

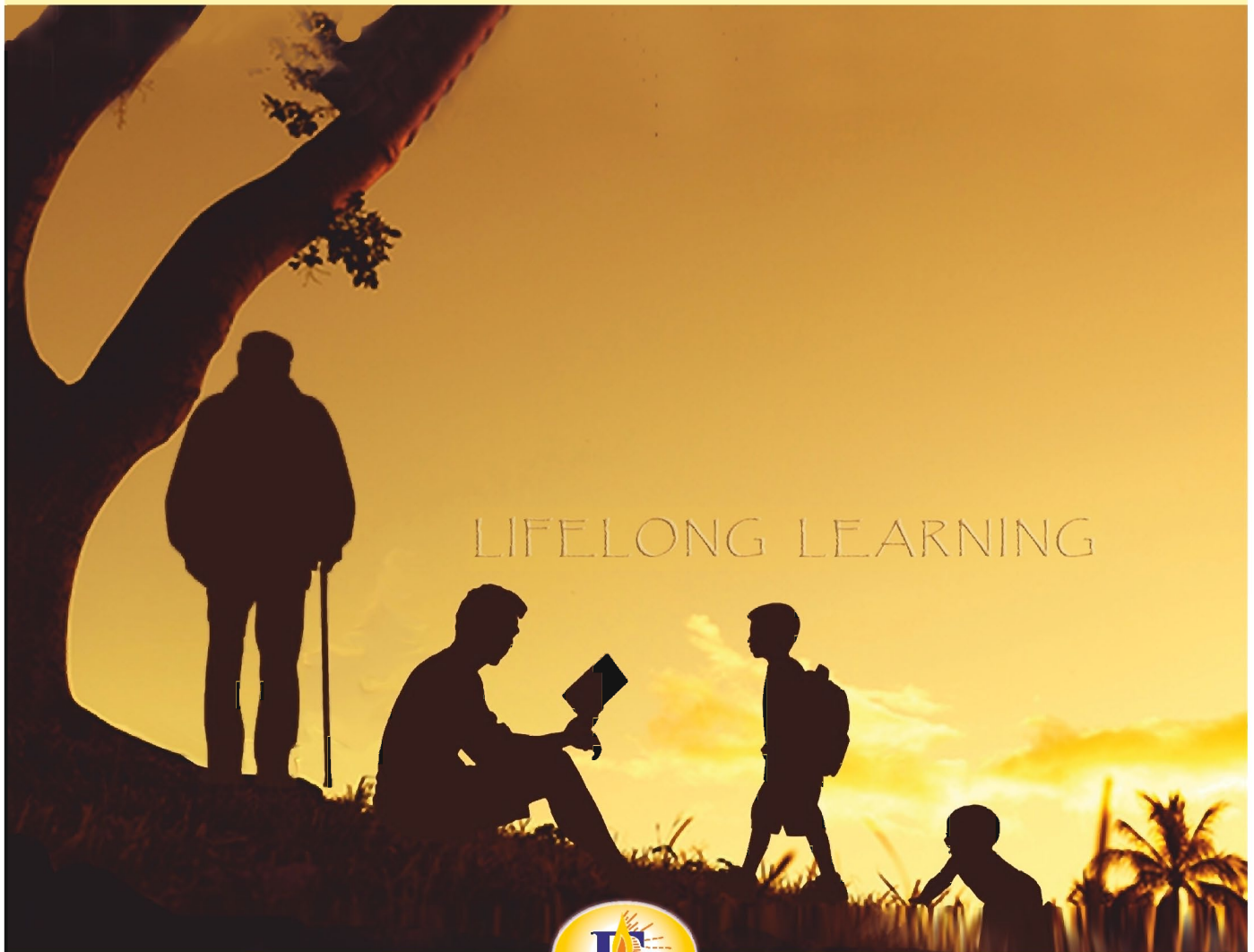
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Inner Flame

Volume IX

Issue 2

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The path of devotion is the most recommended path to the divine in this Kaliyuga as per many a master. The golden period for the path of 'bhakti' was between 15th and 16th century AD as per historians as many poet saints like Nanak, Meera, Kabir, Tukārām and Purandara Dāsa popularized this path with their music that captured the outpouring of the soul in total surrender. Chaitanya Mahāprabhu was one such saint whose path of intense devotion was laced with music, dance and love with an underlying thread of theistic dualism. You can read about his inspiring life in the informative piece featured in this issue.

In his article Swāmi Chidānanda has touched upon the aspects of a learning mind that is so essential for all of us to inculcate if we are to reach higher levels of consciousness.

Meditation is rightly hailed as the royal path for seekers who would like to recognize the ultimate truth directly. There is an insightful story on the practice of meditation from the modern perspective.

Mindfulness has gained great popularity in the modern world due to its usefulness in purposeful living. It can be considered as a stepping stone to increase the quality of meditation; and there is a useful article on how to cultivate the practice in daily life.

In the section 'Places that Beckon' we are taking you to Shravana-Belagola, the charming temple-town in Karnataka which is home to Asia's tallest monolithic statue of Bāhubali. The place is presently abuzz with celebrations associated with the Mahā Mastakābhisheka (ceremonial anointment of the statue).

In the series 'Rishis of India', we learn about Gautama Maharshi who had great powers and performed many great feats as per our epics.

There is also a beautiful poem written by Swāmi Vivekānanda that describes the path of a seeker as he traverses from the blameworthy self to the domain of blemishless 'no mind' where there is nobody left to blame.

Hope you will enjoy this bouquet of noble thoughts...

Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd.)
For The Chief Editor



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Editor

Swāmi Chidānanda

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(Written from New York, 16th May, 1895)

ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

O Lord Of Radiance, Lead Us On

The Right Path!

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani



Manifestation of the divine spirit

Just after sunset on the 23rd F a l g u n , corresponding to the 18th February 1486 A.D., a beautiful child was born. The moon was eclipsed at the time of birth and as per religious custom, the people of Nadia were engaged in bathing in the Bhagirathi with loud cheers of 'haribol'. The father Jagannath Misra, a poor pundit of the Vedic order and the mother Sachi Devi, an exemplary woman, were both descended from Brahmin stock originally residing in Sylhet. At the reading of the *janma patri* (birth chart) the maternal grandfather, Pandit Nilambar Chakravarti, a renowned astrologer of the times, foretold that in times to come, the child would be a great personality, much loved far and wide; and he therefore, gave him the name *Visvambhar* (Supreme Spirit). The neighbourhood ladies lovingly called him Visvambhar Gaur Hari on account of his golden complexion, and the mother called him Nimai on account of the Neem tree near which he was born. As an infant, even in his mother's arms, he wept continually; but when the sound 'haribol' fell within earshot, to everyone's astonishment, he would stop. Thus, there was the continual utterance of 'haribol' in the house, foreshadowing his future mission. As he grew, he was whimsically light-hearted, always playing pranks; he was quick to pick

up the Bengali language when he was admitted to a *pāthshālā* (school) after his fifth year. This beautiful child grew up to be famous, adored then and revered to this day not only in India but far and wide. He is Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, accepted by his followers as a Divine manifestation.

Early childhood and education

Like a much earlier incarnation of Vishnu, Nimai showed signs of his divinity very early. As a toddler, he insisted on eating clay when offered *mithāi* (sweets). When his mother protested, he stated that every sweet dish, in fact, all food, is nothing but mud transformed. But his pure intellect immediately understood and accepted his mother's explanation that every article, in a special state, was adapted to a special use: earth, in the state of a jug could be used as a water-pot but in the state of a brick this use was not possible; clay, therefore, in the form of sweetmeats was usable as food and not in its other states. On another occasion, a Brahmin pilgrim came as a guest to his home. There he cooked his own food and closed his eyes to offer the meal to Sri Krishna. When he opened his eyes, he was astonished to see the child Nimai eating the cooked rice. The third time this happened, the young lad showed himself as Krishna, the object of his worship. In another instance, on being kidnapped, he deluded the thieves into returning him, his stolen clothes and jewellery to his own house. And all this before he had completed his fifth year!

