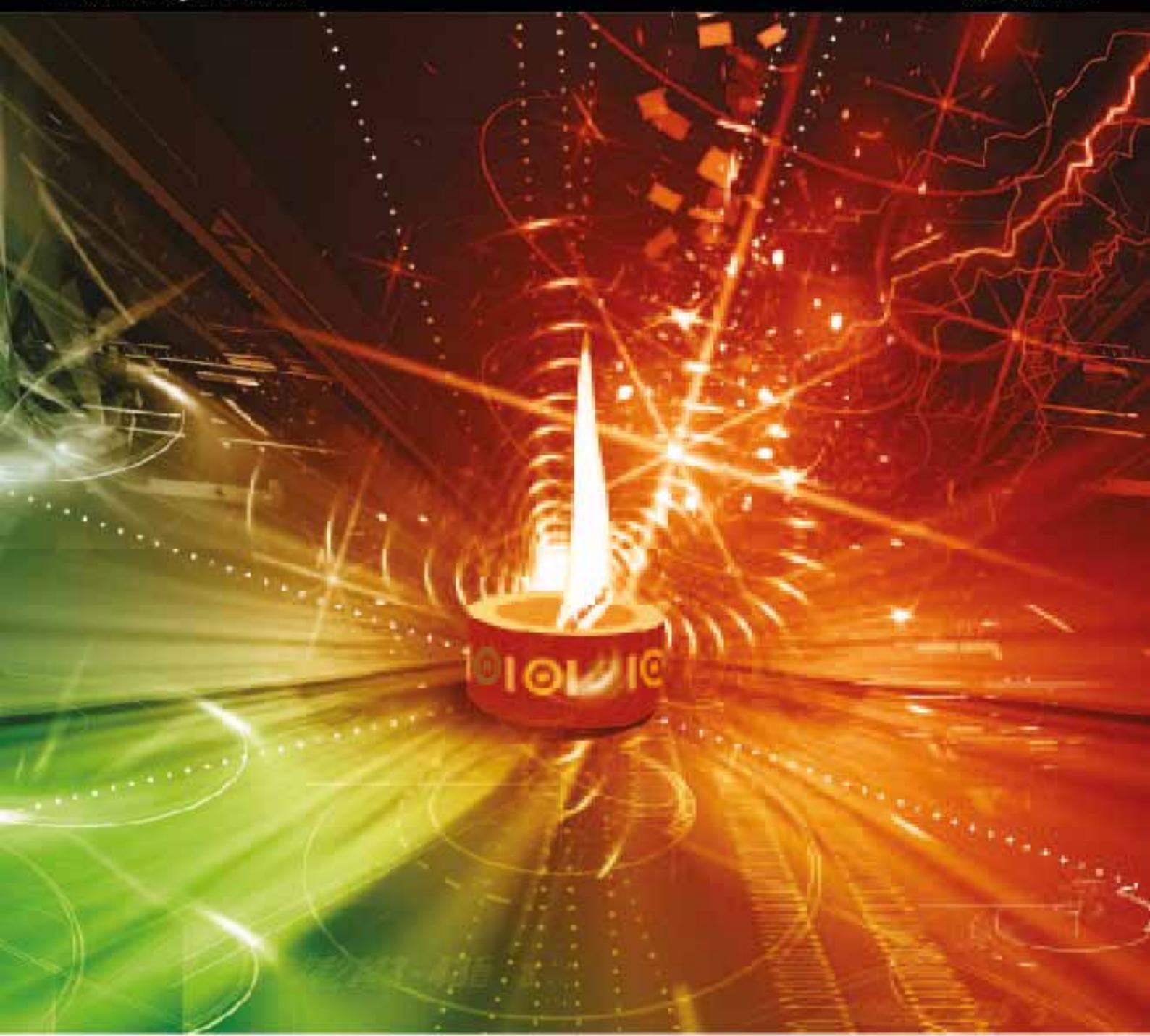


# Dharma

Diwali 2011 Special Edition

Oct - Nov 2011



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# Welcome

Welcome home to the smell of morning dew on the forest carpet, or the smell of the log fires burning in the crisp air. Welcome home to quiet conversations, or deep reflection on the nature of reality in the forest clearing on the water's edge. Welcome home to the sound of the forest bird call, the swish of the breeze amongst the trees, or the sound of silence that instantly stills the mind. Yes, welcome home. To the silence within, where you are one with the Omnipresent, Omiscient- and Omnipotent reality- The Creator of all things. And where Brahma's AUM echoes fide between the stony boundaries between existence and non-existence. Welcome!

Set in the heart of the picturesque KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Forest Retreat was inspired by the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy that was started by Sri Swami Sivananda at the headquarters of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, India. Twenty kilometres from Pietermaritzburg and set on the banks of the serene Khayalsami Bay, an inlet into the Albert Falls Dam where the fish eagles rule the azure skies and the carp, catfish and bass ply its silent depths, whilst dragonfly reflect in the limpid glassy waters, the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Forest Retreat overlooks a pristine wetland, home to many families of buck, otter, wild geese and duck. The wetland is home to an even wider variety of bird-life seen on the many hiking trails through the lush forests, a veritable bird-watchers paradise.

The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Forest Retreat offers a unique blend of philosophical contemplation, intense yoga and scrutiny for the serious seeker of the ancient, unchanging truths, as well solitude in a safe natural setting for those just wishing for quality time away from the mundane midweek madness. Home to the Monks of one of

Hinduism's most ancient order, Swami Nischalananda Saraswathi and Swami Chaitanyananda Saraswathi maintain the ethos and intense spiritual vibration in the most ancient tradition of the Himalayan Masters. Both Swami Nischalananda and Swami Chaitanyananda are disciples of the greatest modern Rishi- one who has realised and lived in the light of ancient, eternal truths- Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh India who has spread the light of wisdom, love, peace, and permanent serenity to millions throughout the world.

