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Inner Flame

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Hari Om,

TS Elliot said, "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time". This holy land of the Rishis has been that last stop for many an earnest seeker who, since time immemorial, looks for the meaning of his meandering search.

Imagine a World War-II fighter pilot becoming a monk in India and leading a pious life in the Himālayas. Indeed, that is the dramatic and adventurous life Yogi Sri Krishna Prem led. Dakshu Mansukhani has compiled this fascinating pursuit of happiness that brought him to this holy land in the early 20th century. He remained here to lead the austere life of an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna for the next 40 years or so. As Krishna Prem himself would have put it, Thakur (Lord Krishna) has indeed laid out different paths for all of us to traverse but in the end, they all converge in him!

Swāmi Chidānandaji dwells on the importance of following the path of *dharma* in his article 'A Virtuous Life' under the series 'Perceiving Phoenix'. As illustrated by the story of the dog that followed the great Yudhisthira in the epic Mahābhārata, indeed *dharma* is the only true friend of man in life and after death.

The temple of Bābulnāth that is located on a hillock overlooking the Marine drive at Mumbai has been drawing devotees for a long time. In our series 'Places that Beckon', Ratna Viswanath brings to you lesser known aspects about this popular destination, thronged by those who are looking for a respite from the hustle and bustle of Mumbai.

Vijayalakshmi Menon brings to life another lesser-known lady character from the epic of Rāmāyana i.e. 'Tārā' – the wife of Monkey King Vāli who gets killed by Lord Rāma. Faced with difficult choices, how she maintains her dignity and poise to emerge as a well-respected person, is indeed worth contemplating upon.

Under our series, 'Fleeting Moments, Enduring Impressions' Swāmi Chidānandaji narrates his meeting with Bābā Hari Dāss, the silent master who lived a large part of his life in the United States of America.

As usual, there are interesting snippets, stories and poems for your reading pleasure and we do hope that you enjoy going through this collection studded with the pearls of eternal wisdom. The imaginative cover design by Rashmi Hande captures the paradox of our lives - looking for light without while all the time, carrying it in our bosoms really well.

Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd)
For the Editorial Team



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Editor

Swāmi Chidānanda

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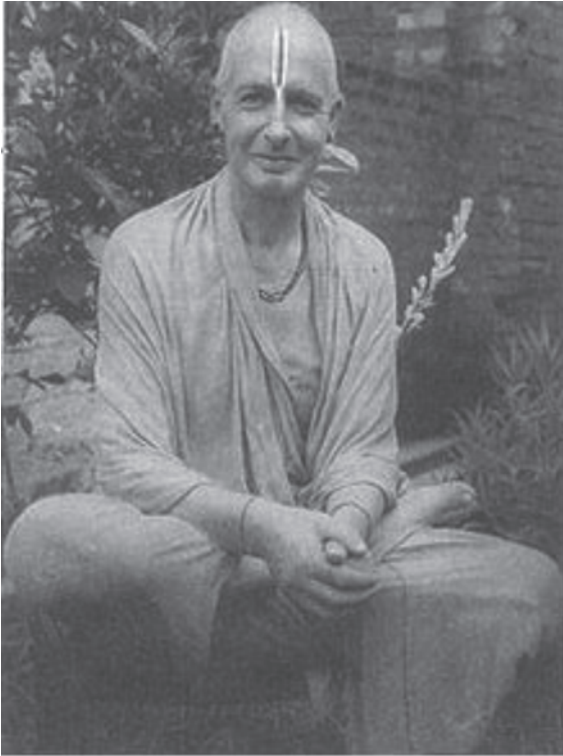
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Introduction

India is an enviably rich storehouse of spiritual knowledge derived from the Vedas and has nurtured stalwarts who dedicated their lives to the search of the Indefinable, Indescribable Imperceptible, the knowledge of which is considered as the only purpose of life. Given the ancientness of Hinduism, it is not surprising that all of these dusky-skinned Masters have taken birth here, in the land of the primordial and highest knowledge. Therefore, when an unmistakably light-skinned, blue-eyed man from England enters the arena, he is bound to attract

interest. His curiosity turned into admiration, morphing into a deep respect and eventually, a love for Lord Krishna as seen through the eyes of the *bhakta* (devotee).

Such a man was Ronald Henry Nixon, later known as Krishna Prem, who came to India in the early 20th century. Together with his spiritual teacher Yashoda Ma, he founded an ashram at Mirtola, near Almora, in the state of Uttarakhand. He was one of the first Europeans to pursue orthodox *Vaishnavite* Hinduism (the worship of Vishnu in any of His forms or Incarnations), and remained a strict *Gaudiya Vaishnavite* (inspired by Chaitanya Mahāprabhu) during the rest of his life. He was held in high regard and had Indians and foreigners as his disciples - disciples whom, according to his good friend Dilip Kumar Roy, he never sought and whom, in fact, in earlier days he repelled, seeing them as intrusions into the privacy of his personal *sādhanā*.

Early life, education and the World War

Ronald Nixon was born in Cheltenham, England, on 10th May 1898; he was educated in Taunton, a small town in Somerset, England. Taunton has over 1,000 years of religious and military history, including a 10th-century monastery and a castle, which has its origins in the Anglo-Saxon period. His mother was a Christian Scientist and his father was reportedly in the glass-and-china

business. At 18, Nixon became a British fighter pilot in the First World War. On one occasion, he had an escape from death that he believed was miraculous, in which a “power beyond our ken” saved him from a German enemy plane hot on his heels, mid-air. His experiences of destruction and death during the war filled him with a “sense of futility and meaninglessness”.

Later, he studied English Literature at King’s College, Cambridge where he became acquainted with Buddhism and Theosophy (early loves, responsible for drawing him to India in the first place) which continued to colour his thoughts. Exploring further afield, indulging his natural bent of mind, he delved into the Gnosis of Plotinus and the Greek Neo-Platonists, symbols, myths and dreams and their psychological significance, the Sufi mystics, Whitehead (a fellow-Britisher best known for his work in mathematical logic and the philosophy of science), as well as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (French idealist philosopher and Jesuit priest), all of which supplied him with arresting comparisons and parallels which he used later in his talks, letters and books he wrote. His interest in Advaita Philosophy drew him to his own personal study of the original Sanskrit texts but though he often spoke of Shankara and Vedānta, he once said, “But I find *sat-chit-ānanda* hard to love! Aren’t Advaitins somehow rather dry?” Obviously, he was a *bhakta*, naturally relating to his ‘*thākur*’, the name by which he called Lord Krishna.

A Passage to India

In 1921, while still in England, with the help

and guidance of a high-ranking theosophist there, Nixon accepted the offer of a teaching position at the University of Lucknow where the Vice Chancellor, Gyānendra Nāth Chakravarti, himself deeply interested in Theosophy, offered him not only his assistance in all matters but also accommodation in his own home where he lived with his wife, Monicā and young daughter Moti Rāni. Little did Nixon know at that time that he would become the disciple of this Bengali lady.

