

Sangh Sandesh

संघ संदेश

January – March 2011 – Yugaabd 5112



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Namaste!

When people come together, great things can be achieved and the new year brings with it hopes of change and improvement.

In this issue, we meet some of our great ancestors in the **Ekatmata Stotra** and learn about how they, as individuals, made a difference to our world. We see how we can take simple steps to enhance our lives in **Sanket** and we discuss how the **Sangh Internship Programme** can help us to strive for continuous improvement to ourselves and our Sangh work.

We report on the **Vishwa Sangh Shibir**, a 5-day gathering of swayamsevaks and sevikas from all over the world. To see people effecting positive change across the globe was a source of inspiration to many during this Shibir and some participants have shared their experiences. In **Sewa News** we highlight the activities undertaken during National Sewa Day which focussed on the importance of giving time for others.

As always, shakhas and Balagokulams in the UK and around the world have been busy and you can read about their activities in **UK Samachar** and **Hindu Vishwa**.

We look forward to hearing more about what you have planned for the coming year and hope that you shall continue to share your thoughts with us. ■

Poonam Mistry

Impossible is Nothing

Impossible. Supposedly, what I was trying to achieve together with our organisation was, in a nutshell, completely and utterly inconceivable. Now, I'll be the first one to admit that organising the society for the better is no easy job! I mean look around us. **How can we, a group of individuals, organise the society to such an extent that we are not constantly at logger heads with each other?** Soldiers in Afghanistan losing their lives, innocent civilians caught up in warfare in the Middle East and the constant reminder of children dying from disease and hunger. This is just today.

On the surface that one word answer is quite fitting but if our mentality is such then we might as well stamp that answer on our foreheads and create a fuss over nothing.

If you told me that Lance Armstrong would win the Tour de France a record seven consecutive times after having survived testicular cancer, I would have said impossible. If, twenty years ago, you would have told me that Apple computers would begin to surpass Windows, I would have said impossible. If someone had told me that a single man going by the name Mohandas Karmachand Gandhi would lead India away from despair, I would have said impossible.

Yet impossible is possible. David Blaine, the high profile American endurance artist once said that, **"in truth, the only restriction on our capacity to astonish ourselves and each other are imposed by our minds."** This, coming from a man who many of us deem crazy. But, what we fail to realise is that through his actions and his stunts he makes a mockery of the word impossible.

Let this be a lesson to us all. Our lives have impossible written all over them in every sphere, in every dimension. The world will tell us we can't do what we want to do, we can't become what we want to become but the defining moments boil down to you, no one else..."

Dijesh Patel is a swayamsevak from Bradford. He has voluntarily dedicated one year of his time for the development and expansion of Sangh work.

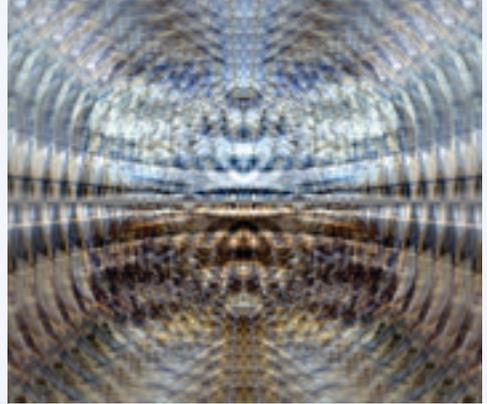
For more information about Dijesh's experiences on vistaar, visit his blog at <http://www.blogger.com/profile/14603002303555945258> ■

Sanket

Line

A line is a linear arrangement of dots. Each dot is placed next to another and a line is made. A line is the teacher of life. A line gives us discriminative wisdom. A line tells us to follow the righteous path. A line guides us to not derail our train of life.

**LET US ENHANCE OUR LIFE
THROUGH THREE LINES.**



The Line of Life

A normal thought: Everyone has to live a balanced life. Family is our first priority. Then we have to work and have a social life too. There is also pressure from Sangh karyakartas to spend time for Sangh. And, there is a demand from society to devote time for Sewa. **How can we live a balanced life?**

We can draw a line with three factors to which we need to give importance in our life - family, work and socialising. The remaining aspects are secondary.

Is this line of life correctly balanced?

Does our life consist only of family, work and socialising?

No!

