



From Darkness Unto Light

Center for Indian Cultural Education
Bal Vihar of St. Louis

January 2011
Volume 1, Issue 1

Editor
Sohan Swaminathan

Youth Group Newsletter

Mahatma Gandhi

Akhil Pulumati and Sai Mandava

Inside this issue:

Mahatma Gandhi	1
Rabindranath Tagore	2
Swami Vivekanada	2
Bhagat Singh	3
Bhagwan Mahavira	4
Kapil Dev	4

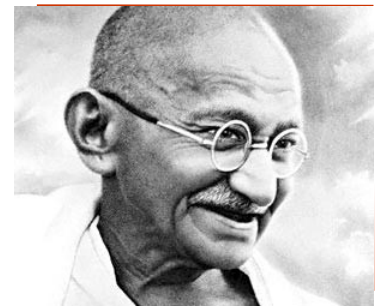
Special points of interest:

- Mahatma Gandhi fought for India's freedom using Non-Violence
- Mahatma Gandhi is Father of Nation
- He was a lawyer

Mahatma Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, a coastal town that was part of the Bombay Presidency. Growing up with a devoted mother and a Jain tradition, young Mohandas gained the influences that would play an important role as an adult which included compassion for others, vegetarianism, fasting for self-purification, and tolerance between individuals. In May 1883, 13-year old Mohandas was married to 14-year old Kasturba in an arranged child marriage. In 1885, when Gandhi was 15, his first child was born, but survived only a few days and Gandhi's father, Karamchand Gandhi, had died earlier that year. Mohandas and Kasturba had four more children which were all sons. Their children were Harilal, born in 1888; Manilal, born in 1892; Ramdas, born in 1897; and Devdas, born in 1900. At his middle school in Porbandar and high school in Rajkot, Gandhi was only an average student academically. He passed the exam for at his college with some difficulty. While there, he was unhappy, in part because his family wanted him to become a lawyer. On September 4, 1888, less than a month from his 19th birthday, Gandhi travelled to London, England, to study law at University College

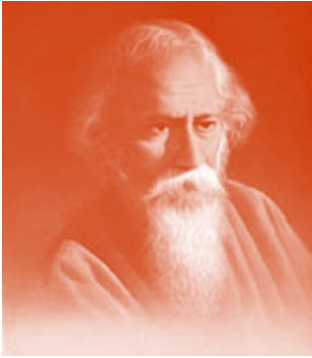
London and to train as a lawyer. His time in London was influenced by a promise he had made to his mother, which stated that he wouldn't eat meat or drink alcohol. Gandhi left London for India on June 12, 1891, where he learned that his mother had died. His attempts at law practice in Bombay failed and, he was turned down for a part-time job as a high school teacher. In April 1893, he accepted a year-long contract from an Indian firm, to a post in South Africa. In South Africa, Gandhi faced the discrimination directed at Indians. For example, he was thrown off a train after refusing to move from the first class to a third-class coach while holding a first-class ticket. Gandhi witnessed the racism, prejudice, and injustice against Indians in South Africa that Gandhi started to wonder about his own place in society. Gandhi extended his stay in South Africa to help Indians to earn the right to vote. On September 11, Gandhi adopted his method of non-violent protest.

After his return to India in 1915, he organized protests by peasants, farmers, and urban laborers concerning excessive land-tax and discrimination. After assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress



Mahatma Gandhi

in 1921, Gandhi led nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, expand women's rights, build religious and ethnic amity, end untouchability, and increase economic self-reliance. Above all, he aimed to achieve Swaraj or the independence of India from foreign domination. Gandhi famously led his followers in the Non-cooperation movement that protested the British-imposed salt tax with the 400 km (240 mi) Dandi Salt March in 1930. Later, in 1942, he launched in civil disobedience demanding immediate independence for India. Gandhi spent a number of years in jail in both South Africa and India. Mahatma Gandhi died on January 30 1948 at the (1948-01-30) age of 78. Mahatma Gandhi will always be remembered as one of the great men in history.

**Rabindranath Tagore**

Rabindranath Tagore was a great poet, philosopher, freedom fighter, and educator.