The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Forest Retreat has a large functions hall. The Sivananda Hall for approximately 500 people and is developing basic accommodation for approximately 50 people and will serve people wishing to experience an authentic Hindu spiritual life. The Sivananda Hall will be an ideal venue for Yoga and Meditation courses as well as for discourses on Vedanta, Ayurveda and other natural healing systems, music, and nature, and hopes to attract Master's from far and wide. Hindu cultural events and celebrations including weddings will be held. The Hall could even be used for youth events including sports and games.

The Yoga Vedanta Forest Retreat will also be open to all Hindu spiritual organizations to host their own spiritual programs. The visit by Swami Padmanananda, the General Secretary of the DLS Headquarters, made it possible to recreate the concept started by Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh, India. Thus, attendance and usage of all facilities is free of charge. However visitors and devotees are free to make any donations in cash or kind for the upkeep of the Retreat. The aims and objectives of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Forest retreat are as follows:

- To provide a facility for rehabilitation of individuals and families within a Hindu ethos
- to provide a facility that would enable and encourage Hindu monastic life
- to provide a base that will be a training facility for the yoga Vedanta Forest Academy course for spiritual seekers
- to provide opportunities for the teaching of Hindu spiritual practices, e.g. Yoga.
- To provide a facility for approved Hindu spiritual institutions to host their programmes
  - to encourage the appreciation and care of the environment and nature especially the planting of trees
  - to provide a facility that will encourage responsible subsistence living in harmony with nature.
  - To bring together Hindu youth in a wholesome and spiritual environment for their spiritual leadership development.
- To provide a spiritual venue for Hindu youth for sports and recreation
- to provide a venue for the Hindu community to host family functions, e.g. birthdays, weddings in a spiritual setting
- To provide a venue for the hosting of important lectures in talks by visiting Mahatmas/Masters.
- to provide a venue for the hosting of yoga courses

**Appeal:** In order for this unique project to be successful we need your assistance. We appeal to all Hindu individuals and organisations to take advantage of the facilities offered (remember there is no charge), or to assist the Retreat by getting involved in any way possible. The last phase of development is the creation of 50 small (3m x 3m) Meditation / Accommodation huts set in the forest and we appeal for assistance for the provision of building material, fittings or bedding etc. For information please contact Dr. K.C. Dhawaraj 0828004035

# Victory to Lord Rama

The 21st December 2012 looms real and large for the Prophets of Doom and much of the western world expecting a cataclysmic global event, or series of events, that will end life as we know it. Yet the wise Oriental world observes that a large part of humanity has undergone a cleansing by way of so many external events like wars and natural disasters, and now see a global attempt to re-establish truth and purity in their immediate environment as seen in the spontaneous uprising against tyranny and corruption. This heralds a new Golden age where the cataclysmic change is not external but internal. A rise from a mind controlling environment that was controlled by the media moguls and governments who told us what reality looked like: to an explosion of access to the truth.

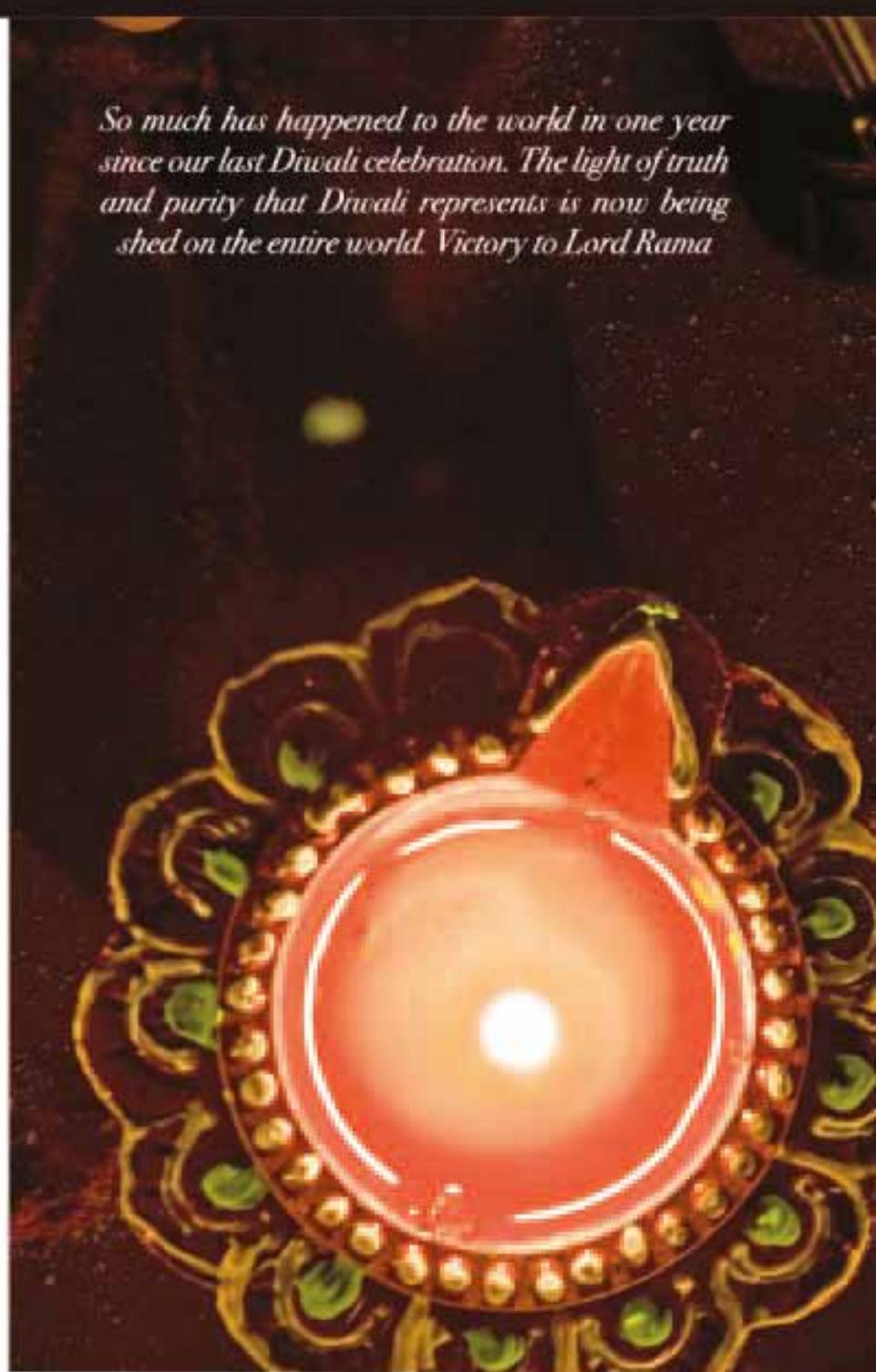
Even the Mayans knew that in this last phase of the Mayan Calander there would be a global change, a shift. This phase coincidentally began with the advent of the internet era which brought to the world a technology that gave access to the truth that could easily result in the closure on a chapter of human history littered with a litany of lies. The History of the world over the last 2000 years was written and re-written in blood by the victors of the wars that they started. Their legacy of bloodshed was a direct result of the truths they eclipsed e.g. reincarnation was declared a heresy by Roman Emperor Justinian in C.E. 652 - a damning lie that is still believed by about 20% of the earth's population today. Even still they dare to call it the 'Theory' of Reincarnation. Their Crusades and Jihads aimed to 'civilise' the Infidels who believed otherwise. Does this not exist to this day?

