

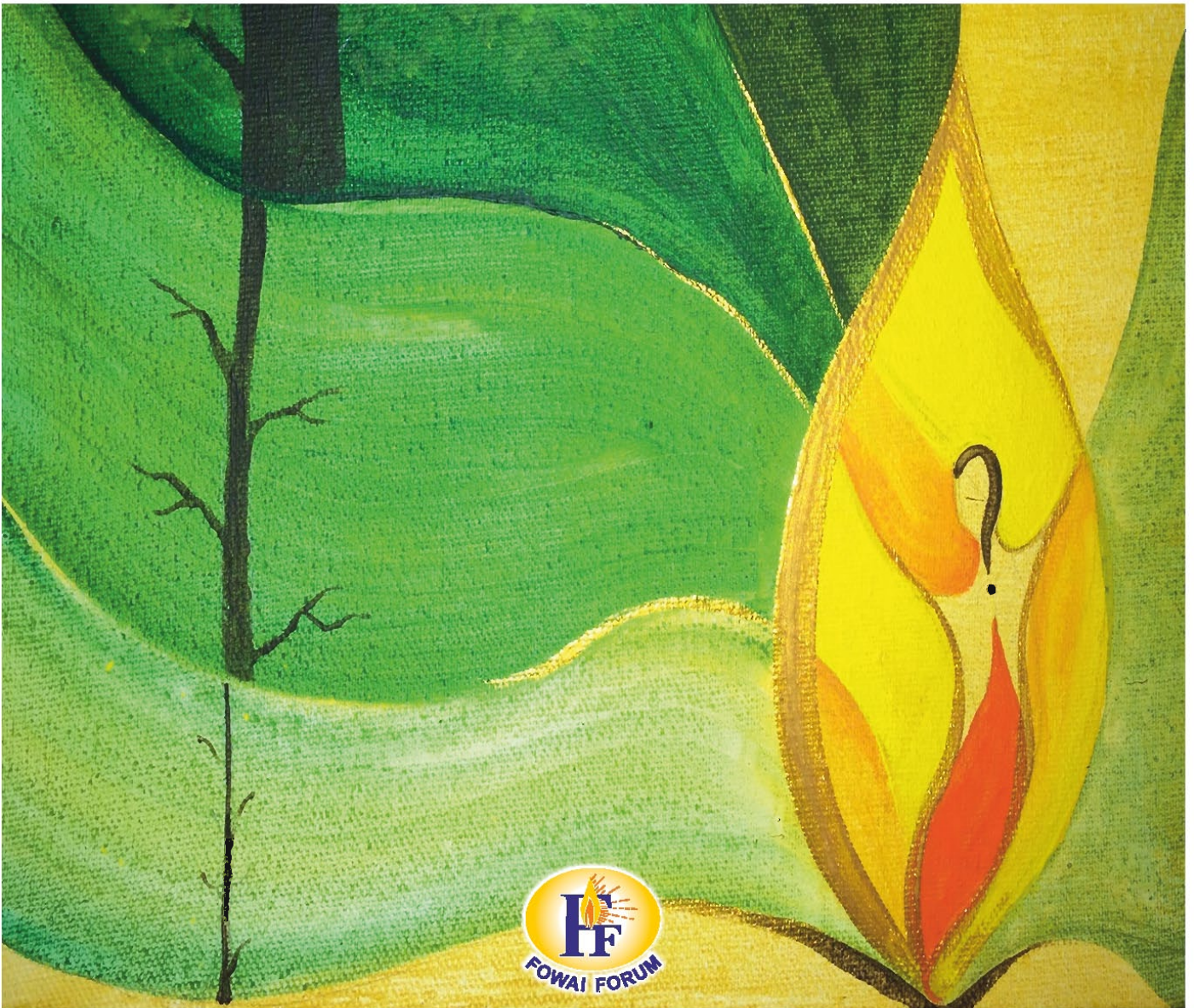
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Inner Flame

Volume IX

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Featured in this issue is Rumi who has been hailed as one of the greatest seers of ancient Persia. Though a devout Muslim who translated parts of Quran into Persian in poetic format, his greatness lies in his being able to transcend the narrow corridors of bigotry, bias and ritualism. The fact that his poetry of divine love has appealed to people from all religions and regions over these past 700 years bears testimony to the authenticity of his vision. In these troubled times, Rumi symbolises the unifying insight of mysticism that forms the essence of all religions.

In his article under *Perceiving Phoenix*, Swamiji explores the concept of lifelong learning from a Vedantic perspective.

There is a charming story about *Sri Nagarjuna* who was one of the monks from the Buddhist tradition who attained great fame. He transforms a thief by teaching him an apparently simple practice – constant remembrance of who one really is from the inside.

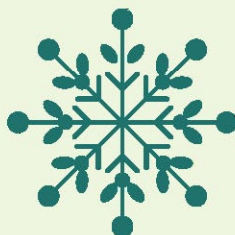
There is also an article on a little-known Dargah at Nagore, a quaint little coastal town in Tamil Nadu, South India.

The story of *Brahmarshi Vishwamitra's* perseverance and single-pointed focus on achieving his objective will no doubt inspire us to follow our bliss and pursue our dreams.

In addition to all this are the gems from the Upanishads that sparkle to provide us glimpses of insights that light up our minds to provide greater clarity in our lives.

Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd)

For the Chief Editor



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The Lover sang:

*"Reason is powerless in the expression
of Love.*

*Love alone is capable of revealing
the truth of Love and being a Lover.*

*The way of our prophets is the
way of Truth.*

*If you want to live, die in Love;
die in Love if you want to remain alive."*

The Devoted Seeker realised:

در راه طلب عاقل و دیوانه یکی است
در شیوهی عشق خویش و بیگانه یکی است
آن را که شراب وصل جانان دادند
در مذهب او کعبه و بتخانه یکی است

Translation:

*"On the seeker's path, wise men and
fools are one.*

*In His Love, brothers and strangers
are one.*

*Go on! Drink the wine of the Beloved!
In that faith, Muslims and pagans are one."*

and

*"Reason, tread the path of selflessness into
eternity.*

*Remember God so much that you are
forgotten.*

*Let the caller and the called disappear
be lost in the Call."*

Who was Rumi ?

The name Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, or Jalal-ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi, Mevlana/Mawlana/Maulana (our master), Mevlevi/Mawlawi or just Rumi as he is popularly remembered over many centuries, is synonymous with Love for and ecstatic flights into the Infinite. Rumi, who lived in 13th century Persia, was the founder of the Mawlawi Sufi order, a leading mystical brotherhood of Islam. He is, today, known as one of the great spiritual masters and poetical geniuses Islam has produced. Rumi shone as a Sunni Muslim poet, jurist, and Islamic scholar and theologian then and today, Rumi's influence transcends national borders and ethnic divisions. He is revered by Iranians, Tajiks, Turks, Greeks, Pashtuns, and other Central and South Asians, including both Muslim and Hindu Indians, all of whom have greatly appreciated his spiritual legacy. They will continue to do so, so compelling is his expressive poetry which has been widely translated into many of the world's languages, transposed into various formats

and joyfully sung the world over. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Rumi has been described as the "most popular poet" and the "best-selling poet" even in the United States.

