

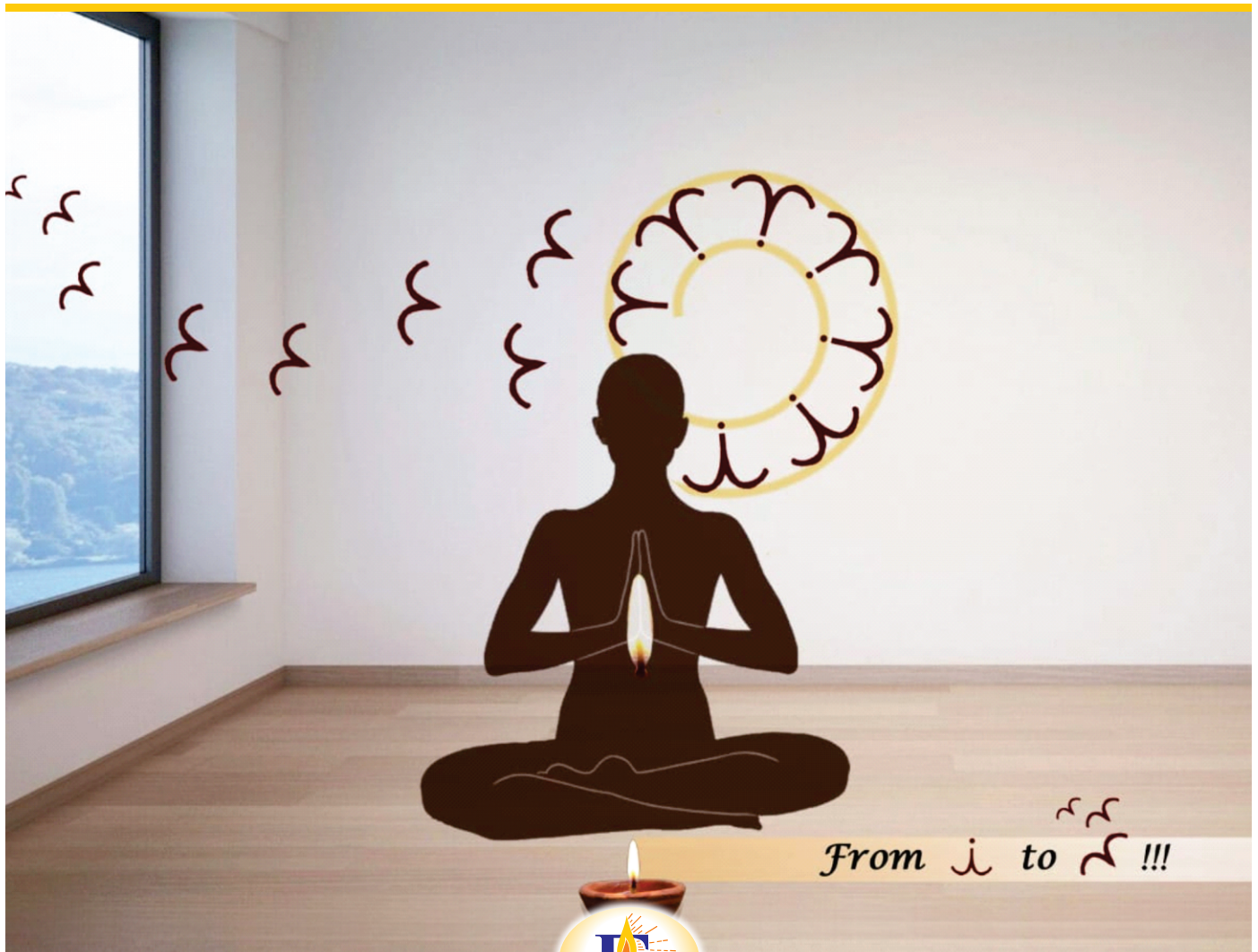
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Almost every issue of this magazine comes out with an attractive front cover design that is both pleasing to the eyes and meaningful in its suggestions. Rashmi Hande in Bengaluru has been rendering this loving service to Inner Flame for quite some time now. Our team expresses its appreciation of her voluntary work.

We have a new contributor in this issue – Neerad Trivedi – who delights us with a beautiful piece on two lady-saints of Gujarat – Gangāsati and Pānbāi. Their lives and teachings truly inspire any reader.

A single mantra in the Kathopanishad warns us of serious obstacles to spiritual excellence and I have done some loud thinking on it in my column *Perceiving Phoenix*. Under the feature *Fleeting Moments, Enduring Impressions*, I place before you a memoir of my meetings with Yogi Rām Surat Kumār of Tiruvannāmalai.

Vatsalā Ravikrishnan enlightens us on the holy place Naimishāranya, about which most of us know that it was where great discourses (on scriptures like Shrimad-Bhāgavatam) were given. Her article lets us know many more aspects of this pilgrim centre.

A serene spiritual centre, an hour's drive from Bengaluru airport, is Advaitam. Its founder Swāmi Advaitānanda has an eye for aesthetics and creativity. Please read his short article on Consistency and Creativity.

And friends, before you put this magazine aside, do read the poem, 'The Indispensable Man', under *Rhythms for the Soul*.

We hope you will enjoy the pages of this issue. We wish you good health, all safety and happy times ahead.

Swāmi Chidānanda



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ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

Five Marks of a Wise Person

- Compiled by Neerad Trivedi

India is home to many spiritual masters, saints, mystics and seekers of truth, as also to many religions, languages, cultures and traditions. Our holy land has nurtured masters like Ādi Shankarāchārya, Gautama Buddha, Bhagawān Mahāvīr, Bhagawān Ramana Maharshi, Shri Aurobindo and many others. It is also the birthplace of gems from the *bhakti* tradition, like Mirābai, Āndāl, Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, Sant Tukāram, Tulsidās ji, mystic poets and Bauls.

The sacred land of Gujarat is witness to many amazing poets, mystics and saints. Some of the more popular names are Narasinh Mehta, Jalārām Bāpā, Ranchoddās Bāpu, Srirang Avadhoot, Srimad Rājchandra, Dāsijeevan and more. The woman-saint named Gangāsati - fondly known as 'Saurashtra's Mirā' - and her disciple Pānbāi also hailed from Gujarat. The relatively unexplored beauty of Gangāsati's poetry is like a hidden gem, steeped in the essence of *jnāna*, *bhakti* and *yoga*, in a beautifully interwoven string of 52 bhajans that flowed effortlessly through her.