There is a sudden great demand for the truth. No more are great and powerful governments and media corporates the sole purveyors of "truth". Truth has a way of expressing itself no matter how long it takes. I believe that Sanathan Dharma - the path of Eternal Truth will fast become the torch bearer for all humanity once again. People of all religious persuasions, will spontaneously find synergies with the universal truths of the Vedas, Agamas, Upanishads and truths taught even to this day by our great Rishis, Vaidika Vidya Rishis.

Be prepared O Hindu brother and sister, the world will most certainly change as we celebrate the great return to the Light of Truth. Be prepared, be illuminated by the great teachings of our great Sanathan Dharma and be ever more prepared to be the bearer of this light. Victory to Lord Rama !

Dr K.C. Dhivraj

*So much has happened to the world in one year since our last Diwali celebration. The light of truth and purity that Diwali represents is now being shed on the entire world. Victory to Lord Rama*



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# Four Reasons any Action is Better than None

It's well-known that busy people get the most done. Their secret is simple: They never stop moving.

Of course, sitting still can be a good thing if it involves renewal, reflection, and focused attention (or having meals with the family). But sitting still can be a bad thing if it involves procrastination, indecision, and passivity.

Companies heading downhill have passive cultures. Unmade decisions pile up. Opportunities are lost. No one wants to risk making a mistake. It becomes easier to sit it out than get into the game. One of my favorite examples involves the backwater bank in which employees would send customers who had complicated problems to the rival bank across the street, rather than try to do anything.

In contrast, in companies with high levels of innovation, people take initiative. They start new things. They don't wait to be told. They get routine work done efficiently in order to free up the time to get involved in something new. Here are some of the reasons.

Small wins matter. Small wins pave the way for bigger wins. A nudge in the right direction, as Cass Sunstein and the new behavioral economists tell us, can lead to major tipping points (per Malcolm Gladwell) when you achieve critical mass. As I saw in my study of business turnarounds and sports teams, confidence - the expectation of a positive outcome that motivates high levels of effort - is built on one win at a time.

Accomplishments come in pieces. A journey of a thousand miles is daunting. The single step with which the journey begins is manageable. Every step you take now adds up by getting that much closer to a goal. Busy people in high-productivity environments tend to take just one more action, return one more phone call, set one more thing in motion before calling it quits for the day. By tomorrow, new demands will start piling up. Mental tricks like dividing big tasks into numerous small steps make it possible to identify immediate actions to get big things off the ground.

Perfection is unsustainable anyway. Forgoes perfection. Just do it. So what if you're wrong? You can always try again. In an uncertain world of rapid change, business strategy includes room for improvisation. Live by some classic slogans: Best is the enemy of good. (Don't wait for perfect conditions.) Nothing ventured, nothing gained. (It takes a little risk to get rewards.)

Actions produce energy and momentum. It simply feels better to take action than sitting around navel-gazing and getting sluggish. Overwork can bring stress, but, in fact, many studies show that the important factor in work stress is lack of control. Identifying a positive action is a way to feel in control. Getting moving doesn't drain energy; it tends to build energy. For people trying to solve the national obesity epidemic, or just to lose a few pounds, exercise is more fun than dieting.

These principles represent more than management tips. They reflect a can-do philosophy that is essential for any entrepreneur or any place that wants more entrepreneurs. The only way to activate potential is to support action.

Sometimes it doesn't seem easy. Organizational cultures, autocratic bosses, uncooperative co-workers, long losing streaks, the uncertainty of shifting industry conditions, and big world events like natural disasters and revolutions can stop people in their tracks. But those who emerge triumphant, and get the most done anyway, are the people who would rather take action, any action, than wait around.