A brief life sketch

Rumi was born on September 30, 1207 at Balkh, in the Iranian region of Khorasan, part of the current territory of Afghanistan. Rumi's father, Baha Uddin Walad, was a respected noble of the city of Balkh who had obtained the title "Sultan of the Scholars" in his lifetime. His mother was Mumina Khatun, daughter of Ruknal-Din, Amir of Balkh. At birth, he was named *Jalal ud-Din*, an Arabic name, meaning "Glory of the Faith". *Balkhī* or *Rūmī* added later, are his *nisabs*, meaning "from Balkh" and "from Rum" (Roman Anatolia), respectively.

According to the authoritative Rumi biographer Franklin Lewis of the University of Chicago, As such, there are a number of historical personages born in or associated with Anatolia known as Rumi, a word borrowed from Arabic, literally meaning 'Roman,' in which context, Roman refers to subjects of the Byzantine Empire or simply to people living in or things associated with the Anatolian peninsula, which had belonged to the Byzantine, or eastern Roman empire. This land had only relatively recently been conquered by Muslims and even when it came to be controlled by Turkish Muslim rulers, it was still known to Arabs, Persians and Turks as the geographical area of Rum.

When the Mongols started invading Central Asia causing much political instability and wars, in 1212 or 1213 Sultan al-Ulama Bahauddin Walad decided to leave Balkh with his family and close friends. Sultan al-Ulama's first stop was in the city of Nishapur. This is where the youthful Rumi

encountered the famous mystic poet Attar of Nishapur. Abū Hamīd bin Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm is better known by his pen-names Farīd ud-Dīn and 'Attār; he was a Persian Muslim poet, theoretician of Sufism, and hagiographer from Nishapur who had an immense and lasting influence on Persian poetry and Sufism. Despite his young age, Rumi impressed Attar and won his appreciation for his early spiritual development. Rumi himself had great regard for Attar and mentioned him as a pure soul in his writings later.

From Nishapur, Walad and his entourage set out for Baghdad, meeting many of the scholars and Sufis of the city. From Baghdad they went to Hejaz and performed the pilgrimage at Mecca. The migrating caravan then passed through Damascus, Malatya, Erzincan, Sivas, Kayseri and Nigde. They finally settled in Karaman for seven years; Rumi's mother and brother both died there. In 1225, Rumi married Gowhar Khatun in Karaman. They had two sons: Sultan Walad and Ala-eddin Chalabi. When his wife died, Rumi married again and had a son, Amir Alim Chalabi, and a daughter, Malakeh Khatun.

It was his meeting with the dervish Shams-e Tabrizi on 15 November 1244 that completely changed his life. It was Shams who introduced Rumi to music, poetry and 'turning' as a form of mystical absorption in the divine. When Shams disappeared, it opened the gates of Mevlana's heart and a pouring of verse would not cease until his death in 1273. From an accomplished poet, teacher, theologian and jurist, Rumi was transformed into a poetic-ascetic. There is a fascinating account of the deep bond of affection that existed between these two

lovers of God. Shams had travelled throughout the Middle East searching and praying for someone who could "endure my company". A voice said to him, "What will you give in return?" Shams replied, "My head!" The voice then said, "The one you seek is Jalaluddin of Konya." Later, on the night of 5 December 1248, as Rumi and Shams were talking, Shams was called to the back door. He went out, never to be seen again. It is rumored that Shams was murdered with the connivance of Rumi's son, 'Ala-Uddin; if so, Shams indeed gave his head for the privilege of mystical friendship.

His poetry is as alive and pertinent today as it was over 725 years ago. Poetry, music and dance, in the name of God, were the only things he could do to express this ocean of love Shams had opened in him. His intimacy with the Beloved evoked joy and gratitude in his followers as they gathered for music, sacred chanting and the famous whirling dance. Rumi's love for, and his bereavement at the death of Shams found their expression in an outpouring of lyrical poems, *Divan-e-Shams-e Tabrizi*. He himself went out searching for Shams and journeyed again to Damascus. There, he realised:

*"Why should I seek? I am the same as He.
His essence speaks through me.
I have been looking for myself!"*

Rumi had found a comforting companion in Sala ud-Din-e Zarkub, a goldsmith. After Salah ud-Din's death, Rumi's scribe and favourite student, Hussam-e Chalabi, assumed the role of Rumi's companion. One day, the two of them were wandering through the Meram vineyards outside Konya when Hussam described to Rumi an idea he had had: "If you were to write a book like the *Ilāhīnāma* of Sanai or the

Mantiq ut-Tayr of 'Attar, it would become the companion of many troubadours. They would fill their hearts from your work and compose music to accompany it." Rumi smiled and took out a piece of paper on which were written the opening eighteen lines of his *Masnavi*, beginning with:

*"Listen to the reed and the tale it tells,
How it sings of separation..."*

Hussam implored Rumi to write more. Rumi spent the next twelve years of his life in Anatolia dictating the six volumes of this masterwork, the *Masnavi*, to Hussam. The *Masnavi* weaves fables, scenes from everyday life, Qur'anic revelations and exegesis, and metaphysics into a vast and intricate tapestry. In the East, it is said in popular lore: he was "not a prophet-but surely, he has brought a scripture". The six-volume didactic epic work, the *'Mathnawi'*, is referred to as the 'Koran in Persian' by Jami, while discourses, *'Fihi ma Fihi'*, were written to introduce his disciples into metaphysics.

In December 1273, Rumi fell ill; he predicted his own death and composed the well-known *ghazal*, which begins with the verse:

*"How doest thou know what sort of king I
have within me as companion?
Do not cast thy glance upon my golden
face, for I have iron legs."*

Rumi died on 17 December 1273 in Konya; men of 5 faiths followed his bier. That night was named *Sebul Arus* (Night of Union). Ever since, the Mawlawi dervishes have kept that date as a festival. His body was interred beside that of his father, and a splendid shrine, the *Yeil Türbe* (Green Tomb, today called the Mevlana Museum), was erected over his place of burial; it was sponsored by the Georgian Queen, Gurcu

Hatun, who was a patron and close friend of Rumi. To this day, this 13th century Mausoleum with its mosque, dance hall, dervish living quarters, school and tombs of some leaders of the Mevlevi Order, continues to draw pilgrims from all parts of the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

His epitaph reads:

"When we are dead, seek not our tomb in the earth, but find it in the hearts of men."

The Dance of ecstasy

Years after his death, his son, Sultan Valad, founded the Mevlevi Order, sometimes known as the Whirling Dervishes. The *Sama* dance, the sacred Sufi practice of whirling or meditative turning, has been passed down for over seven hundred years, as have the music, zikr (sacred chanting), poetry, and the etiquette of this tradition. Women and men alike were in the Order and whirled together for three hundred years after Rumi's death. Finally, after more than four hundred years, men and women are again participating in the *Sama* together. Perhaps, as they whirl, they recall The Master saying:

*As waves upon my head the circling curl,
So in the sacred dance weave ye and whirl.
Dance then, O heart, a whirling circle be,
Burn in this flame – is not the candle He?*

Rumi believed passionately in the use of music, poetry and dance as a path for reaching God. For Rumi, music helped devotees to focus their whole being on the divine and to do this so intensely that the soul was both destroyed and resurrected. It was from these ideas that the practice of whirling dervishes developed into a ritual form. His teachings became the base for the order of the Mevlevi, which his son Sultan Walad had organized. Rumi encouraged *Sama/Sema*,

which is a Sufi ceremony performed as *dhikr*. *Sama* means "listening", while *dhikr* means "remembrance". These rituals often include singing, playing instruments, dancing, recitation of poetry and prayers, wearing symbolic attire, and other rituals. In the Mevlevi tradition, *samā'* represents a mystical journey of spiritual ascent through mind and love to the Perfect One. In this journey, the seeker symbolically turns towards the truth, grows through love, abandons the ego, finds the truth and arrives at the Perfect. The seeker then returns from this spiritual journey, with greater maturity, to love and to be of service to the whole of creation without discrimination with regard to beliefs, races, classes and nations.

