

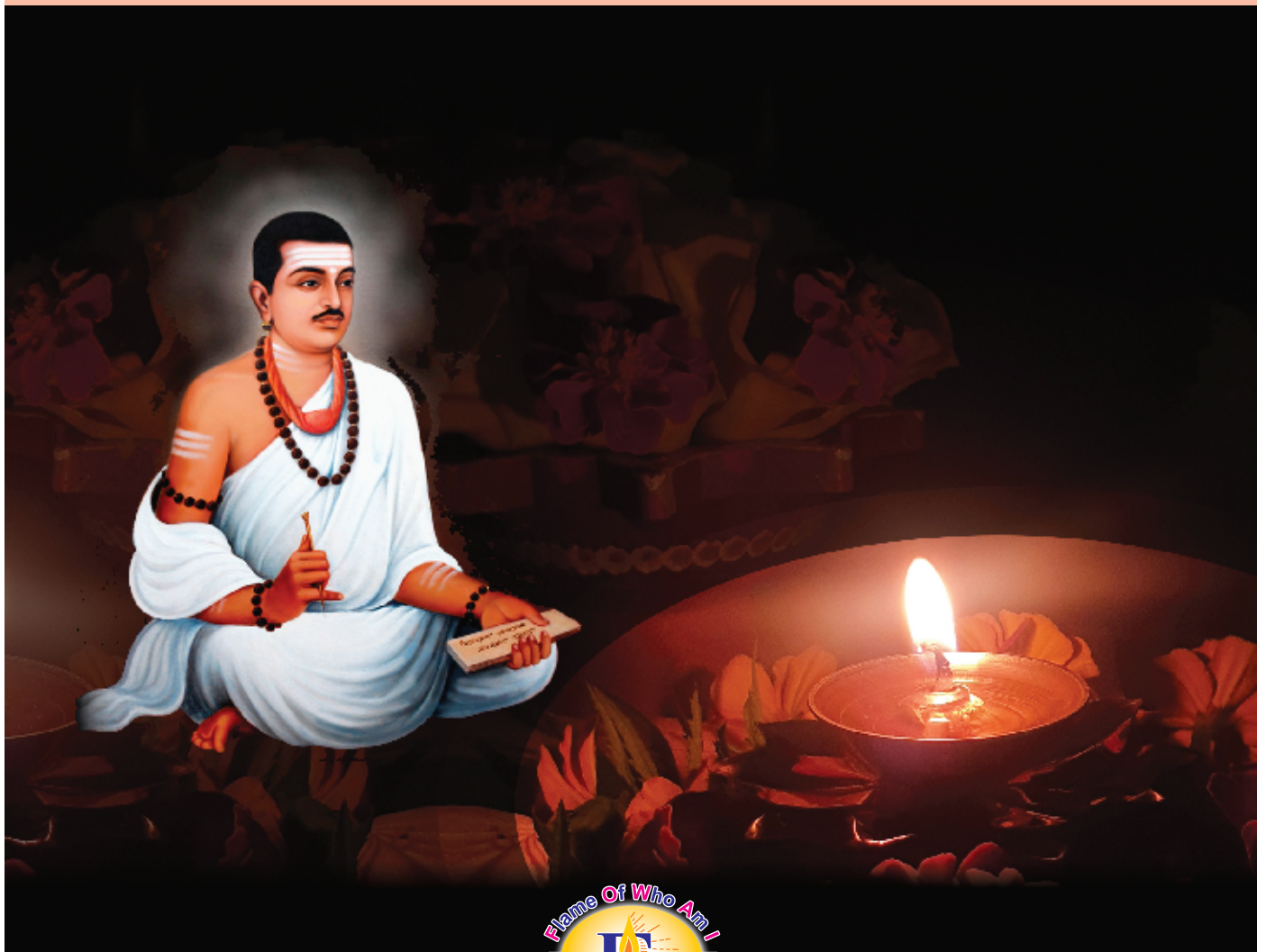
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Inner Flame

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Whenever people lose sight of the underlying meaning of religious practices, the practices tend to degenerate into a mechanical performance of rituals. In such a scenario, the time is ripe for the birth of a new perspective and its growth into a whole new thought process that throws fresh light upon the eternal truths. The *Bhakti* movement that gained prominence in South India from the 7th Century onwards, was one such development, and Basavanna was one of its brightest stars. He was a poet, able administrator and passionate social reformer. He established a new sect called 'Lingāyat' that focussed on worshipping Lord Shiva, while seeking to remove the prevalent caste-based inequities. We bring you his inspiring life story.

For individuals and for organisations, choosing 'what to do' and 'what not to do' lies at the very heart of effectiveness. The subtle forces of desire and fear influence effectiveness by driving our own likes and dislikes which, in turn, shape our thinking about the actions we undertake. In his featured article, Swāmi Chidānanda illustrates this wonderful insight with the verses of the Bhagavadgeetā.

In our section '*Places that Beckon*', we take you to the temple city of Lepākshi, the cultural landmark in South India, dotted with many architectural marvels. Located at the border of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, this hidden gem is a 'must-visit' place for all lovers of art, culture and history.

We also have charming little stories about the masters, Lord Buddha and the Paramahansa Ramakrishna, which unravel little pearls of spiritual wisdom.

Hope all these serve to cheer you up in your own inward journey to know oneself, as that is the sole underlying purpose of our existence in this world of myriad distractions.

Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd)

- For Swāmi Chidānanda



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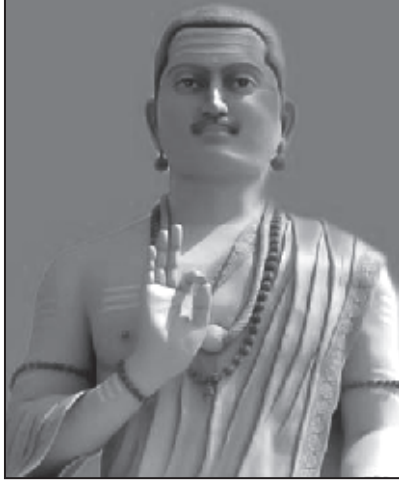
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Basava, also known as Basavanna (1106–1167) was a philosopher and social reformer, who fought against social evils of his time, such as the caste system and the ritual practices of Hinduism. His teachings and philosophy transcend all boundaries, and address the universal and the eternal. Basava was a great humanitarian, who advocated a new way of life, in which the divine experience was at the centre of life, where caste, gender and social distinctions carried no special importance. The cornerstone of his movement was the firm monotheistic belief in God as the absolute and universal supreme Self, identified as Lord Shiva, and the equality and dignity of all individual beings, irrespective of their social status and gender.

A true visionary, who was born ahead of his time, he envisioned a society based

on sound religious, moral and spiritual values, encompassing one and all. Besides serving the people as a great reformer and mystic, he also served as the Prime Minister of the Southern Kalachuri Empire in South India, and started a literary revolution by introducing *Vachana Sāhitya* (Lit. *vachana* = sayings). More on *vachana* below.

Basava is said to have been a mystic by temperament, an idealist by choice, a statesman by profession, a man of letters by taste, a humanist by sympathy, and a social reformer by conviction. Many great yogis and mystics of the time joined his movement, enriching it with the essence of divine experience in the form of *vachanas* that define a new way of looking at God and life. Basava's path later gave birth to a new tradition (*sampradāya*), which became popular in the south as the Lingāvanta Dharma or Lingāyata movement. Other synonyms for Lingāyata are Basava Dharma, Sharana Dharma, Vachana Dharma.

His life and work

Basavanna was born in the year 1106 into a Shaivite Kamme Brahmin family in the small town of Ingaleshwar (Bagewadi) in the Bijapur district of northern Karnataka. He grew up in a strict, religious household, where he was made to wear a sacred thread known as the *janivara*, which he did not accept. He

rejected both the traditional Sanskrit scriptures and the prevailing Hindu rituals. At an early age, he left Bagewadi and spent the next 12 years studying at Sangameshwara, at the then-Shaivite stronghold of Kudala Sangama. There, he conversed with scholars and developed his spiritual and religious views in association with his societal understanding. His Guru was *Jātaveda Muni*, also known as *eeshānya guru*. He believed in one true and perfect God and campaigned aggressively against untouchability, superstition, temple rituals and the dominance of the priestly class. He believed that people should be shown the right way to reach God, and preached equality of all people and castes. For his revolutionary work and exceptional ideas, he earned great recognition in the 12th-century Hindu society.

Basavanna started his career as an accountant at Mangalaveda in the court of Kalachuri king Bijjala, a feudatory of the Kalyāni Chalukya. When Bijjala acquired power at Kalyāna, by overpowering Tailapa IV (the grandson of Vikramaditya VI, the great Chalukya king), Basavanna also went to Kalyāna. With his honesty, hard work and visionary mission, Basava rose to the position of Prime Minister in the court of king Bijjala, who ruled from 1162—1167 at Kalyāna (presently renamed as Basavakalyāna). There, he established the *Anubhava Mantapa*, a spiritual parliament to openly discuss *lingāyatism*, which attracted many saints from all over India. He believed in the

principle *kāyakave kailāsa* (work puts you on the path to heaven, work is heaven). It was at this time that the *vachanas*, simple and easy-to-understand poetic writings with essential teachings, such as the following, were written.

The power of knowledge destroys ignorance;

The power of light dissipates darkness;

The power of truth is foe of all untruths;

The sharana's experience of god is the sole cure of worldliness.

- Kudala Sangamadeva

*Don't rob, don't kill, never ever lie,
don't get angry, don't think negative
about others.*

*Don't self-describe, don't tease others:
this is the way of self-respect, this is
the way to get respected by the world.*

*This is the way of impressing my Lord.
- Kudala Sangamadeva.*

Through his revolutionary ideas and actions against social evils, Basava stirred a lot of controversy. By allowing untouchables to have lunch with him, and praising a marriage between a Brahmin woman and an untouchable man, he invoked the ire of the orthodox members of society, who appealed to King Bijjala with complaints, allegations and accusations. The king did not want to offend the orthodox members of society and invoke their displeasure. So, he ordered the newly married couple to be harshly punished. Before punishing them, he asked Basava to agree with the caste system. But Basava did not relent. He believed that the married couple were

lingāyats, and the rules of the caste system were not applicable to them. The king was not pleased with his argument, and proceeded to punish the couple. After that unpleasant event, Basavanna left Kalyāna in 1196 with a heavy heart and marched towards Kudala Sangama. On the way, he preached to the people about humanity, morality, honesty, equality, individuality, simplicity and the dignity of labour. On the 30th of July in the same year, he left the earthly body and became liberated.

His philosophy

Basava said that the roots of social life are embedded, not in the cream of society, but in the scum of society. His witty way of saying it was that the cow does not give milk to the person who sits on its back, but to the one who squats at its feet. With his wide sympathy, he admitted the high and the low alike into his fold. The *Anubhava Mantapa*, or the religious parliament established by Basava, laid down the foundation of social democracy. Basava believed that man becomes great, not by his birth, but by his worth to society. He believed in the dignity of man and the belief that a common man was as good as a man of status. He proclaimed that all members of the state were labourers, equating the intellectual labourers socially with the manual labourers. He set an example by practising the ideals he preached, and followed a rigid discipline. He emphasized the importance of self-purification, and tried to raise the moral standards of people in society. He also taught the dignity of manual labour,

declaring work as worship. He insisted that every type of manual labour, including those menial tasks which were held in contempt by people, should be looked upon with love and reverence.