Our visualization of someone doing *sāadhanā* is usually that of their being seated in *padmāsana* (lotus- pose) with eyes closed, somewhere in the quietude of mountains or near sacred rivers, away from the maddening crowd. Have we

ever imagined that the purest essence of our ancient wisdom could flow like flour coming out of two grinding stones or that cleansing of the inner self may take place while one is fetching water from the well or washing dishes?...or removing ignorance as one would remove the dirt by sweeping and mopping our homes? What if each of our actions represents a yogic approach to life, where weaving *khādi*, planting seeds, breathing, eating, sleeping and all our daily practices are a source of uniting with the divine? How can a simple, informally educated, village girl have answers to life's deepest mysteries? Even more intriguing is her ability to articulate this wisdom, using folklore and through songs with simple lyrics, with only an *ektāra* (one-stringed musical instrument) as her accompaniment and singing to her only disciple Pānbai.

Gangāsati was born in 1846 to a pious Rajput couple – Bhai Shri Jesajisarvaiyya and Rupādibā, in a small village named Rājapara, near the city of Bhavnagar. She grew up normally like any other child. Her parents used to invite many saints and philosophers to their home and she was always glued to them. She learned to read and write at home, as most girls were not sent for formal schooling and were taught to focus on household chores. At 18, she

married Kahadsangh, another Rajput from a nearby town. Kahadsangh was a very pious man and ardent seeker of truth; he later became the greatest source of learning and support for Gangāsati's spiritual growth. In those days, the tradition was that when any Rajput Girasdar was married to another, the bride had a choice to take along one of her aides with her. Gangāsati chose Pānbai to accompany her to her new home. This was the beginning of a relationship – where Pānbai would become her most beloved disciple in the days to come. Such was the trio of Gangāsati, Kahadsangh and Pānbai.

Kahadsangh lived in a large *haveli* and was a highly respected man in his town. Being an ardent seeker, he frequently invited *sādhus*, saints and philosophers to his home. He also hosted a lot of folk singers for *bhajana satsangs*. But his heart remained unsatisfied till he met his Guru. One day, Kahadsangh and his friend went to Girnar in search of a truly attained master. They climbed the hill by a different route and landed in the *ashrama* of Shri Rametvan ji. Even today, on one of the sidewalks of Girnar Hills, you can find the *ashrama*. Rametvan ji accepted Kahadsangh as his disciple and thus began the journey that would shape the lives of this trio. Rametvan ji became a frequent visitor to Kahadsangh's home and would stay for days together. In the Rajput tradition, the women would lift the veil on their head only in front of their husband or a Guru.

Thus, Gangāsati got to directly interact with Rametvan ji and Kahadsangh's unflinching support to her journey was praiseworthy. During her time with her Guru, Gangāsati learnt to read scriptures and other sacred works, biographies of saints, etc.; she learnt *prānāyāma*, breath observation and *yoga sādhanā*. Kahadsangh and Gangāsati walked this beautiful path together and slowly, they fully immersed themselves in the search for truth. It is said that Kahadsangh attained so many *siddhis* that their home became a centre of *bhajan*s and *kirtan*s. Since this started bothering people in the town, they moved to another, much simpler home near their farm where they could strengthen their prayers and practices. Pānbai was not only a witness to what was unfolding but her spiritual life also started shaping under the couple. She would intently listen to their *satsangs*, and manage the household chores so both could focus on their *sādhanā*. Such was her spirit of service. Life was progressing beautifully till the happening of one incident that would change their lives forever.

One day, a poor farmer lost his only milking cow to a sudden illness. As he was sitting and weeping, some villagers decided to make fun of him. They jokingly said, "Go to that Kahadsangh, he'll bring life back into your cow". The poor villager believed them and took the cow to Kahadsangh. He started pleading and crying. Kahadsangh started explaining that this is the way of life and

what is destined will happen. But this man would just not budge and he kept on insisting that his only milking cow be made alive and that only Kahadsangh had the powers to do it. So out of sheer compassion, Kahadsangh said some prayers and sprinkled some water on the cow and the dead cow started breathing and stood up in some time. The farmer thanked him a million times and happily went away with his cow. But Kahadsangh went into a deep state of despair. He quickly realized that he had come in the way of life's natural course. He felt so sad and ashamed that he used his *siddhi* to manipulate life-force and decided to end his life. He decided to take *samādhi*. In Rajput tradition, it was common for women to become 'Sati' or give up their life in the burning pyre of their husband. Gangāsati wanted to follow this practice, only to be restrained by Kahadsangh, who told her that Pānbāi had been such a true friend, disciple and devotee and that it is Gangāsati's duty to take her to the highest paths of wisdom and leave her own body only when Pānbāi has known the truth. So Kahadsangh sat in *samādhi* and on the 6th day, he gave up his body. As promised, Gangāsati started sharing with Pānbāi all her wisdom in the form of one *bhajana* every single day. It is said that for the next 52 days, Gangāsati took Pānbāi under her wing and walked the path to true freedom and on the 52nd day, after the last discourse, she too left the mortal body. It is incredible that all this happened just 125 years ago, although it seems like a centuries-old mythological

story.

Gangāsati has covered the entire spectrum of *jnāna*, *yoga*, *bhakti*, *sāadhanā*, *abhipsā*, *Guru vachana*, preparation for a *sādhaka*, equanimity, pitfalls of *siddhi*, *shabdaturatayoga* and last but not the least, *vachanaviveka*. Such was the magnanimity of her personality, yet she was so humble in her articulation. Using colloquial *kathiawādi* Gujarati as the medium of teaching her beloved disciple, she showered such compassion as to hold her steadfast in her journey towards truth. While it would take an entire book to share Gangāsati's wisdom, here are a select few lines to help us dive deeper into her core messages and bring about different dimensions of the depth of her understanding.

*-meru re dage ne jena man na dage,
mar ne bhāngi re pade brahmānda re.*

*-vipada pade pan valse nahi, e to
harijana na parmān re.*

Gangāsati's words point out our ability to remain steadfast and equanimous at all times. Even if the mountains (Meru) move, in any kind of adversity, in unbelievable earth-shattering situations, one should remain steadfast in his/her mind. That is the proof that God truly resides in our hearts.

Gangāsati also alludes to a much deeper meaning of *sāadhanā*. When a *sādhaka* is in deep *sāadhanā*, many a *yogi* has claimed that the *meru-danda* (spinal cord) goes through a complete transformation giving us the feeling of it shattering into pieces. However, even in

such situations, a *sādhaka* should remain steadfast and equanimous, knowing fully well about its impermanence.

-shilvant sādhu ne varamvārnamiya pānbai, jena badle nahi vratmān re.

-chittani vrutti jeni sadāye nirmala, jene thaiyā meherbāna re.

In the above prose, Gangāsati talks about the qualities of a *Sādhu* or *Guru*. *Sheela*, *samādhi* and *prajñā* are basic tenets of many traditions. Gangāsati says - I bow down to someone who unflinchingly follows his *sheela*, is steadfast in following his vows and is untouched by pride, one whose '*chitta*' (field of awareness) is always flowing with love and on whom god has showered his choicest wishes. The other meaning of '*mahārāja*' is also 'the throne of our highest self' or '*sahasrāra chakra*', or someone who has transcended the worldly desires and stays in the highest truth and is blessed by the constant flow of grace.

