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Inner Flame

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The 'Sanātana Dharma' has always recognized that different faiths are but different methods to draw the water from the same well. Kashmir (erstwhile the land of Kashyapa Rishi) is a breathtakingly beautiful land where the people who followed Hindu Shaivism have had to endure waves of invasion. Please meet 'Lal Ded' the lady saint of Kashmir whose Lal-vāk's (esoteric poetry) weave non-dualistic philosophy of Shaivism and Islamic Sufism into a unified tapestry of composite Kashmiri culture that celebrates her experience of liberation.

Swāmi Chidānandaji, in his continuing series on 'Lifelong learning', turns the spotlight on the source of luminous light that is at the root of this ability to learn. As usual, he packs a whole bunch of tools, insights and tricks to help us see through the veil.

'The Beggar' is the story of all of us who are caught in the great illusion of *samsāra*.

In our ongoing series on Jyotirlingas, we cover the Mahākāleshwara and Omkāreshwara temples located in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

The amazing story of Sage Agastya will surely enthrall you as he has left his stamp of greatness in geographical locations as far as Indonesia, Sri Lanka apart from India and across time span of over Tretā and Dwāpara Yugas.

There is interesting take on the qualities of 'Spiritual Warrior' from a practitioner of Martial arts.

Finally, there is a charming poem 'Slow Dance' on how we all must learn to slow down to enjoy this journey of life.

Hope you will enjoy this offering of liberating insights!

Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd)
For Swāmi Chidānanda



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Editor

Swāmi Chidānanda

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A rare sketch of Lalleshwari -



Courtesy J.K. Mirza

So said Lal Ded:
You are the Sky, You
are the earth
You are the day, the
very air, the night,
You are the grain-
offering, sandal
paste, flowers and
water too
You are everything,
O Lord

So what can we offer You?"

And

Passionate, with longing in mine eyes,
Searching wide, and seeking nights and
days,

Lo' I beheld the Truthful One, the Wise,
Here in mine own House to fill my gaze.

(Translated by R.C. Temple)

The above quoted vāk-s (verse-sayings) coming from the heart of a Saint who lived in the 14th century reflect the same viewpoint as does one of the highest declarations of Shri Krishna in the Bhagavat Gita VI.30:

'yo mām pashyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi pashyati|

tasyāham na pranashyāmi sa ca me na pranashyati|| 6:30||

(He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, he never becomes separated from Me, nor do I become

separated from him)

Add to that the *mahāvākya Tat Twam asi/That Thou Art* (Chāndogya Upanishad 6.8.7) establishing the identity of the *paramātmā* and *ātmā* and one clearly sees that Lal Ded, cited as "The Greatest Lady of Last Millennium" was a Self-realized One. She and her insights are acknowledged by both Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims, who affectionately call her Mother Lalla or Granny Lalla (Lal Ded), even today, 7 centuries later. Also known as "Lallayogeshwari", some even refer to as "Lalla, the mystic".



The Cultural Milieu

It was a period of religious and moral fermentation in Kashmir: Buddhism, a once prominent culture, had practically disappeared from the Valley of God; numerous temples and images had been destroyed by earlier Muslim zealots, driving the Hindu worship into the seclusion of the home or to 'natural' (*svayambhu*) images---rocks, ice formations, springs

and the likes. Sanskrit became the language of the learned few while the common man took to a form of *prākṛita* which though retaining its essentials, was yet wholly different from the 'language of the Gods'.

Icon of Kashmiri Shaivism

But like everything in the empirical universe, these conditions also changed with the quiet, unpretentious appearance of Lal Ded who, early in life stood tall among other mystics and saints like Rupa Bhawani, Sheikh Nuruddin, Lassa Sahib, Sati Devi and Mathura Devi to name but a few. Lal Ded, who profoundly influenced the thought and life of her contemporaries, continued the mystical tradition of Shaivism in Kashmir through the Lal *vāk*-s. They are the earliest compositions in the Kashmiri language and form an important part of Kashmiri literature. She was an extraordinary saint of her time who, with her simple worship of the Divine, painted practically the whole of Kashmir with the colour of *Shiv-Bhakti*. The enduring testimony to her unadorned yet profound sayings is that they still touch the Kashmiris' hearts and ears: they are quoted freely as maxims on appropriate occasions even today. They were also mainly responsible in moulding the character of the people and reinforcing the tradition of love and tolerance which characterize them now.

Early Life

Lalita was born into a simple, God-loving family in mid-14th century, in 1317 or 1320 at Pandrethan (ancient Puranadhisthana) four and a half miles from Srinagar. She had a happy childhood where she got her

early grounding in what was to be a phenomenal journey. At home she not only imbibed the atmosphere of piety and religion but also came under the influence of Siddha Srikanth or *Siddha Mol* (venerable Siddha), through whom she learned certain spiritual *sadhānā*-s (disciplines) and whom she ultimately excelled in attainments spiritual. There is evidence of the fact that, in those times, liberal education was imparted to women; from a study of her *vāk*, one is persuaded to believe that she was educated during the early part of her life at her father's house.

Trials And Tribulations

As was the convention of the time she was married at the age of 12 at Pampore (ancient Padmanpora) where, according to the tradition of Kashmiri Pandits, her name was probably changed to Padmāvati. Almost from the beginning she was cruelly treated by her mother-in-law who nearly starved her. This story is preserved in a Kashmiri proverb: Whether they killed a big sheep or a small one, Lalla always had a stone for her dinner - an allusion to her mother-in-law's practice of putting a lumpy stone on her platter and covering it with a thin layer of rice to make it look a big heap, for others to notice and admire her generosity. And yet Lalla never protested, not saying a word against her mother-in-law or her husband who endlessly scolded, criticized and reprimanded her, his ears having been poisoned by his mother. Her kind father-in-law accidentally found out the truth; annoyed with his wife, he, in turn scolded her. This incident invited yet more curses on Lalla.

The Mother-in-law took recourse to

other more reprehensible tricks. It was Lalla's habit to rise early to go to the *ghāta* (a flight of steps leading down to a river) with an earthen pitcher under her arm and before collecting water for home, she would spend time on ablutions and yogic exercises like breath control etc., going across to the temple of *Natakeshaw Bhairava*. Seeing this daily routine, the mother-in-law insinuated to her son that Lalla was not faithful to him. One morning her husband, Nika Bhat, waited for Lalla to return, firm in his resolve to shove her out of his home. He loomed behind the door, a formidable, diabolical form with a stick in his hand and as Padmāvati entered her husband, struck the pitcher hard. It is believed that the pitcher broke into pieces but the water content remained intact in a frozen state. Lalla filled each household pot with water till not a drop more was needed. The broken pitcher was flung outside where at once a fresh water spring appeared. As pointed out by historian Pir Ghulam Hasan this spring went dry in 1925-26 but to this day it is called Laila Trag (trag means "pond").

Flight To Freedom

But, veiled behind the excruciating misery, unknown to those around her, Lalla grew in spiritual stature under the guidance of Siddha Srikanth, her Yoga Guru. The path to liberation is said to be like walking on a razor's edge; it was no different for Lal Ded but she walked the walk in her own unique way, never swerving from her Beloved.

At around the age of 26, the cruelties of her worldly existence and its inconsistencies with her inner faith and

convictions surfaced into her conscious mind which led her to the renunciation of a merely worldly existence and to the discovery of liberty in the life of the spirit. Internally driven by her love for God and externally by the urgent requirement of her fellow countrymen, she gave up the confines of the brick home and entered a home where the sky was her roof.