So, let us think about the real line of life. On this line, along with the three factors above, let us add:

- our ancestors from whom we inherited our name, wealth, cultural roots etc,
- our country which provides us with shelter and food,
- our society which provides us with security and future aspirations, and
- scientists, Sages & Great Kings who gave us a better present through their bravery

Once we add on the things that help to sustain us onto this line of life, all factors become complimentary and help each other to enable us to lead a fuller life.

The Line of Accommodation

A normal thought: I like someone. I dislike someone else. One belongs to me and I disown the other. I am better off by myself. I am happy with splits. I am comfortable to live in the boxes of the caste I fall in, the way I worship and the language in which I communicate. If I don't like to follow a particular belief, I will criticise it.

Can there be a solution for this fractional mentality?

Let us draw a line of dislikes and divisions. Now, do not touch this line and draw a longer line above it. The longer the line above, the shorter the lower line becomes. The longer line is that of humanity and Hindu-ness.

Let us expand our hearts to accommodate the entire society regardless of caste, language and other divisions. The darkness of a fractional mindset diminishes with the light of a holistic approach. Let us draw a line to accommodate all. This is the 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' Sanskar.

The Line of 'OK'

A normal thought: We know the difference between good and bad. Historically, Ram was good and Ravana was bad. Krishna was good and Kansa was bad. The 16 chapters of the Bhagvadgeeta list good and bad qualities. Normally we are fine with it.

However, as human beings we don't live a completely good life or a life full of bad deeds or habits. There are three areas - good, bad, and the majority is grey. This grey area can often be seen as, 'OK'.

This 'OK' mindset makes us remain average. This 'OK' mentality stops us exploring our hidden divinity or manifesting our talent. We wish to have discipline in our life but 'OK' spoils this.

What can we do?

As we are human beings it is tough to achieve divine discipline immediately. There are many distractions.

Let us draw a line in the middle of these 'OK' actions. Let us consider that certain 'OK' habits are actually bad for us. Take into consideration the line of life. Gradually drag this line towards the good area and away from the bad. We may start to feel as though we are moving towards the lighter side from darkness, towards a divine nature from demonic. Our actions become more cordial rather than conflicting.

Truly, the line of 'OK' can become the line of Dharma. ■

Ram Vaidya

BalaGokulam



Story

Krishna and Sudama

Sudama was a close friend of Krishna when they were students. Now he lived in a village in hardship and found it very difficult to make both ends meet. He had taken a vow never to beg from anybody but have faith in God's grace only.

The family became hard pressed day by day. Many a time the children were patted to go to bed hungry. This became unbearable for Sudama's wife. One day she said to her husband: **'You say Krishna is your friend; then why don't you go to him?'** Sudama said: **'I'll go, but will never beg anything from him!'** The wife said: **'Don't beg, but just go there at least once.'**

Then she borrowed from a neighbour, some parched rice beaten flat, tied it in a rag and made a small knot. She gave it to Sudama and said: **'Take this with you for Krishna.'**

Sudama took the rice and started for Dwarika barefooted. He reached Dwarika completely exhausted and with dirty clothes on. He stood before the palace of Krishna. He was amazed at the splendour

of the city and feared that he would perhaps be kicked out of it!

But when Krishna heard that Sudama had come, he rushed out at once, embraced him with affection and led him into the palace with respect. He then seated Sudama on a royal seat and soon became engrossed in talks with him.

Sudama was trying hard to conceal that small knot of beaten rice called '*pura*', but Krishna snatched it away from him and began to eat the rice, saying, **'Ah! What a heavenly taste it has!'** Krishna was overwhelmed with the thought that Sudama had remembered Krishna after so many years.



Krishna entertained Sudama for many days. Sudama also enjoyed the stay. But neither had he begged anything from Krishna, nor did Krishna give him anything. Sudama returned without taking anything from Krishna, yet he was not at all sad about it.



But when he reached home, he was amazed to see that everything was greatly changed. He found a fine big mansion in place of his small hut. It was richly furnished and the stores were full of food and grain. Krishna had arranged all this for his friend.

As swayamsevak we should all care for one another without expecting anything in return. No one should feel out of place inside or outside shakha. ■

The birth of Lord Rama

On 13th November 2010, children aged 5 -11 from the Reading Balagokulam performed a spectacular short play in front of a large audience at a Diwali cultural event organised by Reading Temple.