-premlakshanā bhakti jene pragati tene, karvāu pade nahi kai re.

-sadguru vacana ni chāyyā padi gai tene, adhadaka prema jagyo ura māye.

Several scriptures speak about *navadhā bhakti* – *shravana*, *kirtana*, *smarana*, *pādasevana*, *archana*, *vandana*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya* and *ātmanivedanam*. Gangāsati makes a very bold statement about the 10th type of *bhakti* namely, *premalakshanā*, i.e., undying love for the divine, as seen in the likes of *Mirābai* and *Shabari*, where they

see the divine in every form and their love for the omnipresent is constantly overflowing in their bosom. A practitioner of such *bhakti* need not do anything. *Sadhguru*'s grace automatically descends on such a blessed one and awakens their heart with love.

-sookshma suvu ne sookshma chālavu ne, sookshma karvo āhāra re.

-shareerani sthiratā mā chitta jenu kāyam ne, vartina dole lagāra re.

Gangāsati not only talks about *tattva jñāna* but also about simple daily practices that help in *sādhanā* - sleep less, eat little and walk (perform *karma*) as much as needed. Further she adds, 'the body is the vehicle for one's mind to remain steadfast, so make this a practice and don't engage in worthless things'. Man gets drawn towards so many things due to lack of control over his senses; however, if we remain alert in holding the steadfastness of our awareness in our body, we will anchor ourselves strongly and not lose our mind over petty things.

-jugati tame jāni lejo, pānbai, medavvo vacana no ektāra.

-vacanaroopi doar mā surata ne bāndho, tyāre mati jashe jama nā māra.

Hold your breath! Gangāsati dives into the deepest exploration of '*ātma darshana*' (To be one with the all-pervading consciousness). She says, 'learn the trick, *Pānbai*, to tune your own self into the Non-dual, all-pervading higher self.' The question is 'how'? We have to dive deeper into some very

fundamental aspects of saint-tradition, Vedanta and Yoga *sādhana*. Let's look at *vacana*. In common parlance, *vacana* is 'promise'; however, as per Gangāsati, it is the eternal truth. When your *jeevātmā* merges with the *paramātmā*, you are truly living your promise. Now, how do you do that? *santa paramparā* or tradition has, since time immemorial, focused on the only constant in a person's life – Breath. The inflow and outflow of breath is constantly guided by *so'ham*. Being completely aware of *so'ham*, if you become fully aware of true self at the level of body, you merge with *jeevātmā*. When that breath, that awareness (at the level of *jeevātmā*) merges with the higher truth (*paramātmā*), you resonate like a single-stringed instrument, the *ektāra*. Gangāsati says, when you do that, even the fear of Lord *Yama* will not bother you.

*-ādi anādi vacana che paripurān,
vacana thi adhika nathi kāi re.*

*-vacana jānya thaki shuddha prema
jāge re, pachi to surata nirguna mā
samāya re.*

Gangāsati further claims that *ādi-anādi*, since time immemorial, *vacana* is and always will be complete. There is nothing more to be attained or achieved. When you really are able to identify with your true self, real love and compassion rises from your heart. It is then that the *surata* – The beautiful trio of breath, *jeevātmā* and *paramātmā* merges into the *nirguna* or formless all-pervading consciousness.

*-vijadi ne camkāre, motidā parovajo
pānbai, achanakandhakār thāshe.*

*-jot jotāmā divāso vayāgayā pānbai,
ekvisa hajār chasso (21600) ne
kadakhashe.*

As the cricketer would, during the slog over, hit a high-flying sixer, Gangāsati hits the ball out of the ground with a message that potentially questions our very ground of our way of life, with this gentle but powerful reminder.

Gangāsati says that, one has only that much time in a lifetime to see our truth, and only in as much light as is available when lightning strikes. In a flash of a few moments of awareness can one pass the thread through the hole of a pearl, which is to signify 'merging with the divine'. She further adds that days pass by so quickly without action and in just passing our time, without meaningful engagement of our minutes, hours and days. Normally, every person breathes about 15 breaths per minute. She uses this to show us that 15 (breaths) x 60 (minutes) x 24 (hours in a day) = 21,600 breaths get consumed by the devil of time. We are constantly reminded that the time is really short and life is unpredictable, so we should make every moment worthy of living.

The saga of Gangāsati can be narrated endlessly. How fortunate we all are, to be born in the same country as her and to be able to get this piece of wisdom, shared in such simple, easy-to-understand poetry. We bow down also to her disciple, Pānbāi, for her *abhīpsā* –



***Gangāsati Ashrama at Sāmadiyada,
Gujarat***

burning desire to know the truth - and for her service to her Gurus. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of

Bhudardas ji without whom we would not have had any records of Gangāsati's timeless *bhajan*s.

Hope this marks the beginning of a journey towards the higher truth, filled with awareness, dedication and surrender.

Ref:

Gangāsati nu adhyatm darshan-
Bhandev ji

Gangāsati and Paanbai- Brahmvedantji
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangāsati>



The free, exploring mind of the
individual human is the most
valuable thing in the world.

-John Steinbeck



- Swāmi Chidānanda



We took a look at the 'ways to rise' in the last article in this column. This time, let us examine the 'ways to fall', so that we can try to avoid these dangerous possibilities.

Bad Habits Prevent Us from Living the Teachings

"Those who have not stopped wrong ways of living cannot attain this liberating wisdom," declares¹ Kathopanishad,



urging us to put an end to any compromise in our life – in thought, word and deed. For example, if we are exploiting any weaker person or less privileged sections of the society for personal gains, we must stop it without any delay. If we are hurting anybody with harsh words or are misleading people with lies, there should be immediate action to desist from such behaviour. Our saying goodbye to bad habits – *manasā, vāchā, karmanā* – is complete when we are careful enough not to entertain sinful thoughts.

Mere Intellectual Activity is a Trap

A lot of Vedānta students (and teachers too) enjoy, on the one hand, the subject of high-level spirituality and go quite deep into the nuances of the different revelations of the scriptures. They are generally game for it, if invited to a vibrant discussion on a topic over a cup of tea. They are willing to participate in seminars, conferences and long retreats too, all related to Vedānta. The tragedy, however, is that a good number of these people are not vigilant enough during their private time. There is a contradiction between their lofty thoughts and actual actions. Philosophically speaking, actions, typically in privacy, that lack virtue, represent strong clinging to either physical comforts or to a certain self-image that the person is used to. Either

way, it is an attachment to the not-self (*anātmā*) and we cannot realize the Self (*ātmā*) if we are tightly holding the not-self. Our intellectual engagements would then be a form of escape – from the sorrow of our inadequate self – and all of it remains in a separate compartment. What we talk does not touch our behaviour. It is then mere intellectual skills or logical abilities, which do not succeed in removing the obstacles to Realization. “This understanding cannot come by through mere logic,” asserts² the Upanishad.