With his views on dignity of work and equality of people, he formed committees for various vocations such as agriculture, horticulture, tailoring, weaving, dyeing, and carpentry. People from all vocations and walks of life participated in them and contributed their ideas for social, moral and economic growth and welfare. There were women followers such as Satyakka, Ramavve, and Somavve with their respective vocations. Some of them composed their own *vachanas*, expressing the philosophy of Basava.

The movement, initiated by Basava through *Anubhava Mantapa*, became the basis of a sect of love and faith. It gave rise to a system of ethics and education, at once simple and exalted. It sought to inspire ideals of social and religious freedom, such as no previous faith of India had done. During times which were characterized by inter-communal jealousy, it helped by shedding a ray of light and faith in the homes and hearts of people. But the spirit soon disappeared after the inter-caste marriage that Basava facilitated ended abruptly, when the couple was punished for the same by the king. The dream of the classless society was shaken. Basava soon realised the bleak picture and left for Kudala Sangama and a year later, he died. Many believe that it was through self-annihilation, because

of the agony caused by his failure. He is considered to have established the *lingāyat* sect, though some scholars believe that he furthered an already-existing creed.

The Lingāyat sect

The *lingāyats* are strict monotheists. They enjoin the worship of only one God, namely *linga* (Shiva). They believe that the human body is a temple. In addition, they have continued to build community halls, and have diligently carried forward the *Shaiva* temple tradition of South India. Their temples include Shiva *linga* in the sanctum, a sitting Nandi facing the *linga*, with *mandapa* and other features. The followers of *lingāyat* tradition state that they do not accept the caste system of Hinduism. The *vachanas* of the *lingāyat* saints affirm their faith only in Shiva and show a clear rejection of polytheism. The *lingāyats* bury their dead, with the corpse seated cross-legged in the grave. Funeral rites end when the mourners return home and take purifying baths. They believe in *Bayalu Siddhānta* (void), consider that God lives in the body, and that, after death, the human merges in the Ultimate. So, there is no rebirth, no *naraka* (hell), no *swarga* (heaven). A break-away sect of *lingāyatism* is that of *veerashaivas*. The *veerashaivas* follow more Vedic and Hinduised versions, while *lingāyats* are non-Vedic, non-*āgāmic* and egalitarian people.

Vachanas

Basavanna used his poetry, known as *vachanas*, to raise societal consciousness. Gender or social



The Bust of Basavanna on the banks of River Thames in London

discrimination, superstitions and rituals were all rejected by him. Basavanna is credited with several major *lingāyat* works, including *vachanas*, such as the *shat-sthala-vachana*, *kāla-jnāna-vachana*, *mantra-gopya*, *ghatnā chakra-vachana*, and *rāja-yoga-vachana*. His trinity consisted of *guru* (teacher), *linga* (personal symbol of Shiva) and *jangama* (constantly moving and learning).

Vachana literally means 'that which is said'. The *vachanas* are rhythmic writing in Kannada, composed and used by the *sharanas*, to build an egalitarian society. They were composed in simple language, targeting the common man. They brought awareness about the simplicity of life and religion to the people. *Vachanas* ended with one or the other local names by which Shiva is invoked or worshipped. In style, they are epigrammatical. A recurring contrast in his poems and ideas is that of *sthāvara* (whatever is static or standing) and *jangama* (whatever is moving or seeking). Temples and ancient books represented the former, while work and discussion represented the latter.

*The rich will make temples for Shiva,
What shall I, a poor man do?*

*My legs are like pillars, the body the
shrine,*

The head, a cupola of gold.

*Listen, O Lord of the meeting rivers
[Shiva],*

*Ten things, standing, shall fall, but the
moving shall ever stay.*

Basavanna 820, Translated by
Ramanujan

*How can I feel right about a god, who
eats up lacquer and melts,
who wilts when he sees a fire?*

*How can I feel right about gods you sell in
your need, and gods you bury for fear of
thieves?*

*The lord Kudalasangama, self-born, one
with himself, he alone is the true God.*

Basavanna 558, Translated by
Ramanujan

Also known as *vachana s̄ahitya* in Kannada poetry, this rhythmic composition originated in the eleventh century and thrived throughout the twelfth century, as an element of the *sharana* movement.

Basavanna's Socio-Political Contributions

Equality: Regardless of caste, Basava thought that all people were formed as equals. To combat caste, class and gender inequality, Basavanna joined forces with several other followers.

Women's empowerment and respect towards women: One of his numerous contributions to the renewal of today's

tradition-bound society was his recognition of women's identity and rights. There is no denying that 'a society's view of women's status' is a key indicator of its level of culture. In seven *vachanas*, Basavanna describes how women should be looked upon. In all these *vachanas*, Basavanna emphasizes to his followers that it is wrong to want the wife of another man, and that it is even worse to view a woman as anything other than a sister or mother. As a result, he creates a set of guidelines for his adherents.

Veerashaiva movement: Basavanna was a strong proponent of social change. He advanced to become the movement's leader for *veerashaiva*. He established a cult that is still well-known today. The previous class of priests was eliminated. The mass dissemination of the ultimate truth was decided upon, using the local language. It gave women a significant place in social and religious life. It gave everyone, regardless of wealth or poverty, a single ideal for realization.

Anubhava Mantapa: Basavanna firmly believed in the idea of a caste-free society, where everyone had an equal opportunity to succeed. He founded the *Anubhava Mantapa*, a *lingāyata* academy of mystics, saints and philosophers, to accomplish the noble goal. It acted as a clearinghouse for ideas regarding universal human values and ethics. *Anubhava Mantapa* has been referred to as 'The First Religious Parliament of the World' by the late Dr S. Radhakrishnan, a prominent

philosopher and former President of India.

Promoted inter-caste marriages: The social revolution of the twelfth century reached its pinnacle with the union of a Brahmin woman and an outcaste (Harijan), a cobbler's son.

Pioneer of Democracy: Basavanna's strong and ultimate goal was to establish a democratic social structure.