The play offered an opportunity for the children to gain knowledge about the Ramayana and the characters involved. Some of the glittering crowns and jewellery required for the costumes had been crafted by the children and their efforts were very much appreciated by the audience.

This was a wonderful opportunity to spread awareness to parents regarding Balgokulam & Shakha activities in Reading. ■



Dressing up for the characters gave these children the chance to try their craft skills by making some glittering crowns and jewellery.





A WALK ON THE BEACH...

So, you've probably heard it already, the story goes something like this...

A child is walking on a beach with his dad one morning. The sun is up and the tide is going out. The child sees starfish on the beach. As he bends down to pick one up, his dad stops him.

"What are you doing son?"

The child replies, "If this starfish remains here, it will die, I need to put it into the sea."

The father laughs and says "son, it doesn't matter. Leave it. Anyway, there are thousands of starfish here. Throwing one in won't make a difference."

The child throws a starfish in and says, "it will make a difference to this one."

Quite a simple story really, but the child's attitude is tremendously important. **An attitude whereby he believes that his actions count.**

He could have played in the sand, run about, done whatever pleased him. But he saw an opportunity to make a difference (it was probably a lot simpler in the child's head.)

Lets look at the story again. A child went for a walk on the beach with his dad – he didn't go to 'save the starfish.' The stranded starfish weren't really 'his problem'. He had nothing to gain by throwing the starfish back into the sea.

Routine can be good, but often we switch to autopilot. Sometimes we don't even know that we are just going through the motions.

Nurturing an attitude like this child's is important for our development. In our parish we often say how many years we have been going to shakha. Regularity is important, but are we making every shakha count?

So, the next time you go to the beach (or to shakha), don't just run around. Remember this story. Tell yourself that you are going to make 'this' shakha count. An opportunity will present itself to you to make a difference.

SIP is a 7 week long programme because it in itself is a process of development. Over 7 weeks, this attitude is nurtured in every part of your being - in your personal behaviour and in your Sangh work.

Because turning up isn't enough.

He could have played in the sand, run about, done whatever pleased him. But he saw an opportunity to make a difference...

BECAUSE 'TURNING UP ISN'T' ENOUGH



SIP 2011

Sangh Internship Programme

The reason that SIP is 7 weeks long is because it in itself is a process of development. Over 7 weeks, this attitude is nurtured in every part of your being - in your personal behaviour and in your Sangh work.

National Sewa Day

On 21st November 2010 Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains came together for a unique event, the first ever National Sewa Day, which saw selfless service and social action come to life. Local activities were held all over the country on a single day to bring joy and alleviate hardship for many thousands of people across the UK.

More than 5,000 people from over 100 cultural, community and faith organisations volunteered a variety of projects including tree planting, soup kitchens, local environmental cleaning and improvement programmes and much more.

Celebrities, business leaders and politicians including Boris Johnson and Tony Blair backed the day. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, gave his backing to the event as a demonstration of communities putting the concept of "the Big Society" into practice.

Barry Gardiner, MP for Brent North, tabled an Early Day Motion in Parliament a week before the event in support of National Sewa Day, which was signed by 19 members of Parliament. It states: *"That this house congratulates all participants involved in organising the first National Sewa Day as a cross-community, multi-faith initiative for social action to tackle hardship and conserve the environment; and pays tribute to Britain's Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain communities for leading by the power of their example in a practical way to benefit their fellow citizens."* Below is a small snapshot of some the fantastic events held across the country:



Bradford

Bradford – A food and clothing collection took place at the Laxminarayan Hindu Temple and Sai Centre, Lidget Green. A total of 36 Volunteers managed these locations receiving the goods, collecting over 450 tins of Vegetables, 67 Black Bin liners full of clothes and many more items. These were given to the Curry Project, a local organisation that provides food and clothes for the homeless.

A total of 18 Volunteers were sent to the Lower Grange estate (Allerton) on the outskirts of Bradford City, to dig 21 holes to plant fruit and flowering trees in the front gardens at two local Housing Associations. The trees will provide free fruit in season,

bring benefits to wildlife and improve the outlook of a rundown and deprived estate.

An enthusiastic and talented team of 14 Volunteers visited the home of a 4-year-old suffering from acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia in Swillington, Leeds. They were tasked with cleaning up a very large garden and carrying out some DIY inside the house.