The Mawlawi rites, *samā'*, symbolise the divine love and mystical ecstasy; they aim at union with the Divine. The music and the dance are designed to induce a meditative state on the love of God. Mawlawi music contains some of the most core elements of Eastern classical music and it serves mainly as accompaniment for poems of Rumi and other Sufi poets. The dervishes turn timelessly and effortlessly. They whirl, turning round on their own axis and at the same time, also moving in orbit. The right hand is turned up towards heaven to receive God's overflowing mercy which passes through the heart and is transmitted to earth with the downturned left hand. While one foot remains firmly on the ground, the other crosses it and propels the dancer round. The rising and falling of the right foot is kept constant by the inner rhythmic repetition of the name of "Allah-Al-lah, Al-lah..." The ceremony can be seen as a great crescendo in three stages: knowing God, seeing God and uniting with God.



Lasting legacy of divine love

Jalal al-Din Rumi was a philosopher and mystic of Islam. His doctrine advocates unlimited tolerance, positive reasoning, goodness, charity and awareness through love. To him and to his disciples all religions

are more or less truth. Looking with the same eye on Muslim, Jew and Christian alike, his peaceful and tolerant teaching has appealed to people of all sects and creeds. Unification with Divinity through selfless love and devotion is the basic doctrine of Sufism. Though it originated in Central Asia, yet its concepts and practices are very close to Indian philosophical traditions of Vedanta and Bhakti. Sufism is much adored and

venerated all over the world. Seven centuries after his birth and sojourn on the earth, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi is still one of the brightest stars on the firmament of Sufi mysticism, poetry and the hearts of not only his followers but all lovers of God through poetry. The general theme of Rumi's thought, like that of other mystic and Sufi poets of Persian literature, is that of *tawhid* - union with the Beloved, from whom he sees himself as being cut off and aloof.

His yearning for and understanding of the goal of humanity is beautifully expressed in a poem from his collection called *Masnavi. A Daybook of Spiritual Guidance* (1990) translations by Camille Adams Helminski and Kabir Helminski. Another collection of Maulana Rumi's spontaneously-composed Persian poems (ghazals) is called *Divan-i Kabir* or *Diwan Shams Tabrizi*; two poems are particularly expressive of this meeting with the Beloved through whirling.

Sources: <http://www.wikipediarumi>, www.wikiquotes



The easiest and the most effective means
for purging the mind is to associate with saints
and the seekers after Truth
and to ceaselessly invoke the Name of God.
- Sri Anandamayi Ma





“We must relentlessly go about acquiring knowledge as though we will never get old and as though we will never die,” says a line of a *subhāshita*¹ (verse of wisdom). The material to study may seem very

bulky; the work may seem to demand a great length of time; and it may appear that a lot of energy will be required to go through the books; the student however rolls up his sleeves and says, “I can do it; I will do it.”

In these days of MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), it has become all the more convenient for any of us to stay engaged in continued studies irrespective of our age, position or resources. Ongoing, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge is the hallmark of ‘lifelong learning’ and this could be taken up for personal or professional reasons. Elsewhere, it can give benefits like greater competitiveness and enhanced employability but, when applied to Vedānta study, lifelong learning blesses the student with increased peace of mind and continual personal development.

The Vedānta Context

Wise spiritual teachers have always urged us to engage with the study of the Upanishads in a 24x7 style. An oft-quoted line² goes, “Contemplate on Vedānta all the

time: (from the time you get up) till you hit the bed at night, and (from the time you are born) till your last breath.” This science of liberation (*mukti-shāstra*) claims to be the most worthwhile form of knowledge. Certain portions of the literature ask us to give up all other study and take up Vedānta alone. The popular example³ is, “All this grammar will not come to your rescue when the time of death comes close!” Such an emphasis on devoted study of the Upanishadic wisdom of course presupposes that the student has acquired adequate detachment (*vairāgya*), following a lot of examination of worldly accomplishments and enjoyments.

In order to gain *vairāgya*, we need to exercise *viveka* (discrimination between the true and the false). As life time and again brings us to situations where we have to choose between the ‘good’ and the ‘pleasant’, we must carefully choose the ‘good’ and reject the ‘pleasant’. A person is brave and wise when she opts for the good (*shreyas*) over the pleasant (*preyas*)⁴. The habit of carefully examining generates in us the necessary ability to make the right choices. No wonder *Socrates*⁵ too made the statement, “An unexamined life is not worth living.”

Knowledge that Ends All Knowledge

The well-known meaning of the word Vedānta is that it is the culminating, final teaching of the Vedas: *vedānam antah*. A second meaning is that it is the knowledge (insight, understanding) where all knowledge ends, *vedasya* (or again

vedānām) antah. What is meant is that, in this awakening, there is no more the three-fold divisions of the knower, the known and the knowing. There is no dependence on knowledge anymore. There is no sense of incompleteness on the basis of not knowing something. There is no *need* to know anything more.

The above is illustrated in the story of Sage Nārada approaching Sage Sanat Kumāra, as found in the Chāndogya Upanishad (chapter 7). Even after mastering numerous subjects, Nārada is not free of sorrow. His young teacher is not surprised. He says to the erudite student, "All these subjects that you know so far add up to the finite only. There is no true, lasting happiness in the finite. Happiness is to be discovered in the infinite only!" Towards the end of his scintillating discourse (and interaction), Sanat Kumāra points out the nature of the infinite reality⁶ (*bhoomā*), where the hallmark is the absence of the duality between the knower and the known!

Sanat Kumāra literally says, "Where one does not see anything other than oneself, there is the vision of the infinite reality." The implication is that the division, created by thought, of "me" and "not me" gets dissolved. A visitor asked Shri Ramana Maharshi, "Will a man serve *others* after he gets enlightened?" Maharshi's reply was, "When there's enlightenment, there are no others!"

Open Mind, the Essence of Lifelong Learning

The paradox of the state of freedom that Vedānta speaks of is that, on the one hand, the free mind does not need to know anything more but, on the other, is not opposed to any new learning. It is ever ready to receive a new outlook, learn a new

language, acquire a new skill or adapt to a new situation. This free mind does not get attached to the comfort of "Ah, I now know everything." It has the innocence and the playfulness of a child. It has the humility of a new student at a school. Being aware of a lot of things, it is at the same time curious to pick up something afresh.

