

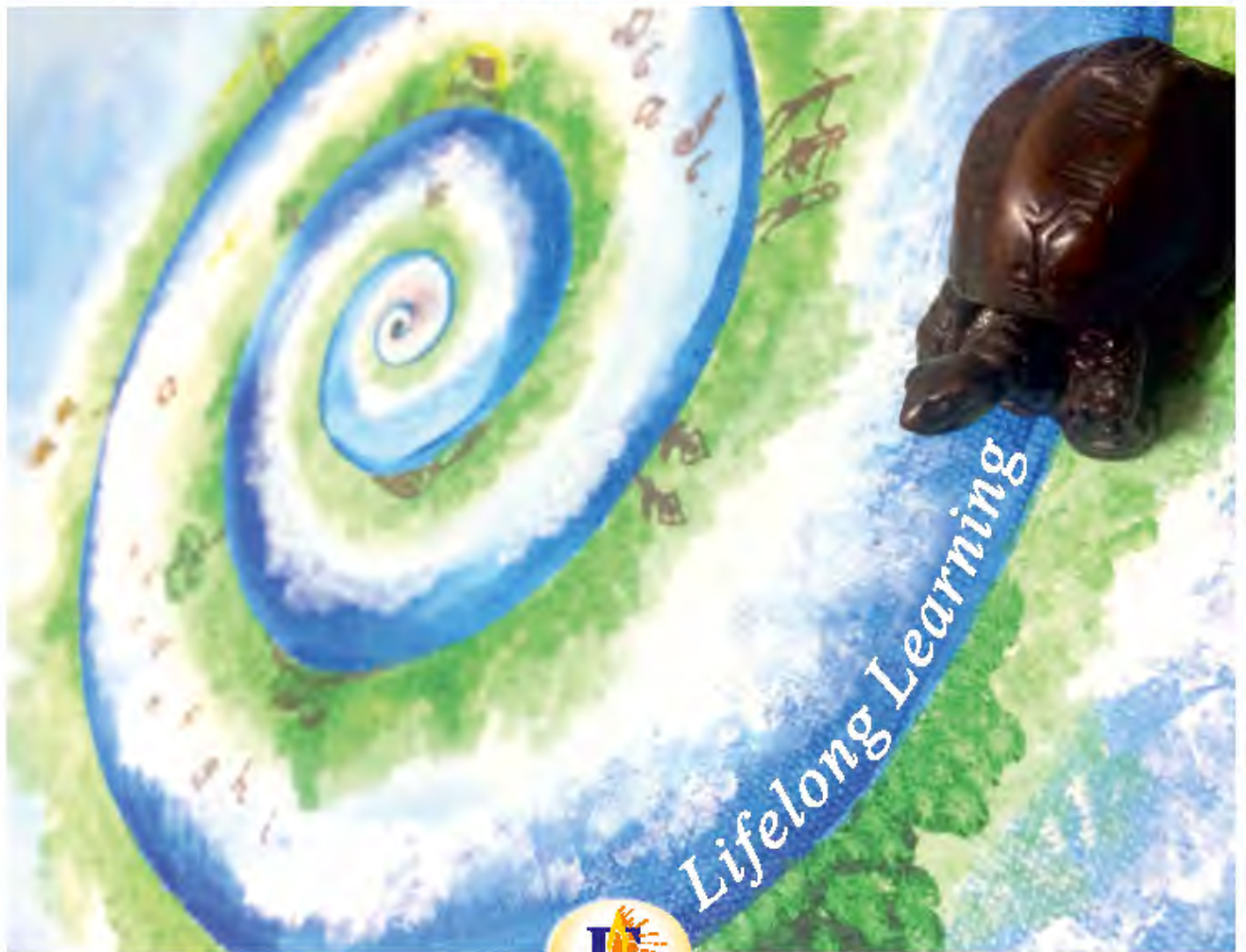
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# Inner Flame

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This country has had the unique privilege of being led by great warriors and kings who themselves were mentored by mystics who had scaled the pinnacle of spiritual experience. Starting from Brihaspati who mentored Lord Indra, we can list many such partnerships like those of Sage Vishwāmītra & Rāma, Lord Krishna and the Pāndava-s, Chānakya & Chandragupta, etc. Shri Swāmi Samartha Rāmadāsa of Sajjangad who guided the great Marāthā warrior Shivāji was one such mystic who shaped the destiny of the country with his spiritual vision for a kingdom based on universal values. There is a very informative article on this great luminary in this issue.

Swāmi Chidānanda ji touches upon the qualities that are required to be cultivated by a student, for him to be in a state of readiness to absorb new learnings from the perspective of the Vedic wisdom.

The little story on how Kabir poured divine love into his mundane profession of weaving is indeed inspiring for many of us who are wondering about how to connect the 'higher' plane of contemplation with the 'lower' plane of daily existence.

We are starting a new series on DVĀDASHA JYOTIRLINGA where we will provide information on these holy places of great spiritual significance where prominent Shiva temples are located. This issue features two locations viz. Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh and Somanātha in Gujarat.

The article on Rishi Mārkandeya is indeed uplifting as it takes us on a journey across time to a golden age where men of the rarest caliber achieved immortality by defying the God of death himself through their spiritual prowess.

The article on breathing techniques in the Buddhist tradition provides a detailed guide on how to deepen levels of awareness.

The poem IF by Rudyard Kipling has inspired many a soul with its lofty vision of a man of balance and it is amazing how that vision resembles the equipoise (*Sthitaprajnalakshanas*) described in The Bhagavad Geetā.

**Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd)**

*For the Chief Editor*



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Swāmi Chidānanda

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### FEATURED

Samartha Rāmadāsa –

The mystic, missionary and mentor

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani ..... 1

### PERCEIVING PHOENIX

The Learning Mind

- Swāmi Chidānanda ..... 8

### STORY TEACHES

Life - A Dance from Cradle to Grave

..... 10

### GEN NEXT

Harmony

- Zhi Yi ..... 11

### PLACES THAT BECKON

Dvādasha Jyotirlinga

- Compiled by Ratna Vishwanath ..... 13

### RISHIS OF INDIA

Maharshi Mārkandeya

- Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon..... 18

### GUEST CORNER

Following the Breath with Mindfulness

- Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906-1993) ..... 23

### WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM UPANISHADS?

Once in a while, leave the driver's seat!

- Swāmi Chidānanda ..... 26

### RHYTHMS FOR THE SOUL

If

- Rudyard Kipling ..... 27

### ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

Lack Of Self-control Will Spell Doom



- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani

**Sāvadhāna**

In the Bhagavad Geetā, Sri Krishna categorically answers Arjun's anxiety regarding the discipline of Yoga being interrupted by physical death: It is never wasted as it continues in the subsequent life (Bhagavad Geetā Chapter 6:37). Probably, that is how a child, just 12 years of age understood intuitively, with a rarely exhibited insight, the warning in the word "sāvadhāna" (be alert, be cautious) when he heard it as the circumambulations (*pherās*) were commencing. Instead of running away instinctively in fear from an imagined enemy, with hitherto unmanifested wisdom, he ran away from the certain entrapment of a married life! Perhaps, not an acceptable action in socially conscious individuals, but this innocent child, inclined as he was towards meditation and prayer, ("for the welfare of the world", as he told his surprised, enquiring mother), knew subliminally that there is more, much more that he was born for and by walking out of a contractually binding life-relationship he moved towards the Ultimate Relation-less Relationship (as so succinctly put by the great Vedāntic Teacher, Swāmi Chinmayānanda). However, it took another 12 years of intense *sādhana* before the veil was completely lifted to get the Darshan of his Beloved. Thereafter,

established in Truth, he was instrumental in relieving the fears and agony of the subjugated, downtrodden masses struggling to achieve some succour in life, helping those stuck in the eternal cycle of life and death (*samsāra*). He eventually gained great fame and admiration as the mentor and Guru to the greatest King in Maratha history.

**Early Life**

Born to Suryāji Panth and Renukā Bāi in Jamb, Maharashtra, on Rāmanavami in 1608 A.D (1530 Lunar calendar), 'Samartha' Rāmadāsa, the acknowledged and much beloved Guru of Chatrapati Shivāji, as also of millions of others even today, especially in Maharashtra, India, was given the inspirational name Nārāyana Suryāji Thosar, after the family deity. During childhood, though fond of all vigorous and physical games, Nārāyana showed great intelligence, firm faith in God and his whole persona shining with devotion to Lord Hanumān and Lord Rāma. It is said that he was visited by Lord Rāma himself who told him, "Go to the banks of the river Krishna and start a new religion. The descendant of the Shilodla dynasty is going to take an avatāra. You will guide him with devotion." [Shivāji belonged to this ancient lineage].