The huge statue of Basavanna near Gadag, Karnataka

Gender equality: According to Basavanna, in the early Vedic era, men and women had equal rights. The wife and husband were regarded as being on an equal footing, and shared in all social and religious obligations.

Promotion of local language: The people's local language should be used as the medium for delivering secular and spiritual education.

Opposition to the caste system: He strongly opposed the caste system and the idea that some communities were superior to others, and he rid his associates of any sense of superiority or inferiority complexes.

Dignity of labour: He claimed that work is worship. He argued that all manual labour should be viewed with love and regard, even the work that people usually looked down upon.

Compassion: For Basava, compassion was not built on faith, but it was supported by reason and science.

Against renunciation: Renunciation and dwelling in the forest are ruled out as cowardly tendencies to escape from life. Reasoning and experience are the only guiding lights for free thinking and spiritual advancement.

Non-Violence: As a major proponent of *ahimsā* (non-violence), he strongly opposed human and animal sacrifices. The legacy of Basava and his contemporaries, the '*sharanas*' (commoners, who attained self-realization via Lord Basava's divine guidance and grace), is undoubtedly a live tradition that can still motivate a community even nine centuries later.

Today, the vitality of that tradition and its attractiveness are primarily due to the fusion of real spirituality and social awareness. In 2023, Basavanna Jayanti was celebrated on Sunday, 23rd April. His *samādhi* is located in Bagalkot district, Karnataka.

Sources:

A portion of the above article is written by Remya, who adapted it, with necessary changes, from an article on Basavanna from Wikipedia.org

<https://www.clearies.com/basavanna/>

<https://allsaivism.com/articles/basava.aspx>



- Swāmi Chidānanda



Many a time, we are not at all aware as to how much we are enslaved by our likes and dislikes – *rāga and dvesha*. These are the culprits, causing a lot of disorder in our

life and lifestyle. These attachments and aversions, though not intrinsic to us at a deep level, rule the roost. In simple terms, they make us do what should not be done, and prevent us from doing what should be done. These mental conditionings take complete control of our choices in day-to-day life.

Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj rightly points out, “Two forces govern our life: desire and fear. Desire is the memory of pleasure enjoyed, and fear is the memory of pain suffered!” We can easily see that likes and dislikes are closely connected to desire and fear. This pair of forces jeopardizes the balance in our way of living. They foster *adharma* (wrong ways) and damage *dharma* (right ways).

Geetā's Loving Advice

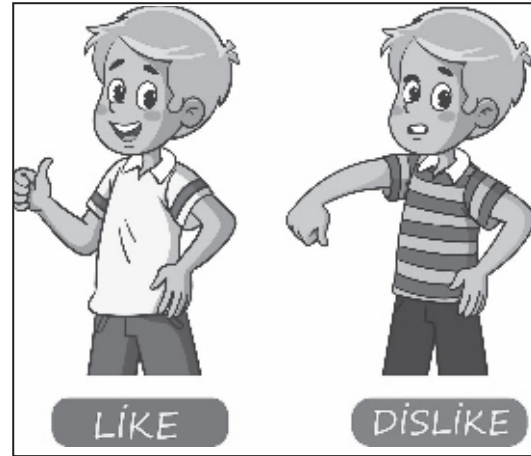
In a verse that can help us a lot in our efforts to bring our life back to

righteousness, Lord Shri Krishna praises such work as the best (*sāttvika*), where we do what is to be done.

Doing things, seeing them as ‘things to be done,’

*Putting aside false attachments,
Warding off desires for gratifications,
Is the best of actions, O Arjuna! (Geetā 18.9)*

Enormous are the benefits of following this advice. Likes and dislikes come in the way of right living, and cripple us in ways that we cannot imagine. Once we value the advice as above, we begin to assert our *sense of duty (kartavya-prajñā)*, and stand guard against the debilitating influence of attachments and



aversions. The word ‘*kāryam*’ is a sweet one; all that it means is ‘*this needs to be done*’. Upon recognizing that a certain

piece of work *needs to be done*, can we not gather all our energies and resources to focus on that *duty*, to the exclusion of a dozen other thoughts that are prompted by desires and fears?

An old verse (*subhāshita*) says², “Do not do *what is not to be done*, even if life is at stake; do *what is to be done*, even if life is at stake.” The verse emphasizes commitment to duty in very strong terms, and discourages us from wasteful engagements, in equally strong terms. Most human beings, alas, are fickle in their minds. There was an office where the efficiency was very low. The head of the organization engaged a consultancy firm to find out the reasons for the poor functioning of the office. A team came to observe how the office ran. They wrote just one sentence in their summary report: “The only problem with this office is that everybody is busy with a lot of things that are different from what is expected of them!”

We must introspect and find out if we are like the staff of that unenviable office. Do we make a great list of things to be done, but spend all our time, every day, with things extraneous to that list? Are various temptations, distractions, personal interests, etc., so strong, that we easily throw our duties out of our in-tray and fill it with many substitutes? Do we have the bad habit of not liking ‘our business’ and of falling in love with ‘what is none of our business’? Do we have, strangely enough, an allergy to living in a disciplined way, and an inexplicable affinity to living in a haphazard manner? Do we suffer from some psychological

disorder where one part of our mind loudly says, “Do this”, and, at the same time, another part of our own mind decides to ‘do that’?

Geetā, the Medicine for Mental Problems

People have a misconception that topics like heaven and hell, merit and sin, soul, God, etc., are what Geetā is all about. While these words and topics do find a place in the teachings of the Geetā, the essential teachings of the holy work have much to do with the integration of the human personality. No wonder, Pujya Swāmi Chinmayānandaji gave 114 radio talks on Geetā, perhaps in the 1970s, which later came out in the form of a book titled, ‘The Art of Man-Making’. Studied especially by tens of thousands of young women and men around the world, this book is a handbook that guides us in self-management. Much of the themes he covers in the book, deal with psychological corrections. He once said, in a way that seems to downplay yoga, “I do not believe in bending my body; I believe in straightening my mind!” Two masters who taught him all the spirituality – Swāmi Shivānanda and Swāmi Tapovanam – were both into yoga, where physical postures (*āsanas*) and breathing exercises (*prānāyāma*) are very much a part of the system. Therefore, we are not to misunderstand Swamiji’s words as any form of disapproval of Patanjali’s Yoga. At the most, he only meant he was passionately following the path of Jnana-Yoga, where the emphasis is on the study of Vedānta, reflecting upon it and acting upon the

wiser understanding that arises from the study.

