



VOL No. 2. Issue No. 10 VIVA NEWSLETTER (ENGLISH MONTHLY)

Vivekananda Institute of Values (VIVA)

Practical Spirituality for All

“Everything can be sacrificed for truth,
but truth cannot be sacrificed for anything.”

Swami Vivekananda



LOOKING INWARDS ('In search of Truth')

When Swami Vivekananda's voice soared high 'Sisters and Brothers of America', during the Chicago address in 1893, one of the popular misconceptions laid to rest was that India was a land of half-naked fakirs and snake charmers. Misconceptions have always existed due to the human tendency to believe without validation. Consider these statements- 'tomato is a vegetable' or 'the samosa is of Indian origin'. True? No. What about 'Yoga is related to stretching the body' or 'India is a Hindu nation'. Not true. This newsletter will tell us more about these issues. Misconceptions exist because of prejudices and biased opinions. A curious, questioning attitude and truth seeking is required. Further, people also tend to accept as true oft-repeated aphorisms without applying their mind. 'White races are superior to black races', 'boys are better at math than girls'; the list is endless. In this issue, we attempt to question a few such concepts and also pay homage to those who speak the truth and seek the truth.

The Editorial Team

TRUTH AS AN IDEAL, by Uma Kaikini from Gurgaon

Yudhishtira was known for his unflinching adherence to 'Satya' and 'Dharma', which were more precious to him than royal ambitions, material pursuits and family relations. It is said because of his truthful nature, his chariot used to fly four fingers above the ground in the Kurukshetra war. When he tricked his opponent by a white lie, his famed chariot instantly fell down to the ground!

Mahatma Gandhi is a well know exponent of truth. His autobiography "My experiments with truth" is about his pursuit of truth and self-discovery through personal experiences and experiments. According to him, "Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth."

Shanmugam Manjunath, an IIM Lucknow graduate, was an Area Sales Manager of Indian Oil Corporation Limited, when he was murdered for sealing a petrol station, which sold adulterated fuel. He was shot dead in Gola Gokarannath in Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh, for doing his duty without fear or favour. This incident inspired several students at IIM, IIT and other institutions to set up 'The Manjunath Shanmugam Trust'. This young man was just 27. What a loss to the nation!

We are responsible for what we do and also for what we do not do. If there is complete uniformity between our thoughts and words, they leave an indelible impact and we don't need to oversell ourselves to prove the point. It is said if a man doesn't utter a lie for a long period of about 12 years or so, whatever the person utters bears the power of materialisation. He attains Siddhi.

Let us remember that even if we are in a minority of one, the truth is the truth and we need not fear.



Tomato is a fruit because it is a ripened flower ovary and contains seeds but since it is used in cooking the tomato is regarded as vegetable.

Samosa is actually of middle eastern origin. It probably originated in the 10th century in Central Asia.





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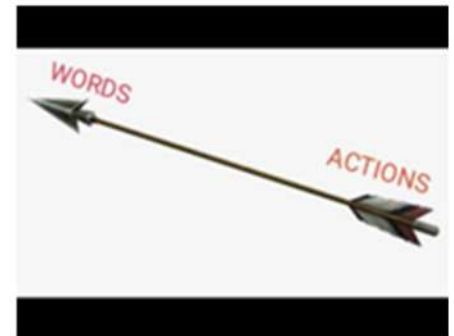
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WORDS MUST BE MATCHED BY ACTION, by Om Prakash from Bhubaneswar

Raja Harishchandra was a legendary king of the Solar dynasty. He was known for his honest and noble character. It is said that he had once made a promise to sage Vishvamitra and to fulfil the promise he had to give away his kingdom, sell his family, and agree to be a slave of a 'chandala' (crematorium worker/an outcast). His wife supported him in fulfilling his promise. He believed that fulfilment of commitment he made was his 'dharma', and words once spoken have to be acted upon.

For Raja Harishchandra, it was impossible to live without integrity. Imagine your words to be the front end of an arrow and your actions to be the rear end. Just like the arrow's rear end must follow its front end to hit the target, your actions must follow your words to live a life of integrity. It only takes few seconds to make a commitment but sometimes it takes a whole lifetime to fulfil it. Sometimes in the process, we may have to sacrifice our time, money, personal space and happiness. Without a heroic spirit, we cannot fulfil our promises. While so many kings are forgotten today, we still remember Raja Harishchandra and his devotion to truth because he fulfilled his commitment against all odds.



Asanas that are related to movements and postures of the body constitute only one limb of Ashtanga Yoga (the eight limbs of yoga). The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, meaning "to yoke," or "to unite". The practice aims to create union between body, mind and spirit, as well as between the individual self and universal consciousness.

A popular misconception in the western world is that India is a nation of Hindus. India is a land of various beliefs. Hinduism is the dominant religion, whose followers represent over 80% of the total population. It coexists with other religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, and Sikhism.



WHAT IS TRUTH? by Dr. Hema Raghavan from Delhi

Truth is black and white when the statement matches fact. Charcoal is black. If you say black, it is the truth; if you say white, it is false. Truth here is absolute. Truth is actuality and not mere perception. The earth appears flat but it is elliptical. Truth can only be discovered, never created.