The free mind is fond of life and yet not attached to the world. Ready to live long, if need be, it is at the same time ready to go, if need be! On the one hand, it carries the sense of responsibility, and on the other, knows very well that nobody is indispensable on the earth. To put it in the language of devotion, the illumined mind knows that God is running the show here and none of us ought to believe that the world will collapse if we leave the stage.

With this kind of childlike innocence, there is much joy in learning, in working, in giving and in receiving. With no bias, prejudice or partiality, there is joy in 'playing' and here, 'winning or losing' does not matter!

Detached Engagement

Academicians define lifelong learning as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective". Vedānta can be – on a lower level – a subject, along with many other subjects. It can be – on a higher level – a subject that gives a *balanced* view with regard to the study of all other subjects. Endowed with a certain Vedāntic perspective, we can go for what they call *detached engagement* in our pursuit of degrees and qualifications, higher positions and bigger earnings!

Lifelong learning is often considered learning that occurs after the formal education during years of childhood (where learning is instructor-driven or pedagogical) and into adulthood (where the learning is individually-driven or androgogical). Vedānta too typically occurs after formal education, and into adulthood. Vedānta and 'lifelong learning' as is commonly understood can thus go hand in hand.

Both in Vedānta study and in forms of lifelong learning, life experiences help a lot as the learner seeks to gain knowledge for professional or personal reasons. The concept of lifelong learning has become of vital importance with the emergence of new technologies that change how we receive and gather information, collaborate with others, and communicate. Nowadays, Vedānta studies too, are taking place in a lot

of new ways, all of them much influenced by emerging technologies.

Notes:

- 1 *ajarāmaravat prājno vidyām-artham cha sādhayet.* {This line urges us to pursue wealth (*artha*) also with vigour.}
- 2 *āsupter-āmriteh kālam nayed vedānta-chintayā* {source unknown}
- 3 *samprāpte sannihita kāle, nahi nahi rakshati dukrin-karane* {Bhaja Govindam, verse 1}
- 4 *shreyo hi dheero'bhi preyaso vrineete* {Kathopanishat, mantra 1.2.2}
- 5 In Plato's *The Apology*, which is a recollection of the speech that Socrates gave at his trial.
- 6 *yatra nānyat pashyati nānyat shrinoti.... sa bhoomā* – Chāndogya Upanishad 7.24.1



A problem exists only when the mind
desires to get somewhere,
to achieve, to become something.
– J Krishnamurti, Amsterdam 1955, Talk 2



Sri Nāgarjuna used to live naked, and even kings and queens used to touch his feet. He was absolutely a beggar -- he had not even a begging bowl. So while he was visiting the capital the queen presented him with a golden begging bowl studded with diamonds. With tears she asked him not to reject it.

Nāgarjuna said, "I will not reject it, I will not hurt your feelings, but it will be very difficult for me to keep it for long -- a naked man, and I have to sleep also. Anybody can steal it. I sleep under the sky, I sleep under a tree ... It is not going to be with me for long."

But the queen said, "It does not matter, I will prepare another better than this. Now it is a question of my prestige. So if it is lost, whenever I see you again you will get another."

Nāgarjuna said, "I have no objection."

A thief was hearing all this and said, "My god. A golden bowl worth millions of rupees, studded with diamonds, and this naked man ... it is absolutely unsuitable, it does not fit." So he followed Nāgarjuna thinking, "Let this fellow go to sleep..." Nāgarjuna was staying in ruins outside the town where doors were missing, where walls had fallen -- and this thief was hiding behind a wall.

Nāgarjuna was watching -- "Somebody is following me. Obviously he cannot be following me to these ruins. He must be following for the begging bowl." Then he saw the thief hiding behind a wall. He threw the begging bowl outside the window and told

the man, "Take it. I will not force you to become a thief, I give it to you as a gift."

Do you see how the buddhas behave? "I will not force you to become a thief because that will be my crime, not your crime. I give it to you as a gift. Just take it and run away." The man could not run away, could not believe it. He was almost frozen. He had never seen such a man, who can throw a thing worth millions of rupees just as if it is nothing, and he is saving him from being a thief. He is giving it to him as he would give a friend a gift.

Something triggered in the thief's heart. He said, "Can I come inside and touch your feet and sit by your side just for a few minutes? I have never seen such a man like you."

Nāgarjuna said to him, "That was exactly the purpose of throwing the bowl, to bring you in. Come in, sit down."

He followed everything. He asked Nāgarjuna, "How could you manage to throw such a precious thing? I am a thief, to be honest. I cannot be dishonest to a man like you. And you have been so compassionate that you don't want me to be a thief, but that is my profession."

Nāgarjuna said, "There is no harm, you continue to be a thief. *Just remember one thing, that you are a buddha."

He said, "My god, I am a thief and you are telling me to remember that I am a buddha!"

Nāgarjuna said, "This is enough. You just try, and I am going to stay for two weeks. You can come anytime, day or night, to give me the result, what happens."

After the third day, he was there with the begging bowl, asking Nāgarjuna, "Please take it back; otherwise I will be murdered. Now the whole town knows that I have got it. I have been hiding it here and there but it can be protected only by a queen or a king."

Nāgarjuna said, "You leave it here, it is not important. What is important is, what happened to the discipline I had given to you?"

He said, "You have given me a tremendous discipline. I first thought, 'It is so easy just to remember that I am a buddha.' But you are very clever, because when I went to steal something, just the remembrance that 'I am a buddha' and I would get frozen, my hands would not move to take anything. For three days I have not stolen a single thing. This is unprecedented in my life. And I don't think that I will be able to steal again. This is a dangerous thing you have said to me, because the moment I find an opportunity to steal something, the remembrance that I am a buddha ... I simply relax, I escape -- it is not right for a buddha. I cannot let you down or let the buddha down."

Nāgarjuna said, "That is your problem. But take this begging bowl because

somebody will take it, and it does not matter who takes it."

He said, "Forget all about it. Just as you remember, I also remember: 'I am a Buddha'."

The very remembrance of who you are is going to transform your whole life. You cannot do anything against your innermost consciousness. You have been doing it because you have been unaware. The only secret is to achieve a recognition that inside you there is always a 'witnessing Self. The name of the witnessing Self is the Buddha. In every act, in every word, just remember your inner being -- its blissfulness, its silence, its grandeur, its eternity - and you cannot be the same man.

This is called the transmission of the lamp. It happens in the intimacy of the master and the disciple. Nothing is said but something is understood.

The very energy of the master, the very presence simply penetrates you and awakens you, brings you out of your dreams and your sleep. That is the meaning of the word 'Buddha': one who is awake....

[We are reminded of a great Ancient scholar Sri Nagarjuna (150AD to 250AD).....who is considered the most influential Buddhist thinker after Gautama Buddha himself....!!!!!!]



Truth is for me the release of the mind
from all burdens of memory.
Truth is awareness, constant awareness of life
within and without you. – J Krishnamurti

- Philip Goldberg

Almost every weekend, my wife and I hike on a well-maintained trail abutting Los Angeles. The hikers we come across are as diverse as the passengers on a New York subway. We see faces whose ancestry points to Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East. We hear accented English and sometimes Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, Hebrew, French, Italian, Russian and languages we can't identify. The trail attracts so many people of Iranian descent that we've taken to calling it the Persian Trail and learned to say "good morning" in Farsi.