At eight, he started his studies in Ganganagar close to the village of Mayapur where, in two years, he became well read in Sanskrit grammar and rhetoric. Thereafter his education was of the nature of self-study (*swādhyāya*) after he found all the important books belonging to his father who was himself a Pandit. It is said that he read the *smṛiti* on his own and the *nyāya* in competition with his friends who were then studying under the celebrated Pandit Raghunath Siromani.

By the age of 10, Nimai had become a more-than-adequate scholar in Sanskrit grammar, rhetoric, the *smṛiti* and *nyāya*. Even at this tender age, he was considered one of the best scholars of Nadia, the renowned seat of *nyāya* philosophy and Sanskrit learning; in truth, many were actually afraid of confronting him in literary discussions.

Attending to worldly duties

In his desire to please God in whichever way he could, he took on the responsibility of taking care of his parents in the absence of his elder brother who had left home to enter *sannyāsa* looking upon this turn in his life as an offering to God. At the death of his father, his serene nature consoled his exceedingly sorrowful widowed mother. Even now, at the tender age of fourteen-fifteen, his strong leaning towards the Truth was very much in evidence. He then married Lakshmi Devi and went to the eastern part of Bengal to acquire wealth, earning a great deal even as he bore, with equanimity, the sorrow of losing his young wife to snakebite. He returned to Nadia and at the insistence of his widowed mother, he married Vishnupriya. Young as he was, he accepted the uncertainties of life, and embarked on honing his scriptural

understanding. He defeated a well-known learned man, thus becoming the most important Pandit of his times. He was barely seventeen years of age when he was given initiation by a *vaishnava sannyāsi* at Gayā. He was henceforth called Krishna Chaitanya.

Ascent to greatness

It was after his return to Nadia that Chaitanya's strong religious leanings surprised not only those to whom he preached but also Advaitins of that time, Advaitins who had accepted the Vaishnava faith even before Chaitanya was born. They were astonished to see the change in the young man: he was no more a contending *naiyāyika*, a wrangling *smārta* and a criticising rhetorician he truly swooned at the name of Krishna and behaved as an inspired man under the influence of his religious sentiment. It has been described by Murari Gupta, an eye witness, that he showed his heavenly powers in the house of Srivas Pandit in the presence of hundreds of his followers who were mostly well-read scholars. He opened a nocturnal school of Kirtan in the compound of Srivas Pandit's home; there he preached, sang, danced and expressed all sorts of religious feelings. Nityānanda Prabhu who was then a preacher of Vaishnavism and who had then completed his travels all over India joined Him by that time. In fact, a host of Pandit preachers of Vaishnavism, all sincere at heart, came from different parts of Bengal to join him. Nadia now became the regular seat of a host of Vaishnava Ācharya-s whose mission it was to spiritualize mankind with the highest influence of Vaishnavism as expressed by Madhvāchārya.

Among those who first accepted Pandit

Nimai as Chaitanya Mahāprabhu were his two friends, Nityananda and Haridas; they were given the title 'Prabhu'. The first mandate that he issued to Prabhu Nityananda and Haridas was: "Go friends, go preaching through the streets of the town, meet every man at his door and ask him to sing the name of *hari* and lead a holy life and you then come and report to me every evening the result of your preaching." Thus ordered, the two preachers went to meet Jagai and Madhai, the two most abominable characters. The duo insulted the preachers on hearing Chaitanya's mandate but were soon converted by the influence of devotion (*bhakti*) inculcated by Mahāprabhu. The people of Nadia were surprised but accepted the Nadia Pandit not only as a gigantic genius but as a true Missionary from God Almighty.

Miracles galore

From this time to his 23rd year, Mahāprabhu preached his principles not only in Nadia but in all the important towns and villages around the city. He had many devotees in whose homes he showed miracles, taught the esoteric principles of Bhakti and sang his *sankirtana* with them. His Nadia followers commenced singing the holy name of *hari* in the streets and bazars. The *sankirtana* in the streets created a mixed sensation rousing different feelings in different quarters particularly with the jealous *smārta* Brahmins who complained to Chand Kazi (judge) against the character of Chaitanya as un-Hindu. The Kazi came to Srivas Pandit's house and broke a Mridanga (a drum also called *khol*) declaring that unless Chaitanya would cease to make noise about his queer religion, he would be obliged to enforce Mohammedanism on him and his followers.

Mahāprabhu then ordered the town people to appear in the evening, each with a torch in his hand, which they did. He and the *sankirtana* groups marched to the Kazi's house where Mahāprabhu held a long conversation with the Judge. At the end of the dialogue, he communicated into the Kazi's heart his own Vaishnava influence by touching the Kazi's body. The weeping Kazi admitted that he had experienced a keen spiritual impact which had cleared up his doubts and produced in him a religious sentiment which gave him the highest ecstasy. He then joined the *sankirtana* party. Thereafter, astonished at the spiritual power of the Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, hundreds of heretics converted and joined the banner of *Visvambhar*.

Moving to Puri

He was 24 years of age when he resolved that for his mission to meet with complete success, he had to leave not only Nadia but also his family. This decision was reinforced after some jealous Brahmins picked a quarrel with him and collected a party to oppose him. Declaring that party feelings and sectarianism were the two great enemies of progress, he took on universal citizenship by cutting his connections with family, caste and creed, his strong principles combined with his naturally soft heart sustaining him when confronted with his bitterly weeping wife and his mother. The world was now his unlimited home for the spiritual worship of Krishna, with mankind as his family. He met his mother at the house of Sri Advaita Prabhu in Santipur, which he had been induced to visit. Both pleasure and pain invaded her heart when she saw her son in the attire of a *sannyāsi*. As a *sannyāsi*, Sri Krishna Chaitanya was wearing nothing but a *kaupin* (loin cloth) and *bahirvāsa* (an outer

covering). His head was without hair and his hands bore a *danda* (stick) and a *kamandalu* (hermit's water pot). The holy son fell at the feet of his beloved mother and said, "Mother! This body is yours and I must obey your orders. Permit me to go to Vrindāvan for my spiritual attainments". The Mother, in consultation with Sri Advaita and others, asked her son to reside in Puri (town of Lord Jagannath) so that she might obtain some information about him now and then. Mahāprabhu agreed to that proposition and in a few days, left Santipur for Orissa. Walking or taking a boat where necessary, he visited many places before arriving at Puri, where he was overwhelmed when he saw Lord Jagannath in the temple. (Biographers have described the journey of Sri Krishna Chaitanya from Santipur to Puri in great detail.)

Propagation of the Vaishnava faith

In Puri, he was introduced to and stayed at the home of Sarvabhauma, a very well read, erudite scholar in the Vedānta philosophy of the school of Sankaracharya. Born in Vidyanagar, Sarvabhauma had been a well-established teacher to innumerable students of *nyāya* before he moved to Puri. He was astonished at Mahāprabhu's personal beauty, and feared that it would be difficult for the young man to maintain *sannyāsa-dharma* during the long run of his life. He had a long, perhaps hot discussion with Gopinath who had a great reverence for Mahāprabhu and who insisted that the *sannyāsi* was not a common human being. To be satisfied with Gopinath's conclusion, Sarvabhauma requested Mahāprabhu to hear his recitation of the Vedānta Sutra-s to which the latter tacitly submitted. Sri Chaitanya heard with silence what the great Sarvabhauma uttered with gravity, for seven

days, at the end of which the latter said, "Krishna Chaitanya! I think you do not understand the Vedānta, as you do not say anything after hearing my recitations and explanations." Sri Chaitanya said that he understood the Sutra-s very well, but he could not make out what Sankaracharya meant by his commentaries. On being questioned further by an astonished Sarvabhauma, Mahāprabhu explained all the Sutras in His own way without touching the Pantheistic commentary of Sankara. The keen understanding of Sarvabhauma saw the truth, beauty and harmony of arguments in the explanations given by Sri Chaitanya which made him admit that it was the first time that he found one who could explain the Brahma-Sutras in such a simple manner. He then submitted himself as an advocate and follower. Reports of this spread and the whole of Orissa sang the praise of Krishna Chaitanya; hundreds came to him and became his followers.