Monicā Chakravarti had a significant role to play in Ronald’s life, both in Banāras and in later times. Hence, a word about her would not be out of place. Mrs. Chakravarti was no ordinary personality. It is said that when she was a child, she had been chosen by Swāmi Vivekānanda, then only an unknown *sannyāsi*, for the symbolic worship in the *Kumāripujā*, as observed in Bengal. In Rome, there was such an aura about her that it led to her being mobbed by a crowd in St Peter’s when she travelled there with her husband and Theosophist Annie Besant. They tore the blue sari embroidered with silver stars worn by the beautiful, dark, big-eyed woman whom they took for the Virgin Mary. Another time, she was thought to be the Queen of Madagascar when she dressed in all her finery, and even Queen Victoria, on seeing Monicā on the sidewalk, sent her summons to the palace. Monicā refused, saying that Indian women did not go anywhere without their husbands!

In Lucknow, Monicā played her roles well: as wife of the Vice Chancellor, she entertained, with cultured refinement, her

husband's many distinguished guests while still not ignoring outlandish religious mendicants or using a peasant's crude sayings that she did with great effect. She firmly believed that if a person had any spiritual worth within, it would show on the outside. Consequently, she neither hid her own lamp under a bushel of conventionalities nor did she object to eccentricities of dress and behaviour in others seeking the same goal. Among the visitors to their home was one Dilip Kumar Roy, disciple of Sri Aurobindo and a Krishna *bhakta* who entertained them with his beautifully sung Krishna-*bhajans*. A strong friendship developed between Monicā, Dilip Kumar Roy and Ronald Nixon.

Under the Guru's guidance

Behind Monicā's social and vivacious exterior lay an overpowering love for Krishna: it is said that when she spoke of Him, Krishna was not confined to words; His Presence could be felt in the room. It was no surprise then, that in 1928 Monicā took the vows of renunciation (*sannyāsa*) in the *Gaudiya Vaishnavite* tradition, where these vows are called *vairāgya*^{*}. She adopted the monastic name of *Yashodā Mā* or *Yashodā Māi Vairāgini*. Soon thereafter, she initiated Ronald Nixon into the Vaishnava tradition, conferring on Ronald the name Krishna Prem. In 1930 they together set up an *āshrama* at Mirtola, a village 10 km. away from Almora in Uttarakhand. They named the *āshrama* Uttar Vrindāvan, which was another name by which Mirtola was known. Yashodā Mā's daughter Moti Rāni accompanied her mother. Dr. Alexander, a well-known

English surgeon who left a prosperous worldly life and who had been an earlier acquaintance of Krishna Prem, also joined them. Gradually, under the guidance of Yashodā Mā, they built a Krishna Temple, a place of work, worship and introspection where aspirants could live a life centred on dedication to the Spirit.

Life in the *āshrama* was extremely austere. They took only a single meal a day, and even gave up drinking afternoon tea, when the *āshrama* could not afford to serve it to the labourers who worked in the fields around. There was no hot water available, even though the winters were very cold with heavy snowfall. Krishna Prem slept on the floor on a single blanket, close to the side of his Guru Yashodā Mā. Krishna Prem was a great *guru-bhakta* and believed firmly that nothing could take the place of personal service to the guru, for quick spiritual progress. His devotion to Yashodā Mā was something very rare in modern times, especially for an ex-professor and intellectual of such high order. Nothing was allowed to disturb the peaceful and purposeful atmosphere at Mirtola. Krishna Prem refused to involve himself in any problems of this world and therefore, both newspapers and radio were not allowed within the precincts. To him, the news in the present was always the same as in the past and the radio, "a sort of unintelligible background noise." Echoing the mantra in the Mundaka Upanishad, he said, his only aim was to "hit the mark of the Imperishable with the arrow of the self, sharpened by meditation and to become one with it."

Gertrude Emerson Sen, a visitor to Almora and wife of scientist Dr. Basishwar Sen, was surprised to see a European in such a remote part of India and that too in an *āshrama*. She was startled to see a fair-skinned, blue-eyed stranger sitting among the monks on the floor, clad wholly in Indian *geruā* dress, deep in absorption with the ongoing devotional chanting. She also noted his strict adherence to *Vaishnavite* rules and regulations. Gertrude Sen remembers that even before the *āshrama* was set up, on a visit to their admittedly 'unorthodox' household, arrangements had to be made for Yashodā Mā and Krishna Prem to eat separately...on a washed veranda floor, in brass *thālis*, the fresh vegetables and dry ingredients cooked by the guests themselves on charcoal fires in shiny new pots. Mrs. Sen recalls another incident when her husband teased Gopal, as they lovingly called Krishna Prem, saying, "if my grandmother followed all this ritualistic procedure, I could understand it. But you have had such a different background. Back in Cambridge days, you must even have eaten plenty of beef! How is it you can observe such orthodox restrictions?" Exhibiting faith in the older Masters, his Guru and his own complete immersion in what he believed to be the right way to live to reach the goal, Gopal laughed good-naturedly, replying, "For one thing, I believe that any self-imposed discipline, external or internal, is rather a good thing in this present age, when every kind of social and individual restraint is being hurled out of the window. Also, quite simply, this happens to be the path laid down by those who have gone before me and reached the goal. Who am I,

just entering on the path, to say 'I will do this and not that, accept this discipline but not that?' I accept the whole." Described as 'the embodiment of dedication', Krishna Prem stuck to the rules wherever he went. He once asked a friend to wait outside while he went into the inner sanctum of the Dandeshwar Temple to meditate awhile. 'His blue eyes and very English looks left no doubt as to his European origin but his *sannyāsi's* garb gave him the right of entry.'

Alexander Phipps alias Madhāw Āshish, an Englishman (who went to Almora and eventually became first a disciple and then the head of the *āshrama* after the passing away of Sri Krishna Prem) was just as surprised and bemused when, in 1942, he saw Krishna Prem stride 'barefoot on to the veranda of Almora's one Western-style hotel...six foot, big-boned but soft-fibred, blue-eyed, a high-domed shaven head with a stubble of white hair, and a lot of that pinko-white Anglo-Saxon skin that goes red in the sun showing in the gaps of his ochre garments...[Sri Krishna Prem] talked brilliantly, learnedly, wittily...his eerie blue eyes ...looking through, not at one' of the two before him. He also noted that Krishna Prem was not a missionary who attempted to persuade others that he held the keys to the mysteries of the spiritual world. He would simply answer "I do not know" when asked a question beyond his knowledge. However, he could communicate, in Bengali, with a peasant woman as easily as he did with a sophisticated intellectual.

Moving as He makes us move

When Yashodā Mā passed away in 1944,

Krishna Prem inevitably came to find himself in the company of 'worldly' companions and visitors who asked for his views on urgent matters concerning the present-day India. But no matter what the subject, whether it be on caste (which he felt that, in its old form, had served its purpose and would have to go), or reforms in law, or India's rapid thrust towards industrialization, or India losing her spiritual values in the rush to achieve what the west had, or fear of becoming a second-hand copy of it, Krishna Prem invariably raised the answers to a higher more sublime level: "But, of course, it is Thākur who pulls the strings. We move as He makes us move. We dance as He makes us dance."

Apart from the philosophy on which Vaishnavism was based, Krishna Prem was well-versed in the *Itihāsa* as presented by Veda Vyāsa as well. During the Chinese infiltration into NEFA, anxious that perhaps the Chinese really would overrun India, spreading Communism, Krishna Prem allayed fears by referring to an incident from the Mahābhārata. "Do you remember how during the battle of Kurukshetra, Ashwatthāmā was just on the point of destroying Arjuna? He had already let fly his Brahmāstra weapon, which nothing could stop or avert before it reached its mark. Well, Krishna pressed down His foot, and the chariot wheels sank a foot or two into the earth, and the fatal arrow passed harmlessly overhead. I believe that at the critical moment, Krishna will always press His foot down. India will be saved. India can never lose her soul."