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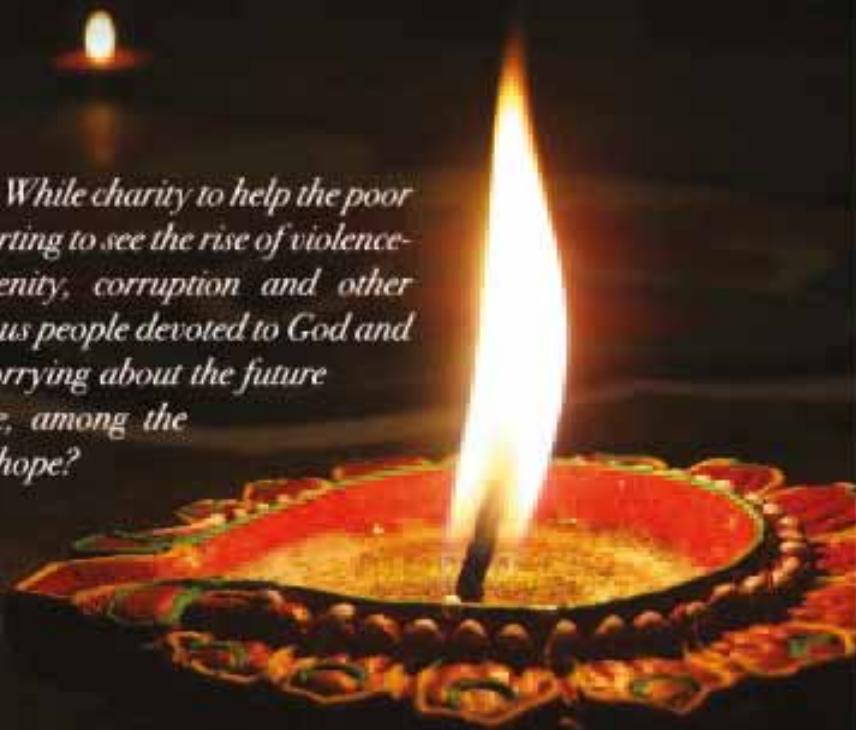
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# Lamp of Knowledge

*Our world today is at the crossroads. While charity to help the poor and needy is increasing, it is disconcerting to see the rise of violence - domestic or national, crime, obscenity, corruption and other expressions of ill-gotten wealth. Serious people devoted to God and godly means of living are indeed worrying about the future prospects of their children. Is there, among the gloomy cloudiness, any shiny ray of hope?*



It is in this context that the various celebrations that have come to us from time immemorial from the spiritual land of Bharat hold the clue. One of the most loved celebration of all the Hindus the world over, is the Festival of Lights - Diwali, also called Deepavali. Diwali signifies lighting of lamps in every household on the Amavasya night that follows the bright fortnight after Vijaya Dashmi. No doubt this occasion marks joy and merriment. On the Diwali Day, rows of lamps decorate the houses and presents are exchanged. Diwali, in the north of India, is associated with the coronation of Lord Sri Rama when he returned to Ayodhya (in Uttar Pradesh) after vanquishing the demon King of Ceylon, Ravana on the day of Dassera. Sri Ram had been in exile for fourteen years and the people were pleased to see his return to Ayodhya.



This festival gives us, Hindus, an opportunity to go beyond the external extravagance. It offers an opportunity to dive deep into his/ her heart and search for all types of demonic qualities residing inside. Thus, the need is felt to clear the darkness from the heart. To drive away the darkness we have to light the lamp of knowledge.

Sri Krishna encountered the demon Narakasura, who before his death entreated the Lord to celebrate with lighting of diyas and burning firecrackers. We all do the latter part but do not pay attention in removing the darkness. As Swami Vivekananda says, darkness in a sealed room over one thousand years will instantly vanish the moment a matchstick is lighted. Knowledge of God is light. When a lamp is lit on Diwali, just pray to your chosen ideal that the darkness of ignorance be removed from your heart. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna says that out of compassion for the devotees, He, residing within their hearts, certainly destroys the darkness born of ignorance with the radiant lamp of knowledge. (Ch X. 11). Hence, while celebrating Diwali, let us pray to the Divinity (in whatever form one may believe in) to bestow the right knowledge by which we can lead a peaceful and prosperous life with service to the poor and needy.

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# Sri Aurobindo's Vision & Teachings



The teaching of Sri Aurobindo starts from that of the ancient sages of India that behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things, one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by a certain separativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true Self and Reality in the mind, life and body. It is possible by a certain psychological discipline to remove this veil of separative consciousness and become aware of the true Self, the Divinity within us and all.

Sri Aurobindo's teaching states that this One Being and Consciousness is involved here in Matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself; consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient, and once having appeared is self impelled to grow higher and higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and spirit of the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection.

But while the former steps in evolution were taken by Nature without a conscious will in the plant and animal life, in man Nature becomes able to evolve by a conscious will in the instrument. It is not, however, by the mental will in man that this can be wholly done, for the mind goes only to a certain point and after that can only move in a circle. A conversion has to be made, a turning of the consciousness by which mind has to change into the higher principle. This method is to be found through the ancient psychological discipline and practice of Yoga. In the past, it has been attempted by a drawing away from the world and a disappearance into the height of the Self or the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo teaches that a descent of the higher principle is possible which will not merely release the spiritual Self out of the world, but release it in the world, replace the mind's ignorance or its very limited knowledge by a supramental Truth-Consciousness which will be a sufficient instrument of the inner Self and make it possible for the human being to find himself dynamically as well as inwardly and grow out of his still animal humanity into a diviner race. The psychological discipline of Yoga can be used to that end by opening all the parts of the being to a conversion or transformation through the descent and working of the higher still concealed supramental principle.