On a subsequent tour of South India, he performed many miracles even as he had a philosophical conversation with the Governor of Vidyanagar on *prema bhakti*. He preached Vaishnavism and *nāma sankirtana* throughout the journey, spending the four months of the rainy season at Rangakshetra. It was here that he converted the family of young 10-year-old Gopal, who later became one of six Gosvamins or Prophets serving under their leader, Sri Krishna Chaitanya. Trained in Sanskrit, Gopal wrote several books on Vaishnavism. Sri Chaitanya visited numerous places in Southern India as far as Cape Comorin, returning to Puri in two years via Pandharpura on the Bhimā. At Pandharpura, he spiritualized one Tukāram who became from that time a religious

preacher himself. (This fact has been admitted in his Abhangas which have been collected in a volume by Mr. Satyendranath Tagore of the Bombay Civil Service.) He also had discussions with the Buddhists, the Jains and the Māyāvādīs in several places, and converted his opponents to Vaishnavism. He was all of 27 years of age.

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's devotion inspired and fascinated men of other faiths also. On his many travels to and from Vrindāvan, he converted a large number of Mohammedans not by the scriptures of Vaishnavism but by scientifically arguing the teachings from the Koran itself. (The descendants of those converts are still known as Pathān Vaishnavas). Among his followers he had royalty as well: Rājā Pratāparudra was one of them. Two descendants from the line of Karnatik Brahmins, knowledgeable in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, Rupa and Sanatan had lost their moorings while employed and loved by Hussain Shah, the then Emperor of Gaud. Even their names had been changed to Dabir Khas and Sakar Mallik. The two could find no way to come back as regular Hindus, and had written to Mahāprabhu for spiritual help, which he readily gave, ordering them to leave the service and proceed to Vrindāvan. Later, both took instructions from Mahāprabhu, taking on names like Rupa Gosvāmi and Sanātan Gosvāmi; the details of the teachings, still available today, were gathered from the brothers themselves and collated in an invaluable work, Sat-Sandarbha.

It was not just householders who succumbed to the love exhibited by Mahāprabhu. Eminent *sannyāsis* of the time, headed by their most learned leader

Prakāshānanda Sarasvati, after a short controversy, yielded to Mahāprabhu and admitted that they had been misled by the earlier commentaries on Vedānta. He touched the hearts of many doggedly learned scholars and made them weep for their spiritual improvement, falling at his feet and asking for his grace. Sri Chaitanya then preached pure *bhakti* and instilled into their hearts spiritual love for Krishna which obliged them to give up sectarian feelings, making practically the whole of Benares to Vaishnavas, all joining the Master in *sankirtana*. It is reported that so deep was his love for Krishna that even in the jungles that he travelled through with his comrade Balabhadra, tigers and elephants danced on hearing the name of Krishna.

For the next 18 years till his disappearance when he was 48, Chaitanya Mahāprabhu lived in Puri in the house of Kasi Misra. During this time, his life was one of steady love and piety. He was surrounded by numerous followers, all of whom were of the highest order of the Vaishnavas and distinguished from the common people by their pure character and learning, firm religious principles and spiritual love in Rādhā-Krishna. His sentiments carried him far into the firmament of spirituality, day and night, and all his admirers and followers watched him worshipfully. He sang and danced, took no care of himself and often times lost himself in religious beatitude. All who came to him looked upon him as the 'All Beautiful God', appearing in the nether world for the benefit of mankind. He loved his mother all along, was most amiable in nature, humility being personified in him. His sweet appearance gave cheer to all who came in contact with him.

He appointed a beloved disciple as the missionary in charge of Bengal and despatched six disciples (Gosvamins) to Vrindāvan to preach love in the Northern country, punishing all of his disciples who deviated from a holy life. He never lagged in giving proper instructions in life to those who solicited them defying caste distinction, promoting spiritual brotherhood.

Main teachings

His very life was the message that is now celebrated as Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's teachings, based as they are on the Srimad Bhāgavatam and the Bhagavad Gitā. His teachings are the most practical, the essence being the Universal Religion of Love. He advocated what the *shāstra-s* recommended for this Kali age, a common platform for realization, namely chanting the holy names of the Lord. People can hold meetings to glorify the Lord in their respective languages and with melodious songs, and when such performances are executed in an inoffensive, loving manner, it is certain that the participants will gradually attain spiritual perfection without having to undergo more rigorous methods. At such meetings, everyone - the learned and the foolish, the rich and the poor, the Hindus and the Muslims, the Englishmen and the Indians, the *chāndālas* and the *brāhmanas* - can hear the transcendental sounds and thus cleanse the dust of material association from the mirror of the heart. This, according to Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, is the method of instilling Universal Love of Mankind.

Despite having been initiated in the Madhvāchārya tradition and having taken

sannyāsa from Shankara's tradition, Chaitanya's philosophy is sometimes regarded as a tradition of his own within the Vaishnava framework – having some marked differences with the practices and the theology of other followers of Madhvāchārya. This 16th Century saint and social reformer, Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu was well known in [the now] Bangladesh and in India in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Manipur, Assam. Specifically, he is worshipped in the forms of Rādhā and Krishna and is popular through the chanting of the *hare krishna mahāmantra*. In the later verses of the Bhāgavata Purāna, it is accepted that he was prophesized to appear in Kali Yuga. His line of followers, known as Gaudiya Vaishnavas, (*Gaudiya* refers to the Gauda region in present-day Bangladesh) him as an *avatāra* of Krishna in the mood of Rādhārāni.

No amount of words can do justice to the innermost thoughts of Mahāprabhu except his own. He composed only one set of eight verses in Sanskrit called *shikshāshtakam* while the majority of his philosophy was codified by his primary disciples. Quoted within the Saint's Bengali biography called '*Chaitanya Charitāmrita* (by Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami), *Shikshashtakam* is accepted to be the essence of all the teachings of Mahāprabhu on Bhakti within the Gaudiya tradition/Chaitanya Vaishnavism. Overflowing with devotion and praise for the glory of Sri Krishna and *sankirtana*, the pathos of a devotee's anguish and resultant resolution clearly come through.

