EDITORIAL

We are living in the age of turmoil and the pace of change is indeed frightening. The rich countries like America and Europe have already peaked out and are sliding down on the economic front. On spiritual front, as such, they never cared to learn from East with the result that family system is in shambles. It is true that all our spiritual practices cannot eliminate suffering, but they protect the mind and make suffering acceptable.

The year 2012 has started with some hopes but lot of fears. Iran going the nuclear way and USA-Israel-Europe putting sanctions to dissuade it or otherwise face war. This could be devastating for the entire world. How does spirituality help in overcoming such happenings in this beautiful world created by God? Or are such wars inevitable like the great war of Mahabharata to weed out the evil for long lasting peace on earth?

The scene at home in India is also not very encouraging. The Anna Hazare movement to bring some honesty and sanctity in Government and business has died down under dirty politics between the political parties. The state assembly elections have taken priority over all such issues since the biggest state of India, Uttar Pradesh, is under focus. This can decide the coming future of politics in India.

This issue of The Divine Vision carries very interesting pilgrimage trip of Bhai Sahib with other devotees to South India in which the LSF members covered practically all places of religious pilgrimage in South India in 10 days. The exhaustive coverage with commentary from Bhai Sahib includes Mahaballipuram, Meenakshi temple in Madurai, Rameshwaram, Vivekananda Shila Smarak, Kanyakumari, Dhanushkodi and many other spots of interest. It also describes the initiation of Maha Avtar Babaji by Rishi Augusta and many other facts unknown to us.

Other articles by Bhai Sahib and Dr. Manoj Pabrai and your favorite 'Topic for Contemplation' make very interesting reading.

Those who got a chance to visit the Ashram recently, must have observed that it now gives a good refurbished look. This is as a result of appeals made to the LSF members against which some responded very favourably. We would continue to appeal for such contributions in cash and kind from you to fulfill the aspirations of LSF, its aims and objectives.

We now look forward to meeting you all on next LSF Anniversary celebration on 8th April 2012.

LSF

THE DIVINE VISION

Volume XXVI **MARCH, 2012**

CONTENTS

- **The study of spiritual Endurance**
  Dr. O.P.Kohli
- **Titiksha - Forbearance**
  Dr. O.P.Kohli
- **Higher state of consciouness**
  Mr.Suresh C Pahwa
- **What lessons we have to learn on this earth?**
  Dr. Manoj Pabrai
- **How to get RID of constant worry?**
  Dr. Manoj Pabrai
- **Malaria**
  Dr. Manoj Pabrai
- **Topic for Contemplation** :
  Role of spiritual principles in our daily lives
  Mr. Suresh C. Pahwa
- **Personal experiences of devotees** :
  Bhai Sahib's heling touch.
- **Devotees' questions :** *Bhai Sahib's answers*
- **LSF ' NEWS & EVENTS'**

Publisher & Printer: **Dr. O. P. Kohli**
Editor : **Dr. O. P. Kohli**
Cover-design : **Dr. O. P. Kohli**
Address : **c/o GH-13/590, Pashim Vihar, New Delhi - 87**
Phone : **011-25264030 & 25253345**
Printed at : **Everest press, New Delhi**

LSF

The Study of Spiritual Endurance

By: Dr.O.P.Kohli

Endurance is the ability for a human to exert itself for a long period of time, usually used in regards to aerobic exercise. Endurance is also a spiritual quality. Spiritual endurance, or perseverance, is the mark of a victorious human being. It is the presence of inner strength and hope in the hidden man, and the staying power of a faithful believer. It is on full display during life's difficult moments. Endurance is a spiritual trait that first comes from an inner confidence in God's presence no matter where we are or what is going on around us.

Endurance is more than physical strength. Endurance is not only a display of one's strength, but a demonstration of one's strong determination as well. Strong will is a must-have of a potential winner. Oftentimes, many strong warriors lost their opportunity to win the battle due to lack of determination. They were easily intimidated by the discriminating appearance of their enemies, and they lost their will to win.

Endurance has the quality of timelessness, for though it may begin today, it has no end and it removes you from the confines of time. Endurance is developed within you day-by-day, as your spirit remains steadfast and the weeks drag into years. From moment-to-moment, and month-to-month, your spiritual goals must hover before your eyes, transfixed as the purpose of your life.

A believer's spiritual endurance is more than his notable will to achieve something in life. Endurance is an inspiring exhibition of God's grace and is an amazing result of a well-understood and sufficient grace of God being revealed through a believer's life. It is joy and strength-producing grace. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

The blessings of spiritual endurance are beyond man's earthly desires and expectations. They cannot be measured by man's unreliable scale. As endurance grows to maturity within you, your spirit is rendered impervious to the passage of time. Endurance is the guarantee that nothing in creation can ever influence your personal relationship with your Heavenly Father. It begins with simple waiting, then grows into

patience, then finally develops into an immovability that is unaffected by time.