This, however, cannot be done at once or in a short time or by any rapid or miraculous transformation. Many steps have to be taken by the seeker before the supramental descent is possible. Man lives mostly in his surface mind, life and body, but there is an inner being within him with greater possibilities to which he has to awake - for it is only a very restricted influence from it that he receives now and that pushes him to a constant pursuit of a greater beauty, harmony, power and knowledge. The first process of Yoga is therefore to open the ranges of this inner being and to live from there outward, governing his outward life by an inner light and force. In doing so he discovers in himself his true soul which is not this outer mixture of mental, vital and physical elements but something of the Reality behind them, a spark from the one Divine Fire. He has to learn to live in his soul and purify and orientate by its drive towards the Truth the rest of the nature. There can follow afterwards an opening upward and descent of a higher principle of the Being. But even then it is not at once the full supramental Light and Force. For there are several ranges of consciousness between the ordinary human mind and the supramental Truth-Consciousness. These intervening ranges have to be opened up and their power brought down into the mind, life and body. Only afterwards can the full power of the Truth-Consciousness work in the nature. The process of this self-discipline or Sadhana is therefore long and difficult, but even a little of it is so much gained because it makes the ultimate release and perfection more possible.

There are many things belonging to older systems that are necessary on the way - an opening of the mind to a greater wideness and to the sense of the self and the Infinite, an emergence into what has been called the cosmic consciousness, mastery over the desires and passions; an outward asceticism is not essential, but the conquest of desire and attachment and a control over the body and its needs, greed and instincts are indispensable. There is a combination of the principles of the old systems, the way of knowledge through the mind's discernment between Reality and the appearance, the heart's way of devotion, love and surrender and the way of works turning the will away from motives of self-interest to the Truth and the service of a greater Reality than the ego. For the whole being has to be trained so that it can respond and be transformed when it is possible for that greater Light and Force to work in the nature.

In this discipline, the inspiration of the Master, and in the difficult stages his control and his presence are indispensable - for it would be impossible otherwise to go through it without much stumbling and error which would prevent all chance of success. The Master is one who has risen to a higher consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative. He not only helps by his teaching and still more by his influence and example but by a power to communicate his own experience to others. This is Sri Aurobindo's teaching and method of practice. It is not his object to develop any one religion or to amalgamate the older religions or to found any new religion - for any of these things would lead away from his central purpose. The one aim of his Yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature.

There is an ascending evolution in nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will remain a man in its external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious. During the whole of his life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo gave all his time to establish in himself this consciousness he called supramental, and to help those gathered around him to realise it.



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# The Festival of the Cows

The Sri Krishna Gowshala In Thorntown together with the Vaishnava Research Forum, recently held the 'Festival of the Cows'. The event took place at the Gowshala and was attended by about 1800 people. There were enlightening talks on the glories of the cow and the need to protect and revere the cow. A go-puja (prayer to the cow) and go-dhan (the gifting of a cow) also formed part of the programme. The Sri Krishna Gowshala was established about five years ago in order to afford the Hindu community an opportunity to revere cows in a safe and peaceful environment. The special guest speaker, Sri Hari Das, a senior devotee of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, explained that in Vedic culture there are seven mothers who must be respected and given all protection. These are , one's biological mother, the wife of one's guru, the queen, the wife of a brahmana, the cow , nurse and earth are the seven mothers highlighted in Vedic scriptures. In a Srimad Bhagavatam purport (8.8.11), His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON, has stated " Unfortunately because people in the Kali Yuga are manda-all bad, and sumanda-mutayah, misled by false conceptions of life, they are killing the cows in the thousands. Therefore they are unfortunate in spiritual consciousness, and nature disturbs them in so many ways, especially through incurable diseases like cancer and through frequent wars among the nations. As long as human society continues to allow cows to be killed in slaughterhouses, there cannot be any question of peace and prosperity". There was a festive atmosphere throughout the day and the event concluded with a scrumptious vegetarian meal. For further information on cow protection you can e-mail Divesh Maharsj on [vaishnava.research@gmail.com](mailto:vaishnava.research@gmail.com).



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# Kurma Avatar (Turtle./tortoise Avatar)

The Devas lost their strength and powers due to a curse by the sage Durvasa because Indra, the king of the Devas, had insulted the sage's gift (a garland) by giving it to his elephant (Airavata) which trampled upon it. Thus, after losing their immortality and kingdom, they approached Lord Vishnu for help. Vishnu suggested that they needed to drink the nectar of immortality to regain their lost glory. However, they needed to strive hard to acquire the nectar since it was hidden in the ocean of milk. After declaring a truce with their foes (Asuras), Indra and his Devas together with the Asuras, use the serpent Vasuki as a churning rope and the mount Mandara as the churning staff.

When they began churning, the mount began sinking into the ocean. Taking the form of a turtle (Kurma), Vishnu bears the entire weight of the mountain and the churning continues and various objects are thrown out including the deadly poison Halahala, whose fumes threaten to destroy the Devas and the Asuras. Lord Shiva, Shiva then comes to their rescue and gathers the entire poison in his palm and drinks it. His consort, Parvathi, clasps his throat and the poison remains there. Hence he became known as "Neelakanta" (literally: "the blue-throated one").

"Fourteen precious things" come out of the ocean, culminating with Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods, appearing with the nectar of immortality. The Asuras immediately rush and grab the nectar while quarreling among themselves.

Vishnu again comes to the rescue in the form of a beautiful damsel, Mohini and tricks the Asuras and retrieves the potion which is distributed to the Devas. Though the Asuras realize Vishnu's tricks, it is too late, as the Devas regain their renowned prowess and defeat them.

