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# Inner Flame

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Hari Om

If somebody had told us earlier how the world would change drastically due to a tiny virus - Covid 19, we would have probably laughed it off and dismissed that person as a lunatic. However, as the new normal, that includes social distancing, sanitization, lockdown, etc., is holding us in its spell, the limitations of human endeavour in the face of the larger reality must become clear to every rational intellect. The world is rightly seeing great value in the time-tested ways of the eternal wisdom offered by the ancient civilization of 'Bharat' and this is propelling our country to a position of leadership in the whole world.

Under our series 'The Beacons', we are very proud to present one of the living luminaries of Hinduism, Jagadguru Swāmi Rāmbhadrāchārya, whose multifarious activities in the fields of spirituality, social service, academics, Sanskrit literature, religious discourse and many more areas, only provide a glimpse into the unlimited inner possibilities latent in man.

In his article under the series 'Perceiving Phoenix', Swāmi Chidānanda elucidates as to how, cultivating an intense self-awareness is the key to developing emotional intelligence, that often is the difference between success and failure in these challenging times.

Under 'Stories Teach', read how the mundane 'Peas Biryani' has an underlying message, illustrating how the presence of God is what makes everything happen.

Swāmi Chidānanda recounts his meetings with another great saint - his namesake - Swāmi Chidānanda Saraswati who was the second head of The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, established by Shri Swāmi Sivānanda.

We are climbing the proverbial hill in the temple-town of Palani where the great Lord Dhandāyudhapāni (Subrahmanya) settled down after he developed Vairāgya. Fittingly, the place boasts of a rich lore of incidents of many a spiritual seeker finding his inner light.

Through a little story, Shri Anthony de Mello S.J. brings out the power of benevolence.

While our daily life limps back to normalcy post the lockdown, the transient nature of this material world of ours is uncovered once more and the relevance of the spiritual insights that anchor us to the immovable substratum cannot be overemphasized. Let us all imbibe this unifying vision, abide in it always and be the instruments of the almighty by enabling its transmission.

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



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### Editor

Swāmi Chidānanda

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God is the substance of this universe

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani



This revered *āchārya* has been blind from the age of 2 months and has not allowed any obstacle to impede his pursuit of working for humanity, in general, and for the handicapped, in particular. He has, in just this one lifetime, achieved what would normally require several lifetimes for ordinary mortals. Consider some of his vast achievements:

- On 24 June 1988, He was chosen by the Kāshi Vidwat Parishad in Varanasi as the Jagadguru Rāmānandāchārya, seated at the Tulsi Peeth and at the Kumbh Melā held in Allahabad in February 1989, the appointment was unanimously supported by the Mahants of the three Akhārās, the four sub-Sampradāyas, the Khalsas and saints of the Rāmānanda Sampradāya.

- One of the top spiritual leaders of Hinduism today, he is an educator who founded the one and only University in the world for the disabled. The University is based in Chitrakoot in Madhya Pradesh, India.

- Swāmi Rāmbhadrāchārya can speak 22 languages and is a spontaneous poet and writer in Sanskrit, Hindi, Awadhi, Maithili and several other languages.

- He has authored more than 100 books and 50 papers, including four epic poems - two each in Sanskrit and Hindi, Hindi commentaries on Tulsidās' Rāmcharitmānas and Hanumān Chalisā, a Sanskrit commentary in verse on the *Ashtādhyāyi*\* and Sanskrit commentaries on the *Prasthānatrayi*.

- Also acclaimed for his knowledge in diverse fields including Sanskrit Grammar, Nyāya and Vedānta, he is regarded as one of the greatest authorities on Tulsidās in India, and is the editor of a critical edition of the *Rāmcharitmānas*.

- He is a *Kathā*\*\* artist for the *Rāmāyana* and the *Bhāgavatam*, his *Kathā* programmes being held regularly in different cities in India and other countries, and telecast on several television channels. He is also a leader of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

Such is the glory of Shri

Jagadguru Rāmānandāchārya and one can only agree in total awe and admiration when one asks: “When is a disability not a handicap? When you are an ardent devotee of the Lord, a *bhakta*, because...

भक्तके जीवनमें कभी काँटे नहीं आते।

“The [path of a] devotee’s life never has any thorns.”

### **Early life**

This remarkable personality took birth in a most pious Sarayupārīṇa Brāhmaṇa family of Vasishtha Gotra in Shandikhurd village of Jaunpur district in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. He was born in the early hours of the Makara Sankrānti day of January 14, 1950 (Māgha Kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, Vikrama Samvat 2006) to mother Shachi Devi Mishra, and father Pandit Rājadeva Mishra. He was named Giridhara (a name of Lord Krishna) by a cousin of his paternal grandfather, who was a devotee of Mirābai.

### **Inner vision in lieu of physical eyesight**

Trachoma, the leading preventable cause of blindness worldwide, struck the two-month-old infant, infecting his eyes without mercy. Modern medicine was unavailable in the village in those days, and though local treatment was tried, Giridhara lost his physical eyesight forever, and since then, has perceived everything through ‘divine sight’. With the limited resources available in those days, Giridhara was not taught to read and write Braille. He did not need to, for where one sense failed to develop, another faculty intuitively developed to

be his life-support. This first manifested in his immediately mastering a scripture by listening to just a single recitation and then composing beautiful poetry by dictating to a sympathetic companion.

As his life has unfolded, we see that in the loss of physical eyesight lay the greatest wealth of ‘inner vision’. Perhaps it was wished that Giridhara should not see the horrors of Kaliyuga, but revel in divine internal vision through the exclusive worship of Lord Rāma and Mother Sitā. He himself did not see his blindness as a handicap...at an All India Confederation of the Blind, in New Delhi he said:

*“What is to be seen in this fallen world, which is false and filled with vices, is full of disputes and is governed by the sins of deceitful and wicked people? Only Rāma is worth seeing whose flocks of hair cover his lotus-like face, who is completely blissful, who has the form of a child, and who is the giver of liberation.”*

### **Initial Education**

Like it is for the more fortunate children, Giridhara’s initial education was started at home by his grandfather, Pandit Sūryabali Mishra. But there was a difference: Giridhara had a phenomenal memory. With the help of his grandfather, Giridhara memorized the entire 700/701 slokas of the Bhagavad Geetā in Sanskrit, including chapter and verse numbers by the age of five years. By eight, he had memorized the entire Rāmācharitamānasa of Sant Tulasidās (approximately 10,800 verses). Later, he went on to memorize and master the

Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhāgavata Purāna, major works of Sanskrit grammar, and all works of the poet-saint Tulasidās. His Upanayana Samskāra was performed on the *nirjala ekādashi* day of June 24, 1961, when, besides being given the *gāyatri mantra*, he was initiated (given *deekshā*) into the mantra of Rāma by Pandit Ishvaradāsa Mahārāja of Ayodhyā.

### Higher Education



In 1966, when he was already a teenager, Giridhara Mishra joined the *Ādarsha Gaurishankara Sanskrit Mahāvidyālaya* in Jaunpur to study Sanskrit grammar and other subjects for five years; he topped his class in every one of those five years with his ability to remember everything just by listening to it once. Despite his visual disability, he did not stop there; he went on for higher studies: he enrolled in the *Sampūrnānanda Sanskrit Vishvavidyālaya* in Vārānasī. In 1973, he visited New Delhi to participate in various national-level Sanskrit competitions in the *Akhila Bhāratīya Sanskrit Adhiveshana*, and won five gold medals in *Vyākaraṇa*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Nyāya*, *Vedānta* and *Antākshari*. Impressed by his unparalleled genius, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi offered to send

him to the USA for treatment of his eyes, but Giridhara Mishra politely but firmly turned down this offer. Also in 1973 and then in 1976 respectively, he topped the Shāstri (Bachelors) and *Āchārya* (Masters) examinations in *Vyākaraṇa* from the Sampūrnānanda Sanskrit Vishvavidyālaya with gold medals. In an unprecedented move, he was declared *Āchārya* of all subjects taught at the University for his All-round Scholarship.