For reasons known or unknown, we tend to have false values guiding our thinking. We may, for example, undervalue honesty, hard work and service-mindedness. With much logical neatness, the Vedānta and its allied literature can convince us that noble values and higher work ethics can not only reward us with greater success in all



that we do, but also bless us with deeper and long-lasting satisfaction with the whole of our life. What is more, we will understand that 'being good human beings' is far more necessary and important than acquiring wealth or fame. We will realize the importance of good physical and mental health. In a proper study of the Geetā, we cannot but develop an enhanced appreciation of the need to develop emotional intelligence.

Therefore, Do Your Duty First

All philosophy will be in vain, if we do not develop the ability to stay duty-conscious. Not doing our duty ('*kārya*' in the verse of the Geetā that is the basic

inspiration for this article) creates guilt, shame, lack of self-confidence and many other negativities. Proper performance of our duty fills us with satisfaction, good self-esteem and the enhanced ability to deal with new challenges. Commitment to duty is an important aspect of 'purity of heart' (*chitta-shuddhi*) that Vedānta works talk a lot about. If any of us is tired of doing our duties, the good news for them is that, as we perform our duties with promptness and do it all as an offering to God, our duties magically become less! That is because, from a higher philosophical perspective, duties are dependent on our mindset. *Karmayoga* brings about such dramatic changes in our mindset, that a lot of things that looked like our bounden duty at one time, will be discovered to be 'not really our work.' We can then easily move to higher planes of life, marked by divine contemplation, not shackled by too much work.

May we gain insights into Shri Krishna's teachings and vertically move upwards to higher planes of consciousness. *Harih Om!*

Notes:

1 *kāryam-ityeva yat-karma niyatam kriyate' rjuna*

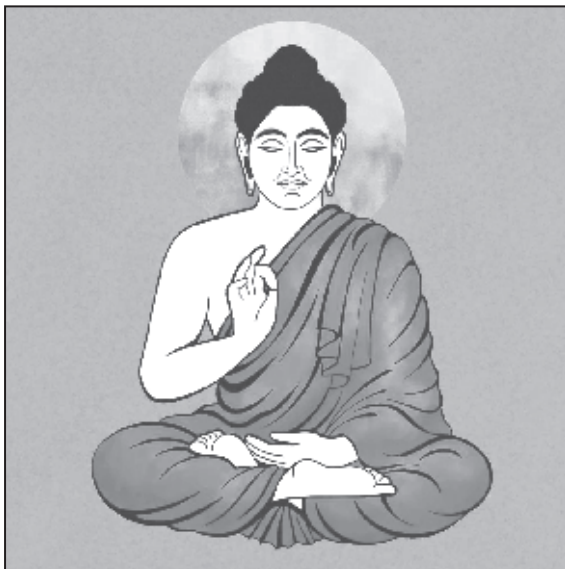
sangam tyaktvā phalam chaiva sa tyāgah sāttviko matah | Geetā 18.9 |

2 *akartavyam na kartavyam prānaih kantha-gatair-api*

kartavyam-eva kartavyam prānaih kantha-gatair-api | Subhāshita |



- As narrated by OSHO



Gautama Buddha comes into a town. The whole town has gathered to listen to him, but he goes on waiting, looking back at the road — because a small girl, not more than thirteen years old, has met him on the road and told him, “Wait for me. I am going to give this food to my father at the farm, but I will be back in time. But don’t forget, wait for me.”

Finally, the elders of the town say to Gautama Buddha, “For whom are you waiting? Everybody important is present; you can start your discourse.”

Buddha says, “But the person for whom I have come so far, is not yet present, and I have to wait.”

Finally, the girl arrives and she says, “I am a little late, but you kept your promise. I knew you would keep the

promise, you had to keep the promise, because I have been waiting for you since I became aware... maybe I was four years old when I heard your name. Just the name, and something started ringing a bell in my heart. And since then, it has been so long — ten years maybe — that I have been waiting.”

And Buddha says, “You have not been waiting uselessly. You are the person who has been attracting me to this village.”

And he speaks, and that girl is the only one who comes to him: “Initiate me. I have waited enough, and now I want to be with you.”

Buddha says, “You have to be with me, because your town is so far, off the way, that I cannot come again and again. The road is long, and I am getting old.”

In that whole town, not a single person came up to be initiated into meditation — only that small girl.

In the night when they were going to sleep, Buddha’s chief disciple Ananda asked, “Before you go to sleep, I want to ask you one question: do you feel a certain pull towards a certain space — just like a magnetic pull?”

And Buddha said, “You are right. That’s how I decide my journeys. When I feel that somebody is thirsty — so thirsty that without me, there is no way for the person — I have to move in that

direction.”

The master moves towards the disciple.
The disciple moves towards the master.

Sooner or later, they are going to meet.

The meeting is not of the body,
the meeting is not of the mind. The
meeting is of the very soul — as if,

suddenly, you bring two lamps close to
each other; the lamps remain separate,
but their flames become one. Between
two bodies, when the soul is one, it is
very difficult to say that it is a relationship.
It is not, but there is no other word;
language is really poor.

It is ‘at-oneness’.



Bring your attention to your breathing and realise that you are not doing it. It is the breath of nature. You reconnect with nature in the most intimate and powerful way by becoming aware of your breathing and learning to hold your attention there. This is a healing and deeply empowering thing to do. It brings about a shift in consciousness from the conceptual world of thought to the inner realm of unconditioned consciousness.

