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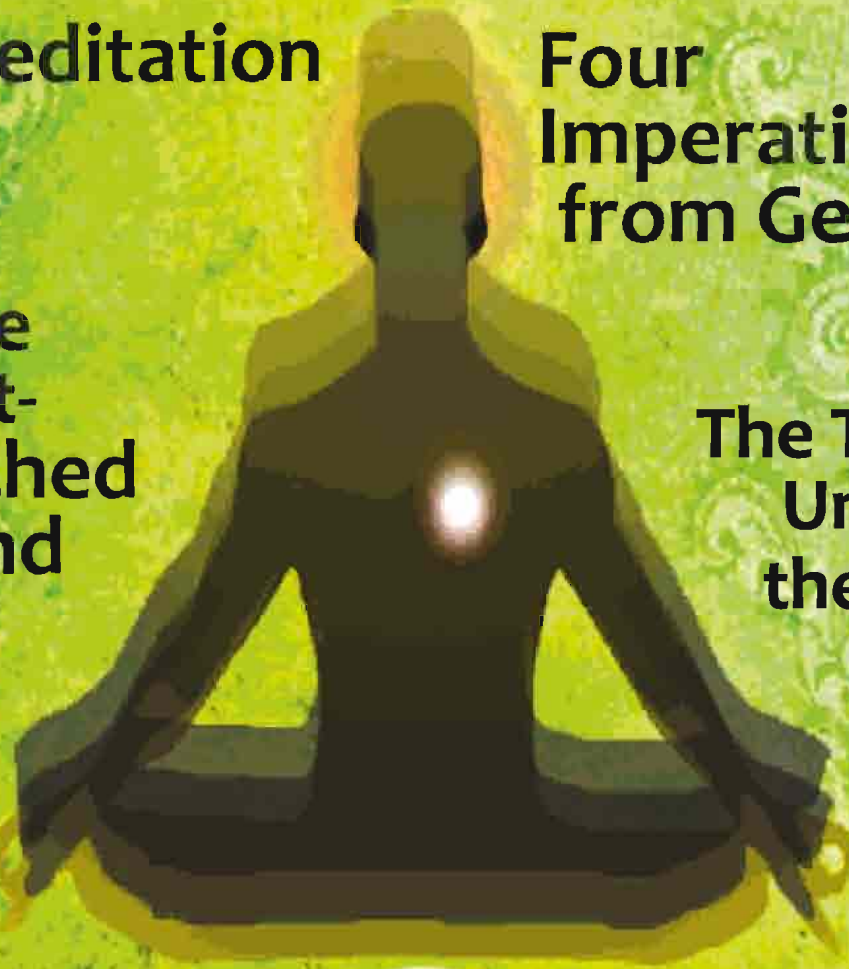
JUNE - JULY 2016

On meditation

**Four
Imperatives
from Geeta**

**The
Out-
stretched
Hand**

**The Temple
Under
the Sea**



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

WE CAN MAKE OUR LIFE SUBLIME

"Lives of great men do remind us, we can make our life sublime," wrote Longfellow. That is the idea behind our featuring great spiritual masters one after another in the issues of Inner Flame. We present here Shri Vallabhācharya, whose life and works are an all-time inspiration for anybody who studies them. He was a genius who carried together love of God with a highly convincing philosophical framework.

None less that the Superman – the actor who played the role, I mean – provides to us the message in this issue that we can serve the society even if destiny throws us into great adversity. Christopher Reeve left "footprints on the sands of time," to quote Longfellow once more.

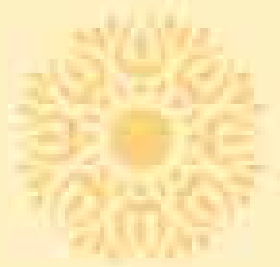
In an attempt to show that Geeta is not just high philosophy and hard metaphysics, the article by me under *Perceiving Phoenix* gives samples of 'down-to-earth' advice in the form of do's and don't's that adorn the Song Celestial.

We have a new contributor in Malathi Moorthy who provokes our thinking by sharing her musings on a very frequently asked question, "Should we give alms to beggars at all?"