शिक्षाष्टकम्

चेतोदर्पणमार्जनं भव-महादावाग्नि-निर्वापणम्
श्रेयः-कैरवचन्द्रिकावितरणं विद्यावधू-जीवनम् ।
आनन्दाम्बुधिवर्धनं प्रतिपदं पूर्णामृतास्वादनम्
सर्वात्मस्नपनं परं विजयते श्रीकृष्ण-संकीर्तनम् ॥१॥

Let Sri Krishna *sankirtana* be ultimately victorious which cleanses dust off mind, extinguishes the formidable fire of repeated birth and death, is glorious rays of the moon, gives life to knowledge, increases the ocean of bliss, has every word sweet like nectar and makes everybody holy. 1

नाम्नामकारि बहुधा निज सर्व शक्तिस्तत्रार्पिता
नियमितः स्मरणे न कालः ।

एतादृशी तव कृपा भगवन्ममापि
दुर्दैवमीदृश - मिहाजनि नानुरागः ॥२॥

O Lord, you have filled your many names with all your power and which can be remembered any time. O God, you are so kind to do it but I am so unfortunate that I don't love your beautiful names. 2

तृणादपि सुनीचेन तरोरपि सहिष्णुना ।
अमानिना मानदेन कीर्तनीयः सदा हरिः ॥३॥

Assuming ourselves smaller than straw, being more tolerant than trees, devoid of pride and respecting others, we should always sing in the praise of Sri Hari. 3

न धनं न जनं न सुन्दरीं कवितां वा जगदीश कामये ।
मम जन्मनि जन्मनीश्वरे भवताद्भक्तिरहैतुकी त्वयि ॥४॥

O Lord of the universe, I do not desire money, followers, women or poems. O God, I wish to have causeless devotion for you in my all future births. 4

अयि नन्दतनुज किंकरं पतितं मां विषमे भवाम्बुधौ ।
कृपया तव पादपंकज -स्थितधूलिसदृशं विचिन्तय ॥५॥

O son of Nand, consider me as your eternal

servant, bound in this ocean of birth and death; please show your mercy accepting me as a dust-particle in your lotus feet. 5

नयनं गलदश्रुधारया गद्गदरुद्धया गिरा ।
पुलकैर्निवितं वपुः कदा तव वदनं नाम-ग्रहणे भविष्यति ॥६॥
O Lord, when will the tears of my eyes fill my face on taking your name, when will my voice choke up and when will the hair of my body stand erect on reciting your name? 6

युगायितं निमेषेण चक्षुषा प्रावृषायितम् ।
शून्यायितं जगत् सर्वं गोविन्द विरहेण मे ॥७॥

O Krishna, in your separation, a moment looks like ages. Tears are flowing from my eyes like torrents of rain and all this world seems meaningless. 7

आश्लिष्य वा पादरतां पिनष्टु मामदर्शनान्-
मर्महतां करोतु वा ।

यथा तथा वा विदधातु लम्पटो मत्प्राणनाथस्-
तु स एव नापरः ॥८॥

Whether He embraces me as a devotee of His feet or not, whether he appears before me or not, whether He accepts me as his own or not, the naughty Sri Krishna is my Lord and no one else. 8



Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's Sankirtana Movement

- Swāmi Chidānanda



“Be ever ready to learn, if need be, from even a child or a parrot,” goes an old saying¹. There is a need to continue learning in a number of outer fields and in our own inner realm too. Acquiring knowledge and

skills in order to earn a living, function efficiently and handle money, men and matters is an ongoing process in the life of every one of us. The learning that needs to take place in the ‘inner realm’ is about right attitudes, healthy outlooks and is, more importantly, about giving up bias and prejudice.

The tragedy of our university education is that it equips us mainly for getting ready to take up a career but does little to make us good human beings. Our society at any time is divided on various grounds. Every younger generation, at the time of growing up, begins to subscribe to one or the other sides among the warring groups. As a result, humanity remains divided. Man’s worst enemy thus becomes another man, and not animals or plants.

A learning mind, backed by true alertness, sees through the game and sheds its prejudice. It is ever ready to accept ‘what is right’ and abandon its insistence on ‘I should be right’ or ‘my way has got to be

accepted’. This pure mind thus gives up its insistence (*āgraha*) on self-interest. The wise used to say², “the sign of wisdom is non-insistence”.

The self obstructs learning

Self-interest is like a thorn in the flesh. Unless we remove it, it simply continues to pain us, at every step! “She / he alone attains peace who acts without egoism and attachment,” says³ Lord Krishna in the Geetā. We normally wonder, “How can we be happy unless we safeguard our self-interest?” The wise have shown a way out. When we learn to see our good as a part of the good of people, we gain true happiness though our focus was on serving others.

“Interested in the well-being of all forms of life,” is the expression⁴ that the Song Celestial uses, pointing to the highest state of consciousness, where the ‘learning mind’ takes us. It is not mere idealism but is a fact rooted in right seeing. Our happiness lies in seeing our intimate connection to all others. This is as true as saying fire is hot. As we move ahead spiritually, we shed numerous likes and dislikes, all of which are rooted in false seeing. To see fire as cold is ‘false imagination’ and to see it as hot is ‘right seeing’. Likewise, our perception that our own wealth, name and fame can bring to us happiness is erroneous; perceiving the joy of living in harmony is free of error.

“It is in giving that we receive,” observed Saint Francis of Assisi in his Universal Prayer. Spiritual wisdom consists in recognizing such hidden truths of life. Leigh

Hunt wrote in his poem *Abou Ben Adhem*

***Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:-
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?"-The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those
who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."
The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God
had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.***

Do we change at all

Life takes us through such frustrating times that we often wonder whether we change at all, through the entirety of our life! Everybody seems to be caught in their habits, in their nature. All are good in advising others but none seems to give up his attachments or aversions. Is divine grace alone capable of making us act differently than how we did all this time?

The picture is not so dark as it seems. The good news is that we get opportunity to change every moment. In the school of life, yet another test is offered to us whenever we fail in one. Mother Nature seems to be infinitely kind. She never gives up on us. Without worrying about whether we will be different in times to come, can we not act more wisely in the situation on hand? Can we not make a wiser choice in the 'small or big' occasion that presents itself in the present, without

being anxious about the endless future?

Change we must. On surface level, it is like training our senses, coaching our mind, cultivating new, good habits. These do make a difference though they may have their own limitations. Deep inside we may remain pretty much the same when we make some cosmetic changes in our thought, word and deed. On a deeper level, we can change by the magical touch of our own 'flame of steady awareness' that not only illumines the hidden corners of our consciousness but can burn away long-standing regrets or hard-to-forget bitter memories.

Learning and Negation

The idea that it is all about collecting new knowledge, which can make us better human beings, is not mature understanding of life. We rise to a higher level of maturity when we realize that it is through noticing false beliefs and, by seeing the false as false, negating such falsehood that we rise above selfish, indifferent ways. A dog was continuously biting a dry bone, imagining there would be some nourishment. In the process it was bleeding and the taste of its own blood made it falsely believe that something was after all coming from that dry bone. This illustration is given by wise people to convey the message that there is no true happiness in the outer world of pleasure, position, possession or power. All happiness comes from our own within.

If we get to see – with our own inner eye of wisdom – how we foolishly cling to our favourite (bad) habits or insensitively keep away from certain (truly near and dear) people, that seeing can liberate us from self-created traps. This seeing, far above introspection or self-analysis, is a unique ability in us. Most of us do not tap this

capacity, which lies dormant within us. By coming in contact with wise people, through some dialogues with them, by our contact with Nature and by our turning within in a spirit of exploration, we can surely awaken this faculty of alert watching.

A man was very much stressed as he stretched himself a lot, giving his wife company every weekend as she attended a whole lot of concerts in their city. He strongly felt that this was his way of being a good husband. One day however his wife said to him emphatically that she did not need his company to go and enjoy the concerts. Though she had told him this many times before, he saw it today only that 'what he was doing' was unnecessary! We too entertain many thoughts, speak many words and do many things, which are totally unnecessary! Do we see that? In seeing, there takes place negation. The unburdening renews us deeply. That is the operation of the learning mind.