Sri Krishna Prem never sought disciples, never permitted himself to be advertised. Only a single painting of his Guru, Sri Yashodā Mā, still hangs in the little room that was hers. No pictures of him, small or life-sized were permitted to be hung in the *āshrama*. Since his arrival in India, his very personality had changed: he wore the *Vaishnava* mark on his forehead, a long *tulsi-mālā* over his *geruā* clothes. Once, someone came up to him in a street and obviously guessing his identity, inquired pointedly if he could tell him where 'Professor Nixon' was. He merely turned away, answering casually "Oh, he died long ago." It was only later in his life that a change, not in fundamentals but in these superficial details was noticed. The mark on his forehead was wiped off; the *mālā* was worn under the now "more comfortable" clothes: a straight cotton sheet, dyed *geruā*, sewed up at the sides with the openings left for arms to come through and a hole cut in the middle for the head; this was tied round the waist with a folded twist of cloth over which he put on a sweater in winter.

However, though he had died to his old self, he was a thorn in the flesh of the British officials in the days before Indian independence. Most of them, with a singular opacity of perception - not realizing that it was he, who in some measure, partially compensated for a few of their many sins of commission and omission - felt that he had badly let them down by his open and flagrant identification of himself with India and Indians, especially Hinduism, which their government was attempting to disparage with the intention

of wiping it out completely from the hearts and minds of Indians. The wife of a one-time deputy commissioner of the district explained his 'eccentricity' by scoffing that since, he being a pilot in the first world war (true) his plane had crashed (also true) and because he had received a very serious head injury, he was, naturally, never quite right again!

The routine at the *āshrama* was strictly maintained, one indication being the serving of meals: nobody was allowed to eat before the food had been offered to *thākur* and the Guru had consumed it. Though his meditation and prayers were always done in private, Krishna Prem often lifted the residents of the *āshrama* to great spiritual heights when he was cajoled into joining them for *bhajans*; he would sing in a beautiful and stirring way which invariably brought tears to everyone's eyes. At such times, he was accompanied on the drums by Mādhav Āshish, one of his three very faithful friends and dedicated disciples. Simplicity and functionality in all areas, personal and in the *āshrama*, were becoming the signs of transformation taking place within...indicating a major outward change which was due to come. Though unwell, he wished not to be bothered by doctors, '*thākur*' being his one and only doctor. But when his health deteriorated even further, someone pleaded with him, "You have access to *thākur*, why don't you ask for an extension?" His reply was simple: "You don't realize that I am already living on extension. This is the extension now."

Described by Dilip Kumar Roy as the

professor-turned-yogi who 'brought British doggedness to bear upon the practice of yoga', Krishna Prem distinguishes faith from mental belief. Faith is for him 'the light which the higher personality sends down to the lower'; he defines true faith as the 'naked smokeless flame that burns in the secret recesses of the heart', affording glimpses of the Infinite; *bhakti* is not emotional rapture as such, but self-giving to Krishna, which is naturally accompanied by emotional rapture. It is "the offering of the mortal (*āhuti*) in the pure flame of the immortal", he said. It must be total and unconditional, involving "the staking of everything that does not matter, for the one thing that does". Revealing his *parā-bhakti*, he said, "It is not a question of what I want or don't want. It is essentially what Krishna wills." He carried an image of Krishna as his Eternal companion and *Ishtadevatā*, the manifest form (*vigraha*) being not a mere symbol but the manifest Reality of the Supreme.

It is said that supreme love is one with supreme wisdom. Haridas Chaudhuri, a Bengali and integral philosopher, a correspondent with Sri Aurobindo and the founder of the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) said in 1966 that 'he had, on the one hand, an unusual comprehensiveness and wideness' of vision and on the other, the yogic power to withdraw from the superficial thought movements of contemporary times and discover "a new and abiding source of Knowledge." *bhakti* led Krishna Prem to discover "Krishna's Light" ...the light that is not seen but is the *light that sees*. By virtue

of his total renunciation and pure devotion, Krishna Prem's whole being was set on fire with the love of God. He found in India his spiritual home; he recognized the historic role of India as God's playground - *Lilābhoomi*. His numerous letters shed light upon such perennial problems as the personal and the impersonal aspects of the Spirit, *karma* and freedom, *māyā* and the external world, life and philosophy, religion and social progress, humility and humour, the healing power of laughter, *japa* and *mantra*, etc. For Krishna Prem, there is only one true spiritual path and that path is indefinable. It is the blossoming of the individual beyond his ego in Krishna's Light and Love. So Krishna Prem says, "The true path is through the sky and has no landmarks and no descriptions. All described paths are but the tracings on the earth of the shadow of one who has gone in the sky."

Interactions with Saints

In 1948, when he visited South India, his life-long friend, Dilip Kumar Roy introduced him to Sri Aurobindo, who immediately noted the 'seeing intellect' (*pashyanti buddhi*), in Krishna Prem. He was also introduced to Mirra Alfassa ('The Mother') to whom he said that he had come for blessings that he might give himself up without reserve to his Guru and Krishna. Mother held his eyes for nearly a minute and then said, "But you have given yourself." "Not enough," he answered. Later Dilip Kumar reports that Mother told him that his words had made a deep impression on her: and yet he had spoken but a few words!



His experience at the feet of Ramana Maharshi was typical and revealing. With great admiration and deep veneration, he said, "I agree wholeheartedly with Sri Aurobindo's verdict that his *tapasyā* is a shining light of India". He himself reported to Dilip Kumar Roy that as soon as he sat down to meditate in Maharshi's presence, he heard a voice questioning him over and over again: Who are you? Who are you? He answered: I am Krishna's servant. At once, another question arose: Who is Krishna? Answer: Nanda's son. But the question was repeated relentlessly. He answered: He is an *avatāra*, the One-in-all, the resident of every heart.. and more on the same lines. But the relentless questioning would not cease. He left the hall, disturbed and evoked the help of Rādhā-Rāni, telling her the answers he

had given. Refusing to give into Roy's entreaties regarding the answer, he went on with his reminisces. Next morning when he sat down at the blessed feet, Maharshi gave him a lightning glance and smiled, revealing to Krishna Prem "beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was the author of it all and that he also knew that I had divined his part correctly. Then, as I closed my eyes to meditate, a deep peace descended into me and settled like a block of ice, as it were, till my every cell was numb with an exquisite bliss....As I meditated, it was borne home to me through the mystic silence that this peace stemmed ultimately from the Lord Himself. Doesn't He say in the Geetā that He Himself is the primal source of all experience [Geetā, IX. 18] 'I am the goal, the upholder, the lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend. (I am) the origin and the dissolution, the ground, the resting place and the imperishable seed.' The peace in this instance was transmitted through His beloved agent, the Maharshi."