One *vāk* clearly vocalises her reason for abandoning her home-bound life:

*Dohtataduniyaahastamma may baram
Patatozonoomkenhnatakyah
Haavsa 'Lalli' meialimmaparoom
Para paraKaroomPooryomnazaanh.*

O Blessed one: I entertained this world with all fanciful longings, but ultimately found it whirling and rocking due to greed, hatred and ignorance of the people. Then I understood 'Love' is the essence of God's essence and it appeals to the deepest emotions of men and rouses in them a longing for Truth. I realised something out of nothing. At one time I gave it an understanding with the acquiring of knowledge, the next moment I underwent deep study to seek temporal pleasure but now I confess that it failed to widen my understanding. O Lord! How weary, stale and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world. My brain is whirling round and round I can stand it no longer, my soul is full of discord and dismay. [*vāk* 68: "Voice of Experiences" Lall *vāk* Part Two rendered by B.N. Sopori].

Once she left home, she would only keep the company of *sādhu's* and *pirs*. She did not think in terms of men and women. She would claim that she had yet to

encounter a man, and that is why she went about naked. But once, on seeing Shah Hamdan, an Islamic mystic saint and an effective preacher, she hid herself saying: "I saw a man, I saw a man". As a wandering preacher she led a severely ascetic life, clad in the bareness of one who had forsaken comforts, and by example and precept conveyed her teachings to the masses. It appears that Nature Herself was her protector in her nakedness: her huge belly hung over her private parts, thus leaving her free to roam where His Will took her without the burden of clothes on her shoulders.

Another of her *vāk*'s stands testimony to her initial agony and the subsequent ecstasy:

With a thin rope of untwisted thread

Tow I ever my boat o'er the sea.

Will God hear the prayers that I have said?

Will he safely over carry me?

Water in a cup of unbaked clay,

Whirling and wasting, my dizzy soul

Slowly is filling to melt away.

Oh, how fain would I reach my goal.

and the subsequent ecstasy:

Guru kathhriadiyasManz, bag, rattam.....

"Since I have developed close association with my Guru, I have merged myself completely in him and followed his precepts with heart and soul, my vital powers soared higher and higher, and thus I have washed my mind and body with the sacred waters of Gānga and a strange realization of joy and ecstasy was realised by me and as such I was able to release my soul from bondage of *karma* and transcended the possibility of rebirth,

as such I attained deliverance with all my body intact, now I have become '*jeevanamukta*' [*vāk* 3: "Voice of Experiences" Lall *vāk* Part Two rendered by B.N. Sopori].

Popular Anecdotes

While there are many hagiographic stories of Lal Ded, one example of the high moral teaching which Lalla demonstrated was when, during her nude state, a gang of youthful rowdies mocked her. A sober-minded cloth vendor intervened and chastised them. On seeing his kindness, she asked the vendor for two pieces of ordinary cloth, equal in weight. She put them on either shoulder and continued her wanderings. On the way some had salutations for her and some had gibes. For every such greeting she tied a knot in the cloth, for the salutations in the piece on the right, and for the gibes in the piece on the left. In the evening after her wanderings, she returned the pieces to the vendor and had them weighed. Neither had, of course, gained or lost weight by the knots. She thus brought home to the vendor, and her disciples, that mental equipoise should not be shaken by the manner people greeted or treated a person.

So that her teachings and spiritual experiences might reach the masses, she propagated them in their own language laying the foundations of the rich Kashmiri literature and folklore. More than thirty per cent of the Kashmiri idioms and proverbs derive their origin from her *vāk*-s. Her quatrains are now rather difficult to understand as the language

has undergone so many changes since then but apart from the consideration that they explain the Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir through the Kashmiri language, they exemplify the synthesis of cultures for which Kashmir has always been noted. They are an aggregate of Yoga philosophy replete with references to special Yogic and Shaivism philosophical terms expressive of high thought and spiritual truth, precise, apt and sweet. Lalla fills her teachings with many truths that are common to all religious philosophy. There are in it many touches of Vaishnavism, the great rival of Shaivism, much that is strongly reminiscent of the doctrines and methods of the Muhammadan Sufis who were in India and Kashmir well before her day, and teachings that might be Christian with Biblical analogies, though Indian's knowledge of Christianity must have been very remote and indirect at her date. She castigates the converts and the fanatical followers of the so-called "religions" in the following apt saying:

O Mind why hast thou become
intoxicated at another's expense?
Why hast thou mistaken true for untrue?
Thy little understanding hath made thee
attached to other's religion;
Subdued to coming and going; to birth
and death.

The removal of confusion caused among the masses by the preachings of zealots was the most important object of her mission. Having realised the Absolute Truth, all religions were to her merely paths leading to the same goal:

Shiv chuy thali thalirozan;

Mo zan Hindu to Musalman.

Truk ay chuk pan panunparzanav,

Soy chay Sahivas sati zaniyzan.

Siva pervades every place and thing;
Do not differentiate between Hindu
and Musalman.

You art intelligent, recognise thine own self;
That is the true acquaintance with God.

Recognising that Love alone was both the path and the goal, here and now, Lalla was no believer in good work in this or in former lives, in pilgrimages or austerities. In one of her sayings she criticised the cold and meaningless way in which religious rituals were performed:

God does not want meditations and
austerities

Through love alone canst thou reach the
Abode of Bliss.

Thou mayst be lost like salt in water
Still it is difficult for thee to know God

All labour, to be effective, must be undertaken without thought of profit and dedicated to Him. Exhorting her followers to stick fast to ideals of love and service to humanity, paying no thought to the praise or condemnation that might follow from their observance, she said:

Let them jeer or cheer me,
Let anybody say what he likes;
Let good persons worship me with flowers;
What can any one of them gain I being
pure?

If the world talks ill of me
My heart shall harbour no ill-will
If am a true worshipper of God
Can ashes leave a stain on a mirror?
A strong critic of idolatry she conveyed
as useless and even silly, idol worship

and calls upon the worshippers of stocks and stones to turn to Yogic doctrines and exercises for salvation:

Idol is of stone, temple is of stone,
Above (temple) and below (idol) are one;
Which of them wilt thou worship O foolish
Pandit?

Cause thou the union of mind with Soul.

But Lalla was no bigot; she constantly preached wide and even eclectic doctrines; witness the following and many other instances: "it matters nothing by what name the Supreme is called. He is still the Supreme;" "Be all things to all men;" "the true saint is the servant of all mankind through his humility and loving kindness," "It matters nothing what a man is or what his work of gaining his livelihood may be, so long as he sees the Supreme properly."

She put no value on anything done without the saving belief in Yogic doctrine and practice, one of the results of which is the destruction of the fruits of all work, good or bad. The aspirant should try to attain perfection in this life: all he requires is faith and perseverance:

Siva is with a fine net spread out
He permeates the mortal coils
If thou whilst living canst not see
Him, how canst thou when dead
Take out Self from Self
after pondering over it

She was a firm believer in herself. She became famous talking of the "wine of her sayings" as something obviously precious, and alluded often to her own mode of life, fully believing she had obtained Release:

I saw and found I am in everything
I saw God effulgent in everything.
After hearing and pausing see Siva
The House is His alone; Who am I, Lalla.

Enduring Legacy

The greatness of Lalla lies in giving the essence of her experiences she obtained during the course of her Yoga practices through the language of the common man. She has shown very clearly the evolution of the human being, theory of *nada*, the worries and miseries of a *jeeva* and the way to remove them. The different stages of Yoga with the awakening of the Kundalini and the experiences at the six *chakra*-s have been elucidated by her. Much can, indeed, be said on her work as a poet and more, perhaps, on her work in the spiritual realm. But at a time when the world was suffering from conflict - social, political and economic - her efforts towards removing the differences between man and man needed to be emphasized.