**Intense Sādhana**

Escaping the householder's life, he was drawn to Panchavati, in Nashik district where Lord Rāma, His wife Sītā and His brother Lakshman had stayed during their 14 years in exile (*vanvāsa*). From there he went to Takli village near Nashik, where the rivers Godāvari and Nandini meet, for a life of

intense devotion and spiritual study. Here he understood the true impact of isolation with just the sky overhead as his roof, with birds and animals as companions. Without deliberation, he had set a standard for the benefit of seekers who even today practise 'withdrawal' from the world, both outside and inside, through meditation.

Setting an example for day-to-day discipline of body and mind, he would wake up before sunrise, have a bath and follow it up with 'Surya Namaskāra' a series of positions each of which prays to the Sun. Then he would stand in the river with the water reaching his waist and chant the mantra – "Sri rāma jaya rāma jaya jaya rāma". Chanting until the Sun reached the top of his head (noon), he would then ask for food (*madhukari*: a system of begging adopted by a mendicant) in only five houses, offering a small part to Lord Rāma before consuming it himself. Afternoons were spent in the forest in a temple dedicated to Lord Rāma, reading scriptural texts extensively, also imbibing spiritual knowledge from the elders who visited the temple. Devoted to Sri Rāma as he was, he studied Vālmiki's Rāmāyāna, attended programs of songs praising Lord Rāma through the narration of his good qualities and his stories. [Later in life, he wrote a popular text called *Rāmāyāna* in which he describes, in his own words, the conquest of Lankā by Sri Rāma and the vanquishing of Rāvana, showing that a Rāvaṇa exists in each one of us, whose conquest reveals the true Rāma.] At night, he listened to Bhajans. His last thought before sleeping was, naturally, that of Sri Rāma as he prayed to him. As a result of such tremendous devotion, he was gifted with eight powers by Lord Rāma himself, who appeared

before him and asked him to start a new religion. Forgetting his originally given name, he came to be called 'Samartha' (most competent/capable/proficient) 'Rāmadāsa' (the most loyal devotee of Lord Rāma).

### **Visit to Pandharpur**

Through a significant incident that occurred early in his life, this ardent devotee of Sri Rāma was made to expand his mind (and through his subsequent teachings, the minds of his devotees) to see and respect God (*īshwara*) in His manifold forms. Pandharpur is a famous pilgrim-destination for worshippers of Vishnu which Rāmadāsa had not visited as he was not aware of the existence of this holy place. Tradition says that one day Lord Pānduranga Vitthal, in the form of a Brahmin, with a batch of three hundred pilgrims, appeared before Rāmadāsa and asked him whether he had any objection to seeing Lord Krishna. On hearing that Rāmadāsa had none, the Brahmin took Rāmadāsa to Pandharpur. But on approaching the temple, he found that the Brahmin was nowhere to be seen. Rāmadāsa immediately knew that it was none other than Lord Pānduranga who had brought him to that sacred place. He entered the temple, and to his great surprise, found Sri Rāma standing alone on a brick. Rāmadāsa addressed the Deity thus: "O Lord, what are You doing here alone? Where are Your brother Lakshmana and Your consort Sītā Mātā? Where is Māruti and where are the monkey hordes?" On hearing these words, the image at once transformed itself into Sri Pandarinātha. Rāmadāsa then praised Pānduranga for His kindness, prostrated before Him and sang songs of joy for getting His rare Darshan. Rāmadāsa now felt doubly convinced that there are several incarnations of the Lord but that His several forms only preach that everyone

should respect and worship the One who takes care of one and all in the world. Thereafter, Rāmadāsa became a frequent visitor to and devotee of Pānduranga Viṭthal also. It was here that Rāmadāsa came in contact with Tukārāma and other saints of Pandharpur.

#### **The Social reformer**

Young as he was, his innate compassion and sense of right and wrong observed the utter helplessness of a populace set adrift by the straying away of the Brahmin class from their role of teaching and guiding. His mind, with its keen sense of awareness, was quick to identify the ills of the social, political and economic conditions of the ordinary Indian. He minutely observed the circumstances of the people, and realized that the frequent floods and famines and wanton attacks by the wilful Muslim invaders, actually being assisted by local people, had left the general population scared and depressed, riddled with superstitious thought, and completely bereft of self-confidence. Moreover Rāmadāsa was not content with just his own salvation; he saw the dire need to help the populace. To restore the damaged psyche of the populace, he put up many temples to Hanumān (Māruti), emphasising Māruti's accomplishments in the face of adversities, patience in the pursuit of the truth, courage and strength when facing enemies.

Sri Rāma, his own Guru, was the other role model he chose for the common man; he brought hope and cheer into their dim lives by reminding them of His exploits in the wilderness through stories, teaching them the mantra that he himself had found to be the bedrock of his own emancipation. Based on these experiences he wrote two books, *Asmani Sūtanī* and *Parachekranirūpanam* which teach the importance of not losing patience and having faith in oneself and God.



#### **Mentoring Shivaji, the Marāthā King**

Like all great *sādhus*, Rāmadāsa had subtle ways of teaching as well. It is a well-known fact that the great Marāthā, Chatrapati Shivāji had heard of, made the

acquaintance of and accepted Rāmadāsa as his Guru and mentor. Apart from giving him support through spiritual confidence, Rāmadāsa taught Shivāji that the Lord alone is the King of the Universe and that men, no matter how much their valour and courage, are merely emissaries, representing and ruling on His behalf. On one occasion, on seeing his gurudeva Rāmadāsa going about the streets with his begging bowl, Shivāji made a gift of his whole kingdom to him. When asked by Rāmadāsa what he would do with his life now that he had disposed of his kingdom, Shivāji said that he would be very happy and consider himself blessed if he could spend his life in his gurudeva's service. Accepting this with a smile, Rāmadāsa showed Shivāji the life of a beggar by first taking him on a round of Satārā to solicit alms, then cooking a simple meal which they both ate sitting together under a tree. It was then that Shivāji asked his gurudeva what he was going to do with him after reducing him to a beggar. Rāmadāsa knew that the opportunity had come to set up a lofty ideal for the King. Rāmadāsa asked Shivāji to rule the kingdom in his (Rāmadāsa's) name, to take the *geruā chaddar* (ochre robe) for his banner, defend its honour with his life, and to think that the kingdom did not belong to him but to treat it as a trust to be ruled well and justly before God.

While Samartha Rāmadāsa may have abandoned his 'worldly' life by escaping marriage, he taught Shivāji and his disciples that the role allotted to one in life is never to be disregarded. He had lived with his parents for a mere 12 years, yet on hearing that his earthly Mother was pining for him and that she had, in fact, lost her eyesight on account of the sorrow arising out of the separation, Rāmadāsa went to see her. He prostrated before her and by touching her eyes, restored her vision. Having gained *siddhis* as a result of his early years of intense *sādhanā*, he taught his disciples that the power of Yoga should be used selectively and not for personal gain or enhancement of power; his own emphasis on integrity of thought, word and deed was demonstrated to his disciples when, having unknowingly blessed a widow with a long life as a married woman (*suhāgan*), he did not hesitate to restore the life of her husband.

#### **Respect for Women**



His respect for women was not merely a matter of words. He understood the importance of their role in maintaining a harmonious society and in fact, encouraged them to participate in religious work, giving them

positions of authority within his own mission. He had 18 staunch women disciples, three of whom are known to have taken charge of centres he opened. And that was not the limit of his teaching: he openly chastised an old man protesting against these women,

admonishing him and others that everyone came from a woman's womb and that those who did not understand her importance were not worthy of being called men. He abhorred the prevailing distinction based on caste and creed. A true advisor, he taught that all human beings are equal, and supported socialism and secular society.

#### **Main teachings and literary works**

In his last days on earth, he devoted his time partly to literary activities and partly to the systematic building up of his Mutts manned by his disciples, both in the North and in the South. The literary works of Rāmadāsa such as *Dāsabodha*, *Manāche Shloka* (verses addressed to the mind), *Karunāshuktas* (hymns to God) and *Rāmāyana* are very popular readings even today. This great Guru of Mahārāshtra breathed his last in 1682 at Sallangad, a fortress near Sātārā, which was given to him by Shivāji for his residence. The last instructions that Rāmadāsa gave to his disciples advised them not to think much of bodily wants, to have *satsanga* with devotees, to keep the image of Sri Rāma in their hearts and repeat His name always. As he himself had done, he advised them to "Annihilate lust, greed, anger, hatred and egotism. See Lord Rāma in all creatures. Love all. Feel His presence everywhere. Live for Him alone. Serve Him in all beings. Make total and unreserved surrender unto Him. You will always live in Him alone. You will attain immortality and eternal bliss".

History books on the lives of Saints are not as fully appreciative of their ideals as the writings of the Saints themselves. Moreover, the innermost nature of a writer impresses the reader through his/her literary works more when the understanding and instructions given in those texts that pertain to spiritual pursuits are wordlessly proven by the writer's personal life. Based on the lofty ideals on which Rāmadāsa



lived his life, we are aware even today through his most sought-after and revered writing, *Dāsabodha* that he walked the talk, that he lived his beliefs and had complete faith in them. Just one example clearly illustrates this: the early life of Rāmadāsa which he spent in isolation in the forest shows the seeker that withdrawal into the depths beyond the 'forest of thoughts' is what leads to true emancipation.