The following comment was received on the National Sewa Day Facebook page:
"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to the Volunteers who came out to Preston view today in Swillington Leeds. They did a fantastic job of clearing up my grandson, Alex's, garden. They cleared the rubbish, cut the hedges, made a space for Alex to put his toy cars, they did so much work and the garden looks brilliant, one of them even gave the Bathroom a new lick of paint, it all looks great. Thank you again for groups such as this you are all so very kind keep up the good work."

Northampton - Northampton Shakha ventured out and had some fun with the Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust within the Nature Reserve at Lings Wood. They got involved with various activities including cutting back unwanted weeds and picking up litter. They all had a fantastic morning with the Wildlife Trust helping to clear the woodland area, which was greatly supported by everyone who took part. There was also an appearance from local MP Michael Ellis.

Rugby - Over 40 youths and adults from Rugby Shakha volunteered their time to help the community. Over 20 projects were held in Rugby including the cleaning of the gardens at the Benn Partnership, the Sikh Welfare Association and the YMCA, the removal of general waste from several homes and a spring clean of the Hindu Temple on Kimberley Road and the Indian Association on Edward Street. They also took the opportunity to hold a grandparent's and grandchildren's fun day, where grandchildren entertained the elderly in the Hindu temple with games and music followed by a tasty meal. ■



Northampton



Nottingham Dhruv shakha enthusiastically took on the task of cleaning the VHP mandir

Makar Sankranti Utsav - January 2011

Northampton Shakha celebrated Makar Sankranti Utsav in style this year. To make this utsav a memorable and exciting one we decided to go out and fly some kites. This was great fun to watch or have a go at flying. Everyone had a good laugh when someone finally managed to get the big kite to fly and it ended up getting caught high in the trees. In all a great outing for all at shakha.



Samiti Khel Pratiyogita 2010

Hindu Sevika Samiti's fourth Khel Pratiyogita took place in Leicester's Soar Valley School with 153 participants from 13 nagars across the country. This year's competition saw, for the first time, a gruhini gana participating in Kho and

we hope this serves as encouragement to other nagars in the future. A great atmosphere was created through the spirit of sisterhood coupled with competitiveness and the standard of play and teamwork were inspiring. The winners were, Ashton (Ring), Woolwich (Kho) and Wembley (Kabaddi).

Sangh Khel Pratiyogita 2010

The Khel Pratiyogita held in December 2010 echoed the successes of the past competitions held in Derby. The sankhya of 600, of which 472 played, remained unchanged from the previous year's record. 64 teams from 20 nagars participated in 154 matches throughout the day. The participating nagars demonstrated that they had come back from last year better prepared to uphold the increasingly high standards seen within the competition and to challenge Harrow nagar's almost clean sweep of the trophies in 2009.

The Samarop bauddhik was delivered by Shri Nilkesh Mehta, Kendriya Saha Bauddhik Pramukh. Nilkeshji spoke about the importance of team work in Sangh and the qualities of a succesful team.



The eventual winners of the Sangh Khel Pratiyogita 2010 were:

- **UNDER 11s FOOTBALL:**
winner - Leicester
- **12-15s FOOTBALL:**
winner - Harrow
- **KHO:**
winner - Bexley Heath
- **KABADDI:**
winner - Woolwich
- **RING:**
winner - Leicester. ■



Hindu Sevika Samiti, Kenya hold first ever Ghosh Varg

From 11th to 13th December, 33 shiksharthinis came together to focus on learning more about the instruments taught in shakha, including Vamshi (flute), Aanak (side drum), Panav (base drum) and Ghosh Dand.

The shiksharthinis undertook Samilit Ghosh where they would play their instruments together as one group and an interesting session where the advanced group got to swap their current instrument to learn the basics of another. The shiksharthinis also learnt how to carry their instruments and practice whilst speaking the different rachnas and coordinating their feet movements.

There were also the usual shakha activities such as khel and bauddhik. Shri Ramchandra Pandeji spoke about how Ghosh came into existence in Sangh and how it can be important in motivating sevikas in the shakha. Bhakti Korla took a bauddhik on the meaning and essence of shakha. There were workshops and discussions about the benefits of playing musical instruments.

One of the highlights of the Varg was the Jamhuri Day (Republic day) celebration on 12th December. The sevikas sang the National Anthem and created a great atmosphere before Anita Patel narrated the story of the road to independence for Kenya.

This marks the beginning of our dream of having a Ghosh Gana of 100 girls and we look forward to many more Ghosh Vargs.

