

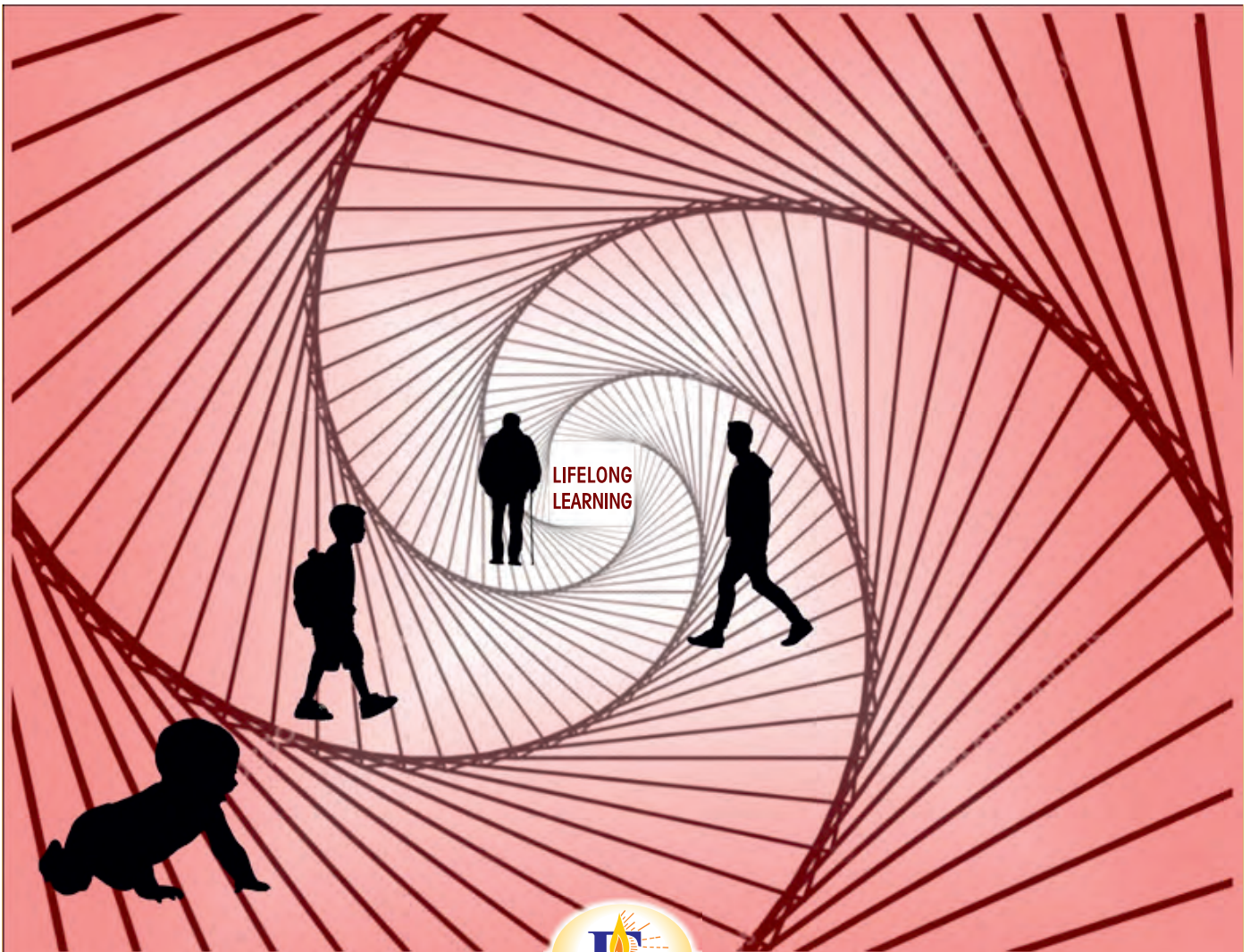
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# Inner Flame

Volume IX

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Hari Om,

After Swāmi Vivekānanda stormed the Western World with his fiery personality in 1893, many were the Indian monks who felt inspired to contribute to this new mission of introducing Vedānta to seekers across the world. One such luminary who made an impact shortly afterwards was Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha. His practical approach, direct teaching of the way to live the eternal philosophy and inspiring personality that spread cheer all around, found ready takers both in the East and the West. Let us go through his journey as captured in the *featured article* and be purified by the experience.

We are all guilty of treasuring memories of the past and becoming prisoners of our own impressions. The only real 'use' of the past experience to our current moment is probably 'what we can learn from it'. We need to absorb the learning and drop the dead baggage. Swāmi Chidānanda brings out this lesson beautifully in his article under the series 'Perceiving Phoenix'.

The essence of Vāstu is beautifully captured in the charming story (under *Stories Teach*) that drives home the importance of respecting the environment around us and this includes both the animate and the inanimate world.

Another story illustrates the difference between having contact with people and establishing connections with their hearts.

We cover the holy Shiva temples of Rāmeshwara and Nāgeshwara in our ongoing series on *Dvādasha Jyotirlingas*.

In our series on Rishis of India, you will find details in respect of that immortal mischief-maker who roams the world – Sage Nārada, who is said to be the first among journalists. On a lighter note, no wonder, with the media growing in stature, there is so much grief in this world. However, as taught by the Devarshi Nārada, taking the Lord's name will surely save us from the worries of this age !!

Hope you enjoy going through these stories that hold so many insights worth reflecting upon...

*For Swāmi Chidānanda*  
**Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd)**



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Swāmi Chidānanda

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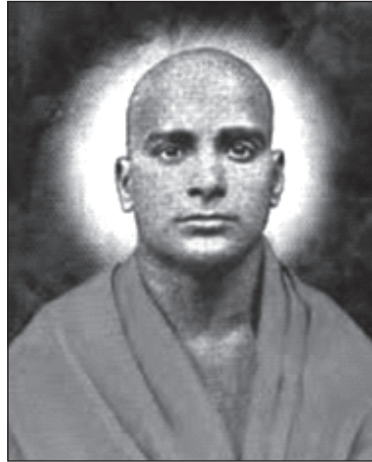
Exert, Do Not Give Up Easily

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani

### **Hindu Monk creates a flutter in the West**

It was the year 1902. A very young man, just 29 years old, sailed into San Francisco in the United States of America, after a short but successful visit to Tokyo, Japan. “Fresh from the Himalayas, clad in an orange robe, the symbol of the divine fire that glowed within him” was the first description given by the journalist who wrote for a local newspaper; she went on to say: “The old order of things is to be reversed. Out of the jungles of Upper India has come a man of astonishing wisdom, a prophet, philosopher, scientist and priest, who proposes to play the role of a missionary in the United States and preach a new doctrine of unselfishness and spiritual power to the idolaters of the mighty dollar. He is a Brahmin of the Brahmins, a Goswāmi of the highest caste...” Later, another accolade, “healer”, was added when his melodious yet powerful chanting of OM restored the health of many at a lake resort sanatorium at another location in the US.

The young man was asked how he lived; he said, “That is simple. I do not try. I believe. I attune my soul to the harmony of love for all men...where love is, there is no want, no suffering. This state of mind and faith bring influence to me that supply my needs without the asking...” One comment about his effect on people was: “To see him was to begin, as



it were, life anew. All meanness and smallness of mind vanished and the person was lifted up. A new, altogether transcendental outlook on life flew, as it were, from his eyes to those who came under the spell of his happiness and dream.”

This fully-matured, wise, young giant of a man was none other than Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha. He often referred to himself in the third person as

“Rāma” and in later years he signed himself as “So-am-I [Swāmi] Rāma Truth”...deleting the little ‘i’ in Tīrtha.

### **Early Life**

Like many of his ilk, Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha took birth in a nondescript Brahmin family. He was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1873 in the village of Muraliwala in the Gujranwala District of Punjab [now Pakistan.] His mother died when he was a few days old; his father Hirānanda Goswāmi left him in the care of his elder brother Gossain Gurudas and an old aunt who told him inspiring stories from the scriptures and taught him prayers, often taking him to temples. Even as a youngster who loved solitude, he would put intelligent questions to all, including holy men and even offered explanations.

As was the custom then, RāmaTirtha was barely ten when his father got him married. But along with that, his father did him and the world an enormous favour by leaving him under the watchful eye of his

friend, Bhakta Dhana Rāma, a man of great purity and simplicity of life. Rāma regarded him as his Guru and in deep devotion, offered to him his body and soul. His surrender to his Guru was so complete that he never did anything without first consulting him.