Later, he continued: "As I went on imbibing this delectable peace, meditating at his feet - I suddenly took it into my head to return the compliment and put a question to him in silence: 'And who are you, may I humbly ask?' It so happened that the next moment I had to open my eyes involuntarily when, lo, I found his couch empty! "There was the couch where he had presided two seconds before, but in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, he had vanished - just melted into thin air! I closed my eyes once more and then looked again, and there he was tranquil and beneficent like Lord Shiva Himself! A momentary

smile flickered on his lips as he gave me a meaningful glance and then looked away." The purpose of this 'miracle' to Yogi Sri Krishnaprem was "that He was beyond *nāma-roopa*. Or shall I say: the One beyond all *māyā*, the Star beyond the phantoms, the Last Reality beyond the ephemera, the Silence beyond the songs - you may make use of any simile you fancy. Personally, I look upon it as a sign of His Grace - His giving me the answer in a way only He could have given....The rest is silence."

Guiding his disciples

Krishna Prem, despite his English origin, was widely accepted and admired in the Indian Hindu community. Brooks wrote that "Krishna Prem's evident intellectual and inspirational qualities gained him wide fame and many disciples in India, as reflected in numerous books on his life and teachings." Gertrude Emerson Sen wrote that "I know of no other person like Krishna Prem, himself 'foreign' to begin with, who has drawn so many Indians to himself". His friend Dilip Kumar Roy wrote that Krishna Prem "had given a fillip [stimulus] to my spiritual aspiration".

Out of his voluminous correspondence and evening readings, first emerged contributions to 'The Aryan Path', an organ of the Bombay Theosophical Lodge. The first book was the shortest. Called 'The Search for Truth', it represented an act of faith on the part of a disciple, a seeker, who sought exalted advice from the Guru. *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Geetā* and the *Yoga of the Kathopanishad* had a considerable impact on his disciples and others in India.

Both books treated the texts from the point of view of what light they shed on *yoga*. Sri Krishna Prem's commentary is strictly Hindu in its arrangement and inspiration. But its literary form, its style, its flashes of English humour salted with good-natured irreverence for academic scholarship--place the author in the best tradition of writers from across the channel to France. The seeming levity in no way distracts from the fundamental importance of the book which sets forth the principles of a whole conception of spiritual practice. According to Herzen, "The Yoga of Kathopanishad' is a more technical treatise. It provides what you might call an anatomy and physiology of human consciousness with a very subtle description of its workings particularly in relation to the mysteries of death and rebirth." Dilip Kumar Roy's simply-entitled book 'Yogi Sri Krishna Prem' is worth reading to experience first-hand, the depth of the latter's love for Sri Krishna to the extent that the reader quickly develops a love for Krishna Prem as well as the object of his devotion.

My ship is sailing

When he fell seriously ill, something seemed to have snapped within him: one who, for 45 years had been strict with himself and others, at least where eating food was concerned, suddenly did not mind what he ate. Though his voice and face reflected his suffering, there was no word of complaint; he was convinced that "thākur has two strings to pull, an up-string and a down-string. Today He is pulling the down-string." On the days when he felt better and could sit out in the open, sometimes talking a little, resting, looking

at the great snow peaks, flowers and birds, he would whisper softly "It is alright. Everything is alright." He passed away on 14th November 1965.

He was hailed by Sarvepalli Rādhākṛishnan, the then President of India, as a "great soul". The embodiment of dedication to God, his epitaph engraved for the *samādhi* reads that he was 'the tangible proof of the intangible [who] lent profundity and dignity to life', exhibited even in his last words: "My ship is sailing" for he had said that "as long as we live in the past or the future, we are only running up and down the bank on this side. If we want to reach the goal, the eternal, we have to steer the boat straight out and across to that other shore." Even in his death he 'demonstrated in a manner more powerful than words the supremacy of the human spirit over the sufferings of the body'. (Mādhav Āshish)

In a fitting tribute, Dilip Kumar Roy, who loved him in life and revered him in death, wrote a poem:

*Sons of an intellectual age, we scan
And weigh the hearts findings with our
mental measures,
Surmising never once that no mind can
Win even a clue to the soul's resplendent
treasures.*

*The more we probe the more must
thought mislead
Till even the meaning of our spirit's birth
Is buried in the din of words that plead
For the reign of trifling truths of temporal
worth.*

*You diagnosed this fatal malady
With an insight born of loyalty to love*

*And so disowned our reasoned revelry
Whose dire discord your heart could
never approve.*

*O Reason's elect, withal, a citizen
Of stellar climes no mind has ever trod:
Who saw your radiant Face could never
again
Doubt faith's deep power of leading back
to God.*

Notes:

*1. the mental state of mind that lets go of
all attachments that belong to the

materialistic world.

Dilip Kumar Roy, "Yogi Sri Krishna Prem".
Bharatiya Vidyā Bhavan. 1975

[https://new-age-spiritual-masters.
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Don't be idle, leaving all the future to chance or fate.
Only a person who walks on and on can reach the goal,
not one who halts on the way.

Swāmi Tapovan Mahārāj



- Swāmi Chidānanda

Right living is the springboard of spiritual life. In traditional terms, *dharma* paves the way to *adhyātma*, culminating in *moksha*.

Living in sin

The wise¹ say, “What are sins? Why, for example, does a man drink too much? It is because he hates the idea of being bound – bound by the incapacity to drink as much as he wishes. He is striving after liberty in every sin that he commits. This ‘striving after liberty’ is the first instinctive action of God in a man’s mind.”

How interesting it is, therefore, that we invite disorder in our life with a desire for freedom. *It is a case of a bad end of a good intention.* Liberty is our aspiration but we work towards increased bondage. It is all because of ignorance. Increasingly therefore, the message is: *gain the right outlooks and live according to them.* The wise warn us saying that the great things we read will turn into poison if we do not live in accordance with them. Someone who has not studied this wisdom at all may do wrong things but there is no conscious violation of the principles in such a case. When we have studied and understood higher values but, yielding to temptations, we live at variance with the values, there is the



negative energy of conscious violation. This can harm our mental and physical health.

What is dharma?

On the one hand, it is not easy to define *dharma*, right living. On the other hand, there is no shortage of literature available on the precious topic. One of the

age-old verses gives ten characteristics of ‘*dharma*’:

*Dhritih kshamā damo'steyam
shaucham-indriyanigraha
dheer-vidyā satyam-akrodho dashakam
dharma-lakshanam*

The ten marks of *dharma* (right living) are: staying firm on a chosen course of action, forgiveness, mind-control, non-stealing, cleanliness, sense-control, intelligent choices, steady acquisition of knowledge, truthfulness and non-anger. (Manu-Smriti 6.92)

The very word ‘*dharma*’ means ‘that which holds, bears or supports’. When there is *dharma*, our life is held in place; we have greater inner strength. When there is no *dharma*, our life is jeopardized; we get weaker inside ourselves, though we may have glitter and glamour outside. Vedānta shows to

us the intimate relationship between 'dharma in our conduct (*āchāra*)' and 'dharma in our true nature (*svarūpa*)'. All the human values that constitute right conduct can be appreciated as emanating from our Pure Self (*shuddhaātmā*). For example, being good to others, accepting them as they are and serving them, etc. arise from the fact (revealed by Vedānta) that all of us are that one Pure Self. There is no plurality here², really speaking! Geetā too describes the supreme yogi as one who sees others' joy and sorrow as one's own³. On the surface thus, there are others and us. At the deepest level, we are one. A value expressed in the Universal Prayer⁴ of Saint Francis of Assisi echoes this interconnectedness: *it is in giving that we receive!*

Dharma and Meditation

In recent times, the word 'meditation' has wide acceptance everywhere. Believing in myriad benefits through the exercise of meditation - beginning with good health, peace of mind, enhanced creativity, etc. - a large number of people want to meditate. Like yoga for the body, meditation is regarded as a great rejuvenator of the mind. There are numerous kinds of meditation.