With some more tips on meditation by the Thai monk Ajahn Chah and the crisp advice on meditation from Chāndogya Upanishad under Eternal Vibrations, we have attempted once more to make this issue of Inner Flame also helpful to the readers in their daily spiritual practices, in addition to providing some food for thought.

Swami Chidananda

Editor



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Editor

Swami Chidananda

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Introduction

Shri Vallabhāchārya occupies a unique place in Indian culture as a scholar, a philosopher and devotional (*bhakti*) preacher. He is widely considered as the last of the four great Vaishnava Acharyas who established the various Vaishnava schools of thought based on Vedantic philosophy, the other three (preceding him) being Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya and Nimbarkacharya. He is especially known as a lover and propagator of Bhāgavat Dharma.

Shri Vallabhāchāryaji also called Shri Mahaprabhuji was born on the auspicious day of Chaitra (*vraj-vaishākha*) Krishna *Paksha Ekādashi* (11th day), 1478 A.D. in Champāranya (currently in Chhattisgarh, India) in a Telugu (Tailang) Brahmin family. His father was Shri Lakshman Bhattji and mother Shri Illammagaruji. By the tender age of 10-11 years, Shri Vallabh had completed his studies of all the religious scriptures like *Veda, Purāna, Smṛiti, Tantra* etc. and various philosophies like *Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Mimāṃsā, Jain* and *Bauddha* etc. from his father as well as various learned

scholars.

Even in that youthful state, Vallabhāchārya knew he had to go on a *Parikrama* (or *pradakshina* or circumambulation of sacred places in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist context) and having already lost his father to death, he, as was the custom, had to get the permission of his mother to go on a pilgrimage to Vraj. He approached his mother Shri Illammagaru, who, shocked at the request, refused him permission to do so. But the urge to go to Vraj, where Lord Shrinathji was waiting for him, was so strong that he thought of a way out. Shri Vallabh was the incarnation of Agni (Fire) and so, on his own wish, his house caught fire! Illammagaru quickly ran out of the house but Shri Vallabh stayed inside. On seeing her son not coming out, Shri Illammaji started screaming "Get out! Get out of the house!" Shri Vallabh took his mother's sentence (Get out of the house) as her permission to leave home and go on a *parikrama*. This is all Shri Vallabh wanted to hear and he set out for Vraj immediately. But before setting out, he promised his mother that he would be by her bedside when she would pass away and he kept this promise too!

In order to preach the gospel of love, Shri Vallabhāchārya began to tour India. He wrote about the society of his times in his *Krishnāshraya Grantha*. He described the moral degeneration that he found everywhere. He lamented the fact that

people lacked *gynān* (knowledge) and *vairāgya* (asceticism). Religious rites were followed blindly without any real idea of the essence of religion. The priests and *sādhus* asked people to renounce the world and mortify the body through fasts and penance. The common people were confused and could not understand how to achieve *moksha*. Shri Vallabhāchārya decided to help people by writing about the true meaning of religion. He evaluated the different schools of thought and pointed out their drawbacks. He demonstrated the futility of *gynaan* and *vairagya* without *bhakti*. He did not see the point in renouncing the world – it was better for human beings to stay within the family structure and serve the Lord.

When Shri Vallabhāchārya was on a visit to northwest India, the Lord requested him to come to Mount Govardhan to meet Him. Asking people around Mt. Govardhan, Vallabh found that there was one cow going to the mountain everyday and releasing her milk at a particular place. Vallabh asked people to dig that area. At this time the Lord revealed Himself to Shri Vallabh in form of Shree Nathji, hugged Shri Vallabhāchārya and gave him the sacred mantra "*Shree Krishnah Sharanam Mama*" with which to initiate people. This mantra is referred to as *Ashtākshara Mahāmantra* (the great mantra with eight syllables).

