



Vedanta Ashram Society
6421, Cork Street Halifax
N S B3L 1Z5 Canada
Phone (902) 431-6000
<http://www.hindutemple-halifax.org>

NOTE: As you all know that the General Body Meeting scheduled on December 6th, 2009 was postponed for reasons beyond our control. It is re-scheduled on 17th January, 2010 and all the members were informed by phone and through the announcements on Sundays.

Notice of General Body Meeting

The Annual General Body Meeting of the Vedanta Ashram Society, Halifax will be held on Sunday, January 17, 2010 at Hindu Temple, 6421 Cork Street at 2:00 p.m. sharp.

If any member wants to have discussion on any other topic/issue which requires the consideration of The General Body may submit the topic in writing 72 hours prior to the meeting to Mr. Ashok Khanna, 15 Bayview Rd. Halifax, NS, B3M 1N8 or hand-deliver at the Mandir.

The Agenda of the meeting as follows:

1. Welcome by the Chairperson.
2. Review and approval of the minutes of the last General Body Meeting of December 7, 2008.
3. Chair person's Report
4. Reports from Building Committee and Fund Raising Committee.
5. Review and approval of the Financial Statements of the Society for the current fiscal year.
6. Appointment of auditors.
7. Any other matters which require consideration of the General Body.
8. Appointment of coordinator for Mandir Expansion Project
9. Elections of Board Members for the term 2010-2012



Mandir Patrika

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VAS President's message

December 2009

It has been a remarkable and enjoyable experience for all of us in the executive board to look back. It has not been only parties and meetings but a lot of work to make us feel contented and calling ourselves as humble care-takers of our community Hindu-Mandir.

Working with the board and the respective committees has been a memorable experience but the greatest pleasure was the result from meeting all of you who participated in various activities - may it be a Pundit at the Altar, volunteers in kitchen, training the kids or decorating the Mandir for special functions. We greatly appreciate the help of all volunteer who contributed their time and expertise in facilitating the various events of the Mandir.

Acquiring the Young Street property, negotiations, fixing and renting gave us a lot of excitement, extra work and at times frustration but we enjoyed every moment of it. As a sequel to this, planning for the expansion of our Mandir is a major historic event in the annals of our VAS and calls for lots of work and input of one and all. The new plan should give a facelift so that our Mandir conforms to the architecture of a Hindu Mandir; and it incorporates safety features which were not up to the mark at present. The General Body Meeting to be held on 17th January 2010 presents reports from both Building and Fund Raising Committees. This meeting would facilitate to jump start our fund raising activities for the Mandir Expansion Project. It is vital that all members should attend the meeting and participate at the planning stage.

With experience I wish to suggest that VAS should, in future, consider limiting the number of participants to a maximum of 200-250 for any major festival; exceeding this number is not advisable from safety point of view. As a precaution this year the Diwali function was cut short by about an hour. In the event of an emergency it would have been extremely difficult to handle, as the steps leading to and from the prayer hall are too narrow to facilitate an orderly evacuation. This problem stresses the compelling need that the Mandir expansion project be undertaken and completed at the earliest time possible.

I thank you for your full support. and hope you extend the same to the next executive.

Wish you all a very happy, Peaceful and Prosperous New Year and let us hope the year 2010 brings you all the dream Mandir.

Special Committees for Building Expansion Project:

1. Building Committee:

The building Committee has been busy in obtaining the needed permits and approvals of the plans from the city. They will provide some of the particulars for your input in the General Body Meeting to be held on 17th January, 2010.

Members of the Building Committee:

1	Dr. Prabir	Basu
2	Mr. Surinder	Bhalla
3	Dr. Subba Rao	Durvasula
4	Mr. Kautilya	Gandhi
5	Mr. Ashok	Khanna
6	Mr. Sunder Lal	Sharma
7	Mr. Suraj	Sikka

2. Fund Raising Committee:

As most of you are aware, a Fund Raising Committee has been established to raise funds for the Mandir Expansion Project. They have been meeting on a regular basis and achieved a lot of progress. One of these days these members will be knocking on your doors. Without your support this Project will not be possible. Please donate generously. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generous support.

The following are the members of the Committee.