Slavery to Sense Pleasures is a Death Trap

Calling a person ‘lacking in stability’ (*ashānta*), when he (or she) is very attached to the enjoyments of the five sense organs, a mantra says³ that such a weakness will surely come in the way of attaining the true, lasting peace of the Self. Even as a man is trying to contemplate on the wise statements of the Vedānta, according to which he is of the nature of peace, the lingering attachment to worldly pleasures causes a derailment of all spiritual contemplation. The same mantra also highlights the importance of ‘mental

focus’, which is an ability to dwell on the truth of the Upanishads for an extended period of time in a sustained manner. Elsewhere called ‘concentration’ (*ekāgratā*), this is much required in *sādhana*. To have a wandering (*asamāhita*, not collected) mind that easily gets distracted by a sense stimulus or by some memory, would be a terrible pothole to come across during the journey.

Yet Another Subtle Trap

Even those who have successfully steered clear of the three potholes mentioned above, may fail to reach their destination if their mind is hooked on the result of all their spiritual practices. The sages (Rishis) of the Vedānta, in their penetrating understanding of human psychology, maintain that Self-realization requires complete *letting go*. You lose it when you dream of ‘getting’ it; and you get it when you are desireless! The problem with harbouring a desire for success is that such a desire creates a duality; it breathes new life into ‘time’ and it strengthens the ‘separate self’. The craving for success, which is commonly found in mundane endeavours, stretches itself into the spiritual domain also, making spirituality another ‘result-oriented hunting expedition’! As a result, the student ends up as a restless⁴ person. As the student becomes truly mature, she rises above mental unrest and enjoys her meditation without being bothered about reaching anywhere. In thus beholding the beauty of the Pure Self, without wanting to possess it, there is the ending of the self; there is ending of

(psychological) time. Then there is what they popularly call 'living in the present'.

The Means and the End

The Advaita (non-dual) Vedānta points out how, on the high plateau of spiritual practices, the dividing line between the means (*sādhana*) and the end (*sādhya*) vanishes. As the Buddhist nun Ayya Khema titled one of her books, *Being Nobody, Going Nowhere*, the finest spiritual practice is not about achievement or accomplishment. It is not about becoming a superhero of some sort. Rather, it is a wonderful return to our home. Even the slightest disturbance arising in the mind, whereby the finite expresses a desire to transform into the infinite, is a confirmation of ignorance. We are already what we are seeking! "Remembering the Reality consists in staying firmly in It," says⁵ Shri Ramana Maharshi in his great work *Saddarshanam*.

The discovery of the non-dual truth cannot be a gradual process within the parameters of the illusory duality. Time, space and causation are the warp and woof of the dualistic realm. The journey of Self-realization is not a movement in time or space; nor is it a party to any scheme of causes and effects. We may, therefore, call it a sort of *quantum leap*. This is all the more reason for us to maintain that it is a cessation of the false appearance of duality (of the self that perceives and the world that is perceived) that constitutes Realization. This cessation is not on the axis of time, for time is a member of the illusory appearance. In the phenomenal world,

something ends in time giving rise to something else. In contrast, time itself ends here in Realization, uncovering the timeless, ever-present Reality.

Enhanced Awareness is the Key

In summary, we may say that all the 'potholes' mentioned in this article are the marks of dim awareness on the part of the seeker. As her awareness gets brighter, how can she continue at all with her bad habits, whatever they are? How will she use logic, reason and other intellectual processes in a compartmentalized manner, without integrating them into her way of living, without aligning them with the movement of her heart? Enhanced awareness ensures that we do not fall for the petty pleasures of the senses; nor do we shun them. We move on with life, enjoying pleasures and suffering pain as and when they come to us. Call it awareness or intelligence (*prajñā*) - that is the key to focussing where it is required and that is the way to stay away from all rosy visualization of the future.



All kinds of spiritual practices have a place of their own in the scheme of things but all of them are soon seen to be like corollaries, whereas 'watchfulness' is like the theorem. Though the scriptures speak of many approaches to the ultimate goal of human life, these approaches beat a retreat when a seeker reaches the height of gentle awareness, marked by unbiased, unconditioned observation of things inside and outside.

Notes:

- 1 '*nāvirato duscharitād..*' – Kathopanishad, 1.2.24 (Chapter 1, Valli 2, mantra 24)
- 2 '*naishā tarkena matir-āpaneyā*' – Ibid 1.2.9
- 3 '*nāshānto nāsamāhitah*' – Ibid 1.2.24
- 4 '*ashānta-mānasah*' – Ibid 1.2.24
- 5 '*tasya smritih tatra dridhaiva nishthā*' – Saddarshanam, verse 1



A man can be happy, and remain happy if he declines to submit to anything which is likely to disturb his mental equilibrium.

Sri Chandrashekhara Bharati Mahaswamigal



God is like the wish-yielding tree (*kalpataru*) of the celestial world, which gives whatever one asks of it. So one should be careful to give up all worldly desires when one's mind has been purified by religious exercises.

A certain traveller came to a large plain in the course of his travels. As he had been walking in the sun for many hours, he was thoroughly exhausted and heavily perspiring; so he sat down in the shade of a tree to rest a little. Presently he began to think what a comfort it would be if he could but get a soft bed there to sleep on. He was not aware that he was sitting under the celestial tree. As soon as the above thought rose in his mind, he found a nice bed by his side. He felt astonished, but all the same stretched himself on it. Now he thought to himself how pleasant it would be, were a young damsel to come there and gently stroke his legs. No sooner did the thought arise in his mind than he found a young damsel sitting at his feet and stroking his legs. The traveller felt supremely happy. Presently he felt hungry and thought, "I

got whatever I have wished for, could I not then get some food?" Instantly he found various kinds of delicious food spread before him. He at once fell to eating, and having helped himself to his heart's content, stretched himself again on his bed. He now began to revolve in his mind the events of the day. While thus occupied, he thought, "If a tiger should attack me all of a sudden!" In an instant a large tiger jumped on him and broke his neck and began to drink his blood. In this way, the traveller lost his life.

Such is the fate of men in general. If during your meditation you pray for men or money or worldly honours, your desires will no doubt be satisfied to some extent; but, mind you, there is the dread of the tiger behind the gifts you get. Those tigers --- disease, bereavements, loss of honour and wealth, etc., --- are a thousand times more terrible than the live tiger.