A man of spiritual endurance is happy because he is sure that he is fulfilling the will of God and he is enjoying the loving-kindness of the Lord upon his life. Surely, God shows His love and favor to them that endure trials and afflictions at all times for the glory of God.

One of the toughest lessons in faith is enduring to the end. This is the journey through the tunnel with no light except at the end of it. It is never a smooth ride and comes with all the unforeseen obstacles that one can imagine. However we all have to make this journey in life in order to strengthen our faith and reach the kingdom of God.

Spiritual endurance has several key factors that must become a part of who we are for us to succeed.

Pride

Pride in what we do is the first step to maintaining spiritual endurance. In our everyday lives we take up tasks from making our beds to how we look, there is pride in showing off what we are capable of accomplishing. In this sense the same is attributable to our spirituality. In this we must be proud in the endurance that we undertake for the work of God.

Blessings

Spiritual endurance is all about giving back to God. It could entail fasting or poverty in the things of our world. This does not have to be just financial poverty as we understand it. It can be that of humility in a situation where we would normally be proud; having perseverance where we would be impatient or simply abstaining from what would normally be ours. In all cases we are giving up what is ours because of our faith. There can only be one result from this and that is blessings. As the Lord says his strength is made perfect in our weakness. This is the only way that we can attain this level of spiritual strength.

Love

Love is the most significant factor in enduring spiritually. If spiritual endurance is all about giving then we must also love who we are giving to. This is about building a relationship with God. No one can spiritually endure unless they love God. We would do anything in this world for who we love. We would undertake any spiritual journey despite the physical loss as seen by man because of our love for God.

If these three factors are a part of us then enduring spiritually becomes

LSF

TITIKSHA - FORBEARANCE

By: Dr. O.P.Kohli

Titiksha is the distinguishing hallmark of every great being that has ever walked the earth!

Titiksha is the power to bear steadily & calmly all *sparshas* (contact) without any reaction in the centre of the being, whether they are pleasant or painful. The mind or body may desire or suffer, but the observing *Purusha* (soul) remains unattracted and unshaken, observing only as *Sakshi* (witness) and as *Ishwara* (Divine) holding the system firmly together & calmly willing the passing of the *dwandwas (dualities)*.

It does not crave for or demand the pleasure. It does not reject the pain. Even when pleasure or pain is excessive, it wills that the mind and body should not shrink from or repel them, but bear firmly. It deals in the same way with all *dwandwas* (dualities), hunger & thirst, heat & cold, health & disease, failure & success, honour and obloquy etc. It neither welcomes & rejoices, nor grieves & avoids. It gets rid of all *jugupsa* (disgust), fear, shrinking, recoil, sorrow, depression etc, i.e. all the means by which Nature (*bhutaprakriti*) warns us against & tries to protect from all that is hostile. It does not encourage them, nor does it necessarily interfere with such means as may be necessary to get rid of the adverse touches; nor does it reject physically, except as a temporary discipline, the pleasant touches; but inwardly it presents an equal front of endurance

How do you react when people, including your near and dear, criticize and condemn you? When your ego is hurt, do you get angry and start throwing tantrums? Uncontrolled anger is called rage, which can delude anyone's intellect. At this moment, one's capacity for discrimination and discernment are dismantled. ***So, to handle hurt and recrimination one needs to practice Titiksha or forbearance.***

Essence of Titiksha

When a person is established in Titiksha they face hurt and even physical kicks with a smile. This creates a soothing mental environment, which encourages divine qualities such as *fearlessness*,

non-violence and forgiveness. The person smiles and embraces the world. They surrender totally to God. Jesus forgave his persecutors, exclaiming they did not know what they were doing! Jesus was thus established in Titiksha. Practicing Titiksha and surrender can give us freedom from fear and agitation. We all have to carry our personal cross. Nobody can escape this work. We should do this with a smile and trust Him to make our burden lighter

Story of Angulimala (Disciple of Buddha - the enlightened one).

During Buddha's lifetime, there lived a devilish man known as Angulimala, who used to rob people. He was called Angulimala, because he used to wear a garland made of his victims' thumbs. But, when he met Buddha, Angulimala repented and became the enlightened one's disciple. One day, Buddha sent Angulimala to a village to get alms. The villagers promptly beat up the ex-robber, as they were still angry about his past misdeeds. When Angulimala came back with bruises and wounds, Buddha asked him how he reacted to the villagers' violence. Angulimala said he recited mantras and kept calm during the beating!

Titiksha is Surrender

Angulimala's composure was only possible because of his Surrender. There is a higher power that automatically takes care of our body actions such as breathing and digestion, even though we may not be aware of them. We need to surrender with Titiksha to this higher power as He knows what is best for us. *Practicing Titiksha and Surrender can give us freedom from fear and agitation.*

Mainstream scientists are currently speculating on the origin of the self-control capability – "*where does it come from*" they ask? Neuroscientists ascribe it to the brain's frontal cortex, geneticists attribute it to genetic and environmental influences, while evolutionary psychologists might in all probability trace it to some mysterious tribal ritual which was practiced thousands of years ago on the African continent. The venerable Indian yogis averred that self-control derives from the *Purusha*. There are two sides to human consciousness – *Purusha* (immobile spirit) and *Prakriti* (consciousness in action) and the initial goal of Yoga is to separate these two through various practices.