1	Mrs. Neel Ahuja	2	Dr. Dhiman Chowdhary
3	Mrs. Bala Durvasula	4	Mrs. Jaya Dutta
5	Mrs. Uma Gandhi	6	Mrs. Kamal Gulati
7	Dr. Rekha Gupta	8	Dr. R. P. Gupta
9	Mr. Ashok Khanna	10	Mr. K. L. Khanna
11	Mr. Rajinder Kumar	12	Mr. Ram Mago
13	Mr. Manohar Narang	14	Dr. Asha Parkash
15	Mrs. Neera Sikka	16	Mrs. Raj Verma
17	Mr. Alok Wadhawan		

Reports from committees:

Religious Committee:

“I am thankful to the congregation for having been entrusted to help manage and guide the religious activities at the altar last two years. The executive committee and the volunteers have cooperated to the fullest extent possible in discharging my duties.

Apart from the routine weekly and special functions that have been managed, one highlight needs to be mentioned. The Pundits’ change/deitie’s clothing storage room has been completely renovated and reorganized in an orderly manner at the cost of about \$1200.

Several generous donors have together covered this cost imposing no burden on the temple. My thanks go out to them. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers for their help, and the congregation for their confidence in me.” Mrs. Lakshmi Raju

Community Out- Reach Programs

VAS has done a great job in helping the community. When there was an appeal from Feed Nova Scotia for food to the needy, VAS responded readily. With the generous help of the devotees and painstaking effort of our executive members, food items were collected and sent to Metro Food Bank of Parker Street Branch. This project was carried for eighteen months and the Feed Nova Scotia acknowledged our effort.

Monthly Food sponsoring at the Hope Cottage is progressing successfully. The devotees are signing their names readily to sponsor even without being approached and we are grateful for their generous support. A few volunteers from Prasad committee are going to the Hope Cottage and providing hot meals and their efforts were highly appreciated by the residents.

Save the Planet Program:

We are using only recyclable plates, cups, and carefully sort the items to reduce the garbage. It may sound like a drop in the bucket in reducing the overall problem of garbage fills but we are happy to do our share in saving the environment.

Board of Directors 2008 & 2009

Chairperson	Mr. Ashok Khanna	445-1409
Vice Chairperson-Admin.	Mrs. Kamal Gulati	443-0570
Vice Chairperson-Religion	Mrs. Lakshmi Raju	429-4359
Vice Chairperson-Prasad	Mrs. Jaya Dutta	455-8431
General Secretary	Ms. Poonam Unia	431-3465
Financial Secretary	Mrs. Bala Durvasula	463-7804
Youth Co-ordinator	Mrs. Tej Sharma	423-1988

Annual V.A.S. Membership

Please become a member if you are not one yet; encourage your friends and relatives to support the temple. Cheques as well as cash payments are welcome. Please note September 30th was the last day to become a regular member to participate in the Annual General Body Meeting.

Singles over 19 years	\$31.00
Couples	\$51.00
Life Membership	\$1001.00 (Payable in within a calendar year)

Welcome to the following devotees who became Life Members in 2008-2009
Hope many more would join to support our dream project.

Mr. Ajay	Bhatnagar	Ms. Rita	Malik
Mr. Vishal & Shelly	Bhardwaj	Dr. Rajiender & Minakshi	Mohandas
Dr. Subba Rao & Bala	Durvasula	Dr. Vijay & Louise	Sharma
Mr. Kautilya & Uma	Gandhi	Dr. Sunita	Sharma
Mr. Ashok & Vijay	Khanna	Dr. Yash & Poorni	Singh
Mr. Chand	Malik	Mrs. Urbija	Sinha
Mr. Ravi	Malik	Mr. Vivek & Anita	Swamy

Devotees are welcome to book the Mandir for private or V.A.S. sponsored public functions through the Board of Directors.

Please note that the amount of donations for both Prasad Sponsoring on Sundays and sponsored private functions on other days is slightly increased to reflect the ever increasing cost of groceries and paper products. Also we have taken up a big project and therefore we can't afford to spend from savings.

Events	Minimum Donations
Sunday Prasad Sponsoring	Minimum \$251.00 Additional donations welcome.
Weddings and Sponsored Private functions- responsible for their own food	\$351.00 cleaning included
Mandap loan outside temple use	\$51.00
Private functions without food	\$201.00

Recent Activities of our Mandir

Janmastami celebrations:

Sri Krishna Jayanti was celebrated on 13th August from 9:00 p.m. to midnight. The hall was full with devotees and everyone enjoyed the kirthans and bhajans on Lord Sri Krishna.