The composite culture and thought she preached and the Orders she founded was an admixture of the non-dualistic philosophy of Shaivism and Islamic Sufism. As long back as the 14th century she preached non-violence, simple living and high thinking and became thus Lalla Arifa for Muhammadans and Lalleshwari for Hindus. She was thus the first among the long list of saints who preached medieval mysticism which later engulfed the whole of India.

The essentiality of Lal Ded's appeal lies in her mystical experience or *anubhava* clothed in intelligible language. Though she did not give rise to any order as such

and did not present any systematized philosophy, yet the direction of her sayings in unmistakable, an ethico-mystical message is inescapable. There is a method in her 'madness' or personal ecstasy. She lays down a moral code and prescribes rules for attaining spiritual salvation.

I held firm the reins of the horse, my mind,
 I controlled well the pranas coursing
 through the ten nādis;
 Then did the nectar of the mystic moon
 Melt and flow, suffusing my whole being,
 The mind thus curved,
 My void merged with the void of pure
 consciousness.

Thus Lal Ded, without rejecting the flesh altogether but accepting it only as a necessary evil, found her spiritual salvation within her own self.

I discovered the Lord
 Within the walls of my own soul.

There are several verses of Lal Ded in which she refers to her attainment of Self-realization and spiritual enlightenment. For her it was a real experience of life. There was no shadow of doubt or uncertainty about it in her mind. And, what is more, there is a tone of tremendous self-confidence and assurance in her verses when she tells us about her mystical illumination. As, for instance, in these lines:

Samsarasayastapasi
Bodhuprakashulobum sahaj
 Into this universe of birth I came
 By Yoga gained the Self-revealing light!
 (Trans. Nila Cram Cook)
Lolukinaruvaalinjbuzum
shankarlobumtamisuut

My heart I parched as farmers
 parch the grain
 And from that fire

there came a wondrous boon
 And Shiva in a flash I did obtain
 (Trs. Nila Cram Cook)

lalbotsayasswamanbagubaras
vuchhumshivasshakathmilhtuvah
tati lay karumarnritsaras
zindaymarastukaryamkyah

I, Lalla, entered through the door of the
 garden of my mind
 And saw Shiva and Shakti united into one,
 O joy!
 There I became immersed in the lake of
 nectar

And died even while I was still alive
 What will now death do unto me?

In the *vāk* below she states in simple
 words, what the state of mind has to be for
 Self-realization:

malwondizolum
jigarmorum
tyelilalnav dram
yell dally traavymastatiy

I burned the impurities of the mind
 And killed my desires

Then only I did my name Lalla became
 known

When I surrendered completely before Him
 A fearlessly and fiercely independent
 woman Lal Ded started her spiritual journey
 as a tormented soul, but attained a stage
 where Self-realization and Self-awareness
 gave her tremendous inner strength and
 the confidence that derived from that
 strength:

kesarivanuvolumratithshal

I dragged the lion from its den like a jackal.

Epilogue

The exact date of Lalla's death is not known. It is claimed that she died in Bijbehara around 1372 or 1389 or so but personalities like Granny Lalla do not really die, she is alive in her sayings and in the hearts of Kashmiris. Her metaphors which clothe her mystical practice in the form of *vāk* continue to inspire mankind. While they continue to dazzle with their high wattage incandescence, her role as a spiritual leader who resolved the crisis of her times caused by a clash of two beliefs and value systems - one indigenous and the other alien, has to be regarded as momentous, whether or not history recognizes its true significance. Lal Ded's immense impact on the Kashmiri mind has remained practically undiminished despite the passage of almost seven centuries, it being so essentially because of the fusion of the poet and the saint in

her, or, to use the words of Dileep Chitre (which he has used for another great Bhakti poet, Tukārama), because of "a poet's vision of spirituality and a saint's vision of poetry" that she presents in her verses. Her *vāk*-s illustrate her deep sense of compassion, her mystical insights and spiritual vision, her profound awareness of the human condition and her Shaiva world-view which makes her look at existence as manifestation of one, indivisible, consciousness. Urging all to "tune yourself with the recitation of sacred letter OM" she reminds one and all: Those who glow with the light of the Self are freed from life even while they live. But fools add knots by the hundred to the tangled net of the world."

Source: ikashmir.net

The history of India has for its landmarks not wars and emperors but saints and scriptures.

- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan



SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

HATE, it has caused a lot of problems in this world, but it has not solved one yet.
Maya Angelou



- Swāmi Chidānanda



The rishis (sages) of yore took up the question, “How exactly does learning take place?” They were wonder-struck at the ability of the human mind to understand a wide variety of subjects and gather vast knowledge in outer and inner fields. A young child often shocks us with incredible knowledge. Making news right now is a young boy, for example, of Indian origin, who is stunning everybody with his command on computer science. Tanmay Bakshi, 13-year-old, has an amazing mastery over the subject of artificial intelligence (AI) and he is regarded the youngest IBM Watson programmer! Can training from outside make anybody learn things at terrific speed, in unbelievable volume? Does a person bring all this by birth – genetically or from previous births?

The Light That Stimulates

The famous *Gāyatri mantra* in the spiritual tradition of India explicitly mentions a divine light¹ that is behind all our thoughts. The prayer found in Rg-veda (3.62.10) has been recited in a large number of Indian homes from time immemorial. “..that which inspires or directs² our intellects” is the key expression in the mantra, which seems to hint at an unlimited, divine source behind all out limited, earthly thoughts.

Two exercises have equal value in developing a highly competent mind. One is to engage in study, observation, dialogue

and discussion. The second is to let the mind rest in inner silence, with a sense of surrender to the Unknown and with a sense of profound receptivity. The first alone, though logically sound, has serious limitations. The second alone, though presumably unbounded, has the possible shortcoming that the student may withdraw from the affairs of the world. Engagement in chosen subjects (*pravritti*) and immersion in our divine essence (*nivritti*) have to go hand in hand in order to optimize learning.

Food and Mind

Rishi Uddālaka says³ in Chāndogya Upanishad, “If we consider the food we eat as made of three parts – gross, medium and subtle – then it is the subtle part that makes our mind.” In an interesting experiment that the teacher conducts with his own son Shvetaketu, the young boy is made to go on complete fast for 15 days, consuming just water only. At the end of it, the father asks the son to recite Veda mantras and the son cannot simply remember any! Upon taking food, the boy regains his ability to recollect and recite the mantras.

We have always believed in India that the quality of the food we eat determines the quality of our mind. Rishi Sanat-kumāra declares⁴, for example, in Chāndogya Upanishad again, “Our intellect is pure if the food we take in is pure.” While ‘what we eat’ is the obvious, direct meaning of the word ‘food’ (*āhāra*), a second interpretation from none other than Shri Ādi Shankarāchārya goes⁵, “food here means all the sense objects like sound (that go in)”. He then clarifies that purity (*shuddhi*) here would mean being free from attachment, aversion and delusion while perceiving diverse sense objects.

In both the contexts of mundane knowledge and of spiritual understanding, a truly sharp mind that is free of encumbrances like attachment or aversion can be the most excellent tool. Such a mind is to be acquired by *upāsana*, which is no other than selected exercises that drive away distractions, oscillations and vacillations of a mind that is conditioned by various influences of the outer world. All of us, in our days of ignorance, have acquired worldly tendencies (*vāsanā-s*) and it is a mighty challenge to get freed from them. Traditionally we are advised to do various kinds of *japa* and *tapah*, with the promise of our mind becoming purer and more single-pointed. Lofty thinkers like J Krishnamurti have said that ‘living in attention’ itself is the way to come upon the state of attention. They have questioned the role of ‘other exercises’ in the matter of being alert and vigilant.

