

GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Sat Jan 11 Seva Saturday** from 10am to 2pm. Help “winterize” your Center. Pizza served for lunch at 12:30pm. No need to stay the entire 4 hours — come when you can, stay as long as you like.
- **On Saturday January 25th** we will celebrate the birthdays of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda. We'll start at 11am with a brief talk on these two great souls, who founded the Ramakrishna Order and began its mission work. The Puja, conducted by Aditya Chaturvedi, 11:30-12:30, followed by prasad lunch in the Monastery. Food to be offered must be in the kitchen by 11am!
- **Swami Harinamanandaji** will be here on Sunday, Jan 26 to lead a Workshop on the Chandi. Starts at 10am, ends at 1pm, followed by lunch with the Swami. Please bring your own brown-bag lunch.

- In February, **Swami Nirakaranandaji** of the St Louis center, will be with us on Sat the 15th & Sun the 16th to lead a weekend-long retreat on the teachings, the life & the achievements of Adi Shankaracharya. Detail in e-news & web.

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

Good King Wenceslas

You may not have enjoyed the whole of Christmas, Charles Dickens might have said, if you had not yet heard the tale of Good King Wenceslas. Well, if you're in that deplorable condition, it can be remedied this morning. You have heard the saint's Christmas Carol, and now we'll discuss the parable's inner meanings.

Rooted in Christian mystical traditions, the carol's symbolism tells a story of a king who is both an humble servant of God in man and a master of spiritual power.

First, some context: January is a month for study of Raja Yoga, a spiritual path often called the yoga of meditation.

As a raja yogi, you use ancient, proven spiritual techniques to quiet your mind and gain control of your attention.

Regular daily practice of Raja Yoga increases your ability to concentrate, and may lead to meditation. This can unite you with the Divine Presence, the source of your being, and liberate you from the cycle of rebirth and death.

A Prayer from Swami Paramananda

All life is to teach us how we may bring the living presence of our Ideal into our consciousness.

*Verily Thou art my life's fulfillment;
The cause of my joy and sorrow, laughter
and grief;*

My soul's sunshine and heart's raincloud.

When our life becomes empty, to fill this emptiness, we try to gather from outside and we gain emptiness. We try to find something permanent and we seek it in the fleeting.

Consciousness of the presence of the Eternal within our soul alone will bring us peace and enduring satisfaction. There is no anarchy or accident in the cosmic universe. There is no uneven distribution of favor and disfavor. Only as we seek that which does not shift or change do we find our fulfillment.

O Thou Infinite and Ever-blessed One, Thou art the conscious Being abiding in the hearts of all conscious beings.

Do Thou fill my heart with a living sense of consecration to Thee, That I may learn to follow Thy path with unwavering faith and whole-hearted devotion.

Grant me spiritual insight that I may know and do Thy Will.

That is the frame of reference within which we will look at King Wenceslas and the actions of the king and his page:

- Cultures use storytelling and parable to share spiritual truths.

- Written language: Songs, poems, and tales collected and transcribed. .
- Christianity: huge number of stories and songs about Jesus and His teachings
- Many sung as Christmas carols

This morning:

- Parable of Saint Wenceslas (Good King Wenceslas)
- A beautiful and moving Christmas song written by John Mason Neale (1818-1866)
- Anglican clergyman, strong interest in the Eastern Orthodox Church
- This carol his most famous work
- Subject is Saint Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia (c. 907-935)
- Considered a martyr and a saint soon after his death, named King by Holy Roman Emperor, Otto 1
- Subject of songs and morality tales carried to royal courts, cities, and villages in Europe by minstrels, and told in church

First, let's take up the parable's meaning in mystical Christian context; then, look at it from a Ramakrishna Vedanta perspective, which will:

- Identify "characters" of the story as aspects of your body-mind complex
- Relate these to training for your highest spiritual realization

To understand the Christian meanings, we need a little background:

- Saint Stephen, first martyr of Christianity
 - Venerated as saint in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox Churches.
 - Patron of masons and stonemasons, so associated with Freemasonry
 - Feast Day is Dec. 26 (Roman), Dec. 27 (Eastern)
 - **From Chapter 6 of The Acts of the Apostles**

- Stephen one of seven men of the early church in Jerusalem appointed to serve as a teacher
- Denounced for blasphemy against God and Moses and speaking against the Temple and the Law.
- Tried before the Sanhedrin
- Condemned and stoned to death by a mob, witnessed (encouraged?) by Saul of Tarsus, later to be known as Saint Paul the Apostle
- Stephen's name derived from Greek: Stephanos, meaning "crown" — invested with a crown of martyrdom

“Brightly shone the moon that night:”

*This is from *The Moon in Masonic History*, by a Grand Historian of the Order of Freemasonry:*

“There is no more spectacular reminder of our Masonic historical and ritualistic heritage than the moon at its height of fullness.

While astronomers view the moon with the analytical eye of science, the moon has been a focal point for cultures around the world throughout history and has inspired music, poetry and religion alike.”

In Freemasonry, the moon is associated with wisdom and secret teachings.

Definition of the English “league:”
About 3 miles

Verse by verse discussion of Good King Wenceslas:

*Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even
Brightly shone the moon that night
Though the frost was cruel
When a poor man came in sight
Gath'ring winter fuel.*

*"Hither, page, and stand by me
If thou know'st it, telling
Yonder peasant, who is he?"*

*Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence
Underneath the mountain
Right against the forest fence
By Saint Agnes' fountain."*

*"Bring me meat and bring me wine
Bring me pine logs hither
Thou and I will see him dine
When we bear them thither."
Page and monarch forth they went
Forth they went together
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather.*

*"Sire, the night is darker now
And the wind blows stronger
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."*

*"Mark my footsteps, my good page
Tread thou in them boldly
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."*

*In his master's steps he trod
Where the snow lay dinted
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed
Therefore, Christian men, be sure
Wealth or rank possessing
Thee who now will bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing.*

Ramakrishna Vedanta and Good King Wenceslas:

Devotion and service keys to a successful path of discrimination and renunciation —
“...acquiring the discipline that will enable the mind to take on board the message of Vedanta...” Dennis Waite, *The Book of One*

Parable is instructive at the level of the subtle body, or “the soul:”

King = Buddhi, the discriminative faculty
— the decider

Page = Faculties of Mind, the servant ego
Poor man = suffering humanity, struggling
to keep inner fire burning

**Buddhi receives information from the
mind**, illumines a course of action: service
*"Bring me meat and bring me wine, Bring
me pine logs hither*

*Thou and I will see him dine, When we
bear them thither."*

Mind struggles with oppositions of the
world: *rude wind's wild lament, And the
bitter weather —*

Page (lower mind, ego): *Sire, the night is
darker now, And the wind blows stronger,
Fails my heart, I know not how, I can go
no longer*

**Buddhi as Guru: Spiritual practice
yields mastery:**

*"Mark my footsteps, my good page,
Tread thou in them boldly
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."*

*In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted
Heat was in the very sod,
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**Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
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Q&A & Commentary
CLOSING CHANT