Working with Pandit Rāmaprasāda Tripāthī, he completed his doctoral *Vidyāvāridhi* degree (PhD) in 1981 with the aforementioned Sanskrit dissertation titled *adhyātmarāmāyaṇe apāṇinīya prayogānām vimarśaḥ*. Later, in 1997 he was awarded the post-doctoral *Vāchaspati* degree (DLitt) by the same university for the Sanskrit dissertation *Ashtādhyāyāḥ Pratisutraṃ Shābdabodhasamīkshanam*, in which he explained the grammar of *Ashtādhyāyī* in lucid verses.

So inspired was the examiner of Swāmi Rāmbhadrāchārya's (then known as Giridhara Mishra) Sanskrit thesis entitled *adhyātmarāmāyaṇe apāṇinīya prayogānām vimarśaḥ* (Deliberation on the non-Paninian usages in the Rāmāyana) that he (the examiner) himself wrote a Sanskrit verse

in praise:

शोधप्रबन्धपरिशीलनतः समन्तात्  
सञ्जायते मतमिदं मम युक्तियुक्तम्।  
शोधप्रबन्धमकरन्दमधुव्रतो ऽयं  
विद्वद्विमृग्यविरुदं लभतामिदानीम्॥

śodhaprabandhapariśīlanataḥ samantāt  
sañjāyate matamidaṃ mama  
yuktiyuktam।  
śodhaprabandhamakarandamadhuvrato'  
yaṃ  
vidvadvimṛgyavirudaṃ labhatāmidānīm॥

*My logical conclusion that arises from having completely examined the research is that he [Giridhara Mishra] is the bumblebee for the honey in the form of research. May he now obtain the praise and fame which is sought after by the learned.*

On completion of his doctorate, the UGC offered him the position of head of the *Vyākaraṇa* department of the Sampurnānanda Sanskrit University. However, Giridhara did not accept it; he decided to devote his life to the service of religion, society, and the disabled.

#### **Tulasī Peetha**

Now holding a doctorate, Giridhara Mishra refused the *grihasta* stage, and has followed *Viravrata* – the vow of the brave – lifelong Brahmacharya. He took *Vairāgi* initiation called *Virakta Deekshā*\*\*\* in the eponymous *Rāmānandi Sampradāya* (Shri Rāmavat or Shri Sampradaya) on the *kārtika* full-moon day of November 19, 1983. Following the tradition of the

Sampradāya, he was given the name *Rāmabhadradāsa*, meaning the servant of the auspicious Rāma and has been lovingly but reverentially known as **Swami Rāmbhadrāchārya** ever since. Today, the *Rāmānandi Sampradāya* is one of the largest and most egalitarian Hindu sects in India, around the Ganges Plains and Nepal. It mainly emphasizes the worship of *Rāma* as well as *Viṣṇu* directly and worship of other incarnations. While considered *Vaiṣṇava*, the *Rāmānandi* are the largest ascetic group that celebrates the Shivarātri festival, which is dedicated to Shiva. The ascetics rely upon meditation and strict sensual-pleasure-denying practices, but also believe that the grace of god is required for them to achieve liberation. And their faith is that only *Viṣṇu* or *Rāma* can grant liberation. Rāmānanda was the founder of the eponymous *Rāmānandi Sampradāya* (also called *Shri Rāmavat* or *Shri Sampradāya*). This is the largest ascetic community in India, and their members are known as *Rāmānandis*, *Vairāgis* or *Bairāgis*. They are known for their self-imposed, highly disciplined, austere, structured and simple lifestyle.

#### **His life's work**

***“Humanity is my temple. And I am its worshipper. The disabled are my supreme God and I am their grace seeker,”***

Shri Tulsī Peeth Seva Nyas is a religious and social service institution based at Janki Kund, Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh, established by Guruji



on Tulsidās Jayanti day, 1987. Chitrakoot is the area in Madhya Pradesh where Lord Rāma spent twelve out of his fourteen years of exile. Swāmiji believes this Peeth is situated at the very place where Sri Rāma gave his sandals to His brother Bharat. The following temples have been constructed at this place:

**Kānch Mandir (काँच मन्दिर) :** The Kānch Mandir includes the temple of Citrakūṭa



Vihārī and Vihāriṇī (Lord Rāma and mother Seetā), along with the Raghav Satsang Bhavan. It is a temple with three Shikharas. Beautiful statues of Lord Rāma, mother Seetā and Lakshmana are lodged in the sanctum sanctorum.

**Mānas Mandir (मानस मन्दिर) :** The Manas Mandir is a new, bigger temple constructed in 2008 at the entrance of Tulsi Peeth. It has the entire Rāmacharitamānasa engraved on its white marble walls in black and red colours, following the version of the critical edition compiled by Guruji.

He founded the Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Handicapped University, an institution of higher learning solely for disabled students, on 27 September 2001 in Chitrakoot. This is the first university in the world exclusively for the disabled. The university was created by an ordinance of the Uttar Pradesh Government, which was later passed as Uttar Pradesh State Act 32 (2001) by the Uttar Pradesh legislature. The act appointed Swāmi Rāmbhadrācharya as the lifelong chancellor of the university.

The university offers graduate, post-graduate, and doctorate degrees in various subjects, including Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Sociology, Psychology, Music, Drawing and Painting, Fine Arts, Special Education, Education, History, Culture and Archeology, Computer and Information Sciences, Vocational Education, Law, Economics, and Prosthetics and Orthotics. Admissions are restricted to the four types of





disabled students - visually impaired, hearing impaired, mobility impaired, and mentally impaired - as defined by the Disability Act (1995) of the Government of India.

The objectives of the university are indeed noble: not just education by providing a disabled-friendly campus and class rooms where 21 courses are taught in order to prepare students of strong character, enriched with traditional and modern knowledge; the university also provides boarding, lodging and essential requirements to disabled students to facilitate their better accessibility to higher education. Along



with that, the University explores suitable placement for the graduates in the private and public sectors and not the least of all, it actively promotes the spiritual, social and economic aspirations of the students to enable them to enter the main stream.

### **Jagadguru**

*Jagadguru* (literally, the preceptor of the world), is a term used in the *sanātana dharma* for somebody who possesses complete knowledge and understanding of Vedic scriptures. The term has traditionally been conferred upon Āchārya-s of Vedānta who composed *Sanskrit* commentaries on the three principal scriptures of Vedānta (also called the *prasthānatrayi* - the Brahma Sūtra, the Bhagavad Geetā and the Principal Upanishads). In medieval history, there were six such Āchāryas who were bestowed with the title of Jagadguru - Sankarāchārya, Nimbārkāchārya, Rāmānujāchārya, Madhvāchārya, Rāmānandāchārya and Vallabhāchārya. After Vallabhāchārya, the Jagadguru tradition in Vedānta was lost – for the next five centuries nobody wrote Sanskrit commentaries on the *prasthānatrayi*... until the advent of Jagadguru Rāmānandāchārya in the 15th-century. The great Vaishnava devotional poet-saint who lived in the Prayāgraj-Vārānasi region is recognized as the founder of *Rāmānanda Sampradāya* the largest monastic Hindu renunciant community in modern times. He also composed the *Ānandabhāṣya* on the *prasthānatrayi* and is thought of as Lord Rāma's incarnation in Kaliyuga.

