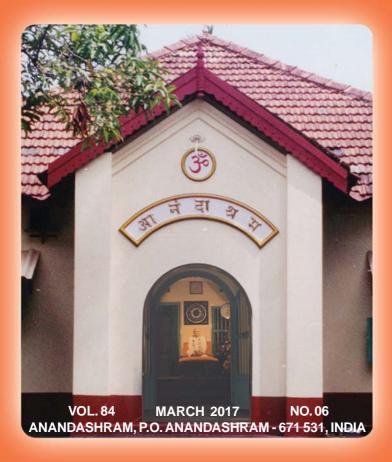


A monthly journal started by HH Swami Ramdas in 1933 DEDICATED TO UNIVERSAL LOVE AND SERVICE





On Shi Ram jai Ram jai gai Ram

GURU'S GRACE

My life's fruition was reached -

When my purity reflected spiritual radiance;

When light of God made all parts of

my being lustrous;

When bliss and peace permeated my life entire;

When my heart poured out Love in unending stream flooding all the worlds.

Guru's Grace is in the start, middle and end of this achievement.

- Swami Ramdas

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THE VISION

A Monthly Magazine

Anandashram

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FROM THE EDITOR

'In Search of Papa' is an earnest quest to dig deep into the blessed life and teachings of Beloved Papa Swami Ramdas, the Founder-Master of Anandashram, who sought for, found and lived in communion with the Divine.

His teachings are the clear and direct signposts for those who take to the path. However, Papa wants us to dive deep into his words to understand the theme through our own experience. He says: "Through mere superficial churning of thought, Ramdas' words cannot be understood. You can throw light on them only when you bring with you the blazing torch of your own perfected experience. Experience is gained by diving into the depths of your mind. Mere assertion of the Truth is not realisation. Realisation means direct perception and experience."

Every search is a learning experience, no matter how it ends. So is this one that we embark upon. It is not meant to be an academic pursuit or a cerebral exercise; it is our response to Papa's ardent call: "Be God, lead others to God". How to make this statement a reality is the challenge before us and this is one such attempt.

Last month's issue of THE VISION carried revelations unearthed during this search pertaining to the period while Papa was on the path. This month's issue carries the revelations after Papa's becoming one with the Divine.

- EDITOR

THE NEW BIRTH By Swami Ramdas



There is a stage in the evolution of the soul when it takes an upward turn and rapidly marches towards the fullness and perfection of its inherent state of Divinity. The soul is essentially Divine,

and to realise this it should, by a conscious process, return to its native spiritual greatness and glory. When this transformation takes place, the soul experiences a new birth, as it were, since it is imbued with a consciousness whose nature is eternal and infinite. It dawns on the soul that it is not a relative, limited and changing individual but that it is an omnipresent, imperishable and immutable Reality.

Now the soul undergoes such a change in its outlook that its valuation of life and its objects become

entirely different from what it was before the spiritual enlightenment. Its life thereafter is lived in the terms of the absolute and all its activities are based upon the highest spiritual knowledge and experience.

Such a new birth and consciousness come to every soul in the world. Some may attain this blessed state earlier than others, but all human beings are inevitably progressing towards this ultimate, sublime consummation in their life-journey through the field of time and space.

The spiritual awakening of the soul is nothing but God revealing Himself in the heart. It is His omnipotent will prevailing over His lower nature behind the mask of which the supreme grandeur of the Divine is hidden. It is by a double process that the soul realises its spiritual sovereignty — God's assertion from within and the vehicle's submission to Him from without. The dominance of the former brings about the complete surrender of the physical, mental and vital aspects. It is like a brilliant light newly lit within a perforated screen permitting its radiance to spread out in all directions, converting even the screen itself into a mass of splendour.

The great Ones, who have reached the summit of Divine illumination and knowledge, can alone lead

and guide the souls that are struggling on the Path. It is by their power and grace that the aspiring soul is gifted with strength, courage and determination to boldly face all trials and surmount all obstacles on its way to the supreme goal. They inspire by contact, by teaching and by their power. They are like the gardeners who tenderly watch, nourish and take care, in every way, of the growing plant and see that it fulfils its existence by bearing beautiful flower and delicious fruit.