Urvi Aggarwal

Construction and handing over of the "Nutrition Kitchen"

Members of the Hindu Religious & Service Centre took the Hoppa Bus to the Grogan 'A' School in Korokocho on Sunday 26th September 2010. The main aim of the school when it was built in 1992 was to rehabilitate orphaned, destitute and vulnerable children in the area by giving them access to literacy and numeracy skills.

The school is a community project meant to benefit the residents of the Grogan

'A' village who own, run and sustain the school, which is currently home to 242 pupils. This is an informal school, which has not been recognized by the Government and which therefore means that the pupils do not get the benefits of free primary education and text books.

The school wished to run a regular feeding programme to maintain the school's pupils. Unfortunately, the programme is on the verge of collapse as most parents are unable to pay K.Sh.10/- per day towards its sustenance. This programme was therefore being handed over to the Hindu Religious & Service Centre.

Anita Hirani of the "Hindu Religious & Service Centre" gave a brief talk about our Sewa activities such as free medical camps, street children's health camps, food distribution during famines, tree planting, paying school fees of poor but bright students and much more.

I kindly pledge to all to take part in this type of initiative to make Kenya a better place and to raise literacy levels.

Princess Anu Dave

Inaugural quiz night proves popular in New Zealand

Hindu Youth New Zealand (HYNZ), Wellington chapter, organised its first quiz night event for the Wellington region on Friday January 21st. It was open to the public and 40 high school and university students participated.

There were six rounds, including "Hindu Culture and Heritage", "Geography and General Knowledge" and "Guess Who?"

"Traditional", "vibrant", "colourful" and "dharma" were words used to describe the Hindu culture. The young judges voted "proud" to be the winning answer, from Sushant Balajee, Alex Joe and Kishan Patel, Year 12 students from the Hutt Valley High School and the eventual winners.

"The Quiz Night brought people together in a friendly competitive spirit and helped create bonds amongst the youth that will carry into future events that we will be organizing," said Ms Kumuthini Selvaraj, co-ordinator of HYNZ (Wellington chapter). ■



VishwaSanghShibir

Experiences

The fifth Vishwa Sangh Shibir took place from Wednesday 29th December 2010 to Monday 3rd January 2011. Held once every five years, this unique gathering brought together 517 swayamsevaks and sevikas from over 35 countries including Nepal, Hong Kong, Sweden, Germany, France, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Canada, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, Bali, South Korea, Australia, Japan, Bulgaria, UK, USA and New Zealand.

The Shibir was held at the Rani Laxmibai Girls' Military School which is run by the Maharashtra Education Society in Pirungut, near Pune.

We asked a few of the attendees to share their experiences...

I used to think that the UK is doing well in Sangh's task of positively influencing the samaj. That was before I went to VSS 2010...

On the first morning, there was a session for the Yuva Shreni (youth category) where swayamsevaks and sevikas from around the world presented Sangh activities in their regions. Some of them are newly established and yet seem to have influenced society to such an extent that, within a couple of years, they've become household names across the country and in political circles. Some of their events are ridiculously ambitious but have turned out to be huge successes.

The formula for their success is simple - unwavering dedication and time spent on our cause. They are happy to sacrifice family, leisure and sleep time in order to achieve success. In engineering speak, their effectiveness and time given per person is much higher than ours.

Lesson learnt.

But now the question begs, how much time will YOU give?

Bhavin Davdra, UK

It was truly an exhilarating and unique experience. One could see that in spite of all the challenges, Sangh has been successful in reaching a wide cross-section of people. What is the secret of that success? Aatmiyataa (amongst many other factors also) is a key.

After the Deekshant Samarop bauddhik, each Shibirarathi was presented a momento. I was walking off after receiving mine and said “Namaste” to Mohan-ji. He said “Namaste” to me and added, “Pitaa-ji ko namaskaar kehnaa...mata-ji ko bhi”. It was clear to me that he remembered about my father’s illness.

Being the head of Sangh in India with so many things to worry about, I would hardly have taken offence if he didn’t say anything. Such an example from our highest Adhikari serves as a great lesson that Karyakartas must show concern for each and every swayamsevak/sevika and his/her well-being.

VSS was memorable not just because of the wonderful Shibirarthis I met, but also because of the example of our Adhikaris. This reinforced in me the importance of not mechanically running Shakha, but also becoming the change that I wish to see.