The successors of Rāmānandācārya are bestowed with the title of *Jagadguru Rāmānandācārya*.

Swāmi Rāmabhadradāsa was chosen as Jagadguru Rāmānandācārya in 1989, and was ritually anointed in Ayodhya on August 1, 1995. He then wrote Sanskrit commentaries titled *Shri rāghavakripā bhāṣya* on Brahma Sūtra, Bhagavad Geetā and eleven Upanishads. Swāmi Rāmabhadracārya thus revived the Jagadguru tradition after 500 years, and also gave the *Rāmānanda Sampradāya* its second interpretation of Vedānta (after *Ānandabhāṣya*).

#### **The grace of Sarasvati**

Throughout his life, Jagadguru Rāmabhadracārya, who speaks 22 languages, has been a spontaneous composer and poet (*āshukavi*) in many Indian languages. He has a large repertoire of styles in poetry (some of which have translations quoted here). As a child, he effortlessly composed poetry in Prakrit and Sanskrit. In the afternoons, his grandfather would narrate to him various episodes of the Hindu epics Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata, and devotional works like *Vishrāmsāgara*, *Sukhsāgara*, *Premasāgara*, and *Brajvilāsa*. At the age of three, Giridhara composed his first piece of poetry-in *Awadhi* (a dialect of Hindi)-and recited it to his grandfather. In this verse, Krishna's foster mother Yashoda is fighting with a *gopi* (milkmaid) for hurting Krishna.

मेरे गिरिधारीजी से काहे लरी ।  
तुम तरुणी मेरो गिरिधर बालक काहे भुजा पकरी ॥  
सुसुकि सुसुकि मेरो गिरिधर रोवत तू मुसुकात खरी ॥  
तू अहिरिन अतिसय झगराऊ बरबस आय खरी ॥  
गिरिधर करगहि कहत जसोदा आँचर ओट करी ॥

mere giridhārījī se kāhe larī  
tuma taruṇī mero giridhara bālaka kāhe  
bhujā pakarī ॥  
susuki susuki mero giridhara rovata tū  
musukāta kharī ॥  
tū ahirina atisaya jhagarāū barabasa  
āya kharī ॥  
giridhara karagahi kahata jasodā ācara  
oṭa karī ॥

**“Why did you fight with my Giridhara (Krishna)? You are a young maiden, and my Giridhara (Krishna) is but a child, why did you hold his arm? My Giridhara (Krishna) is crying, sobbing repeatedly, and you stand there smirking! O Ahir lady (cowherd girl), you are excessively inclined to quarrel, and come and stand here uninvited.”**

Giridhara (the poet) sings – so says Yashoda, holding on to the hand of Giridhara (Krishna) and covering [her face] with the end of her Sari.

At the age of eight, he wrote:

महाघोर शोकाग्नि नातप्यमानं  
पतन्तं-निरासार-संसार सिन्धौ ।  
अनाथं जडं मोहपाशेन बद्धं  
प्रभो पाहि मां सेवक क्लेशहर्तः ॥

*O omnipotent Lord, remover of the distress of your worshippers! Protect me, who am being consumed by the extremely dreadful fire of sorrows, who is helplessly falling in the ocean of the mundane world, who is without any protector, who is ignorant, and who is bonded by the shackles of delusion.*

And one can almost hear the playful, naïve lisp of the innocent child-devotee (*bālabhakta*) in this composition in which he uses alliteration:

*O the one who is playful with a row of locks of wavering hair (lolālālīlala); O the one who never changes (alola); O the one whose mouth is full of saliva in the pastimes [as a child] (līlālālālālālala); O the one who accepts the wealth of earth (Seetā) in the sport [of breaking the bow of Shiva] (lelelele); O the one who destroys the multitude of worldly desires of mortals (lalālīla); O the child [form of Rāma] (lāla); O the one who destroys the fickle-minded nature of the being (lolīla); [may you ever] delight [in my mind] (lālala).*

॥ 20.94 ॥ “Rāmabhadrācārya, Sri bhārgava rāghaviyam,

Even when reading the translation, his love and dependence on both Rāma, the Deity of his heart and Mother Seetā are overflowing: calling upon Mother Seetā, he says:

*“O the one who is as dear as life to Rāma, O the delightful one, O the power of Rāma, O one with eyes like lotuses, O Queen, O Seetā, grant me the most beautiful devotion to Rāma”*

His Sanskrit commentaries have a broad coverage, with theories supported by evidence, novel interpretations, elaborate derivations, and an independent style with quotes from the works of Tulsidās accompanied by Sanskrit poetic translations. His Hindi lyrical works follow the Bhojpuri tradition with emphasis on both the aesthetics and emotion. Optimism, devotion to motherland, and patriotism are some more features of his works which are seen in several poems and plays.

To date, he has composed more than 80 *granthas* and innumerable minor works, including 25 books of poetry and 20 in prose. His Magna Opera include four epic poems, commentaries on *prasthānatrayī*, *ashtādhyāyī* and *rāmacharitamānasa* and a critical edition of the *rāmacharitamānasa*. His love for Sri Rāma and Seetā and his humility are the outstanding features of these and the numerous Kathā-s he has regaled devotees with. For example,

*“I have not even touched paper, nor have I even taken a pen in hand. In the Bhringaduta, only the Lord of mother Seetā has spoken”.*

### ***Deposition on behalf of Lord Rāma in the Ayodhyā case***

So steeped is Jagadguru Rāmbhadrācharya in the scriptures and ancient texts of *sanātana dharma* that in the year 2003, he deposed as an expert witness for religious matters in the Allahabad High Court. As the infant Rāma is a minor, Jagadguru Rāmbhadrācharya, being a descendant

of sage Vasishtha and thus a Brāhmana from the Gurukula of Lord Rāma, defended the Lord in the case. Portions of his affidavit and cross-examination are quoted by the High Court in the final judgment. In his affidavit, he cited the ancient Hindu scriptures (*Vālmiki's Rāmāyana, Rāmatāpanīya Upanishad, Skanda Purāna, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, et cetera*) describing Ayodhyā as a city, holy to Hindus and the birthplace of Rāma. He cited verses from two works of *Tulasidās* – eight verses from the *dohā shataka* which describe the destruction of a temple and the construction of a mosque at the disputed site in 1528 CE, and one verse from *Kavitāvali* which mentions the disputed site. Refuting the theory of the original temple being to the North of the disputed area (as pleaded by the pro-mosque parties), he described the boundaries of the *janmabhūmi* as mentioned in the Ayodhyā Māhātmya section of *Skanda Purāna*, which tallied with the present location of disputed area as noted by Justice Sudhir Agarwal. The verdict on September 30, 2010, ruled in the favour of Lord Rāma – the prayers of crores of Hindus were answered, and Jagadguru Rāmbhadrāchārya's testimony was vindicated.

### ***A Critical Edition of the Rāmācharitamānasa***

The *Rāmācharitamānasa*, consisting of around 10,800 verses, was composed by *Tulasidās* in the late sixteenth century. Over 400 years, it became extremely popular in northern India. Numerous editions of the epic are in existence, and

there are many places where these editions differ in the number of verses, the original text, and spelling and grammar. In the twentieth century, critical editions of the Mahābhārata and Vālmiki's Rāmāyana were published by Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune and Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda but no critical edition was available for the *Rāmācharitamānasa*, an epic of similar importance for crores of Hindus. Swāmi Rāmbhadrāchārya, who has done more than 4,000 recitations of the entire *Rāmācharitamānasa* since childhood, has come out with a critical edition of the *Rāmācharitamānasa*, after studying as many as fifty different editions during eight years of research. This edition is known as the *Tulsi Peeth* edition and was printed in 2006. It is believed by the *Rāghava Parivāra* to be the exact words of *Tulasidās*.