Mind the Great Instrument

As applicable to the highest spiritual insights, it is said on one hand⁶ that such wisdom is ‘beyond the mind’. We also find statements in the Upanishads that it is through the mind only⁷ that we can know the truth. The apparent contradiction is resolved⁸ by an Upanishadic statement itself, “This truth can be seen with a sharp, subtle mind.” In simple terms, the ordinary mind that is extrovert can never see the truth of the Self. The same mind, upon being refined through training and with the competent teacher’s guidance, is able to behold the extraordinary truth.

In view of the point made already – that several things like “the food that we eat, the sense objects that we perceive and the way we perceive objects” go into making our mind weak or strong, we need an integrated approach to advance spiritually. At a given point of time, our body has varieties of toxins being generated all over it. Various

glands in the physical body secrete different chemicals, which may not be in right proportions as regards our receptivity. Therefore, we need to go for physical exercises too like yoga. It is a tight rope walk! No wonder we often find good scholars of Vedānta not yet free of lust and greed! They may be after wealth or fame too! This shows that they have just used their head and become knowledgeable in the ordinary sense of the word. Their heart is yet to be refined!

In order to realize the ‘whole’, we indeed need a holistic approach to right living. Otherwise spirituality also can become another fancy, one more trap or yet another hang-up! Holistic wisdom requires, as a popular expression goes, “a place for everything but everything in its place!” There is certainly a place for every one of the well-known aspects of the *adhyātma-vidyā* such as *mantra*, *tantra*, *japa*, *poojā*, *yoga* or *swādhyāya*. We need to be careful however not to be caught in some kind of ‘holier than thou’ attitude, just because we are good at one or two of these. Constant introspection, true humility and 360-degree watchfulness should help.

Notes:

- 1 | *bhargo devasya* – light divine |
- 2 | *dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt* |
- 3 *annam-ashitam tredhā vidheeyate....
yo'nisthah tan-manah* (Chā. Up. 6.5.1)
- 4 *āhāra-shuddhau sattva-shuddhih*
(Chā. Up. 7.26.2)
- 5 *shabdādi-vishaya-vijnānam raga-
dvesha-moha-asamspristham..*
(bhāshya on 7.26.2)
- 6 *yan-manasā na manute* – Kena Up. 1.5
- 7 *manasā + eva + idam + āptavyam* –
Katha Up. 2.1.11
- 8 *drishyate agryayā buddhyā
sookshmayā...* Katha Up. 1.3.12



An Emperor was coming out of his palace for his morning walk when he met a beggar. He asked the beggar, "What do you want?"

The beggar laughed and said, "You are asking me as though you can fulfill my desire!"

The king was offended. He said, "Of course I can fulfill your desire. What is it? Just tell me."

And the beggar said, "Think twice before you promise anything."

The beggar was no ordinary beggar, he was the Emperor's past life master. He had promised in that life, "I will come and try to wake you in your next life. This life you have missed but I will come again." But the king had forgotten completely -- who remembers past lives?! So he insisted, "I will fulfill anything you ask. I am a very powerful emperor, what can you possibly desire that I cannot give to you?"

The beggar said, "It is a very simple desire. You see this begging bowl? Can you fill it with something?"

The emperor said, "Of course!" He called one of his Vazirs and told him, "Fill this man's begging bowl with money."

The Vazir went and got some money and poured it into the bowl, and it disappeared. And he poured more and more, and the moment he would pour it, it would disappear. And the begging bowl remained always empty!

As the news spread throughout the whole capital, a huge crowd gathered in front of the palace. The prestige of the emperor was now at stake.

He said to his Vazirs, "If the whole kingdom is lost, I am ready to lose it, but I cannot be defeated by this beggar."

Diamonds and pearls and emeralds, his treasures were becoming empty. The begging bowl seemed to be bottomless. Everything that was put into it -- everything! -- immediately disappeared, went out of existence. Finally, it was the evening, and the people were standing there in utter silence. The king dropped at the feet of the beggar and admitted his defeat. He said, "You are victorious, but tell me one thing before you leave, just fulfill my curiosity. What is the begging bowl made of?"

The beggar laughed and said, "It is made up of the human mind. There is no secret. It is simple, it is made up of human desire....!"

This understanding transforms life. Go into one desire -- what is the mechanism of it? First there is a great excitement, great thrill, adventure. You feel a great kick. Something is going to happen, you are on

the verge of it. And then you have the car, you have the yacht, you have the house, you have the woman, and suddenly all is meaningless again...!

What happens? Your mind has dematerialized it. The car is standing in the drive, but there is no excitement anymore. The excitement was only in getting it. You became so drunk with the desire that you forgot your inner nothingness. Now the desire is fulfilled, the car in the drive, the woman as your wife, the money in your bank account - again excitement disappears. Again, the emptiness is there, ready to eat

you up. Again you have to create another desire to escape this yawning abyss.

That's how one moves from one desire to another desire... That's how one remains a beggar! Your whole life proves it again and again -- every desire frustrates. And when the goal is achieved, you will need another desire. The day you understand that desire as such is going to fail comes the turning point in your life. The other journey is inwards. Move inwards, come back home.

- Author Unknown -



- Compiled by Ratna Vishwanath

(Continued From Last Issue)

3. Mahākāleshwara Jyotirlinga

Location

Mahākāleshwara Temple is located on the banks of the Kshipra River, in the dense Mahākāl forest in Ujjain (erstwhile Avanti) in the state of Madhya Pradesh. This *jyotirlinga* is an important pilgrimage site in Central India. It is also one among the seven “*mukti-sthala-s*” – a place that can grant *mukti* or liberation.

Antiquity

It is difficult to ascertain as to when exactly this temple was first built. There are records dating 6th c. BC referring to the administration of the temple. The punch-marked coins of Ujjain, belonging to 4th-3rd c. BC, bear the figure of Lord Siva on them. Mahākāla temple is also mentioned in several ancient Indian poetic texts, such as in *Meghadutam* and *Raghuvamsham* of Kālidasa, *Harshacharit* and *Kādambari* of Bāna Bhatta, *Naisadhacharit* of Sri Harsha, etc.

The various dynasties that ruled Ujjain always bowed down before Mahākāla. Even as a number of Shaivite temples (including those of 84 Māhadeva's) took shape in Avanti, the upkeep and development of Mahākāla temple was never neglected. The religious and cultural significance of the temple was always recognised. During the medieval period, the Islamic rulers too made donations to the temple. Under the Maratha regime, the temple was rebuilt during the 4th-5th decades of eighteenth c. AD.

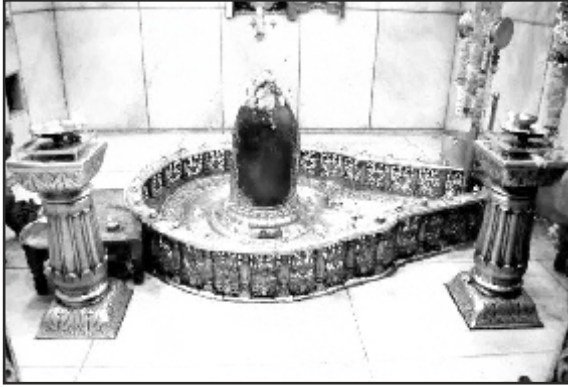
The *Purāna-s* narrate that the temple

was first established by Prajāpita Brahma. There are also a number of legends as to how this *jyotirlinga* came into existence. According to one legend, there was a five-year-old boy Shrikar who was enthralled by the devotion of King Chandrasena of Ujjain towards Lord Shiva. Shrikar took a stone and started worshipping it as Shiva. Many people tried to dissuade him in different ways, but his devotion kept growing. Pleased by his devotion, Lord Shiva assumed the form of a *jyotirlinga* and resided in the Mahākāl forest.