Balkrishna Shastry, USA



The Swagat Yatra was a sight to see. A long procession with a march past from the students of Rani Laxmibai Girls' Military School, followed by Khadgar demonstrations and the speciality of Maharashtra, Dhol Tasha - a demonstration done by the sevikas of Pune Mahanagar.

The air was full of the sound of large drums being played with the local beat. It was very powerful. These drums are large and require a lot of physical strength and stamina to play, and even to hold in position.

When the sevika gana came into proper view, a small girl, probably the same height as the drum, immediately caught everyone's attention. She was playing with just as much strength as the older sevikas and maybe with more passion.

She looked so content to be a part of the gana. The whole demonstration lasted about 2 and half hours.

There are many times we shy away from doing something that we consider ourselves "small" for, times we look at the size of the task and mentally decide that we cannot complete it.

She made me realise that no task is too large, no individual is too small. If your heart is set on something and you have the determination and willpower to commit to it, the size of the task becomes insignificant.

Towards the end of the programme, she was still playing with as much vigour as when it started and reluctantly had to stop.

Neha Rawal, Kenya

Of the many influential swayamsevaks present at the Shibir, Shri Jagdish Shastry ji caught my eye - one of the first men who started Shakha outside of Bharat on a boat (yes, a boat) to Kenya, Jagdishji is a pioneer.

Jagdishji is now wheelchair bound and, despite his inherent will to be active, his physical body is unable to comply. Jagdishji sat a few rows in front of me at the start of one of the first Shakhas. The Dhvaj Pramukh made the short journey to the Dhvaj pole, Dhvaj in hand.

Suddenly, Jagdishji began shuffling as if he wanted to stand up. At first I thought he may have been in some discomfort but to my amazement, he began pushing up even further on the handle bars of his wheelchair. It was clear he wanted to stand and without a moment's hesitation, the swayamsevaks helped him to his feet. He stood for about ten seconds, did Pranaam, supported by those around him, and then was helped back into his chair.

What immense respect, love and understanding he must have for our cause! Do we share the same feelings? It is only once we have full conviction and dedication, that we can do our work selflessly. The same can be said about any task we take on. To read the full article, visit <http://vistaar-dijesh.blogspot.com/2011/01/understanding-what-we-do.html>

Dijesh Patel, UK

Having played a different role in the Shibir, I got an opportunity to meet the Karyakartas who were working tirelessly in the background to make it a success and to make our stay comfortable.

Seeing their dedication and commitment to fulfil their duties was the most inspiring for me. A total of 190 Prabhandhaks & 48 Prabhandhikas were present at the Shibir Sthan, forming 32 teams. The core team consisted of 8 members who met every day from 7:30pm to 11pm for 3 months. I saw them become like one family.

VSS not only inspired the Shibirarthis but also inspired the Prabhandhak in a huge way. There are so many inspiring examples I could share, but here is one which really touched me.

Man. Shashtri ji, said to Chandra Kant ji “Mein agle Vishwa Sangh Shibir me aunga, meri Maa ke saath.” (I will come to the next VSS with my mother.) He explained that although he shall not be alive to witness the next VSS, he shall definitely come back as a baby in his next birth.

When I heard this, it left me speechless and my mind did not work. It deeply touched my soul. It is beyond words to explain how much Sangh means to Karyakartas like Man. Shashtri ji. For me, meeting with such great personalities is what VSS embodies.

Anita Patel, Kenya (Mukhya Shikshika at VSS)



On arrival, we were allocated a room dependent on age. Within our Samiti Yuva avaaaz, I was placed in a lower bunk below an Australian, beside a South African and Sri Lankan on the left, a Thai and Nepali on the right and across a Kenyan and Mauritian girl.

We were from around the globe, with diverse upbringings, day-to-day lives and cultures; however we were sharing the same ultimate vision and path and so, where we were from didn't matter. That was probably the most inspiring thing of all.

Even with language barriers and cultural differences, we grew close so quickly and learnt from one another's experiences. After 5 days of sharing a room, playing khel with each another and discussing obstacles we face within our countries, we genuinely felt like sisters.