At school, Rāma was a brilliant student. After topping the list in the B.A. course, he got an M.A. degree in Mathematics, a subject for which he had an intrinsic love and in which he was exceptionally bright. He served for a while as Professor of Mathematics in the Forman Christian College and as Reader at the Lahore Oriental College. It was at this stage that his spiritual life began to blossom as a *bhakta* of God. He began to study the Geetā and became a great devotee of Lord Krishna, an intense longing for whom gave him a vision of his Beloved. He used to deliver lectures on *bhakti* under the auspices of the Sanātana Dharma Sabhā of Lahore, while he also turned to Vedānta, studying under the inspiration of Sri Mādhava Tīrtha of the Dwāraka Math. A great impetus was given to his spiritual life by Swami Vivekānanda, whom he saw for the first time at Lahore. The sight of the great Swāmi as a Sannyāsin kindled in him the longing to don the ochre robe.

### **The Himalayan Sojourn**

His mundane life carried on as it was ordained: he had two sons from his marriage. But that did not dilute his growing intense passion for the vision of the all-pervading Lord and not satisfied with just a vision, he longed for oneness with God. Indifferent to food and clothes, he was always filled with ecstatic joy, tears often flowing down his cheeks. It was not long before he had the insight he yearned for, and thereafter he lived, moved and had his being in God. Soon

enough, Rāma resigned from his post and left for the Himalayan forest, accompanied by his family and a few others. But owing to ill-health, his wife returned to the plains with one son while the other was left at Tehri for his schooling. A few days before Swāmi Vivekānanda's eternal samādhi, Rāma Tīrtha took *Sannyāsa*; his Master, Swāmi Mādhava Tīrtha had already given his permission to Rāma Tīrtha to take *Sannyāsa* at the time and place of Rāma Tīrtha's choice.

A few years in the solitude of the Himalayas saw him ready to fulfil his innate love for humanity. He returned to the plains to teach. The effect of his presence was marvellous. His infectious joy and his bird-like warbling of Om enchanted everyone. Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha was a living Vedāntin.



He saw and felt God in all names and forms. His love for man was evident and his love for nature was expressed in beautiful poetry:

*“Free birds of golden plumage sing  
Blithe songs of joy and praise,  
Sweet children of the blushing spring  
Deep notes of welcome raise;  
The roseate hues of nascent morn  
The meadows, lakes and hills adorn,  
The nimbus of perpetual grace  
Cool showers of nectar softly rain!  
The rainbow arch of charming colours  
With smiles the vast horizon paints.”*

In a poem addressed to the Moonlight, he ends by saying:

*“Yourself and I Together we lie,  
For a while we lie together,  
Round me you twine, I drink your wine  
Till each is lost in the other.”*

### **Global vision takes wings**

The intrinsically joyous, laughing Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha had a burning desire: to spread the message of Love and Vedānta as far and wide as was possible. It carried him to Japan with his disciple Swāmi Nārāyana. Author Puran Singh, who met Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha in Japan, narrates in “The Story of Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha” an incident there. In the middle of a conversation with Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha, his Japanese host excuses himself, leaves the room only to return very shortly with his wife and children. Questioned, he apologetically replied, “Excuse me! I could not have this unusual joy without sharing it with my family.” Conversely, in reply to the Japanese Baron's question as to why Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha had renounced his family, the latter replied, “Only to seek a larger one and to share my joy with the whole world.” His happy nature had such an impact on ordinary Japanese people, that even after his departure from Japan, he was lovingly remembered: “I still see his smile floating in the air like plum flowers,” said one. And

another who attended a lecture in English even though he did not know the language said, “It seemed to me he was a column of fire and his words the little sparks that flew about.”

After this short but very efficacious duration in Tokyo, he departed for the U.S.A. in 1902. He spent only one and a half years there; however, the impact of his charming personality and love-filled teachings continues to resound through a society set up to study Vedānta. Dr Hillier, his kind host in Francisco wrote: “He enlisted himself, under his great intellectual necessity, amongst the apostles of Advaita Vedānta as expounded by Shankarāchārya, but he preached it with his own intense emotion of a Vaishnava... He was never neglectful of his great remembrance of God...” On another occasion, reciting her long tale of family woes to what appeared to be an uninterested Swāmi sitting cross-legged on the floor before her, an American lady was suddenly transported when Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha opened his eyes, called her Mother and recited, in his own inimitable way, “Om! Om”. “I seemed to have been lifted from the earth, I swam in air as a figure of light and I felt myself the Mother of the Universe... Oh the word OM reverberates through my bones, the word Mother lifts me up to the divine. ..Some springs of nectar within me have burst up, the crust is broken and I am holy,” she blissfully recalled.

To the Americans, Rāma Tīrtha taught the way of perfect morality and total abstinence. Keeping the body in active struggle and the mind in rest and loving abstinence means salvation from sin and sorrow, right here in this very life. He used words already familiar to Americans: atonement became 'at-one-ment' to illustrate active realization of oneness with the All; restlessness of mind was termed 'dis-ease' rather than disease. This summed up Rāma

Tīrtha's message to the land of the Dollar. On his way back to India, he stopped in Egypt where he was accorded a hearty welcome by the Mohammedans, to whom he delivered a lecture in Persian in their mosque. To the West, Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha appeared not merely as a wise man of the East but as the Wisdom of the East come in tangible form.

### **Return to India**

In India he stayed for a while at Muttrā with an old Swāmi, Shiv Guna Ācharya in what was called Shānti Āshram on the bank of the Jamunā. There he loved to sit on the silver sands of the river and bask in the sun, doing nothing. Living quietly by the river, his life was his message. He welcomed people of different faiths, encouraging all to struggle within themselves for freedom even as they struggled for freedom of the country. He eschewed temptations to achieve a limited agenda, not in anger but with deep understanding. "It is not good, speaking ill of others and indulging in low, mean, personal criticism of anybody. We must see the bright side of everything and every man and justify them as ourselves." He enjoyed both, the musings of a certain poet, Nazir, of whom he was very fond and Punjabi folk-literature, in which he read Gopal Singh's Kafis reciting them, eyes shut, with the original pang of the writer himself. Such was his positive nature: the fruit of his love for God and his understanding of life and the universe.

From Rāma Tīrtha, India has inherited the dual gems of Vedāntic boldness and a grand, unique spiritual patriotism. His love for his motherland was boldly expressed: He emphatically declared: "If you must realize unity with God, realize first your unity with the Whole Nation. Let this intense feeling of identity with every creature within this land be throbbing in every fibre of your frame". Calling the nation 'Mother India', he urged: "Let every son of India stand for the Whole,

seeing that the Whole of India is embodied in every son."

Rāma Tīrtha infused in the minds of people a new joy, a happy conviction that it was not for nothing that we lived in a miserable world, and that we did not, after a long struggle in the sea of life, reach a waterless desert, where our sorrows would be repeated. He lived practical philosophy, and through that showed to the world that it was possible to rejoice in the bliss of the Self even in this very life, and that everyone could partake of this bliss if one sincerely strived for it.

### **Living Vedānta in daily life**

The teachings of Rāma Tīrtha are peculiarly direct and forceful. They are unique. Rāma Tīrtha did not teach any particular Yoga or Sādhanā or propound any abstract philosophical theory. He taught the actual living of Vedānta, of Yoga and Sādhanā. This he taught by his own personal example. In himself, he embodied an exposition of illumined living. Thus Rāma Tīrtha's very personality itself preached and taught as much as any of the innumerable discourses and lectures he delivered to crowded audiences from platforms that ranged from India, San Francisco, Tokyo and back. Rāma Tīrtha demonstrated how Vedānta might be lived, his own life being an expression of the supreme art of living life in all its richness of vision and fullness of joy. It was Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha's unique distinction that he expounded Vedānta as a supreme yet simple art of living. He did not try to take people to Vedānta, he took Vedānta to the common man in the quiet of his home, to workers in busy offices, into the crowded streets and into the noisy markets of the western world. To rise above the petty self and act impersonally—this was the key to divine living. His call was to wake up to oneness with Life, Light and Love (Sat-Chit-Ananda) and "immediately the Central Bliss

will commence springing forth from you in the shape of happy heroic work and both wisdom and virtue. This is inspired life; this is your birthright".

Swami Rāma Tīrtha was a practical, bold Vedāntin. He lived a dynamic life in the spirit of the Self. Very high were his ideals, sublime were his views, and perennial and spontaneous was his love. He was Divinity personified and love-incarnate. He is ever-alive as a dynamic soul-force, ever shedding the spiritual effulgence in the heart of every seeker after Truth. His teachings are inspiring, elevating and illuminating—a fountain of his intuitive experiences.

