

ALL KERALA SRI RAMAKRISHNA BHAKTA SAMMELAN 2009

By the grace of Sri Ramakrishna this year's all Kerala Sri Ramakrishna Bhakta Sammelan was conducted by Vivekananda Kendra, with great devotion and grandeur at Ananda Dham, the Head quarters of Vivekananda Kendra Vedic Vision Foundation, Kodungallur. Nearly four hundred devotees participated in the four day deliberations which were sprinkled with bhajans, mangala arati, songs, study class, lectures, etc. To add to the wholesomeness of the programme there were music recitals, dances, kathakali, ottanthullal and a short akshara sloka sadas.

A unique feature of this year's Sammelan was a Sri Ramakrishna Chaitanya Ratha Yatra which started from Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, on 3rd May and after visiting all the Ramakrishna Math Centres and other important spiritual centres in Kerala culminated at the Devi's temple Kodungallur on 7th afternoon. Revered Swami Swaprabhanandaji provided the spiritual lead and was ably assisted by Sri Hareendran and Sri Manoj of Sri Ramakrishna Boys Higher Secondary School, Puranattukara, Sri K.G. Venugopal of Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Kaloor, Sri P. Harinath and Sri Jaya Shankar of Vivekananda Kendra Kodungallur.

Adding youthful charm and vigour to the yatra were Vishnu, Arun, Priyan and Shambu. Sri Udayan and Sri Amal provided the much needed driving expertise to take the Ratha yatra across Kerala in trying situations. Sri Ramakrishna Light and Sound company, Trissur made the yatra vibrant and attractive. The yatra was a grand success judging by nearly forty receptions it received in its 1500 km long journey from Kanyakumari to Quilandy and then to Kodungallur.

Despite the All Kerala hartal, on 7th afternoon a good number of devotees had managed to assemble at the Devi's temple where the Ratha was received with devotion and fervor. There was a small procession from the temple to Ananda Dham where the yatra was accorded proper welcome by the devotees. By 5.30 pm Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj hoisted the Sammelan flag marking the beginning of the Sammelan. In the short session which immediately followed Revered Gautamanandaji Maharaj and Rev. Sakranandaji Maharaj delivered introductory and benedictory addresses. Dr. M. Lakshmi Kumari in her welcome speech reminded the participants that the conference was a true Yagna in which every one should make their ahuti with devotion, shraddha and surrender. A sense of renunciation and service should dominate the conference upholding the theme 'atmano mokshartham jagat hitaya ca' she added. There was arati, and bhajan which were followed by an enchanting dance recital by very talented team of dancers from Sri Krishna School of Dance and Sundarodayam. A delicious dinner followed before the participants were escorted to their respective resting places.

On 8th morning Revered Swami Swaprabhanandaji Maharaj conducted mangala arati and Sri Ramakrishna Sahasranama archana, followed by a regular class on selected verses of Vivekachudamani. After breakfast the newly built stage-cum-library complex 'Dakshina' was formally inaugurated by Revered Gautamanandaji Maharaj. There was an impressive Vedic chanting by students of Sri Satya Sai Vidya Bhavan, P. Vemballur. Dr. Lakshmi Kumari explained that the 'Dakshina' complex commemorates the inspiration and guidance which Vivekananda Kendra received from two great visionaries Swami Vivekananda and Ma. Eknathji Ranade. Ku. Sutapa Das rendered a meaningful song on Ma. Eknathji Ranade befitting the occasion.

