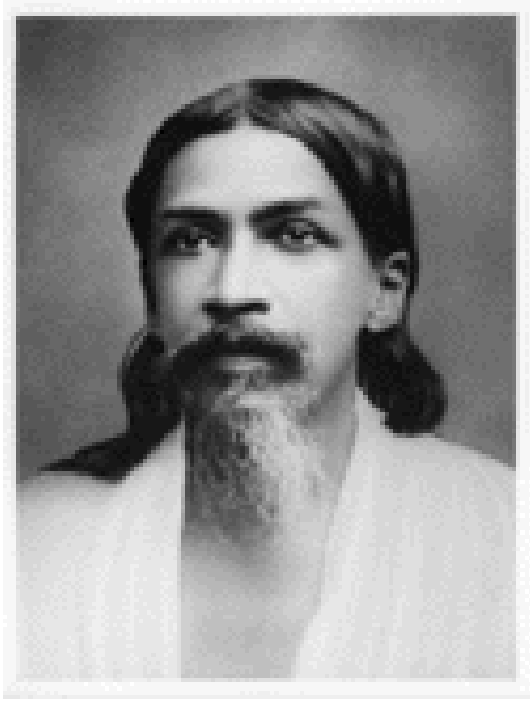
SANDESH BHARATI

Vol V No. 4 **Oct/Nov/Dec 2002** **HongKong**



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Krishna said,"Do you duty, Arjun, as your nature dictates. All work fetters, as all fire gives smoke. Only selfless duty saves. Fix your mind on me. Surrender all deeds to me. All problems will be solved by my grace. Pride will lead only to your moral ruin. If, filled with pride, you say, 'I will not fight,' it is all in vain. You are foolish. Fight you will, your nature will make you fight. Your karma will make you fight. You will fight in spite of yourself."

-Mahabharata

VIJAYADASHMI CELEBRATION IN HONG KONG

This year we celebrated the Vijayadashmi Utsav on the 12th of October. This being the last festival of the year celebrated by our Shakha, it was done with the full participation of Swayamsevaks, Adhikaris & shikshaks.

As it is well known, on this day we celebrate not only the victory of Raja Ram over Ravana, but a wider concept of victory of good over evil forces is also the main motive to celebrate this festival in Sangh.

The utsav programme started exactly on time, with our Sangh-chalak (President) Shri G.T. Gulji doing the Shastra pooja. Then, the speaker of the day Shri Shekhar Aiyar explained in his short and concise speech the importance of the day, the relevance of Shastra Pooja, and also covered some points on the Durga Pooja. (As this day is known as Durga Pooja day in West Bengal and neighbouring states).

We were then entertained with a beautiful patriotic Geet sung by Shri M.S. Raj.

Later, a quiz was conducted; the questions were connected with the significance of Vijaya Dashami. The quiz was well participated by the Swayamsevaks who were too eager to answer the questions.

The programme ended with everybody sharing the Preeti Prasad, which as usual was lovingly prepared by the families of participating Swayamsevaks and Adhikaris. Here we wish to express our sincere thanks to Shri Shyam ji, who as everytime untiringly prepared special dishes cooked by his loving affection for all.

NASA IMAGES DISCOVER ANCIENT BRIDGE BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA

This article proves that the bridge mentioned in the Ramayana as being built by Lord Ram with the help of the Vanaras beween Rameshwaram – Sri Lanka is absolutely true.

In a similar vein, it has been proved without any doubt that Dwarka City built by Krishna existed, as described in the Mahabharat and other scriptures. The remains found in the submerged city of Dwarka by marine archaeologists clearly proves the antiquity and age of that city and they tally with the details mentioned in our scriptures.

Critics and rationalists beware!
HINDUS DO NOT ACCEPT THEIR RELIGION AND SCRIPTURES AS MERE LEGENDS OR MYTHOLOGIES. WE BELIEVE THEM TO BE A PART OF HISTORY. WE BELIEVE THEM TO BE TRUE AND REAL"

Space images taken by NASA reveal a mysterious ancient bridge in the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka. The bridge currently named as Adam´s Bridge is made of chain of shoals, c.18 mi (30 km) long.

The bridge´s unique curvature and composition by age suggests that it may be man made. The legends as well as Archeological studies reveal that the first signs of human inhabitants in Sri Lanka date back to the primitive age, about 1,750,000 years ago.

This information is a crucial aspect for an insight into the mysterious legend called Ramayana, which was supposed to have taken place in Tredha Yuga (more than 1,700,000 years ago).
In this epic, there is a mentioning about a bridge, which was built between Rameshwaram (India) and Srilankan coast under the supervision of a dynamic and invincible figure called Rama who is supposed to be the incarnation of the supreme.

This information may not be of much importance to the archeologists who are interested in exploring the origins of man, but it is sure to open the spiritual gates of the people of the world to have come to know an ancient history linked to the Indian mythology.

READERS COLUMN

Dear Readers,

In response to our column "COMMON QUESTIONS POSED TO YOU - HOW DO YOU ANSWER" of Jul/Aug/Sep, we received the following interesting letter from Shri Rajesh Pandey,

"Thanks for sending a copy of Sandesh Bharati. The section of "Common Questions Posed to You - How do you answer" was interesting and informative.

I especially liked the way you guys emphasized that problems exist in all parts of the world and at least as far as crime is concerned, our country is way behind places like the States. But yet, in our country, the media likes to sensationalise the negative news as if it is the only nation where it is happening.

To give you an example, one of India's leading political magazine, INDIA TODAY, had a cover story on rape dated September 9th,2002. There it was mentioned that according to WHO, a woman was raped in India every 54 minutes. That means less than 10,000 rapes in a year from a population of 1 billion plus.