(a story from the Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna)



- Compiled by Vatsala Ravikrishnan

One of the fascinating aspects of Sanātana Dharma has been its all-encompassing nature that binds together 'people, places and the planet'. Under 'Places that Beckon', we have been exploring various important shrines and places of pilgrimage and have been highlighting their spiritual significance (as explained through *purānic* folklore, etc.). The compilations under this series and our visits to various shrines may also have enabled us to get a glimpse into certain spiritual disciplines, which when performed with austerity at these shrines, help us in understanding **people** – by discovering ourselves and getting an insight into the minds of others. At the same time, we get an opportunity to truly recognize the importance of these **places** as well as their relevance on this **planet**. Therefore, it is not bewildering to note that in our culture, we pay obeisance to people, rivers, mountains, individual trees and interestingly, even forests. This issue will take us through one such interesting place – **Naimishāranya** - a forest which is considered to be a representation of the deity.

As the name '*aranya*' suggests, this auspicious place is a forestland where 33 crore *devatās*, 3½ crore shrines and 88000 sages reside. The rich mythology of Naimishāranya is believed to have existed from the beginning of the universe. It finds its reference in most of

our scriptures - the *purānas*, the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyana and others.

Etymologically, the word *naimis* has been spelt in two ways - *naimis* and *nimisha* – both names having their own significance.

The Legend associated with the Origin of Naimishāranya

According to the *Vāyu Purāna* and the *Brahmānda Purāna*, when the universe manifested, 88,000 saints and sages went to Lord Brahmā and prayed to Him to reveal to them the ideal place for uninterrupted meditation, where one can get divine knowledge and perform spiritual rites for the welfare of humanity.

Answering their prayers, Lord Brahmā told them that he would send his disc (called *Manomaya Chakra*) which would direct them to the sacred spot. He released his *chakra* and all the saints followed its path. After completing several revolutions around the universe, the *chakra* settled on the banks of Ādi Gangā Gomati. It fell with great force into a *yagnyashālā*, whereby the underworlds were shattered and huge quantities of water gushed up from underneath. Lord Brahmā requested Goddess Shri Lalithā Devi to stop the *chakra*. She did so and thenceforth, settled at this place as Lingadhārini.

Since then, this place, which was surrounded by a forest, came to be

known as Naimishāranya (*Nemi* – the outer rim of the disc). It became the central place for meditation by all the saints and sages. The spot where the *chakra* struck the earth and water springs emerged, came to be known as *Chakrateertha*. The sages performed penance and finally, Lord Vishnu appeared before them and accepted their offerings. Vishnu is considered to be an **aranya-svaroopi**, or in other words, the forest of Naimishāranya is considered as a manifestation of Vishnu and held in reverence and worship. Sadly though, today the forest no longer exists!! Visiting it is like time-travel back to *Satyuga*.

The Varāha Purāna says that it was here that Lord Mahāvishnu killed the demon Durjaya and his entire army of *dānavas* (demons), using His *Sudarshana Chakra*, in one **nimisha** (a minute); hence, the name Naimishāranya. It is also said that when Lord Mahāvishnu killed the demon Gayāsura with his *Sudarshana Chakra*, the demon's body was cut into three parts that fell at three places namely, Pāda Gayā (Gayā Kshetra in Bihar), Nābhi Gayā in Naimishāranya and Kapāli Gayā in Badari Kshetra. Hence, Naimishāranya is also called Nābhi Gayā Kshetra.

The Religious Significance of this Place

It is believed that in the forests of Naimishāranya, Vedavyāsa revealed the four Vedas, eighteen *purānas*, and the six shāstras to the 88,000 Rishis. This is also the place where Srimad Bhāgavatam was revealed.

Shri Rāma performed *Ashwamedha yajna* at this place after killing Rāvana. He also took a holy dip in the *Chakrateertha* to wash away the sins of having killed Rāvana, who was a *brāhmana*. This is also the place where Goddess Seetā Devi was accepted by Mother Earth.

Naimishāranya has been visited by great saints such as Shankarāchārya, Suradāsa, etc. It is also considered to be the place of origin for *Shri Satyanārāyana Vratha Kathā*, which was revealed by Vedavyāsa to Suta, who, in turn, told it to Shaunaka and other Rishis.

The temple of Vishnu is considered to be one of the eight '*swayam-vyakta-kshetras*' – where the idol is self-manifested. A reference to this is found in the literature of the Vaishnava saints of Tamil Nadu. The temple is classified as a *divyadesham* - one of the 108 Vishnu temples that are revered in the Vaishnava canon - in the Nālāyira Divyaprabandham (the repository of 4000 verses of hymns sung in praise of Lord Vishnu by the saints of the 7-9th century in Sangam Tamil Literature).

Places to visit

There are 5 major places that a pilgrim must visit at Naimishāranya.

1. Chakrateertha and the temples surrounding it

This is the core *teertha* at Naimishāranya. It is believed that the holy waters of all the holy places in India are present here at *Chakrateertha*. There are innumerable *teerthas* on the earth but this is considered the first among them all. Taking a holy dip in this *teertha* is regarded as very auspicious, especially

during Somavati Amāvāsyā and Mahākumbha. It is believed to free the devotee of all sins.

It is believed that one can quickly attain *siddhi* at *Chakrateertha*. Offering of *pindas* to one's ancestors, ritual hair-cropping of a child and donating to *brāhmanas* in this place are considered to be most gainfully sacrosanct.



(Chakrateertha)

Chakrateertha is surrounded by a number of small temples, such as the Bhuteshwar Mahādeva temple, Shringi rishi temple, Gokarnanāth temple, Siddhi Vināyaka temple, Chakranārāyana temple and Badri Nārāyana temple.

2. Shri Lalithā Devi temple

Lalithā Devi is the presiding deity of this temple, which is considered as one of the Shakti-peethas. It is said that the heart of Goddess Sati fell here.

3. Vyāsa Gaddi and other temples near Gomati

The typical visualization of Vedavyāsa sitting under a Banyan tree, narrating the Vedas, is much familiar to us. Vyāsa Gaddi is a small temple under a Banyan tree. The tree dates back to the eon ages.

River Ādi Gangā flows close by. A temple dedicated to Satyanārāyana is also located near Vyāsa Gaddi.



Another important folklore associated with this holy place is that life on this earth had its genesis here. It is believed that when Brahmā wanted to create life on this universe, he gave the responsibility to the first couple – Manu and Shatarupā. Manu and Shatarupā did *sāadhanā* at Naimishāranya for a good 23,000 years and finally got the benedictions of Srīman Nārāyana to have him as their son. A special temple dedicated to Manu-Shatarupā is located on the banks of river Gomati.

4. Hanumān Garhi

As the name suggests, this is a temple dedicated to Lord Hanumān. Interestingly, one can notice small figurines of Rāma and Lakshmana, sitting on his shoulders. The story goes that when Rāma and Lakshmana were captured by Ahirāvan during the Rāma-Rāvana war and taken to Pātālaloka, it was Hanuman who brought them back. The temple is located at the place where Hanumān emerged, carrying Rāma and

Lakshmana; it is commonly referred to as 'Hanumān Garhi'.