Sri Kurusam in Andhra Pradesh is the only temple dedicated to the Kurma avatar.

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## Om Hari Om In Praise of Japa

William Page

(American Vedantic, Volume 13, No. 3, Fall 2009, p.8-11)

Japa is one of the main spiritual practices of the Ramakrishna movement. Combined with prayer and meditation, it forms a triangle – a three-fold method of reaching out for God, establishing him within, and keeping him there. Prayer is simply the act of talking to God. The words can be spoken aloud, whispered, or uttered mentally. They reach out to God and invite him to come down and take his seat upon the lotus of the heart. Once he's there, we begin to do japa and meditate. Japa is the continuous, silent repetition of a very short prayer or invocation, called a mantra. It can be done on its own or in conjunction with meditation. Meditation is the act of visualizing God within us. Together, these two practices establish God within us and enable us to feel his presence. In the intervals between meditation sessions, we usually get preoccupied with our daily work. If God gets restless at being neglected and seems inclined to leave his seat, we can bring him back by doing japa. So power draws the Lord from the heavens to the heart; japa and meditation establish him in his throne within; and prakrti keeps him there. Of course, his grace is also necessary. Without it, nothing happens.

Do it now

Prayer and meditation require our full attention, but one of the advantages of japa is that you can do other things at the same time. Holy Mother, who was famous for doing prodigious amounts of japa, undoubtedly did much of it while busy with her household chores: husking paddy, sweeping and scrubbing the floor, washing and cutting vegetables. It's also a good way to shut down the endless chatter of the mind. We often find our thoughts wandering. Japa pulls them back and gives them focus. It's like a thread that ties the mind in the longs feet of the Lord; it reminds us always to pay attention to him. Sri Ramakrishna taught a variety of spiritual practices, but Swami Brahmananda and Holy Mother placed special emphasis on japa. If you study their teachings, you'll find that they constantly emphasized the necessity of doing it, and especially at fixed times in the morning and evening. The fixed times establish the habit. Once you get used to doing it at certain times, you get restless to do it when those times come. If you don't do it, you feel guilty. In fact, guilty feelings are common among devotees who skip doing their japa. If you don't want to feel guilty, better not skip it! A common complaint among beginners is that they don't feel any results. Swami Brahmananda constantly had to reassure his disciples that if they didn't feel any results in the beginning, they would feel them later on. Perseverance is the key. In fact, he told one disciple, "Follow some spiritual discipline for at least three years, and then, if you find you have made no tangible progress, you may come back and skip my face!"

(Swami Prabhavananda, The Eternal Companion, Vedanta Press, Hollywood, 1947, p.129.)



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# Purattasi



18th September to 17th October 2011

Amongst South African Telugu/Tamil this month long festival is the most important one dedicated to LORD VISHNU who takes on the form of LORD PERUMAL.

This fast is an abstinence of eating meat, smoking, consuming alcohol, some even do not sleep with their spouse and sleep on the floor, clean pots were no meat was cooked are used and so forth. Many faithful's just have one meal for the day while others give up their favourite foods in dedication to the Supreme Lord. This fast should not be like a torturous burden. The abstinence increases one's will power and concentrating to be able to pray to the Supreme lord even more faithfully. By fasting impurities are decreased and purity is increased which is so essential in the attainment of the Supreme Lord. The benefits are inconceivable if the fast is properly observed.

While the daily observance is observed, Saturday (due to time, place and circumstances) is reserved for prayer activities. On this day most people observe a Nirjala fast i.e. a fast where not even a single drop of water is taken. In the morning preparations are underway for the prayers in the evening. When preparing food items for the prayer the strictest of precautions are taken to ensure cleanliness and purity. After the prayer sessions, meals are served to all, especially the poor. The most important lesson that we should take from the fast of the Purattasi month is that we must have tolerance, decrease our false ego and increase our faith in the Supreme Lord Vishnu.

#### THE OBSERVANCE OR "PURATTASI VIRATHAM" AT HOME

In the South African context, on a Saturday fixed for the prayer, family and friends gather to offer worship to Lord Vishnu. The head of the household places the "maamam" on the forehead of the males, and places a red dot on the foreheads of the females. The offerings include cooked rice, a variety of curried vegetables, milk, fruit, coconut, betel nut, betel leaves, incense, camphor, flowers, kozhukkattai (steamed rice cakes), vadhai (deep fried patties made from pea dhal and seasoning), urundai, payasam, kadalai, etc. Tulsi leaves are used liberally in the worship of Lord Vishnu, as this is very dear to Him. When Tulsi leaves are on the food items Lord Vishnu immediately accept that food, which then becomes, prasad (blessed food). Once the offerings are made to Lord Vishnu, inside the house, everyone goes outside where camphor is lit and the Lord is welcomed into the house by the devotees calling out the lord's name or praise to him " gwayndha govintha!" Once inside, devotional hymns praising the glory of Lord Vishnu are sung as the devotees offer prayer. At the conclusion of the prayer precaution is taken to make sure that the maamam is wiped off from the foreheads and the water disposed off in an unpolluted area as this symbol of Lord Vishnu is considered to be sacred. The strictest of rules, concerning hygiene, are followed during the preparation of the offerings. Further, the prayer

is conducted with utmost piety and steadfast devotion. Source: " Tamil Festivals ", Author: Mala Lutchmanan

**SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM** Canto 11 chapter 5 verses 38-40 "Men who live in Satya Yuga and other ages long to be born into this world in the age of Kali, O King. For it is in the Kali age that men who are wholly devoted to Lord Narayana will appear. O King, they shall be found everywhere, but they shall be found in large numbers in the Dravida country (South India) where the rivers Tamraparni, Kritamala, Payasini, the extremely sacred Kaveri, and the great Vetravati (which flows to the west) flow. The men who drink the waters of these rivers will become pure of heart and devoted to Lord Keshava (another name for Lord Krishna)."