So, to quicken the soul with the longing for the Divine and to cause it to evolve steadily until it realises the fullness of its spiritual glory, the goodwill and blessings of a saint are absolutely necessary. The soul, caught in the toils of its lower nature, hungers for true freedom and happiness. This quest can easily, and in the shortest time possible, be fulfilled when it draws light, inspiration and grace from a saint. Truly, saints are saviours. They are the storehouses of spiritual wealth and they freely give it to those who ask them. To serve them is to have the right and the power to enter into the realm of immortality. All those who keenly desire for the spiritual unfoldment of their lives and the achievement of true happiness and peace should, in all meekness, approach saints and get

illumined in their elevating and transmuting presence.

Now the new birth, the new life and the new consciousness will come to you as God's spontaneous gift and your life will be flooded with Divinity inside and out. You are all the sacred and holy temples of God. May He manifest Himself in you and may you by His benediction become His incarnate images!

IN SEARCH OF PAPA — A SYNOPSIS OF REVEALATIONS

(...Continued From Previous Issue)

REVELATIONS UNEARTHED AT THE SUMMIT

(11) JOY IS THE AIM OF LIFE

"The outlook of the true aspirant is optimistic. His eyes see only beauty, goodness and love everywhere. In every happening he discerns the seed of hope and achievement. In this way, he conquers the moods of depression that seek to subdue him. His face is bright and cheerful. He takes life and all that it brings for him, not seriously. His heart is light. He enjoys a joke and gives himself away to a hearty laugh. He is frank and playful like a child, and creates a jovial atmosphere wherever he is. Joy is His nature. All through the thoughts, words

and acts, should run an unbroken stream of His remembrance, and this is supreme joy. When you at last reach His feet, and lose yourself in His glorious being, you yourself become joy." Swami Ramdas (SR)

All the above characteristics were fully demonstrated in Papa's life, whether he was conversing with devotees, addressing a large audience, or handling Ashram affairs. There would be roars of laughter when he related, in his own unique way, observations or incidents from his own life.

Joy means fullness. Then one becomes calm, collected, peaceful, self-contained and self-contented. There is nothing lacking. By attaining that bliss which is self-existent we feel we have gained the greatest thing in the world. There is nothing more to be achieved.



Imagine you have planted a sapling in the garden. Will you not eagerly look forward to the joyous moment when you see that it is about to blossom? A garden resplendent with flowers will always bring a smile to one's face. Life is a gift from the Divine; we can celebrate it in every moment if we maintain a sense of optimism and enthusiasm in life.

(12) NON-DUALITY DOES NOT NEGATE DUALITY

"Even after reaching this great height of the all-comprehensive vision of the Reality in which all diversity is dissolved into one, the God-realised soul assumes a position separate from the great Truth. He calls himself the son, child, servant or devotee of God." SR

Papa considered Bhakti as the first step on the Divine path. Bhakti implies intimate relationship of the devotee (Bhakta) with the Lord (Bhagavan). Traditionally the Lord is perceived in the form of a deity whereas Papa had the same Bhakti towards the Lord in the form of Love, knowledge and power.

Papa could maintain and enjoy a dual relationship with God as a child or servant even after realising that he and God are one. Love works only on the plane of duality. All his actions, great or small, bear the stamp of love, for love is his being and love is his life, and in love he finds the fulfilment of his existence.

Have you ever seen a potter's wheel where a lumpy clump of moist clay is shaped into a fine mud pot? What happens to the mud then? It is formed into a shape that has some utility though the substance remains the same. Similarly, Beloved Papa, after attaining the non-dual state, continued to serve humanity in what appears to us to be a state of duality.



(13) BEING ORIGINAL AND CREATIVE

"Be the light unto yourself and in your own original way manifest the magnificence and power of your enlightened life. Be highly creative and set free the infinite power that is within you." SR

The Creator has endowed many of His creations with rich potentialities. This has been given to them

to bring it out in the form of discoveries and inventions for improving the standard of life and living of the overall creations.

Every creation is unique and hence our effort should be to know our uniqueness and bring it out. If we look at the universe we find that there has been a steady march for betterment in all fields because of the revelation of the varying potentialities by so many human beings.



Have you ever wondered how sculptors carve out a figure from a log of wood or block of marble? They imagine the figure inside and chisel away everything that is not part of the figure. Similarly, we have to bring out the infinite creative power bestowed on us by eliminating all the chaff for the greater good of one and all.

(14) INDIVIDUAL WILL HAS NO PLACE IN SPIRITUALITY

"Really, man has no will of his own. There is only one Divine will at work everywhere and in all. It is a mistake to think that we, as individuals, have got any power to do anything. God is behind everything." SR

When we closely observe, we find there are so many movements and changes that are going on within the body, such as the action of the digestive organs, the blood circulation, the growth of the hair, etc. We know very well that these things are not done by us as individuals and that there is a Power other than us which is responsible for these inner movements and that the same Power is responsible also for our outer movements. Bereft of that Power, the sense of individuality cannot exist.