In short, Swāmi Rāma's thrilling life is a flashing example of rare *prema* and a divine spontaneity. Listen! Here Rāma's voice whispers: "You have simply to shine as the Soul of All, as the Source of Light, as the Spring of Delight, O Blessed One! And energy, life activity will naturally begin to radiate from you. The flower blooms, and lo! fragrance begins to emanate of itself".

#### **Attaining Nirvāna**

In September 1906, young as his body was, it had become frail; physically and metaphorically he would slip and fall often but he always countered it with his usual discernment: "Ah! Rāma had just forgotten his Beloved, so he has fallen, otherwise there can be no fall. We slip first within and then we fall without. The outward fall is only contingent. Always take care within. Not a breath to pass without the Beloved. Fill your breath with Him." In the evenings, he would burst forth singing and clapping his hands and dancing, looking and reminding those

around him of Chaitanya. Author Puran Singh was not present at Vashishtha Ashram on the day Swāmi Rāma Tīrtha left his body. Swimming in the river, weakness overcame him especially as he got into a whirl of waters under the surface. It was after some time that he rose to the surface, and he was seen putting out a little struggle, but it was soon over. His body floated down the river, as if he died just as he struggled up to the surface by the very exertion. At last, a pencilled note was later found among his meagre possessions. Translated, it read:

"O Death! Take away this body if you please! I care not. I have enough of bodies to use. I can wear those silver threads, the beams of the moon, and I live. I can roam as a divine minstrel putting on the guise [of] hilly streams and mountain brooks. I can dance in the waves of the sea. I am the breeze that proudly walks and I am the wind inebriated. All these shapes of mine are wandering shapes of change. I came down from yonder hills, raised the dead, awakened the sleeping, unveiled the fair faces of some and wiped the tears of a few weeping ones. The bulbul and the rose both I saw and I comforted them. I touched this, I touched that, I doff my hat and off I am. Here I go and there I go, none can find me." Live in Om".

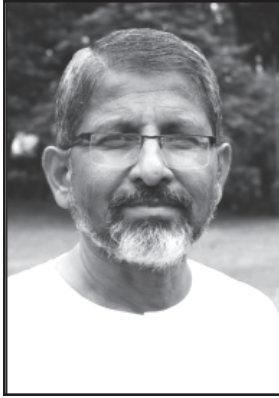
Sources:

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'The Story of Rama' by Puran Singh





- Swāmi Chidānanda



The *guru-kula*, going by the convention those days, was meant for Brahmin boys. The chief teacher Hāridrumata went by the rules that had been laid down. One morning, however, he had an unusual case. A young boy stood before him and, upon being asked about his caste (*gotra*, lineage), the boy neither affirmed he was a Brahmin nor admitted he was not one. The candidate who wanted to join the *guru-kula* just said, "I do not know what my *gotra* is!"

He was outspoken and went on to say that he had never seen his father and, before leaving his home to come to Hāridrumata, he had asked his mother about his lineage. All that the mother had said to him was that she herself did not know correctly who Satyakāma's father had been. In her younger days she had served at several places as a maid, and had attended on different masters at all those places. As per norms prevalent and practices in vogue at the time, she had conceived at one of those places. The mother was outspoken; so was the son when he was in front of his chosen

teacher.

*The teacher had an open mind*

Hāridrumata could have just refused admission to Satyakāma, saying unless it was confirmed that he was a Brahmin, the school's rules would not permit him to take him in. The pious teacher instead throws his arms open and says, "I regard you a Brahmin, when I notice that you are truthful, transparent and outspoken!" The teacher, without looking left or right, welcomes the boy to join his *guru-kula*.

The boy – Satyakāma Jābāla – was indeed extraordinary and so was his teacher Hāridrumata, whose openness was remarkable. Great heights of learning become possible in any subject or in any field, when the educators and learners are open-minded, which means they are not shackled by conventions or traditions. This, of course, does not mean that they throw the traditions to the winds at the drop of a hat. They respect traditions but their inner spirit is free. When needed, they go by their inner voice and do not behave mechanically.

***The pencil with an eraser***

When I lived in California in the mid-90s, a lady was regularly attending my Vedānta classes. She had three sons and her third son was a bit short-tempered. This boy broke some rules at his high school and, when reprimanded by his teachers, he screamed

at them and almost threatened them in some way. This was too much for his school and he was asked to leave the school. The mother was miserable at the turn of events, and she took her son to other private schools, asking for admission for her boy. Schools, one after another, refused her son admission, knowing the background of the case. I remember how, on one fine day, she narrated to some of us, after the Vedānta class, the way she had found light at the other end of the tunnel.

At one school, in contrast to all others, the principal was most understanding. She gave a broad smile and said, "I welcome your son to our school!" When this happened without any resistance or arguments, the mother of the boy was surprised. She asked the principal, "How come you are so kind? Are you not afraid my son will misbehave at your institution too?" The large-hearted educator replied, showing a pencil on her desk, which wrote at one of its tips and had an eraser at the other tip, "Look at this pencil. If it writes something wrong by chance, it also has an eraser that can remove the wrong words. Likewise, our vision of education recognizes wrong behaviour but has ways to forget the past, understand the student and set him right."

The school turned out to be a blessing for the emotionally disturbed boy and today, after 25 years, I know the young man doing very well as a professional at work and as a good husband and father at home.

#### **Hard and soft**

The openness that we are talking about is

hard to define in ordinary terms. It is about a certain maturity of outlook, which enables us to be strict at times and forgiving at other times. "The hearts of extraordinary people are harder than diamond and softer than flowers," goes an old Sanskrit verse<sup>2</sup>, and submits, "who can indeed understand the ways of the wise?"

Intuition and creativity seem to go hand in hand with care and compassion when wise people rise above mechanical behaviour and surprise everybody around with their noble actions. They may refuse to budge when others expect them to be kind; they may easily forgive when others think they will punish someone. This is not erratic on their part but something born of a deeper dimension in their personality. What they do is not *against reason* but *beyond reason*.

When they are hard, which means they remain strict in imposing some discipline, it has a healthy influence on people around them, who might be taking things too easy and are slipping into *tamo-guna*, a kind of sloth and indifference. When they are soft, which means they give much freedom to their team members, it again influences others in a desirable way, helping them grow in their own ways. This wisdom – to decide when to be hard and when soft – requires a bit of, I guess, what they call *intelligence beyond thought*.

#### **Forgive, forget and move on**

Most people in this world, especially the middle-aged and the older ones, nurse some wound or the other, of some unpleasant

incidents of their past. Their mind repeatedly goes back, revisits those episodes and experiences a variety of reactions. They wonder – more often than not – how they can settle score with the people who insulted them or caused some loss to them. They seldom ask themselves the valuable question, “What did I learn?”

The word ‘*kshamā*’ appears at many places in our scriptures. It is an extraordinary value. When we learn to look at our past with broadmindedness, on the one hand, we realize how everybody’s behaviour in this world is driven by many factors and that we need not be too judgmental. On the other, we also realize that it is better for us to identify our lapses in the whole matter and

correct ourselves in the present. We then stop brooding, and begin to live in a different way that is free of our past mistakes.

It is indeed charming to be a student in this process of lifelong learning – both outside and inside.

=

Notes:

1. Chāndogya Upanishad 4.4 (chapter 4, section 4) presents this fascinating story.
2. *vajrādapi kathorāni mridu kusumād api, lokottarānām chetāmsi ko nu vijnātum-arhati?* |Subhāshita.
3. For example in Geetā 16.3. The word *kshānti* (Geetā 18.42) also has much in common.



We never know what ripples of healing we set in motion by simply smiling on one another.

- Henry Drummond



Munuswamy made it big in business, so he spent money buying a piece of land in the city outskirts (Visakhapatnam rural) and built a 3-storey farmhouse. He had an impressive swimming pool in the garden with a 100-year-old mango tree in the backyard to boot. In fact, he bought the property precisely because of this tree. His wife loved eating mangoes.

During renovation, his friends urged him to get guidance from a 'vāstupandit' just to tread on the side of caution. Munuswamy never quite believed in vāstu, yet surprisingly, he took the advice to heart and went out of his way to engage a 'vāstupandit' from Hyderabad. The pandit was none other than Dr.Veera Reddy who had been in the profession for 30+ years, renowned in the practice of vāstushāstra. They had a meal in Vizag, then Munuswamy drove the vāstupandit to the rural Visakhapatnam. Along the way, when cars behind them tried to overtake, Munuswamy would simply give way.