Notes:

- 1 *yukti-yuktam vacho grāhyam bālād-api shukād-api,*
yukti-heenam vachas-tyājyam vridhādad-api shukād-api
(from Bhāgavatam perhaps)
(Meaning) That which is consistent with rational thinking ought to be accepted whether proceeding from a boy or even from a parrot, and that which is inconsistent with right thinking ought to be rejected even if emanating from an old man or from the great sage Shukadev himself.
[shuka means a parrot; it also is the name of a sage.]
- 2 *buddheh phalam tu anāgrahah.*
- 3 *nirmamo nirahankārah sa shāntim-adhigacchati 2.71*
- 4 *sarva-bhoota-hite ratāh – Geetā 12.4*



SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

Laughing faces do not mean that there is absence of sorrow!
But it means that they have the ability to deal with it.
- William Shakespeare

When you are in the light,
Everything follows you,
But when you enter into the dark,
Even your own shadow doesn't follow you.
- Hitler

One day, The Buddha is passing by a forest. It is a hot summer day and he is feeling very thirsty. He says to Ananda, his chief disciple, "Ananda, you go back. Just three, four miles back we passed a small stream of water. You bring a little water -- take my begging bowl. I am feeling very thirsty and tired." He had become old. Ananda goes back, but by the time he reaches the stream, a few bullock carts have just passed through the stream and they have made the whole stream muddy. Dead leaves which had settled into the bed have risen up; it is no longer possible to drink this water -- it is too dirty. He comes back empty-handed, and he says, "You will have to wait a little. I will go ahead. I have heard that just two, three miles ahead there is a big river. I will bring water from there." But The Buddha insists. He says, "You go back and bring water from the same stream." Ananda could not understand the insistence, but if the master says so, the disciple has to follow. Seeing the absurdity of it -- that again he will have to walk three, four miles, and he knows that water is not worth drinking -- he goes. When he is going, The Buddha says, "And don't come back if the water is still dirty. If it is dirty, you simply sit on the bank silently. Don't do anything, don't get into the stream. Sit on the bank silently and watch. Sooner or later the water will be clear again, and then you fill the bowl and come back."

Ananda goes there. The Buddha is right: the water is almost clear, the leaves have moved, the dust has settled. But it is not

absolutely clear yet, so he sits on the bank just watching the river flow by. Slowly and slowly, it becomes crystal-clear. Then he comes dancing. Then he understands why The Buddha was so insistent. There was a certain message in it for him, and he understood the message. Mud had settled down on its own.

Same is the nature of our mind also. Our thoughts are like mud which pollutes our consciousness. The moment we stop paying attention to thoughts, stop cooperating with them, stop analyzing thoughts, stop bothering with them, silence starts descending on us, and we regain our pure conscious state.

He gave the water to the Buddha, and he thanked the Buddha, touched his feet. The Buddha says, "What are you doing? I should thank you that you have brought water for me." Ananda says, "Now I can understand. First, I was angry; I didn't show it, but I was angry because it was absurd to go back. But now I understand the message. This is what I actually needed in this moment, sitting on the bank of that small stream, I became aware that the same is the case with my mind. If I jump into the stream I will make it dirty again. If I jump into the mind more noise is created, more problems start coming up, surfacing. Sitting by the side I learned the technique.

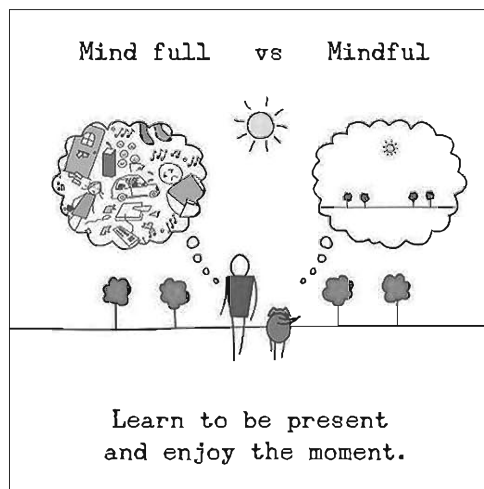
"Now I will be sitting by the side of my mind too, watching it with all its dirtiness and problems and old leaves and hurts and wounds, memories, desires. Unconcerned, I

will sit on the bank and wait for the moment when everything is clear." And it happens on its own accord, because the moment you sit on the bank of your mind you are no longer giving energy to it. This is real meditation. Meditation is the art of transcendence. And the Buddha says, "Now do the same with your mind. Don't be in a hurry, be patient. Just as the leaves have gone and the dust has settled, if you can sit silently inside doing nothing, the mind also settles, thoughts disappear, desires are gone, and the spring

of your consciousness becomes crystal clear. Ananda, just a little patience! Sit by the side of your mind and wait. No doing is needed. Sitting silently, doing nothing, is all."

That's what meditation is all about. So, even though it is difficult, go slowly, go slowly with it. Peace. It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

– [Source] [via Alex Greta Grace]



By Karson McGinley

You've heard the benefits of meditation, and maybe you have a devoted formal practice that gets you up before sunrise. But your ability to connect to the present moment needn't be limited to the time you are sitting on your zafu or meditation seat. When you soften your expectations of what mindfulness practices look like from the outside, you find that there are many ways you can dip into focused concentration and embodied awareness. Try implementing these habits into your daily routine and before long, mindfulness will become a way of life.

"Wherever you are, that is the entry point."

—Kabir, 15th century Indian poet

1. Listening Meditation

Start where you are. Take a moment while sitting at your desk, taking a break at work, or even eating in a restaurant while your tablemate is in the bathroom. Practise experiencing each sound as it happens, without trying to judge it, label it, or push it away. If you find yourself getting irritated by the sounds around you (e.g., *"I'm trying to write an article here; why won't that dog stop barking?"*), try using the sounds as a tool for mindfulness. Bind your consciousness to the sounds as an indication of what is happening during the exact moment you are in. Over time, your attitude toward the sounds around you will change from annoyances to opportunities for awareness.

2. Keep a Journal

Start your days or end your nights with an investigation into your thoughts and feelings. You may numb out on alcohol, drugs, television, or other distractions and miss the opportunity to uncover what your feelings are trying to actually tell you. Feelings do not just go away if left unacknowledged, so take a few minutes several times a week to work through what's going on with you on the inside. Bear witness to how the emotions shift as you shine the light of awareness on them; they always pass. Mindfulness in this way means giving your emotions the attention they deserve, the way you would to a friend or family member.

3. Eye Gazing

Gaze into the eyes of your baby, a pet, or a partner who's willing. Depending on who you share this experience with, you may find silent eye contact to be awkward at first, but consider the benefits of social connection and truly being seen. Sustained eye contact has the ability to remind you that you are not alone, that you are one with other beings, and are deeper than your external appearances. Eye contact with a baby or small child strengthens the bond you share. Locking eyes with your cat or dog taps you in to the inherent presence of animals in any situation (inspiring, indeed). And if you catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror, lingering

on the reflection of your own eyes can help you to experience self-compassion and self-love.

4. Object Meditation

Yes, this is a meditation that is often done during a formal practice, but how many other ways can you merge with the object of your concentration? Try sitting at your kitchen table and look at—really look at—the food on your plate. Notice the colors, the textures, and the arrangement on the plate. The idea is to concentrate on something that perhaps you never fully contemplate—a flickering candle, a small piece of artwork, or even your own hands. You don't have to stare at it for long, just a few seconds can bring you deeper into the moment you're in.

5. Be One with Nature

As you walk your dog, stroll to the end of your driveway to pick up the paper, or go for a run in your neighborhood, practice fully embracing the nature around you. The myriad types of trees, the colors of the flowers, the smell of the ocean, and the twinkling of the stars are all invitations to be one with the now. Take a few extra minutes here and there to really receive the healing vibrations of the earth, and you'll feel an inner settling that will bring you back to center.

6. Switch Up Your Routine

When you become complacent in your routines, it's easy to go on autopilot. If you notice yourself arriving to work without remembrance of the commute, take a different route going home and become a tourist in your own city. Want to slow down your eating habits and really savor your food? Try eating with your non-dominant

hand. Have you grown attached to the same spot in your group exercise or yoga class? Move to a different part of the room and get a fresh perspective. Simple acts that shake up your routine help you to experience the newness of your familiar activities, thereby calling for an increased sense of presence.