Papa thus makes the individual know that spiritual progress means reducing the dominance of 'me' and 'mine' and ultimately to transfer the assumed ownership of all emotions, thoughts and objects to the Real Owner.

Puppetry, an ancient art form in India, is often performed on stage where puppets, playing different roles, are controlled by puppeteers. Puppets can't play by themselves; their actions are in the control of their masters who pull the strings attached. Similarly, our life is in the hands

of the Divine and as such individual will has no place in spirituality.



(15) ENLIGHTENMENT CONVERTS COMPLEXITY TO SIMPLICITY

"Life is the expression of Atman; and though seemingly two, they are one." SR

How do we convey sublime spiritual teachings and profound philosophical precepts in a simple, clear and candid way? You'll find the answer in Papa's conversations and writings. On every complex topic, his thoughts are crystal clear; his message is simple and within the reach of everyone. He employs the technique of conveying the indescribable by connecting us with the common run of life. It is no academic exercise for him but unfolding of his unique experiences.

In the quote mentioned above, Papa conveys some

practical hints for us to understand the profound word ATMAN. Though the Life force is indescribable, the presence of the same is experienced by one and all.

A closer study reveals that the individual existence purely depends upon the Universal Life manifesting through the air, water, sun, space, earth, gases, metals, minerals, plants and trees etc. In other words the fields for the organs of perception and action of an individual are provided only by the Universe. Hence it can be surmised that the Life force within us is the individualized expression of the Universal Life or Spirit.



If you have ever opened a switch box at home, you'd be amazed to find how complex it is; plenty of colourful wires are criss-crossing all around. The same switch box when covered, looks very simple

and easy to operate. Similarly, Papa could convey complex spiritual themes in a simple manner.

(16) NOT BELONGING TO ANY CREED

"Ramdas does not belong to any creed or sect. If he had belonged to any particular creed or sect, his freedom would have been limited." SR

Papa believed that bigotry and adherence to any creed was also a hindrance to Sadhana.

Every creation is enjoying the benefit of the discoveries and inventions brought out by persons belonging to different creeds, sects and countries. Truth being such how can we limit our bonding to any specific segment?

An aspirant should also be open to the teachings of all sages and saints; one can learn from every one of them. Remember what Gandhiji said: "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

Have you ever seen a bird in the sky bearing a passport as it crosses to another country? They enjoy the fullest freedom of movement, not at all bothered about man-made barriers, borders and boundaries. Similarly, Papa and all other saints

belong to the whole world, and are not limited to any group or sect.



(17) ACCEPTANCE OF EVERYTHING AS IT IS

"There is no disorder in the world... Everything is as it should be." SR

Though these words may appear to be very difficult to accept, proportionate to the intensity of our efforts to feel His presence within in the form of Love, we will gradually realize that behind all the apparent disorder and restlessness seen outside and inside, there lies an order and rhythm, because all things happen only by the will of God, who is love, harmony and peace and who determines things and events only for the ultimate good of all. In other words, wherever love is there, we will not put the label of disorder.

This becomes possible only by raising ourselves

from the individual level to the universal level, meaning viewing through the goggles of love. Then we will be able to perceive order everywhere, just as we can enjoy the beautiful panoramic view only from the hilltop and not from the plain.



Can we see any order or pattern in the vast array of things around us? Does it not seem like chaos and confusion? But, if one looks down from an aircraft, there seems to be a pattern and design. When we start looking at things in their totality, not in fragments, we come to accept things as they are, not as we want them to be.

(18) ALL SPIRITUAL TEACHERS ARE REVERED EQUALLY

"Ramdas has realised the unity of all religions, and his love and admiration go out to all the spiritual teachers equally. He is at once the servant of the Almighty, and a child of saints. How blissful it is to feel and be conscious of this truth!"SR

So far as man can sweep his thought into the earliest origins of the history of mankind, he cannot fail to observe all through its course, a galaxy of souls standing out as distinctly different in nature, temperament and vision from the common run of human beings. These are the saints and sages, Avatars and Prophets of the world. The outlook of these unique souls upon the life of the world is discovered to be of a rare value and significance. Whilst the human beings in general are possessed only of the individualistic view of life, these renowned souls are gifted with a universal sense which clearly reflects in all their thoughts, words and actions.

