange. I've got another pair of the same at home.

Teacher: Now, children, if I saw a man beating a donkey and stopped him, what virtue would I be showing?
Student: Brotherly love.

Teacher: Desmond, your composition on "My Dog" is exactly the same as your brother's.! ! Did u copy his?
Desmond: No, teacher, it's the same dog!

Teacher: What do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?
Pupil : A teacher

STORY

Good or bad, hard to say

Once upon a time, there was a king. The king liked one of his followers very much because he was very wise and always gave very useful advice. Therefore the king took him along wherever he went.

One day, the king was bitten by a dog, the finger was injured and the wound was getting worse. He asked the follower if that was a bad sign. The follower said, 'Good or bad, hard to say'.

In the end, the finger of the king was too bad that had to be cut. The king asked the follower again if that was a bad sign. Again, the

follower gave the same answer 'Good or bad, hard to say'. The king became very angry and sent the follower to prison.

One day, the king went hunting in the jungle. He got excited when he was on the chase of a deer. Deeper and deeper he went inside the jungle. In the end he found himself lost in the jungle. To make thing worse, he got captured by the native people who lived inside the jungle. They wanted to sacrifice him to their god. But when they noticed that the king had one finger short, they released him immediately as he was not a perfect man anymore and not suitable for sacrifice.

The king managed to get back to his palace after all. And he finally understood the follower's wise quote, 'Good or bad, hard to say'. If he hadn't lost one finger, he could have been killed by the native people.

He ordered to release the follower, and apologized to him. But to the king amaze, the follower was not mad at him at all. Instead, the follower said, 'It wasn't a bad thing that you locked me up.' Why? Because if the king hadn't locked the follower up, he would have brought the follower along to the jungle. If the native found that the king was not suitable, they would have used the follower. Again, the quote 'Good or bad, hard to say' stands.

The moral of the story is that everything that happens in this world, there is no absolute good or bad. Sometimes good things turned out to be bad things eventually, while bad things become a gain. Whatever good things that happen to you, enjoy it, but don't have to hold too tight to it, treat it as a surprise in your life. Whatever bad things that happen to you, don't have to feel too sad or dispair, in the end, it might not be a total bad thing after all. If one can understand this, he or she will find life much easier.

SANDESH BHARATI

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Editorial Team
Nirmal Laungani, Manoj Kumar Motwani, Haresh Khushi, Vijai Jeandani

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