The formal inaugural session of the Sammelan was presided over by Sri P. Parameswaran, President, Vivekananda Kendra. Sri Godavarma Raja of Kodungallur palace lighted the lamp. Sri S.G. Rajagopal Prabhu, Chairman of the

Reception Committee welcomed the august gathering. Rev. Sw. Gautamanandaji gave the inaugural address in which he stressed the supreme role that the Holy Trinity, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda have played in revitalizing the Sanatana dharma. Sri Parameswaranji reminded the audience of the great gift packet that Swamiji had left for mankind which we have failed to open and derive benefit from. Rev. Swami Sakranandaji called upon the house-holder devotees to enlighten themselves and their homes by practising satya and dharma and inspire the younger generations with the everlasting spiritual values enshrined in our Sanatana dharma. Sri A. Balakrishnanji, Vice President of Vivekananda Kendra focused the attention on the two great visionaries Swamiji and Ma. Eknathji. He recalled Sri Eknathji's organizing skill and vision in giving shape to the Vivekananda Rock Memorial and the spiritually oriented service mission of Vivekananda Kendra. An impressive talk on Sri Ramakrishna came from Rev. Swami. Desikatmanandaji who had specially come from Sri Ramakrishna Student's home, Chennai to be with the devotees.

Before lunch there was arati and bhajans and the post lunch session started with an interesting quiz programme based on the Holy Trinity which was ably conducted by Mrs. Rama Menon from Trissur. Afternoon session had three impressive speakers, the first being the well known novelist Sri C. Radhakrishnan. His talk on Science and Spirituality took science to the high realm of spirituality yet to be achieved by it. This he did in the light of Swami Vivekananda's observations on the scientific theories which were available in the late 19th century. In his lecture, The Glory that is Bharat Dr. P. Raman conducted a guided pilgrimage through the physical, intellectual and spiritual landmarks which have made India a glorious punya bhumi.

Dr. H. Sudarsan the world renowned social worker and winner of many awards and recognitions was the next speaker. He narrated many experiences from his own life where strict adherence to truth and integrity had helped to transform several government departments, specially dealing with health, to take up a 'cleaning process'. He emphasized that the ideal 'atmano mokshartham jagat hitaya ca' is an ideal remedy for many of the ills that our society is suffering from. He released the book titled 'jeevita sayahnathill anandathinde vazhi', Malayalam translation of Rev. Swami Ranganathanandaji's booklet 'bliss in the old age' by Sri Anandeswar a devotee from Quilon. Kum. Nivedita, Vice President of Vivekananda Kendra pointed to the advent of Sri Ramakrishna as the need of the hour which and how Hindu dharma rejuvenated itself under his magic touch. The inspiration he passed on to Swamiji has virtually helped India to re-establish her spiritual supremacy in the world. The session ended with the wonderfully melodious Bengali song rendered by Ku. Sutapa Das, Jeevana Vrati of Vivekananda Kendra. Rev Swami Atmaghanandaji led the bhajan session which was followed by arati.

For the first time Sri Ramakrishna's life found expression in the art form of kathakali performed by Sri Kottakal Sashidharan, a renowned kathakali artist, when he presented a condensed version of Sri Ramakrishna's life as a natural extension of that of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna.

9th May was Buddha poornima and there was a Ganapathi homam as part of the early morning programme. The days archana was based on Holy Mother Sarada Devi. Vivekachudamani class followed.

The opening address in the forenoon was by Srimad Swami Muktanandaji Maharaj of Anandashram, Kanhangad who on his way to Vellimalai ashram had kindly agreed to halt at Ananda Dham and address the devotees. He spoke on namajapa, its efficacy in transforming individual, family and society. His speech was based on the experiences of Papa Ramadas Swami and Mataji Krishnabhai.

Pravrajika Dhruvaprana Mataji opened the treasure chest of the life and teachings of Holy Mother Sarada Devi with her highly informative talk. She released a booklet 'Jnanadayini Sri Sarada Devi' translated from Bengali by Prof. V.S. Sharma which is a good addition to the literature on Holy mother. Falling in line were the next three speakers. Dr. Lakshmi Shankar impressed the audience with her oratorical skill and spoke on the gurubhava of Holy Mother. Pravrajika Tapaprana Mataji from Calicut presented Holy Mother in the light of practical Vedanta. Pravrajika Sumedhaprana Mataji emphasized the universal motherhood that Sri Sarada devi epitomized. The morning session concluded with the bhajans Prof. Balakrishnan and party from Trissur and was followed by arati.