The pandit laughingly remarked: "Swamygaru, your driving is really safe." He spoke really fluent Telugu for someone from Telangana. Munuswamy laughed at the remark: "Usually people who need to overtake have some urgent matter to attend to, so we shouldn't hold them up."

Arriving at a small town, Vizianagaram, the streets grew narrow and so Munuswamy slowed down. A giggling child suddenly came out from a side lane and as the child ran across the street, Swamy still didn't speed up. Instead, he kept looking at the lane, as if waiting for someone. Suddenly, another child came out, chasing after the child ahead.

Dr. Reddy was surprised and asked:

"How did you know there'd be another child following suit?" Swamy smiled: "Kids are always chasing after each other, so it's impossible for a child to be in such glee without a playmate." Dr.Reddy gave him a big thumbs up and laughed out loud: "That's really considerate of you!"

Arriving at the farmhouse, they got down from the car. Suddenly about 7 to 8 birds flew off from the backyard. Seeing that, Swamy told Dr. Reddy: "If you don't mind, please wait here for a little while."

"What's the matter?" the pandit was taken aback.

"Oh, probably some kids are stealing mangoes in the backyard. If we walk in now, we might give them a fright, let's not risk anyone falling off the old mango tree." Munuswamy replied humorously.

Dr.Veera Reddy stayed silent for a while before making a statement: "This home doesn't need a Vāstu treatment anymore."

Now it's Swamy's turn to be shocked: "Why's that?"

"Any place graced with your presence naturally becomes the property with the most auspicious Vāstu."

When our minds prioritize others' peace and happiness, the one who benefits is not just others, but ourselves too. When a person is considerate of others at all times, then this person has unconsciously accomplished sainthood. The saint is, in fact, a person who, by caring for others, becomes enlightened.

*Hope your home too does not need a Vāstu Pandit.*

A monk of the Ramakrishna Mission was being interviewed by a journalist from NY.

The journalist started interviewing the monk as planned earlier.

Journalist - "Sir, in your last lecture, you told us about *Jogajog* (contact) and *Sanjog* (connection). It's really confusing. Can you explain?"

The monk smiled and, apparently deviating from the question, asked the journalist: "Are you from New York?"

Journalist - "Yeah..."

Monk - "Who are all there at home?"

The journalist felt that the monk was trying to avoid answering his question since this was a very personal and unwarranted question. Yet the journalist said: "My mother has expired. My father is there. Three brothers and one sister. All married..."

The monk, with a smile on his face, asked again: "Do you talk to your father?"

The journalist looked visibly annoyed...

The monk persisted - "When did you talk to him last?"

The journalist, suppressing his annoyance, said: "May be a month ago."

The monk: "Do you brothers and sisters meet often? When did you meet last as a family gathering?"

At this point, sweat appeared on the forehead of the journalist. It seemed as if the monk was interviewing the journalist.

With a sigh, the journalist said: "We met last at Christmas two years ago."

The monk: "How many days did you all stay together?"

The journalist (wiping the sweat on his brow) said: "Three days..."

Monk: "How much time did you spend with your father, sitting right beside him?"

The journalist was looking perplexed and embarrassed and started scribbling something on a paper...

The monk: "Did you have breakfast, lunch or dinner together? Did you ask how he was? Did you ask how his days were passing after your mother's death?"

Drops of tears started to flow from the eyes of the journalist.

The monk held the hand of the journalist and said: "Don't be embarrassed, upset or sad. I am sorry if I have hurt you unknowingly... But this is basically the answer to your question about 'contact and connection (*Jogājog* and *Sanjog*)'. You have 'contact' with your father but you don't have 'connection' with him. You are not connected to him. Connection is between heart and heart... sitting together, sharing meals and caring for each other; touching, shaking hands, having eye contact, spending some time together... You brothers and sisters have 'contact' but you have no 'connection' with each other..."

The journalist wiped his eyes and said: "Thanks for teaching me a fine and unforgettable lesson"

*This is the reality today. Whether at home or in the society, everybody has lots of contacts but there is no connection between people. No communication. Everybody is in his or her own world.*

*Let us not maintain just "contacts" but let us remain "connected", caring, sharing and spending time with all our dear ones.*

*The monk, it is believed, was none other than Swāmi Vivekānanda.*

- Compiled by Ratna Vishwanath

(Continued from the last issue)

### 7. Rāmeshwara Jyotirlinga

Rāmeshwara (Rāmanāthaswāmy, Rāmalingeswarar) *Jyotirlinga* Temple, the southernmost of the twelve *Jyotirlinga*-s, is located in the holy town of Rāmeshwaram, situated on the Pamban Island in the state of Tamil Nadu.



This *Jyotirlinga* is closely associated with the Rāmāyana and Rāma's victorious return from Sri Lanka. Lord Rāma is believed to have worshipped Lord Shiva at Rāmeshwaram, both on his way to Sri Lanka and on his return to Bhārat.

The temple and the town have taken their name from this fact; Rāmeshwara means 'Lord of Rāma'. The temple is believed to have been consecrated by none other than Lord Rāma himself.

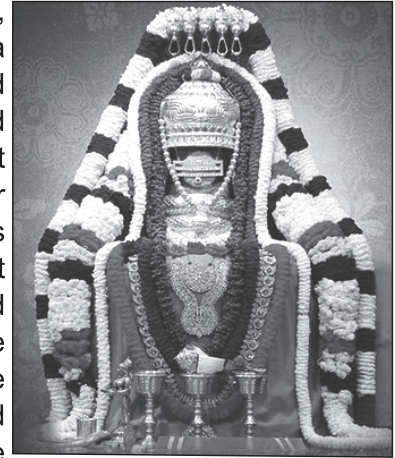
Rāmeshwaram is of great religious significance for Hindus and is considered to be one of the 'Chār Dhām' sites. It is a time-honoured pilgrimage centre, often considered at par with Banāras. Rāmeshwaram is one of the 274 *Pādal Petra*

*Sthalams* - places which three of the most revered Nayanārs (Saivite saints) have glorified with their songs. The natural beauty of the city also makes it a tourist attraction.

### The legends behind the Rāmeshwara Jyotirlinga

According to one legend, Rāma, on his way to Sri Lanka, stopped at Rāmeshwaram and was drinking water at the seashore, when he heard a celestial proclamation: "You are drinking water without worshipping me."

Thereupon, Rāma made a *linga* of sand and worshipped it and asked for its blessings to defeat Rāvana. Lord Shiva, in the form of the *linga*, blessed Rāma. The



*linga* then turned into a *Jyotirlinga* and Lord Shiva resided there for eternity.

Rāmeshwaram is also the place where Lord Rāma created a bridge across the sea to Sri Lanka.

According to another legend, Lord Rāma, after killing Rāvana, returned to India, first stepping on the shores of Rāmeshwaram. To expiate the 'dosha' of killing a brāhmana, Rāma wanted to offer worship to Lord Shiva. There being no shrine of Shiva in the island, Rāma dispatched Hanumān to Kailāsh to

bring an idol of Shiva.

Anticipating a delay in Hanumān's return, Rāma offered worship at a pre-chosen auspicious moment to a Shivalingam fashioned by Seethā out of sand available by the seashore. This lingam, worshipped by Rāma, is known as Rāmalingam (Rāmanāthar) and is the *lingam* in the sanctum.

When Hanumān returned, he was disappointed that his Lord had not used the lingam brought by him. Rāma pacified Hanuman and named this Lingam Kāshi Viswanātha(r). Devotees have to worship Kāshi Viswanāthar (also called Kāsilingam and Hanumān-lingam) before worshipping Rāmanāthar.

#### Architecture

This temple is well-known for its architecture, especially the magnificent *prākāra-s* or long ornate corridors, massive sculpted pillars, towers and the *theertham-s* or sacred tanks.

Rāmanāthaswāmy Temple was just a thatched shed, to begin with. The present structure was the work of many individuals spread over a number of centuries. The Sethupathi-s of Rāmanathapuram played a major role in the establishment of the temple. The temple was expanded during the 12th century by Pandya Dynasty, and its principal shrines were renovated by the rulers of the Jāffnā kingdom. The composite columns depicting Virabhadra are additions by the Vijayanagara kings during the early 1500s.

Like all ancient temples in South India, there is a high compound wall around the temple premises, with *gopuram-s* (towers) on all four sides. The *rājagopuram* (main tower) is 53 m tall. The temple has striking long corridors running between huge

colonnades (a long sequence of columns) on platforms which are five feet high. The Rāmanāthaswāmy Temple houses the longest corridor among Hindu temples in the



World- renowned corridors of the Temple

world.