Thus the vision and mission of every spiritual saint in different places is to guide those who contact them and enable them to progress fast in their spiritual life. So all of them are revered.

Mother earth produces different grains in different places and they are used by different persons according to their taste and need — rice, wheat, ragi, oats, etc, each one having its own uniqueness and relevance. Similar is the case with

saints and sages who appear in different places and inspire those who come in contact with them. Recognizing this Papa reveres them all equally.



(19) EQUAL OUTLOOK FOR TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL APPROACH

"Man cannot conceive of God, who is infinite and eternal. God is beyond name and form. The instrument, which we have to make use of, in trying to comprehend Him, is the mind. And the mind can think only in terms of name and form. So, if we want to concentrate our mind on God, we have to give Him a name and a form." SR

While Papa did not follow any traditional approach, including image worship or rituals, etc., he never condemned any of them, as many cannot conceive

the nameless and formless reality straightaway. Moreover, there have been many instances where many have scaled the heights through the traditional approach also.

Vinobaji says: "The Saguna devotee serves the form of the Lord through his organs whereas the Nirguna devotee thinks of the good of the whole world. The former appears absorbed in outward service, but his mind is absorbed in the contemplation of the Lord. The latter does not appear to be rendering any concrete service, but he is certainly rendering a great service from within."

Though there is no image worship or other such traditional practices in Anandashram, Ashram does support them elsewhere.

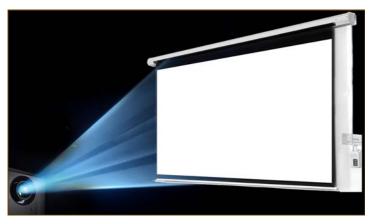
Most of our gardens are full of flowering plants. We often water them, nurture them with manure and prune them, in some cases. Do the plants blossom only in the parks and gardens? No. You will find amazing variety of flowering plants in the wild as well. Similarly, God can be worshiped either as the impersonal or with name and form. Here, Papa's approach is inclusive and unbiased. Though he always highlighted the impersonal aspect, he never condemned the traditional deity-worship.

(20) WITNESS CONSCIOUSNESS DISSOLVES THE MIND

"Really, to stand apart from mind and watch its activities, is a blissful exercise. The moment the dissociation becomes complete, that is to say, one's identification with the watcher or the witness becomes perfect, that very moment the mind dissolves, and you attain Samadhi, i.e., absolute peace and bliss." SR

Papa says that through consciously taking to mental chanting thoughts drop off by themselves paving the way for the mind to become still. This facilitates the welling up of the Witness Consciousness.

Papa further clarifies thus: "Be a witness to all movements. Detach yourself from them and become the observer of them; then you will realize that



you are the Eternal Witness and the body is not yourself. The watcher is the real you — the Self Immortal."SR

The white screen, the substratum, is always still and remains untouched and unaffected even after different scenes are projected on it. Similarly is the state of Witness Consciousness remaining undisturbed by thoughts floating on it and finally leading to stillness.

POINTS TO TAKE HOME

- Though at the start, the attempt may seem to be an outward journey, as we proceed we will find it is purely an inward journey.
- Treading the path is as important as the final destination.
- Identifying each persons' unique path paves the way to expansion and ultimately universalisation.
- Reverence for the so-called outer form would become genuine and not superficial.
- This search will lead to a better understanding of what the word 'SEER' really means.
- This quotation of Papa will really begin to mean something to us: "The world we live in is a school in which observation and experience offer us immense possibilities for self-improvement, nay,

the world itself is Guru or God."

- We will not suddenly form an opinion based upon outer appearances, because we will realize that we can only see a small part of the overall picture.
- This journey will enable one to have a better idea of the relationships between the Ideal and the person; spirit and matter; the path and the goal; the Sadhaka and Sadhana; the Guru and the disciple; and the ephemeral and the Eternal.

CONCLUSION

This search to know more about the quintessence of Papa, Swami Ramdas, is an ongoing journey. That means, it is just a comma, not a full stop. This search can reveal so many gems from the huge treasure waiting for our exploration; many more can be found if we continue our exploration.

To sum up, this search offers the aspirant on the spiritual path, these salient guidelines:

Only by undertaking the inward journey and freeing ourselves from all sorts of conditionings can the move towards the Ultimate become a reality. Beloved Papa says: "For realizing the Truth no external paraphernalia is necessary. The day will come when one has to leave all these behind, and go to meet the Eternal in the perfect nakedness of your Spirit, shedding all

make-believe forms, customs and traditions."