### ***Honours & Awards***

In 2015, Swāmi Rāmbhadrāchārya was awarded Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian honour. He has been honoured by several leaders and politicians, as diverse in outlook as the President of India A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, Somnath Chatterjee, an MP and one-time Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Several state governments, including that of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh have conferred honours on him.

“Saint, commentator, poet, visionary, leader, orator, singer, educationist, reformer, example for the

disabled — the list is endless. No description of Jagadguru Rāmbhadrāchārya can be ever perfect and complete. He is the saint of our times and we are honoured to see him in flesh and blood.” This is just one of the many praises showered on this living saint.

Swāmi Rāmbhadrāchārya, calling upon the Lord of his heart, prays:

अशरणशरणप्रणतभयदरण  
धरणिभरहरणधरणितनयावरण  
जनसुखकरणतरणिकुलभरण  
कमलमृदुचरणद्विजाडनासमुद्धरण ।  
त्रिभुवनभरणनुजकुलमरण  
निशितशरशरणदलितदशमुखरण  
भृगुभवचातकनवीनजलधरराम  
विहरमन्सिसहसीतयाजनाभरण ॥

*aśaraṇaśaraṇapraṇatabhayadaraṇa  
dharaṇibharaharaṇadharaṇitanayāvaraṇa  
janasukhakarṇatarāṇikulabharaṇa  
kalamṛducaraṇadvijāḍṇasamuddhar  
aṇa ॥*

*tribhuvanabharaṇadanujakulamaraṇa  
niśitaśaraśaraṇadalitadaśamukharaṇa  
bhṛgubhavacātakanavīnajaladhararāma  
viharamanasahasītayājanābharaṇa ॥*

“O the refuge of those without refuge, O the destroyer of the fear of those who bow down [to you], O the remover of the earth's burden, O the paramour of the daughter of the earth, O

*the cause of pleasure in devotees, O the nourisher of the dynasty of the sun, O the one with feet as delicate as the lotus, O the redeemer of the wife of the Brahmin (Ahalyā), O the nourisher of the three worlds, O the slayer of the clan of demons, O the bearer of sharp arrows, O the destroyer of Rāvaṇa in battle, O the new cloud for the Chātaka bird in the form of the descendant of Bhṛigu (Parashurāma), O Rāma, O the ornament of devotees, take pleasure in my mind with Seetā.” ॥ 20.13 ॥*

“O Rāma! Awake, awake. O the mighty descendent of Raghu! Awake. O the husband of Seetā! Awake. Make the whole world happy.” ॥

**Notes:**

\*Ashtādhyayi is a 4000-sutra Sanskrit treatise on grammar, written in the 5th century by grammarian Panini.

\*\*Kathā or Kathya is an Indian style of religious storytelling, performances of which are a ritual event in Hinduism

\*\*\*Virakta Deekshā: a vow to turn away from all worldly desires

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These days, everyone knows how important a high Emotional Quotient (EQ) is, for us to succeed in life's challenging situations, both in the secular and the spiritual domains. Of the many components that constitute commendable emotional intelligence, the ability to be aware of the emotions that arise in us, and to recognize their exact nature, is of paramount importance. Let us examine what emotional self-awareness is and whether there are practical steps to enhance this precious dimension of good EQ. At the end, it is all about leading happier and more effective lives. When do you have high EQ?

Emotional Intelligence (EI) covers both understanding and managing emotions. It covers both our own emotions and those of others. These are obviously not taught in physics or economics. Therefore, these topics come under the domain of



psychology and of education. The topics then are also interdisciplinary with communication, leadership, ethics, human values, organizational behaviour and so on.

EI, when measured and calibrated, becomes a figure known as EQ. The calibration process involves taking average 'emotional intelligence' to be 100. Several skills, which we may call components, make for high EQ, which then is vital for success in every area of life. For example, the ability to bear stress is an important aspect of EQ. Two equally bright people, with equally enviable academic records, may not perform equally when they take up their careers. Between the two, the one who can cope with stress will surely fare better, even though the second person



has equal subject knowledge and IQ. Likewise, a person who has greater empathy, another component of EQ, will network better with his team members and also with people outside his team, as compared with somebody who does not read and feel the emotions of others well.

**Where does awareness come in?**

Of all the components of EQ, which can be 15, 20 or 30 also in number, 'emotional self-awareness' ranks on top, and can even be called the mother of all other components. In this sense, it becomes an interdisciplinary theme with spirituality and religion too. Unless we are aware of our harshness, how can we take the first step towards being kind? Unless there is recognition within us of the miserly behaviour on our part, how can we be fair, leave alone generous? Only when we take cognizance of the early stages of desire or anger, will we succeed in reining them in.

No wonder, 'mindfulness' has become extremely popular in today's world. On the one hand, Buddhist teachers like Thich Nhat Hanh<sup>1</sup> and on the other, medical professors like Jon Kabat-Zinn<sup>2</sup> have highlighted the importance of awareness of what we are doing and what we are thinking on a moment-to-moment basis. Teachers like J Krishnamurti, of course, take the matter to very great heights, where they strip it of any character of being a technique. The Upanishads point to Pure Awareness<sup>3</sup>, irrespective of objects, and call it the highest truth.

**Geetā pitches in**

The Sanskrit word *pashyati*, which means 'one sees', appears at a number of places of critical importance in Vedānta scriptures including Bhagavad-Geetā. Shri Krishna calls for heightened awareness throughout his immortal teachings in the Geetā. Pointing to the state of mind of the most exalted yogi, he says that the *parama-yogi* **sees** all equally<sup>4</sup>. This verse in the sixth chapter refers to the awakening of immense empathy in a spiritually advanced person.

If we are not aware of the early stages of the rise of emotions in us, and we are unable to recognize the structure of the emotions, it is next to impossible to bring them under check. We may talk big of self-control but we fail miserably when various urges come up and seize us. Shri Krishna compliments those who notice the building-up of the momentum<sup>5</sup> (*vega* in Sanskrit) of desire (*kāma*) and anger (*krodha*) in their bosom, and, empowered by this awareness, are able to prevent them from exploding.

Emotional self-awareness is the fragrance of high levels of the attribute *sattva* in our mind (*antah-karana*). This is evident from an utterance<sup>6</sup> by Shri Krishna, "Light emanates from all the gates of one's body, when *sattva* is on the rise in one." The light he refers to, is obviously not the light (of physics) in which our sense organs, the eyes, see. It is the light of sensitivity within us, which enables us to notice even tiny waves of ambition or jealousy, lust or greed. It is

the same sensitivity which, when directed outside ourselves, understands the suffering of others or their aggressive intentions.

### **Human values point to high EQ**

When Geetā either prescribes or describes various human values, all of them are indeed an immediate expression (or a further outcome) of enhanced emotional self-awareness. Purity of mind<sup>7</sup>, compassion towards all living beings<sup>8</sup>, being able to bear with hardships and to forgive those who hurt us<sup>9</sup>, or mature self-restraint<sup>10</sup>, are truly possible if we are, *on a moment-to-moment basis*, watchful of the play of emotions in our bosom. Mere 'should and should not' do not take us far in the matter of inner change. We end up doing what we should not, and fail to do what we should. In contrast, where there is emotional self-awareness, we see clearly the falsity of certain outlooks of ours, how they are utterly unreasonable or outdated, how they are against universal values and how they are sure to bring misery and repentance to us in due course of time. This live seeing can make all the difference. We change.