There is also a mythological story that Lord Shiva appeared in Ujjain from the ground to vanquish a demon called Dushana, whose atrocities on the citizens of Ujjain had become unbearable. After killing the demon, Lord Shiva took the form of a *jyotirlinga* and since then, he has been residing in this holy city.

The Temple of the Great God of Time

Mahākāla refers to Paramashiva or the supreme form of Shiva and of Godhead itself. *Mahākāla* means ‘beyond time or death’ (*mahā* means “great” and *kāla* “time or death”). *Mahākāla* is the destroyer of all elements. There is nothing beyond him, no element, no dimensions, not even time. He is also ‘the bringer of the greatest death’—the death of all that is. Both *Mahākāla* and his consort *Mahākālī* represent the ultimate destructive power of brahman. They are responsible for the dissolution of the universe at the end of the *kalpa*. They have the power to dissolve even time and space into themselves and exist as ‘void’ (*'sat'*/pure existence really) at the dissolution of the universe.



The *lingam* at Mahākāl is believed to be **swayambhu (self-manifested; as compared with other images and lingams which are ritually established and invested with *mantra-shakti*)**. It is also '*dakshināmurti*' i.e., facing the south. Both these are unique features found only in Mahākāleshwara among the 12 *vyotirlinga* - S.A *Shree Yantra*, positioned upside down, is installed at the ceiling of the **garbhagriha** (where the *Shivalingam* sits). In this sense, it is a place where *shaktipeetha* and *vyotirlinga* are together.

The temple has three-storeys. The lingams of Mahākāleshwara, Omkāreswara and Nāgachandreswara are installed in the lowest, the middle and the uppermost levels respectively. **The idol of Nāgachandreshwara on the third storey is open for darshan only on the day of Nāgpanchami. The idols of Ganesh, Pārvati and Kārtikeya are also installed in the west, north and east respectively of the sanctum sanctorum. To the south is the image of Nandi.**

A large Kunda (pond) named Koti Tirtha also exists in the temple-complex. The Kunda and its water are considered to be very holy. There is a shrine with the images of Sri Rama and goddess Avantika. In the southern side of the main shrine, there

stand many small Saivite temples built during the Maratha regime; among these, the temple of Vrddha Mahākāleshwara, Anādi Kalpeswara and Saptarshi are prominent and are remarkable pieces of architecture. The temple of Mahākāleshwara is a planned admixture of the Bhumija, Chalukya and Maratha styles of architecture. **The temple itself is located in a spacious courtyard surrounded by massive walls near a lake. The shikhara or the spire is adorned with sculptural finery.**

Mahākāleshwara Temple is one of the important temples of India wherein *tāntric* worship is practised. '*bhasma-ārati*' is the first ritual performed in the morning. In this ritual, the *lingam* is bathed with ash from a fresh funeral pyre.

Other important events/ rituals at the temple are:

1. *Nitya Yātrā*: The *Yātrā* is undertaken as narrated in the Avanti Kānda of the Skanda Purāna. After bathing in the holy Kshiprā river, the *Yātri* pays a visit to the various deities of the temple.
2. *Sawāri* (Procession): The procession of Lord Mahākāla passes through the streets of Ujjain on all Mondays of some auspicious months. The last *sawāri* in Bhādrapada is celebrated with great pomp and show and draws attendance of lakhs of people. The procession of Mahākāla on Vijayadashami festival is also a great occasion
3. *Hariharamilana*: At midnight on Baikuntha Chaturdashi, Lord Mahākāla is taken in a procession to Dwarakādhisha Mandir to meet Lord Hari. Later on, in a similar procession on that very night, Lord Dwarakādhisha visits Mahākāl temple to meet Lord Hara.

This festival is the symbol of oneness between the two great Lords.

Thousands of pilgrims from all over the world visit this temple, especially so during the month of Shrāvan and on Nāgapanchami day.

It is believed that prasād (holy offering) offered here to the deity can be re-offered unlike in all other shrines.

4. Omkāreshwara Jyotirlinga

Location

The Temple of Omkāreshwara (the Lord of Om) jyotirlinga is situated on Omkāreshwara island on the banks of the Narmadā, in between Indore and Khandwa, in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The island of Omkāreshwara is uniquely shaped like 'Om' on account of the path taken by the Narmadā at this place. The island is also called Shivapuri and Mandhata. The temple of Mammalleshwara is situated south of the river Narmadā. Both the temples are usually visited during a pilgrimage to Omkāreshwara.

The scenic beauty of Omkāreshwara is further enhanced by a 270-foot cantilever bridge over the Narmadā. River Kāveri confluences with Narmada at Omkāreshwara. The city has 68 *teertha*-s (places of spiritual importance) and a group of 108 *shivalinga*-s, making it very important Shaivite site.

Legend And History

There are 3 legends about the origin of Omkāreshwara *jyotirlinga*. According to the first legend, Vindhya Parvat (mountain) performed a penance to please Lord Shiva; Lord Shiva appeared here and blessed the Vindhya Parvat with his wish of being greater than Mount Meru. At the request of the gods and sages, the *linga* which was

worshipped by Vindhya Parvat was split into two parts 'Omkāreshwara' and 'Mammalleshwara'. According to a second story, King Mandhata and his two sons performed penance. Seeing their devotion, Lord Shiva appeared as a *jyotirlinga*. As per the third story, Lord Shiva, in the form of Omkāreshwara, appeared to defeat *asura*-s during a violent war between the *deva*-s and *asura*-s.

Mahmud of Ghazni had invaded and severely damaged the temples at Omkāreshwara in the 11th century. Peshwa Baji Rao II had to build them anew as the earlier ones were mutilated beyond repair.

Omkāreshwara was visited by Ādi Shankarāchārya; He is believed to have composed many of his works by the banks of the Narmadā in this sacred city. Lord Shiva and goddess Pārvati are believed to rest here in Omkāreshwara, hence the '*shayan*'aarti (9 pm onwards) draws the maximum number of devotees.



Architecture

The temple is built in the North Indian style of architecture, with high spires. The soft stone of which it was constructed has lent its pliable surface to a rare degree of detailed work. The stone roof of the temple is also intricately carved.

The Omkāreshwara *jyotirlinga* is not affixed to the ground, but is said to be

naturally installed there. There is always water around it. Also, the *linga* is not situated below the cupola. Instead, it is at the top of the temple.

There are *verandahā*-s encircling the shrine; these have columns which are carved in the shape of circles, polygons and squares.



The devotees first have the *darshan* of the giant *panchamukha* (five-faced) Ganesh. This Ganesh shrine is the centre of special festivities during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival in Aug- Sept.