LSF

HIGHER STATE OF CONSCIOUNESS

By: Suresh C. Pahwa

"Higher state of Consciousness" are high sounding spiritual words but attaining such state is not complicated if we follow simple steps advised by our Sri Sri Parmahansa Yogananda. It requires sincerity and discipline nurtured through spiritual practice like meditation.

Meditation on HIS formless Self as *SAT-CHIT ANANDA* : Ever-Existing, Ever- Conscious, Ever- Bliss leads to gradual nurturing of the sapling of consciousness within and silently to higher state of consciousness.

We live in our life through three states of consciousness: Waking state, Dreaming State and Sleeping State. In the waking state of consciousness we experience the world through the five senses through which we seek sense pleasures and fulfilment. In the sleeping state we are completely cut off from Waking state activities. In the dreaming state we are neither awake nor sleep and not aware of our surroundings.

The Higher state of Consciousness is somewhere between the waking , sleeping dreaming states. Here we know we 'are' but do not know where or what I am—This state is called SHIVA. It is said that this state gives deepest possible rest that one can experience and can be achieved through meditation. Meditation prevents stress from entering the system and also releases accumulated stress leading close to '*Ananda*' state.

With assimilation of meditation into daily life at fixed given time, when external disturbances are least Cosmic state of consciousness dawns within. It is not a overnight affair but a gradual nurturing process since all mental disturbances and imbalances have to be satisfied with discriminative knowledge and analysis. The mind needs to be dropped or silenced. It is the mind which is higher than the senses. It is infinite with many desires even though the capacity of senses to enjoy is limited. Greed wants more and more of sensory objects. Even though you can enjoy a limited amount during a lifetime , you want all the wealth in the world. Hence the monkey

mind is to be tamed by the practice of meditation and once this is done the process to higher state of consciousness is easy, natural and self-sustaining. The first step to higher state of consciousness is the to attain power of discrimination. We cling to mind concepts and want things to happen only in certain ways. Thus they stop us from perceiving infinite consciousnessthat truly is part of us. All mind senses are not bad and meditation gives us power of discrimination to analyse what is good and what is bad in our spiritual path.

Anger and emotions are nothing but fleeting emotions. Once you achieve higher state of consciousness the whole Universe is perceived as part of Self and love flows between us and the world leading to universal state of *Sat-Chit –Ananda*.

****

LSF

WHAT LESSONS WE HAVE TO LEARN ON THIS EARTH

Dr. Manoj Pabrai

We were put on this earth to learn lessons. Here are the most important lessons.

B: Born to learn — that is our raison d'être (reason for being). Be Love — that is end product of learning to love.

L: Learning lessons give meaning in us, meaning to our lives and others. Life-long quests may be part of the learning process especially as we have to learn to tame our baser instincts. Loving ourselves and others overcomes the baser parts of our instinct.

E: Exist is what we do when we live this earthly life, but we should want to do more than exist and attempt to embrace love as much as possible.

S: Sincerely bless and you get a step closer to having a loving nature.

S: Sincerely bless and start to understand the nature of love, as a blessing is the starting point of love.

Y: You have to understand first before you can do anything.

O: Our instinct can be tamed with love, so pour in love with blessings for yourself and others. Overflowing love and blessings transform instinct into a loving one.

U: Undertake to understand your nature more and to pour as much love and blessings into yourself as you can muster.

Positive push blessing

B: Bottle up all the positive feelings and brim with positivity — brim, brim, brim.

L: Look at life in a positive, new way. Look for all the ways to be positive.

E: Embrace each day with a positive attitude because attitude has a powerful influence on your daily life, impacting upon relationships and the outcomes you experience.

S: Supervise and manage your attitudes because you have power over your thoughts and actions, so choose to have a positive frame of mind as much as possible.

S: Strength of character and confidence can be cultivated, so choose to face the day with these qualities beaming from you like strong search lights that light up and bless your world.

Y: Young in spirit is a positive spirit, so choose to hold life-affirming thoughts that lead you to your highest good and to the receiving of bountiful blessings.

O: Overcome limitation by always putting on a positive face and soon you really will be more positive.

U: Unleash the positive power within you, because you do have positive power, and the more you do this the more positive you will be.

LSF

The meaning of life

Meaning is in us, not in things. We are born to learn lessons (to give meaning to our lives and others).

The quest of life

Instinct comes first (is inborn) and our first lesson (and for many a life-long quest) is to tame our instinct.

Love drives out fear

The best way to tame instinct is through love for ourselves and others. If you learn to love then fear cannot exist. Fear dissolves as love sweeps in.

Do you know how to love?

How do we learn love? Well what works for me is to focus on blessings.