The *Dāsabodha* which is widely read even today consists of twenty sections. Each section is termed a *dasaka* as it contains ten chapters, called *samāsas*. The whole book is written in the form of prose-verse but it never becomes humdrum. Just like him, his language too, is simple and the style terse, even though it is a treatise on the *advaita vedānta* in the Marathi language. That he had dedicated his life to reviving the ancient religion of Bhārat can be seen in all the activities he undertook. His life was a shining example of the truths of Vedānta; for example, for years he did not have a solid roof for shelter and even when he had one, he rarely made use of it. Utterly dependent on the Lord and with the welfare of the people always at heart, he roamed from place to place to provide guidance and to infuse in them, discrimination about the real values of life. In *Dāsabodha* he deals with a wide range of subjects on the spiritual life: *māyā*, true and false knowledge, the need of a Guru for a beneficial understanding of the scriptures, the characteristics of a Guru as well as the qualifications of a true disciple. The necessity of spiritual disciplines, *bhakti* and liberation are amply dealt with, his own leanings being clearly revealed. He makes it clear in *Dāsabodha* *xvi. 7.29-40* that he was impatient with the Brahmins who had fallen from the ideal and were taking to occupations not fitting with the purity and spirituality of a *sattvika* nature and that he had lost all sympathy for the

wise of the race who voluntarily embraced other religions.

Through the appropriately beneficial acts of setting up Hanumān temples, he extols the value of the human body in as much as it forms the vehicle for the liberation of the soul from transmigration, urging man to take the responsibility that makes or mars his own fate; it was, after all, by the human body alone that many have become *rishi-s*, *muni-s* and attained God-realisation through different paths. But, says Rāmadāsa, all this is possible when the body, (like that of Hanumān) is strong and free from disease and deformities. Moreover, this healthy, strong body should be utilised in the service of God. The animals cannot aspire for liberation because they have not the sense of the values of life; all their energy is consumed in self-preservation and satisfaction of their instincts which are not high.

While stressing the importance of cultivation of virtuous habits for one who aspires for liberation, he does not hesitate to provide a piece of worldly advice too which can bring profit both in one's spiritual and secular life. 'One who takes pleasure in self-aggrandisement, one who undertakes to do a work beyond his capacity, one who has neither learning nor wealth but still remains proud, one who earns wealth by foul means, are all ignorant,' says Rāmadāsa. That these, along with other drawbacks which he enumerates, should be given up and that the positively helpful qualities should be assiduously cultivated by a seeker of a higher life, is the contention of Rāmadāsa. In short, his view is that without a good grounding in moral life, spiritual life is an impossibility.

Following the *rishis* of old, he draws a sharp line of demarcation between what real knowledge is, and what is considered normally as knowledge: the former liberates



man whereas the latter binds him to this world more and more. The knowledge of the different sciences and dexterity in using that knowledge to fulfil our worldly ambitions is not real knowledge; it only whets our desire to excel in accumulation of worldly goods and deeds. As against this is posited the knowledge of the *ātman*, the Ever-Eternal Substance, the Indwelling Spirit in all, which destroys ignorance and makes man omniscient. And this is not to be attained by mere study of the *veda-s* but by the grace of a guru, the necessity of whom he never tired of stressing, for the realisation of God. Many of the chapters of this book are exclusively devoted to impress this idea on the mind of the readers and whenever he speaks of *brahman* and realisation, he puts this idea in the forefront. So definite is he about the efficacy of the guru's grace that he holds it more covetable than the knowledge of all the *veda-s* and *vedānta*, when he says: '*I know neither Sanskrit nor Prakrit but by the grace of my guru I can dispense with the study of the veda-s and all kinds of learning.*' (v. 6.33-42.) He could also, perhaps, be referring to his own lack of formal education that usually marks the credentials of acceptable teachers.

Then, as now, a question that troubles young minds, seems to be, 'Why should one give up the comforts of the world which are here and now, to aspire after something which is unknown and indefinite?' Rāmadāsa gives the reply: True, this seems to be real but why not look around and see where the so-called youth, beauty and vigour, the wealth and the people whom we loved have gone. If they were real why should they disappear, if they are unreal then why take birth, which is fraught with danger, with trials, and repeated trepidations with inevitable death the only certainty. Is it not more rewarding than that man should therefore try to avoid this

cycle of birth and death by realising the nature of his own Self? Nothing else, says Rāmadāsa, can free one from this bondage.

Again, to cut at the root of the argument that what is perceived by the senses is more tangible than the "promised freedom", Rāmadāsa gives the classic examples of high *vedānta*: the experience of a man in the desert who runs after the water in the mirage, the experience of the man who obtained wealth in his dreams, and the enchanting world of the magician. If the senses were infallible in their judgement, why does man see water where it is not, see wealth where it is absent, and enjoy a whole world of impossibilities? If then the senses cannot be depended upon fully, how can one judge which of its experiences are true and which false; just as the wealth which was real during the dream has no reality during the waking condition, all this that we see has only a temporary existence; refuse to have anything to do with it and think of the One reality, the *ātman*....is what he urges.

Speaking in the simplest language, he stresses the highest *sādhana*: the enquiry, the investigation and the analysis of the question that engages the mind: Whence this illusion? He answers it clearly with a simple analogy: it is because the unreal and the real have got mixed up like milk and water that we see everything as real and it requires intuition like the instinct of the proverbial swan to separate the two, to reject the unreal and to accept the real. The unreal shines as real because of the substratum on which it is projected is real. Rejecting the unreal, one should attain the real which is One without a second and that is one's own Self. How is this to be done? By faith in the words of the guru, by constantly hearing about God, by devotion to God and finally by self-surrender, says Rāmadāsa.

But he also warned those in haste:

gaining the Ultimate is not credible for one who has not gone beyond the body idea. It is true that everything is illusory but until one has experienced it oneself, *upāsanā* is necessary: worship God, do *kirtana* and in every other way remember God. Otherwise, the tendency to worship one's own body more will remain, one's own possessions (relationships and worldly goods) will dominate and one will remain entangled in the world. Though he himself was a staunch *advaitin* in thought, Rāmadāsa worshipped Sri Rāma and felt proud in calling himself His servant. Moreover, Rāmadāsa had experienced the fruits of devotion to Sri Rāma with the efficacy of the 13-syllabled "*sri rāma jaya rāma jaya jaya rāma*" *japa*. He therefore insisted that even by taking recourse to this *saguṇa* aspect of *brahman*, one could reach the *nirguṇa brahman*. Thus he spoke with absolute conviction when, in *Dāsabodha*, he deals with the question of the necessity of worship (*upāsanā*) and *bhajan*-singing (*kirtana*). *bhakti* according to him is not antagonistic to the path of *advaita*; self-surrender is not degradation but an elevation of the mind to the level of the *ātman* by forgetting the body and even the ego. *shravana*, listening, plays a very important part in our spiritual life. Without hearing about God, we cannot understand Him but this hearing should be through the mouth of a qualified person. That person is the guru; he instructs the disciple according to his temperament and tendencies: one who likes the worship of God with form should not be asked to cultivate devotion to His formless aspect; neither should one who takes naturally to the formless aspect be forced to go through the disciplines of the *saguṇa* aspect.

The idea that meditation is imagination seems to have been prevalent even during those days and Rāmadāsa faces this accusation boldly, saying, 'The world itself is an imagination and out of this world you get

only disillusionment at the end, then why not try better imagination? Imagine about God, about *brahman*; by thinking good thoughts constantly, bad thoughts vanish from the mind, similarly, by thinking about God, this world will glide away giving place to the mightiest power, God.'

Rāmadāsa insists that without knowing one's own Nature, it is futile to think that one would get liberation. *brahman* is all that exists, all the variety that we see is only due to *māyā*. *brahman* cannot be compared, yet if we have to illustrate, we can say it is like the space (*ākāsha*), all-pervading - but there the comparison ends for the *ākāsha* is created and destructible whereas *brahman* always exists. It is the Only Reality in which all gods, even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheshwara are born. It is very near us and at the same time very far. In this way, he goes on to give illustrations, most of which we come across in the Upanishads and the Geetā.

*Dāsabodha*, therefore, is a compendium of the truths of *vedānta*, upheld by the weight of the supreme realisations of the author. Being written in the language of the people, it has been a tremendous force in the revival of the *Ancient Religion*. The need of such a work at that time was possibly intensely felt as the Brahmins had deprived the other castes from having access to the *veda*-s. In truth, its necessity still continues as the zeal for learning Sanskrit has died out in the country. As it has a direct appeal to the mind and also a direct method of approach to the subject, it is deserving of more wide reading than afore by those who place the spiritual life on a higher pedestal than the normal life.