I cherish the diversity; it's one of the great treasures of life in America. And it pains me that not everyone feels that way. Some people are bewildered by it and find it discomfiting. Some feel threatened by it. Some hold it in such contempt that they lash out against it, with angry words, vindictive legislative proposals and, tragically, violent rage.

As is distressingly evident in the news, the tension between those who value cultural, ethnic and religious pluralism and those to whom it represents an existential threat has surfaced in ugly ways throughout the world. It is, of course, a major factor in the U.S. election and in the UK's Brexit vote. It



also explains the disturbing rise of ethno-nationalist political parties in Europe. And it explodes with force in other parts of the world, where the forces of Us and Them clash with weapons, not just votes and words.

Some people not only find it easy to live among the Other, they feel enriched by the experience. Others, alas, are repulsed by the Other.

When they can't maintain their distance they may grudgingly tolerate the unwanted presence, but that tolerance might last only until they compete for the same job or date the wrong person. Same as it ever was-ever since Us and Them first contended for a water hole or a hunting ground or the favor of gods.

Sorting out what makes some people pluralists and others exclusivists may be one of the more important issues confronting us as a civilization. One obvious reason some celebrate diversity is exposure. I grew up in Brooklyn, long before that densely populated borough became a hipster nexus. Back then it was a symbol of what was called The Melting Pot, a place where immigrants and transplants of different origins mingled in schools, workplaces, restaurants, bars, buses, subways and ballparks. The progeny of the original settlers mingled even more intimately, and with ever-greater ease and

comfort. Many intermarried, mixing up the gene pool in new and beautiful ways. Ever since, I have been enriched and illuminated by my exposure to people from all parts of the globe and all of America's subcultures.

But, while familiarity breeds acceptance more often than contempt, it doesn't always. Even in the Brooklyn of my youth there were bigots and racists. Some of the whites who cheered for Jackie Robinson and abhorred the Jim Crow racism of the south would panic if a black family moved to their block. And many a Christian with close Jewish pals drew the line if their child or sibling fell in love with one-and vice versa. Subsequent generations had broader boundaries, and sometimes no boundaries, and that evolutionary tendency persists. It is reason for optimism. Still, our species will not advance as rapidly as it needs to unless we can speed that process up.

One hopeful sign is the emergence of disciplines with names like intercultural competence and cultural proficiency. I've learned a lot about this from friends who train people to become more aware and more skillful in settings marked by diversity. Kikanza Nuri Robins, coauthor of *Fish Out of Water* and founder The Robins Group, says cultural proficiency "provides healthy and compassionate responses to differences in race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability." Tom Morgan, the Principal Consultant at Morgan Intercultural, helps clients develop "the skills, awareness and knowledge to be able to read culturally diverse situations accurately-and to exhibit culturally appropriate behavior in many contexts."

He says that research shows there are discrete levels of intercultural competence,

and at the lower levels we find fear, anger and conflict. "At the 'defense polarization' stage," Morgan says, "people see cultures that are different from 'ours' as being a threat to 'our' way of life." That feeling of being under siege gives rise to protective measures ranging from walls to warfare. Perhaps the methods used to improve cultural proficiency in business and education can help everyone achieve understanding, openness, empathy and respect for the Other. What could be more useful at a time when avoiding "Them" is less and less possible and hostility is more and more dangerous?

Ultimately, pluralism and diversity are not just social issues but spiritual ones. I don't just mean the obvious fact that some religious teachings promote exclusivism and exacerbate enmity toward the Other, while others embrace inclusivity and erase barriers. I also refer to the deeper, more subtle issue of individual spiritual consciousness. The key word here is identity. Deep spiritual practices expand the locus of one's identity, moving us over time from seeing our limited, individuated persons as the center of the universe-what scholars call an egocentric identity-to ever-widening circles. Eventually, we don't just understand we are linked to all other sentient beings, we sense it, feel it, know it at the depth of our souls. That's when the Other becomes not a threat, or a nuisance we're forced to put up with, but as part of ourselves and therefore worthy of concern and empathy.







That progressive broadening of one's kinship circle is not just a noble aspiration. It breaks down barriers and raises our capacity to give and receive love. We need to cultivate it, both for ourselves and the future of humanity.

Source: <https://spiritualityhealth.com/blogs/spirit-matters/2016/11/01/philip-goldberg-us-and-them-eternal-division-we-have-transcend>
(Philip Goldberg is the author of American Veda and numerous other books; a public speaker and workshop leader; a spiritual counselor, meditation teacher and ordained Interfaith Minister.

He is the co-host of the podcast Spirit Matters: Conversations on Contemporary Spirituality. He lives in Los Angeles.)



This...

<p>When Life Knocks You Down</p> 	<p>Get Up</p> 	<p>And Turn Back To God</p> 
 <p>When Life Puts You In Higher Position</p>	<p>Kneel Down</p> 	<p>And Turn Back To God</p> 



- Compiled by Ratna Vishwanath

INTRODUCTION

A *dargāh* is a shrine built over the grave of a revered religious figure, often a Sufi saint or a dervish.

'*dargāh*' is a core concept in Islamic Sufism and holds great importance for the followers of Sufi saints. Many Muslims believe that wishes are fulfilled after they offer prayers or service at the *dargāh* of the saint they follow. The word '*dargāh*' is derived from a Persian word which literally means 'portal' or 'threshold'. Some Sufis and Muslims believe that *dargāh-s* are portals by which they can invoke the deceased saint's intercession and blessing. Others visit *dargāh-s* as a means of paying their respects to deceased pious individuals or to pray for perceived spiritual benefits.

A *dervish* is a member of a Muslim religious order noted for devotional exercises and one who may be guiding a Sufi Muslim ascetic on a spiritual path. *Dervish-es* are known for their poverty and austerity.

Nagore *dargāh* is a spiritual and sacred shrine in South India. It is located in Nagore, a coastal town in the district of Nagapattinam in the state of Tamil Nadu.

It is built over the tomb of Meera Shahib Abdul Qadir Hajrath Shahul Hamid Badshah. He was a spiritual leader and lived during 1490–1579 CE. He was fondly called *Mian Sahib* or *Meeran Sahib*. The *dargāh* is a major pilgrimage centre that attracts pilgrims belonging to both Islam and Hinduism, symbolizing peaceful coexistence between the two religions. The Nagore *dargāh* is

sometimes referred to as the Mecca of South India.

ABOUT THE SAINT

Mian sahib was born in Manikpur of *Ayodyāpuri* in Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh. He was a 13th generation descendant of the renowned Sufi saint, Hazrath Muhiyudin Abd al-Qadir al-Jalani. At the age of 5, he qualified as *Hafiz al Quran*. He was a great scholar in Arabic and Persian. He went to Gwalior at the age of 18 for his Islamic education, to be the disciple of Syed Mohammed Houdu Sathari, a preacher and social reformer. Mian Sahib followed in the footsteps of his teacher and taught many youngsters about Islam and took them to the Ajmer Dargah and then to Mecca and Medina and performed Hajj. He then moved to Maldives, Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu with his spiritual team. Thereafter, he began his Islamic Tabligh (propagating the faith). He is believed to have arrived in Nagore during 1533–34.