Bless away

When I bless love seems to be so naturally a part of it. Blessings are good wishes when you sincerely bless and love in action when you wholeheartedly bless or bless at the deepest level.

Understanding is key

Blessings are also the start of the understanding of love. You have to understand first before you can do anything.

****

LSF

HOW TO GET RID OF CONSTANT WORRY?

Dr. Manoj Pabrai

This is no cure-all to get rid of constant worry, but at the very least, the following text should give you a little breathing room and enable you to step back from your problems so you don't panic. When you're ready, find a problem from your list and attack it. It's amazing how much better you'll feel when just one annoying issue is gone.

Here are 8 ways to get rid of worry:

1. **Write it down.** Acknowledging your worry takes away its obsessive power. So make a list of what's bugging you.
2. **Say a prayer.** Ask God for help, patience and the strength to get through your troubles.
3. **Do something.** Clean out your closet, reorganize a room, write a letter or make a phone call you've been putting off. You'll feel better just getting something done.
4. **Read.** A book about someone else's troubles (to take your mind off your own), something uplifting or funny, or even a self-help book for advice.
5. **Take a break.** For 10-15 minutes, sit with your eyes closed in a quiet spot. Mentally make a list of blessings in your life; good health, plenty of food in the fridge, friends and family, nice weather, anything you can think of.
6. **Take a walk.** Movement is action. With any luck the exercise will clear your mind and raise your endorphin levels at the same time. Getting out in the sun will lift your spirits too.

LSF

7. **Let it go.** For a day or even just a few hours, do something you enjoy. Try to refresh your mind and see things in a new light. Don't worry – your problems will still be there when you get back.

8. **Ask for help.** Ask your spouse, friend, sibling or Internet buddy for ideas on how to get past the obstacles in your life. It'll remind you that others have gotten through the same problems before and hopefully give you some useful advice.

****

LSF

MALARIA

Dr. Manoj Pabrai

Definition

Malaria is transmitted most commonly by mosquito bites which produce recurrent attacks of chills and fever. Caused by a parasite that's transmitted by mosquitoes, malaria kills about 1 million people each year worldwide. A vaccine to prevent malaria is currently under development. If you're traveling to locations where malaria is common, take preventive medicine before, during and after your trip.

Signs & Symptoms

A malaria infection is generally characterized by recurrent attacks with the following signs and symptoms:

- Moderate to severe shaking chills
- High fever
- Profuse sweating as body temperature falls
- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Malaria signs and symptoms typically begin within a few weeks after a bite from an infected mosquito.

When to see a doctor

Talk to your doctor if you experience a high fever while living in or after traveling to a high-risk malaria region.

LSF

Causes

CLICK TO ENLARGE

- **Uninfected mosquito.** A mosquito becomes infected by feeding on a person who has malaria.
- **Transmission of parasite.** If you're the next person this mosquito bites, it can transmit malaria parasites to you.
- **In the liver.** The parasites then travel to your liver — where they can lie dormant for as long as a year.
- **Into the bloodstream.** When the parasites mature, they leave the liver and infect your red blood cells. This is when people typically develop malaria symptoms.
- **On to the next person.** If an uninfected mosquito bites you at this point in the cycle, it will become infected with your malaria parasites and can spread them to the next person it bites.

Other modes of transmission

Because the parasites that cause malaria affect red blood cells, people can also catch malaria from exposures to infected blood, including:

- From mother to unborn child
- Through blood transfusions
- By sharing needles used to inject drugs

Risk factors

Risks of more severe disease

People at increased risk of serious disease include:

- Young children and infants
- Travelers coming from areas with no malaria
- Pregnant women and their unborn children

LSF

For Diagnosis and Treatment see your Doctor

Prevention

Reducing exposure to mosquitoes

Prevention involves keeping mosquitoes away from humans.

Strategies include:

- ***Spraying your home*.** Treating your home's walls with insecticide can help kill adult mosquitoes that come inside.
- ***Sleeping under a net.*** Bed nets, particularly those treated with insecticide, are especially recommended for pregnant women and young children.
- ***Covering your skin.*** During active mosquito times, usually from dusk to dawn, wear pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- ***Spraying clothing and skin.*** Sprays are safe to use on clothing.

LSF

****

Topic for Contemplation :

Role of spiritual principles in our daily lives

By: Suresh C. Pahwa

I have been on the path of spirituality for over 20 years. The first impact was made personally by Swami Chinmayananda and then the book 'Autobiography of a Yogi' by Sri Sri Parmahansa Yogananda had a great influence over my life. I continue to learn, understand and follow the spiritual path laid down by these Gurus under direct guidance of Dr. O.P. Kohli , founder of Life Sciences Foundation, Delhi.

I take the liberty of sharing some of the spiritual principles picked up over past few years and how these play silent but very crucial role in my daily life. Contemplation on these principles may help those seeking peace and happiness in this life.