5. Dadhichi Kunda

The Dadhichi Kunda located in Mishrikh, 9 kms from Naimishāranya, is dedicated to the sage Dadhichi. An interesting *purānic* story is associated with this place.

Indra, the king of the *devās*, was once driven out of *Devaloka* by an *asura* named Vritra. The *asura* was the recipient of a boon whereby he could not be killed by any weapon that was known till the date of his receiving the boon and additionally, that no weapon made of wood or metal could harm him. Indra, who lost all hope of recovering his kingdom, went to seek the aid of Vishnu. Vishnu revealed to Indra that only the weapon made from the bones of the sage Dadhichi would defeat Vritra. Indra and the other *devās* therefore approached the sage, and asked him for his aid in defeating Vritra. Dadhichi acceded to their request but wished that he had time to go on a pilgrimage to all the holy rivers before he gave up his life. Indra then brought together the waters of all the holy rivers to Naimishāranya, thereby allowing the sage to have his wish fulfilled without further loss of time. Dadhichi is then said to have given up his life by the art of yoga, after which the *devās* fashioned the Vajrāyudha from his spine. This weapon was then used to defeat the *asura*, allowing Indra to reclaim his place as the king of *Devaloka*.

It is believed that, before surrendering his body for this sacrifice, the sage

walked around the Naimishāranya Kshetra, performing a holy *parikramā* of 269 km. To commemorate this sacrifice, a large number of pilgrims perform the *parikramā* of Naimishāranya Kshetra every year in the month of *phālgun*. They commence this journey on the new moon day and traversing clockwise on a circular route of 269km in 11 days, finally reach Mishrikh, where, after a 4-day halt, the pilgrimage is concluded. The *parikramā* route defines the sacred ground of Naimishāranya and is protracted in a radius of 16 km from the central point of Naimishāranya. It is believed that one who performs this *parikramā* will not have to come back to this world and will remain in the company of God.

In conclusion, we may say that, for the enlightened as well as the ignorant, the desire for salvation has always been like the North Star. Places like Naimishāranya reiterate this significance and help build the connection between mortals and the Divine. The only regret is that the forestland in *Satyayuga* which was considered as a manifestation of God, has been thoroughly encroached upon in *Kaliyuga*, by mankind, in its greed and in building modern dwellings. The only solace is that, to this day, the sanctity of the place is held in high regard and it continues to stand out as a beacon.

Naimishāranya is located at the junction of the roads from Seetāpur and Khairabad, 20 miles from Seetāpur. It is 24 miles from Sandila railway station, 45 miles north of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.

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Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity...it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.

Melody Beattie



- Swāmi Chidānanda



Many called him 'Visiri Swāmi', with the word '*visiri*' meaning 'a hand fan'. People often found him holding the old-style '*visiri*' wherever he moved. Born in the year 1918 in a village near Ballia, which is not far from Varanasi, Yogi Rām-Surat-Kumār was a saint and mystic. In his childhood, he used to go and meet saints and mystics whenever he got a chance. Sri Khapadia Baba, a mystic monk, advised him to go to the South and be a seeker.

He spent most of his 'post-enlightenment' period in Tiruvannamalai, the small town in Tamil Nadu, known all over the world, thanks to the Ramana Maharshi Ashram. This town is also famous for attracting spiritual seekers worldwide and has had a continuous lineage of enlightened souls. The Yogi acknowledges the contribution of three of the most well-known saints of his time, in his evolution to enlightenment. These individuals were Sri Aurobindo - the founder of

Integral yoga, Ramana Maharshi - one of the 'spiritual supermen' of his time, and Swāmi Rāmdās - Yogi's eventual guru.

My First Encounter

I first saw this Yogi, perhaps in December 1990, when people used to call me Brahmachāri Lokanātha Chaitanya, and I was serving the Chinmaya Mission, Bengaluru, assisting Swāmi Brahmānandaji, mainly in the area of teaching Vedānta and Sanskrit. I had once visited Tiruvannamalai in the previous year with my mother and a few others in the family but wanted to go alone a second time to spend a few days quietly in Shri Ramanāshrama. By chance, I got a golden offer of a ride from Shri Dwaraknath Reddy, who was going from Bengaluru to Tiruvannamalai in his car. His driver, he and I left the city one morning and sped towards the holy town of Lord Arunāchala (Shiva).

In the 8 to 10 days I spent there, staying in a room allotted to me at the Ramana Āshram, I did the several things that every devotee would do. Going around the Hill (giri-pradakshina), visiting the ancient (Arunāchala) temple in the town, meditating at several places in the Āshram, going up to the Skanda Āshram, the Virupāksha Cave, seeing nearby āshramas like the one of Seshādri Swāmi, and spending some time at the Āshram's library. I remember vividly how I felt very sleepy one morning

at 9 am, as I was trying to meditate in the Old Hall but how, when I changed my mind and went to the library, two hours quickly passed as I browsed through many books, several magazines and made notes, etc., without feeling sleepy even for a second! It seemed to me then itself that my *swadharma* was to study and teach, and not yet to meditate much.

That is when some people told me about 'an enlightened saint' living near the ancient temple. I was curious, if not excited, about the prospect of meeting a living saint in this part of the country. So I went one day to have the *darshana* of Yogi Rām Surat Kumār.

Do You Want to Get Mad?

The house where the Yogi was staying was among lots of houses and other buildings on one of the busy, noisy roads just outside the big temple. The surroundings were neither neat nor clean but were alright by Indian standards. I went in with some fruits in hand. The hall where he was sitting was right after the main door. Some 15 to 20 people had surrounded him and, to my surprise, most of the devotees had brought – not sweets or fruits to offer – but packs of one of the strong cigarette brands of that time, called Char Minar! I understood he was not a traditional guru but a mystic with his own unique charm.

To my relief, he was speaking English (and perhaps some Hindi and a little Tamil too). People asked him questions, made submissions and expressed views on a variety of issues. I introduced myself and, when I got a chance to

express a doubt, said, “How do we acquire true detachment (*vairāgya*)?” He laughed loudly as he heard my question. I did not feel embarrassed, as his laughter simply made the atmosphere light.

“This young brahmachāri, this Lokanātha, wants to know how to get *vairāgya*! Look at him!” He said, continuing to laugh. After a minute or two, he said, “*Do you want to get mad?*”

“If you want to get mad,” he continued, “One excellent way is to be in the company of mad people. After sometime, you will also go mad!”

I smiled. Others in the hall also enjoyed the parallel that the Yogi had drawn between ‘company of mad people’ and ‘company of holy men (or women)’ (*satsanga*).

He went on to say, “If you wish, I can recommend some mad people of present times. One is Swāmi Chinmayānanda. A second example is Swāmi Dayānanda!” I felt happy as I had already been in regular touch with the former since (about) September 1980 and had also met the latter several times between 1980 and '84.