That was by far the most prevailing feeling I took home from the shibir - that we all have a strong bond as sevikas, regardless of where we are from, and these will be my lifelong friends and sisters. ■

Sneha Mehta, UK



To read about more VSS experiences,
please visit www.hssuk.org/vss2010

Rugby Shakha's Sewa during Navratri

From Friday 9th October for 9 days, Swayamsevaks came together at the Bharat Sevak Samaj building and took an active role in setting up the Navratri hall and organising events such as the Aatham Aarti, fancy dress competition, Aarti competition and much more. And, many stayed until the early hours after the celebrations were over to help clear the hall.

A core group of young Swayamsevaks played the Dhol and Dholak and provided a musical backdrop to the celebrations every night.

The shakha presented a cheque for £250 to the Samaj Day Care via Sewa International, to enable the centre to purchase utensils. Ramesh Mistry, Saha Karyawaha of Rugby gave a small speech about the work of Sangh and Sewa activities in Rugby. The efforts of the Swayamsevaks were acknowledged by the president of the Samaj, Mr Ishwarbhai Mistry. ■



Ekātmā Stotra

Raamakrishno Dayaanando, Ravindro Raama Mohanah |
Raamateerthoravindashcha, Vivekaananda Udyashaah || 28 ||

Ramakrishna Paramahansa - Ramakrishna Paramahansa was one of the foremost Hindu spiritual leaders of India. Born on February 19th 1836 in West Bengal, he had a divine and magnetic personality. For him, religion served as a means to achieve the goal of God-realisation.

For fifteen years, Ramakrishna taught ceaselessly the basic truths of religion through parables, metaphors, songs, and through his own example. He died on August 16th 1886 leaving behind 16 devoted young disciples, headed by Swami Vivekananda.

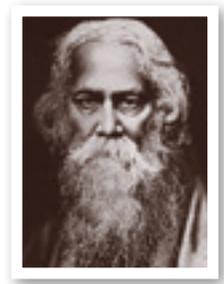


Dayaananda - Maharishi Dayaananda Saraswati was born on February 12th 1824 and was an important Hindu religious scholar, reformer and founder of the Arya Samaj in 1875. He disliked the practice of idol and ritualistic worship and worked towards reviving Vedic teachings.

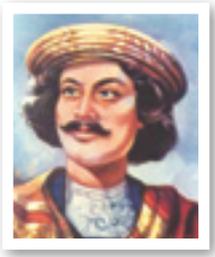
He is often referred to as one of the makers of modern India and his book, "Satyarth Prakash" is said to have contributed to the Indian independence movement. He is known for promoting the equal rights of women in education and for translating the Vedas into Hindi to make them available to the common person.

Rabindra Nath Tagore - Born in 1861, Rabindra Nath Tagore had early success as a writer in his native Bengal. He translated some of his poems and became known in the West as the voice of India's spiritual heritage.

Tagore was a poet but he wrote successfully in all literary genres including plays, short stories, novels, autobiographies and dance dramas. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his poem, 'Geetanjali'.



Raja Ram Mohan Rai - Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on May 22nd 1772 and was an Indian religious, social and educational reformer who challenged traditional Hindu culture and was influential in politics, public administration, education and religion. He is known for his efforts to abolish the practice of sati, where a widow would sacrifice herself on her husband's funeral pyre.



Swami Rama Tirtha - Swami Rama Tirtha was born in 1873 in Punjab and was a brilliant student, especially in mathematics. After completing his degree he worked as a Professor in a college. He was a great devotee of Lord Krishna and delivered lectures on Bhakti in Japan and USA where he started many societies, some dedicated to the study of Vedanta. He gained a large following due to his charming personality and continued to give lectures until he passed away in 1906.

Maharishi Aurobindo - Sri Aurobindo was an Indian nationalist, freedom fighter, philosopher, Yogi and poet who was born on August 15th 1872. He was a writer whose works include translations of and commentaries on the Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita and much more.



Swami Vivekananda - Swami Vivekananda is known for cramming immense hard work and achievement into his short life. From a young age he had a burning desire to know the truth about God and questioned holy people, asking if they had seen God.

He was the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who alleviated his doubts and transformed him into a confident sage with the authority to teach.

Swami Vivekananda crossed India as a wandering monk. He represented Hinduism at Chicago's Parliament of Religions in 1893 and gained popularity for his sensible and insightful teachings on Hindu culture and beliefs. Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and it is said that he awakened India to a new national consciousness.

Swami Vivekananda's lectures have been gathered into nine volumes and make for a fascinating read. ■



SanghSandesh

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