The other nearby temples in

Omkāreshwara are:

- Vrihadeshwara temple : Dedicated to the 24 avatars of Lord Vishnu, this ancient temple has exquisite sculpture.
- Annapurna temple : This ancient temple located in a vast area has shrines dedicated to goddess Laxmi, Saraswati and Pārvati along with a 35 feet tall statue of Lord Krishna.
- Govindeshwara temple : This is the sacred spot where Ādi Shankara received *deeksha* from his Guru. Govindeshwara cave is the place where Shri Govindabhagvadpāda, the guru of Sri Ādi Shankara meditated. The site was renovated in 1989.
- The monthly *Shivarātri*, *Mahāshivarātri* and *Kārthik-Pūrnimā* are important days at the **Omkāreshwara** temple. A huge fair is organised on the day of *Kārthik-Pūrnimā*.

(Will Be Continued)



- Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon



Sage Agastya was a revered Vedic sage and a great Maharshi of this country and his name appears in Itihāsa (Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata) and Purāna-s. He is one of the seven Rishis mentioned in the Vedic texts as well as a subject of reverence for

being one of the Tamil 'siddhar' in the Shaivism tradition. He is also revered in the Purānic literature of Shaktism and Vaishnavism. He is also one of the sages found in ancient sculpture and reliefs in the Hindu temples of South India and Southeast Asia such as in the early medieval era Shiva temples, in Java, Indonesia. He is the principal figure and Guru mentioned in the ancient Javanese language text Agastyaparva, whose 11th century version still survives.

Birth of Agastya

The origins of Agastya are mythical. One story goes that there was a famous king called Ikshwāku in the solar line of kings and that he had a son named Nimi. After Nimi became the king he wanted to perform a Yagna. As Sage Vashishtha

was the royal priest the king approached him and asked for help in performing the Yagna. However, Sage Vashishtha had already given word to Devendra that he would help him in performing his Yagna in heaven. So, he told the king that he could help him only on his return after helping Devendra with his Yagna. The king was impatient and so without waiting for Vashishtha he went ahead and got his yagna done with the help of Sage Shatānanda, son of Sage Gautama.

After helping Devendra, Sage Vashishtha returned and came to see the king. But the king did not heed the sage's arrival and continued sleeping. Vashishtha was very upset at this and angry. He cursed the king that he would die. When King Nimi heard of the sage's curse he decided to retaliate as he was also a great *tapasvi* and had the power to curse. So, in turn he also cursed the sage that he too would die. Soon both King Nimi and Vashishtha left their mortal bodies.

Because Sage Vashishtha was a Brahmarshi, immortal and pure, he went straight to Brahmāloka where he met Lord Brahmā. Hearing what had happened Brahmā was very upset and told the sage that as he still had a lot of work to complete in the world, he would help him get a new body with the help of Rishi Mitavaruna and Apsarā Urvashi.

And thus as per Lord Brahmā's orders two Maharshi-s named Agastya and Vashishtha were born. As Agastya was born first he is considered older than Vashishtha.

Another story goes that Agastya was also called Kumbhayoni meaning 'one whose womb was a mud pot'.

Besides this he is also called Mana, Kalasaja, Kumbhaja and Maitravaruni. Agastya means 'bright, effulgent one' which comes from the root *aj* or *ang* and links Agastya to 'one who brightens'. Agastya is traditionally the Indian name for Canopus, the second most brilliant star found in the South Asian skies next to Sirius.

Agastya's Āshramas

Two legends place Agastya's āshrama-s at different locations, one in Northwest Maharashtra on the banks of River Godavari near Nasik and the other in Kolhapur, Maharashtra. The other places mentioned are Kannauj in UP and Agastya Muni village near Rudraprayāga, Uttarakhand. Devi Bhāgavata Purāna mentions his hermitage as being based in Tamil Nadu in Tirunelveli / Thanjavur. Thus, some stories conclude that Agastya may have been a migrant Aryan whose ideas influenced the South and alternatively a native non-Aryan Dravidian whose ideas influenced the North and Southeast Asia.

Agastya's promise

It is said that once when Agastya was on a tour of the world he reached a big valley where he saw his *pitru-s* hanging upside down from trees. He was shocked to see this and asked them the reason for this. They told him that this was

because he had not become a *grihastha* and so there was no chance for the family to continue as it is only then that they will get salvation and be able to go to heaven. They pleaded with him to get married and continue the lineage. Thus, Agastya realizing the gravity of the situation agreed to become a *grihastha* and beget a son.

Lopāmudrā

For a long time, Agastya wondered as to whom he should marry. Suddenly with the power of his *tapas* an idea flashed through his mind. He came to know that the king of Vidarbha was performing *tapas* to beget children. He created a juicy fruit and gave to the king who in turn gave it to his queen and who ate it with great devotion. As the fruit was the product of Agastya's years of *tapas* soon the queen delivered a beautiful baby girl. The child was named Lopāmudrā.

Lopāmudrā grew up to be a girl of exquisite beauty and had all the qualities expected of a princess. When she reached the marriageable age, the king started looking for grooms but found none who could match up to Lopāmudrā and this got him very worried.

By his divine insight Agastya knew that Lopāmudrā could be the most suitable bride for him. So, he approached the king to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. This got the king and queen very worried and disappointed as they just could not conceive the idea of giving their daughter in marriage to a sage who lived in a forest, for their daughter was accustomed to a life of luxury. Lopāmudrā came to know of her parents' worries. But

realizing what was good for her she went and pacified her parents and assured them that she was agreeable for this marriage and that is what she wanted. Now the parents had no choice but give their consent. Thus, Sage Agastya and Lopāmudrā became husband and wife.

After marriage Lopāmudrā gave up all her royal comforts. Now she dressed and lived simply as a true sage's wife in the forest. She proved herself to be an ideal wife. In course of time she herself became a *tapasvini*. As time went by they had a son named Dridhasyu who mastered the Veda-s at birth itself. He also worked hard at the āshrama as a result of which he came to be known as Idhmavaha. Thus, Agastya fulfilled his duties towards his *pitru-s* and helped them to go to heaven.

The end of Kāleyas

A band of *daitya-s* (demons) known as Kāleya-s lived on the sea bed. They would come out at night, enter āshrama-s of holy men, destroy everything and kill the inmates including *tapasvi-s*. They did not even spare the āshrama-s of Sages Vashishtha, Bharadwāja, Chyavana and many others. These demons destroyed the āshrama of the Pāndava-s as well. As a result of this all good acts such as performing *yagna-s*, *pūjā-s* etc. came to a standstill. This got the *deva-s* very worried. They went to Vaikuntha and asked Lord Vishnu for help to find these demons as in spite of an intense search they could not find them. Then Lord Vishnu told them as to where they could find them and as to how they come out at night, finish their evil deeds and go back to the sea bed

by dawn so that no one can find them. He also told them that Sage Agastya was the only one who can do the job of finding them as he was the only one capable of drinking the entire volume of sea water in one gulp. When the sea is drained it would be very easy to find and destroy them.

Hearing this the *deva-s* immediately went to Lord Brahmā to take his permission and proceeded to find Sage Agastya. They prayed long and hard to please Agastya and begged him to drink the sea water. Agastya obliged and with the power of his *tapas* drained the sea of its water. With the demons exposed a great battle was fought between the *deva-s* and *dānava-s* and the *deva-s* came out victorious.

With all the *dānava-s* destroyed, the *deva-s* now asked Agastya to refill the ocean with the water he had swallowed. But Agastya was helpless as all the water he had drunk had digested by then. The *deva-s* then went to Lord Vishnu to find a way to fill up the sea. Lord Vishnu told them that King Bhagiratha, born in the family of Sagara, could do the job.

King Sagara had sixty thousand sons and all of them had been reduced to ashes by the fire of Sage Kapila's anger. In order to help them attain *mukti*, Bhagiratha, grandson of Sagara brought Gangā down to earth by the power of his *tapas*. The divine Gangā filled up the dried sea bed with water and on the way, she flowed over the ashes of Sagara's sixty thousand sons and helped them get salvation.