Sources:

**Dasabodha: Swami Paratparananda**

Article Published in the Vedanta Kesari Magazine – May 1961

[http://www.dlshq.org/saints/samartha\\_ramdas.htm](http://www.dlshq.org/saints/samartha_ramdas.htm)

- Swāmi Chidānanda



Technology is enabling us today to make possible Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) and anybody among us would dream of a world where ignorance is finally obliterated! In a

2016 report of the Institute of Life-Long Learning (ILLL)<sup>1</sup> of the Delhi University, it is said that Google, in collaboration with various institutions in our country (like IISc, IITs etc.) had offered 150 courses which attracted about 7 lakh enrolments! We have programmes everywhere in the world today where, at low cost, people can learn almost any subject irrespective of their age. All the same, there is, as is often the case, many a slip between the cup and the lip!

#### **The Capacity and Favour to Learn**

"You can take a horse to the water but you can't make him drink," goes the old saying. How do we ensure that we actually learn when opportunities to do so come up? A good number of people who enrol for a course drop out within a few sessions. Then there are many who plod along but without enthusiasm, imagination or interest. Most appropriately therefore a Vedic prayer<sup>2</sup> asks both speech and mind to constantly shine and grow strong, making 'learning' not only possible but effective.

| *āvīr-āvaer-ma edhi* = Shine, shine for me and grow, O speech and mind |

In the integrated development that the *rishis* (sages) of the Vedic times envisioned, it was imperative that the students have the right state of mind to promote the spirit of learning. The seers clearly understood that speech (*vāk*) and mind (*manah*) were the key instruments involved in any learning. Secular subjects or spiritual topics require that the learner goes about the study with no conflict within himself (herself). Imagine a girl is reciting something with her faculty of speech but her thoughts wander away somewhere else! A boy may think of some theme but if he is unable to express it in the right words, that also would be a failure. Therefore the mantra<sup>3</sup> says:

| May my speech be based on the mind; may my mind be based on speech! |

Right lifestyle, and not just the affairs of the classroom, can indeed ensure that we learn well.

#### **Sincerity**

In the well-known story of Mahābhārata, Dronāchārya goes on leave for a few days, leaving the students with some homework. They had to revise a list of values that he had just taught. When he comes back, many are able to tell him the whole list with some descriptions too. Yudhisthira however mutters just one value - truthfulness - and does not proceed further. When asked why, he admits that he spent all the time pondering the significance of satya and, more he reflected there was more to discover!

The famed educationist Dr. Maria Montessori<sup>5</sup> observed, “It is our duty to prevent the child from doing anything which may offend or hurt others and to check behaviour which is unbecoming or impolite.” Yudhisthira’s sincerity or somebody else’s carefulness (not to hurt anybody) are aspects of the way we live – 24x7 – that surely affects the quality of our education, our lifelong learning.

Many learn the hard way that character is non-negotiable in the blossoming of human life. Absence of noble values in practice, not just in precept, can seriously damage the quality of our life, which in turn implies that we may end up having a lot of wealth sans peace and happiness. Others too around us get many things from us except peace and happiness.

#### **Best Teachers are Students for Ever**

In an inspiring anecdote that dates back to 1994, we learn that the King of Oman himself came to the airport in Muscat to receive Shri Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then President of India. It was very unusual, they say, for the king to go to the airport to receive dignitaries. The king went out of his way to receive the guest, climbing up to the plane, and later himself driving the car to take Shri Sharma to the suite where he was to stay. The astonished reporters finally came to know the reason for his behaviour on the part of their head of state. The king clarified that he had, in his younger days, studied in Pune in India, and Dr Sharma had been his professor at that time!

While the episode narrated above is in praise of the exalted place of a teacher in our society, we must note that a true teacher is ever dedicated to the pursuit of

knowledge and is therefore ever a student.

| May ‘what I have studied’ not leave me! |(mantra<sup>4</sup>)

We need to stay dedicated to our subjects of interest, and to ‘learning about life itself’. No matter what our profession is, it is most essential that we keep learning the *art of living*, which is indeed the gateway to true spirituality. The fragrance of holistic living emanates from us, only when we integrate our professional engagements with *right living*, which is the greatest subject.

#### **Knowledge of How to Live**

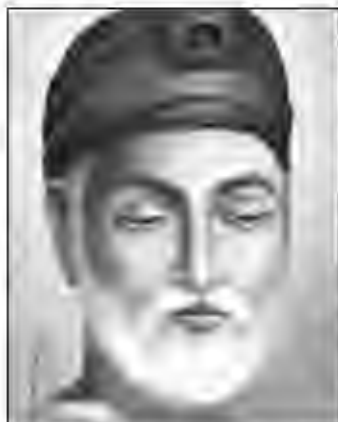
The scholar asked the boatman, “Do you know history, economics, astrology, Sanskrit and political science?” The poor boatman knew none of them. And when the boat, a little while later, was going to sink, it was the illiterate’s turn to ask the learned man, “Sir, do you know swimming?” The professor didn’t know how to swim.

So will be our case if we have skills, talents and knowledge of certain subjects but do not have a deep understanding of relationships, the way to conduct ourselves – in public and in privacy. Lifelong learning is not just about accumulating varieties of new skills but also growing in our understanding of life itself.

Notes :

1. See [www.illl.du.ac.in](http://www.illl.du.ac.in)
2. Peace invocation of Aitareya Upanishad beginning with *vāk me manasi..*
3. *vāk me manasi pratisthitā, mano me vāchi pratisthitam* (same as 2 above)
4. *shrutam me mā prahāseeh –* (same as 2 above)
5. The Discovery of the Child, page 68





"One of the great mystics of India, Kabir, was a weaver by profession. He had thousands of followers including kings and still he continued to weave clothes.

Once, the king of Varanasi asked him, "Master, it doesn't look good. It makes us feel embarrassed. We can take care of you. There is no need for you to weave clothes and every week on market day, go into the market to sell your clothes. Just think of us: people laugh at us."

Kabir said, "I can understand your problem but I have only one talent and that is to weave beautiful clothes. If I stop doing it, who will do it? And God comes in different faces, in different bodies, to purchase clothes every week in the marketplace."

He used to address every customer, "Lord, be very careful of the cloth. I have been weaving it, not just like any other weaver – my songs are in it and my soul is in it. I have poured my whole being in it. Be careful, use it with tenderness and love and remember: Kabir has woven it especially for you, Lord."

And it was not something that he was addressing to anybody in particular – any customer! This was his contribution. He used to say to his disciples, "What else can I

do? I am doing my best: I can weave, I can sing, I can dance – and I am immensely contented."

WHATEVER YOU ARE doing, if there is contentment and a feeling that this whole existence is nothing but the manifestation of godliness, that we are travelling on holy earth, that whomever you are meeting, you are meeting God – there is no other way; only faces are different, but the inner reality is the same – all your tensions will disappear. And the energy that is involved in tensions will start becoming your grace, your beauty.

Then life will not be just an ordinary, routine, day-to-day existence, but a dance from cradle to grave.

And existence will be immensely enriched by your grace, by your relaxation, by your silence, by your awareness."

- Osho,

*The Hidden Splendor*



## Gen Next

## Harmony

- Zhi Yi

The word harmony is used here in the sense of harmonizing the five Dharma activities. The five are – to regulate a) the times of eating and drinking, b) sleeping, c) the body, d) breathing, and e) the heart-mind.

It is like a potter, who when s/he aspires to make pottery, must first knead and prepare the clay carefully so that it is neither too hard nor too soft, and then can s/he shape it on the wheel.

The first thing you must do is regulate the intake of food, that is, eating becomes a part of Dharma practice, something which assists the body to enter the Dharma path. Food when over indulged causes the Qi energy to become hard pressed and the body listless, the arteries and veins obstructed, the heart closed off, not at peace when sitting in meditation.

If you eat too little, then the body will be tired and the heart hung up, the mind's thoughts unsteady. If both of these, over eating and insufficient nourishment, are eliminated, then one can attain to the way of Zen concentration.

Thus, the Buddhist canon says:

*When the body's at peace, the Zen way is enriched.*

*When eating and drinking, know what's sufficient,*

*Take joy in a life of quiet seclusion,*

*The heart filled with joyful peace is energyladen.*

*This is what is called the teaching of all Buddhas.*

The second thing to regulate is sleep.

Sleep is a time of darkness and doubt, which should not be indulged in. If you sleep too much, you not only waste time which could be spent in refining sacred meditation, you also lose precious time for Gongfu (kungfu) practice, and lead the heart-mind into darkness. If the roots of compassion are not deep, the first awakening to enlightenment will not be lasting.

Regulating sleep makes spirit and breath pure and clean and the heart bright and peaceful.