As he journeyed along, people, attracted by his extraordinary divine personality, became his disciples. In Wardha, a 16-year old boy, Damodar Harsani on seeing Shri Vallabh's persona, was so overwhelmed that he immediately joined him as a disciple and remained with him throughout his life time. Damodardas Harsani had forever forsaken his father's

wealth and home to perform devotional service at the feet of Shri Vallabhāchārya. He later became the first disciple of Vallabhāchārya on the Path of Divine Grace or *pushti marg*.

On their way, they visited Verkatash Laxman Balaji. Here a Pandit named Ravinatha tried to test Shri Vallabh's knowledge of Vedic mantras. Shri Vallabhāchārya correctly recited a hundred mantras, not only from the beginning to end, but also in reverse order. It was particularly in this town that he made a strong impression on the public as an embodiment of Knowledge and consequently he himself was recognized as Bāla Saraswati (young in age but all the same, an embodiment of vast knowledge). After achieving tremendous success and fame, Shri Vallabhāchārya left Vidyanagar and camped on the banks of (the lake) Pampa-sarovar.

Here a person named Krishnadās Meghan surrendered himself at the feet of Shri Vallabhāchārya. Krishnadās Meghan was a resident of Soramji, a village situated near Mathura. He was told by his guru that the Lord had incarnated on earth on the day Shri Vallabhāchārya was born. On hearing this, he left in search of the incarnation of the Lord. On his way he reached Vidyanagar, where he was told about the glorious success and the divine personality of Shri Vallabhāchārya. On meeting Shri Vallabhāchārya, he realized that his search was over. He became an ardent devotee and remained in his service throughout his life. (The famous saint poet) Surdas went to Gau Ghat, a sacred bathing spot on the embankments of Yamuna River. It was here that he came across Shri Vallabhāchārya (in approx. 1497AD) who advised Surdas to

sing Bhagavat Lila, the Creative Play of the Lord and introduced him to the secrets of contemplative devotion. From this time onwards, Surdas never looked back on the path of spirituality. He spent the last years of his life in Vraj, the place of his birth.

Shri Vallabhāchārya undertook many pilgrimages to various places expanding his teachings and perfecting his doctrines. He spent more than fifteen years of his life in pilgrimages. During his trip to Gokarna, he was invited by the king of Vijayanagar. Here he started to introduce his views on the Vedas, Gita, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhāgavat. The King requested him to settle down but, wishing him well, Vallabhāchārya proceeded forward, giving them the following message: “You should all be good and religious people – not God fearing men but God loving men. Speak the truth. Be just and honest to all. Treat all persons equally. Have faith in Lord Krishna and surrender yourself to him. Be charitable and never harm the hungry and the weak. Realize that service to men and animals is service to God”.

Shri Vallabhāchārya used to meditate and talk to his followers in a peaceful area surrounding the outskirts of towns. There are totally eighty-four such “*Baithaks*” all over the country and they are still regarded with great reverence by the Vaishnavās. It took Shri Vallabhāchārya three years to complete his tour of India from Badrinath in the North to Rameshwaram in the south, and from Dwaraka in the West to Jagannath Puri in the East. Shri Vallabh completed 3 *pithvi parikramas* of India during his lifetime. His aim of undertaking these *parikramas* was to meet as many people as possible and teach them his philosophy. Shri Vallabh wanted to reach all the *daivi jeevas* who were there on

this earth and take them back to God by giving them the *Brahma-sambandha dīkshā*. He met those *daivi jeevas* during the three circumambulations and gave them *brahma-sambandha* whereby they were accepted by Lord Krishna. Finally he settled in Adel near Allahabad. During all the three *parikramās* Shri Vallabh imposed three arduous rules on himself:

- (1) Do the *parikramā* barefoot. (He walked a total of 12,000 km.)
- (2) Never enter a village or city but always stay on its outskirts.
- (3) Never wear stitched clothes. (He wore only a dhoti and a small piece of cloth known as an *uparana* throughout his life).

Once when Shri Vallabhāchārya was at Govardhan (*Vraj*), a Kshatriya, Seth Pooranmal of Ambala (Punjab) told him about a dream, inspired by Lord Shrinathji... to build a grand temple for him on Mount Govardhan at Jatipura. On getting his approval to build and appointing Hirmani from Agra as architect, the foundations to this excellent piece of artistry were laid immediately and 20 years later, in 1576, Shri Mahaprabhuji himself placed the deity of Shrinathji therein with great splendour and started the services to the Lord.