The junction of the third corridor on the west and the paved way leading from the western *gopuram* forms a unique structure in the form of a chess board, popularly known as *Chokkattan Mandapam*.

The total length of these corridors is about 3850 feet. There are about 1212 pillars in the outer corridor, each with a height of about 30 feet. Most pillars have beautiful carvings.

There are separate shrines for Rāmanāthaswāmy and his consort Parvathavardhini, as also for the goddess Vishālakshi, Lord Vishnu, Lord Ganesha, the *utsava* images and a *shayana-griha*. There are various halls inside the temple.

There is a *Panchamukhi* Hanumān Temple which holds the floating stone that was used to build the bridge between India and Sri Lanka.

Other sacred sites include 'Gandhamadana-Parvatham Temple(a

small shrine with imprints of Rāma's feet)', 'Rāma Setu', 'Jada Tirtham Temple', Sethumādhava shrine and 'Kothandaramaswāmy Temple'.

There are sixty-four *theertham*-s (holy water-bodies) in and around the island of Rāmeswaram, Bathing in these *theertham*-s is a major aspect of the pilgrimage to Rāmeswaram and is considered equivalent to penance. Twenty-two of the *theertham*-s are within the Rāmanāthaswāmy Temple. The number 22 indicates the 22 arrows in Rāma's quiver. The first and major *theertham* is called *Agni-theertham*; it is the part of the seashore (of Bay of Bengal) associated with the temple. *Agni-theertham* is famous for its



Agni Theertham at Rameswaram

sacred waters and pilgrims perform rituals in honour of their ancestors at this seashore.

As a ritual for one's ancestors, it is a practice to first visit Rāmeshwaram and take some sand from there to Vārānasi. This sand is offered into the Ganga at Vārānasi. After completing the rituals at Allahābād (now named Prayagraj), Vārānasi and Gayā, one has to return from Vārānasi with some Gangā-water and offer it for *abhisheka* at Rāmeshwaram, thereby completing the pilgrimage.

Mahā-shivarāthri is an important festival at Rāmeshwaram, lasting for 10 days

culminating on Mahāshivarāthri day. Vasanthotsavam, Navarāthri, Ārdrā-darshanam are also celebrated with great fervour.

#### Other places of interest

Other tourist attractions nearby are Dhanushkodi beach, a glass boat ride along Pamban bridge, the bird sanctuary in Rāmanāthapuram, water sports in Holy



The Pamban Railway Bridge connecting the island

Island Beach and the house of former President of India, the Late Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Further southeast is the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park, a collection of biodiverse islands and coral reefs, with forests and mudflats. It is home to native mangroves, tropical fish and endangered species such as the sea-cow.

#### 8. Nāgesha Jyotirlinga

The Nāgesha *Jyotirlinga* is in Dārukāvana (a forest of dārukā or devadāru/deodār/ 'Cedrusdeodāra' trees).

#### The legend behind the Nāgesha Jyotirlinga:

According to *Shivapurāna*, a demon named Dārukā and his wife Dāruki lived in Dārukāvana. Dārukā was a devotee of Lord Shiva and Dāruki, a devotee of Mātā Pārvathi. By her ardent penance, Dāruki was able to master the forest and had a boon from



Pārvathi, whereby the forest followed her wherever she went. In order to protect the demons of Dārukāvana from the gods, Dāruki, employing the power obtained from Pārvathi, moved the entire forest into the sea. Dārukāvana became a city under the sea, inhabited by seasnakes and demons.

Supriya, a merchant by profession and ardent devotee of Shiva, arrived at Dārukāvana while sailing with his goods. Dārukā asked Supriya to teach him the norms of worship and penance of Shiva. Fearing that Dārukā would misuse any powers gained by such penance, Supriya refused to guide him. The enraged Dārukā imprisoned Supriya and subjected him to torture. However, Supriya had staunch faith in the Lord and remained unmoved. Supriya set up a lingam and made all the other prisoners recite the mantra '*Om namah shivāya*' while he prayed to the lingam. Dārukā responded by attempting to kill Supriya. Lord Shiva was pleased with Supriya; He manifested and killed Dāruka. Dāruki then started troubling Supriya. Shiva vanquished her too. (The other two versions are that (1) Shiva gave Supriya a divine weapon with which Supriya saved his own life (2) Shiva could not kill Dārukā as Dāruki was a devotee of Pārvathi but he remained there as a lingam to protect Supriya).

The lingam that Supriya had set up assumed the form of a *Jyotirlinga* with the name Nāgesha, while the Goddess Pārvathi was known as Nāgeshwari.

According to Vāmana-purāna (Chapters 6 and 45), 'Bālakhilya-s', a group of dwarf-sages worshipped Lord Shiva in Dārukāvana for a long time. To test their devotion and patience, Shiva came to them as a nude ascetic, wearing only *nāga-s* [serpents] on

his body. The wives of the sages got attracted to the ascetic and followed him, leaving their husbands behind. The sages got very disturbed and felt outraged by this. They cursed the ascetic, saying he should lose his linga (limited meaning – phallus). Shivalinga fell on the earth and the whole world trembled. Brahmā and Vishnu approached Shiva, requesting him to save the earth from destruction and take back his linga. Shiva did so; He continued his divine presence in Dārukāvana as '*jyotirlinga*' forever.

This *jyotirlinga* holds special significance as it symbolizes protection from all types of poisons. Those who worship at this temple are believed to become free of all poisons.

The location of the *Jyotirlinga*:

'Dārukāvana' is regarded as the only clue to indicate the location of the Nāgesha Jyotirlinga. The actual location of the legendary forest of Dārukāvana is the subject of debate.

Deodar trees have been associated with Lord Shiva and the ancient sages were known to reside and meditate in deodar forests to please Him.

Deodar trees are found abundantly only in the western Himalayas and not in peninsular India. Therefore, the 'Jāgeshwar' temple in Almorā, Uttarākhanda is commonly identified as Nāgesha Jyotirlinga.

Also, according to the ancient treatise *Prasādamandanam*,

हिमाद्रेरुत्तरे पार्श्वे देवदारुवनं परम् पावनं  
शंकरस्थानं तत्रैव शिवोऽर्चितः।

(To the northern side of Himālayas, there is the forest of Devadāru, which is most holy, and is the place of Lord Shankara. Lord Shiva is worshipped there itself).

Else, Dārukāvana might exist to the south/ southwest of the Vindhya Mountains, extending to the sea in the west.

### **Nāgeshwara Temple, Uttarākhanda**

Jāgeshwar in Almorā in Uttarākhanda has a cluster of 124 historical temples, some large, some small. One of them is the Nāgeshwara temple. Once the centre of Lakulish Shaivism, Jāgeshwar is located at an altitude of 1870 mts, in the Jatagangā river valley near a Deodar forest.

Jāgeshwar holds the 'Jāgeshwar Monsoon Festival' during the month of Shrāvan and the annual 'Mahā-shivarātri Melā' during spring.

### **Aundha Nāganāth Temple, Maharashtra**

This temple is in Hingoli district in Maharashtra. The temple, as it stands today, was built by the Seuna (Yādava) dynasty and dates back to the 13th century. The original temple is said to have existed from the time of the Mahābhārata. It is believed to have been a seven-storied structure before it was attacked by Aurangzeb.

The total area of the temple campus is about 60,000 sq. ft. The temple itself covers an area of 7200 sq ft. The sanctum sanctorum is located below the ground-level in a narrow chamber and has to be accessed by two steep steps. It is believed that the temple does not have any foundation.

The base of the temple is in *Hemadpanti* style of architecture. The upper portion underwent repairs later and is in the style prevalent during the Peshwā regime. The temple is well-known for its unbelievably beautiful carvings.

This temple is closely associated with saints revered by the Varkari sect. Nāmdeva met his guru, Visobā Khechara here. According to the text Jñāndeva Gatha, Jñāneśvara and Muktai instruct Nāmdeva to go to Aundha Nāganāth in search of a proper

guru. In the temple, Nāmdeva finds Visobā resting with his feet on the lingam. Nāmdeva reproaches him for insulting Shiva. Visobā asks Nāmdeva to place his feet elsewhere; wherever Nāmdeva places Visobā's feet, a lingam springs up. Thus, through his yogic powers, Visobā fills the whole temple with Shiva-lingam-s and instructs Nāmdeva on the omnipresence of God.