Jesus was dragged before Governor Pontius Pilate for claiming to be the King of Jews. Pilate knew Jesus was not guilty but hesitated to free Jesus because he did not want to displease the blood thirsty mob. He said 'I wash my hands off his blood' and handed Jesus to the mob to crucify him thereby sacrificing truth to remain popular. The truth is that he was as much guilty of crucifying Christ as the mob.

"Everything can be sacrificed for truth, but truth cannot be sacrificed for anything," said Swami Vivekananda. A man accused as a robber seeks refuge in a saint's hut. The saint wonders if he is a criminal or not. Nevertheless, he puts him up in an attic where no one can see him. When the mob comes asking if the robber is in, the saint is in a bind- to tell or not to tell the truth – get him lynched or give him an opportunity to reform. He chooses to lie to save the man. In such a case, it is better to be kind than to be truthful.

What do you think?



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MOVEMENT – VIVA Events and Updates

1. Online ACP trainings for all the 3 years were held in September for defence and private schools.

An offline training for government school was held in Bhopal. As always, the teachers being trained were very impressed with the program itself and unique facilitation methods that were taught to them.

Offline trainings for the 3 years of ACP were held at Dehradun and Chandigarh for the Kendriya Vidyalaya schools. The excellent facilitators from VIVA led the teachers through the various modules that were highly appreciated.



From the ACP training in Chandigarh



The engaged Svarat group at the workshop

2. The SVARAT offline and informal meeting with VIVA group is held occasionally on a Friday at VIVA. In September, the topic was “Compassionate Communication with Oneself”. The energetic group were very happy to discuss a matter close to their hearts with the facilitators at VIVA who in turn were happy to share their own experiences in this regard.

3. VIVA’s women’s workshop is titled ‘Kalyani – the Awakened Woman’. On September 11 and 18, the first online workshop for empowering women with self-belief was held. Women were attentive to the ideas presented and found they provided an immense value addition to their own understanding. They participated whole heartedly and provided honest and positive feedback to the facilitating team.

3. After a successful August workshop, an online parenting workshop was once again held on September 14th and 15th. On day 2 of the workshop, that comprised the Q and A session, Revered Swami Shantatmanandaji answered various queries of the parents. The parents found the framework informative and insightful. They were full of questions and the interaction between all the participants and facilitators was candid and engaging. The team at VIVA plans for more such parenting workshops through the year as parents are an important stakeholder in its vision of the awakening of the country. For information on our parenting workshop please reach out to us at arise.parents@gmail.com.



The online parenting workshop in progress



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SOME TRUTH SEEKING

Concept 1: Wealth brings happiness.

Our understanding: Wealth brings comfort. Meaning and purpose in life bring happiness.

Concept 2: A religious person is a good person.

Our understanding: Religion is a path which could help us to internalize and adopt good values such as honesty, compassion, integrity, acceptance and unselfishness. Only when we practice these values do we become a truly good human being.

Concept 3: Someone who is quiet and introverted contributes less than those who are extroverted and dynamic.

Our understanding: Quiet people are often thinkers and capable of brilliant solutions to problems if they are given time.

Concept 4: First impression is the best impression.

Our understanding: Yes, provided that the person being impressed upon is truly evolved and therefore capable of understanding more from the first impression.

Concept 5: We can never change our inherent dispositions.

Our understanding: Self-effort and a strong will to change helps us to change ourselves and the course of our life. Grace of God follows the person who shows the will to try.

ASK SWAMI SHANTATMANANDA

A reader writes:

Can you please tell us what is meant by lower truth and higher truth and give examples too?

Swami Shantatmananda replies:

Truth by definition is the highest aspiration of the human mind. According to Vedanta, there is only one consciousness and that is addressed by many names like 'Brahman' or 'Atman'. This is the highest truth. Opposed to this, there are other aspects of truth that are called lower truth. Lower only because (1) they are the stages to reach the higher truth and (2) they are embedded within what is essentially considered unreal and transitory, namely this world. In our existential world, if we meet our commitments, practice honesty and integrity in our personal, social and business lives they would be considered a lower form of truth. Perfecting our lives with the lower truth helps us discipline ourselves, gives us clarity of mind and slowly we seek and reach the highest level of truth i.e., Oneness.

Swami Vivekananda uses these terms in the specific context of Hindu philosophy. Under the Hindu philosophy some systems are considered by some as truthful and correct while the others false and incorrect. Swamiji was of the opinion that all systems of philosophy were worthy and acceptable but the progression of 'Dvaita' (I am separate from God) to 'Advaita' (there is only One Consciousness) is a journey not from falsehood to truth but one from lower truth to a higher truth.

THE CHOICE OF STANDING UP TO THE TRUTH – A story from the life of Swami Vivekananda

Once Narendra was punished at school for no fault of his own. The geography teacher asked him a question which Narendra answered correctly. But the teacher thought he was wrong and punished him. Narendra was undaunted. He protested, 'I committed no error, sir; I am sure what I said is right.' This made the teacher furious and he caned Narendra mercilessly.

Narendra returned home, his eyes filled with tears and he narrated everything to his mother. Bhuvaneshwari Devi consoled him saying, 'My son, why do you get upset if you are right? Follow the truth always, whatever happens.' This ideal of unwavering loyalty to truth which Swamiji saw in his mother and later on in his spiritual master was the basis for all his actions.