At Pandharpur, a place of religious importance in Maharashtra, Shri Vallabhāchārya camped on the banks of river Chandrabhāgā opposite the famous temple of Lord *Vitthalnathji (Vithoba)*. Lord Vitthalnathji came to Shri Vallabhāchārya and they embraced each other joyfully. Later, on Vallabhāchārya's second visit, Lord Vitthalnathji asked Shri Mahaprabhuji to get married so that the Lord Himself could incarnate in his family and also so that the

pushti marg could be propagated for generations to come. From Pandharpur, Shri Vallabhāchārya visited Nasik and Trimbak, walked along the banks of the Tapti and Narmada rivers visiting various shrines situated there. From here, he left for Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh). Along with his disciples like Damodardas Harsani and Krishnadas Meghan he arrived in Gokul, the early childhood place of Shri Krishna. While on the banks of river Yamuna, Shri Yamunaji appeared before him and he praised her by spontaneously composing and reciting *Shree Yamunashtakam Stotra*. He camped at Gobind Ghat where he gave discourses on Shrimad Bhāgwat.

While in Gokul, Shri Vallabhāchārya was deeply concerned about the question of restoring the people to the path of devotion. What he had seen on his travels made him extremely unhappy. His despair became almost unbearable. On the eleventh day of the bright half of (the month of) Shrāvana, past midnight, when he was exceedingly troubled by this question, Lord Krishna appeared before him in the form of Shrinathji and told Shri Vallabhāchārya to initiate the people on the path of complete self-surrender to the Lord, with love, modesty and simplicity through *brahma-sambandh* (connection of the seeker's soul to the Supreme Soul). The Lord promised Shri Vallabhāchārya that He would accept the services of all the devotees initiated with the *brahma sambandh*. The Lord gave him the Gadya Mantra, as an explanation to the five syllable mantra, and Shri Vallabhāchārya was very happy. The gist of the mantra is, "God is the real owner of all the things in this world. That which I consider my own does not really belong to me. I surrender to God

whatever I possess. Oh... Krishna, I am your servant." Shri Mahaprabhuji garlanded the Lord with a cotton thread garland (*pavitra*) and offered him *misri* (crystals of sugar). As soon as the Lord disappeared, Shri Mahaprabhuji composed *Shri Madhurāshtakam* praising the form and beauty of Shri Krishna the way he appeared before him. This was on the 11th day of Shrāvana Shukla of Samvat 1549. This occasion is celebrated in the sect as the day of *pavitra ekādashi*. It is also known as the day of the birth of *pushti marg* (Path to Grace of God). *brahma-sambandh* is a means of complete dedication and surrender of self to the Lord. *brahma-sambandh* means the establishment of a renewed relationship between the soul and God in which the soul accepts the relation as a servant (*dāsa*) with the Lord as the Master. With this new relation with God, the soul becomes completely free from all sins, provided it remains faithful to the vow of surrender it has taken and it goes on growing in the Grace (*pushti*) of God. The Lord accepts the services of such devotees. Next day, on Shrāvan Shukla 12, Shri Mahaprabhuji initiated Damodardas Harsani with the Holy Mantra. This made Damodardas the first Vaishnava in the *pushti marg*. Now anybody could take *brahma-sambandh*, irrespective of caste, creed, race, colour, wealth, age or sex. He gave Brahma-Sambandh to many people and wrote a *stotra*, *Siddhānta Rahasya* to explain the importance of *brahma-sambandh* and the basic principles of *pushti marg*.

From Gokul, Shri Mahaprabhuji returned to Mathura where he made a decision to go on a journey across Vraj. In the month of Bhādrapada, the eleventh month of the Hindu calendar, he took the oath for

circumambulation of Vraj (*vraj yātrā*) by departing from Mathura and proceeding to Madhuvan, Talvan and then Bahulavan. Shri Vallabhāchārya settled down in Varanasi and accepted Mahalakshmi, the daughter of a Brahmin called Madhu Mangalam, in marriage after consulting his mother. He had two sons. The elder was named Shri Gopinathji and the second son was named Shri Vithalnathji in reverence to Shri Vitobha of Pandharpur, whose incarnation he was believed to be.