From 2 pm young vignesh, an old student of Sandeepani Sishuvihar enthralled the audience by his Ottanthullal. In the afternoon session Rev. Swami Atmaghanandaji spoke on Sri Ramakrishna. Next talk was by Dr. Suvarna Nalappad which was dedicated to late Rev. Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj. The theme was practical Vedanta made explicit by Swami Ranganathanandaji in all his writings. The next speaker was Sri Vijay Mohan who spoke of Swami Vivekananda as the epitomisation of practical Vedanta. The young talented Ku. Vishnupriya sang bhajans before arati. There was sangeeta aradhana by young bank officer Sri Abhiram Unni, Trissur.

On 10th May even though the sky was clear the hearts of devotees were heavy with impending separation after three days of closeness as Sri Ramakrishna's family. For the first time the devotees listened to an asthothara chanting on Swami Vivekananda. Revered Swaprabhanandaji brought his class to conclusion. Two main items on the agenda had to be gone through before concluding the Sammelaan ? Yati puja and the handing over the flag and banner to the group in waiting.

There were benedictory addresses in the forenoon by the Revered Swamis Prasantanandaji Maharaj, Veetaspruhanandaji Maharaj, Akshayatmanandaji Maharaj, Atmaswaroopanandaji Maharaj, Swaprabhanandaji Maharaj, Sadbhavanandaji Maharaj, and Aptalokanandaji Maharaj. The souvenir 'Viveka Tharangam' a few copies of which had reached us in advance, were presented by the Adv. T.M. Damodaran Namboodiripad,

Chairman of the Souvenir Committee with suitable introduction. Swami Gautamanandaji thereafter released the souvenir and distributed it to some of the people on the dais. It is gratifying to mention that the souvenir was printed in Bombay by an ardent well wisher as his offering to Bhakta Sammelaan.

As the stage was getting ready for yatipuja Smt. Lalitha Natarajan and Kum. Vishnupriya helped to create the right atmosphere through guru stuthi and other bhajans. Twelve monks and nine matajis were present for the Yati puja. The devotees washed their feet offered cloth, umbrella, fruits and dakshina along with flowers and garlands. Then they prostrated at their feet mentally paying obeisance not only to the Great Master Sri Ramakrishna but to the entire galaxy of guru parampara which has given us the ideals of the glorious Sanatana Dharma.

After the formal worship by a group of devotees, the entire group of devotees queued up to pay their respects to the monks and matajis. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with a special spiritual fervor.

The interval between lunch and the afternoon session included an akshara sloka sadas in which members of the Mahakavi Katholil Achyuta Menon Akshara Sloka Sadas Samithy of the Kodungallur participated.

Valedictory session was short but meaningful. Dr. M.N. Vijayan, Vice Chairman welcomed the gathering. Then followed by the valedictory address by Rev. Swami Gautamanandaji and benediction by Rev. Swami Sakranandaji.

Then came the most satisfying moment of handing over the flag and banner. The devotees who came from Kalady who were waiting in the audience from morning enthusiastically came forward and took the responsibility of organizing the next Sammelaan at Kalady. Blessed indeed would Kalady be once again, by hosting the next Bhakta Sammelaan. The flag and banner were duly handed over to their representatives with a lot of goodwill and best wishes.

Before passing on the responsibility of proposing vote of thanks to Sri R. M. Pavitran, Jt. Secretary of Reception Committee, Dr. Lakshmi Kumari spoke of the great elation and satisfaction that Vivekananda Kendra derived from the Sammelaan where so many devotees of the great Masters came together and lived together with great shraddha and devotion. Once again she projected the idea of a mahayagna and thanked each and every one for their wholehearted and meaningful participation. Sri Pavitran recollected the contributions of the Reception Committee members, Sponsors of various programmes, advertisers and all those who worked in front and behind the curtain to make the programme successful, impressive and deeply fulfilling. He specially conveyed his grateful thanks to the group of young volunteers who had come from Trivandrum for their valuable help. The programme concluded with shanti mantra.