Nothing to be proud about, but INDIA TODAY does not seem to be aware of statistics concerning rape in the United States, where:-

a. 1.2 women are raped every minute
b. 1 out of 4 women can expect to be assaulted in their lifetime
c. 50% of all rapes occur to women under the age of 18
d. Every 21 hours, there is a rape on a college campus
e. According to National Victims Center Report, in 1992 there were 683,000 rapes. Even though crime in the States has improved, the figure for rapes is still the highest in the world.

I did send an email to India Today but they did not publish it; if you think it will be informative to your readers, you can go-ahead and publish it in your magazine.

Thanks,
Rajesh Pandey,
San Jose, USA

Book Review

Name of book: How to become a Hindu
Author: Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami
No. of pages 410
Reviewed by: Gordhan Gurnani (17), Chandragupta Shakha, Kowloon

The author of this book was a Christian and had his first encounter with Hinduism at the age of 20 in 1974. He went on to become a spiritual teacher (an initiating Guru) and also the 162nd successor of the Nandinatha Kailasa lineage and the satguru of Kauai Aadhaeenam.

This book starts off with testimonies of different people, who were born in a different religious background and their encounter with Hinduism. These people all had one thing in common, the religions in which they believed in didn't seem to answer all their questions in their mind but when they came to Hinduism they found peace and attained spiritual knowledge. All of them formally converted to Hinduism, which according to them is a very necessary step in severing all old ties with their old religion and bonding their loyalties to Hinduism.

Going further ahead, the author discusses several issues. There are two conversations in which a puzzled devotee asks Gurudev on how one can enter Hinduism and he also discusses about ethical conversion.

The best part of this book starts from the 5th chapter "Does Hinduism Accept Newcomers" you will learn about the truth of Hinduism, the beliefs and its obligations. For those who don't know the 5 obligations they are **worship, Holy days, Virtuous living, Pilgrimage and Rites of passage**. This chapter is very beneficial as it gives the background of the origin as well as showing the good quality of being a Hindu.

The author concluded this book with the comparison of Hinduism with other religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism…etc. here the author tells us a brief history about the religions, their goals and beliefs. It also attacks at the most common questions asked by missionaries, which some people do not know how to answer clearly. Not knowing how to answer these questions, your mind will be brainwashed in what the missionaries speak and you will be easily converted. Which is why this part of the book is ***extremely essential*** to all.

Unlike other religions, choosing a name for a newborn or a new follower is not a very easy task. For instance, in Islam males keep their last name Mohammed. While in the Chinese culture the Chinese just mix the names up. But to choose a Hindu name is not an easy job to do. One has to discover the quality and the

ability of the person before giving him/her a name. Because the name you are given will describe your personality.

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world. And as time passes by, it has been broken down into many sects. No matter which sect we are from, we are all regarded as Hindus. And as Hindus we must stand together and reunite.

To end my review, I would say that this book has already given me all the information I needed to know about my religion and I would recommend this book to those people who do not know much about Hinduism or for those who want to learn more about this religion.

Terrorism, from Tower to Temple

From Bombay riots to Coimbatore blasts, from Parliament attack to September 11 attack, from Godhra to Amarnath pilgrims and now Swaminarayan temple, terrorism is rearing its ugly head off and on. It knows no bounds or ends. And is spreading from country to country, twin tower to temple, challenging all those who have vowed to contain it. It can unleash terror anywhere at anytime. With the state-of-the-art arms and techniques and training it has once more proved its efficiency to spread the blood of some innocent people, its latest target was some devotees at Swaminarayan temple in Gujarat. It is sending shock waves throughout the world, from work place to worshipping place people stay in terror.

A group of gunmen opened fire on devotees before the evening aarti at the Swaminarayan temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Terrorists killed 37 people at Akshardham Temple leaving many injured.

Temple complex is spread over a 23-acre area, with shrines, sculptures, exhibitions, audio-visuals, parks,

lakes and rides, Akshardham has about 5000 visitors daily.

A large number of people including the children who visit the amusement park were trapped inside the temple complex until the State Commando Force turned up to their rescue.

The terrorists struck at a time when the number of visitors was at its peak. The temple had a rush of visitors by 5 p.m.

Sources say, two of the terrorists entered by climbing the fence part the VVIP Gate Number, the other two came through the main gate. When the security asked them to deposit their sidebag, the two fired shot from their AK 47 rifles and rushed aiming the sanctum sanctorum. At the same time the other two terrorists who had entered through the other gate hurled a hand grenade as they rushed towards one of the side wings. Eight people were killed on the spot.

CKPF and BSF took charge of the cordon around the temple complex. The number of the injured swelled by the hour, making the medical facility unable to cope with the rush. But doctors and blood donors rushed in to help the injured.

The dead include 34 civilians and three securitymen, one each from the NSG, the State Commando Force and the SRP. The terrorists are said to belong to a group operating in Gujarat namely Tehrek-a-Kasag which means “Movement for revenge in Gujarat”.

The siege came to an end by the 5.45 a.m. the next day. It was the NSG that could locate the two hiding terrorists. The security guards had killed the terrorists holed up in the temple complex on Tuesday night.

The NSG commandos had 20-25 Austrian-made plastic grenades and 180 rounds of ammunition while each terrorist had six magazines of AK-47 rifle, Brigadier Raj Sitapathi, who led the NSG operation said. Two of them were carrying emergency rations like chocolates, raisin and almonds.

Shri Sitapathi said that fighting the young terrorists was not an easy job. The ingenuity they showed while throwing grenades indicates that both were trained in guerilla warfare", he said.

For the NSG it was a fight to the finish. It was after everything had come to an end the NSG spotted two grenades. One has gone damp as it was in the hand of a dead terrorist lying near a leaking tap. But another grenade lying near the basement exploded after sometime.

The operation suffered due to lack of proper light, which also was favourable for terrorists to escape. Even after three hours of continuous firing, the terrorists were not traced. The officials had not got details of the terrorists, but all of them were sure that two terrorists were lurking inside the temple.