7. Drive in Silence

Speaking of your commute, try experiencing a quiet drive, practicing *mouna*, or sacred silence in the car. Give yourself time to decompress from your day, or allow yourself to be silent so you can take in the sights around you. When approached this way, your daily commute from here to there becomes a mindfulness act in and of itself; no time is wasted or taken for granted. If you find yourself mindlessly listening to the radio as background noise, switch it up by alternating your audiobooks, podcasts, and playlists with silent drives to slow things down and be alone with yourself.

8. Unplug from Technology

It may seem obvious, but it's worth mentioning that the simple act of disconnecting from your devices brings you right back to where you are. Anytime you are working on a computer, using a smart phone, watching TV, or checking social media, your attention is pulled outward, away from the moment you are in. In fact, most people feel nervous or flat out incapable of being alone with “nothing to do.”

When was the last time you sat in the waiting room at the doctor's office without distracting yourself with some form of entertainment? What about sitting in perfect awareness during an airplane flight or a train

ride? (Re)train yourself to be tech-free, at the very least for the first and last hour of the day. Better yet, unplug for an entire day every week or month. It can act like a reboot to your hard drive.

9. Create Pauses

Consider the pace of your life and work pauses into your daily rhythm. Before responding to a question, for example, pause and then answer. Before taking another bite of your meal, pause and really taste what is in your mouth. Recognize when things trigger you to become reactive, and challenge yourself to pause amidst the inner conflict. Perhaps it is when a certain person tells you what to do, when you feel judged, or when things feel rushed. Try taking a pause, a purposeful moment of recalibration, and check in with the moment you're in. A single breath in a moment of pause can create just enough space to notice your tendencies and make more mindful choices.

10. Connect to Your Senses

It only takes a moment, but connecting to your senses will help you make a memory more effectively than taking a picture. When you find yourself in a moment you want to remember (e.g., you child's first steps, a

beautiful hot air balloon floating through the sky, or your first in-person view of the Grand Canyon), take the time to drop in to each of your sensory experiences.

- What is the smell?
- What is the temperature
- What is the taste of the air?
- What are the sounds?
- What are the colors?
- What are the details of what you see?

When you take the time to really honor your experiences by paying attention to the details, you create mental snapshots that can last a lifetime.

Meditation is the natural state of being present with yourself. Meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn says that when you are fully absorbed in the present moment, paying attention to *purpose and* not having judgment, you are meditating. So, try widening your view of meditation and spread it throughout your day. Let go of what you think it should look like or how the circumstances could be better to meditate "perfectly." When you start paying more attention to what is, your view of the world will certainly change for the better.



SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

It is only when the mind is free from thought
that there is a perception of that which is,
of that which is eternal, which is truth.

- J.Krishnamurti(CW, Banaras, 1949)

- Compiled by Ratna Vishwanath

The story of Bāhubali

Rishabha Ādinātha was the first in the line of the 24 Jain *theerthankara*-s. When he embarked on his spiritual quest, Ādinātha bequeathed his capital city of Ayodhyā to his eldest son, Bharata and the city of Paudanapura to his younger son, Bāhubali.

Bharata, in his desire to don the mantle of the paramount emperor (*chakravarti*) of his age, ventured on an ambitious course of annexation.

Bāhubali refused to accept his elder brother's suzerainty. Wiser counsel of elder ministers averted a battle between the kingdoms, which would have led to bloodshed and a colossal loss of lives. Instead, Bharata and Bāhubali were to engage in a duel. This might have been the first instance of voluntary disarmament in human history. The duel involved three different types of contests *drshti yuddha* – a contest of staring at each other without closing the eyelids, *jala yuddha* – splashing water on each other till one person turns his face away and *malla yuddha* – a wrestling bout). Bāhubali was the victor in all three contests. As a last resort, Bharata unleashed his super weapon – the *chakra* or the divine wheel. To the amazement of the entire assemblage, the *chakra* circled Bāhubali and settled at his right side.

In this moment of supreme victory, Bāhubali was struck by the frailty of fortune and the hollowness of desires; he realised that anger, greed and pride could lead to such fraternal conflicts over mere worldly



possessions. Without hesitating even for a moment, he renounced his kingdom and all other worldly pleasures and

decided to take *sannyāsa*. In an act of unsurpassed renunciation, he abandoned everything but his soul.

He left the kingdom for meditation and for the purification of his soul. Observing the severest of austerities, he stood in meditation in *kayotsarga* pose for an entire year, forsaking food and water. Such was his penance that anthills grew at his feet and as sculpted in his statue, tendrils – *mādhava lathā* – twirled around his arms. Thus, he attained *kevala jnāna* – having perfect and complete knowledge about the universe. He was referred to as Kevali Arihantha. Bāhubali, the acme of manly perfection in physique had now sublimated into godhood. He is also called Sri Bahubali Swāmi or Gommateshwara Bhagawān (*Gommata* in Kannada, means 'huge').

The city of Shravana-belagola

Shravana-belagola is a historical temple-town and pilgrimage centre in the Hassan district of Karnataka in South India. Around 300 BCE Hassan was a part of the Mauryan empire. Sage Bhadrabāhu arrived from north India in the 3rd century BCE along with many ascetics marking the arrival of Jainism into Karnataka.

This small town of Shravana-belagola boasts of the largest number of *digambara* Jain temples as well as the largest number of rock-inscriptions in the country.

The town has been a prominent centre for Jain art, architecture, religion and culture for over 2,300 years. It is a town of ponds and temples. The name of this holy centre is derived from the pond called '*bili-gola*' (white pond) which lies between two hills namely, Indragiri (also known as Vindhyagiri) and Chandragiri.



'*Bili-gola*' or '*biliya-kola*' ('white pond' in Kannada) nestling between the two hills, became '*belagola*'. After *digambar* (naked) monks used this place, '*Shramana*'

or '*Shravana*' (meaning a Jain ascetic) was added to form Shravana-belagola. Apart from the two ponds on **Vindhyagiri** and three on **Chandragiri**, there are ponds or tanks in the vicinity of almost every monument. There are 7 temples in the town and more temples in Jinanathapura and its surrounding areas.

The tall magnificent monolithic statue of Gommateshwara Bhagawān Bāhubali is 57 feet in height and was completed in 12 years by Mahashilpi Arishtanemi. It was consecrated in 981 A.D. by Chavundaraya, the Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief in the Talakad Ganga Kingdom of the Western Ganga dynasty (350 - 999 CE). Chavundaraya was inspired by his mother Kalala Devi.

Gommateshwara towers over the surrounding countryside in his majestic stance and casts his gaze from a height of 57-feet in solitary serene splendor. This free-standing monolithic statue hewn out of granite crowns the



438-feet high present-day Indragiri and is the largest of its kind in the world. The joy and bliss attained by Bāhubali is manifested in the benign smile on the face of the colossal image consecrated by Chavundaraya.

Earlier, Indragiri, with 647 steps, was called '*Per-Kalbappu*' (Large-Kalbappu) or '*Dodda Betta*'. There are 7 types of monuments – eight small and large temples, four *mantap-s*, two ponds, five gateways or fortresses, three pillars, two arches and 172 inscriptions. These, in Kannada, Sanskrit, Marvadi Mahajani, Tamil and Marathi, date from the late 10th to 19th century A.D.

Opposite Indragiri is the '*Chikka Betta*' (small hill) or small-Kalbappu, now called Chandragiri, the abode to the historic Bhadrabahu *Basadi* (*basadi* refers to a Jain shrine or temple in Karnataka) Chandragupta *Basadi* is dedicated to Emperor Chandragupta Maurya. This was originally built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd Century B.C.. This 200-foot-high hill with 192 steps also treasures the imprint of the feet of Bhadrabāhu, the revered Jain monk, who was the teacher and spiritual guide of the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta. There were 18 temples dating from 9th century A.D. onwards. A historic inscription dated circa 600 is the earliest in the country to refer to the

migration of Jains to the south, the famine in Ujjain, to the role of Bhadrabāhu in safeguarding the Sangha, etc. There are also records of 92 deaths by Samādhi of Jain monks.