He is believed to have led a simple and pious life, performing a lot of miracles, giving him the name *Nagore Āndavar* (meaning 'God of Nagore'). His popularity grew outside the Tanjore region during the period. He was also called by various other names such as Meera Saheb, Qadir Wali and Ganj-e-Sawai.

HISTORY OF THE DARGĀH

Achyutappa Nayak was the king of Thanjavur during early 16th century. Shahul Hamid is believed to have cured the king of his physical affliction caused by sorcery.

Shahul Hamid found a needled pigeon in the palace. He removed the pins from the pigeon, resulting in improvement in the king's health. In remembrance of the event, the practice of setting pigeons free in the premises of the *dargāh* is continued by worshippers in modern times.

As a gesture of his gratitude, the king donated 200 acres of land to the entourage of Shahul Hamid. The *dargāh* was built on a part of this land.

Shahul Hamid is believed to have predicted his own death and advised his adopted son Yusuf about his burial location and the rites to be performed after his death. Yusuf performed the rites as per the instructions and decided to stay there for the rest of his life. A mausoleum was constructed over the grave. Devotees of Shahul, who continued to believe in his powers after his death, venerated the site of the burial. The shrine was initially a smaller one and gradually gained prominence.

Nagore *dargāh*, as it stands now, is believed to have been built by ardent devotees of Shahul Hamid, with a major contribution from Hindus.

The Marāthā king Pratāp Singh and his descendants were patrons to the *dargāh*.

It is believed that a carpenter who was cured of his disease by the miracle of Mian Sahib, presented him a pair of sandals made from the finest wood. The same was used by Mian Sahib and it is said to be kept in a Golden Box next to the tomb. As a mark of respect, devotees venerate the sandals of the saint.

During the last quarter of the 18th century, when there was conflict among European powers, the Nawab of Arcot, the Maratha kings and Tipu Sultan of Mysore

over Thanjavur region, the *dargāh* was considered strategically important by all of them.

ARCHITECTURE

The Nagore *dargāh* covers an area of 5 acres, enclosed by a compound wall.

The main complex has four entrances in each direction. There are five minarets with different heights. The tallest one (called 'Periya Mināra' locally) with a height of 131 ft. was erected around 1760 A.D. during the 195th death anniversary of Shahul. The Maratha king Pratap Singh prayed at the dargah for a son. He built the minaret as an offering after his prayer was answered.

The other four minarets are 77 ft tall *Sahib Mināra*, 93.5 ft tall *Thalaimattu Mināra*, 93.25 ft tall *Muthubaq Mināra* and 80 ft tall *Ottu Mināra*, each constructed in four cardinal points around the dome.

The gold-plated dome is located on the west face outside the main entrance over the tombs of Shahul, his son Yusuf and his daughter-in-law Saeeda Sultana Biwi.

The central part of the *dargāh* is the tomb of the saint Shahul Hamid, which is approached through seven thresholds. Four of these doorways are made of silver and the remaining three, of gold. The other tombs in the shrines are the ones for Shahul's grandson Hassan Alaihis Salam and Abdel Khader Gilani, each located in different chambers.

The adjoining portion of the complex is called *Peer Mandap*; it is the Peer (Trustee)'s place of fasting during the annual festival. A mosque is located next to the *Peer Mandap*, where daily prayers are offered.

Shifa Gunta is a holy tank with stepped sides, located within the precincts of the *dargāh*.

As per local legend, Shahul Hamid is believed to have brought an iron chain with him to Nagore to bind himself during severe austerities. The distinctive chain is identified as the one hanging from the ceiling above the tomb of Yusuf, his adopted son.

There are two shrines associated with the Nagore *dargāh*. These are located outside the main complex. The Vanjur shrine is an underground cave located 2 km north of the main complex; Shahul is believed to have meditated here for 40 days. The Silladi shrine is located 1 km towards the east of the main complex, facing the Bay of Bengal; Shahul is believed to have offered daily prayers here.

There are similar shrines built in Shahul Hamid's honour in Penang (Malaysia) and Singapore. The Singapore *dargah*, built during 1827, has been declared a national monument. These shrines are influenced by the architectural style of Nagore *dargāh*.

FESTIVALS

The most prominent event celebrated at Nagore *dargāh* is the Kanduri festival, a fourteen-day commemoration of the death anniversary of Shahul Hamid. The festival is also called *Qadir Wali Ke Fande* festival.

The word *kanduri* is derived from the Persian word for table-cloth.

The festival is seen as a sacred exchange between Hindus and Muslims, expressing solidarity of faiths in the region. Pilgrims from both the religions from the state and also from Sri Lanka, Burma and Gulf countries, attend the festival.

WORSHIP, RITUALS & ADMINISTRATION

Thousands of pilgrims throng this *dargāh* every day with the belief that Mian Sahib still blesses and cures all ailments

including mental illnesses.

Nagore *dargāh* is a common place of worship for devotees of various religious faiths. It is observed that about 50–75 per cent of the pilgrims visiting the *dargāh* everyday are Hindus. The practice of applying sandalwood paste, offering sweetmeats and food, the way of conducting worship, distribution of holy water and Prasad and playing of musical instruments like *nādaswaram* (a type of pipe instrument commonly used in Tamil Nadu) are atypical of Hindu tradition.

Other practices include offering flags and lighting lamps of ghee at the saint's tomb. Devotees shave their heads near the tank and offer tin or silver-plated facsimiles of body parts, houses, sailboats, etc., matching their material needs.

Pilgrims take a holy dip in the *Shifa Gunta*. The tank is considered sacred and it is believed that taking a dip in it cures physical ailments. *Nakaiyanthathi*, a Tamil devotional poem, mentions the tank as "a haven of sweetness and comfort, bedecked with the auspicious lotus". Indeed, Shahul Hamid and the *dargāh* are revered in Tamil religious literature across different centuries.

Since Shahul Hamid was a celibate, he is offered a *Sehra* (head dress), and not the customary flowers as at other *dargāh-s*.

As per a local legend, Shahul was approached by a childless couple; he declared to them that they would be blessed with children but that the first offspring would be presented to him for adoption. To this day, many childless couples worship in the *dargah* to be blessed with offspring.

While the *dargāh* is open throughout the day, the doors of the shrines are open only during early morning and evening.

People also come to pray at a mosque located in the *dargāh* complex. Friday Prayer or Juma Prayer attracts thousands of devout Muslims, especially for the prayer at noon.

The hereditary *Khalifa* (Sufi saint), selected from among the descendants of saint Yusuf, performs all the official and religious duties at the *dargāh*.

The administration and maintenance of the *dargāh* is governed by a committee which operates under a scheme decreed by the Madras High Court.

There are three other prominent mosques in the vicinity; one near Nagai Pudhur Road, one near the new bus stand, and another at Moolakadai Street.

NEARBY PLACES OF INTEREST

Nagore Beach, located on the shore of the Bay of Bengal, is a prominent tourist attraction. It is at 5 minutes' walking distance from the *dargāh*.

HOW TO GET THERE

The nearest airport is Trichy which is approximately 150 km. from Nagore.

The nearest railway station is Nagapattinam, which is just 4 km from the *dargāh*.