The uniqueness identified in Papa's life is a reflection of the same uniqueness within us. It is like a musk deer, wandering around in search of the enthralling musk (Kasturi) and finally realising that it is within itself, not outside. "When you see greatness in others, the same greatness is in yourselves; when you see littleness in others, the same littleness is in yourselves," said Pujya Mataji Krishnabai.

The search has no end until the searcher — the sense of individuality — realizes Papa/Guru as the Reality within, and the searcher is no more. This has been corroborated by Beloved Papa himself while addressing the devotees: "Papa-Mataji are everywhere, God is everywhere and you are everywhere." SR

May this search be instrumental in hastening the spiritual progress of every aspirant, through continued exploration of Papa's life and teachings.

PRACTICAL CLUES EMERGING FROM THE SEARCH

- 11. Optimistic outlook (e.g. Blossoming plants)
- One with the Creator and the co-creation (e.g. Mud and pot)
- 13. From the potential to the actual (e.g. Sculptor and the marble)

- 14. Subject to the Divine Will (e.g. Puppet and puppeteer)
- 15. From complexity to simplicity (e.g. Switch board inside and outside)
- 16. Freedom from conceptual prisons (e.g. Flying bird)
- 17. Universal perspective (e.g. Aerial view)
- 18. Many paths one goal (e.g. One earth many crops)
- 19. Inclusive spirituality (e.g. Flowering in garden and forest)
- 20. Witness Consciousness (e.g. Screen and the moving objects)

WORDS OF PUJYA MATAJI KRISHNABAI

First, we have to stand guard to see whether the actions we do with our body are dominated by body consciousness or universal consciousness - Deha Buddhi or Vishwa Buddhi. We have



to keep watch on our movements and actions. Then, in our conduct towards those around us, we have to test ourselves from moment to moment to see if our behaviour is dominated by Deha Buddhi or Vishwa Buddhi. The third test is to see whether whatever we do takes us closer to Papa or not. This should be the

yardstick by which we measure all our thoughts and actions. If our thoughts and actions are influenced by universal consciousness, it means we are indeed going nearer Papa. If we are ruled by the body idea, we are drifting away from Papa.

Whatever we do, we should always have Dasatwa (the feeling of being the servant) in our heart. Then, the body idea will not dominate us because, we will all the time be aware that it is Papa who is doing all actions through us. On the other hand, if we allow the ego to reign in our heart and imagine that we are doing everything on our own, then we are bound to fail. Even when we talk or request others to do something, we should do so in the fullest consciousness that it is to a form of Papa that we are talking. If we just remember this one thing, then we cannot but be humble in our approach to others.

WORDS OF SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA



To transform all your actions into worship of God, no particular Mantra is necessary.

What is needed is constant remembrance of God either by chanting

His all-powerful Name or by adopting any other method.

When you wake up in the morning, before you open your eyes, feel that you are getting up from the lap of God. Send out a prayer in your own language:

"Oh Lord, when I open my eyes, may I be able to see everything as your manifestation. May I also be conscious that whatever is done, either through this body or through any other body, is happening by Your power only."

After you open your eyes and get up from bed, you may be seeing many things in your room. Say: "Oh Lord, these are Your own forms."

When you go for a wash, feel that the tap you touch to take water for a wash, is the form of God; the water that flows is the form of God; the face you wash or the body you pour water upon and wash is also another form of God.

Then you go to your prayer room. Feel everything there is different forms of God and you are praying to God who is everything and transcends everything.

When you go for breakfast, see the table as God, the chair as God, the cup as God, the tea as God, the bread as God. Feel or bring to your mental vision the form of your Ishta, and offer bread and other eatables

whatever they are and the tea to your Ishta. Feel that He is eating the bread etc. and drinking the tea.

Then you start your breakfast bringing to your mind that it is His Prasad and keep chanting your Ishta Mantra. After breakfast, when you happen to meet someone, feel that you are meeting your Ishta in that form.

Like this you can keep on bringing in God in everything and everybody all through the day in your house, in your office and wherever you go.

Finally, when you retire, feel that you are going to rest on the lap of your Ishta and sleep chanting your Ishta Mantra. When you sleep chanting the Ishta Mantra and wake up chanting the same, you can be sure that the Mantra is within you during your sleep also. Thus you can be in tune with God all the twenty-four hours and dedicate all your actions to Him. In fact there is no particular method prescribed anywhere.