"Virtuous living is the mother of all meditations", said a thoughtful spiritual thinker. With *dharma*, our meditation can go to great heights. Without *dharma*, our meditation is crippled. When there are various kinds of disorder in our daily life, we do not have, in the first place, the frame of mind to meditate! At the other

extreme, when our living is marked by order, meditation happens on its own.

'Thought cancellation' is how masters describe the non-cooperation of our mind as we try to meditate, going by any of the countless approaches. Disorderly living (*adharma*) generates varieties of conflict and contradiction in us. The resulting noise brings forth negative thoughts, which cancel the positive thoughts we attempt during meditation. If we attempt silence, the noise left behind by *adharma* throws a spanner in the works!

The Golden Rule

"Do unto others what you would want them to do to you," has been one of the ways in which the Golden Rule of Ethics is defined. We want others to keep their word. If they have promised us something, we very much want them to fulfil the promise. The golden rule comes in here, saying we should keep our word too. They say 'integrity and intelligence are the two most essential assets of human life'. Integrity consists in keeping our promises and intelligence involves special care in making promises. Obviously, we cannot keep our word if we overpromise. And, to underpromise would be a form of miserliness and of inadequate response to situations.

We can easily see, taking a second look at the verse (*dhritih kshamā...*) quoted above, which gave us ten features of *dharma*, that integrity is simply impossible if we do not have, to begin with, *dhriti*, the ability to stand our ground even as obstacles come our way

from outside or inside. So are *dama* (mind-control) and *indriya-nigraha* (control of senses) needed in rich measure to live a life of integrity. The ten marks of right living thus are a beautiful elaboration of the stuff that right living is made of.

The verse explicitly mentions *dhee* (intelligence) as a facet of *dharma*. We must see that our life easily goes for a toss when we do not make intelligent choices. "Promise in haste, repent at leisure," is how somebody wisely put the matter. In the corporate world also, they say a company gallops to success when it chooses good opportunities at the right time and focuses on the implementation of the projects taken up. Unintelligent people say 'yes' to unreasonable and fanciful proposals and consequently suffer.

We must contemplate on dharma

Lists like the one found in the verse quoted earlier in this article (*dhrithkshamā..*) act as mirrors to the way we live. We must reflect on each of the ten values and check if our life has the fragrance described in the verse. Awareness of disorder is the beginning of the way to end it. If we become aware, for example, that we are into some form of 'stealing', that awareness can initiate the process of return to total honesty.

[Stealing here need not be related to money or material goods but may mean some form of using another person's intellectual property without his knowledge.] Intense awareness of inappropriate thoughts, words and deeds in our daily life can act as the catalyst to inner change.

An old verse, *subhāshita*⁵, highlights the place of (the merits earned through) right living: General knowledge is our best friend during travels; an understanding spouse is our best companion at home; medicine is our best associate during illness; *dharma* alone will remain our friend, companion and associate *even after death!* Therefore, we must never underestimate the value of a virtuous life, a life of *dharma*.

Notes:

1. Found on the HOME PAGE of sriramanamaharshi.org, these words are perhaps by Maharshi Ramana.
2. *neha nānāsti kinchana* – Katha Upanishad, 2.1.11
3. *ātmaupamyena sarvatra..* Geetā 6.32
4. *O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace...* by St Francis of Assisi.
5. *vidyā mitram pravāseshu, bhāryā mitram griheshu cha
vyādhitasya + aushadham mitram,
dharmo mitram mritasya cha*



- Author unknown

Ādi Shankara was on a visit to Kāshi. After taking bath in the Gangā, he headed straight to the temple. At the temple, in front of Lord Vishwanātha, Shankara began to seek pardon for the three sins that he had committed. His disciples wondered what those sins could be!! ...for Ādi Shankara was flawless in his ways! What could the Āchārya be doing *prāyaschitta* (atonement) for?

They waited for answers!as we are curiously waiting too!!

Shankarāchārya then explained – Though I believe that the Absolute is *sarva-vyāpta* (Omnipresent) and have also expressed so in many of my works, I have come all the way to Kāshi nagara for Lord Vishwanātha's darshana, as if He is present only in Kāshi. I have committed the sin of saying one thing and doing another. This is my first sin.

After recognizing the Lord as one whose glory cannot be described, or as one whose infinite nature cannot be described in mere words [which are limited], I had attempted to describe HIM in a string of words, in my *stotras* & other writings.

“The Taittiriya Upanishad says, “*yato vācho nivartante aprāpya manasā sah.*” (The written words and the mind fail to comprehend Him). Though I knew that

He is beyond the realm of thoughts and words, I have made an attempt to describe Him in the ‘Kāshi Vishwanātha Ashtakam.’”

Again, I have committed the sin of knowing something but not practising it. This is my second sin.

Now, the third sin -

In my ‘Nirvāna Shatkam’ I wrote -

*na punyam na pāpam
na saukhyam na dukham
na mantrō na teertham
na vedā na yajñāh
aham bhojanam naiva bhojyam
na bhoktā
chidānanda rupah shivoham shivoham*

(I have neither higher nor lower merits [*punya* and *pāpa*], nor pleasure or pain; I do not need sacred chants, nor do I need to go on pilgrimages. I do not need scriptures, rituals, or sacrifices (*yajnas*). I am neither the enjoyed nor the enjoyer, nor enjoyment. I am the form of Consciousness-Bliss. I am auspicious, I am auspicious).

I realized that the Almighty is residing in me as the *ātmā* and yet, I undertook the long journey to get the *darshana* of the Almighty in a place external to my body. This is my third sin.

The profound insight in this episode

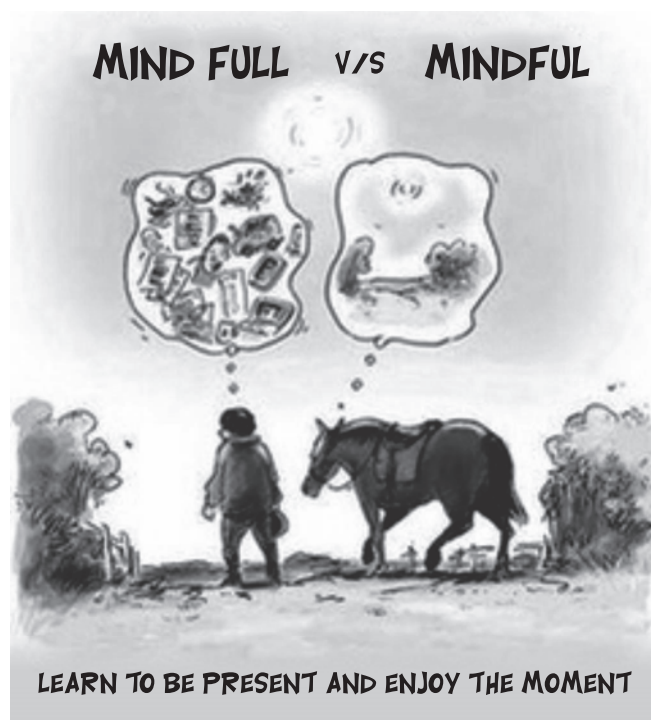
in the life of Shankara reveals the importance of harmony in our thought, word and deed. If one has the keenness to attain the Absolute, one should maintain harmony in one's thoughts, words and deeds.