Once, when Nāmdeva was chanting bhajans with his senior gurus and other *varkāri-s*, the priest asked them to go away, saying that their singing in front of the temple was disturbing the routine pūjā. He also insulted Nāmdeva and admonished him for coming to the temple as he belonged to a low caste. Then Nāmdeva went to the backside of the temple and started singing *bhajans* there. But God, in order to be within the sight of the pining devotee and to listen to the *bhajans*, revolved the temple. As a testimonial to this miracle, *Nandi* is located in the rear side of the temple.

Guru Nānak, the founder of Sikhism is said to have visited Aundha Nāganāth temple and Narsi Bamani, the birthplace of Nāmdeva. Nāmdeva is also revered in Sikhism, as Bhagat Nāmdeo.

Every year a fair is held here in the month of Māgha, lasting till the beginning of month of Phālguna.

### **Other Nāgeshwara temples:**

The Nāgeshwar Temple, located near Dwāraka, on the coast of Saurāshtra in Gujarat is also a famous temple. It is believed that Lord Krishna himself worshipped the lingam here.

The Pāndava-s are believed to have discovered this linga during their exile. Their cows would drink water at a river and then milk would flow from their udders as though

the cows were making an offering into the river. Realizing that some great God must be residing in the river, the Pāndava-s cleared out the water and the linga could be seen.

A 25m-tall statue of Lord Shiva in a seated position and a large garden with a pond are major attractions in this temple, which was renovated in 1996.

Another Nāgेशwara temple is reported to be situated near Audhgrām near Purnā in

Andhra Pradesh.

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**(To be continued)**



## Solitude

"I want to be with God in prayer."

"What you want is an absurdity."

"Why?"

"Because whenever you are, God is not;  
Whenever God is, you are not.  
So how could you be with God?"

Later the Master said:

"Seek aloneness. When you are with someone else you are not alone. When you are 'with God' you are not alone. The only way to really be with God is to be utterly alone. Then, hopefully, God will be and you will not."

- Anthony de Mello S J



- Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon

After completing the creation of the entire cosmos, Lord Brahmā asked his sons Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanathkumāra and Sanatsujāta to continue the task of further creation. The four sons refused saying that they would rather do penance than this and left the place for good. This made Lord Brahmā very sad.

In the end he called his favorite son Nārada and asked for his help in the great task of creation. When Nārada also refused saying he preferred to perform penance, Lord Brahmā was very angry at the

ungrateful behavior of his son. Thinking that his sons considered the task of creation very low, he cursed Nārada that he will have to leave Satyaloka (a place where Gods dwell) and be born twice as an ordinary human being and suffer the trials and tribulations of life and then only return.

Thus because of Lord Brahmā's curse, Nārada was born as the son of Chitraketu, the King of Gandharvas (celestial musicians) and was named Upabharana. Now as a gandharva, he naturally loved music and was trained under great teachers. He loved stringed instruments and is supposed to have invented the Veenā. He also got himself initiated to Vaishnava-deekshā from Āchārya Brihaspati, the divine preceptor of Gods and began to pray and meditate regularly.

Once, the daughters of a *gandharva* named Chitraratha happened to pass by

Upabharana in deep meditation and fell in love with his handsome figure. With the consent of the elders they married him and they lived happily for many years. When he realized that the time had come for him to leave *gandharva-loka*, he engaged in deep meditation and one day he renounced his body and his soul left for its destined place.



Now as per the curse, he had to live another earthly life before getting back to Satyaloka and thus he was born as a son to a housemaid in a Brahmin's house on earth. The

master of the house gave him the name Nārada. The housemaid was uneducated but highly cultured. Her one and only aim was to see that her son was well brought up as a cultured human being. She firmly believed that if she taught her son all the right things, the Gods will be pleased with her and bless her son and as a result, his life would become pretty useful. Thus because of his upbringing, his mind was not drawn towards activities which normal children of his age would be fond of indulging in. He had no other interest excepting to listen to spiritual discourses by learned men on life and God. He mastered great knowledge about life here and hereafter. In fact, his mind was full of God and nothing else.

Once, a number of great and highly revered sages came to his master's house to observe Chāturmāsya Vrata (Chāturmāsya is a period of four months, sometime two

months, in the rainy season which is spent by *sanyāsis* in seclusion, following strict discipline regarding food, movement and meditation). He would closely observe them when they were in deep meditation. He would also sit for long hours in prayer, meditation and other sacred activities. He learnt to create a beautiful image of God in his mind and concentrate on it for long hours.

One day, he left the village and went to a forest to meditate. After a long period of time he happened to open his eyes and saw the beautiful form of the Lord in front of him. His joy knew no bounds but in a flash the form disappeared. Nārada was upset but continued with his meditation. When Nārada had lost all hope of seeing the Lord, he heard a voice which said that there a reason why He had appeared but quickly vanished. It was to teach Nārada that all his endeavors should be for seeking the Lord and nothing else and that Nārada's desire of having the *darshan* of the Lord would be fulfilled only in his next birth. Nārada spent the rest of his life in penance and prayer and finally left his mortal remains and reached heaven. By then, life on this world had gone a full circle. There was a great deluge and everything had been destroyed.

#### **Nārada in the story of Jalandhara**

Jalandhara was a very cruel demon king. He forced Indra and Devas to vacate their position in Swarga-loka. Vishnu remained neutral due to Lakshmi's reluctance to harm Jalandhara. So, Nārada Muni created two problems for Jalandhara. He told the demon king that Shiva's power and riches were much greater than what he had and secondly Pārvati, his wife, was the prettiest woman in this universe. Hearing this, Jalandhara started pursuing Pārvati. This led to a war with Lord Shiva, where He slit Jalandhara's

throat with a fiery chakra which He produced from his left toe, thus saving the world from the rule of a wicked *asura* king.

#### **Nārada's role in Kamsa's life**

Ugrasena was the king of the Yādavas and Mathurā was the capital of his kingdom.



He was a king only in name as his son Kamsa was the de-facto ruler. Kamsa was married to the two daughters of Jarāsandha, another powerful but wicked king of that time and this added to Kamsa's strength. He was surrounded by wicked men who would give him wrong advice to an extent that anyone he felt was against him was imprisoned without even a trial. Once Nārada visited Mathurā and stayed outside the city but informed Kamsa of his arrival. Kamsa then came with his royal entourage to accord him a grand traditional welcome. While discussing things, Nārada informed Kamsa that all the Devas in Devaloka had decided to destroy all the asuras in the role of kshatriyas and his name was also there in the list. He was to be killed by the eighth son of his sister Devaki.

The arrogant Kamsa just laughed as he was sure that there was no other as powerful as him who could do him any harm. Just to be sure, however, of his own safety, he decided to kill all the children born to Devaki. The pot of his sins was full and that is why Sage Nārada told him this divine secret. Later, as ordained, Devaki's eight child Shri Krishna killed him and saved the world.

### **Nārada informs Shri Krishna about Bānāsura**

One day, Shri Krishna's grandson Aniruddha (son of Pradyumna) suddenly disappeared. The Yadavas were worried and knowing this, Sage Nārada, who roams around the three worlds, appeared before Shri Krishna and told him that Aniruddha, had been taken to Shonitapura, the capital of the demon king Bānāsura, with the help of witchcraft because Bānāsura had come to know that Aniruddha was in love with his daughter, Ushā Devi. Bānāsura was furious and he had tied up Aniruddha with nāgapasha (noose of the Nāgas, which on impact could bind the target in coils of living venomous snakes). On knowing this, Shri Krishna collected a huge army and marched towards the kingdom of Bānāsura. He defeated the demon king and brought back his grandson and Ushā Devi. Nārada Muni by revealing the whereabouts of Aniruddha helped Shri Krishna defeat the arrogant asura king and save this world.

### **Nārada clarifies a mystery to Yudhishtira**

When Yudhishtira was conducting Rājasuya Yagna, Shri Krishna was to kill Shishupāla. When Shri Krishna did kill Shishupāla, a divine light left Shishupāla's body and entered Shri Krishna's divine being. Yudhishtira and others present were surprised at this phenomenon as no one

could explain it. It was then that Nārada, the wise one explained that even though Shishupāla had developed a hatred for Shri Krishna since childhood, in death he went to heaven instead of hell because in the past he and his brother Dantavakra were divine gate-keepers of Vaikuntha. They had been cursed by the great Sage Sanaka and his brothers and had taken birth on this earth as Hiranyākashipu and Hiranyāksha, Rāvana and Kumbhakarna and now as Shishupāla and Dantavakra. They had to be killed by the Lord to help them get back to Vaikuntha, where they belonged.