There are regular buses to Nagore from all neighbouring cities and towns and also from Chennai. Taxis are also available.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagore_Dargah
www.tamilnadutourism.org
nagoreshrine.weebly.com/history.html



- Compiled by Vijayālakshmi Menon

The tradition of Rishis

India has become a beacon to the world as a result of the great work done by our Rishis. They led a life of great renunciation and deep meditation, trying to unravel the mysteries of life and trying to find solutions to the human problems. Kings and emperors went to them seeking solutions to their problems. The Vedas were revealed to them in a state of tranquility or in a state of Samādhi. On the basis of the truths revealed to them, they showed the world how to live according to dharma (righteousness). There were many such great sages and one of the foremost among them was Brahmarishi Vishwāmitra.

Birth of a Kshatriya with Brahmin qualities

Sage Vishwāmitra's story is narrated partly in Bālakānda of Vālmiki Rāmāyana and partly in Mahābhārata. By the power of Brahmā, a great King by the name of Kusha was born. Vaidarbhi was his wife. They had four sons named Kushamba, Kushanabha, Adhūrtharajasa and Vāsu. Kushamba did not have any children for a long time and therefore performed Putrakāmeshti Yāga. In course of time he had a son whom he named as Gādhi. According to Vishnu Purāna, Gādhi had a daughter named Satyavati. She was married to an old Brahmin named Ruhika who was foremost amongst the race of Bhrigu, having all the qualities of a Brahmin. They desired a son. So one day he told Satyavati to ask whatever she desired knowing that she was craving for a son.

Satyavati did not ask for anything so he just said "so be it" (*thathāstu*) and gave Satyavati a sacrificial offering (*charu*) which he had prepared to achieve his objective. He gave Satyavati's mother too some other '*charu*' so that she too could conceive a son with all the characteristics of a Kshatriya at her request. Now Satyavati wondered whether the *charu* given to her by her husband was better than what was given to her mother. So she decided to give her mother the *charu* given to her and ate the *charu* given to her mother. Thus Satyavati's mother gave birth to Vishwāmitra, son of a Kshatriya Gādhi but with the qualities of a Brahmin while Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni (father of Parashurama) a Brahmin but with qualities of a kshatriya. As a child, Vishwāmitra was given the name Vishvarata by his mother and as he was Gādhi's son, he was also called Gādheya. Since he was born in the Kaushika clan he came to be called as Kaushika and later on as Vishwāmitra.

Encounter with Sage Vasishtha

Vishvarata, belonged to a dynasty of enlightened kings and ruled his kingdom well as per his Dharma. He had several wives and nine sons. One day, he set out with his army on an expedition. The campaign ended successfully and it was while returning to his kingdom that he happened to pass through a forest where he felt a sudden calmness descending on him. Looking around, he saw all the animals of the forest living in harmony and there was as a general sense of happiness and wellbeing around. On

enquiring, he was told that all this was because of the nearby hermitage of a sage named Vasishtha. He decided to visit this Sage and pay his respects. The sage welcomed him, made him comfortable and insisted that he should have food before leaving. The king agreed but wondered how a poor sage living in a hermitage will be able to feed him and his large army. But Sage Vasishtha was not worried. In his hermitage, he had a cow named Nandini, daughter of Kāmadhenu, the divine cow, who could fulfill all the wishes of the sage. As it was his duty to feed the king and his army, he approached Nandini with this request. In minutes, Nandini produced all the articles of food required, to their fill. Seeing this, the king was amazed! He wondered how a sage could have managed all this and questioned the sage. Sage Vasishtha, in all honesty, told him the truth. Being a king, Visvarata believed that such rare and worthy things rightly belonged to him. Only he had the right to own her. He promised Vasishtha that in return for Nandini he would give the king Vasishtha hundreds of cows. But Vasishtha was not ready to oblige the king. So the king made him a bigger offer by saying that besides the cows, he would also give him anything he asked for. But Vasishtha would not budge. Now Vishvarata's anger knew no bounds. He ordered his soldiers to forcibly take the cow to his palace. Nandini ran to Vasishtha and begged him to let her stay and to please protect her. When Vasishtha told her that he was helpless against the mighty king and that she will have to free herself by her own efforts, she decided to teach the king a lesson. She produced thousands of well-armed soldiers who destroyed the King's army. To save his life, the king ran away to his kingdom. Though he was not bodily

harmed, his wounded heart could not be healed. So he sent his sons to wage war against the sage but they were burnt in the fire created by the sage. Viswarata was grief stricken. He understood that all this was happening because of Vasishtha's power of *tapas*. So he also decided to do severe *tapas* and get divine powers and weapons from the gods and destroy Vasishtha. He entrusted his kingdom to his sons and left for the mountains to do penance.

Severe penance

Thousands of years went by. Lord Shiva felt pity and appeared before him and told Vishvarata to ask for a boon. Without hesitation, he asked for all the powerful weapons to destroy Vasishtha and Shiva did not disappoint him. Now armed with all this weaponry, he rushed to Vasishtha's hermitage. On reaching the hermitage, he wrote on a bhurja leaf a message, warning Vasishtha that now he was back to destroy him. He stuck this bhurja leaf to his arrow and shot it towards the hermitage. The arrow landed on the feet of Vasishtha who was in deep meditation with his disciples. He opened his eyes, read the message but remained unperturbed, as he had all his *indriyās* and intellect under control. He told his disciples not to panic and stay calm. Seeing this, the king became desperate. He found that every weapon he used would come up to the sage's Yogānanda (also known as Brahmānanda - a small staff of sacred wood, always kept by a Rishi to protect himself) which would swallow all the weapons of the King. Again the king was defeated. But he was not discouraged. He decided to go to the mountains to do severe penance again. This time he was determined to please Brahmā and become a Brahmarishi.

A heaven for Trishanku

Once upon a time, the land of Kosala was ruled by a king called Trishanku of Ikshwāku dynasty. He had a strange desire to reach heaven in his mortal body and enjoy the pleasures of heaven. Sage Vasishta was his family Guru. So he went to him with this strange request. Vasishta was shocked at what he heard. He told Trishanku that what he desired was impossible to attain. Trishanku was upset and set out to find another sage who could fulfill his wishes. On the way, he met the hundred sons of Sage Vasishta. He asked them for help but they refused saying that they did not wish to do something which their father had refused to do and put their father to shame. Trishanku was livid. He left them in a huff to find someone else. Hearing this, the sons of the sage were so angry that they cursed him saying that from then onwards, he would become a ugly looking *chandāla*. Immediately Trishanku lost all his color and became dark as coal, his hair became rough and matted and his clothes became dirty and torn! He begged them to take back their curse but they did not relent. However, Trishanku did not lose hope. He was aware of the enmity between the sage Vasishta and King Vishvaratha. So he went straight to King Vishvaratha who was surprised to see the *chandāla*. As soon as the king heard of Trishanku's story, the old enmity towards Vasishta reappeared and he promised to help Trishanku. So he decided to send Trishanku to heaven by the power of his penance. As he reached heaven, Indra, the Lord of Heaven was very upset and angry. He told Trishanku that there was no place for him in heaven as he had been cursed by his guru and was a *Chandāla*. Thus he was thrown out of heaven and came plummeting

down, crying for help. When Vishvarata heard his cries, he blamed Vasishta for having cursed the king. In great anger, he began creating an alternative heaven at the point where Trishanku was hanging in mid-air. To finalize the act Vishvarata created a new Saptarishi constellation and many solar constellations in the southern sky. Then he proceeded to make another Indra. Hearing this, the gods and goddesses shuddered in fear. They begged Vishvarata not to do all this for Trishanku who had been cursed. But he was not ready to break his word given to Trishanku and told the gods to let him live in the heaven he had created for him. The gods agreed but Vishvarata was not very happy when he realized that that all the powers he had gained through severe penance had depleted as a result of this act; hence he, once again, set out to do more severe penance.