Thus the Buddhist canon says: *If during the first night watch and the last night watch you waste your time, and do not during this time control sleep due to such causal conditions you will pass through your whole life empty, and nothing will be attained.*

The third, fourth, and fifth things to regulate are the body, the breath, and the heart-mind. Since these three faculties are used together, they cannot be treated separately. Since there is a beginning, middle, and ending to the practice of meditation, there is a relative difference in how one enters into, abides in, and comes out of Zen contemplation. When entering Zen meditation the first thing which you the practitioner must do is, if you wish to enter *samādhi* is to properly regulate the body. This must be done outside the state of meditation. Working, resting, walking, stopping, in motion or rest, whatever you do, you must in all things choose with care and discretion.

If your actions are coarse and rough,

then your breath and Qi energy will follow in accord, i.e., your Qi energy will become coarse, the heart-mind will be dissipated and hard to control, and when it's time to sit in meditation you'll find it a bother; the heart will not be at peace. Because of this, even when you are outside the state of meditation, you must still use your heart-mind in a way not contrary to the "skillful means" (*upāya*) of meditation.

Then, adjust the belt and your robes a bit so that they are neat and won't come undone when meditating. Next, attend to your hands. Lay the left hand, palm up, onto top of the right palm, with the thumbs slightly touching. Place both palms thus held together on top of the left leg, and pull the two hands toward the body so that they come to rest beneath the navel, bringing calming peace to the heart.

Next, regulate the body by moving backward and forward and flexing the limbs and joints seven or eight times, as one does in self massage, not letting arms and legs lean unevenly. Continue to adjust the body, by sitting up straight, keeping the back erect without sagging to the front or back. Then adjust the head and neck, so

that the tip of the nose lines up with the belly button, bending neither left or right, held neither too low nor too high, face even and body settled properly.

Now open the mouth and exhale all impure Qi breath from the chest. The method of expelling the breath is: open the mouth and exhale breath, and as you let it go, see with your mind all of the divisions of the body, all of the blockages in the channels of the body, to be expelled with the breath as you exhale.

When done, close the mouth, and inhale pure clean air through the nose. At this point you must sit straight in the Zen position, just as if you were a stone, not letting the head, body or limbs move.

To sum it all up in a few words, the body should not be too loose or too rigid, if you want to keep the body regulated.

{The Zen master Zhi Yi, we believe, lived during 538AD – 597AD. The above article is an abridged version from a chapter from *Zen is for Everyone - The Xiao Zhi Guan text* - by Zhi Yi - translated by Micael Saso}



You are a beautiful soul hidden by the trench coat of the Ego.

- Mike Dola



- Compiled by Ratna Vishwanath

### Introduction

A Jyotirlinga is a shrine where Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of a *jyotirlingam*. *jyoti* means 'radiance' and *lingam* the 'Image' or 'Sign' of Shiva. It is the radiant sign of The Almighty or The Supreme Being, the Supreme Shiva, the partless reality.

Originally, there were supposed to be sixty-four *jyotirlinga-s* out of which twelve are considered to be highly auspicious and holy. *jyotirlinga-s* have tremendous power because they were consecrated and made in a certain way. They are located at certain geographically and astronomically significant points. *jyotirlinga-s* are highly revered among the Hindus.

There is no unique appearance to mark the *jyotirlinga-s*. It is believed by some that you can see these *linga-s* as columns of fire piercing through the earth after you reach a high level of spiritual attainment.

The twelve *jyotirlinga* sites in India take the name of the presiding deity. Each of them is considered a different manifestation of Lord Shiva. The primary deity/ image in all these sites is the '*lingam*' which represents the infinite nature of Lord Shiva.

According to Śiva Mahāpurāṇa, Brahmā and Vishnu had an argument as to who, among the Trinity, is superior. To settle the debate, Supreme God Shiva pierced the three worlds appearing as a huge Infinite Pillar of Light - the *jyotirlinga* - which later cooled into the Holy Mountain Annāmalai

(on which the temple of Arunāchaleshvara is located). Vishnu and Brahmā split their ways, proceeding downwards and upwards respectively to find the end of the light in either direction. Brahmā lied that he found out the end, while Vishnu conceded his defeat. This lie of Brahmā angered Shiva, making him curse Brahmā that he would never be worshipped.

### The twelve *jyotirlinga* are

- Somnātha : at Saurashtra in Gujarat
- Mallikārjuna : at Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh
- Mahākāleshwara : at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh
- Omkāreshwara : in Madhya Pradesh
- Kedārnātha : in Uttarakhand
- Bhimāshankara : at Dākini near Pune in Maharashtra
- Vishwanātha : at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh
- Tryambakeshwara : at Nashik in Maharashtra
- Vaidyanātha : the Baidyanātha Temple in Deoghar District of Jharkhand or the Vaidyanātha temple in Parali in Maharashtra
- Nāgeshwara : in Dwarka, Gujarat
- Rāmeshwara : at Rāmeshwaram in Tamil Nadu
- Ghrishneshwara : at Verul near Ellora, Aurangabad in Maharashtra

**Two *jyotirlinga-s* are on the sea shore, three *jyotirlinga-s* on river banks, four *jyotirlinga-s* in the heights of the mountains and three *jyotirlinga-s* in villages located in meadows.**



The location of the twelve  *jyotirlinga-s*  is said to be an interesting geometrical placement on the map of India, forming a golden spiral or a Fibonacci spiral.

The following  *shloka*  (verse) /  *stotra*  (hymn) gives the names and location of the twelve  *jyotirlinga-s*  as also the benefits of reciting the same. One who recites this  *stotra*  evening and morning is said to be relieved of all sins committed in the preceding seven lives. One who visits these gets all his wishes fulfilled and one's  *karma*  gets eliminated as Maheshwara is pleased with the worship.

द्वादश ज्योतिर्लिंगस्तोत्रम्  
सौराष्ट्रे सोमनाथं च श्रीशैले मल्लिकार्जुनम्। उज्जयिन्यां  
महाकालमोङ्कारममलेश्वरम्॥  
परत्यां वैद्यनाथं च डाकिन्यां भीमशङ्करम्। सेतुबन्धे तु  
रामेशं नागेशं दारुकावने॥  
वाराणस्यां तु विश्वेशं त्र्यम्बकं गौतमीतटे। हिमालये तु  
केदारं घृश्मेशं च शिवालये॥  
प्रतानि ज्योतिर्लिंगानि सायं प्रातः पठेन्नरः।  
सप्तजन्मकृत् पापं स्मरणेन विनश्यति॥  
एतेषां दर्शनादेव पातकं नैव तिष्ठति। कर्मक्षयो भवेत्तस्य  
यस्य तुष्टो महेश्वरः॥

This is the first of a series of articles on the twelve  *jyotirlinga-s* .

### 1. Somnātha Jyotirlinga

Considered to be the first of the 12  *jyotirlinga-s* , the Somnātha Temple in Gujarat is situated near Veraval in Prabhas Kshetra, Kathlawad district. This is a highly revered pilgrimage site in the country. Traditionally,  *dvādashā jyotirlinga*  pilgrimage begins with the Somnātha temple.

There is a legend as to how this  *jyotirlinga*  came into being.

According to the Shiva  *Purāna* , the moon was married to the 27 daughters of



Daksha Prajāpati; among them, he loved Rohini the most. Seeing his negligence towards the other wives, Prajāpati cursed the moon that it would lose all its radiance. A disturbed moon along with Rohini came to Somnātha and worshipped the  *sparśa lingam*  after which he was blessed by Shiva to regain his lost beauty and shine. On his request, Lord Shiva assumed the name Somachandra and resided there eternally. He became famous by the name Somnātha.

The temple has been destroyed and rebuilt many times. The present Somnātha temple is an elegant reflection of the past glory of Somnātha. Built in Kallash Mahāmeruprasāda style, it was constructed under the guidance of Prabhāshankar Sompurā.

The temple has a  *garbhagriha* , a  *sabhāmandapa*  and a  *nrtyamandapa*  with a 150 feet-high  *shikhara* . The  *kalasha*  at the top of the  *shikhara*  weighs 10 tons and the  *dhvajdanda*  is 27 feet tall and a foot in circumference.

The temple has a large central hall with entrances on three sides, each protected by a lofty porch. The temple carvings and sculptures speak about the great artistic endeavor of the craftsmen who built it. The main gate faces east, and the sense of space and light is glorious.

The sanctum of the temple is spacious. The *shivalinga* is huge, and one can see the priests performing different pujas. The doors have silver frames and the ceilings are golden. There are small temples of Ganesh and Hanumān after the entrance and there is a *nandi*. Then comes the *garbhagriha*, where one can have *darshana* of the  *jyotirlinga*. There is also an idol of Tripurasundari on the right side of the sanctum and an idol of Ambikā mātāji on the left side.