The police remarked that the attack could be in retaliation to the communal riots that broke out after the Godhra carnage.

Among the many injured devotees, some Muslims were also seen. Several Muslims used to visit the temple and its amusement park.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee who was in Maldives, cut short his programme and returned to India.

"We will deal with terrorism with a firm hand. Government is strong to tackle the scourge and it has the people's trust

and faith", said the Prime Minister at a reception hosted by Indian High Commission to Maldives S.M. Gavai.

Prime Minister who visited the Swaminarayan temple after flying in directly from Maldives said that Pakistan has a hand in the temple carnage.

"We must remain united and maintain our traditional spirit of brotherhood at all costs. There is no room for differing", the Prime Minister said.

"First violence takes place somewhere and revenge is taken elsewhere. This must end", he said.

It is not a question of party but is linked to the question of the country's unity, societal security and communal fabric," the Prime Minister added.

"We must maintain communal harmony. There cannot be any place for animosity," he further said. Posing questions on the attack the Prime Minister asked "Who were these two terrorists? Who was behind them? I think there was a conspiracy behind this outrage. The Government will make all efforts to get to the root of this. This is not just the handiwork of two persons. Some other powers are behind it".

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, while speaking in Gujarat held Pakistan responsible for the attack. He said that a leader of the "enemy country" had given indication of such type of attack. Musharraf, while talking about Gujarat at the UN had given hints of terror, Advani further clarified his statement.

Shri Advani remarked that the terrorists were targetting Gujarat after the successful Kashmir elections, where they could not unleash terror.

Terrorism has changed the world, its impact is now evident in every field. From economy to the very existence of human beings, it is destroying everything denying peace to the world.

Binary Numbers in Ancient India

Binary numbers form the basis for the operation of computers. Binary numbers were discovered in the west by German mathematician Gottfried Leibniz in 1695. However, new evidence proves that binary numbers were used in India prior to 2nd century A.D., more than 1500 years before their discovery in the west.

Ancient India had a tradition of scholarly learning. This tradition continued till the beginning of current millennium. During the millennium long foreign rule hostile to scholarly activities, a vast body of scientific information was lost. Thankfully some of the ancient literature has survived. Most of the scholarly work needed to preserve the ancient learning was done in South India which remained free from invasion for a significant time. Scholars are now rediscovering the forgotten contributions of ancient India in the field of mathematics and science. One of these discoveries is that of the use of Binary numbers for the classification of meters.

The source of this discovery is a text of music by Pingala named "Chhandahshastra" meaning science of meters. This text falls under the category of "Sutra" or aphorismic statements. Detailed discussions of these short but profound statements are found in later commentaries. "Chhandahshastra" can be conservatively dated to 2nd century A.D. The main commentaries on "Chhandahshastra" are "Vrittaratnakara" by Kedara in probably 8th century, "Tatparyatika" by Trivikrama in 12th century and

"Mritasanjivani" by Halayudha in 13th century. The full significance of Pingala's work can be understood by the explanations found in these three commentaries.

Pingala (Chhandahshastra 8.23) describes the formation of a matrix in order to give a unique value to each meter. An example of such a matrix is as follows:

0 0 0 0 numerical value 1
1 0 0 0 numerical value 2
0 1 0 0 numerical value 3
1 1 0 0 numerical value 4
0 0 1 0 numerical value 5
1 0 1 0 numerical value 6
0 1 1 0 numerical value 7
1 1 1 0 numerical value 8
0 0 0 1 numerical value 9
1 0 0 1 numerical value 10
0 1 0 1 numerical value 11
1 1 0 1 numerical value 12
0 0 1 1 numerical value 13
1 0 1 1 numerical value 14
0 1 1 1 numerical value 15
1 1 1 1 numerical value 16

Following comments are in order:

Pingala's system of binary numbers starts with number one (and not zero). The numerical value is obtained by adding one to the sum of place values.

In Pingala's system the place value increases to the right, unlike the modern notation in which it increases towards the left. This also proves that these two systems developed independently.

Pingala (Chhandahshastra 8.24-25) also describes how to find the binary equivalent of a decimal number. The procedure is as follows:

1. Divide the number by two. If divisible write 1, else write 0 on ground.
2. If first division yielded 1, divide again by two. If divisible write 1, else write 0 to the right of first 1.
3. If first division yielded 0, add one to the remaining number and divide by two. If divisible write 1, else write 0 to the right of first 0.
4. Continue this procedure till you get zero as the remaining number.

To illustrate this procedure let us find the binary equivalent of number 108.

Step 1: Divide by two. Divisible, so write 1. Remaining number is 54. **1**
Step 2: Divide number 54 by 2. Divisible, so write 1 next to first 1. Remaining number is 27. **1 1**
Step 3: Divide 27 by 2. Indivisible, so write 0 to the right. Add 1 to 27 and divide by 2. Remaining number is 14. **1 1 0**
Step 4: Divide 14 by 2. Divisible, so write 1 to the right. Remaining number is 7. **1 1 0 1**
Step 5: Divide 7 by 2. Indivisible, so write 0 to the right. Add 1 to 7 and divide by two. Remaining number is 4. **1 1 0 1 0**
Step 6: Divide 4 by 2. Divisible, so write 1 to the right. Remaining number is 2. **1 1 0 1 0 1**
Step 7: Divide 2 by 2. Divisible, so write 1 to the right. Remaining number is 0. So procedure terminates. **1 1 0 1 0 1 1**

Now we can check that this number does represent 108 in Pingala's system. Taking the sum of place values we get 107 (1*1 + 1*2 + 0*4 + 1*8 + 0*16 + 1*32 + 1*64). Adding 1 to this sum, we get 108, the number we started with.