Attainment of Brahmarshi status

Vishvarata continued his rigorous penance. During this period, he met a beautiful *apsarā* (a divine dancer) named Menakā. He forgot his *tapas*, prayers, worship and other activities and began to live with her. They had a daughter named Shakuntalā. It was then that he realized what a great mistake he had made by deviating from his life's mission of becoming a Brahmarshi. He left Menakā and his daughter and went away to start his *tapas* again. Menakā too went back to heaven and the child Shakuntalā was brought up in Sage Kanva's ashram. She grew up and married Dushyanta and the couple had a son called Bharata after whom our country is named.

After thousands of years, Brahma appeared again to Vishvarata and told him that he was pleased with the King's penance and that, from then onwards, he would be

addressed as Maharishi. Vishvarata was not happy as his goal was to be called Brahmarishi. So he intensified his *tapas*. Devendra tried to disturb him by asking another *apsarā* by the name of Rambhā to destroy his concentration. However, because of his great powers, he came to know about it and cursed her to become a stone. He then went deeper into meditation. Devendra and other gods now had no choice but to confer on him the title of Brahmarishi. And thus he came to be known as Brahmarishi Vishwamitra! But he was not satisfied. He wanted Vasishtha to acknowledge him as a Brahmarishi. The gods requested the sage to do so which he did. Vasishtha also said that the Vedas and *amkāra* will be Vishwamitra's, along with the *gayatri* through which he will be able to show the world the way to salvation and to reach a state of infinity.

Pivotal role in Rāmāyana

In Rāmāyana too, Sage Vishwāmitra had a great role to play. King Dasharatha of Ikshwāku dynasty had four sons namely Rāma, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna. Sage Vasishtha was their Guru. One day Sage Vishwāmitra came to visit Dasharatha. The king welcomed the sage and asked him the reason behind the visit. Vishwāmitra explained to the king that two *rākshasas* (demons), Mārīch and Subāhu

were obstructing his performance of sacrificial rites. They were wicked but very brave and according to a vow of the sacrifice, he could not get angry. So he wanted the King's eldest son Rāma to go with him to the forest to kill the *rākshasas* and protect the *yajna*. Hearing this, Dasaratha was worried as to how his young son could do this. Instead he offered his army, but Vishwāmitra insisted on taking Rāma with him. At this stage, Vasishtha advises the king that Vishwāmitra was the bravest of the brave and the wisest of the wise. He was a master of all arms and weapons. In fact, there was no one who had mastered all this more than him. He alone could have killed the *rākshasas* if it wasn't for the vow he has taken. At last, Dasharatha agreed and so Rāma, accompanied by Lakshmana, went with Sage Vishwāmitra to the forest. On the way, he initiated them into the use of several invincible weapons he had got from Lord Shiva.

In the end, Vishwāmitra attained the exalted position of being one of the seven sages (*saptarishis*) and even in this Vaivasvatha Manavanthara, he has been occupying that exalted position. He has become the guiding light to all righteous people by blessing them with the all-powerful *gāyatri* mantra.

jayatu, jayatu vishwāmitrah!!!



- Swāmi Chidānanda

Highly successful and much envied by many, she always harboured thoughts that bothered her no end: I did not take care of my father during his last days. I ignored the repeated requests by my second daughter to help her in her enterprise. She was famous outside but sad inside.

"I did not do the good thing that I should have done," is an error of omission. "I did the bad thing that I should not have done," is an error of commission.

Upanishads declare that knowledge is the ultimate medicine for this universal ailment of regrets of the nature of omission and commission.

It does not trouble her any more – a thought like, "Why did I not do virtuous acts?" or like, "Why did I do that sinful thing?" (See the mantra below.)

Yes, such is the leap in consciousness that Upanishads primarily teach.

Basis: Taittiriya Upanishad 2.9

*/ etam ha vāva na tapati,
kim-aham sādhu na akaravam,
kim aham pāpam akaravam iti |*

| एतं ह वाव न तपति - किम् अहं साधु न अकरवम्,
किम् अहं पापम् अकरवम् इति |



Corporate Soul

My house says to me, "Don't leave me, for here dwells your past."
And the road says to me, "Come and follow me, for I am your future."

And I say to both my house and the road,

"I have no past, nor have I a future.

If I stay here, there is a 'going in my staying'.

And if go, there is a 'staying in my going'.

Only love and death change all things".

- Kahlil Gibran



- Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
 With your bitter, twisted lies,
 You may trod me in the very dirt
 But still, like dust, I'll rise.
 Does my sassiness upset you?
 Why are you beset with gloom?
 'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
 Pumping in my living room.
 Just like moons and like suns,
 With the certainty of tides,
 Just like hopes springing high,
 Still I'll rise.
 Did you want to see me broken?
 Bowed head and lowered eyes?
 Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
 Weakened by my soulful cries?
 Does my haughtiness offend you?
 Don't you take it awful hard
 'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
 Diggin' in my own backyard.
 You may shoot me with your words,
 You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,
 But still, like air, I'll rise.
 Does my sexiness upset you?
 Does it come as a surprise
 That I dance like I've got diamonds
 At the meeting of my thighs?
 Out of the huts of history's shame
 I rise
 Up from a past that's rooted in pain
 I rise
 I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
 Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
 Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
 I rise
 Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
 I rise
 Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
 I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
 I rise
 I rise
 I rise.

Maya Angelou (1924-2014), "Still I Rise"
 from *And Still I Rise: A Book of Poems*.

Source: *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* (1994)



Never play with the feelings of others because you may win the game
 but the risk is that you will surely lose the person for a life time.

- Shakespeare

ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

SEE THE DIVINE IN EVERYBODY



त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि
त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।
त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन वञ्चसि
त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः ॥
श्वेताश्वतर-उपनिषत् 4.3

| tvam stree tvam pumānasi |
| tvam kumara uta vā kumāree |
| tvam jeerno dandena vanchasi |
| tvam jāto bhvasi vishwatomukhah |

Thou art the woman; thou art the man; thou art the youth and the maiden too. Thou art the old man who totters along, leaning on a staff. Thou art born with faces turned in all directions.

Shwetāshwatara Upanishad (mantra 4.3)

Swami Vivekananda roared, "If you cannot see God in the human face, how can you see him in the clouds, or in the images made of dull, dead matter, or in mere fictitious stories of our brain? I shall call you religious from the day you begin to see God in men and women.. Whatever comes to you is but the Lord, the Eternal, the Blessed One, appearing to us in various forms, as our father, and mother, and friend, and child – they are our own soul playing with us. (Complete Works 2:326)

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FOWAI FORUM

Wisdom for Right Action

Dissemination of spiritual and secular wisdom is the main objective of the Fowai Forum. Educational activities, human welfare and services to all life are its concerns. Insights and observations especially based on Indian culture and heritage will find expression in its activities.

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