The foundation of Jinanathapura, a northern foothill of Chandragiri, was undertaken by Gangaraja in 1117. The Santivara *Basadi* located here, is the most ornate of the Hoysala *Basadis* in Karnataka.

The steep climb to the hills and *basadis* in Shravana-belagola are symbolic of the restraint required of the Jain faith.

Bāhubali Mahāmasthakabhisheka ceremony 2018

Mahāmasthakabhisheka, the head anointing ceremony is performed once in 12 years to the 57 feet tall monolithic statue of Lord Bāhubali at Shravana-belagola. The event was held under the leadership of His Holiness Swasti Sri Charukeerthi Bhattarakha Swamiji of Shravana-belagola from 17th-25th February 2018.

The Golden Triangle

The three tourist attractions of Shravana-belagola, Belur and Halebeedu together constitute Karnataka's Golden Triangle.

A visit to Karnataka's Golden Triangle is a wonderful pilgrimage. Along with the Gommateshwara temple and other attractions in Shravana-belagola, the Chennakeshava Temple in Belur with its intricate carvings and the Hoysaleshwara Temple in Halebeedu are a tourist's delight and a pilgrim's dream-come-true.

These symbols of human devotion, manifested by such immeasurable beauty and sheer workmanship that has survived centuries, makes the journey from Belur (called Velapura in its earlier days) to Halebeedu and to Shravana Belagola a

litany of a different sort.

Tens of thousands of carvings in black soapstone, representing action-packed sequences from Hindu mythology, cover the length and breadth of the Chennakesava Temple. Also called the Vijayanarayana temple, it is a 12th century Hindu temple. It was commissioned by king Vishnuvardhana in 1117 CE and is on the banks of the Yagachi river.

Halebeedu was the erstwhile capital of the Hoysala empire (1000 - 1334 CE). The Hoysaleshwara Temple at Halebeedu has bigger and more intricate sculptures, again in black soapstone. Sadly, Halebeedu – then known by the name of Dwarāsamudra – fell into the hands of Alauddin Khilji and Muhammad Tughlak and their armies.

How to get there

Shravana-belagola is about 50 kms from Hassan. The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation operates buses connecting Hassan with other parts of Karnataka as well as other states. Hassan is connected by road via national highway No. 75 to the rest of the country. Hassan Airport is expected to be operational by 2018. Hassan Junction railway station connects it to the rest of the country through the Indian Railways. There are various trains to Shravana-belagola from Bengaluru, Mysuru, Hassan and Mangaluru.

Sources: Shravana-BELAGOLA.net
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- Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon

Glory of Gautama Maharshi

Gautama Maharshi is one of the 'Sapta rishis' (seven sages) of the *vaivaswatha manvantara*. The name Gautama is very significant: *tama*' means 'darkness' and '*go*', inter alia, means 'bright light'. Together, Gautama means the one who dispels darkness (ignorance) by his brilliance (spiritual knowledge).

The Rig Veda has several *sūktam-s* (hymns) that go with his name. This Rig Vedic sage Gautama, who also finds mention in Jainism and Buddhism, is credited with authoring many hymns in *maṇḍala*.

Both the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata have references to Sage Gautama i.e., we have references in both the *tretā* and *dwāpara yuga-s*. He was the progenitor of the Gautama *gotra* of Hindu Brahmins.

One of the earliest *dharmasūtra-s* is attributed to Maharshi Gautama. It contains twenty-eight chapters with one-thousand aphorisms, covering almost every aspect of the observances of Hindu *dharma*, including the rules for the four *āshrama-s*, the forty *sanskāra-s*, the four *varna-s*, the duties of a king, the punishments for various offences, the obsequies for the dead, do's and don'ts of food intake, *dharma-s* for women, rules for '*prāyashchitta*' (atonement for sins), rules for succession in property matters, etc. In this sense, Gautama's Dharma-shāstra may perhaps be considered as the oldest law book of the world!

The *Devī Bhāgavatam* says that the river Godāvāri is so named because of its association with Sage Gautama. A hymn in *Sāmaveda* called *bhadra* is ascribed to him.

The avatāra of Lord Shiva as *tryambakeshwar*, happened for the sake of Gautama.

Some famous disciples of Sage Gautama were Prāchīna-Yogyakartā, Shāndilya, Gargya and Bhāradwāja.

Trial of Ahalyā

Ahalyā, one of the five *panchakanyā-s* (greatest among women), was his wife. She was the *mānasa-putri* of Brahmā. The Purāṇa-s speak of the story wherein Gautama won the hand of Ahalyā by circumambulating the divine cow Surabhi, in order to fulfill the stipulations of Brahmā that whoever goes around the earth first will win the hand of Ahalyā. They had a son named Shatānanda. The Sage also had three more sons named Anjani, Nodhas and Vāmadeva. Shatānanda became the chief priest of the kingdom of Mithilā under King Janaka. Vāmadeva and Nodhas were both discoverers of mantra-s.

According to Rāmāyana, Ahalyā was a devoted and virtuous wife, very faithful to her husband. The couple lived in their beautiful *āshrama* in a forest near Mithilā (Mithilā Upavana) where they jointly practised asceticism for several years. The Brahma Purāṇa and the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa describe the *āshrama* as being near the holy city of Pushkar where, to this day, stands a temple dedicated to Maharshi Gautama and Ahalyā.

One day, early in the morning, Rishi Gautama went to take bath in River Gangā. The king of Devas, Indra played a dirty trick on Ahalyā by assuming the form of Gautama, because of which she was forced to sacrifice her chastity. Indra had always believed that

he being a king, all the best things were meant only for him and so always resented Ahalyā's marriage to a much older, forest-dwelling ascetic. After committing this heinous act, Indra was trying to escape from the ashrama when he was caught by Rishi Gautama who was returning to his *āshrama* after his bath. On seeing what had happened, Gautama cursed both Indra and Ahalyā, whereby Ahalyā turned into a stone and had to remain so for thousands of years before attaining liberation only by the touch of Lord Sree Rāma's feet in Tretā Yuga.

As a result of uttering these terrible curses on two persons at the same time, Sage Gautama lost all the extraordinary powers he had acquired as a result of long years of penance. In order to regain those powers, he left his beautiful *āshrama* and went to the Himālayas.

A thousand years later, the great Sage Vishwāmitra (one of the Sapta-rishis) decided to perform a *yāga* and his efforts were being foiled by marauding *rākshasa*-s, who had made it a routine to disturb *yāga*-s being performed by sages. To seek protection, he went to the royal court at Ayodhyā and secured protection by way of escort of the two princes Rāma and Lakshmana, sons of King Dasharatha. After the successful completion of the *yāga*, on their way to Mithilā, they had to traverse through the deserted but supremely attractive ashrama of Gautama Rishi and Shree Rāma happened to free Ahalyā from the curse of the Rishi.

Sage Gautama who was doing penance came to know about the happenings in his ashram with the help of his divine insight. In a moment, he presented himself at his *āshrama* and received his wife Ahalyā in her original pure state after getting herself released from the curse. He also welcomed Sree Rāma and others to his ashram and performed all the rituals as specified in the

shāstras. After accepting the Sage's hospitality, Maharishi Vishwāmitra and the princes continued their journey while Sage Gautama returned to the mountains to continue with his *tapas*.

Gautama and the River Godāvāri

Sage Gautama is also credited for having brought Gangā down to earth in the form of Godāvāri. It is said that once the whole country was reeling under a severe famine. Thousands of sages who had no food and water took shelter in Sage Gautama's *āshrama*, since he was a *siddhapurusha*, a person who can get things done at his will.