Between the fifth and ninth century, in the Tamil-speaking region of South India, these saints (known as Alvars) revitalized the Indian religious culture, sparking a renewal of devotional worship throughout the subcontinent. Travelling from place to place, from temple to temple, from holy site to holy site, they composed exceedingly beautiful poetry to their Divine Beloved, Vishnu, as an expression of their love for Him.

#### Benefits from observing Purattasi.

1. The community becomes united during this period. We must strive at all times to be united.
2. The restrictions to a vegetarian diet are not only an act of self-discipline but this abstinence has profound religious significance, which helps in the purification of the body, mind and soul. It helps to discipline the mind, removes waste and toxins from the body and helps to revitalize the body in its capacity to function well. It further helps the mind to become more alert and reflexes become sharper.
3. Devotion to God especially during this Kaliyug period is important. This period, which is characteristic of excessive greed for power, extreme hatred, jealousy, anger and intolerance have polluted the life of man in general all over the world. We must strive, seek and maintain the following virtues: truth, peace, righteousness and non-violence. This helps people in directing their thoughts towards God Realization.

NB. Gratitude must be extended to Narottam Das (E-mail nd@b4all.org) for the use of his article. The article was edited due to space constraints.

# Five Ways

# God Uses the Problems in Your Life



*The problems you face will either defeat you or develop you - depending on how you respond to them. Unfortunately, most people fail to see how God wants to use problems for good in their lives. They react foolishly and resent their problems rather than pausing to consider what benefit they might bring. Here are five ways God wants to use the problems in your life:*

## 1. God uses problems to DIRECT you.

Sometimes God must light a fire under you to get you moving. Problems often point us in a new direction and motivate us to change. Is God trying to get your attention? "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths."

## 2. God uses problems to INSPECT you.

People are like tea bags... if you want to know what's inside them, just drop them into hot ever water! Has God tested your faith with a problem? What do problems reveal about you? "When you have many kinds of troubles, you should be full of joy, because you know that these troubles test your faith, and this will give you patience."

## 3. God uses problems to CORRECT you.

Some lessons we learn only through pain and failure. It's likely that as a child your parents told you not to touch a hot stove. But you probably learned by being burned. Sometimes we only learn the value of something by losing it. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

## 4. God uses problems to PROTECT you.

A problem can be a blessing in disguise if it prevents you from being harmed by something more serious. Last year a friend was fired for refusing to do something unethical that his boss had asked him to do. His unemployment was a problem - but it saved him from being convicted and sent to prison a year later when management's actions were eventually discovered. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good!"

## 5. God uses problems to PERFECT you.

Problems, when responded to correctly, are character builders. God is far more interested in your character than your comfort. Your relationship to God and your character are the only two things you're going to take with you into eternity. "We can rejoice when we run into problems... they help us learn to be patient. And patience develops strength of character in us and helps us trust God more each time we use it until finally our hope and faith are strong and steady."

Here's the point:

God is at work in your life - even when you do not recognize it or understand it. But it's much easier and profitable when you surrender to his plan for your life.

Ramesh Bhagoothal Bhikha (8 April 1947 - 25 June 2011)

We said goodbye to a strong, hard working man with a huge heart and a big but down to earth personality.  
Father, husband, brother & friend, you are surely missed and your memories live on in the hearts of those closest to you.  
Rest in Peace, God Bless.



# Diwali Sweet Recipes

## Fudgy Diyas

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup walnuts crushed  
1/2 cup cashews crushed  
1-1/2 cups biscuits (marie or glucose), crushed  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup butter 2 tbsp. cocoa powder  
1/2 tsp. vanilla essence

### Method:

Put sugar, cocoa, butter in a nonstick pan. Cook while stirring, till well dissolved. Take off heat, mix in all other ingredients. Allow to cool till it can be handled. Create palms, shape into diyas, as for other recipes. Cool well till firmed, fill if and as desired. Store in airtight container.

## Mango Coconut Burfi

### Ingredients:

1 cup mango pulp (tinned will do)  
1 cup grated coconut  
1/2 cup milk powder  
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar  
3 tbsp. ghee  
1/2 cup powdered sugar  
1/2 tsp. cardamom powder

### Method:

Cook mango pulp over a low flame stirring continuously, preferably in a non-stick pan, till it solidifies, cool.  
Add coconut, milk powder and the granulated sugar and keep aside for 15 minutes. Then cook over a low flame, stirring all the time. When it boils add the ghee and keep cooking till it thickens into a lump and froths slightly. Switch off gas and stir another 3 minutes.  
Add the powdered sugar and the cardamom powder and mix well, pour into a greased plate and pat with the back of a spoon to spread it evenly.  
Decorate with varq (edible silver foil). This is optional. When slightly cooled, cut into pieces. Makes about 30 pieces.

## Sesai Kheer

### Ingredients:

500 gms. parwal  
250 gms. sugar  
450 gms. khoya  
50 gms. wholemilk powder  
10 almonds, 10 green pistachios  
1/4 tsp. cardamom powder  
few saffron strands

### Method:

Crush together almonds, pistas, in mixer. Peel parwals carefully. Make lengthwise slit from top to bottom. Put in boiling water, and simmer for 2-3 minutes. Drain, remove, carefully squeeze out all water. Keep aside. Roast khoya stirring continuously, till light pink and crumbly. Take off fire, cool a little, add milk powder, crushed nuts, cardamom, saffron. Stuff into each parwal. Tie each with some clean thread, if required. Make sugar syrup with 1 cup water. When syrup is just 1 thread consistency, drop in parwals. Simmer for 2 minutes, remove carefully, and place on a mesh. Cool, remove strings, cover with silver foil if desired. Serve chilled.