*manasi ekam ... vachasi ekam,
karmani ekammahātmānām
manasi anyat vachasi anyat, karmani
anyat durātmānām.*

(Superior people are those who have perfect harmony in their thoughts, words and deeds; those who lack harmony in these three are inferior).

[Having said the above, the great Āchārya would perhaps have concluded: "but then, how can I commit a sin if I am auspicious??"]

JAYAJAYA SHANKARA
HARAHARA SHANKARA



- Compiled by Ratna Viswanath

Bābulnāth is an ancient Shiva temple in Mumbai. Shiva in the form of 'the Lord of the Bābul tree' is the main deity in this temple.

Bābulnāth temple is located in the very heart of Mumbai, on top of a small hillock at nearly 100 feet above sea level, overlooking the Arabian Sea. It is at the end of Marine Drive and to the south of Malabar Hill. The closest local railway station is Grant Road.

Even amidst the hustle and bustle of Mumbai, one can feel the peace and tranquillity at Bābulnāth. The grandeur and magnificence of the temple structure reminds one of Mount Kailas, the eternal abode of Lord Shiva. Millions of devotees visit this temple every year, especially on the occasion on Mahāshivarātri and during the month of *Shrāvan* (August/September). The temple is always abuzz with festivities, especially on Mondays, which is the main day of worship. Ghee puja is one of the important attractions during Shivarātri and in the month of *shrāvan*.



The legend associated with the origin of the temple

The Bābulnāth *lingam* and the other idols at this temple were originally consecrated in the 12th century by the then Hindu king of the region. Over a period of time, the idols got buried and were forgotten.

Around 300 years ago, the place now known as Malabar Hill had abundant pastures. Pandurang, a rich goldsmith, owned a large part of the land in the south-east part of this hilly terrain and his cattle would graze there. A cowherd named Bābul looked after them. Because of the fresh grass, the cows would always give plenty of milk. One evening, a healthy cow named Kapila didn't give a single drop of milk. Pandurang asked Bābul for the reason and was astonished by his answer. Bābul said it wasn't the first time the cow had not given milk. He further said that since a long time, the cow had been regularly going in the evenings to a particular place and would pour all her milk there. Pandurang didn't believe the explanation and went with Bābul the next day to see what was happening. He was surprised to observe

the cow's gesture. She allowed milk from her udder to flow at the place as though performing *abhisheka* (anointing). Pandurang became curious and had the spot dug up. He was amazed to find a *swayambhu* (self-manifested) Shiva *lingam* carved in black stone. In all probability, this discovery took place somewhere between 1700 and 1780. This is the Shiva *lingam* worshipped as Bābulnāth.

The temple was re-built in 1780 and was patronised by Hindu merchants and mainly by the Gujarati community. A bigger temple was built in 1890 by contributions from Gujarati merchants and from eminent persons like Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda state.

Architecture

The current structure of the temple dates back to 1890. In 1900, a tall spire was built. The height of the structure was considerable when built but a lightning strike in the 1960s damaged the spire and lowered the height of the present temple to a great extent. Even so, until the 1980s, Bābulnāth Temple continued to be one of the tallest structures in Mumbai.

One of the most iconic Shiva temples in Mumbai, Bābulnāth is also an architectural delight. It is one of the most spacious temple complexes in the city. The interiors are intricately carved. All the pillars as well as the ceiling in the temple feature elements from Hindu mythology. Many of these beautiful structures, made from limestone and marble, are procured from Rajasthan and lend the temple its

heritage ambience.

Management of the temple

Shri Bābulnāth Bhakta Mandal was formed by prominent devotees and was registered with the Charity Commissioner of Mumbai in November, 1959, with the objective of improving the facilities for devotees and resolving grievances by making a representation to the management and the Trust Board.

Shrāvani Bhajan Sandhyā:

Right after the bomb blasts in Mumbai in 1993, Mr. Kuvavala, who headed Shri Bābulnāth Bhakta Mandal, wanted to do something to keep the community united. He describes as 'a divine spark', the idea that came to him one morning - to organise a *bhajan sandhyā* during the auspicious month of *Shrāvan*.



After giving it a lot of thought and with the inspiration and guidance received from seers and the help of like-minded friends, the *bhajan sandhyā* was scheduled for 9pm to midnight on Saturday nights. The event received media coverage in Gujarati newspapers and was the first event to be shown live in the local cable TV network. Artists were more than happy to be singing at the event and over a period of time, even refused to accept conveyance charges to/ from the venue, leave alone accepting fees for their rendition. Stage decorators, providers of sound systems and others were keen to render their services. For some time, the timings were extended to make it a whole-night event.

The *bhajan sandhyā* continues to be patronised by all sections of the society. Not only the local population but also devotees from various parts of Gujarat come to attend this programme. Many outstation devotees come especially for this event and after the *bhajans* conclude, proceed directly to the Mumbai Central railway station to board the train to their hometown. Devotees have sat continuously for more than seven hours without getting up even once, as they would not want to lose their seat. When singers or accompanying artists were unable to show up, other artists with similar talents would turn up with their instruments and in good time, to take

their place. The popularity grew so much that artists who were not invited to perform at the *bhajan sandhyā* would feel dejected.

On one occasion, it was decided to dedicate the event to Lord Varuna, the God of Rain. This was in view of the lack of rainfall in most parts of the state of Maharashtra and in other parts of the country. Announcements had been made in print media and in Cable Television. The mantra 'Om Namah Shivāya' was to be chanted continuously for one minute by each of the singers (after his/ her performance), the devotees present and by all the viewers watching the programme live on Television. This translated to the *mantra* being chanted in a count of more than a million. As soon as the chant was begun by the first singer, the clouds gathered and there was heavy rain. The rainfall continued till the morning and went on for an entire week.

After the serial bomb blasts in trains in Mumbai, the *bhajan sandhyā* is held earlier in the evening.

There are many such incidents and occasions during which Lord Bābulnāth has kept alive and rekindled the faith of his beloved devotees.

Sources :

www.babulnathmandir.org

www.babulnathbhaktmandal.com



- Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon

Though extolled in the Rāmāyana as one of the five virgins (*panchakanyās*), the recital of whose name every day, is believed to dispel sin, very little is known about Tārā, the queen of Kishkindā, a woman of unusual intelligence, foresight and confidence. In Rāmāyana, Tārā is described as the daughter of the monkey physician, Sushena and in later sources, as an *apsarā* (celestial nymph) who rises from the churning of the milky ocean while in some places, she is described as the daughter of Brahaspati, the Guru of the gods. 'Tārā' in Sanskrit means 'star'. She and her husband, the monkey king, Vāli, had a son called Angada.

In the Rāmāyana, the two monkey brothers Vāli (also known as Bāli) and Sugriva are mentioned. In fact, a complete chapter called the Kishkindā Kānda is devoted to them. The interesting story of these two brothers Vāli and Sugriva, is related in this section. Vāli, the ruler of Kishkindā, had gone to fight the demon Māyāvi. He had disappeared for a long time and hence, was believed to be dead. Therefore, Vāli's younger brother, Sugriva, took over as the king of Kishkindā. Sugriva also married Vāli's 'widow' Tārā. Later, with the turn of events, when Vāli returned, Sugriva refused to vacate his throne, so Vāli had to take it by force. He exiled Sugriva and not only 're-acquired' Tārā but in retaliation, also seized Rumā,



Sugriva's wife.