"They rise in me," declares<sup>11</sup> Shri Krishna, referring to thoughts and emotions that are predominantly *sātvik*, *rājasik* or *tāmasik*. This remark is one of the essential cornerstones of Vedānta, which puts a million phenomena of this universe – outside us and inside us – on the platform of awareness. All of them are in Awareness (*chit*, *samvit*, *prajnāna*); they rise and fall in Awareness; Awareness alone is the

ultimate truth that survives all of them.

### **Conclusion**

The very purpose of Bhagavad-Geetā is to help us with self-knowing, which means we must first know all the tentacles of this octopus called 'the ego'. We must notice carefully how laziness, selfishness, ambition, bitterness, etc. operate in our body and mind. This self-knowing paves the way to clearing all these formidable obstacles to Self-knowledge. When we intuit our divine nature, as the ever-loving and ever-lovable Pure Self, Geetā's job is done!

### **Notes:**

1. For example, see his book 'The Miracle of Mindfulness'. Thich Nhat Hanh, who may be called a Zen master, offers gentle anecdotes and practical exercises in the book, as a means of learning the skills of mindfulness: being awake and fully aware. From washing the dishes to answering the phone to peeling an orange, he reminds us that each moment holds within it an opportunity to work toward greater self-understanding and peacefulness.
2. For example, see his book 'Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life'. Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994
3. | *prajnānam brahma* | – Aitareya Upanishad, 3.1.3
4. | *samam pashyati* | Geetā 6.32
5. | *shaknoti iha eva yah sodhum ..* | Geetā 5.23
6. | *sarva-dvāreshu dehe'smin prakāsha upajāyate* | Geetā 14.11
7. | *sattva-samshuddhi* | Geetā 16.1
8. | *dayā bhooteshu kshānti* | Geetā 16.2
9. | *kshānti* | Geetā 13.7 and 18.42
10. | *ātma-vinigraha* | Geetā 13.7
11. | *te mayi* | Geetā 7.12



- Osho



Mother usually made Peas Biryani on Wednesday afternoons in winter. It was her favourite dish to prepare, for it was easy to make, yet a hot favourite amongst the kids. Moreover, fresh peas were in season and tasted heavenly.

She heated some oil in a pan and added a spoonful of cumin seeds. Then she added a handful of chopped onions. She proceeded to add some green peas and seasoned them with salt and turmeric powder. Having sautéed them for a couple of minutes, she turned in the cleaned and washed rice and poured in a good amount of water. She covered the pan with a lid and let it get cooked on a slow flame.

Strangely, the ingredients in the

simmering pot started a conversation...

The rice was the first to say, "I am the most important of all of us present here for I am pure white and wholesome. I am the key ingredient to making Peas Biryani. I am *Satya*. This is the Truth."

The yellow turmeric powder chuckled and said, "No longer are you white my dear, for I have dyed you in my own colour. I am *dharma*. This is my duty."

The peas smiled peacefully and said, "What is Peas Biryani, without peas, eh? We are the most attractive and delicious part of this preparation. We are *shānti*. We are peace. We are peas (peace) and our colour too is green that is the colour of peace."

The salt mused to itself and said, "Who would ever be able to eat Peas Biryani, without salt? I am the most important of all. If I were not there, Peas Biryani would be unpalatable. My taste shall be infused in each particle. I am *prema*. I love each one of you equally.\*"

The onions said, "We add the tang to this dish. We add flavour. We are the soul of all vegetarian food. We are *ahimsā*. We tolerate all other flavours, yet retain ours."

The pan spoke up and said, "It's me who is holding all of you in here. But for me, you would all have been separate identities. I have held you together, so

that jointly, you can become a delicious dish. Where would you be without me? I am discipline and I am indispensable. \*”

The cumin seeds were dancing up and down in the boiling water and said, “Try making Biryani without us. It shall be quite tasteless. We sizzle in the hot oil first of all, for we are devoted to spreading our flavour, wherever we go. We are devotion.”

The Biryani was almost ready and the oil glistened on every grain of rice. It said, “I ensure that each grain of rice, each pea and each cumin seed retains its individual identity. I prevent stickiness. I am discrimination.”

The water was almost completely absorbed by now. It smiled contentedly and said, “I was determined to permeate into each particle of all of you. Without me could peas Biryani ever have been made? I am determination and I am the

most important of all.”

Mother came by and checked to see if the Biryani was done. The gas flame smiled quietly to itself and said, “Each one is so full of its own importance. Without the power of heat provided by me, what would they be? It is the power of God vested in me that I can give the energy to cook. But alas, who remembers the Power of God?”

God smiled to Himself as the lady turned off the gas and waited, till .... He was needed again.

Each one of us in this world is so full of his or her importance. We conveniently forget God who gives us the power to do everything. Whether acknowledged or not, whether remembered or not, God is the power behind doing and making everything, even Peas Biryani.



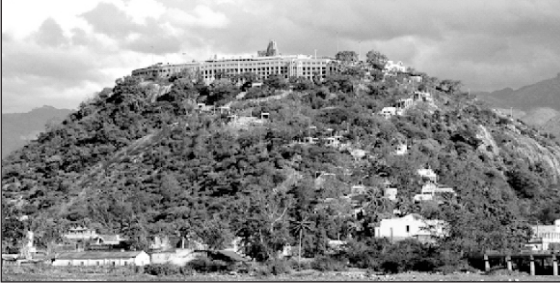
Instead of buying your children all the things you never had,  
you should teach them all the things you were never taught.

Material wears out but knowledge stays.

- Bruce Lee



- Compiled by Ratna Viswanath



### **The Six Abodes of Lord Subrahmanya**

Lord Subrahmanya, also known as Kārtikeya or Skanda and fondly addressed as 'Murugan' in Tamil, is one of the most revered deities in the state of Tamilnadu. Of the multitude of temples in Tamilnadu which are dedicated to Lord Subrahmanya, six shrines - together referred to as the *Āru Padai Veedu* (*Āru* - six, *Padai* - army, *Veedu* - abode) - are considered supreme and the most sacred. It is believed that as the commander of the *devas*, Skanda graced these six shrines during his battle with the demon Sūrapadman. These shrines have been extolled in the 2000-year-old Tamil poetry of the Sangam era.

The *Āru Padai Veedu* shrines are

- Palani (Pazhani, ancient name - Podhini) where Kārtikeya is enshrined as Dhandāyudhapāni,
- Tirupparamkunram, which enshrines Subrahmanya,
- Pazhamudircholai, enshrining Skanda,
- Swāmimalai, enshrining Swāmināthan,
- Tiruchendur, which enshrines

Subrahmanya and Senthilāndavar

- Tirutthani, which enshrines Subrahmanya.

Tirupparamkunram is near Madurai. Pazhamudircholai is near Coimbatore. Pazhani is equidistant from Madurai and Coimbatore. Swāmimalai is in Kumbakonam in Thanjavur District. Tiruchendur is on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Tirutthani is near Tirupati and Chennai.

Palani is considered the third *Padai Veedu*. The temple at Palani is an ancient one, situated at an elevation of 1500 feet above sea level.