1.Money and Prosperity

Money represents, quite simply, a flow of energy, which every one cherishes in this modern life. In daily life we do business activities to earn money and more money as the greed has no end. We earn far more than required in our current life span and perhaps for next couple of life spans too. This is not true wealth as this becomes more a liability than asset in due course of time. True wealth is the spiritual wealth which we happily share with all, in this life and also enjoy in our future lives.

2. Friends and Company

Very often, success or failure on the spiritual path is determined by the company one keeps. To attract and have friends who support our highest aspirations is vitally important. Accomplishment is great when we have God as our friend when we are alone.

3.Health and Healing

Sri Sri Parmahansa Yogananda always advocated common sense approach to health. For perfect meditation one has to keep one's body fit and strong. His teachings always emphasized an integration of physical, mental,

emotional and spiritual aspects of human nature. Guru Ji had the ability to meditate at railway station, while waiting for the train. His techniques of Kriya Yoga are sure path to good health, mental alertness and spiritual growth.

4. Praying for others

We pray and seek prosperity, good health and other wishes from God only for self or at the most for the near ones who have direct influence in our life. The real advancement lies in praying for the humanity, in general, since praying for others is an integral part of one's own well-being. Dr O.P. Kohli prays and practices long -distance healing for LSF members / devotees and humanity at large who seek his healing touch.

5.Unconditional Happiness

As one goes on the path spirituality and somewhat higher state of consciousness one learns the art of remaining happy unconditionally. The negativities of lust, anger, greed, attachment, ego etc die down and life becomes lighter and wonderful to live in. One achieves unconditional happiness under all conditions as it is not attached to given set of conditions.

6.Thanks Giving

In this materialistic world we give thanks to everyone even for small favours but take it for granted and never thank God for the wonderful world He has given us to live in. If , our prayers are limited to thanking God for all He has given us and not extended to list of our wants, greed and complaints, it plays a mini miracle in our life. Our wants and needs gradually diminish and we feel much lighter and happier. The best is to have least expectations and then— after all God is all knowing and we need not repeat our expectations. All actions should be to deserve the rewards rather than desiring without right actions.

The above spiritual principles are simple to understand and follow and can change your life.

****

LSF

Personal Experience of Devotees :

Bhai Sahib's answers

1. Mr.Vikas Rajauri (J&K)

I am 36 years old and was in the habit of alcoholism, excessive and chronic drinking over a long period of time. I suddenly gave up and that resulted in certain symptoms of visual and frightening hallucination. I was confused, agitated and could not sleep. There was a marked deterioration in the intellectual and physical condition.

Many doctors were consulted but the medicines gave me only temporary relief.

Fortunately I met Dr. Kohli in Jammu. He diagnosed the ailment as 'Delirium' and gave me 2 months *talismas* to use with certain precautions. The treatment gave me a complete cure and I am feeling quite normal with lot of friends around me. I have started reading the books of Himalayan saints and my joy is so great that I walk around the Hermitages in a dream of happiness.

2. Ms. Arti, Delhi

I am 30 years old and had been suffering from an irrational, uncontrollable, violent outburst of emotions of ear for the last about 5 years. Sometimes I displayed unusual behavior so as to attract attention or to get out of the unpleasant situation.

The medicines gave me relief but for a shorter period.

I met Dr. Kohli in the Chattarpur Ashram during his spiritual discourse. He listened to my problems and gave me two months' *telismas* to use with certain discipline.

I am fully recovered now and advise everyone to seek help from his Guru again and again until you are safe and fully recovered from recurring ailments.

3. <u>Mr. Ujagar Ludhiana</u>
<u>(Punjab)</u>

I am 42 years old and had been suffering with a feeling of confusion and dizziness accompanied by numbness and throbbing headaches.

I met Dr. Kohli and was told that this is a disease of the nervous system and has a tendency to run in the family. The sufferer knows in advance when the attack is going to come.

He gave me two months' *talismas* to use with certain instructions. I am fully cured and now want to tell the people that it is the power and extent of their inner receptivity that determines how much they can attain of true knowledge and how rapidly. Receptivity comes as a result of being loyal to a Guru and faithfully practicing his disciplines.

4. Ms. Shiveta, Delhi

I am 25 years old and had been suffering from an inflammation of the mucous membrane with excessive discharge from nose. The medicines gave me relief but for a shorter period.

I met Dr. Kohli and his treatment with certain disciplines gave me a complete relief.

May God bless Dr. Kohli and his spiritual healing powers which are helping hundreds from sufferings.

5. Ms. Mamta Jammu

I am 30 years old and have been suffering for the last about 3 years from an irritation of the nasal passages causing sneezing involuntary. Sometimes attacks were acute on exposure to dry cold air. The medicines gave me temporary relief.

I was directed to Dr. Kohli who gave me two months treatment with certain instructions.

I sincerely followed the treatment and am feeling quite comfortable now.

May God help Dr. Kohli to continue his relentless free service to humanity to get rid of certain diseases where normal medicines fail?

****

LSF

NEWS AND EVENTS

Bhai Sahib' Birthday Celebrations

Bhai Sahib's birthday was celebrated on 17th December 2011 at the Ashram, Chattarpur Farms on a low key.