There was a little more of light exchanges between the master and all of us, and I think I was with him for about an hour at the most.

The Second Darshana

Time passed and I moved to Mumbai, was the Resident Āchārya of a Vedānta Course between March 1991 and May 1993 at the Sāndhepany Sādhanālaya,

the main *āshrama* of the Chinmaya Mission. Pujya Gurudeva Swāmi Chinmayānandaji had appointed me to the position and he was blessing the whole program by periodic visits. In 1992, all my students and I had the special privilege of listening to his wonderful classes on Viveka Chudāmani for 60 days at Sidhbāri in Himachal Pradesh. In August 1993, Pujya Swamiji attained Mahā-Samādhi, leading to several changes in the organization. I was posted to San Jose in California in November 1993. Upon returning from USA in August 1998, I taught a second bunch of women and men at the Powai Āshram.

In (perhaps) December 2000, I accompanied an NRI Vedānta student to Tiruvannāmalai. He and I spent two days at the Ramanāshrama. When I learnt that a big, new Āshram had come up at a short distance from Ramanāshrama and the saint there was Yogi Rām Surat Kumār, I went there along with the visitor from USA. The now very famous 'Visiri Swāmi' was not at all as accessible as he was ten years ago! We could only see him from a distance of 20 feet, as he sat on a chair. The space around him was barricaded on all sides and nobody else was near him. We bowed down and paid our respects to him while he looked at us and made a gesture of blessing us.

I learnt some years later that the Yogi had left his mortal coils in February 2001.

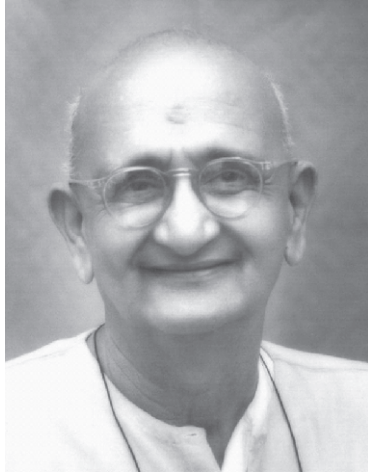
A Little More about Visiri Swāmi

Prof. Makarand Paranjape (the Director of the reputed Indian Institute of

Advanced Study in Shimla, at the time of writing this article, May 2021) wrote about this saint in the magazine *Life Positive* in September 1999: "Yogi Rām Surat Kumār, based at the abode of the great sage Ramana Maharshi, is a rare saint who forces you to look into your innermost being. Seekers across the globe come here and each visit unfolds a different vision. Indeed, it is believed that, at any time, there are at least three living self-realized souls at Tiruvannāmalai, one of them apparently being Rām Surat Kumār, the new yogi of Arunāchala. If you are meeting him for the first time, Rām Surat Kumār usually asks general questions. And he ends the encounter with: My Father blesses you."

Between 1952 and 1959, the Yogi travelled a lot in the country. Shri Aurobindo and Shri Ramana Maharshi, both of whom left their bodies in 1950, had impacted the Yogi tremendously but he was to find his 'guru' in Swāmi (Papa) Rāmdās of Kānhangād. Sri Aurobindo gave him *jnāna*, Sri Ramana Maharshi blessed him with *tapas* and Swāmi Rāmdās gave him the nectar of *bhakti*. Swāmi Rāmdās initiated him into the holy mantra: "Om Sri Rām Jai Rām Jai Rām", by pronouncing it thrice in his ears. Yogi often referred to this instance as his 'death', since from this moment on, his ego no longer existed, and he had a profound spiritual experience.

We learn that devotees and disciples of Yogi increased steadily towards the last ten years of his life. In addition to many from India, he had some



Swāmi Rāmdās (1884 – 1963)

prominent Western students like Lee Lozowick, who founded 'Western Baul' communities in the West, and Krishna Carcelle (Gaurakrishna), who published the Vedāntic monthly magazine 'Rāma Nāma' and created the website of 'Yogi Rām Surat Kumār Bhavan' with the blessings of his Master, and publishes free e-books on the Yogi.

Looking back, I do regard my seeing this saint twice in life as good fortune indeed and I feel blessed to have had a short but sweet exchange of thoughts with the Yogi in my first visit to him.



Opinion is really the lowest form of human knowledge. It requires no accountability, no understanding. The highest form of knowledge is empathy, for it requires us to suspend our egos and live in another's world.

Bill Bullard



- Swāmi Advaitānanda

..Consistency is a pattern. Patterns create rules to be adhered to. This is useful to manage living; else, there will be chaos everywhere. Imagine if there is no consistency on the roads! You need to stick to your lane, be within the speed limits, follow signals, stop and go at designated spots - all these make living easy for everyone around. Society is structured around patterns. But there is no pattern to your inner life. Your thoughts and emotions are not governed by any rules other than those created by you. As long as you don't impose them on others, they affect no one else. But if your thoughts and emotions become a pattern, they bind even you and make you a victim. A consistent thinker becomes a victim of his very thought process. Any emotion you consistently entertain creates a pattern that repeats itself. If you are consistently sorrowful, grief becomes a part of you! Anger

repeated over a period of time makes you angry for no reason! Cultivate joyfulness and you will be happy even in adverse conditions. Patterns repeat themselves. Ironically, consistent thought does not require thinking! It repeats itself in well-formed grooves. Observe closely and you will see that a consistent thinker is trapped by his own thinking. He is a victim of his own thought process. He cannot be creative. Consistency kills creativity. It has no spark to ignite anything new. It conforms to a pattern and feels safe. Creativity is always inconsistent. To be creative, you have to let go of all known patterns. Allow thoughts to play about without approval or denial, let them dance, watch them rise and fall, you will then get to the creative space within you! A space that remains untouched by thought or emotion. A space that makes you almost meditative.....



What do we learn from
the Upanishads?

When is our Life Truly Fulfilled?

- Swāmi Chidānanda

Gain and loss, success and failure, health and sickness, etc.,
– a million things like them – happen in
our life. After all that, we die one day. What can bring true fulfillment to us?
What makes our life really meaningful?

It is Self-knowledge (*ātma-jnāna*), the Upanishads say uncompromisingly.
There is true fulfillment if we know the Self in this life.
Great is the loss if we do not gain this liberating insight in this life.

*iha ched-avedeet, atha satyam-asti
na ched-ihāvedeet, mahatee vinashtih*

Kena Upanishad, 2.5
(Khanda 2, mantra 5)

[The mantra highlights the urgency of Self-knowledge.]



A seed grows with no sound, but a tree falls
with huge noise. Destruction has noise, but
creation is quiet. This is the power of
silence.... Grow silently.