This subject has been discussed in detail in a scholarly article (B. van Nooten, "Binary Numbers in Indian Antiquity", Journal of Indian Studies, Volume 21, 1993, pp. 31-50). This article along with several other articles pertaining to the contribution of ancient India to the field of computer science has been published in a book titled "Computing Science in Ancient India". More information about the book is as follows:

Computing Science in Ancient India
Edited by T. R. N. Rao and Subhash Kak
Published by Center for Advanced Computer Studies in 1998
University of Southwestern Louisiana 70504
Library of Congress Catalog Number: 98-86952
ISBN: 0-9666512-0-0

Deepavali break for schools next year

By GAVIN GOMEZ, The Star Online

PETALING JAYA: Hindu students have added cause for celebration next year as the Education Ministry will for the first time introduce a mid-term break for Deepavali.

"The five-day break from Oct 23 to 27 was considered after numerous requests from the Hindu community. This means that there will be two-mid term breaks in the second term (as opposed to just one in previous years)," a ministry official said yesterday. Deepavali falls on Oct 24 next year.

As a result of the decision, the total number of school holidays will increase from 87 this year to 89 in 2003.

Next year's school term will begin on Jan 6 in most states.

KNOW YOUR HINDI

This is our fifth article about Hindi language. In our previous issues, 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(Persian), 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
YAAD	FARSI	SMARAN	REMEMBER
DUSHMAN	FARSI	SHATRU	ENEMY
MAAL	ARABIC	VASTU/SAAMAGRI	GOODS
SAAMAN	FARSI	VASTU/SAAMAGRI	GOODS
CHEEZ	FARSI	VASTU	PIECE – OBJECT
KHAT	ARABIC	PATRA/CHITTHI	LETTER
MULK	ARABIC	DESH	NATION
WATAN	ARABIC	DESH	NATION
WAJAH	ARABIC	KAARAN	REASON
AZAAD	FARSI	SWATANTRA	FREE

Sarvepi sukhinassantu, sarve santu niraamayaah
Sarve bhadraani pashyantu, maa kashchit duhkhabhaag bhavet

Let everyone be happy, let everyone be free from all ills, let everyone behold only the auspicious, let no one be afflicted.

RISHI AUROBINDO GHOSH

"What Bengal thinks today, the rest of the country thinks tomorrow", was a famous saying in British India. The reason was very clear. Bengal was a land of great revolutionaries, philosophers and saints. Khudiram Bose was the first freedom fighter sent to the gallows by the British. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's famous VANDE MATARAM became a rallying point for all Indians fighting the British. Swami Vivekanand was the great thinker and saint who continues to influence generations of Hindus. Rabindranath Tagore, the great poet whose Jana Gana Mana was adopted by an independent India as the national anthem, became the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize. All of these great souls hailed from Bengal. Another great Bengali personality in the same league was Rishi Aurobindo, who was described as the poet of patriotism, one of India's greatest thinkers ever.

SRI AUROBINDO was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. His mother, Swarnalata Devi, was the daughter of nationalist Rajnarayan Bose. His father, Dr Krishnadhan Ghosh, a civil medical officer in Bengal, studied in England and by the time that he returned to India, was so westernized that he vowed to bring his children up as Englishmen. In fact, in 1879, at the age of seven, Aurobindo, along with his two elder brothers was taken to England for education and lived there for fourteen years. Brought up at first with an English family at Manchester, he joined St. Paul's School in London in 1884 and in 1890 went from it with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for two years. In 1890 he also passed the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but at the end of two years of probation failed to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service. At this time the Gaekward of Baroda was in

London. Aurobindo saw him, obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England for India, arriving there in February, 1893.

Sri Aurobindo passed thirteen years, from 1893 to 1906, in the Baroda Service, first in the Revenue Department and in secretariat work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and part-time professor of French and, finally, Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity -- for much of the poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time -- and of preparation for his future work.

In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East. At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, assimilated the spirit of Indian civilization and its forms past and present. A great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity, for he was debarred from public action by his position at Baroda. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda Service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

Initially, Aurobindo's political activities had remained limited to Baroda, but they soon extended to Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bengal. Aurobindo's goal was to capture the public through writing. He made an extensive study of Indian literature and papers on the Indian freedom struggle. Armed with fluency in Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali, he then expressed his views in papers like the Indu Prakash, Bande Mataram, Dharma and also the Karma Yogin. His writings

became the ideal for the Indian youth. He called on the young to serve the nation as *karmayogins* and he wanted them to devote all their energies towards freeing Mother India. He told the youth that "if you study, study for her sake; train yourself body and mind and soul for her service; work so that she may prosper; suffer so that she may rejoice."

Aurobindo's philosophical, spiritual and patriotic views are evident from the letter that he wrote on 30th August,1905 to his wife, Mrinalani Devi, from Baroda. The excerpts from that letter are as follows;-

"It is my firm faith that whatever virtue, talent, higher education and knowledge and wealth which GOD has given me belongs to HIM. I have the right to spend only as much as is needed for the maintenance of the family and on what is absolutely necessary. Whatever remains should be returned to the Divine. If I spend all of it on myself, for personal comfort, for enjoyment, then I am a thief. According to Hindu scriptures, one who accepts money from the Divine and does not return to him is a thief. I have no regrets for the money that I gave to Sarojini or Usha because assisting others is Dharma, to protect those who depend on you is a great Dharma. In these hard days, the whole country is like a dependent at our doors. I have thirty crores of brothers and sisters in the country – many of them die of starvation, most of them are weakened by suffering and troubles and are somehow dragging on their existence. They must be helped. What do you say, will you be my wife sharing this Dharma with me? We will eat and dress like ordinary people and buy what is really essential, and give the rest to the Divine".