Bhai Sahib with some his closest devotees gathered at the Ashram in the morning for quiet meditation session and spiritual discourse.

In the evening few other selected devotees arrived to celebrate the birthday when birthday cake was cut and everyone prayed for healthy long life of our Guru Ji.

The Ashram gave an excellent look since it has been totally refurbished with aluminium windows, doors, new carpets and curtains, bathroom tiles and fittings etc. All the work was done courtesy a close devotee of Guruji.

TRIP TO SOUTH INDIA (10 days)

Bhai Sahib along with other devotees of LSF, Shri. NC Sharma, Ms. Sharma and Shri. RK Sharma and others visited places of special interest and pilgrimages via Chennai, the major international and national gateway of South India on 22nd January 2012.

From Vaishnodevi in the North to Tirupati and Kanya Kumari in the South, from Pushkar in the West to Bodhgaya in the East , India is bejewelled all over with pilgrim sites. These places are the pillars of India's varied religions, cultures and traditions and stand firmly as icons of our beliefs.

CHENNAI:

Chennai bears a distinctive new look. It has posh multi-storeyed offices, aesthetically designed hotels and plush residential complexes. The street are lined with internet cafes, mobile phone rentals for easy communication, forex money changers, banks and ATM's for quick cash access. Glitzy multi- cuisine restaurants, fast food cafes, pubs and discos have sprung up to cater to the new generation of global workers.

LSF

Today, Chennai is busy trading centre for exports, particularly leather and textiles. There are many Indian and Multinational Soft ware companies. Chennai is the fourth largest metropolis and third important port of India. It is the major international and national gateway of South India. The Kamraj domestic terminal and Anna International Terminal are located adjacent to each other. Both terminals offer transfer facilities of pre-paid coach to any part of the city.

Chennai is also linked to all the important cities of South India. There are two main railway stations, Chennai central for broad gauge and Egmore for meter gauge. Distance of two railway stations from the city centre is 5 kms and 4 kms respectively. Besides, the city is linked by the biggest Moffusil Bust terminus. It has 30 arrival and 150 departure terminals. Most places in Tamil Nadu , Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh can be reached within 24 hours because of the excellent road links on the National Highway.

From Chennai Shipping Corporation of India operates passenger and cargo ships to various parts of the world. The city is also equipped with Call Taxis, Tourist taxis and City Tours.

The journey from Delhi to Chennai was covered by Indigo Airlines on 22nd January 2012.We reached the Bell Hotel at about 11 AM., hired a taxi and reached Kanchipuram at about 1 PM. First of all we visited there Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam Math. This was established by Shri Adi Sankara about 2500 years ago. Shri Adi Shankara is regarded as the incarnation of Lord Shiva. He was a great thinker, leader and a missionary. The great Guru toured the whole of India with the sole purpose of propagating Advaita philosophy through religious discourses and debates. The Math has a unbroken lineage of 70 Acharayas in the Sankaracharya Prampara.

At present, the Peetam has been performing various activities to uphold Sanatam Dharma, various traditions, social activities and projects under His Holiness Sri Sankara Vijayandra Saraswati Swamiji.

We met Swami Ji in the room. Thousands of followers gathered there for His *Darshan*. He looked like a symbol of spiritual knowledge and enlightment. He blessed us with His pure vibrations. Few books on traditional education were given to us. A well fixed mind on Him indicated that He is the truth an all the rest is false. Those wishing for fruits from the Swamis are not regularly united with them because they want both, the world and the God.

After Swamiji's Darshan we visited:

1. Shri Kamakshi Amman temple; Kamashki being the principal Goddess in Kanchipuram, the Shiva temples here have no separate sanctum of Shakti.

2. We then visited the Ekamhareswarar temple in Kanchipuram. It is worshipped in the form of Prithvi Lingam. The two thousand five hundred years old mango tree inside the temple is the biggest attraction.

3. We then visited Kailasandar temple, dedicated to lord Shiva.

4. Sri Perumal Temple (Vishnu temple) and a few temples more of historical and architectural importance.

We returned from Kanchipuram in the evening and reached Marina Beach. A marvellous 13 kms stretch of the sea and the sand, ideal for walking and wading in the surf. Across the road are marvellous buildings. Lot of travellers visit the Marina Beach for their pleasant evenings.

The next day i.e. on 23rd Jan 2012 , we visited Mahabalipuram , 64 kms from Chennai. It is situated on the Bay of Bengal. It is a must visit destination if we are in South India. The history of Mahabalipuram dates back to 2000 years. It contains nearly 40 monuments of different types including an 'OPEN AIR' bas relief - Which is the largest in the world.

The proper venue of the site is ' Mamallapuram' after the name of Mamalla , a Pallava King-Narasimha Varman (630-668), who created one of the earliest of its monument. It is popularly known as Mahabalipuram.
Close to the sea is the two –spire Shore Temple, which was built in the 8th century. It has shrines to Shiva and Vishnu. These were much closer to the water but now they stand about 100 meters inland, as the water has receded.