Being the first revered  *jyotirlinga*, various *yagna*-related rituals have an importance in Somnātha. *raśmi dhvajārohan* at Somnātha temple is a great event for the devotee. Anyone can perform it for a designated fee. The temple authorities provide a saffron-coloured *dhvajā* (flag), which has embossed symbols of *nandi* and *trishul* on it. The devotee performs *pujā* of the *dhvajā* near the *garbhagriha*. A temple employee then takes the *dhvajā* to the top of the temple and unfurls it.

Somnātha Trust Management is among the best of the *dvādasha jyotirlinga* management trusts.

The Trust at present has undertaken several developmental activities, which include the plan to develop various places and expand facilities.

Somnātha Museum is just 100 meters away from the Somnātha temple. Here one can see the ruins of the ancient Somnātha temple as also the waters brought from around the world for *prāṇapratishthā* (consecration) ritual. It is a well-preserved *sāra*.

Prabhas Kshetra, being the land of Lord Sri Krishna's *dehatyāga* (giving up the body), is an important place for Vaishnavas.



Lord Krishna ended his earthly journey here, along with his elder brother Balarāma. This is the place where Sri Krishna was hit by an arrow of the poacher named Jarā. After being hit by the arrow, Lord Sri Krishna arrived at the holy confluence of the Hiran, Kapila and Saraswati Rivers, where they join the ocean. He performed His divine *dehatyāga leelā* on the sacred and peaceful banks of River Hiran.

## 2. Mallikārjuna Jyotirlinga

Located in the picturesque environment of Nallamalāl Hills is 'Srisaillam'. The Mallikārjuna  *jyotirlinga* at Srisaillam (literally, holy hill/ mountain) is the abode of Shiva and Shakti. It is on the banks of the river Krishnā in Kurnool district in the southern part of Andhra Pradesh.

The temple has numerous shrines. The presiding deities are Mallikārjuna Swāmy, one of the twelve  *jyothirlinga*-s and Bhramarāmbā Devi, one of the eighteen *mahāshakti*-s; both are believed to be *svayambhu* or self-manifested. The co-existence of the  *jyotirlinga* and the *mahāshakti* in the same temple is unique.

There is a common belief that this holy *kshetram* (holy precincts) exists from time immemorial. In the traditional Hindu mythology, this *kshetram* is identified as the *kailāsa* (heavenly abode of Lord Shiva

and Pārvati) on the earth and named as *ilā-kailāsam*. It is believed that Sati devi's upper lip fell here when Shiva carried Sati devi's corpse and wandered during the Daksha *yajna* episode.

According to the Shiva *Purāṇa*, Lord Ganesha was married off before Kārtikeya and Kārtikeya was angered by this. He went away to the Kraunch Mountain. All the gods tried to console him but in vain. Ultimately Shiva-Pārvati themselves travelled to the mountain but were turned away by Kārtikeya. Seeing their son in such a state they were very hurt and Shiva assumed the form of a *gyotirlinga* and resided on the mountain by the name of Mallikārujna. *mallikā* means Pārvati, while Arjuna is another name of Shiva.

Across the river Krishnā, there are the ruins of the Chandragupta nagara, which is mentioned in the Skanda *purāṇa* and also in some of the celebrated literary works of 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

According to Agni *purāṇa*, in *kritayuga* the demon king Hiranyakasyapa did penance at the *kshetram* and worshipped God Mallikārjuna Swāmy.

The Skanda *purāṇa* proclaims that in the *tretāyuga*, during their exile, Rāma and Sītā visited this *kshetram* and consecrated *sahasra linga-s* (one thousand *linga-s*) here.

In *dvāpara yuga*, the Pāndavā-s, during their exile, spent some time in this *kshetram* and worshipped the deities. Even now there is a pond at the footway to Srisailam called as Bheemuni Kolanu.

Bhagavān Dattātreyā is said to have done penance at this *kshetram*; to this day, there is a tree (*sthala vriksham*) named Dattātreyā *vriksham* in the temple complex.

In *kaliyuga*, Śrī Ādishankara stayed here and composed his Shivānandalahari. He also established *śrī cakra* in Bhramarāmbā sanctum.

A part of the inscriptional evidence, the architectural features of the temple complex of Srisailam attest the patronage of the Chālukyas (AD 624-848). The Kakatiyas (AD 953-1323) contributed much for the growth of the temple. The period of Reddi Kings (AD 1325-1448) is the golden age of Srisailam in that almost all rulers of this dynasty did celebrated service for the temple.

Sri Krishnadevarāya visited the shrine in 1516 AD; he constructed 'Salumandapas' on both the sides of the car street. Srisailam was a witness to the fall of the Vijayanagara rule and this *kshetram* is said to have lost its erstwhile glory.

In the year 1674 AD Chatrapati Shivāji, the great Marāthā King visited Srisailam. He is said to have restored the festivals of the temple.

The temple is enclosed by tall walls measuring 183 m (600 ft) by 152 m (499 ft) and 8.5 m (28 ft) tall. There are a number of sculptures in the precincts, one rising above another.

In 1949 the temple came under the control of the Endowments Department and attained its past glory after it became accessible by road during the year 1956.

*Sikharam* is the most important of all sightseeing spots in Srisailam. It is the highest peak of the Srisailam mountain range and is 2830 feet about the sea level. There is a viewing point, wherefrom one can see the Mallikārjuna temple. Skanda *purāṇa* states that one shall be emancipated from all sins and attain *mukti* (become free from the vicious cycle of

birth and death) by just seeing the Srisailam *śikharam*.

There is a temple of Lord Ganapati present beside the main road before arriving at Srisailam. It is believed that Lord Ganesh records the names of pilgrims who come to Srisailam and shows the list to Lord Shiva so that they will be blessed, so he is called *sāksīganapati*.

Legend says that the benediction attained by having one glance of Srisailam

(*darshanam*) is equal to having given lakhs of donation in Kurukshetra, taking two thousand holy dips in Gangā, residing for lakhs of years in Varanasi, or doing austerities at the banks of the river Narmadā.

Sources:  
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It needs honesty of thinking, clarity, the desire to be open,  
to invite 'what is' without fear of suffering.  
Then the barrier between the inner and the outer is non-existent.  
The inner then is the outer, and the outer is the inner.  
But to have that integration,  
there must be a comprehension of the process of the mind.

- J Krishnamurti (CW, Ojai, 1949)





- Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon

**Lineage of the Rishi**

History was one of the sixty-four arts that were taught in the Gurukula-s in ancient Bhārata. We find therein enthralling accounts of the lives and works of our great *maharshi-s*, *muni-s* and *tapasvi-s*. Sage Mārkaṇḍeya figures as one amongst the greatest *purāṇapurusha-s*.

Rishi Mārkaṇḍeya is celebrated as a devotee of both Śiva and Viṣṇu and is mentioned in a number of stories in the *Purāṇas*. The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, in particular, consists of a dialogue between Mārkaṇḍeya and a Sage called Jaimini. A number of chapters in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* are dedicated to his conversations and prayers (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, canto 12, chapter 8 Mārkaṇḍeya's prayers to Nara Narāyaṇa). He is also mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*. Rishi Mārkaṇḍeya is venerated by all Hindu traditions. Mārkaṇḍeya Theertha, where the Sage wrote the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, is a place venerated by the Hindus and is situated on the trekking route to the Yamunotri Shrine in Uttarkāshi district, Uttarakhand.

Sage Bhrigu was born in the Swayambhu Manvantara and is known as Brahmā's *mānasaputra* because he was



born out of Brahmā's mind. He had a wife named Khyāti and they had three children - two sons and a daughter. All of them belonged to the great Rishi tradition. They found out truths not perceivable by our senses. That is why they are referred to as '*ateendriyarta drashta rishis*'. Sage Mrikandu was one such born in the great Rishi family. He had a wife named Marudmati. The couple had no children and were very worried.

Finally, they decided to take refuge in Lord Śiva. They decided to perform severe *tapas* to please Him. At long last, Śiva was pleased and appeared before the Sage and his wife. They sought from the Lord the boon of getting a son. Lord Śiva agreed but asked the couple whether they wanted a gifted righteous son but with a short lifespan or a dull-headed, low-witted child but one with a long life. The wise Rishi in all his wisdom opted for the former, a child with all good human qualities, an exemplary son, destined to die at the age of sixteen. Soon thereafter, a male child was born to them and they named him Mārkaṇḍeya. As he was born in the Bhrigu clan, he was also called Bhārgava, Bhārgavottama, Bhrigukulashārdula, Bhrigunandana and by many other names.

**Conquest of Lord Yama**

He was an intellectual giant from birth.