### **Nārada's connection to Vālmiki and Vedavyāsa**

Sage Nārada was instrumental in the making of the Rāmāyana, for he was the one who had cursed Lord Vishnu to come down on the earth, lose his wife and regain her with the help of monkeys. Secondly it was only when Nārada Muni narrated the story of Lord Rāma, the perfect man and other events of Rāmāyana, did Sage Vālmiki agree to pen the great epic as a poem.

Once, when Nārada visited Sage Vedavyāsa's āshrama, he found him sitting in a pensive mood. Upon asking for the reason he replied that, inspite of having classified the Vedas and even after composing Mahābhārata for those who could not comprehend the Vedas, he was still not satisfied. Hearing this, Sage Nārada suggested that even though Sage Vedavyāsa had done his best there were no stories highlighting devotion to Lord Nārāyana in his works. He asked the Sage to write a bhakti text having devotion as the main theme. Acting on Sage Nārada's advice, Sage Vedavyāsa wrote Bhāgavatam which spoke of devotion, knowledge and

renunciation.

### **Glory of Sage Nārada**

It was Sage Nārada who enlightened ordinary people of this earth about the greatness of God and the need to love and be grateful to Him. His very name suggests it. 'nāra' means knowledge and 'da' means one who gives it. The Nārada Bhakti Sutra composed by him is considered to be the perennial source of 'bhakti-rasa'. He is known in the Hindu tradition to be traveling to distant worlds, carrying a Kartāl and Tamburā, singing the glories of Lord Vishnu (Hari and Nārāyana). Other texts named after Sage Nārada include Nārada Purāna and Nārada Smṛiti.

The name Nārada also refers to different persons in mythical legends of Hinduism, as an earlier birth of Sariputta in Jātākā Tales of Buddhism, as well as names of medieval Buddhist scholars and in Jainism.

Sage Sanatkumāra taught *bhūma-vidyā* to Sage Nārada. This Vidyā occurs in the Chāndogya Upanishad (chapter 8, section 24), where Sanatkumāra instructs Nārada Muni on how Jnāna and Vairāgya can be revived in this age of Kali for the attainment of salvation. This is perhaps the greatest of all the Upanishadic vidyās after attaining which

one does not return to mortal existence.

Nārada Muni is considered to be one of the 12 Chiranjeevis (immortals). He is also said to have mastered the 64 vidyās. He is mentioned in the Shabda-kalpa-druma as the one who gives knowledge to the Devas, asuras and humans alike, and that is why he is also known as Deva-Rishi Nārada Muni.

Nārada Jayanti is observed on Pratipada Tithi during Krishna Paksha of Jyeshtha month. This day is also observed as Patrakār Divas (Journalists' Day) as he is believed to be the pioneer of communication and the first journalist on earth. Intellectual meetings, seminars and prayers are held on this day with an appeal to the journalists to follow his ideals, broaden their approach to the people and aim towards public welfare.

A temple dedicated to Sage Nārada is located at Nāradaḡadde, which is at a distance of about 48 km from Raichur, on the banks of River Krishna. It is believed that the Sage performed penance here.

Nārada Muni was called a gossipmonger. While people accuse him of causing disputes, the fact remains that his intentions were never vengeful or malicious. His ultimate goal was the betterment of every soul, with no vested interest of his own.



- Sundar Pichai

At a restaurant, a cockroach suddenly flew from somewhere and sat on a lady. She started screaming out of fear.

With a panic stricken face and trembling voice, she started jumping, with both her hands desperately trying to get rid of the cockroach.

Her reaction was contagious, as everyone in her group also got panicky.

The lady finally managed to push the cockroach away but ...it landed on another lady in the group. Now, it was the turn of the other lady in the group to continue the drama.

The waiter rushed forward to their rescue.

In the relay of throwing, the cockroach next fell upon the waiter.

The waiter stood firm, composed himself and observed the behavior of the cockroach on his shirt. When he was confident enough, he grabbed it with his fingers and threw it out of the restaurant.

Sipping my coffee and watching the amusement, the antenna of my mind picked up a few thoughts and started wondering, was the cockroach responsible for their histrionic behavior?

If so, why was the waiter not disturbed then? He handled it near to perfection, without any chaos.

It is not the cockroach, but the inability of

those people to handle the disturbance caused by the cockroach, that disturbed the ladies.

I realized that, it is not the shouting of my father or my boss or my wife that disturbs me, but it's my inability to handle the disturbances caused by their shouting that disturbs me.

It's not the traffic jam on the road that disturbs me, but my inability to handle the disturbance caused by the traffic jam that disturbs me.

More than the problem, it's my reaction to the problem that creates chaos in my life.

Lessons learnt from the story:

I understood, I should not react in life; I should always respond. The women reacted, whereas the waiter responded.

Reactions are always instinctive whereas responses are always well thought of.

*A beautiful way to understand .....LIFE.*

A person is HAPPY not because everything is RIGHT in his life. He is HAPPY because his attitude towards everything in his life is right..!!

**\*Online sources have ascribed this story to the CEO of Google. Editors**





What do we learn from  
Upanishads?

## The True Address of Happiness

- Swāmi Chidānanda

*“Dearer than a son (to his father), dearer than wealth (to someone who is very attached to money), dearer than anything else (to anybody among us who is fond of anything else) is this – the inmost (principle of our existence) – the Self.”*

In our ignorance we look for happiness in a thousand objects of the world. The above mantra (Brihadāranyaka Upanishad 1.4.8) supplies to us right information on where happiness is truly located.

॥तदेतत्प्रेयः पुत्रात्, प्रेयो वित्तात्, प्रेयोऽन्यस्मात् सर्वस्माद्, अन्तरतमं यदयमात्मा ॥



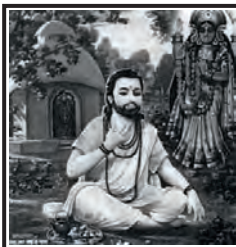
The most manifest sign of wisdom is continued cheerfulness.

- Montaigne



*- Ramprasad Sen*

Come on, Mind, let's go steal-  
 You and I together-  
 All Shiva owns- Mother's feet,  
 If we can carry them off.  
 But if they catch us  
 In that watchful house,  
 That would be the end of the body.  
 They'd tie us up in Kailasa.  
 Don't forget your guru's advice  
 If we get in; we'll wound Shiva  
 With an arrow of devotion,  
 Then grab those feet and run.



Ramprasad Sen – (1718 – 1745) Ramprasad was a Bhakti poet of eighteenth century Bengal. His devotional poems, known as Ramprasadi, are usually addressed to Mother Kali. The poems of Ramprasad were popularised by Sri Ramakrishna.



## Brahman and Bhagavad Gitā

Bliss and Love are One

- Antonio do Rosario Fernandes

According to our (Indian) culture, the ultimate (or supreme) reality was neither the pleasure of ruling a kingdom nor of owning large herds of cattle (a sign of wealth in ancient times); nor was it the conjugal pleasures with celestial maidens (apsarās). Attainment of Brahman, referred to as nirvāna, which is the state of total bliss, was the ultimate reality.

### What is Brahman?

The definition that best describes Brahman is 'ānanda' or total bliss. Brahman is – in general – associated with the infinite. Thus the person who has attained Brahman experiences total bliss, which is no different from infinite love for his fellowmen. His faculties for perception and learning will be heightened; he becomes 'enlightened'. Finiteness is the characteristic of the mortal man. With the attainment of Brahman, there is instant mutation in man's faculties – from the finite to the infinite – a characteristic that is generally attributed to God.

It was perhaps the desire to quantify their experience of the infinite, which was achieved on their attaining Brahman, that was responsible for our ancestors to invent the decimal system of counting, including the mathematical concepts of zero and infinity – their great gift to mankind. Hinduism sees attainment of Brahman as the mystical union of man with God.

### The Gitā

In the Bhagavad-Gitā, Brahman is equated with both the Absolute God and the personal God. Sri Krishna, the personal

God, is on one hand an avatār (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu and, on the other, no different from Brahman. In contrast, the nirvāna of Buddhism, which is essentially identical to realization of Brahman of Hinduism, is different in one respect. On the question of whether God is there or not, Buddhism is silent. The Buddha did not say either yes or no.

Gitā deals with the knowledge of Brahman, the ultimate reality, attaining which a man experiences total bliss. The Gitā discusses different paths or yogas for attaining Brahman. There are the path of knowledge (jnāna-yoga), the path of action (karma-yoga) and the path of devotion (bhakti-yoga). An important aspect of the Bhagavad-Gitā, which has never been emphasized in literature, is that the Gitā never says that a particular path for attaining Brahman is false. Saying sometimes jnāna-yoga is the best, and at other times karma-yoga is the best, and still at other times bhakti-yoga is the best path, it also suggests that all the paths are actually the same. It emphasizes that the different paths lead to the same Brahman, and the state of total bliss. This is the well-recognized, reconciliatory approach of the Bhagavad-Gitā.