Agastya stops the growth of the Vindhya mountains

Sage Agastya's fantastic feat of drying up the sea was an out of the world achievement and equally great was his feat of stopping the growth of the Vindhya mountains. The king of Vindhya saw the Sun go around the Meru every day and thought that if the Sun can go around Meru, which is a mountain, every day, why cannot the Sun respect me too and go around me every day. He approached Sūryadeva with this question to which the Sun-god replied that his course was decided by the Supreme Lord and that he was only following instructions. He had nothing to do with it. On hearing this the king was very annoyed and took offence. He decided to obstruct the way of the Sun by growing taller and taller each day. The trees and the birds began finding it difficult to survive. The *deva-s* realized the gravity of the situation and finally went to the Vindhya's preceptor, Sage Agastya.

Agastya thought of an idea to deal with this problem without antagonizing the king. He went to the king and requested him to keep his head bent so as to allow him and Lopāmudrā to cross to the other side and stay that way until they return. Vindhya had to respect his preceptor's words. He stopped growing and stood with his head bent as instructed by Agastya who never returned. This great service by the sage made life easy for humans and other living beings as this eased the movement for the Sun and the Moon.

King Nahusha

Devendra the chief of gods killed Vritrāsura by deceitful means and by doing so earned the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*. So, he along with his wife Shachi Devi ran away from heaven without telling anyone to Lake Mānasa and began to live inside the stem of a lotus flower. Everyone including the *deva-s*, sages, *siddha-s*, *gandharva-s* etc. were terribly scared as heaven became headless and was in utter chaos. So, they all got together and appointed a great king called Nahusha as Devendra. As days went by he began to desire Shachi Devi for himself and commanded the *deva-s* to bring her to him. But they resolved amongst themselves to save Shachi Devi. They went to Vishnu who suggested that Devendra perform an Ashwamedha *yajna* to redeem himself of the sin for killing a *brāhmaṇa*. As the Saptarshi-s were bringing Nahusha in a palanquin for his marriage to Shachi Devi the king became very angry with the slow progress of the Saptarshi-s. In anger, he kicked Agastya who being shorter than the others was walking slowly. Agastya cursed him and Nahusha turned into a snake. Now he realized his folly and begged Agastya for forgiveness. Then Agastya felt sorry for him and told him to live as a snake for a thousand years after which Yudhishtira the oldest amongst the Pāndava-s, would come to the forest and free him from the curse. After this Devendra returned to heaven and retained his seat as the king of Devloka. Thus, Agastya with great forbearance and strength of his *tapas* saved

Shachi Devi from ignominy which she would have suffered at the hands of Nahusha.

Mahāmuni Agastya is also described as the sage who used his *dharma* powers to kill demons Vātāpi and Ilwala after they had jointly misled and destroyed nine thousand men.

Besides this it is also said that once all the Rishis from around the world went north to hear Shiva reveal the secret of the *veda*-s and the *tantra*-s. This caused the earth to tilt and so Lord Shiva asked Sage Agastya to go South and restore the balance of the earth, for the spiritual weight of Agastya was equal to the weight of all Rishi-s put together.

River Kāveri

Sage Agastya's wife Lopāmudrā was born for enhancing the welfare of this world. For that purpose, she wanted to turn into River Kāveri and flow down into the plains to which Agastya gave his consent.

It is also said that on his journey South Agastya carried a pot of Gangā water. One day he placed the pot on the ground, when Ganesha in the form of a crow came and sat on the edge of the pot which caused it to tip. Water flowed out of this pot non-stop. Thus, River Kāveri came into being.

Whatever may be the veracity of these stories it happened for the good of this world.

Initiating Shri Rāma to Aditya Hridayam

When Shri Rāma was fighting the battle with Rāvana, He was finding it difficult to slay Rāvana as he had ten

heads and as soon as one head was cut another would grow in its place. When Agastya realized the problem Shri Rāma was facing he initiated Him to *āditya hridayam*. He asked Him to chant it with devotion to Sun god, who blessed Him and this helped Shri Rāma win the war against Rāvana.

Agastya is traditionally attributed to be the author of many Sanskrit texts such as the Agastya Geetā found in Varāha Purāna.

Agastya Samhitā a dialogue between Skanda and Agastya is a part of the Skanda Purāna and the Dvaidha - Nirnaya Tantra text.

Agastya is mentioned in all four Veda-s of Hinduism and is a character in the Brāhmana-s, āraṇyaka-s, Upanishad-s, Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata and many other Epics and Purāna-s.

Agastya and Lopāmudrā are associated with hymns found in the Rig Veda.

Both are said to have popularized the Lalitā Sahasranāma, the thousand names of Goddess which is a part of the Brahmānda Purāna.

Agastya is renowned in South India as the father of Siddha, a form of *āyurveda* practiced in the southern states.

He is associated with occult arts of architecture, forecasting as well as formulation of Tamil language.

Even today a mountain peak between Tamil Nadu and Kerala is called Agathigamalai or Agastya's Hill, a reminder of his presence in and contribution to civilization in South India.

He was an expert in the *mantra* and *tantra shāstra*-s.

Agastya also appears in first millennium CE Buddhist texts such as *askalapa*, *katantra* and *candra-vyākarna*.

He also appears in Buddhist mythologies such as Jātaka Tales.

Agastya is one of the most important figures in a number of medieval era Southeast Asian inscriptions, temple reliefs and arts in Cambodia, Vietnam and Java, Indonesia.

The Tamil text Pattupattu states Agastya to be a master of *Isai* (music and song).

The Tamil literature refers to him as the originator of Tamil language and the people of Tamil Nadu are proud to own him as their Sage and they worship him in temples.

He is considered to be one of the *drishtāra*-s (seers) of Veda *mantra*-s and is considered to be one of the greatest amongst the sages of India.



Relativity of Ego vs Knowledge

1

Knowledge -----

Ego =

More the knowledge, lesser the ego

Lesser the knowledge more the ego....

Albert Einstein



- By Adam Brady

What does it mean to be a *spiritual warrior*? This somewhat contradictory term appears in multiple wisdom traditions throughout human history. A fascinating concept, a spiritual warrior implies one who combats the most insidious and universal enemy-ignorance.



expanded awareness. While spiritual practices such as yoga and meditation enhance and accelerate the growth of awareness, a spiritual warrior must have the specific awareness to recognize that you

Known as *avidyā* in Sanskrit, ignorance of the true nature of the world invokes countless forms of suffering. The spiritual warrior deliberately takes up the fight against this cunning foe, choosing to bring light to the darkness.

The path of the spiritual warrior is not an easy one. It can challenge you, require sacrifice, and force you into the cognitive dissonance often encountered when you search to discover the causes of your ignorance. However, the rewards are great:

1. In the act, of self-liberation from your fears, doubts, small mindedness, and limiting beliefs
 2. In service to the world as path makers and leaders of a global shift in consciousness and world transformation
- What then, are the qualities of a spiritual warrior? What attributes or states of mind are necessary to become warriors of light?

1. Awareness

A spiritual warrior must possess

are at war with the darkness of ignorance. If you are to take up the call of spiritual warrior ship, you must remain vigilant that in the lack of awareness, ignorance will grow. As you pay attention to yourself-your thoughts, speech, actions, and beliefs-you deprive ignorance of a fertile field in which it can take root.