- Eckhart Tolle



- Compiled by Vatsala Ravikrishnan

Religious places beckon us for multiple reasons. Some are significant due to their *purānic* relevance, some for their historical significance, and some for their architectural splendour. With the tide of time and the change of power-centres, the relevance and significance of the places change, and many of them get relegated in the minds of the people.



Lepākshi is one such place that has great historical, spiritual and architectural significance, but it seems to have lost the glory that it once had in the past. The presiding deity of the temple is Veerbhadraswāmy, a fearsome form of Shiva. It comes under Andhra Pradesh in Sri Satya Sai district (earlier, a part of Anantpur district). It is located about 15 km from Anantpur town and 120 km from Bangalore.

Purānic relevance: Considered one of the rare forms of Shiva, Veerabhadra finds mention in the Skanda Purāna as '*Lepākshaya-pāpanāshaka*.' According to the legend, Daksha's daughter Sati got married to Shiva against Daksha's wishes. Once, Daksha organised a *yajna* to which all the *devās*, princes, his

children and grandchildren were invited, except Sati and Shiva. Sati's urge to attend the event, due to her affection for her parents, overpowered the social etiquette of not going to a ceremony, uninvited. When Shiva refused to accompany her, Sati insisted on attending the ritual without him. Upon her arrival, Daksha started to humiliate her husband, expressing his hatred for Shiva in

front of the entire assembly of people. Unable to bear the ignominy, the furious Sati leapt into the sacrificial fire, immolating herself with her yogic abilities. When Shiva heard of the incident, he tore a clump of his matted hair, from which Veerabhadra and Bhadrakāli emerged. He ordered them to destroy the *yajna* to avenge his wife's death. Veerabhadra followed his master's order and rampaged the entire *yajna*, killing Daksha in the carnage. In order to restore peace and end the bloodshed, Brahma pleaded with Shiva. Shiva instructed Veerabhadra to resurrect Daksha, and to put an end to the mayhem. Daksha's head was then replaced with that of an animal. Shiva calmed Veerabhadra and made

him his *angarakshaka*.

The Lord at Lepākshi is dedicated to this form of Shiva. It is considered one of the 108 *divyakshetras* of Shiva.

Purānic legends attribute this temple to the sage Agastya, who, while travelling across the Vindhya, took shelter in a cave on this hilltop, *kurma-shaila*, that was in the shape of a tortoise. Some believe that it was he who prayed to the *Pāpa-nāshaka linga*, which got consecrated at the temple later.

Another common folklore about the place is that the wounded bird Jatāyu (in the Rāmāyana) fell here, while trying to save Mother Sitā from Rāvana. When Rāma came to this spot, he saw the bird and said compassionately, "*le pakshi*," which means 'Rise (get up), O bird' in Telegu, giving the place its name.

Historical evidence: The present temple was built by two brothers, Virupannā Nayaka and Virannā, who were governors under the Vijayanagar empire during the reign of Achyutarāya Nāyaka. While the temple town existed before the building of the temple, it gained prominence during the Vijayanagar empire, as it was considered its second capital. As per a legend, it was constructed by Virupannā, using the funds from the state treasury. The king suspected them of embezzlement of the money used for the construction, and announced that Virupannā would be blinded. When Virupannā heard this order, he executed it on his own, right at the same spot where he was. It is rumoured that even today, one can see an eye mark on one of the walls, with

blood stains around it.

The temple has about 20 inscriptions, of which the earliest dates back to 1583 CE.

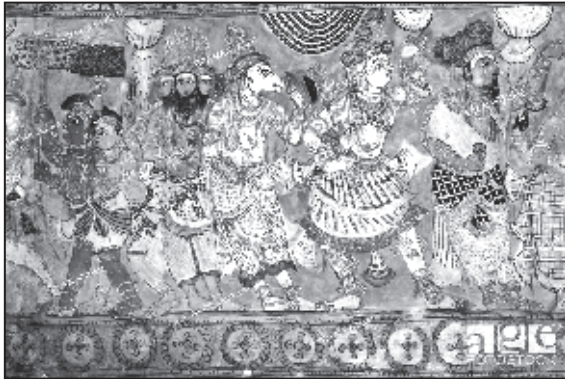
Architectural splendour: Built in the 16th century, the architectural features of the temple are in the Vijayanagara style, with a profusion of carvings and paintings on almost every exposed surface of the temple. It is one of the centrally protected monuments of national importance, and is considered one of the most spectacular Vijayanagara temples.

The temple is enclosed by two walls and can be divided into three sections: the *Nātya Mantapa* (dance pavilion), the *Ardha Mantapa* (foyer) or the sanctum; and the *Kalyāna Mantapa* (wedding hall).

The ceilings of the *Nātya* and *Ardha Mantapa* have several murals, illustrating scenes from the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyana and the *Purānas*. One painting depicts Krishna as an infant suckling his toe, while the theme of another is the wedding of Pārvathi and Shiva (in his Sadāshiva form). Brahma is officiating the wedding, while Himavat, Vishnu, and several sages are giving the couple their blessings.

The central portion of the roof has a mural of Lord Veerabhadra, ranked by the builders of the temple, Virupannā and Virannā. Measuring 23 feet by 13 feet, it is probably the largest mural in Asia. There are also representations of at least 15 avatars of Shiva.

At the entrance to the sanctum



sanctorum, a profusion of sculptures and paintings, covering every inch of space on the columns and ceiling, can be seen. Figurines of gods and goddesses, along with carved images of horses and soldiers, adorn the pillars of the temple. The ceiling of the hall is fully covered with mural paintings, depicting scenes from the epics, the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyana, and the Purānas - all depicting the grandeur of the Vijayanagara pictorial art. There are several portrayals of ancient characters like Lord Anantashayana, Lord Dattātreya, Chaturmukha Brahmā, Sage Nārada and the celestial dancer, Rambhā.