At the age of fifty two, he detached himself from the world and started meditating and singing songs in praise of Shri Krishna. One week prior to his departure from this material world, he took a vow of silence on the Hanuman Ghat in Varanasi on the bank of river Ganges. His two sons requested him to guide them and give his last message. As he had taken a vow of silence, he wrote a few words on the sand:

Listen to my last words. "I foresee a time when you will forget God and become engrossed in worldly matters. It is likely that you will become slaves of your passions which will turn you away from the path of devotion. Instead of rendering service to God, which is your primary duty, you will fritter away your time and energy in idle pursuits. But if you follow my advice, God will not forget you. You should believe that Krishna is your God and never slacken your faith in him and then he will surely protect you. You should regard him as the be-all and end-all of your life. Your ultimate good lies in serving him, which should be done with all your heart, mind and soul. Trust in his protection. Remember him always in all thoughts, words and deeds"

As soon as he ended, Lord Krishna

manifested himself visually on the spot and wrote in the form of a verse completing Shri Vallabhāchārya's message and counsel thus:

"If you have faith in me, you will be under my care and protection and will not suffer failure of any sort. Be free from sorrows and anxieties concerning your future, for you are safe in my hands. Only, you should love me with the love of Gopis. If you do so, then you will surely secure liberation. That is the only means of union with Me, by which you will regain your original divine nature. Do not give your thoughts to worldly matters. Be devoted to me and render service to Me by all the means at your disposal".

Soon after this, Shri Vallabhāchārya rose from his seat and entered into the waters of the Ganges singing to himself the song of the Gopis and the *yugala gīta* from the Bhāgavata, concentrating his mind on God's form; a brilliant flame arose from the water and whisked him away in the sight of thousands of men, women and children who had congregated there to have his last Darshan. It is said that Lord Krishna then came to the sons and the devotees of Mahaprabhuji who were mourning his loss. He told them that He would always be by their side to help them. Shri Krishna's words and the example of Shri Vallabhāchāryaji's life were an inspiration to those left behind. They took up the work of Mahaprabhuji and spread his message through years to come. This aspect gives him transcendental character to prove that he was not "*Prakruti*" (natural) person but divine. *Vaishnavas* consider Shri Krishna, Shri Yamunaji and Shree Vallabhāchārya on equal footing, for this simple reason that all the three are inherently capable of emancipating the souls from the bondage of life and death.

Among his many miracles are the bringing back to life the dead family cow called Yashoda when he was only a child; planting a *peepal* leaf which soon became a full grown tree; touching a man to cure him of severe heat rash; feeding hundreds of Vishnu Swami's *sādhus* from a single pot of Kheer which was Prasad of Thakorji (*sāmagri pātra akshay*) saying that "to feed the hungry is Dharma"; bringing to life the statue of a cow and answering a 100 questioning Brahmins at the same time by making 100 heads (*so-mukha*).

His teachings are simple: Devotion, Love of God and implicit surrender are essential. The Bhakti Marg, which is just surrendering in totality, is for everyone. This path of Devotion is where one renounces everything and leaves everything to God. It is the easiest path and one needs to have faith in God to be able to walk this path. It is also called *pushti bhakti* – grace-filled, bountiful, overflowing love where Liberation has no bliss in itself. The *ānanda* (bliss) aspect of Shri Krishna is what a Pushti devotee seeks through his devotion. This *ānanda* lies nowhere else but in Shri Krishna's Bhakti alone. *pushti bhakti* can never be practised with the expectation of return. Hence, it is called "*Bhaituki*", i.e. without a reason, or "*nishkāma*," desireless or "*prem lakshan bhakti*". The *jiva-ātmā* (individual soul) is part and parcel of God (*paramātmā*). All Jivas are in different evolutionary stages, weakened as they are by unrighteous karmas. *paramātmā* created the universe and other *ātmās*. Vallabh accepted four basic works as authority: (1) the Vedas, (2) the Bhagavad-Gitā, (3) the Brahma-Sutra, and (4) the Bhāgavata. The order of these works, we are told, is most logical, as the doubts in each preceding work are removed by the one that

follows. The doubts in the Vedas are therefore, to be removed in the light of the Gitā and so on.