The Guru from outside will tell you only to remember God constantly and dedicate all your actions to Him. The devotee has to adopt his own ways and means and work out the details as guided by the Guru from within. No set prayer is necessary. You can pour out your heart to God in your own language.

DEAR CHILDREN

Software engineer Siddharth Shankar, 22, makes the logistics of social service sound so simple. "It takes just one hour a week of your time to make a difference," he says. And he has done it for enough weeks for the last seven months to prove it.

From the very first month of joining work, Siddharth and six friends started setting aside a certain portion of their salary for charity. "It's just 5% or 10% of my salary," he says. "It's never a fixed amount with any of us. There are months when some of us put in more and others when we just stick to 5%. We collect the money and every month one of us finds an institution or person in need. Photographs of the institute or person are taken, and bills and receipts scanned and emailed to all members of the group. After the cause has been thoroughly investigated and found to be credible, we find out what the need of the moment is — school fees, a water purifier, rice and sugar or books? We never give money to the cause. We always buy what's needed or pay the fees," he says.

"When I was an engineering student, my friends and I used to keep talking about how we could help others. We did things on and off, but it was only when we started working that we began doing our bit for the lesser privileged," says Ahalya Natarajan, also part of the circle of seven.

"It takes just an hour a week. We don't have regular meetings in person or any such thing," says Siddharth. "We are ambitious young people who want to get ahead in life. We know we cannot spend all our time doing social service. So we do the best we can considering that we work 10 to 12 hours a day. Every month one member finds a place and verifies it. We all do the money transfers online to the person who is going to the institution. If anyone else has the time, they accompany him. So, in effect, it works out to be an hour a week, sometimes even less," he explains.

Some months the cause may not require too much money, which means that the rest is either saved for a bigger project coming up, or several smaller causes are taken care of. But the minimum is one cause a month," says Siddharth, who is also a "power ambassador" for Infosys, where he works (working out ways to conserve power and resources is his passion. It's the reason he is also part of IT Exnora, which focuses on wastage of power in IT companies, and he also tours schools in the city talking about

conservation of power).

Just one more byte of compassionate logistics from Siddharth, "I read a survey done in 2007 which said that 25% of the Indian population can afford to give Rs.100/- a month to a social cause, that's Rs.2500 crores a month. That's our inspiration!"

Source: Times Of India

EPISTLES OF SWAMI RAMDAS

Beloved Ram,

...The prompter of action is He; the doer also is He. It is He in movement, as also in rest. There is none but He. ...God's name is most powerful. It dispels ignorance and gives knowledge. It breaks bondage and brings freedom. It destroys sorrow and yields bliss. The knowledge, freedom and bliss we realise are eternal. God is our father, mother, master, friend and all. ...When our longing to realise Him is intense, He comes to our rescue, without any doubt. He is the friend of the meek.

Take heart, beloved Ram. It is His will that you are what you are, and where you are. Submit to His will and be peaceful and cheerful.

ANANDASHRAM NEWS

15,500-CRORE NAMA JAPA YAGNA FOR WORLD

PEACE: The total Japa received in the second round of the 15500-Crore Nama Japa Yagna for World Peace in the month of January 2017 is 250 crores. The grand total of the Japa done so far now stands at 15165 crores.



"ME TO WE" APP

VITAL (Value Integrated Teaching And Learning) is an initiative of Anandashram to promote values in our education system. The approach of VITAL is to integrate values with curricular topics through apt inspirational incidents. VITAL has recently launched a mobile app — 'Me to We' - to bring this concept to our fingertips.

To install, please search for 'Me to We' on

Google Play Store or Apple App Store





WATER SHORTAGE

It would be better if devotees could plan their visits to the Ashram after the summer because of water shortage.

Statement Of Ownership And Other Particulars About THE VISION

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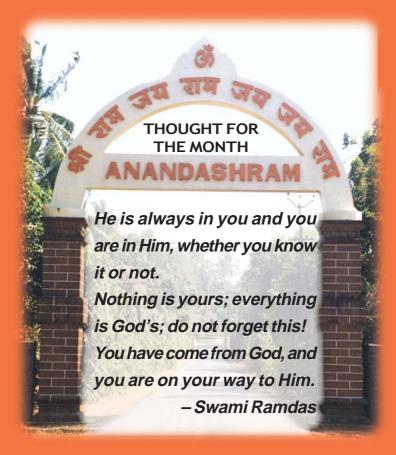
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