As a young boy, he studied and mastered the Vedas and *shāstra-s* and became a paragon amongst human beings. Young Mārkaṇḍeya showed great liking for meditation and prayer. He understood that there was nothing in this world that could not be achieved by *tapas* and so he decided that through severe penance, he would conquer death. He grew up to be a great devotee of Lord Śiva and on the day of his destined death he continued worshipping Śiva in the form of a *śivaliṅga* and continuously kept chanting the powerful *mahāmṛityunjaya mantra*. As the final moments approached, the messengers of Lord Yama, the God of death, came with ropes to take his life away, but they could not do so because of the power of his *tapas*. Ultimately, Yama himself came, thinking he would be able to do what his men could not. In the meantime, Mārkaṇḍeya continued to chant the mantras praising Lord Śiva



holding the *śivaliṅga* in a tight embrace. When Yama cast his *pāsha* (rope) around the sage's neck, the rope went around Mārkaṇḍeya and the *śivaliṅga* together. The *śivaliṅga* instantly broke into two and Lord Śiva emerged from it in all His fury and attacked Yama for his act of aggression. In the battle that ensued, Lord Śiva defeated Yama who conceded and asked for pardon. The ever benevolent Lord Śiva pardoned him on condition that the devout youth should be allowed to live forever. As a result of this act, Śiva is known as *kālāntaka* (ender of death or conqueror

of time and death). It is said that little Mārkaṇḍeya then composed the *mahāmṛityunjaya stotra* in praise of his savior.

It is said that this event took place on the banks of River Markanda in Kurukshetra district. Today a magnificent temple stands on this site and is known as Mārkaṇḍeshwar Mahādeva temple. According to another opinion, this is believed to have happened in a place called Thrukkadiyur, Tamil Nadu.

In course of time, Mārkaṇḍeya married a girl by the name of Dhumoma and after a few years, the couple were blessed with a son whom they named Vedashira.

#### Glory of Sage Mārkaṇḍeya

Sage Mārkaṇḍeya was a great *tapasvī*. When Indra saw him do great *tapas*, he got frightened as usual, thinking that the Sage would get his seat. So he sent Kāmadeva along with Vasantha and a few *apsarā-s* to disturb his *tapas*. As they came close to the place Mārkaṇḍeya was, they found the whole place had been transformed into a paradise where nature bloomed in all its glory. The *apsarā-s* began to dance and the *gandharva-s* began to sing melodiously. It was an opportune moment for Manmatha (Cupid) to act. He shot five arrows at the Sage but all his efforts proved powerless. He could not disturb Mārkaṇḍeya's *tapas*. This was the power of his *tapas* which he did for thousands of years at the end of which the

Lords Nara and Nārāyaṇa appeared before him. When Mārkaṇḍeya asked them for a boon. Mārkaṇḍeya prayed that he be shown the illusory power also known as the Vaishnavi māyā since Nara and Nārāyaṇa were incarnations of the supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa. The boon was granted and he saw the power māyā wielded.

It is said in Bhāgawataṁ that once when Sage Mārkaṇḍeya was performing *sandhyāvandanam* on the banks of the River Pushpabhadra, a terrible storm began all of a sudden. Black clouds covered the sky and there was frightening thunder and lightning. Rain poured in torrents. Earth was engulfed by oceans from all sides. It appeared to the Sage as though all three worlds would be drowned. Everything in the world, humans, plants, animals and other creatures had lost all hopes of survival. There was great confusion everywhere and even the great Sage Mārkaṇḍeya was filled with fear, concern and confusion. He realized that this was the great deluge or *mahāpralaya*. He had a strange feeling that he was not able to think clearly. He was very hungry and that added to his misery. In this way, Sage Mārkaṇḍeya spent thousands of years ensnared by the tentacles of Lord Mahāviṣṇu's māyā. To fulfill his wish Mahāviṣṇu appeared in the form of a beautiful little child lying on a leaf. As soon as the Sage's eyes fell on the divine child, all his pain, weariness and anguish disappeared and he experienced complete bliss. As he came near the child, he was sucked - like a small insect - into the child's nostrils by the sheer force of the child's breath. What he saw inside the child was beyond description. There Mārkaṇḍeya Rishi discovered all the worlds, the seven regions and the seven seas, the sky,

thousands of constellations of stars, the sky, the mountains, forests, *deva-s*, *rākṣasa-s*, towns and villages with people of various *varṇa-s* and *āśrama-s* doing their duty, the five elements, etc. It was a fascinating sight. In fact, the entire cosmos was there in front of him in all its reality. The Sage did not know what to make of all this. He began to pray to Lord Viṣṇu. No sooner had he started, than he came out of the child's mouth. In this way, Sage Mārkaṇḍeya got to see the illusory potency of Lord Nārāyaṇa. It is then that he composed Mukundāṣṭakam.

#### **Presence across epochs**

One day when Lord Śiva and Pārvatī Devi were travelling in the sky, they happened to see Mārkaṇḍeya doing intense *tapas*. On seeing this Pārvatī Devi asked Lord Śiva as to why, in spite of fully surrendering himself to the Lord, the Sage had not got what he deserved. So both of them decided to come down to earth and speak to the Sage. The Sage received them with devotion and worshipped them. Then the Lord spoke to the Sage and told him that he was a great Brahmarshi and that both Sri Hari and Himself respect all *sādhu-s* who are peaceful within and without, are detached, love everything, human, plant or animal, animate or inanimate objects. He also told the Sage that all those who have fixed their attention on the almighty are granted immortality to sustain righteousness in this world, so that they can practice and preach *dharma* in order to make ordinary mortals understand the nuances of dharma. Hearing this, the Sage was overwhelmed and asked Śiva to bless him with strength and the will to have devotion to God and all those who love God. Hearing this, Lord Śiva was very pleased

and blessed him with the boon that the Sage will remain famous in all the *kalpa*-s (a *kalpa* is a measurement of time and is equal to a day in Lord Brahmā's life) and that he will never grow old and live forever and will compose the *Purāna*. So saying, the Lord and Pārvatī Devi left. Later, Sage Mārkandeya wrote the very famous epic called the Mārkandeya *purāna*.

The Sage thus having earned a long life with the blessings of Lord Siva, we find him in both Tretāyuga and Dwāpara Yuga. Sage Mārkandeya was a beacon for all ages. When King Dasharatha performed the *putrakameshtī yāga* in order to beget children, The Sage served as the *ritwika* at this *yāga*. He was one amongst the greats in the court of Sri Rāma. He occupied a pride of place in the court of Yudhisthira too. The Sage gave *darshan* to the Pāndava-s at Dwaithavana and Kāmyakavana when they were in the forest undergoing great misery.

He was a true friend in need. When the Pāndava-s were living in the Kāmyakavana forest, Sage Mārkandeya happened to go there. Yudhisthira was in trouble. The great Sage consoled him and tried to infuse confidence into his mind saying that great people never deviate from the path of righteousness ever in the face of the worst possible danger and citing a number of instances and stories to prove his point. He narrated to them the story of Sri Rāma and of Sāvitrī who never swerved from the path of *dharma*. He advised Draupadi too to have courage and never abandon the path of righteousness. As Sage Mārkandeya had seen the secrets of creation, its beginning, its course and the end, he could pacify Yudhisthira. He told him that in the past, humans were very pure

because they followed a certain code of conduct which helped them maintain a life of peace and plenty. They were righteous and truthful. They always had God in their minds and so had no problems or hurdles which they could not cross. They got all that they desired and lived for thousands of years. But in course of time, they got into anger and desires, followed by greed and attachment and they came to be steeped in misery because of *karmapāsha*. Thus the sage explained to him the importance of *karma*. He also told him about controlling one's senses and keeping one's mind pure and how this can raise a man from the mundane to divinity. He also gave him a detailed account of man's journey to the abode of Yama and made it clear to Yudhisthira that the only one force that is true and real is that of Sri Krishna.

He also gave him a detailed account of the life to be in Kaliyuga. This shows us the Sage's ability to foresee the future. His description of the incarnation of Kalki is another instance to prove this point. The Sage was always with the Pāndava-s whenever they were in trouble. He was their well-wisher on all such occasions. The Sage was with the Pāndava-s when they went to look at the great court hall which Maya had built. He was present when Bhishma, lying on a bed of arrows at the end of the Mahābhārata war advised Yudhisthira on *varṇa dharma* and *āshrama dharma*. (There are four *varṇa*-s namely *brāhmaṇa*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *shudra*. There are four *āshrama*-s in a man's life namely *bālyā*, *grihastā*, *vānaprasthā* and *sanyāsa*). He was present when Bhishma cast away his body. When the Pāndava-s finally decided to go to heaven, Mahāprasthāna (meaning leaving one's

home for good on one's journey to the other world), Sage Mārkaṇḍeya was present there, as Yudhisthira had expressed a desire to worship him and get his blessings. The Sage obliged and all throughout supported the Pāṇḍava-s advising them at every stage.