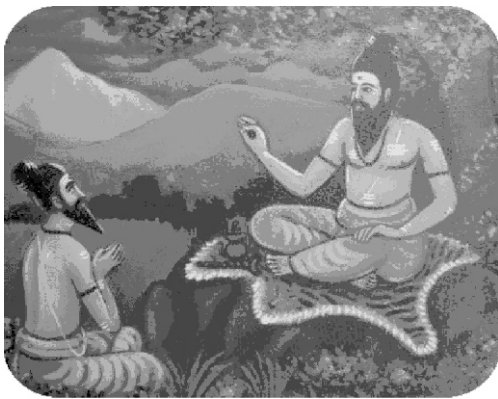
### **The Legend associated with the Palani temple**

Sage Nārada paid a visit to Lord Shiva and Devi Parvati at Mount Kailas and presented them with a celestial fruit. Ganapati and Kārtikeya (Murugan), the two sons of Shiva and Parvati, each wanted the entire fruit for himself. Shiva proclaimed that the fruit would be given to the one who returned first after going around the world. Ganapati did a *pradakshinā* (circumambulation) of His parents, as Shiva and Parvathi represent the whole world (or is it that, to a child, his parents are his entire world?). Thus, Ganapati 'reached' first and won the fruit. Murugan, who sat on his peacock and actually went around the world, reached later, only to find that Ganapati had already won the prize.

Murugan thus got disappointed. He vowed to leave His home and family and renounced the world. He came down first to Thiru Avinankudi at the foothills of the Shivagiri hills. Shiva and Parvati came there. Shiva pacified Murugan, saying "Pazham-nee"<sup>1</sup>, meaning "You are the fruit" - that Subrahmanya Himself was the fruit of all wisdom and knowledge. The place came to be called Pazhani. Some say that Palani got its name from Pazhanam (meaning 'paddy fields').

Murugan withdrew to the top of the Pazhani hill and settled there in peace and solitude as a recluse.

Many *siddhars*<sup>2</sup> are said to have lived in this region. The idol of Palani *Āndavar* (Lord) is said to have been made of *Navapāshānam* (nine minerals) by a Siddhar called Bhogar. *Navapāshānam* is a combination of *Veeram*, *Pooram*, *Rasam*, *Jathilingam*, *Kandagam*, *Gauri pāshānam*, *Vellai pāshānam*, *Mridharsingh*, *Silasat*). It is also believed that the materials of abhishekam like milk, sandalpaste, etc., attain medicinal properties on being poured over Lord Palani *Āndavar*'s idol and that they have cured many diseases, when partaken. It



is a widely-known speciality of Palani.

Bhogar is considered as one of the eighteen *siddhars* born in the world. He lived around 3000 B.C. Bhogar gained knowledge in medicine, astrology, spirituality, yoga, etc. Being an expert in medicine and anticipating that in due course of time, human beings would suffer from a large number of diseases, Bhogar used his great knowledge and skill to make a 'Master-Medicine'. He used 4448 rare herbs and first made nine 'poisonous' medicines. Under the guidance of Agastyar (the Father of Ayurvedic / *Siddha* medicine) and other *siddhars*, he then combined these 9 'poisons' in a certain proportion and method. He used this *Navapāshānam* (non-poisonous in the combined form) or the Master-Medicine and made the idol of Lord Murugan.

After installing the idol at the Palani Hill, Bhogar used to worship it by doing *abhisheka* (anointing / pouring on the idol) with milk and panchāmritam. This milk and panchāmritam thus became medicine to cure diseases. Bhogar's disciple Pulipani *siddhar* later took over the worship of Lord Murugan after Bhogar went into *nirvikalpa samādhi*.

Near Palani Hill is a temple called Thanasiappan Temple. This is where Bhogar is believed to have mixed the *Navapāshānam* and made the Murugan idol.

The deity at Palani is known as *Dhandāyudhapāni* Swāmi or 'the Lord with a staff in His hand'. The deity is in a standing posture. He has the look of one

who has renounced all worldly pomp. He wears just a loincloth and holds the staff. He is a messenger of the great precept 'Renounce all to reach Me'. The icon is unique in the whole world. Murugan signifies beauty – in Tamil, it is said that an alternate name for Murugan is 'Beauty' - and Lord Murugan is the god of Beauty and Youth.

### ***The Significance of Pazhani in Tamil Literature***

Palani Hill is prominently featured in Tamil Literature of the Sangam era. 'The History of Palani' written by Balasubramania Kavirāyar speaks about the glory of this place. It contains 23 chapters in 987 verses and was written in 1628 AD. Many Tamil saints and scholars have sung in praise of the Lord of Palani.

Pazhani and Lord Pazhani-*Āndavar* have been praised by Saint Arunagirināthar in his Thiruppugazh and in Kandar-Alankāram.

### ***Other shrines in the Palani Temple Idumban Temple***

Idumban was one of the very few *asuras* who were survivors of the *sura-asura* war that had been fought between the forces of Murugan and those of Sūrapadman. After surviving the war, Idumban had undergone repentance and had become a devotee of Lord Murugan. Once, Sage Agastya wanted to take two hills - Shivagiri and Shaktigiri - to his abode in the South and commissioned his *asura*-disciple Idumban to carry them. Idumban bore the hills slung across his shoulders in the form of a *kāvadi*, one on each side. When he reached (what is now) Palani and felt fatigued, he placed the *kāvadi*

down to take rest.

When Idumban resumed his journey, he found that he could not lift the hill(s). Murugan had made it impossible for Idumban to carry it. Idumban spotted upon the hilltop, a little boy wearing only a loincloth. He demanded that the boy vacate the place at once, so that he, Idumban, could proceed with his task. The boy refused. In the fierce battle which ensued, Idumban was slain but was later restored to life.

Idumban belatedly recognised the boy as none other than his *ishta-devatā* Murugan. He prayed to Him that whosoever carried on his shoulders the *kāvadi*, signifying the two hills and visited the temple on a vow, should be blessed and secondly, that he (Idumban) should be given the privilege of standing sentinel at the entrance to the hill.

Hence, we have the Idumban shrine halfway up the hill where every pilgrim is expected to offer obeisance to Idumban before entering the temple of *Dhandāyudhapāni*. Since then, pilgrims to Palani bring their offerings on their shoulders in a *kāvadi*. The custom has spread from Palani to all Murugan shrines worldwide.

### ***Bhogar Shrine***

Bhogar *samādhi* is also inside Palani Murugan temple. Actually, Bhogar himself constructed his *samādhi* exactly under the Lord Murugan *Navapāshānam* idol and went into *nirvikalpa samādhi* there. The entrance to his *samādhi* is a cave-like structure. To this day, worship for this great *siddhar* is conducted at this entrance.

The Bhogar Shrine is in the southwestern corridor of the hill-temple. It is said that there is a subterranean tunnel - linking the shrine with the sanctum sanctorum - through which Bhogar is believed to be going to the main idol of *Dhandāyudhapāni* and performing daily worship.

### ***The Architecture and the Artwork***

It is said that the Palani temple was built by a king of the Chera dynasty. The Palani Hill has a height of 160 m. It has a path around it, admeasuring 2.84 km. There are 689 steps to reach the top. The area is surrounded by various medicinal herbs and trees like sandalwood, *Kadamba*, etc., as also fields and groves.

On the outer walls of Lord Murugan's shrine, there are many edicts, made by some kings of the Pāndya dynasty. In the front *Mandapam* of the temple, there are many beautiful and artistic sculptures, depicting *siddhas* in penance, parrots, peacocks, deer, *Kalpavriksha*, etc. There are also icons of *Dhandāyudhapāni*, His devotees, as also of Yaazhi. At the entrance near the *Rāja Gopuram*, there are two sculptures - a young lady carrying her child in the right arm and carrying a flower basket in the left and another beautiful lady, presumably a friend, standing in front of her. There are pillars with Yaazhi in the *Paaravel Mandapam*. In the *Ardha Mandapam* there are sculptures of beautiful young women.