He was awarded Nobel Prize in 1913

**Swami Vivekananda**

Rabindranath Tagore was an Indian poet, Hindu philosopher and nationalist who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. His literary compositions include, poetry, novels, essays, short stories, travelogues, drama, etc. but his most famous writing includes the Indian national anthem, Jana Gana Mana. Tagore was born in Kolkata. Tagore is known to Westerners as a poet rather than as a formal philosopher, but these two arts are seldom differentiated in traditional Indian culture. An implicit philosophy can be seen in Tagore's poetry. The main literary device by means of which Tagore communicated his religion-philosophical views was that of bridal mysticism. This entails seeing oneself as the bride of God, with a complete submission to and adoration of the divine bridegroom. Rabindranath Tagore is revered as a Guru. Hindus believe that

by listening to the words of such wise and enlightened men, people are brought closer to god. His spiritual journey was guided by the Upanishads. The Upanishads, derived in turn from the Vedas, speak of the Brahman. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in a Universalist strain about man's relation to Brahman and the experiences that lead to establishing ultimate identity with Brahman. The importance of Tagore as a figure in literary history is perhaps appropriately illustrated by the fact that two countries, India and Bangladesh, adopted national anthems songs written by him. Tagore was also instrumental in the early stages of the nationalistic movement in India. He was the first to reject the knighthood given by the British crown, in protest against the Jallianwala Massacre.

Another contribution of Tagore is the university Visva-Bharati,

incorporating the school instituted by him enshrining his educational ideals. He saw the educational system introduced by the British as "artificial", with total emphasis on unquestioning obedience, mechanical book-learning, and little interaction with nature and usually in subjects with little touch with the life of the country around him. He sometimes referred to himself in slightly mock-serious tones to his lack of formal education.

Tagore was keenly sensitive to the world movements of his time and expressed his pain and depression over wars expressively. His yearning for world peace was however not of a political nature, he preferred it to be based on a true realization of the universal identity of mankind and indeed, of the whole of the entire world.

Rabindranath Tagore

Nimisha Varma and Dhruv Bhora

Swami Vivekananda

Rohith Perla and Sohaan Swaminathan

Swami Vivekananda was a key figure in the introduction of Hindu philosophies in Europe and America, and also was a major force in the revival of Hinduism in India, and founded Ramakrishna Math. So how did Swami Vivekananda become like the person we remember him.

On January 12, 1863, Swami Vivekananda was born in Kolkata, India, into an aristocratic family. His father was Vishwanath Dutta, an attorney of Kolkata High Court, and his mother was Bhuvaneshwari Devi. Both of them had an outlook on religious matters, and Swami Vivekananda's mind was

influenced by this. In 1877, Swami Vivekananda and his family moved to Raipur. Since there were no good schools in Raipur, he spent time talking about spiritual topics, and therefore became aware of the existence of God.

Swami Vivekananda's spiritual life continued when he met with Ramakrishna Paramahansa in November 1881. He accepted Ramakrishna as his guru. Then, in 1885, Ramakrishna suffered from throat cancer, and was shifted to Cossipore. Swami Vivekananda and some of the other disciples took care

of Ramakrishna during his final days. After the death of Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and other disciples accepted the monastic life and became monks. In 1888, Swami Vivekananda left the monastery and became a wandering monk. But why did he do this? Well, he wanted to acquaint himself with different social patterns. He saw suffering and poverty and he wanted to help them because that's what monks do.

Swami Vivekananda travelled all over India for five years. He wanted to spread Hinduism, and therefore went to

Chicago to speak at the Parliament of World Religions. But on the way there, he visited Japan in 1893. He observed the cleanliness and social aspects of the Japanese, and was impressed. But on his return to India from Chicago in 1897, he was asked if India should become like Japan. But Swami Vivekananda said India should continue to what she should be. In July 1893, Swami Vivekananda arrived in Chicago and spoke about Hinduism to America. He said that all the religions have different perspectives, but they all lead to God. Then, eve-

rybody approved of his perspective, and of Hinduism. He then spoke many more times at the Parliament until it ended on September 27, 1893. After that, Swami Vivekananda spent 2 years lecturing about Hinduism in the central and eastern United States. He attracted several sincere followers and his ideas were spread and admired by several scholars and famous thinkers. Then, he returned to India in 1897 and founded Ramakrishna Math, which was going to not only

teach students spirituality, but also help people in educational, cultural, medical, and relief work. After that he lived peacefully and finally died on July 4, 1902. Swami Vivekananda was a great man who not only made Americans aware of Hinduism, but he also helped others.