Numerous sages attained Brahman, the ultimate reality, using some path (yoga) or another. Any known path leading to the supreme reality must necessarily be true. That seems to be the logical basis for the Gitā to regard all the paths to be true and

none to be false!

### **A Little Paradox?**

One aspect of the Bhagavad Gitā that has not received much recognition is that, for being eligible to obtain the knowledge of Brahman, one must already possess the attributes of a person who has actually attained Brahman<sup>1</sup>. How does one explain this apparent paradox? The difference in attributes between the one who is eligible and the one who has attained Brahman is perhaps one of degree only, which is finite in the former and infinite in case of the latter.

### **Thrust on Universal Welfare**

It is a well-recognized aspect of the Gitā that one should not hanker for the fruit of one's actions but ought to perform actions in the line of duty dispassionately and with detachment. It is not so well known that universal welfare<sup>2</sup> is the criterion prescribed by Gitā for choosing the proper line of action. The concept of universal welfare has in modern times has been appropriated by Christianity vide its enormous contribution, even in India, in the field of education and public health.

### **Brahman and Jesus**

Legend has it that Jesus Christ attained Brahman in India, before he went on to start his public life in Palestine. Christ's doctrine of love for one's fellowmen and of offering the other cheek for being slapped just cannot be explained by Judaism, which preaches "an eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth". It can easily be explained by the concept of Brahman, the supreme reality. Let me explain. Imagine two persons who have both attained Brahman. One happens to slap the other, let us say! When the other person who is equally brave and strong (if not stronger

and braver) offers his other cheek, the first person will realize that he has made a mistake and will apologize. If the first person (has not attained Brahman and) is a rogue, he would gladly slap the second cheek also of the second person! Jesus Christ thus does just as Bhagavad Gitā teaches us how an "enlightened" man acts.

In Greek culture also there is a concept identical to that of Brahman but is associated solely with philosophy, not with religion. Porphyry, in his "Vita Plotini," said that his guru Plotinus (third century AD) had experienced supreme bliss seven times in his life whereas he, Porphyry, had experienced it only once. These Greek philosophers attained the supreme bliss through contemplation and self-purification.

### **What Gitā would mean in modern times**

If the Bhagavad Gitā were to be written in modern times, it would run thus: To the question of Arjuna as to which is the best religion, the Blessed Lord Sri Krishna would sometimes say that Hinduism is the best; he would declare, at other times, that Christianity is the best! He would, still at other times, state that Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism or Jainism (or any other recognized world religion) is the true religion – emphasizing that all these religions preach a moral code which leads man to heaven. Being an Upanishad, the modern world Bhagavad Gitā would definitely put in the mouth of Sri Krishna the view expressed by Āchārya Vinobā Bhāve to Fr. Bede Griffith during a meeting the two had. This is recounted in Griffith's book, "Christ in India." Bhāve said, "We should not concern ourselves with our differences in faith but should ever unite together in those common

principles of 'spirituality,' which belong to almost all religions." Fr. Griffith adds, "Indeed, I was told that he (Bhāve) has recently gone further than this and has maintained that the different religions (or dharmas as he calls them) should be decently 'buried' and only their spiritual principles retained."

While discussing about Bhagavad Gitā, Mr Ravindra Kelekar, who "trans-created" the Mahābhārata into Konkani in Devanāgarī script in two volumes, voiced his opinion to me that, at the mystical level, all religions are the same. It may be said that, at the baser level also, all religions are the same. The precepts, hymns, incantations, liturgy and the holy book, the Bible of the Christians, is in no way superior to or different from the precepts, liturgy, and holy books of the Hindus or of any other religion. Gandhiji rightly said, "All religions are equally true. Every religion has an element of error in it."

Notes:

1 (Editors' note) The author is right in saying that these scriptures like Gitā seem to demand from the seeker (sādhaka) such qualities (like viveka, vairāgya etc) that can be seen in enlightened beings only. In Vedānta works, we have the fourfold qualifications called sādhanā-chatusthaya. They are viveka, vairāgya, shama-ādi-shatka-sampatti and mumukshutva. Being able to distinguish the eternal and the ephemeral, utter distaste for pleasures, six virtues like calmness of mind and a burning desire for liberation. Under viveka, for

example, the sādhaka is supposed to look at everything except Brahman as ephemeral!

2 (Editors' note) The Sanskrit word 'loka-sangraha' as it appears in Gitā 3.20 goes well with the idea of universal welfare. Otherwise also, when we give up our attachment to "what we are going to get" and do our duty with heart and soul, the direct beneficiaries are 'others'.

3 (Author's note) See (the book) Jesus lived in India: His unknown life before and after crucifixion by Holger Kersten.



**Antonio do Rosario Fernandes**

The author retired in 2012 from the position of a scientist with the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa. Religion, politics, art and culture became his passion following a mystical experience he had in 1987.



- Pratheesh Nair

A large numbers of Indians across the world celebrated Dussehra recently; the festivity scorches the evil in us (attributes of Ravana) and makes us embrace goodness (qualities of Rama). Examining this battle of morals, it is worthwhile remembering the stories from epics that we had heard as children.

In Ramayana, Rama seemingly suffered more and enjoyed less. One of the tragic parts of Rama's life is the estrangement from Sita after they returns to Ayodhya. Instead of living happily-ever-after, the epic takes a turn for the worse. Rama chooses the honor of his dynasty and banishes his wife, the very beloved spouse for whom he had endured hardships. A society used to seeing leaders living luxurious lives, and to instant gratification, would view such determination to live by higher principles as folly.

The old saying goes, 'dharma rakshati rakshitah'. "A leader should perform his duties selflessly, and he gains protection by this very act." The welfare of the public takes precedence over that of the leader. This sense of social responsibility becomes a basic qualification to be a good leader, who should understand this fundamental truth and act.

CEOs of corporate houses today launch Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs as part of their organizational ethos, either because they truly believe in it or for the publicity value their brand receives in return. CSR is indeed an expression of ancient wisdom though it may have been repackaged by smart MBA exponents. Arthashastra by Kautilya – one of the most famous administrative treatises – emphatically says, "sukhasya moolam dharmah, dharma-moolam arthah," the key

to happiness is dharma (right conduct) and the key to dharma is wealth. Happiness lies in doing the right things in the right way (dharma) and wealth is required to achieve this. Unfortunately, most businesses have forgotten the first part of this statement. People want large profits but forget that wealth is not the end. Their wrong vision makes them do CSR for the sake of greater profits via promotions. Corrupt intentions corrupt the action.

The treatise advises leaders to secure wealth, grow it and, most importantly, use it for welfare. Unfortunately, men forget the third part. They do adhere sometimes to the third principle but – instead of the intended welfare of the public – they ensure the welfare of their families. This selfish approach breeds discontent among employees, resulting in long-term harm to goodwill.

Good leaders rise above pursuits of wealth and fame and exert towards the genuine, larger good of people, society and environment, which their business exploits. Some of our legendary business leaders adhered to this great principle of raja-dharma and shaped their society. They built hospitals, extended grants for education and spent on improving infrastructure, etc. These acts won them goodwill and trust of the masses, which stayed very long.

True leaders understand the essence of social responsibility and dharma. They pursue noble goals with selfless vigour as Rama did. This may not be a happy ride for them, but they earn something for which a price tag cannot be attached.

*[The author, while in Pune, was an active member of the editorial team of Inner Flame. He now lives in Canada. – Ed]*

## ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

### EXERT, DO NOT GIVE UP EASILY

*Advice in Mahābhārata to Leaders*



King Bhagiratha bringing Ganga to earth with Lord Shiva's help, symbolizing entrepreneurship, proactivity, enthusiasm

उद्यच्छेदेव न ग्लायेद् | *udyacched-eva na glāyed* |

उद्यमो ह्येव पौरुषम्। | *udyamo hyeva paurusham* |

### PRAISE OF EXERTION

Bhishma says to Yudhisthira, while guiding him on how a king ought to be:  
*The king should always exert for acquiring greatness. He should never bend down in meekness. Exertion is manliness.*

Mahābhārata, 12.133.9

(12 shānti-parva, chapter no 133, shloka number 9, chapter 131 in some editions)

{The above is an example of how the great itihāsa (epic) – Mahābhārata – running into 100,000 verses – throws light on effective living and role playing.}

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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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