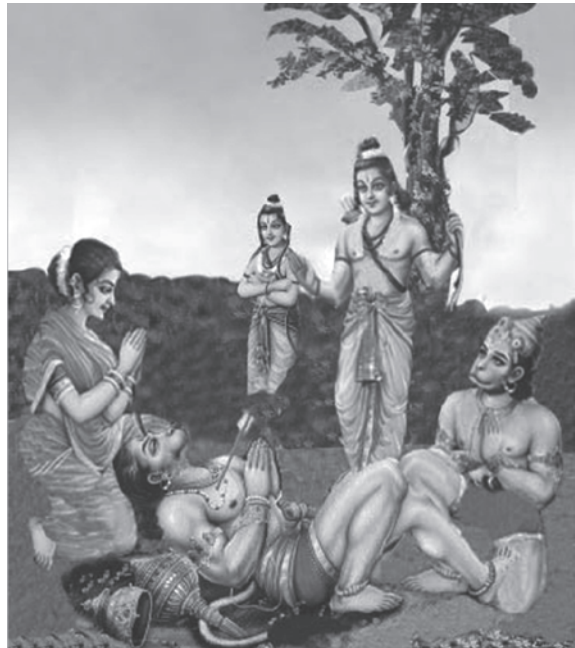
In the meantime, after Sitā had been kidnapped by Rāvana, the demon-king of Lankā and while searching for her in the forest, Rāma and Lakshmana met the monkey warrior Hanumān who took them to Sugriva. Rāma struck a deal with Sugriva that he would help him defeat Vāli and regain his wife Rumā and his kingdom; in return, he wanted Sugriva to help him find Sitā. As agreed, Sugriva challenged Vāli to a duel. However, Sugriva lost the contest as Rāma could not differentiate between the two. Rāma explained his predicament to Sugriva and asked him to re-challenge Vāli but this time, he asked Sugriva to wear a garland so as to be able to differentiate him from Vāli.

The Kishkindā Kānda of Ramayana states that, having heard of the growing friendship between Rāma and Sugriva, Tārā cautioned Vāli that appearances

can be deceptive. Normally, a person who has lost a combat would never return so soon for a re-challenge, specially after such a decisive defeat. She urged Vāli to forgive Sugriva and to anoint him as the crown prince, for this diplomatic move would help all of them live in peace and also befriend the exalted Rāma. While acknowledging Tārā's love and devotion, Vāli argued that a warrior like him cannot refuse a challenge but promised not to kill Sugriva but only kill his pride. In the Mahābhārata, it is said that Tārā dissuaded Vāli and pointed out that Sugriva may have found a protector and warned him about Sugriva's alliance with Rāma and the plotting of Vāli's death at the hands of Sugriva and his advisers. Vāli, who praised Tārā as a lustrous moon and as one who understood the language of all creatures, however, not only disregarded Tārā's advice but also suspected Tārā of cheating him with Sugriva. In Kamban's Rāmāvataram, Tārā warns Vāli about Rāma's plans to kill him. However, Vāli dismisses her warning as unfounded as, Rāma, a man of *dharma*, would never kill him when he and Sugriva were in a duel. Vāli leaves for the duel, promising Tārā that he would return only after slaying Sugriva.

Vāli engaged Sugriva in a combat, ignoring Tārā's sound advice. While the fighting was on, Rāma shot an arrow at Vāli from behind, fatally wounding him. As soon as the news of Vāli's death reached Tārā, she rushed to see him with their son Angada. All the monkeys, while running away in terror, implored her to go

back to the palace and consecrate Angada as the king. However, Tārā refused to do that, saying she needed to



see her husband first and led them all back to where Vāli lay dying. Tārā, while reproaching Rāma and Sugriva, embraced the dying Vāli. She accepted Vāli's death as a punishment for seizing Rumā and exiling Sugriva. Hanumān consoled Tārā and advised her to crown Angada as the king but Tārā felt it inadvisable, as his uncle Sugriva was still alive. With his last breath, Vāli realised his folly of abandoning Sugriva and urged Angada and Tārā to support Sugriva. Vāli requested Rāma to take care that Tārā is not insulted and advised Sugriva never to doubt Tārā's advice, as she was thoroughly knowledgeable about matters of running a state and other subtle matters, 'for nothing Tārā believes turns out to be otherwise'.

The lamentation of Tārā is summarized in Rāmāyana as a very significant event. The North Indian interpretation of the Rāmāyana elaborates Tārā's lament where she is shown preferring death to widowhood. Here she also blames Rāma for unjustly killing Vāli and tells Him that if they had forged an alliance, Vāli could have helped Him in recovering Sitā. Tārā also invokes the power of her chastity and curses Rāma that as soon as He finds Sitā, He would again lose her and that Sitā would return to Mother Earth. In the Bengali Krittivasi Rāmāyana, apart from the usual curse of Rāma being separated from Sitā, Tārā additionally curses Rāma that in the next birth, He would be killed by Vāli. The Mahānataka and the Ānanda Rāmāyana say that Vāli is thus reborn as the hunter who kills Krishna in the next incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

In South Indian interpretations, Tārā's lament has been significantly expanded. Therein it is said that after the death of Vāli, Tārā asks Rāma to kill her and lead her to Vāli. Rāma consoles Tārā saying that she should accept pre-ordained destiny. Rāma guarantees that her rights and those of her son Angada will always be protected and that she will enjoy 'continued comfort'. He tells her that the wife of a hero should not have personal sorrow. In Adhyātma Rāmāyana, while Tārā wails over the death of Vāli, Rāma preaches to her that the body is ephemeral and the soul is eternal; therefore, she should not grieve over a decaying body. Listening to this, the enlightened Tārā bows to Rāma and

gains the boon of supreme devotion. Another version portrays her as trying to stabilize the kingdom after Vāli's death. With Angada in her arms, she implores the subjects to accept Sugriva as their king, as per Vāli's dying wish! In some rare instances like in Rāmāvataram, Tārā does not marry Sugriva. He treats her as a mother figure and gives her all the respect due to her.

Angada, with help from Tārā and Sugriva, cremates Vāli and Sugriva acquires both, the kingdom and Tārā! Angada is anointed as the heir-apparent. There is no reference to any ritual in any scriptures to show that Sugriva married Tārā but some refer to her as his wife while some claim that she was 'acquired'. Tārā, like a true hero's wife, refuses the Kishkindā throne. Instead, she opts for Sugriva's kingship. Her tact comes to the fore in this action of hers and is seen as her attempt to secure the future of her son as *yuvārāja* of the kingdom.