Further continuing, he tells his wife,

"Whereas others regard the country as an inert object and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and rivers, I LOOK UPON MY COUNTRY AS MY MOTHER. I WORSHIP HER AND ADORE HER AS THE MOTHER. WHAT WOULD A SON DO WHEN A DEMON SITTING ON THE BREAST OF HIS MOTHER IS DRINKING HER BLOOD? Would he sit down content to take his meals, and go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he, rather run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race; it is not physical strength, I AM NOT GOING TO FIGHT WITH THE SWORD OR WITH THE GUN, BUT WITH THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE. THE POWER OF THE WARRIOR IS NOT THE ONLY KIND OF FORCE, THERE IS ALSO THE POWER OF THE BRAHMAN WHICH IS FOUNDED ON KNOWLEDGE. This is not a new feeling within me, it is not of a recent origin, I was born with it, in my very marrow, God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission."

Aurobindo formed secret revolutionary societies which enveloped Bengal. He asked members of these secret societies to take a solemn oath to "secure the freedom of Mother India at any cost." He stoked the fire of revolution by organizing a huge rally on November 9, 1905 in Calcutta. In the meantime, the Bande Mataram, a paper that he edited, won the praise and admiration of all. The British, in an effort to curb the growing dissent, prosecuted Bande Mataram and arrested Ghosh, who was charged with promoting sedition. The British resorted to caning anyone chanting Vande Mataram but Aurobindo was acquitted for lack of proof.

But, he was arrested again and put in jail in the Lal Bazar police station on May 5, 1908 as an undertrial prisoner for

what came to be known as the Alipore bomb conspiracy. This was a gruelling trial in which Aurobindo was defended by the renowned Calcutta lawyer Chittaranjan Das. In his statement, Aurobindo said "The whole of my case before you is this. It is suggested that I preached the idea of freedom to my country which is against the law. I plead guilty to the charge. If it is an offense to preach the idea of freedom, I admit I have done it. I have never disputed it". Despite his blunt statements, Chittaranjan Das's professional defense saw Aurobindo acquitted.

On his release from jail, Aurobindo was a changed man. He seemed confident that India would attain her freedom. In February, 1910, he withdrew to a secret retirement at Chandernagore and in the beginning of April sailed for Pondicherry in French lndia. A third prosecution was launched against him at this moment for a signed article in the Karmayogin; in his absence it was pressed against the printer of the paper who was convicted, but the conviction was quashed on appeal in the High Court of Calcutta. For the third time a prosecution against him had failed. Sri Aurobindo had left Bengal with some intention of returning to the political field under more favourable circumstances; but very soon the magnitude of the spiritual work he had taken up appeared to him and he saw that it would need the exclusive concentration of all his energies.

Eventually he cut off connection with politics, refused repeatedly to accept the Presidentship of the National Congress and went into a complete retirement. During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 onwards, he remained more and more exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his *sadhana.* He was a master of YOGA which he believed would develop the "higher principles of life", which remain hidden within every individual. He felt humanity could attain

perfection little by little through conscious preparation and effort. In 1914 after four years of silent Yoga he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, the Arya. Most of his more important works, The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, Essays on the Gita, The Isha Upanishad, appeared serially in the Arya. These works embodied much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga.

Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture (The Foundations of Indian Culture), the true meaning of the Vedas (The Secret of the Veda), the progress of human society (The Human Cycle), the nature and evolution of poetry (The Future Poetry), the possibility of the unification of the human race (The Ideal of Human Unity). At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and at Baroda and those, fewer in number, added during his period of political activity and in the first years of his residence at Pondicherry. The Arya ceased publication in 1921 after six years and a half of uninterrupted appearance. Sri Aurobindo lived at first in retirement at Pondicherry with four or five disciples.

Afterwards more and yet more began to come to him to follow his spiritual path and the number became so large that a community of *sadhaks* had to be formed for the maintenance and collective guidance of those who had left everything behind for the sake of a higher life. Sri Aurobindo's fame spread beyond India to other nations. In fact, one of his foremost devotees was a French lady who later became known simply as "The Mother" and who was instrumental in establishing the Auroville Ashram.

Sri Aurobindo left his body on December 5, 1950.

KNOW YOUR HINDUISM...

HINDUISM & IDOL WORSHIP

Generally speaking the people of many other religions laugh at the idea of idol worship amongst Hindus as an act of superstition. But we as Hindus accept Idol worship as a simple way of expressing our devotion and love to God. There is a childlike innocence and purity of approach when a person stands reverently in front of an idol and bows before it in total submission. These qualities are hard to achieve by an adult grounded in materialism, but which are much sought after in the bhakti marg, the devotional path. A Hindu will never be ashamed of going to a temple and bowing before an idol. He will have no hesitation to stand in front of it and speak to it as if he is talking to an individual with the faith and devotion that is exemplary.

Christian missionaries attack Hindus for worshipping idols, forgetting that Christians themselves worship idols, directly or indirectly. When they pray to a picture of Jesus or Mary or wear a cross, isn't that idolatory?

Pratima (Idol) represents GOD. The image in a temple, though it is made of stone, wood or metal, is precious for a devotee as it bears the mark of his LORD, as it stands for something which he holds holy and eternal. A flag is only a small piece of painted cloth, but it stands for a soldier for something that he holds very dear. He is prepared to give up his life in defending his flag. Similarly, the image is very dear to a devotee. It speaks to him in its own language of devotion. Just as the flag arouses martial valour in the soldier, so also the image arouses devotion in the devotee. The LORD is

superimposed on the image and the image generates divine thoughts in the worshipper.

An interesting example in this regard can be given. Once during his travels, Swami Vivekanand arrived in a princely kingdom in Rajasthan. The king's minister told Swamiji frankly that he believed in GOD but could not believe that GOD could be present in the statue/idol? At that moment, Swamiji kept quiet. But after some time, the minister took Swamiji to the main hall where there was a huge picture of the king hanging on the wall. Swamiji saw the picture and asked the minister to spit on it. The minister was shocked. He thought Swamiji was mad and asked him how the Swami could ask him to spit on the picture of his master. At this Swamiji answered him that he was not asking him to spit on the king but only a picture of the king. At this, the minister replied that even if it was only a photo of the king, *it represented* the king and spitting on the picture would be the same thing like actually spitting on the king. Swamiji agreed with him and pointed out that similarly, the IMAGE/IDOL OF GOD REPRESENTED GOD and was therefore respected, loved and worshipped by the devotee, who felt the presence of the Supreme in it.