Swami Vivekananda spread teachings of Bhagwad Geeta to the western world.

He was the founder of Ramakrishna Mission.

Bhagat Singh

Nihal Shrimal and Neal Shekar

Bhagat Singh is one of the most influential freedom fighters of the Indian Independence Movement. Bhagat Singh was born on September 28, 1907 to a Sikh family that had already been involved in revolutionary activities. As a teenager, Singh had become an atheist, and had studied European revolutionary movements. Unlike many Sikhs his age, Bhagat Singh did not attend Khalsa High School, because that high school was loyal to the British government. Instead, he attended Dayanand Anglo Vedic High School. Here he began to follow Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. From this he had openly started to defile the British, and had followed Gandhi's advice by burning his government-school books and any British clothing. However, Bhagat Singh disagreed with Gandhi's non-violence movement, and so he joined the Young Revolutionary Movement and began advocating a violent movement against the British. Later on in his teenage years, he joined the Hindustan Republican Association, which had much more prominent leaders like Ram Prasad Bismil, Chandrashekhara Azad, and Ashfaqulla Khan. Bhagat Singh had done many revolutionary activities in his life. In September 1928, a meeting of various revolutionaries from across India was called at Delhi under the banner of the Kirti Kisan Party. Bhagat Singh was the secretary of the meeting. His later revolutionary activities were carried out as a leader of this association.

The British government created a commission under Sir John Simon to report on the current political situation in India in 1928. The Indian political parties boycotted the commission because it did not include a single Indian as its member and it was met with protests all over the country. When the commission visited Lahore on October 30, 1928, Lala Lajpat Rai led the protest against Simon Commission in a silent non-violent march, but the police responded with violence. Lala Lajpat Rai was beaten and he died of injuries later.

Bhagat Singh, who was an eyewitness to this event, vowed to take revenge. In response to actions by the revolutionaries, the British government enacted the Defense of India Act to give more power to the police. The purpose of the Act was to combat revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. However, the Act was then passed under the ordinance that claimed that it was in the best interest of the public. This angered the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and they planned to explode a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly where the ordinance was going to be passed. On April

8, 1929, Bhagat Singh and batukashwar Dutt threw a bomb onto the corridors of the assembly and shouted "Inquilab Zindabad," which means Long Live the Revolution. The bomb neither killed nor injured anyone. Singh and Dutt claimed that this was on purpose, a claim agreed upon by both British investigators who found that the bomb was not powerful enough to cause injury. Bhagat Singh and Dutt gave themselves up for arrest after the bomb. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Dutt, and Sukhdev were charged with the bombing. On October 7, 1930, they found Singh guilty and sentenced him to be hanged till death. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru were hanged on March 23, 1931. Bhagat Singh was cremated at Hussainiwala on the banks of the Sutlej River. Today, the Bhagat Singh Memorial commemorates freedom fighters of India.



Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh was only 23 years old when he laid down his life for his country.

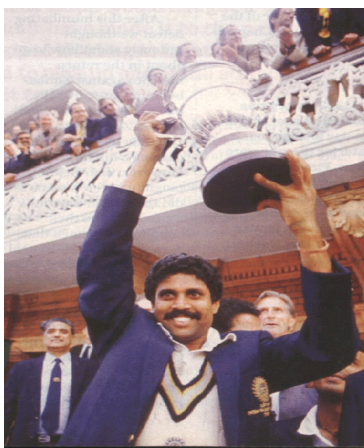
March 23 is celebrated as Martyr's day in India.



Bhagwan Mahavira

The five ethical principles underlying the philosophy of Lord Mahavira are Satya, Ahimsa, Brahmacharya, Asteya, and Aparigraha.

