

SRI MUKTHANANDA MAHARAJ



The present head of “Ananandashram”, Swami Mukthananda, renounced his lucrative career in a private company in Chennai to join the ashram. Swami Mukthanandaji is presently the Managing trustee of Anandashram in Kanhangad, Kerala, South India. The ashram was founded by Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai, endearingly called Beloved Papa and Pujya Mataji, in 1931. Their life and teachings serve as a beacon to mankind. Their vision was universal and their life was devoted to the service of humanity. In his own effort to bring their teachings to life, Swami Mukthanandaji has started initiatives to kindle values to children that are actively supported by the Ashram and Ashram’s volunteers. One such initiative is VSET where school children are made to experientially learn values. We are now meeting for a new initiative by the Ashram – VITAL – where the focus is on enabling prospective school teachers to subtly infuse values to children. Thus, he is the visionary behind creating awareness and kindling need of Value in Education in academic learning.

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Where & when started

Swami Ramdas established 'Anandashram' on 15 May 1931. The surrounding area, which was called Manjapati before the establishment of the Ashram, is now known as Ramnagar.

Brief history of the ashram

The Anandashram slowly grew from its tiny initial structure to the present complex of low-rise buildings. Many of the buildings constructed by the Ashram were given away to those who worked in the Ashram or handed over to the Government to run various social welfare schemes and schools. The Ashram provides free food for all visitors, and free accommodation for a limited period of time. There are special buildings for wandering sadhus and sanyasis. The Ashram publishes a journal called The Vision as well as a number of books by Swami Ramdas (who was a prolific writer) and others.

After the mahasamadhi of Swami Ramdas in 1963, Mataji Krishnabai headed Anandashram until her own passing in 1989. Swami Sachidananda, who joined the ashram in 1949, took over the leadership of the Ashram until he passed away in 2008. Now Swami Mukthananda heads the Ashram.

Purposes of Ashram

During the inaugural ceremony of the Ashram, Swami Ramdas gave a short speech describing the purpose of the Ashram: "The ideal which the ashram holds before it is universal love and service, based upon a vision of divinity in all beings and creatures of the world. Here every man, woman or child, to whatever denomination, creed, or caste the person may belong, shall have free access. This is a place where every effort will be made to cultivate the spirit of mutual love and service, so that what is realized within its walls may prove as an example for the right conduct of human life in outside world"

Spiritual Works

During the lifetime of Swami Ramdas, the mantra was chanted throughout the day in the main Bhajan Hall, except for the times when he would engage in discussions with visitors in the Bhajan Hall after lunch and dinner. Devotees used to meditate in Swami Ramdas's room from 5 am to 6 am, after which Swami Ramdas would spend the day with the devotees

Today the mantra is chanted continuously from 6 am to 6 pm in one of the three samadhis or tombs in the Ashram: the samadhis of Swami Ramdas, Mataji Krishnabai, and Swami Sachidananda. In the Bhajan hall, in addition to Ramnam, the following are also chanted: Vishnusahasranam, Gurustuti, Hanuman Chalisa, chapters of the Gita by children, "Arunachala Shiva", "Namo Ramanaya" and "Aksharamanamala" (in



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deference to Sri Ramana Maharshi), "Om Nama Shivaya" and "Hare Rama Hare Krishna."

Spaces are also available for silent meditation. The practice of meditating in Swami Ramdas's room in the early hours of the morning continues

About the Founders

Anandashram was founded by P. Vittal Rao, who, at a very young age, was dissatisfied and restless with the life he was leading as a householder. Ultimately, on realizing the utter futility of worldly pursuits, God's grace descended on him at the age of 36. Like the Buddha, the God-intoxicated Vittal Rao left everything and wandered the length and breadth of Bharat on foot as a mendicant living on alms and seeking asylum in temples and ashrams. His ceaseless quest eventually molded Vittal Rao into a spiritual master, Swami Ramdas (1884-1963). Devotees affectionately called him 'beloved Pappa.' Eventually in the year 1931, along with Mataji Krishna Bai, a direct disciple, Anandashram was established at Kanhangad, Kerala, as a facilitating centre for sincere sadhaks to pursue their own spiritual quest.

Philanthropic Works

After the passing away of the founders, the mantle of running the ashram fell on Swami Satchidanana (1919-2008), who was an embodiment of the divine love and universal compassion preached by Pappa and Mataji. During his tenure, seva activities of the ashram reached its zenith benefitting thousands of poor and needy. Swamiji was very particular that no one coming to the ashram seeking help must go empty-handed.

Swami Mukthananda has been instrumental in launching two unique national movements in the educational sector, viz, Viswa Seva Educational Trust (VSET) and Value Integrated Teaching and Learning (VITAL) by the ashram. While VSET is intended to make children aware of the role of values and its application in daily life, VITAL aims at helping teachers inculcate a teaching model that facilitates the all-round growth of the individual, and thereby society. Every year, these programmes reach about a lakh participants in different parts of the country.

The Ashram has a Goshala (Cow Shed), in the south-east corner of the campus, with over 50 heads of cattle and the milk yield is passed on to the Ashram Bhojan Shala (Canteen) which feeds not only the devotees but also the poor and hungry who happen to come to the Ashram.

A well-equipped library in the Ashram provides an opportunity to visiting devotees to gain spiritual knowledge through well over five thousand spiritual and religious books in different languages.

Location

Anandashram is located approximately 5 km from the city of Kanhangad in Kasaragod district, Kerala

Sources

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<http://sriramasamartha.blogspot.in/search/label/A.brief%20biography%20of%20a%20Great%20Saint-Sri%20Brahmanand%20Maharaj>

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