A piece of ordinary white paper or coloured paper has no value. You throw it away. But, if that same paper is converted into a currency note, approved by the Government and issued by the Bank, you keep it safely because it becomes money. Even so, an ordinary piece of stone has no value. But, if we behold the stone murti of Lord Krishna at Pandharpur or any other Murti in shrines, you immediately bow your hand with folded hands, because there is the stamp of the Lord on the stone.

The devotee does Shadosopachara for the idol, the sixteen kinds of paying respects or service to the Lord, such as Padyam (water for worshipping the feet), Arghyam, Asana (seat), Snana (bathing), offering clothes, Achamana (water for sipping), applying sandal paste, offering flowers (Archana), burning incense, waving off lights and camphor, Maha Naivedyam, etc. The watering mind is fixed now in this form of worship. The aspirant gradually feels the nearness of the Lord. He attains purity of heart and slowly annihilates his egoism.

Idol worship makes concentration of mind simpler and easier. You can bring before your mind's eye the great Lilas the Lord has played in his particular Avataras in which you view Him. This is one of the easiest modes of self-realisation. Just as the picture of a famous warrior evokes heroism in your heart, a look at the picture of GOD will elevate your mind to divine heights.

The idols help the devotee become highly religious. As a devout worshipper goes to the temple frequently to worship his deity, he is charging himself with religious currents and this keeps him going for days together amidst busy worldly activity. It reinforces his faith in God and confidence to face the difficulties in life. If an idol is installed in house, the very house becomes a place of God's residence, a very sacred place, and a temple by itself. The image that stands there reminds the worshipper constantly of the divine presence amongst them and of their religious duties and responsibilities. It inspires devout men to keep their houses pure and clean and not to indulge in unholy or wicked deeds.

There are many instances in history, when GOD present in the idol has responded to his sincere devotees. The great devotee of Krishna, Narsi Mehta was put to a test by the king. The king said, "O Narsi, if you are a sincere devotee of Lord Krishna, if as you say the idol is Lord Krishna Himself, let this idol move". According to the prayer of Narsi Mehta, the idol actually moved.

The Murti of Krishna interacted frequently with Mira Bai, with Chaitanya. Kanaka Dasa was a great devotee of Lord Krishna in Uduipi in Karnataka. He was not allowed to enter the temple on account of his low birth. Kanaka Dasa went round the temple and saw a small window at the back of the temple. He seated himself in front of the window. He was soon lost in singing songs in praise of Lord Krishna. Many people gathered around him. They were very much attracted by the sweet melody of his music and the depth of his devotion. Lord Krishna turned around to enable Kanaka Dasa to get his Darshan. The priests were struck with wonder. Even today, pilgrims are shown the window and the place where Kanaka Das sat and sang the glories of Lord Krishna.

These are just a very few examples of the thousands of such examples in our holy scriptures where GOD has directly communicated and interacted with his sincere devotees, for whom the Murti was the same as their dear Lord. In another example, a few years back, Lord Ganesh's drinking milk from hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Hindus across the world, proved the presence of GOD in the murti, in the idol.

COMMON QUESTIONS POSED TO YOU, HOW DO YOU ANSWER?

1. **Tell me, what is so important about teaching the Ramayana and Mahabharat to the younger generation. They are all history; what good are they going to do to them in future?**

ANSWER:- People answering this question should first be asked if they agree that history should be taught or not? Whoever says that history does not do any good, better attempt to fight with the school authorities to remove the history lessons from the school. Can they do that? Is it practical? The same people who say this are the same people who will proudly tell their children about their great grandparents, about what they did in the past, show them their photographs, etc. Isn't that also a part of history? Actually whatever happened yesterday is also history.

We have to see here the positive points of teaching history, whether it is the history of our family, whether of the place where we stay, our nation or our religion. As it has been rightly said " A history of a nation shapes up its future". All the histories have one thing in common – that all of them have happened in the past and by reading them and analyzing the events, we can learn from them, take inspiration from the great events that occurred and not to make the same mistakes that might have taken place.

Coming back to the Ramayana and Mahabharat , what does it teach us? Bhagwan Ram gives us a perfect example of how to be a good son, a good brother, good husband and a good king? That is why he is known as

Maryada Purushottam. We can learn from Ravana's example that despite being such a learned and intelligent person, his evil deed of kidnapping Seeta spelt his doom. The message we get is no matter how rich a person is or how much qualified he is, he still has to be cautious and vigilant and not to be proud of his achievements because pride leads to arrogance which leads to evil manifestations.

Mahabharat also shows the greed of Duryodhan that he was not even ready to part with five villages to avoid war. It also shows how despite being a reservoir of noble and great qualities, Yuddhishtra's one weakness for gambling could create so many problems for him and his family. Similarly, it also shows how people taking faith and shelter in GOD will always be protected (like the way Lord Krishna saved Draupadi's honour).

The Ramayana and Mahabharat are not just part of history, they are the guide books to how every Hindu should live his life. Forget about India, they are extremely popular all over South-East Asia. Every child in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, whether he be a Muslim or Buddhist by religion, knows the Ramayana and Mahabharat by heart. Why? Because the knowledge and subject found in such books does not exist anywhere else in the world. Instead of being proud that this originated in India, so many of today's Hindus do not even bother teaching their children about the Ramayana and Mahabharat!!!