## Sevai Kheer

### Ingredients:

1 litre milk  
1/2 cup fine vermicelli broken to 1" bits  
1 tsp. ghee  
3/4 cup sugar  
1/4 tsp. cardamom powder  
15-20 strands of saffron, crushed in 1 tsp. hot milk  
10 almonds, blanched and thinly slivered  
10 pistachios, unsalted, thinly slivered

Heat ghee in a heavy deep pan. Add broken vermicelli, stir till lightly roasted. Add hot milk, stir gently to bring to a boil. Reduce heat allow to simmer for 5 minutes. Add sugar, stir till dissolved. Add cardamom, saffron, cardamom, almonds and pistachios. Mix and take off fire. Serve hot and wholesome.



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Is it not amazing that we regard ourselves as the most civilized humans that exist in the present time. We believe that our technology and advances in this space age have surpassed any previous civilization. While this may be true what do we have to show for it in terms of our humanity, our compassion for our fellow beings, our respect for nature, terrorism, increase stress levels, suicides, drugs and human abuse.

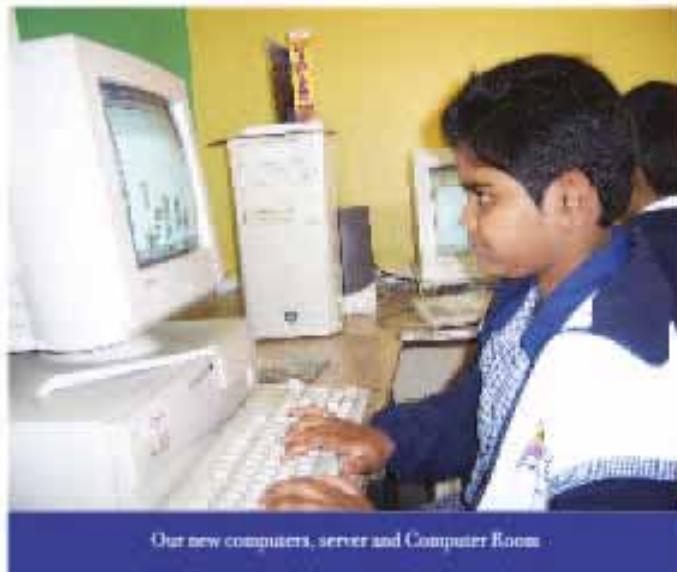
This is the unfortunate price we are paying for our material prosperity and progress. In the midst of all these omens that portend a terrible future, the Westville Hindu Primary School is busy lighting little lamps of hope for a better future- a new generation that will make the world a better home for all.



School begins with meditation every morning. Even our 3 and 4 year olds can sit and focus and experience a calmness of mind which sets the right tone for a day of study.  
In 2010 we undertook major extensions to the school which has given the school a completely new image - new classrooms, new furniture, a library and laboratory.



Our learners enjoying the weekly swimming programme.



Our new computers, server and Computer Room.

72 of our learners trained for and participated in the KFC Cricket festival at the KingsMead.

Indian Music and Dance taught and assessed on the class time table like any other school subject.

Extra Curricular activities offered daily from 14h00 to 15h00

A Youth Development Programme comprising excursions and outings offered every Saturday morning.

- Tax & Accounting
- Wealth Management
- Finance
- Info Technology

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# Karma

Diwali 2011 Special Edition

## BEST POEM IN THE WORLD

I was shocked, confused, bewildered  
As I entered Heaven's door,  
Not by the beauty of it all,  
Nor the lights or its decor.

But it was the folks in Heaven  
Who made me greater and grander.  
The thieves, the liars, the conmen,  
The alcoholics and the drunk.

There stood the kid from seventh grade  
Who argued my lunch money twice.  
Next to him was my old neighbour  
Who never said anything nice.

Bob, who I always thought  
Was rotting away in hell,  
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,  
Looking incredibly well.

I asked God, 'What's the deal?  
I would love to hear Your take.  
How'd all these sinners get up here?  
God must've made a mistake.'

'And why is everyone so quiet,  
So sober - you mean like,  
'Hush, child, He said,  
They're all in shock.  
No one thought they'd be seeing you.'

### JUDGEMENT

Remember... Just going to temple, church &  
mosque doesn't make you  
holier than thou standing in your garage  
makes you a sinner.

Every mind has a PAST...  
Every corner has a FUTURE.

humans and animals alike. Even if all the safety precautions are followed, the wire framing presents potential problems for animals and the environment if not collected after use. Realistically, the likelihood of collection would be low if the lanterns are released on windy days where they can travel long distances before settling on the ground. As they are burned at night, keeping track of the lanterns to collect the wires present logistical problems.

Sky Lanterns have been banned in Vietnam, Australia, and Austria, parts of China, Thailand and Germany. Serious concerns have been expressed over the impact of sky lanterns on aviation safety. The UK Coast Guard has expressed concern over how they can mimic distress flares and farmers and welfare groups around the world have expressed opposition due to the wire structures and the potential for ingestion and other injury by animals.

As with any product, if used responsibly and the wire framework is collected after use, the lanterns provide a visually pleasing display of light, without the resulting noise and trauma to animals.

Remember to keep the following number handy during the festive period: Your local SPCA, Flying Squad, Local Fire Station and your Veterinarian.

## VETCARE ANIMAL CLINIC

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