The Devi Māhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya *purāna* is one of the most important texts of *shakti* tradition. Sati *purāna*, a secret portion of the Mārkaṇḍeya *Purāṇa* says that Goddess Pārvatī gave him a boon to write a text on Her Veera Charitra (valorous character). This text is known as the famous Durgā Saptashati or Devi Māhātmya. The place where he wrote this is known as Yamkeshwar. His compositions *Skandanāma sankeertana* and Sri Krishna mahimā are examples to show the depth

of knowledge he had of Lord Hari and Hara and all the devatā-s. By telling the blind Dhritarāshtra the story of the killing of Tripurāsura, the Sage tried to make him realize that ignorance of non-righteousness and the failure to remove all sensuous delights will never help anyone reach heights of greatness.

Sage Mārkaṇḍeya, the best amongst great sages became a role model by practising what he preached. His story rests fully on *dharma*, infusing confidence in those who listen to it, creating in them a great sense of respect for the sage. The life values he practised and held high are meant for our lives as seekers of material fortune and for the growth of our spiritual wealth and it is our duty to realize this as the greatest truth.



Meditation is a beautiful observation of the moment.  
Bring your thoughts to your higher self,  
and open your mind to your God.

- David Cunliffe





- *Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906-1993)*

**The Buddha's  
Prāṇāyāma:**

It is essential that we understand this profound truth: the *prāṇa* body is the conditioner of the flesh-body. We ought to know that there exist two *kāyas* (bodies at different levels of perception). We know about the first level, the flesh-body, but we hardly know the *prāṇa*-body at all. Therefore, it is very important to understand the *prāṇa*-body, as it can condition the flesh-body in beneficial ways.

In India, the *prāṇāyāma* is considered to be one of the highest and most important subjects for study. While different schools vary in their explanations and meanings for the *prāṇa*-body, all schools seek to regulate the *prāṇa*-body so that it conditions the flesh-body appropriately.

We need to study and train the breath in order to use it to condition the flesh-body. Since we cannot regulate the flesh-body directly, we regulate it indirectly. We study the *prāṇa*-body and practice regulating it. By learning to regulate the *prāṇa*-body, we regulate the flesh-body making it calm and peaceful.

We develop this knowledge through practice and training until we are able to regulate the *prāṇa*. In this way we gradually develop a good, healthy body that is ready for concentrating the *citta* (mind, heart, consciousness). Both the body and mind



are prepared to do their respective duties.

Before the Buddha's time people practiced many types of *prāṇāyāma*. When the Buddha appeared, he too practiced *prāṇāyāma*; he then

incorporated it into his system of contemplating the breath. And through this system of contemplating the breath, we regulate life and the body.

Finally, we come to noting and contemplating our breathing. In order to begin, we must develop *saññā* (mindfulness or reflective awareness) by being mindful of each in-breath and out-breath. We train in *saññā* by noting that we are about to breathe in or breathe out. Let the breathing continue comfortably and normally. Let it be natural. Do not interfere with it in any way. Then contemplate each breath with mindfulness. How are we breathing in? What is the out-breath like? Use *saññā* to note the ordinary breath.

We first develop and train *saññā* by using a technique called "following," or "chasing." We imagine the in-breath starting from the tip of the nose and ending at the navel. We imagine our out-breath starting at the navel and ending at the tip of the nose. In between these two points is the space through which the breath runs in and out. We contemplate with *saññā* the properties of this movement in and out, from the tip of the nose to the navel and back again. Back and

forth. Do not allow any gaps or lapses. This is the first lesson: contemplate the breath with *sati*.

Even though we are not medical students, we still know that the breath only goes into the lungs, that it does not go all the way down to the navel. Imagining that the breath ends at the navel is merely a useful convention; we do not hold it to be true. It is just an assumption based on our feeling and sensitivity of the movement of the breathing. When we breathe, we feel movement all the way down to the navel. We use that feeling as the basis of our practice and follow the breath between the tip of the nose and the navel.

The distinction as to whether it is *sati* that follows the breath in and out or whether *sati* forces the mind to follow the breath in and out is not important at this point. All that matters is to contemplate the breath as if chasing it, without ever losing it. The breath goes in and stops a moment. Then it comes out and pauses a moment. In and out, in and out, with short breaks in between. We must note everything and not let anything slip by. We do not allow empty spaces where the mind might wander but keep the mind constantly focused on breathing in and out.

This is the first lesson to learn, the foundation for all the rest. It may not be so easy. Maybe it will take three days, three weeks, or three months until we are able to do it. This is the first step, the first task we must accomplish. Here we are merely explaining the method of training; it is the practice that counts.

You may not get very far in a ten day course at Suan Mokkh or some other meditation center, but it is important to know what needs to be done and to get



started doing it. Once you correctly understand the method, you can practice on your own until you are successful. So begin with this simple step: contemplate the breath as it moves between the nose and the navel without leaving any chances for the mind to wander elsewhere.

#### **Many Kinds of Breath**

As we practice "following," we have the opportunity to observe the various characteristics of the breath. For example, we can feel the long and the short duration of the breath. Thus, we learn naturally about the long breath and short breath. We can observe the coarse and fine nature of the breath. Further, we can observe its smoothness and bumpiness. Later we will observe the reactions to these qualities. In this first step, however, we contemplate the different kinds of breath; long and short, coarse and fine, easy and uneasy. Begin to observe the various kinds by experiencing them with *sati*.

We must learn to observe in greater detail, that is, to observe the reaction or influence of each different kind of breathing. What reactions do they cause? How do they influence our awareness? For example, when each breath is long how does this affect our awareness?

What reactions do short breaths cause? What are the influences of coarse and fine breathing, of comfortable and uncomfortable breathing? We should observe the different types of breath and their various influences until we can distinguish clearly how the long and the short breaths, coarse and fine breaths, and comfortable and uncomfortable breaths differ. We must learn to know the reactions to these various properties of the breath. Likewise, we must learn to know when these qualities influence our awareness, our sensitivity, our mind.

It is also important for us to note the effect or flavor of each kind of breath. The flavors that arise as different kinds of feeling are: happiness, unhappiness, *dukkha* (suffering), annoyance, and contentment. We observe and experience the flavors or effects caused by the long breath and the short breath, by the coarse breath and the fine breath, and by the easy breath and the uneasy breath.

Find out why they have different flavors. For instance, we can see that the long breath gives a greater sense of peace and well-being; it has a happier taste than the short breath. Different kinds of breath bring different kinds of happiness. We learn to analyze and distinguish the various flavors that characterize the different

kinds of breathing we have scrutinized.

Finally we can discover the various causes that render our breathing either long or short. We gradually learn this by ourselves. What causes the breathing to be long? What kind of mood makes the breath short? Thus, we also come to know the causes and conditions that make the breath long or short.

There is a method that we can use to regulate the breath in these beginning steps to make it longer or shorter. This technique is called "counting," and it trains us to change the length of our breathing. For example, as we inhale, we count from one to five. If during out-breath we count at the same pace but from one to ten, that breath will lengthen accordingly.

During an ordinary breath we only count to five. For a short breath we might count to three and that shortens the breath as we wish. We should always count at the same speed, for if we change the pace of counting, it will negate the effect of counting higher or lower. By counting, we can regulate the duration of each breath. By using this special training technique we can lengthen or shorten the breath. We do not to use it all the time, but we can employ it occasionally to help us regulate the breath or to get to know it better. We can give it a try whenever we choose.



Free choice is one of the highest of all the mental processes.

- Dr. Maria Montessori

## What do we learn from Upanishads?

Once in a while,  
leave the driver's seat!

- Swami Chidānanda

We invest so much in the sense of "I do, I won, I failed," etc. that we remain burdened with regrets, anxiety and fear most of the time. Even the successful ones among us have "no time to smell the roses"!

Here and there, even for short durations, we must "let go" of this illusion that either the world will collapse if we relax

or we will be in deep trouble if we stand aside and just watch. Much of our insecurity is because we don't trust the "other power" that the Upanishads speak of - as Atman or Brahman, that popular religions speak of - as God.

Are you sure you are really driving in this journey of life?

Think! Better still, let go of thinking!

*Basis: Kathopanishad 2.2.5 - There's "another power" that drives "all that you do"!*



- Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams  
your master;  
If you can think—and not make thoughts  
your aim;

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!







**ETERNAL VIBRATIONS**  
**LACK OF SELF-CONTROL WILL SPELL DOOM**



अकृतात्मा लोभेन  
सहजेन विनश्यति ॥वन-पर्व 2.38॥  
नाकृतात्मा वेदयति  
धर्माधर्म-विनिश्चयम् ॥वन-पर्व 215.18॥

*akṛitātmā lobhena  
sahajena vīnashyati (2.38)  
nākṛitātmā vedayati  
dharmādharmā-vīnīśchayam (215.18)*

A person lacking in self-control, due to greed  
(that naturally overpowers him / her)  
will perish. Someone without self-control cannot discern the right and the wrong.  
(Mahā-bhārata, Vana-Parva 2.38 and 215.18)

{The above two half-shlokas from the 3rd canto of Mahā-bhārata show how our  
ability to restrain our senses (*indriyas*) is pivotal in right living and spiritual  
progress. - Editors}





## **FOWAI FORUM**

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