He preached renunciation of worldly pleasures to attain moksha.



Kapil Dev is world's all time great all rounder.

BHAGWAN MAHAVIRA

Radhika Patel and Anjali Desai

Mahavira (599-527 BC) was the last Jainist Tirthankara. People call Lord Mahavira by different names such as Vira or Vira-prabhu, Sanmati, Vardhamana, Ativira and Gnatputra. When it comes to the values of Jainism, Lord Mahavira deserves a special mention, as he was the one to establish the ethics that are ruling the whole Jain community today. In this article I will provide you with the Lord Mahavira's biography.

Lord Mahavira was born at Kshatriyakund near modern Patna in Bihar on April 12th in the year 599 BC. His birthday is celebrated as Mahavira Jayanti every year. He was more popularly known as "Vardhaman". It is due to the fact that, after Mahavira was born, his family prospered and got loads of wealth. People are of the belief that, when Mahavir Swami was born, he was bathed by Lord Indra with celestial milk. Being the son of King Siddhartha, he lived his life like a prince. However, when he turned 30, he left his family and turned into an ascetic. He had around 400,000 followers. At the age of 72, this great personality departed for heaven.

After having left behind

the pleasures of worldly life, he went into the state of deep silence for a period of about twelve and half years. During this period, he learned to control his feelings and desires. For a long time, he went without food. He taught people how to gain freedom from misery, pain and the cycle of birth and death. Lord Mahavira was known to be omniscient, which means he knew everything about past and future. His search for truth and the real virtues of life made people call him Mahavira. Mahavira is a Sanskrit word, which is used to refer to a great hero.

The philosophies of Lord Mahavira are based on the sole purpose of improving the quality of life. The basic idea is to attain spiritual excellence by maintaining ethical behavior and following proper code of conduct. Mahavira philosophy primarily consists of metaphysics and ethics. The metaphysics comprise of three main principles, namely, Anekantavada, Syadvada and Karma. The five ethical principles underlying the philosophy of Lord Mahavira are Satya, Ahimsa, Brahmacharya, Asteya, and

Aparigraha. For twelve years, he deeply meditated in order to overcome his desires and cravings. He succeeded in going without food for days together, avoided clothes and never harmed another living creature even if it was an insect.

Mahavir Jayanti has a lot of religious significance for people belonging to the Jain religion. It is observed to celebrate the birthday of the great Lord Mahavira, who was born at Kshatriyakund near modern Patna in Bihar in 599 BC. According to the Gregorian calendar, the Mahavir Jayanti festival falls during the period between March and April. As a part of Mahavir Jayanthi celebrations, the Jain temples are beautifully adorned with flags. For a Jain, Lord Mahavira is no less than God and his philosophy is like the Bible. As you can see, Mahavir played a big role in history.

Kapil Dev

Praveen Bhagavandoss and Anirudh

Kapil Dev Ram Lal Nikhanj better known as Kapil Dev was born on January 6 1959. He was the sixth child of a total of seven. Kapil Dev was a right arm bowler and one of the best strike bowlers during his career. He was a naturally aggressive player who often helped the cricket team in difficult situations by attacking the opposite team. He used to represent the Haryana cricket team even though he was a Punjabi. Kapil Dev has been recognized as one of the best cricketers in the world. Kapil Dev achieved many things

throughout his career. He captained the India cricket team, and led them to victory in 1983. He broke the record of 431 wickets in test cricket. Kapil became the highest test wicket taker in the world, but his record was beat in 1999. He was the only cricket player to score 4000 test runs and take out 400 wickets. Kapil Dev was named the Indian cricketer of the century by Wisden. His final career tally of 453 wickets was a record until

1994. Kapil Dev received many awards including the Arjuna Award, Padma Shri, Wisden cricketer of the year, Padma Bhushan, and the Wisden Indian Cricketer of the Century.

Kapil retired from cricket in 1994. In 1999, after a few years away from cricket, he was appointed by Anshuman Gaekwad to be India's cricket coach. However, he did not obtain much success and stopped coaching in 2000. After this, Dev decided to take up the sport of golf. One of his most famous biographies, called Straight to the Heart was published in 1994.