Author unknown



- Swāmi Akhandānanda Saraswati Mahārāj

To remain idle is to identify with insentience, thus becoming insentient itself. Laziness, sleep and negligence are characteristic of *tamoguna* (the inertia). Consciousness and bliss - both get hidden in it. By performing action, both are clearly manifested. Performance of a prohibited action is a sign of unbridled desires. Such activities are a result of acute lust, anger, greed, or infatuation. Religion is required to control such *vāsanās* or desires in life. *Dharma* or law of righteousness means control or power to stop the activities of the mind and the senses. *Dharma* is able to provide guidance in matters of transactions, actions, speech and enjoyment in life.

To obey order, is *dharma* and to disobey is *adharma*. Our life is filled with strength when firm decisions are taken in accordance with religious scriptures.

Obeying the commands controls our *vāsanās* (latent desires). In case *dharma* is followed to fulfill any particular desire, then the desired object becomes primary and *dharma* is reduced to an insignificant position. A person filled with desires is like an impoverished, filthy beggar.

Selfless actions bring about the purification of the inner instrument, the mind. Once the mind is pure, either one goes into the state of *samādhi* (superconscious state) or begins the process of Self-enquiry. The effulgence of the purity of mind results in introspection of thoughts. It is such an effulgent mind that can clearly perceive the presence and the absence of the world of duality. Moreover, one gets the knowledge of the non-dual *ātmā* which is the sole Reality.

Thus by avoiding inaction, abandoning the prohibited actions, extinguishing all the desires and with constant contemplation of the Self, one is able to pursue the main goal of life.

Contemplation of Self is no way in contradiction with the empirical transactions of life. Self-contemplation can go hand in hand with selfless behavior.

It is impossible to eliminate the feeling of being impure, pitiable and sullied without the contemplation of the *ātmā*. The agitation of the mind, miseries and foolishness too will continue to remain. One should, therefore, be vigilant.



Subhāshita

अकृत्वा परसन्तापम् अगत्वा खलनम्रताम् ।
अनुत्सृज्य सतां मार्गं यत् स्वल्पमपि तद्बहु ॥

Even a little is a lot when one does not cause misery to others,
does not pose false politeness,
and does not deviate from the way of the virtuous.



Being yourself is the most daring job
in this world.

-Selma Raj



- Ishwarya Chaitanya

This externally enforced self-isolation has put quite a few of us in a state of panic and despair. What to do with all this time? In certain parts of the world, online shopping services are still available and people can retain a sense of normalcy. What about those of us for whom this is no longer an option? What about places where home delivery is not an option as all efforts are being put to curb Corona's spread?

Those who were used to going to the gym now have to make do with home workouts without the expensive equipment. In some places, the police are belting those seen out on the streets without a purpose. Let's face it. Some of us have never been alone and feel totally lost. Some of us do not have the luxury of large apartments or homes where we have space to run around, jump around, stomp our feet in frustration or ecstatic dance (as there are people living below). There are no libraries nearby, or no habit of reading, in the first place. Some of us barely have space to roll out a yoga mat or God forbid: slow internet! We are truly in a fix.

Are we? Being left with next to nothing in an almost apocalyptic situation, is a true blessing in disguise. Being forced to look at yourself could be God's greatest gift to you. When you have nothing, you have everything to gain. And this is the time you can gain

the ultimate: self-love, self-acceptance, best friendship with yourself, despite what's happening around you. Perhaps for the first time, you know for sure that you are not alone.

Why is there so much restlessness in being alone?

Whom are you trying to get away from, while watching TV, reading a book, 'doing' yoga or hanging out with friends? Why so much disdain that there is a constant need to 'improve', experience new people and places and 'become better' in whatever sense of the term? Why this innate dissatisfaction, constant self-judgement and a need to engage in activity that helps you forget yourself and the problems you think you have? Why this chase for something other than what you have or who you are at present?

I'm not saying that we should not practise yoga or travel or experience new things (I pretty much do only this). I'm questioning the motive behind it. We spend our entire lives inside this body, yet our every action seems to take us away from being with the indweller of this body.

If boundless in nature, freedom, then, cannot lie in just being able to do what you want to do. It involves being free, no matter what the internal or external circumstances. In true freedom, neither the shape or the condition of your body, nor the changing state of your

mind, nor external circumstances would matter. Freedom implies total acceptance of the present, the ability to let go of the past and being able to give in to the winds of change without personal agenda. This is not apathy or complacency. It is the acknowledgement of the supremacy of life as a whole, that is not just a sum of the parts that we can cognize.

Darker than Corona are our thoughts about ourselves. We have now, as a species, been placed at a gateway of discovery. Will you step through the door and go on this adventure into the unknown? What is there to fear when there's nothing to lose and everything to gain?



(Ishwarya Chaitanya
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she has been living more in India,
based in Bengaluru.)*



We need time for pondering life's deeper questions, instead of always making money or making things. We need time simply to be quiet now and then: time to reflect on what we are doing, what we value, how we are spending our lives.

So 'slowing down' is not the goal; it is the means to an end. The goal is 'living in freedom' – freedom from the pressures of hurry, from the distractions that fragment our time and creativity and love. Ultimately, it means living at the deepest level of our awareness.

**– Eknath Easwaran,
from the Blue Mountain Journal, Spring 2014**



- Saxon White Kessinger

Sometime when you're feeling important,
Sometime when your ego's in bloom
Sometime when you take it for granted
You're the best qualified in the room,

Sometime when you feel that your going
Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow these simple instructions
And see how they humble your soul;

Take a bucket and fill it with water
Put your hand in it up to the wrist,
Pull it out and the hole that's remaining
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.

You can splash all you wish when you enter,
You may stir up the water galore,
But stop and you'll find that in no time
It looks quite the same as before.

The moral of this quaint example
Is do just the best that you can,
Be proud of yourself but remember,
There's no indispensable man.



ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

FIVE MARKS OF A WISE PERSON



क्षिप्रं विजानाति चिरं शृणोति
विज्ञाय चार्थं भजते न कामात्।
नासंपृष्टो व्युपयुंक्ते परार्थे
तत्प्रज्ञानं प्रथमं पण्डितस्य ॥

*kshipram vijānāti chiram śrṇoti
vijñāya cārtham bhajate, na kāmāt
nāsampṛshto vyupayunkte parārthe
tat prajñānam prathamam panditasya*

A wise man (or lady) grasps the essence of a subject in no time; he (or She) listens attentively, acts firmly with discretion and does not act by mere emotion. Without being requested, he (or she) never utters an irrelevant word or tenders an opinion about others. These are the foremost marks of being wise.

Vidura-Neeti, chapter 1, verse 27

{In 592 verses spread over 8 chapters of the Udyoga Parva, also called Prajāgara Parva, of the Mahābhārata, the wise counsellor Vidura instructs King Dhritarāshtra on a wide spectrum of topics of both general interest and special importance to rulers and administrators. The above is a selection from more than 16 verses on the characteristics of a wise man (or woman).}

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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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