2. So what if my friend became a Christian? After all, all religions are the same, so what difference does it make?

ANSWER:- Well, if all religions are the same, then why did your friend convert in the 1st place? This question should be directed to the Christian priest who converted your friend, does he believe all religions are equal? Do Christians or Muslims ever say all religions are equal? Never. The only people to say that are Hindus, Buddhists or people who don't care about any religion(atheists, etc). How many Hindus who say that all religions are the same have actually read about other religions? Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikkhism have the same beliefs and philosophy and they are indeed in the same family. Similarly, many other Oriental faiths too have many things in common with Hinduism. But Judaism, Christianity and Islam are totally different, having no relation at all to Hinduism. The great American scholar of the Vedas, David Frawley, says that there is a big danger of Hindus "speaking on behalf of other religions". This is absolutely true. I believe that one should read the books of the other religions before jumping to this claim. Again, as Hindus, we HONOUR AND RESPECT all religions. It is much better to say that despite differences between the different religions on this planet, everyone MUST RESPECT AND TOLERATE other religions. This is the correct method. Just like there are different races and nationalities and everyone must co-exist, in the same way all religions must co-exist. This is what is required but Hindus try to go a step further, trying to look for a mythical oneness or sameness in all religions which does not exist. But, it creates confusion. Many Hindu girls who converted to Islam or Christianity after their marriage to a Muslim/Christian boy bluntly tell their parents that since they had been taught all their life that all the religions are the same, why are they complaining about their conversion now? So, it is better to set the record

straight to our kids. Yes, we respect, honour and tolerate all religions but at the same time, being HIndus we cherish and have special love and respect for our own religion and unique values, which should be preserved at all costs.

3. So what if we organize a Christmas party in our house and invite everybody? After all, we are living in a cosmopolitan world.

ANSWER:- Well, if that is the case, why stop at Christmas? Why not start celebrating Easter, Eid, Passover, Yom Kippur, Navroze or Chinese New Year parties in our house and invite everyone? Why just Christmas? Where does one draw a line in being cosmopolitan? Ever heard of your Christian friend celebrating Diwali? There is a big difference in going to a Christian friend's house to wish him/her Merry Christmas and to actually celebrate it in our own house. Let us be honest. Why do we have a Christmas party? Just because so and so person will throw a Christmas party, so why shouldn't I? Isn't it? Actually, the kids have enough exposure to Christmas parties and the Christmas concept – Santa Claus, Christmas tree, Christmas lights – at school, at friends' houses, in shopping malls – that they actually look more forward towards celebrating Christmas than Diwali! The kids should be taught more about our festivals, of which they know almost nothing. We should remember that as Hindus, we HONOUR all religions, BUT we do not and CANNOT PRACTISE all religions.

4. I don't like drinking. But party drinking is essential; otherwise you will be considered odd and left behind in society. And besides drinking sometimes is not bad for health.

ANSWER:- The same argument was good a few years ago about smoking. There were many people who smoked cigarettes to prove that they were forward looking and successful people, and that by smoking one became smarter and more confident. The movies and advertisements portrayed such an image. But, now everybody knows the true picture of smoking. Smoking can give you C but this does not stand for confidence but cancer. The same thing is for drinking. Everyone knows that drinking causes heart disease. Many people will say that certain alcoholic drinks if taken in moderation are actually good for the heart, example wine, etc. Do you believe in that? I remember watching on CNN last year that many doctors discredit this theory; whatever the case, by and large drinking alcohol is bad for health. And drinking in excess is extremely bad for health. Besides that, when one is under the influence of alcohol, he/she doesn't even have control of his mind. So, take the positive points and negative points of drinking alcohol and the answer is that there aren't any positive points so there is really no reason why one should drink alcohol?

The argument that "one will be left behind" is totally unfounded. The truth is that you have to be patient to explain to your friends / business associates why you don't drink and in most cases, you will be appreciated. Or at the very least, people will not be bothered whether you drink or not.

5. At home, I do not eat meat, but outside it is very difficult to be a vegetarian, especially when one is traveling, there is no choice except to starve

ANSWER:- Vegetarianism is a trend which is nowadays catching on fast throughout the world. Recently, there was a cover page article on TIME magazine which showed the advantages of being a vegetarian. The health benefits of vegetarianism are too well known.

It is just someone's mental concoction that one will starve if he didn't eat meat while travelling abroad. I can tell you from my personal example that I am a pure vegetarian and I travel frequently around Asia, Middle East and Latin America. In some places, I may not have eaten the best vegetarian meal, but there was absolutely not a day when I had to go hungry. In fact, pure vegetarian restaurants are becoming popular all over the world. Taiwan must be having one of the largest numbers of vegetarian restaurants in the world outside India. Even in countries like Argentina, where people consume a lot of meat, there are many vegetarian restaurants. And of course, in general restaurants, one can always order for vegetarian dishes, though the choices may not be too many. But, surely it has never been a case of starvation or so. One can always find vegetarian food and fruits all over the world. So, a travelling vegetarian may find some difficulties in some places but with a little effort, can surely get a vegetarian meal at all times.

6. Okay, fine accepted there is a choice. But clients and friends here and abroad would get offended if we keep on refusing to eat meat, since a wider range of food served is made of meat; they will think that we are very fussy and problematic.

ANSWER:- We are living in a civilized, educated and tolerant society. Why will people be offended if we refuse to eat meat. Especially concerning being a

vegetarian, it is highly unlikely that there would be any pressure from anyone to conform to a non-vegetarian diet. Once it is known in your friends circle and among your relatives that you do not eat meat, they will not offer to you in the first place. Surely, when we are among Indians, this matter is quite simple to explain because it is very natural for Indians to be vegetarians. When we are in the midst of foreigners, some of whom may not understand the idea of being a vegetarian everyday at all times, it is best to explain to them the reason why we are vegetarian. So many times, I have seen kids embarrassed in answering the reasons why they are vegetarian. All they can say is because their parents want them to be a vegetarian. Actually, being a vegetarian is such a great thing that one should be proud of it and explain to all about it. The immediate answer that we can say is that we believe that it is cruel to kill animals for our food because animals also have life. It is one answer that will win you many friends. I have personally seen this. Rather than losing friends and clients, people become more curious as to why you are a vegetarian and answered properly, people become impressed and like you better.