MADURAI

On 24th January 2012 we reached Madurai from Chennai by train.
Madurai is one of the oldest cities of Southern India. It has been a centre of learning and pilgrimage for centuries. It is known all over the world because of the magnificent temple of Goddess Meenakshi. This city is well planned and laid out in the pattern of lotus flower with the famous Meenakshi Sundareshwarar Temple in the centre. It is situated on the banks of river Vaigai. Lord Shiva appeared there and drops of nectar from His locks fell on the ground in this town and as such it came to be known as Madurai.
The Meenakshi Temple is a twin temple. The temple in the Southern side is dedicated to Devi Meenakshi and other to Lord Sundareshwarar. This temple is about 258 meters in length and about 241.4 meters in breadth. The original temple was built by King
Kulasekrara Pandiyan. There are 12 temple towers covered from top to bottom with multi-coloured images of celestial beings and mythological figures. This temple is one of the 51 Shakti Peetams. It is one of the five Sabhas of Lord Natraj.
Golden Lotus Tank: Inside the temple there is a tank known as Golden Lotus tank. It is believed that King of Heavens Indra worshipped Lord Shiva with Golden Lotus Flowers from this tank. The tank is surrounded by spacious corridors. On the pillars of Northern corridor are figures of 24 poets of the third Tamil Sangam, the merchant Dhanajeyan who saw the temple at first and the king Kulasekhra Pandiyan who first built the temple.

LSF

Thousand Pillared Hall: This Hall is in the Northest of the temple and built by Ariyanatha Mudaliyar in 1569 AD and is called as the treasure house of the art. It contains 985 pillars. The images of Natraja, Manmatha, Rathi, Arjuna, Mohini, Ganesh, Bhima, Kali-Purusha, Chamdramathi and Saraswati are the magnificent carvings.

In the west of the city there is an ancient Vaishnavite temple with beautiful sculptures called as Koodal Alagar Perumal Temple. The deity installed here is "Koodal Alagar" and his consort known as "MadiraValli"

Madurai is a city of festivals. The wedding of Meenakshi on the Chaitra Poornima day and the procession of Alagar to the river Vaigal attract multitudes of people from all parts of the country. The sweet memories of visit and the soaring towers will continue to attract the visitors again and again to the temple City of Madurai.

RAMESHVARAM

Next day we reached Rameshwaram. It is an island situated in the gulf of the Indian Peninsula and is very important pilgrimage centre of the Hindus. It is also the seat of one of the 12 *Jyotir lingas*. It is said that Lord Rama worshipped Lord Shiva by installing a sand Shivalingam on the spot before the construction of the bridge on the ocean.

Again, it is said that Lord Rama worshipped Lord Shiva on His return from Lanka after killing King Ravana and installing a Shiva Linga to absolve Himself of the sin of vanquishing Ravana. Rama sent Hanumana to Mount Kailash to fetch the Lingam. Since hanuman was late, Sita made a Lingam out of sand. This was installed as 'Rama Lingam' and worship was over. Meanwhile Hanuman rushed in with the Lingam from Kailash. He was disappointed to find another Lingam already installed. To pacify Hanuman, Rama had the Hanumath Lingam also installed alongside and ordered that *pujas* be first performed for the same and then the Rama Lingam. The temple has 22 *Theerthas* (Holy springs)which are believed to have medicinal properties.

The Ramnatha Swami temple faces East. The sea here, about two meters from the main entrance, is very calm and ideal for bathing. The water of this place is considered sacred and known as Agnitheeratham.

The Ganthamathana Parvatham is a hillock to the North of the temple and Rama's *padma* (feet) are placed on a chakra for worship.

Kothandaramar Swami Temple is situated 7 kms from Ramanatha Swamy and it is said that Vibishana surrendered to Rama at this place and Lakshmana performed the preliminary Patabhishekam for him. Here are the ideals of Rama, Sita, Lakhmana, Hanumana and Vibishshana.

Dhanushkodi: The southern tip of the island was completely washed away by Tsunami and to reach Sethu one has to walk 3 kms along the shores. Here a bridge across the ocean was constructed and used by Rama to reach Sri lanka.. This Sethu was later broken by Shri Rama with one end of His bow at the request of Vibhshana and hence the name Dhanushkodi has come.

THIRUNELVELI

At night we stayed in a Hotel Royal Park at Rameshwaram and next day we reached Thirunelveli about 151 kms from Madurai. This ancient city is the district head quarters of Tamilnadu. It is mid way between Madurai and Kanyakumari and is located on the banks of river Thamaraparani. It was once the capital of the pandayas and it has a history that goes back to 2000 years.

The main attraction to this valley is the twin temples of Ganthimathai Nellaiappor dedicated to Parvathi and Siva respectively. The temple was built by a Pandya King in the 7th century . Rare jewels, musical pillars, thousand pillared hall and sculptures are attractions of this temple. It is one of the five Sobhas of Lord Natraj.