The presiding deity in the sanctum sanctorum is a near-life-size image of Veerabhadra, fully armed and decorated with skulls. There is a cave chamber in the sanctum, where the sage Agasthya is said to have lived, when he installed the image of the *linga* here. Within the temple complex, on the eastern wing, there is a separate chamber, wherein an image of Shiva, with his consort Pārvathi, is carved on a boulder. In another chamber, there is an image of Lord

Vishnu, along with his consort Lakshmi.

Besides the above, there are a few other major attractions at the temple:

1. The hanging pillar (*ākāshasthambha*): There are about 70 pillars in the temple. One particular pillar is considered an engineering marvel. This pillar is slightly dislodged from its original position, and a thin piece of paper or a piece of cloth can be easily slipped underneath it. It is said that during the British era, an engineer tried to move it, resulting in the shaking of the temple structure. Hence, he was unsuccessful in unearthing the secret of its support.
2. In the courtyard of the temple is a huge Shivalinga nestled in a huge hooded serpent, which is cut from a single stone.
3. An incomplete *Kalyāna-mantapa*, whose construction was stopped by the king due to his differences with the governor over the embezzlement of funds from the state treasury, can be seen inside the temple.
4. Another major attraction is the huge Nandi, built from a single stone. At 27ft in length and 15ft in height, it is a colossal structure, reputedly India's biggest monolithic Nandi.



5. Sitā's footprint inside the temple is associated with another interesting legend. It is said that when Rāvana abducted Goddess Sitā, and was on the way to Sri Lanka, they stopped at this temple to rest for a while. That is believed to be the source of the footprint that is seen on the floor of the temple premises. Interestingly, this footprint is always wet. You can see water from underneath, constantly seeping up and washing this foot. The source of this water is still unknown.

Important festivals celebrated in the temple include Mahā Shivaratri, Durga festival and the 10-day car festival - the annual Bramhotsavam in the months of February and March.

The 15th-century temple has been listed in the preliminary list of the World UNESCO Heritage Sites, and the State government is making efforts to pitch for a place in the permanent World Heritage Site list.

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If whatever you do does not involve you, does not give you joy, it means that you do not have *shraddhā*. *Shraddhā* is to be cultivated with a view to discovering one's own disharmonies, distractions, slips and inattentions, and to remove them outright.

- Swāmi Bhoomānanda Tirtha



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-jñāna*), 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 vinastih*

Kena Upanishad, 2.5
(Khanda 2, mantra 5)

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



(Excerpt from 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna')



Narendra was seated near the Master. He was constantly worried about his financial difficulties at home. He was now twenty-three years old. Sri Ramakrishna looked at him intently.

Master (to Narendra, smilingly):

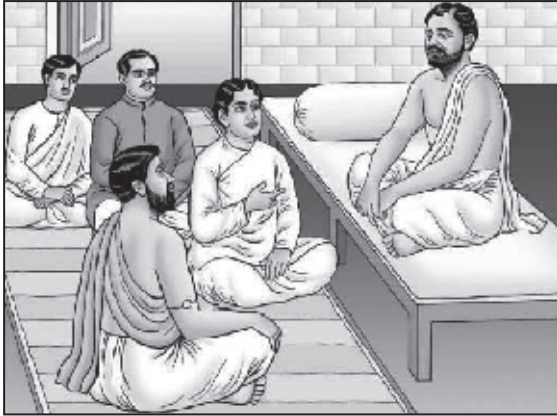
"Undoubtedly you are 'kha'. But you have to worry about 'taxes'; that's the trouble."

By 'taxes', the Master meant Narendra's financial difficulties at home.

Master: "Krishnakishore used to say that he was 'kha'. One day I visited at his home and found him worried. He wouldn't talk to me freely. I asked him: 'What's the matter? Why are you brooding like this?' Krishnakishore said: 'The tax-collector came today. He said my pots and pans would be sold at auction, if I didn't pay my taxes. That's what I am worrying about.' I laughed and said: 'How is that? You are surely 'kha', the *ākāsha*. Let the rascals take away your pots and pans. What is that to you?'"

(To Narendra) "So I am saying that you are 'kha'. Why are you so worried? Don't you know that Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, 'If you have one of the eight *siddhis*, you may get a little power, but you will not realize Me.' By *siddhis* one may acquire powers, strength, money, and such things, but not God.

"Let me tell you something else. Go beyond knowledge and ignorance. People say that such and such a one is a *jnānee*; but in reality, it is not so. Vasishtha was a great *jnānee*, but even he was stricken with grief on account of the death of his sons. At this, Lakshmana said to Rāma: 'This is amazing, Rāma. Even Vasishtha is so grief-stricken!' Rāma said: 'Brother, he, who has knowledge, has ignorance as well. He, who is aware of light, is also aware of darkness. He, who knows 'good', also



knows 'bad'. He, who knows happiness, also knows misery. Brother, go beyond duality, beyond pleasure and pain, beyond knowledge and ignorance.' (To Narendra) So I am asking you to go beyond both knowledge and ignorance."

Sri Ramakrishna went back to his small couch. The devotees were seated on the floor. Surendra sat by his side.

The master cast an affectionate look at him, and began to give him advice.

Master (to Surendra): "Come here every now and then. Nangtā used to say that a brass pot must be polished every day; otherwise it gets stained. One should constantly live in the company of holy men.

"The renunciation of 'woman and gold' is for *sannyāsis*. It is not for you. Now and then, you should go into solitude, and call on God with a yearning heart. Your renunciation should be mental.

"Unless a devotee is of the heroic type, he cannot pay attention to both God and the world. King Janaka lived a householder's life, only after attaining perfection through austerity and prayer. He fenced with two swords, the one of Knowledge and the other of action."



The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see.