During this period a very interesting thing took place in Kailāsa. Pārvati and Ganesha became very jealous of Gangā shining on Lord Shiva's head. They decided to somehow bring her down and Ganesha worked out a plan. He went to Sage Gautama's ashram and chided the sages staying there for misusing the sage's hospitality shamelessly. The sages' self-respect was hurt but they expressed helplessness in moving out of the *āshrama* as there was famine everywhere outside the *āshrama*. Then Ganesha put his plan to work. He told them that he would create a magic cow which would always be running around the *āshrama* creating a commotion. Gautama would try to chase it out by hitting it with *darbha* grass; the cow would fall to the ground as if dead. Then the sages should go to the Maharshi and say that it was a sin to live in a place where a cow had been killed and leave the ashram for another place where Ganesha had promised them that there would be plenty of food and water.

The sages did as they were told to do, but the Maharishi implored them not to leave the ashram and that he was ready to do anything so that he could redeem his sins. In keeping with Ganesha's plan, the sages told him that he would be pardoned only if Gangā

came down to earth and the sage took bath in it.

Gautama then prayed to Shiva and when Shiva appeared, told him about the predicament he was in. Shiva who can dive into the minds of others, immediately came to know the plot hatched by Gowri and Ganesh. He asked Gangā to stay firmly rooted on his head but to let a small amount of water flow down. This came to be known as Godāvāri or Godagangā and Gautama had a bath in it.

A little later, Gautama began wondering as to how a cow could die with the gentle touch of a blade of *darbha* grass. He soon realized that it was a wicked plot hatched by the sages. He cursed the sages that they would become bereft of the knowledge of the Vedas and also, they would no longer be entitled to perform the Vedic rituals.

The Sapta-rishis requested Gautama to have mercy on those unfortunate Brahmins. Gautama then declared that his curse would come true only in Kaliyuga and those Brahmins would not be affected in the other three *yugas*. He then created from his breath, the 'Shiva Samhitā' which is similar to Vedas as far as the importance of rituals is concerned. He did this for the benediction of the Brahmins. He knew that Brahmins would fall from grace in the Kaliyuga. People would give little respect to the Vedas and create their own scriptures. Confusion would prevail and people would create false religions. This shows his vision, compassion and simplicity.

Appearance in Dwāparayuga

In Dwāparayuga as well, Sage Gautama exhibited his great power of penance, unequalled knowledge and wisdom. He was also bold and straightforward and would always give his clear opinion on matters of dharma. Once his colleague Sage Atri praised a king by the name Vainya who was steeped in worldly pleasures and had

everyone call him by names such as Brahmā, Indra, etc. Sage Gautama could not tolerate his misplaced faith and without hesitation, chided Sage Atri. He argued that for the sake of a little wealth, it was wrong to extol one to the state of divinity and that such an act was unpardonable.

A story from Mahābhārata says that Gautama had many disciples and among them was Uttanka, the best among the Bhrigu clan; he was exemplary in his devotion to his guru and *gurupatni* (guru's wife). As a result, he won the love and affection of his teacher. After he was well versed in all the *shāstras* and Vedas, he wanted to leave the *gurukula* and accept *grihasthāshrama* and serve his aging parents. But Gauthama did not permit him to go. He had to spend several years serving his Guru and his wife. Thus, he became a centurion though he did not even know that he had grown old until he accidentally discovered it one day. With his power of *tapas* Gautama blessed Uttanka with youth. He also gave his daughter in marriage to him, blessed the couple and permitted them to go home. Uttanka, however, wanted to pay *gurudakshinā* to his Guru and *gurupatni*. For doing this, he had to undergo many a travail but finally emerged successful. Gautama and his wife showered their blessings on Uttanka. Uttanka fulfilled his obligation of giving *gurudakshinā* and was finally free to lead his own life.

Gautama Rishi Jayanti

All this brings forth this great sage's powers, his compassion and simplicity. He is the greatest amongst the great and is worthy of worship. Gautama Rishi Jayanti is believed to be the birth anniversary of Sage Gautama. It is observed on the first day of the *shukla paksha* of *chaitra* month as per traditional Hindu calendar followed in northern India. We make obeisance to the great Sage Gautama.

What do we learn from
Upanishads?

Do You Want To Be More Effective?

- Swāmi Chidānanda

Three tips from Upanishads :

1. Know what you're doing (*vidyā*),
2. Have faith in the work (*shraddhā*), and
3. Bring your energies together (*yoga*).

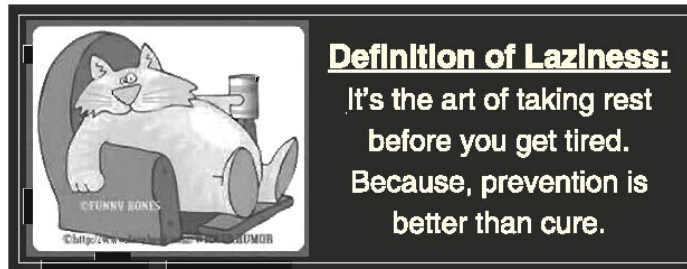
| yadeva vidyayā karoti, shraddhayā, upanishadā - tadeva veeryavattaram bhavati |

Chāndogya Upanishad 1.1.10

यदेव विद्यया करोति, श्रद्धया, उपनिषदा - तदेव वीर्यवत्तरं भवति।
(छान्दोग्य उपनिषत् १.१.१०)

[The word upanishad in the mantra above stands for yoga*,
which we have translated as "bringing our energies together" or focus,
single pointed attention]

* Shankara's commentary



Definitlon of Laziness:

It's the art of taking rest
before you get tired.
Because, prevention is
better than cure.

- Swami Vivekananda

(Written from New York, 16th May, 1895)

The sun goes down, its crimson rays
Light up the dying day;
A startled glance I throw behind
And count my triumph shame;
No one but me to blame.

Each day my life I make or mar,
Each deed begets its kind,
Good good, bad bad, the tide once set
No one can stop or stem;
No one but me to blame.
I am my own embodied past;

Therein the plan was made;
The will, the thought, to that conform,
To that the outer frame;
No one but me to blame.

Love comes reflected back as love,
Hate breeds more fierce hate,
They mete their measures, lay on me
Through life and death their claim;
No one but me to blame.

I cast off fear and vain remorse,
I feel my Karma's(deeds) sway
I face the ghosts my deeds have raised –
Joy, sorrow, censure, fame;

No one but me to blame.
Good, bad, love, hate, and pleasure, pain
Forever linked go,
I dream of pleasure without pain,
It never, never came;
No one but me to blame.

I give up hate, I give up love,
My thirst for life is gone;
Eternal death is what I want,
Nirvanam¹ goes life's flame
No one is left to blame.

One only man, one only God, one ever
perfect soul,
One only sage who ever scorned the dark
and dubious ways,
One only man who dared think and dared
show the goal –
That death is curse, and so is life, and best
when stops to be.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sambuddhāya²
Om, I salute the Lord, the awakened.

1 Nirvanam - *enlightenment*

2 Sambuddhāya - *Sambuddhāya - one who is enlightened*



ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

O LORD OF RADIANCE, LEAD US ON THE RIGHT PATH!



अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्
विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो
भूयिष्ठां ते नम उक्तिं विधेम ॥

*agne naya supathā rāye asmān
vishvāni deva vayunāni vidvān
yuyodhyasmaj-juhurāṇam-eno
bhūyiṣṭhām te nama uktiṃ vidhema ॥*

(Ishāvāsya Upanishad (mantra 18))

O Lord (represented by Agni),
lead us on to prosperity by a good path,
judging all our deeds.

Take away ugly sins from us.
We shall say many prayers unto you. (18)

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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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