The sanctum of *Dhandāyudhapāni Swāmi* is full of artwork. The ceiling here, having the

'*Kodungai*' design, speaks of the talent of the sculptors. The balcony-like structure on the outer side of this area adds a touch of charm. Such artistic work can also be seen on the pillars of nearby temples such as the Thiru Avinankudi temple and Periyāyaki Amman temple. In the *Navaranga Mandapam*, the divine dance of Lord Shiva and (facing Him), the dance of Kali are depicted.

On the walls of Periyāyaki Amman Temple, there is a beautiful ancient painting, revealing the art of singers, artists and dancers. It belongs to the Nāyak period.

### ***Other important places of worship near Palani Temple***

Of all the nearby temples, the **Periya Āvudayar Kovil** is by far the most important and deserves special mention. Located near the railway line on the banks of the *Shanmukha Nadi* in sylvan settings, the temple is dedicated to Peru-Udayar / Āvudayar or Brihadeesvarar, a name that became a legend in the days of the great Raja Raja Chola. The deity here is a *swayambhu* (naturally formed) *lingam* and so, local belief is that it existed even before Bhogar's time. Only male gods are found in the temple. A majestic figure of Dakshināmurti, a rare Rudran and other gracious images in stone, as also a set of sixteen old inscriptions are noteworthy.

The **Kuzhandai Velāyudhaswāmi temple** at Thiru Avinankudi at the foothills of the Pazhani hill is among the earliest abodes of Murugan and perhaps it had humble beginnings under the shade of a *Nelli*

(āmla / gooseberry) tree. The presiding deity is Murugan as a child, sitting on a peacock.

The **Periyanāyaki Amman Temple**, popularly called the 'Oorkkovil' or 'Oorambalam' (the 'town-temple') is dedicated to the Mother Goddess. It is large and spacious and is in the heart of Palani town, two kilometres from the foothills of Pazhani hill. This temple houses the *vāhanas* of all the temples under the Devasthānam (governing body).

Near the Periyanāyaki Temple is the **Māriamman Temple**, very popular with the local folk.

The *Shanmukha Nadi* bathing ghats are at a distance of three kilometres from Palani town. During important days such as eclipses, *Amāvasya*, etc., thousands flock here to have their sins absolved in the purifying waters. *Kāvadi* bearers have a bath here before marching to the temple. This is also a place where oblations can be performed for one's ancestors. On the banks of the river near the bathing ghat, there are many shrines, collectively referred to as **Shanmukha Nadi temples**.

*Sharavana Poikai* originally refers to the celestial pool in the Himalayas, from whose waters the divine child, *Sharavanabhava* namely, Subrahmanya, emerged. *Sharavana Poikais*, symbolic of the original, are built in temple-complexes dedicated to Lord Murugan and are considered sources of redemption. Accumulated sins are believed to be destroyed by a dip here. In

Pazhani, the *Saravana poigai* is near Thiruvavinankudi at the foothills. Devotees bathe here before worshipping at the temple.

**Valli sunai** (sunai – reservoir, tank) is considered to be the most ancient and holiest tank in Pazhani.

### **Places of Tourist Interest**

Kodaikanal, considered the Queen of the South Indian Hills, is situated near Palani and is an important tourist centre. It is 64 km away to the South of Palani. The Kurinji Āndavar temple at Kodaikanal is a famous shrine.

Periyanāyaki Amman temple, Periyavudaiyar temple, Dams at Palani Porundalaar, the garden of herbs, etc., are situated within a radius of about 7 km around Palani. There is a temple for Lord Murugan at Poomparai. The Kurinji plant which blossoms once in 12 years is seen in this area.

Palani Hill is a charming campus from where one can take a look at the Idumban Hill, the Kodaikanal Hills, the Western Ghats, the greenery of the paddy fields, rivers, tanks, Palani town and the colleges. On a lovely, clear and mist-free day, the Kurinji Āndavar Temple is visible from here against the bright Sun.

### **Notes:**

- The Tamil word for 'fruit' is 'pazham'; 'nee' in Tamil, means 'you'.
- The Pazhani Temple and Bhogar find mention in the article on Swami Satchidanandaji, under 'The Beacons' in Issue 11-3 of Inner Flame.

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## Fleeting moments, Enduring impressions

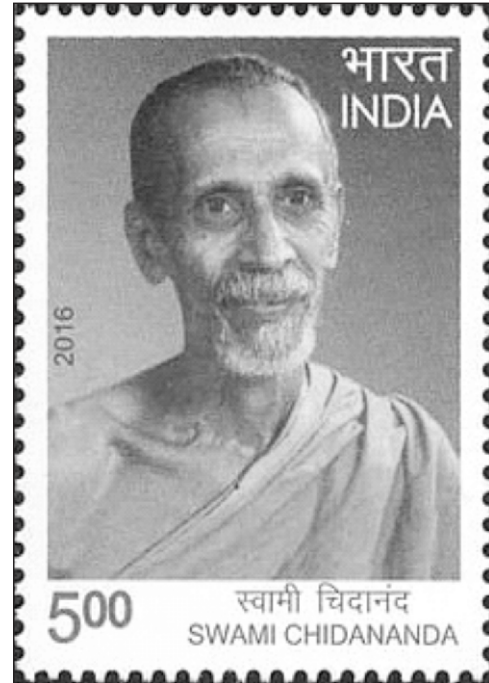
## Swāmi Chidānanda Saraswati An Embodiment of Humility

- Swāmi Chidānanda

As the general caption for this series goes, these are about *fleeting moments* that have left *lasting impressions*. I met – just twice – revered Swāmi Chidānanda Saraswati (1916 – 2008), who succeeded Pujya Swāmi Sivānanda as the head of the Divine Life Society (DLS), headquartered in Rishikesh. Both the meetings (in 1992 and in 2000) were for about an hour only and though they were not one-to-one in nature, they left memories that I will cherish all my life.

In my childhood, my mother used to get the magazine of DLS at our home and she used to adore both Sivānandaji and Chidānandaji. About the latter, she would say he was (as Sridhara Rao) originally from our district (Mangalore / Udupi) and had gone to Madras (now Chennai) for his studies. I had never imagined that one of his *guru-bhāis* would be my Gurudev, and I would receive his name one day!

It was the end of February, 1992, that someone in Mumbai was kind enough to propose that Swāmi Chidānandaji visit Sāndeepany Sādhanālaya. Everything was arranged and he arrived in the evening, probably on the 28th. I was teaching a bunch of Brahmachāris and Brahmachārinis in the two-year Vedānta course (March 1991 – April 1993). Pujya Gurudev Swāmi Chinmayānandaji was at



Sidhbāri (Himāchal Pradesh) on that day. A hundred of us – Āshramites and other devotees from the city – received Pujya Chidānandaji with great love and respect as his car entered the Āshram, and he got down from the car. As the resident Ācharya, I had the privilege of being in the front and garlanding him.

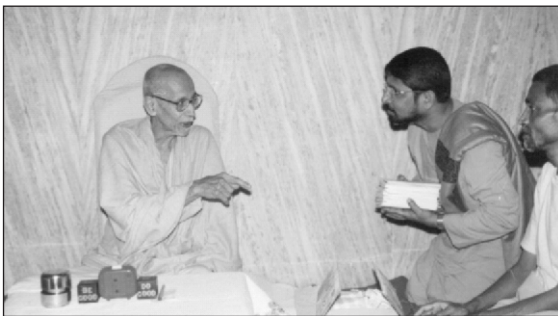
Swāmiji, known for his great humility and tremendous simplicity, gave me a shock when he took the garland off his neck and, with loving blessings, put it on my neck! The whole crowd remarked later it was such a magnificent gesture and I had been truly fortunate. I was, indeed. We led him up the steps leading



to the Jagadishvara Temple, and after *darshan* and *Ārati* at the altar, he delivered an inspiring discourse on the Vedānta, emphasizing *sāadhanā*.