Devotional Music Concert:

On September 26, 2009 we arranged a concert by a visiting artist from India, Sri. G. V. Prabhakar. With his melodious voice, he sang devotional songs like Mira Bhajans, Tulasidas, Jayadev, and Sai bhajans for two hours, and it was highly appreciated.

Diwali

Diwali was celebrated on Sunday the 18th October with a special pooja for Goddess Lakshmi. More than 250 devotees participated. It was very colourful with all the lights and decorations. The function was followed by Prasad and traditional sweets were distributed.

Mata Sarada Devi celebration:

On December 12th Sarada Devi celebration was observed at the Mandir from 6 to 10 p.m. The function was devoted to women and a special quiz program, especially on women, was arranged by the students. Young and old enjoyed the evening.

Upcoming Festivals:

New Year Havan	Friday	01-01-2010
Makar Sankranti	Thursday	14-01-2010
Vasant Panchami	Wednesday	20-01-2010
Maha Shivaratri	Friday	12-02-2010

Community News

Congratulations to Nishi and Bushan Kalra on the marriage of their son Kapil with Sonia which took place on Dec. 6, 2009. May God bless the couple.

Sapna and Deepak Kriplani left Halifax for U.S.A. in November 2009. Their dedication and services to the Mandir are gratefully acknowledged. We wish them well for a bright future.

Vishal Sejal Raj are leaving for U.S.A. in the current month to start a new life. We all wish them well for a bright future in the new country

Our condolences to Dr. Ramakant who lost his father on Nov.28, 2009 in India.

WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE?

By Pandit Sastry Vankamamidi

It is well recognized that knowledge is power and this is what propelled the Western countries to reach high material standards in education, research and development in the fields of science and technology. In the East, knowledge has a different connotation and spiritual meaning. The information to which a human child is exposed, right from a tender age of 5 onwards, through various levels of schooling has led to the present generation of youngsters with lot of education and very little knowledge.

The real definition of knowledge is given in Srimad Bhagavad Geeta Chapter 13, verses 8 through 12. In these 5 Slokas (couplets), 20 qualities were enumerated as the prerequisite for attaining the knowledge of the SELF. Self knowledge has been acclaimed as the goal of human existence and is achieved at the culmination of spiritual journey. During the course of this journey these 20 virtues are to be practiced in one's life. As a matter of fact Geeta itself is a text full of instructions to be practiced and not just chanted mechanically. Right in the invocation Sloka, Vyasa exhorts that the principles enumerated in the 18 chapters have to be practiced to reap the benefits assured as reward of one, following the path clearly laid out by Lord Krishna.

Even in the material world if one reads religiously every day for 20 years the recipe of Gulab Jamun (popular Indian sweet), one does not get the taste of or the experience of eating the dish. Once one brings all the ingredients, follows the recipe then only one enjoys the dish. Now let us examine some of the virtues explained by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in these 5 Slokas.

AMAANITWAM, ADAMBHITWAM, AHIMSA, KSHANTI, AARJAVAM
AACHARYOPAASANAM, SOUCHAM, STHAIRYAM,
AATMAVINIGRAHAM

The English translations for these virtues in sequence are
HUMILITY, MODESTY, NON-INJURY, PATIENCE, UPRIGHTNESS
SERVICE TO THE TEACHER, PURITY, STEADINESS, SELF CONTROL

Each virtue has to be understood in its right perspective and developed in the life of a spiritual aspirant. These virtues are not like the rungs of a ladder, one leading to the other, instead they are like organs of a foetus that have to be developed simultaneously.

HUMILITY comes with the understanding about the insignificance of the individual ego. Everything here follows a law and is very orderly. The amazing fact that the gravitational attraction between various planets of this solar system keeps them moving in perfect orbits and creates the seasons in the year reveals the supreme intelligence behind the events in nature. The recognition that one is an inherent part of this gigantic creation that has been going on from time immemorial and that will continue for a long time leads one to the virtue of HUMILITY. This awareness of the cosmic reality brings humbleness in the aspirant and helps to maintain equanimity in life. One is neither to take credit for one's achievements nor to be upset about one's failures. At the same time one is not to be irresponsible under the garb of humility. One is encouraged to excel in what one does by being 100% focused on the task and yet not to be influenced by the fruits thereof. Every moment one has to be aware of the situation and keep in sight the goal of achieving humility in daily life. (To be continued)