The episode of Tārā encountering an angry Lakshmana, who came to remind Sugriva of his promise to help Rāma rescue Sitā, is compelling. On finding that Sugriva had forgotten his promise to find Sitā, Rāma sends Lakshmana to remind the complacent king of his promise. Lakshmana is unable to tolerate Sugriva's breaking his vow to Rāma, since Sugriva himself was enjoying material and sensual pleasures while Rāma suffered alone. When the agitated Lakshmana reached the inner chambers of Sugriva's palace, Sugriva, who was sleeping off the hangover of a

merrymaking bout, asks Tārā to go and pacify Lakshmana. The critical edition of Rāmāyana states that Tārā voluntarily intervenes to calm the wrath of Lakshmana. Tārā reminds Lakshmana that without an ally like Sugriva, Rāma cannot, by himself, defeat such a powerful enemy as Rāvana. Vāli had told her that Rāvana was a mighty king with several *rākshasās* at his service. Tārā informs Lakshmana that Sugriva had summoned all his monkey commanders and troops to the capital. Adhyātma Rāmāyana states that Tārā, Angada and Hanumān were sent by Sugriva to calm Lakshmana. Rāmācharita mānasa says that Tārā and Hanumān were sent by Sugriva to appease Lakshmana by singing Rāma's praises. In Rāmāvataram, Tārā, though not

Sugriva's wife, pacifies Lakshmana. Seeing her as a widow, Lakshmana is reminded of his own widowed mother. Pacified by Tārā and praised further by Sugriva, Lakshmana begs for Sugriva's pardon for abusing him. It is only through the diplomatic intervention of Tārā that a major crisis was averted.

In the age when women were supposed to have lost all individuality, Tārā was never a shadow of her husbands, as she stood out for her independent views and tactful behaviour. Both her husbands were convinced of her ability and relied on her judgment and thus were able to keep their kingdom safe, strong and prosperous.

Ref: Wikipedia



The butterfly does not look back at the caterpillar in shame,
just as you should not look back at your past in shame.
Your past was the part of your own transformation.

Anthony Gucciardy



- Swāmi Chidānanda



It was in 1995 that Swāmi Dheerānanda from Chinmaya Mission, Washington DC came to visit me in California and stayed for a few weeks with me. As a part of a little bit of 'visiting places worth seeing', we went to have *darshan* of Bābā Hari Dāss at the Mount Madonna Center, which was some 2 hours' drive from San Jose. I drove the Honda Accord, which our CM centre had left at my disposal. The special aspect of this saint was that he did not speak, by choice. We wondered if, because of not using his vocal chords, he had lost the

ability to speak. As though he had read our minds, he wrote on the black slate which always accompanied him, "I do certain *prānāyāma* daily and my ability to speak is intact!"

Both Dheerānandaji and I asked him many questions. Not speaking was no deterrent to him. He wrote crisp answers on the slate so quickly that we had to get ready with our next question with no time to spare. One of the questions I asked him was, "How do we balance *sāadhanā* and all our speaking assignments?" Bābā smiled and wrote, "Keep specific hours for your classes/ lectures and guard your hours for meditation. Let not public contact come in the way of your disciplines."

We truly felt elevated in his presence. After our exchange of thoughts, which perhaps lasted 30 minutes, Bābā and the two of us (in orange robes) walked to the large dining hall for lunch. Bābā took his special seat and was soon surrounded by a number of devotees, adults and children. Without speaking a word, he all the same seemed most comfortable interacting with them in his own way. We ate the delicious vegetarian meal of the Mount Madonna Center. We drove back to San Jose, most satisfied.

Swāmi Dheerānandaji was

apparently much more touched than I was. Within two days, he made a second trip to Bābā on his own and came back, more inspired than before.

I went to the Mount Madonna Center a second time in 2017 but Bābā, who was 94 years old by then, was staying somewhere else. Our group of seven spent an hour at the beautiful Hanumān temple there and returned without seeing Bābā.

Bābā Hari Dāss (1923 – 2018), born in Almora near Nainitāl, Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand), was a yoga master, silent monk and commentator of Indian scriptural tradition of *dharma* and *moksha*. He was classically trained in Ashtānga Yoga (the Yoga of Eight

Limbs), Rāja Yoga of Patanjali, as well as Kriyā Yoga, Āyurveda, Sāmkhya, Tantra Yoga, Vedānta, and Sanskrit.

He was an author, playwright, martial arts teacher, sculptor and builder of temples. Upon his arrival in the US in the early 1971, he and his teachings inspired the creation of several yoga centers and retreat programs in California and in Canada. His extensive literary output includes scriptural commentaries to Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Bhagavad Gitā, Sāmkhya Kārikā, and Vedānta, collections of wisdom, aphorisms about the meaning and purpose of life, essays, plays, short stories, children's stories, *kirtan* mantras, and in-depth instructional yoga material that form the basis of a yoga certification-training program.



If you want to awaken all of humanity
Then awaken all of yourself.
If you want to eliminate the suffering in the world,
Then eliminate all that is dark and negative in yourself.
Truly, the greatest gift you have to give is that of your own self transformation.

LAO TZU



- by Anonymous

One day, a person climbed up a mountain where a hermit-woman had taken refuge and was meditating. The person asked her.



- What are you doing here alone in such a lonely place? To which she replied:

- I have lots of work.

- And how can you have so much work? I don't see anything around you here...?

- I have to train two hawks and two eagles, assure two rabbits, discipline one snake, motivate a donkey and tame a lion...

- And, where have they gone, now that I don't see them?

- I have them all inside here within me...!!

✓ The hawks stare on everything that is presented to me, good or bad, I have to work on them to see only good things. They are my eyes.

✓ The two eagles, using their claws, hurt and destroy; I have to train them not to

hurt. They are my hands.

✓ Rabbits want to go where they want; at the same time they do not want to face difficult situations. I have to teach them to be calm even if there is suffering

or stumbling. They are my feet.

✓ The donkey is always tired, stubborn and does not want to carry the load each time I walk. That is my body!

✓ The most difficult to tame is the 'snake'. Although it is locked in a strong cage with 32 bars, it is always ready to sting, bite and poison anyone nearby. I have to discipline it... that's my tongue.

✓ I also have one Lion. Oh, how proud and vain he is. He thinks that he is the king. I have to tame him. And that's my ego.

✓ As you see, my friend, I have lots of work. And you, what do you work on? Think about it...



What do we learn from
the Upanishads?

KNOWLEDGEABLE, YET HUMBLE
Qualities that Teachers should Possess

- Swāmi Chidānanda



Some of us are teachers by profession or by the choice of our way of living. All of us are teachers informally for there are always some, maybe a small number, at home or outside, who wish to learn something from us.

Rishi Pippalāda in the Prashnopanishad is highly knowledgeable, and was regarded as all-knowing in his times. He is, however, extremely humble when he says to the six scholarly students who approach him:

*yathā kāmam prashnān pricchata
yadi vijnāsyāmah, sarvam ha vovakshyāmah*

Please ask questions as you desire.
If we know (the answers), we shall tell you everything.

(Prashna Upanishad 1.2)

A fully-filled pot makes no sound; a half-filled pot gives out a lot of noise. The mark of vast knowledge and great wisdom is such humility as demonstrated by Sage Pippalāda. We must stand guard against all forms of self-importance, arrogance and one-upmanship. Illumination with profound, lasting peace, can then come to us.

The above mantra also shows how the ancient teachers encouraged questions and promoted an atmosphere of dialogue and debate.



- Khalil Gibran



It is said that before entering
the sea a river trembles with fear.

She looks back at the path
she has traveled, from the peaks
of the mountains. The long winding roads,
crossing forests and villages.

And in front of her she sees
an ocean so vast, that to enter there
seems nothing more than
to disappear forever.

But there is no other way.
the river cannot go back.
Nobody can go back.
To go back is impossible in existence.

The river needs to take the
risk of entering the ocean.
Because only then will the
fear disappear.
Because that's where the
river will know
it's not about disappearing
into the ocean, but of
becoming the ocean.

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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.

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