In the three days after that, I too reached Sidhbāri on March 2, 1992, for the annual Mahā-Shivarātri, where Pujya Gurudev had summoned me to receive the initiation into *sannyāsa*. Revered Swāmi Chinmayānandaji had, of course, full information that the President of the Divine Life Society, his own *guru-bhāi*, had visited the Āshram in Powai three days back and had blessed me. That was perhaps the reason why I had the pleasant surprise of receiving the same name as the holy visitor in Mumbai, as a double blessing. [On the same day, four of us were initiated into *sannyāsa*: Swāmini Gayānanda of Nāgpur, Swāmini Premānanda of Mumbai, Swāmi Swaroopānanda of Hong Kong (present head of Chinmaya Mission) and I entered the new phase of life.]

### ***The second darshan***



In April 2000, along with a whole group of Brahmachāris and Brahmachārinis from Mumbai, I was again in Rishikesh (during which trip, we went to Uttar Kashi

also, for a longer duration). We were privileged to join the evening Satsang at the Swāmi Sivānanda Ashram (the HQ of Divine Life Society). Pujya Swāmi Chidānanda Saraswati welcomed us lovingly and made us sit close to him during the Satsang. In his inspiring discourse on that occasion, he referred to all of us as his “nephews and nieces”!

We have heard a lot about the mutual love and regard that he and our Gurudev Swāmi Chinmayānandaji had. Swāmi Chidānanda Saraswati had been in San Diego, California, a few days before our Gurudev left his mortal coils on August 3, 1993 to pay his last visit to his beloved Guru-bhāi. We know how on many occasions – before and after 1993 – Chidānandaji had graciously joined events and programmes connected with our Gurudev.

In a question and answer session at IIT Kānpur, where Pujya Swāmi Chinmayānandaji had described the ‘man of steady wisdom’ (*sthita-prajna*, Geeta 2:55 thru 2.72), someone in the audience had asked, “Have you met somebody in today’s times whom you would regard a *sthita-prajna*?” Chinmayānandaji had mentioned Chidānandaji as someone whom he would consider a candidate to match the description in the Geetā.

Thus the two occasions where I had *darshan* and some valuable interaction with Swāmi Chidānanda Saraswati remain etched in my mind as highly precious events in my life. Om Shri Gurubhyo Namah!



It's a story about Ricky Ponting, one of the greatest cricketers to have ever approached the game. The trait that made Punter different from other cricketers was his sheer attitude towards the game. It was his never-say-die spirit. It's a revelation of that attitude.

Someone once asked him the secret to his ability to find the gaps in the field. His answer was simple, yet revealing. He said, "Every batsman surveys the field before taking strike, and usually the fielders get imprinted on his mind. They can almost see every fielder in their mind's eye. But in my head, I don't see the fielders. I only see the gaps!" And that, as his tally of runs shows, made all the difference.

We could all take a leaf out of Ponting's book and some takeaways could include the following:-

- Don't focus on the obstacles.
- Look for opportunities.
- Focus on your ability to solve the problems.

In many ways, life is like a game of cricket. There will be fielders out there who will stop you from scoring those runs. There will be an opposing captain who will try his hardest to place the fielders in a manner that will make it difficult for you to score those runs. Your job is to find the gaps and the gaps always exist.

Next time, you see a problem or an obstacle, think the Ponting way. And see the gaps! No matter what, success will be yours.

Find the gaps in these trying times, don't look at the obstacles. This too shall pass, stay safe, score the runs & stay Blessed forever.

What do we learn from  
the Upanishads?

Do You Want To Be More Effective?

- Swāmi Chidānanda

Three tips from the Upanishads:

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

| *yadeva vidyayā karoti,*  
*shraddhayā, upanishadā - tadeva veeryavattaram bhavati |*  
Chāndogya Upanishad 1.1.10

यदेव विद्यया करोति, श्रद्धया, उपनिषदा -  
तदेव वीर्यवत्तरं भवति।  
{छान्दोग्यउपनिषत् १.१.१०}

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

\* Shankara's commentary



To know yourself as the Being  
underneath the thinker, the stillness  
underneath the mental noise, the love  
and joy underneath the pain, is freedom,  
salvation, enlightenment.

Eckhart Tolle



- By Anthony de Mello S.J.



A grocer came to the Master in great distress to say that across the way from his shop they had opened a large chain store that would drive him out of business. His family had owned his shop for a century-- and to lose it now could be his undoing, for there was nothing else he was skilled at.

Said the Master, "If you fear the owner of the chain store, you will hate him. And hatred will be our undoing."

"What shall I do?" said the distraught grocer.

"Each morning walk out of your shop onto the sidewalk and bless your shop, wishing it prosperity. Then turn to face the chain store and bless it too."

"What? Bless my competitor and destroyer?"

Any blessings you give him will rebound to your good. Any evil you wish him will destroy you."

After six months, the grocer returned to report that he had to close down his shop as he had feared, but he was now in charge of the chain store and his affairs were in better shape than ever before.



अज्ञेभ्यो ग्रन्थिनः श्रेष्ठाः ग्रन्थिभ्यो धारिणो वराः ।  
धारिभ्यो ज्ञानिनः श्रेष्ठाः ज्ञानिभ्यो व्यवसायिनः ॥

Better than the ignorant are the ones that know the books,  
better still are those who can remember;  
even better are those who know the meanings,  
the best are those who practise!



“As soon as you think of wanting to be enlightened, you leave the place of the Unborn and go counter to it. Because the Buddha Mind is unborn, it has no thoughts at all. Thoughts are the source of delusion. When thoughts are gone, delusion vanishes too. And once you've stopped being deluded, talking about wanting to attain 'enlightenment' certainly is useless, don't you agree?”

Bankei (1622-1693)

#### DECLARATION

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31/3/2020

*D.A. Marcum*



Above the clouds, sun-kissed with gold...  
Spread out across the sky  
I'm awed by the brilliant evidence  
That God's somewhere nearby

There's a strong desire to touch a cloud....  
To pull it from the air  
Like a puff of silk, unwoven....  
Untouched... just hanging there

Yet the gentlest breeze can move it  
From the pathway of a storm  
Or change it in a moment's time  
Into a different form----

These are lovely thoughts to keep  
When the clouds above seem gray  
And hide the golden sunshine  
That would bring a brighter day...

For we know that God's the Master  
In control of things like these...  
And that often just a little prayer  
Will bring a gentle breeze.

## ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

### GOD IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THIS UNIVERSE

*as gold is the substance of all gold ornaments*



यच्च किञ्चित् जगत्यस्मिन् यच्चा किञ्चिद जगत्यस्मिन्  
दृश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा । द्रिश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा ।  
अन्तर्-बहिश्च तत् सर्वं अन्तर्-बहिश्च तत् सर्वं  
व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥ व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥

(Liberal translation)

Whatsoever there is – in this world – known through perception (because of its proximity) or known through report (because of its distance) is pervaded by Nārāyana – within and without.

महानारायण-उपनिषत् (नारायण-सूक्तम्)

Mahā-Nārāyanopanishad 13.5 (anuvāka 13, mantra 5)  
{This section 13 is known as Nārāyana-Sooktam}

Comments: 'Internal and external' here (implied by 'within and without') can refer to internal organs and external objects too. – Editors.

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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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