2. Courage

A spiritual warrior has courage. Martial artist Bruce Lee said, "Do not pray for an easy life, pray for the strength to endure a difficult one." This is what it means to have courage. As previously explained, the path of the spiritual warrior is not necessarily easy. You can face danger, fear, pain, and uncertainty on the path to spiritual mastery.

Spiritual warriors press on when confronted with adversity, doubt, or the inconsistencies or irrationality of their beliefs and behavior. This doesn't mean you don't feel the fear; it means you feel it and keep going. Deep down you know that the enlightenment you seek is worth enduring the temporary discomfort of the journey.

3. Discipline

Next, the spiritual warrior possesses discipline. Discipline is the ability to restrain yourself—to control your impulses, desires, or emotions for the sake of improvement. It's important to note that such discipline comes not from some outside authority, rather the spiritual warrior forges in the fire of your will. You make the difficult choice to pursue spiritual practices or *sādhana* over the often more comfortable or conventional ways of life with the intention of attaining higher states of consciousness.

Discipline can also mean simply staying on the path. The spiritual warrior knows there will be obstacles on the journey, but when those occur, self-discipline keeps you moving on when others are content to quit.

4. Relentlessness

Relentlessness is another key attribute of the spiritual warrior. Being relentless refers not to being harsh or inflexible. Rather it implies a persistent and determined intention to seek out false beliefs, attempts to fool yourself, and ego delusions. The spiritual warrior understands that ignorance is a tenacious adversary that requires daily and consistent attentiveness so as to not let it take you by surprise.

Relentlessness also means ruthlessly slaying the 1,000-headed dragon of self-importance. Your sense of self-importance can slow spiritual progress and obscure your understanding of who you really are. Relentlessly seeking out opportunities to subjugate the the ego creates space for spirit to enter your life.

5. Cunning

The spiritual warrior is also cunning. As your awareness and spiritual discipline grows, the warrior of light recognizes the

slippery nature of the mind and how easily you can fool yourself. You, therefore, must be equally cunning and crafty when it comes to outwitting your habitual thought traps and cognitive biases. In the space of expanded consciousness, you learn to anticipate the stories you tell yourself, the ways you hide from the truth, and how you stubbornly defend your false sense of self.

This alert witnessing and understanding of your thought process or met acognition allows you to intercept your conditioned behavior so you can course correct toward more conscious choices in thought, word, and deed.

6. Patience

Patience is the next quality of the spiritual warrior. Patience is the calm acceptance that not everything happens according to *your* time line. It allows you to be content as well as pause, wait, endure, and allow things to unfold in their own way.

The spiritual warrior doesn't act needy. You don't push or demand that the universe comply with your wishes. Instead, you recognize that a bigger picture is unfolding; in the absence of a broader perspective, you can't always know what action to take. Therefore, you can calmly be in the moment and wait for the universe to act. When the right time becomes known, the spiritual warrior seizes the opportunity and takes spontaneous and transformative right action.

7. Sweetness

The spiritual warrior also possesses sweetness. Sweetness might seem like a strange attribute of the spiritual warrior, something associated with weakness or sentimentality. In this context, however, sweetness refers to impeccability in word and action. The spiritual warrior holds

yourself to the highest of standards, refraining from anything that could be considered potentially cruel or hurtful.

As the Dalai Lama reminds you, "Compassion and tolerance are not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength." It's easy to be hurtful and mean to yourself or others. Kindness, compassion, and sweetness in the face of anger or ignorance require enormous strength and understanding. Seeing the world from higher ground allows you to act and speak from a place of sweetness that benefits everyone you encounter.

8. Love

The final and most important quality of the spiritual warrior is **is love. To the spiritual warrior love is all that is.** It is the very core of your being and core of all other beings. Removing the veils of love is the spiritual warrior's quest. You exist with love at your source, but often it lies hidden

beneath anger, trauma, or **suffering.** Expanding the field of love for both yourself and others is the ultimate goal of the spiritual warrior. **Love heals all wounds. It is that transformative power that can change the world.** The spiritual warrior shines the light of your love into the darkness of ignorance, not to destroy it, but to transmute it through love into knowledge.

When the spiritual warrior possesses these attributes, you become a powerful force for change in the world. The spiritual warrior fights against the self-delusion, fear, and ignorance that create suffering in your life. This battle is fought within; an effort to shed the chains of conditioning and false beliefs that lie within you. The reward of this campaign is the expansion of consciousness; the spiritual warrior becomes a beacon of awareness who brings healing to the entire world.



About the author : Yoga teacher, author, and martial artist Adam Brady has been associated with the Chopra Centre for nearly 20 years. He is the author of *Warrior of Light*, a story that explores the path to higher awareness through the martial arts.



What do we learn from Upanishads?

The Art of Relationship

- Swāmi Chidānanda



When we emphasize "what we get," relationships can be a source of pain. When we stress on "what we can give," relationships give us joy, through bringing about deeper understanding of life.

"Actions cannot bind you," says Ishāvāsya Upanishad* hinting at this spirit of

"giving," instead of "expecting". Performing our duties (of the world or of religion - *laukika* or *vaidika karma*) in a spirit of service, we remain light in our hearts. We ought to aspire to live a hundred years in this way, celebrating *karma yoga*.

* *na karma lipyate nare* - mantra 2



You want to know the difference between a Master and a beginner?
The Master has failed more times than the beginner has ever tried.
Anonymous



- David L Weatherford



*Have you ever watched kids on a merry-go-round?
Or listened to the rain slapping on the ground?
Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight
Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?*

*You better slow down, don't dance so fast
Time is short, the music won't last
Do you run through each day on the fly?
When you ask "How are you?" do you hear the reply?*

*When the day is done, do you lie in your bed
With the next hundred chores running through your head?
You'd better slow down Don't dance so fast
Time is short the music won't last*

*Ever told your child, we'll do it tomorrow
And in your haste, not see his sorrow?
Ever lost touch, Let a good friendship die
'Cause you never had time to call and say "Hi"?*

*You'd better slow down, don't dance so fast
Time is short the music won't last
When you run so fast to get somewhere
You miss half the fun of getting there.*

*When you worry and hurry through your day,
It is like an unopened gift.... Thrown away...
Life is not a race, do take it slower
Hear the music, before the song is over.*



ETERNAL VIBRATIONS FOUR TIPS ON SUCCESS



यस्य त्वेतानि चत्वारि वानरेन्द्र यथा तव ।
धृतिर्दृष्टिर्मतिर्दाक्ष्यं स कर्मसु न सीदति ॥

॥ 5.1.198 ॥

| *yasya tvetāni chatvāri vānarendra yathā tava* |
| *dhritir-dristhir-matir-dākshyam sa karmasu na seedati* |

Vālmiki Rāmāyana, Sundara Kānda, 1.198

"O lord of vānara's, he / she in whom these four qualities – fortitude, vision, intelligence and dexterity – exist, as they do in you, will achieve his / her mission and not get lost". (He or she is sure to succeed.)

Note: For full text of Vālmiki Rāmāyana with English translation,
visit www.valmiki.iitk.ac.in

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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.

This public trust came into being in the year 2006. Registered as per the Mumbai Public Trust Act of 1950, the Forum engages in organizing talks and workshops as well as in publication of books and audio-visual media.

F.O.W.A.I. = Flame Of Who Am I?

“Who am I?” is the most basic question of life. The understanding of the self, the ‘me’, can cause radical change in the quality of life. This requires turning (the flame of) attention towards thoughts and emotions. When likes and dislikes fall away, pure perception takes place. That heralds freedom.

Dates of publication : 15th of October, December, February, April, June & August

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