7. Indians are ridiculous. If a man smokes or drinks, it is still acceptable. But if a woman does the same, she is looked down upon. Isn't that hypocrisy?

ANSWER:- According to Hinduism, women are the moral torchbearers of the society. Women represent motherhood, and children look up to their mother, more than their father. For a child, his mother is his 1st Guru, she is someone who can do no wrong. In that connection, we know smoking is bad for health and all parents tell that to their children. Is it possible for a

mother who smokes to tell her child that smoking is bad for health?

And this trait is not only true to Indians but equally true to many other communities. Even in the West, where there is a so-called talk of equality of the sexes. If a woman is charged for murder or other crime, why is there so much of a talk of showing leniency to her, just because she is a woman? Why? Because even the West gets stunned when a woman commits a murder because it seems so unnatural and contrary to a woman's character and nature.

We believe that a woman is supposed to be shown more respect. Because she is supposed to be more gentle, peaceful, loving, pure in thought and spiritually inclined than men generally are. And it is because of these things that when a woman smokes, drinks or uses foul language, she is derided. Of course, men doing the same things are not admired but it is deemed especially unnatural if women do the same, because they are supposed to be an ideal for the society.

Of course, there are other reasons to also explain this. It has been proved that smoking and drinking is worse for women than men. It is known that if a woman is bearing a child, then smoking/drinking does tremendous harm to the unborn baby. Secondly, if the woman smokes, she will directly affect the child because the child usually spends more time with the mother than the father. At the same time, if the woman smokes in front of the child, it will be a bad example for the child and if she drinks heavily, she will harm the child by not taking proper care of him/her.

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The states of BHARAT

CHHATISGARH

Area:- 135,194 sq.km, Population:- About 17 million
State capital:- Raipur Main language:- Hindi
Famous pilgrimage centers:- Amarkantak, Bhoramdev, Danteswari Temple
Famous touristic places:- Kawardha, Indrawati National Park, Kangerghati National Park

CHHATISGARH WAS CREATED OUT OF MADHYA PRADESH STATE ON 1ST NOVEMBER,2000. IT IS LOCATED IN CENTRAL BHARAT AND TO THE NORTH ARE UTTAR PRADESH AND BIHAR, IN THE EAST IS LOCATED ORISSA, IN THE SOUTH IS ANDHRA PRADESH AND IN THE WEST ARE LOCATED MADHYA PRADESH AND MAHARASHTRA. A LARGE PART OF THE STATE COMES UNDER THE VINDHYACHAL RANGE. MAHANADI AND NARMADA ARE THE PRINCIPAL RIVERS OF THE STATE. IN FACT, NARMADA HAS ITS ORIGIN IN AMARKANTAK, WHICH IS A PROMINENT PILGRIMAGE PLACE IN CHHATISGARH. THIS STATE IS RICHLY ENDOWED WITH NATURAL RESOURCES. ITS FOREST REVENUE ACCOUNTS FOR A GOOD DEAL OF THE STATES TOTAL REVENUE. IT HAS RICH DEPOSITS OF LIMESTONE, IRON-ORE, COPPER-ORE, MANGANES ORE, COAL, BAUXITE AND ASBESTOS. AGRICULTURE IS THE MAINSTAY FOR THE PEOPLE. 80% OF THE POPULATION IS ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE. THERE IS A VERY LARGE TRIBAL POPULATION IN THE STATE, THE MAJORITY BEING MADE UP OF GONDS, ORAON, KANWAR, BIRHA, SAURA, ETC. THE STATE HAS HOT SUMMERS AND COLD WINTERS.

Children corner

MAZE

Contributed by – Ms Shubhra Srivastava, Pune

A BIT OF EPICS

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A	M	B	A	I	M	A	D	R	I
N	E	E	L	A	S	T	H	I	T
D	U	R	Y	O	D	H	A	N	A
U	P	A	N	A	Y	A	N	J	Y
R	A	M	L	A	X	A	M	A	N

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the colour of Gandhari's scarf that she tied around her eyes? (5)
2. Which place was Krishna's coastal homeland? (6)
3. In Mahabharata , who was Uttara's father? (5)
4. Kunti and ____ were the two wives of Pandu. (5)
5. Ambalika and Vyasa were the parents of ____. (5)
6. While Janaka ploughed the land he found Sita in a ____. (7)
7. Urmila was the sister of ____. (4)
8. ____ is the God of wealth. (6)
9. The sacred thread ceremony is also known as ____. (8)
10. Subhadra was the sister of ____. (7)

DID YOU KNOW???

DIAMONDS WERE FIRST MINED IN INDIA

Knowledge of diamonds started in India, where it was first mined. The word most generally used for diamond in Sanskrit is transliterated as "vajra", which means thunderbolt, and "indrayudha" which means Indra's weapon. Because Indra is the warrior god from Vedic scriptures, the foundation of Hinduism, the thunderbolt symbol indicates much about the Indian conception of diamond.

Early descriptions of diamond date to the 4th century BC. By then, diamond was a valued material. The earliest known reference to diamond is a Sanskrit manuscript by a minister in a northern Indian dynasty. The work is dated from 320-296 BCE.

(Extracts from CBS news dated May 9th, 2002)

ANSWERS for the question on page :

1. BLACK	3. VIRAT	5. PANDU	7. SITA	9. UPANAYAN
2. DWARKA	4. MADRI	6. KALASHA	8. KUBERA	10. KRISHNA

SANDESH BHARATI

Published quarterly by Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Hong Kong
For private circulation only

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Sandesh Bharati is distributed free of charge, however, contributions in support of future publications are welcome.