- Alexandra K Trenfor





आदित्यस्य गतागतैरहरहः संक्षीयते जीवितं
व्यापारैर्बहुकार्यभारगुरुभिः कालोऽपि न ज्ञायते ।
दृष्ट्वा जन्मजराविपत्तिमरणं त्रासश्च नोत्पद्यते
पीत्वा मोहमयीं प्रमादमदिरामुन्मत्तभूतं जगत् ॥

Daily, with the rising and setting of the sun, life shortens, and time (i.e. its flight) is not felt, on account of affairs heavily burdened with manifold activities. Neither is fear produced at beholding birth, death, old age, and sufferings. (Alas), the world has become mad by drinking the stupefying wine of delusion.



DECLARATION

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I, Brni.Vibha Chaitanya, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

31/3/2023

-William Martin

Do not ask your children
to strive for extraordinary lives.
Such striving may seem admirable,
but it is the way of foolishness.
Help them instead to find the wonder
and the marvel of an ordinary life.
Show them the joy of tasting
tomatoes, apples and pears.
Show them how to cry
when pets and people die.
Show them the infinite pleasure
in the touch of a hand.
And make the ordinary come alive for them.
The extraordinary will take care of itself.

~

(Book: The Parent's Tao Te Ching)



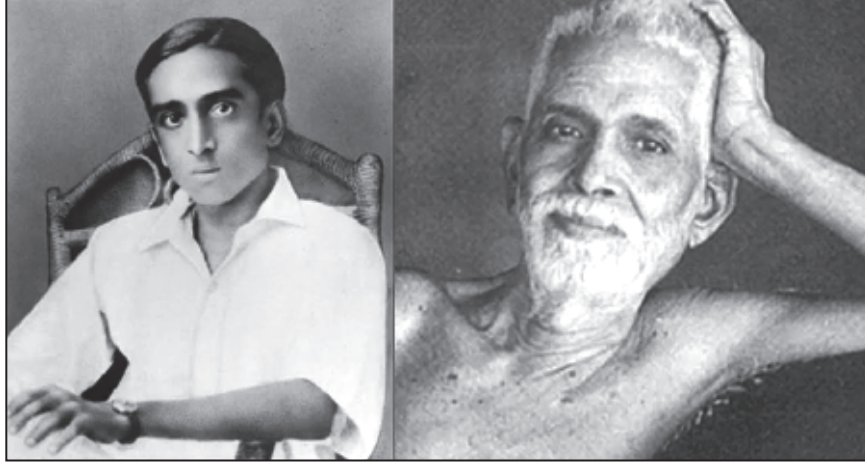
“Truth is not what you want it to be; it is what it is, and you must bend to its power or live a lie”.

-Miyamoto Musashi (Book of Five Rings)



Meeting Bhagavān

- Swāmi Chinmayānanda



Bālakrishna Menon
(Swāmi Chinmayānanda)

Shri Ramana Maharshi

I was just emerging from high school; exams were over. On a package railway ticket, I was roaming through South India. As the train steamed through the countryside at a halting speed, most of the passengers in my compartment suddenly peered through the windows in great excitement and bowed reverently to an elaborate temple beyond. Inquiring about it, I was told that it was the Tiruvannamalai Temple.

Thereafter, the talk of my fellow travellers turned to Ramana Maharshi. The word 'Maharshi' conjured up in my mind ancient forest retreats and superhuman beings of divine glow. Though I was at that time a convinced atheist, I was deeply drawn to visit the Maharshi's Ashram. I chose to take the next available train to Tiruvannamalai.

At the Ashram, I was told that the Maharshi was in the hall, and anybody was free to walk in and see him. As I entered, I saw on the couch an elderly man, wearing but a loincloth, reclining against a round bolster. I sat down at the very foot of the couch. The Maharshi suddenly opened his eyes and looked straight into mine: I looked into his. A mere look, that was all. I felt that the Maharshi was, in that split moment, looking deep into me – and I was sure that he saw all my shallowness, confusions, faithlessness, imperfections and fears.

I cannot explain what happened in that one split moment. I felt opened, cleaned, healed and emptied! A whirl of confusions: my atheism dropping away, but scepticism flooding in to question,

wonder and search. My reason gave me strength and I said to myself, “It is all mesmerism, my own foolishness.” Thus assuring myself, I got up and walked away.

But the boy who left the hall was not the boy who had gone in some ten minutes before. After my college days, my political work, and after my years of stay at Uttarkashi at the feet of my master, Tapovanam, I knew that what I gained on the Ganges banks was that which had been given to me years before by the saint of Tiruvannamalai on that hot summer day – by a mere look.

- Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi

[Swāmi Chinmayānanda (Bālakrishna Menon) was the founder of the Chinmaya Mission.]

During the course of a talk in 1982, the Swāmi said:

“Sri Ramana is not a theme for discussion; he is an experience; he is a state of consciousness. Sri Ramana was the highest reality and the cream of all scriptures in the world. He was there for all to see how a Master can live in perfect detachment. Though in the mortal form, he lived as the beauty and purity of the Infinite.”



Life loves you so much that it sends you difficulties, to make you strong.

- Robin sharma





यत्-कर्म सुकृतं प्रोक्तं *yat-karma sukritam proktam*
 मनो-वाक्-काय-संभवम् । *mano-vāk-kāya-sambhavam* |
 तत्-तु कर्मान्तरं हन्ति *tat-tu karmāntaram hanti*
 मनो-वाक्-काय-संभवम् ॥ *mano-vāk-kāya-sambhavam* ॥

Virtuous activity of mind, speech and body destroys the contrary activity of mind, speech, and body.

(*Ramana Geetā 7.15*)

[God alone is perfect; all of us, mortals, are imperfect. In this life and in our previous lives, we have done wrong things at the levels of thought, word, and deed. It is but natural that we often get agitated about this fact, and are afraid of the consequences of our past karmas. This verse from the Sage of Arunāchala gives solace and hope to all of us. We must engage in good deeds – at the levels of thought, word, and deed. That will reduce, if not eliminate, the results of errors committed by us in the past. – Editors]





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