COURTALLAM

This temple is located 59 kms from Thirunaveli. This wonderful temple is just near to the famous Courtallam waterfalls.. The temple is Conch shaped. Shiva showed Himself as Brahma and Vishnu. Parvati's shrine is also regarded as one of 51 Shakti Peethams.It is also one of the five Sobhas of Lord Natraj.

It is said that Boganathor inspired his disciple, Babaji, to seek initiation into Kriya Kundalini Pranayama from the Siddha Saint Agastyar at Courtallam in the Pothgai Hills of Tamil Nadu, now the Thirumaveli District . Babaji, on arriving there, made a solemn vow to remain at that spot until Agastyar would initiate him into the secrets of Yoga.

Babaji meditated there for 48 days. He was on the verge of complete collapse when suddenly the eminent Siddha Agastyar stepped out of the nearby forest and came up to Babji. He called his name in a soft voice and then embraced him. After giving him water and food, he initiated Babaji into the secrets of Kriya Kundalini Pranayama. This powerful breathing technique is the crystallisation of some of the most important teachings of the Tamil Yoga Siddhas. He then directed Babaji to Badrinath in the Himalayas and to become the greatest Siddha the world had ever known. He has promised to remain in his physical body although visible to a few persons in this physical world. Through such great manifestations God works silently on the gross physical plane and helps those who love the quest for God realization.

During night we came back and stayed at the Aryan Hotel in Tirunelveli. In the morning we set out for Kanyakumari – 91 kms from Tirunelveli.

KANYAKUMARI

Kanyakumari is a famous pilgrim centre at the confluence of the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Kanyakumari has been named after the Goddess Parvathi who worshipped there as Devi Kanya, the virgin Goddess, on one of the rocks of this land's end to obtain the hand of Lord Shiva. A temple stands near where three oceans meet.

LSF

According to the legend the demon King Bana after conquering the three worlds's commenced his aggression against Devloka. In desperation, the Devas sought Lord Shiva's protection. Shiva assured them that his assort would incarnate as Devi Kanya and destroy the demon King. Enchanted with Kanya's beauty the demon king advanced towards her with bad intentions. In a fierce battle he was killed. There are total of 11 theerthams associated with the temple in the ocean surrounding the area. The confluence of the sea at the southern tip of the Indian peninsula has been held sacred for centuries. Though a small town, it is an important pilgrim centre. Handicraft products like mats, fibre bags and sea- shells items and curtains are greatly in demand among the visitors.

SUCHINDRAM TEMPLE

This temple is 14 kms from Kanya Kumari and is considered as one of the store houses of the richest specimens of art and sculpture in stone. It has a fine and beautiful tank. Here the Kong Indra attained purification. It is one of the few temples in the country where trinity is worshipped. The linga named Sthanumalyam is in three parts, the Top represent Lord Shiva, the Middle Lord Vishnu and the base Lord Brahma. Sthanu is the name of Shiva, Mal of Vishnu and Ayan of Brahma. The temple has beautiful gopuram, musical pillars and an excellent portrait of Hanumanji.

THE VIVEKANANDA SHILA SMARAK

It was Swami Vivekananda who, impelled by his devotion to Divine Mother, came to the shores of Kanyakumari, in search of his mission in life. It is said that he swam the 550 yards of shark infested sea to the Shripada rock and meditated there for 3 days and nights till he was enlightened. This rock came to be known as Vivekananda Rock. It was constructed in 1970 in memory of SwamiJi 's meditation on the Shila in 1892. It is here that Swami Ji got the inspiration to go to the 'World Parliament of Religions'. The Shila Smarak is truly a national monument representing all the best in Indian culture. The memorial comprises of two main structures (1) The Vivekananda Mandapam Sheltering the statue of

Swamiji and (2) The Shripada Mandapam surrounding the sacred rock, situated at different elevations on the rock.

Attached to the Shila Smarak is the Vivekananda Kendra which undertakes social welfare service activities, pictorial exhibitions, meditation halls, Beach gardens, a beautiful sunrise library and many other specialities.

The journey to the Vivekananda Shila Samarak was taken by a steamer.

THIRUVALLUVAR STATUE

The statue is an embodiment of the essence of Tamil Classic. ' THIRUKKURAL' authorised by Saint Thiru Valluvar born in 31 BC. It is a precious gem among the classics, unique in the deliverance of code of conduct to the mankind to follow for all the time. This classical work written in Tamil has been translated in over 60 languages of the world. The statue located at the confluence of three great seas, also depicts the great tenets of the Thirukkural virtue, wealth and love.

At all the places we meditated deeply on God. We are fortunate to have a natural appreciation for life's most beautiful experiences. The vibrations of all the temples we have seen, speaks of the language of the soul and can one out of the mire of the humdrum everyday life. As air and light stream into a house through the open windows, if the windows of the soul are thrown open, the truth will flow in and illumine the man according to the ability to recognise and receive it.

The return journey, after about 10 days, was covered wonderfully by the same route as was adopted for the onset of journey.

****