Shri Vallabhāchārya wrote a number of books, but many of them are not available today due to lack of proper preservation but many important books / articles / *padas* written by Vallabhāchārya and the Āchāryas of Vallabh-kul are still available and famous in Vaishnava society. *Yamunāshatakam*, *Navaratnam* and many other *padas*, and the book *Subodhiniji* are very important for Vaishnavas to read and understand. His second most valuable grantha (work) is the *Tattvārtha-Dip-Nibandh* which contains only three chapters: 1. The *Shāstrārth Prakarana* related to the propagation of the *Shhuddhādwaita* philosophy. 2. The *Sarva Nirnaya Prakarana* dealing with all the principal schools of Hindu philosophy. 3. The *Bhāgwatārth Prakarana* consisting of a lucid explanation of the meaning of Shrimad Bhāgwat. The *Shodash Granthas* are a collection of sixteen works of Shri Vallabh in which he has discussed a spectrum of subjects, starting from salutation to Shri Yamunāji in Shri Yamunāshtakam and ending with the grantha *Sevā-phalam* in which Shri Vallabh has discussed the fruits of performing the *sevā* of Lord Shrinathji. The *Shodash granthas* are most important for any Vaishnava as they teach him to live life according to *pushti mārg*. This is the reason why the Shodash Granthas are also known by the name Vallabh Gita. The *Purshottam Sahasranām Stotra* of Shri Vallabh needs special mention because it has a unique place amongst the Vaishnavas of *pushti marg*. A very interesting tale is related to the making of this grantha.

Shri Gopinathji had a principle that he would eat only after completing the *bhāgwat pārāyan* (18000 shlokas or 334 chapters). It would take Shri Gopinathji one and a half days to complete this *pārāyan* and so he ate once in one and a half days. Due to this, Shri Vallabh became worried as this would have an effect on Shri Gopinathji's health. So he decided to create a *stotra* which would contain the summary of all the *Avatars* and *Lila-s* described in Shrimad Bhāgwat. With this in mind, he created the *Purshottam Sahasranām stotra*. This *stotra* of 252 shlokas is equivalent to Shrimad Bhāgwat and the Vaishnavas of *pushti mārg* recite this *stotra* regularly even today.

The *pushti mārga* of Vallabhāchārya is a "*Sampradāya*" - This Religious system has 8 characteristics (a Panth has 5 only):

1. Āchārya; 2. Ishta Swaroop or serving Baal Krishna *swaropa-s*; 3. Mantra, of which there are 2 in Pushti; 4. Vedānta or Vallabha's Vedānta; 5. Dharma Chinha or symbols. 6. *Paramparā Gaadi or Vansha*—e.g. Raghu, Yādav, Vallabh etc.; 7. *Sāadhan Pranāli* or *Nitya* or daily *sevā* plus *Varso Utsav*; 8. Phal or *Bhagavat Prāpti*. The "*Suddh Advait*" philosophy (pure monism) of Vallabh says the world is true, real, good and pure. But what could be false about the world is the way we see it. The world is the manifestation of the Supreme Godhead. *Vallabhsampradāya* believes that everything is Krishna and nothing but Krishna and we are not separate entities. We are *jeev-ātmās* trying to re-connect to the *paramātmā* from where we originated—the *purush-uttama* Krishna; not being obsessed with liberation

but only with pleasing *Sevā* to Krishna. To be with Krishna is to be with Bhāva (unconditional loving attitude) like the Gopis of Vrindavan. The path is a path of Grace and intense love (*krupa mārg*) as taught by Shri Vallabhāchāryaji. After deep study and practical experience, Vallabh introduced a simple way to attain God by following simple principles and rules. God Himself showers His grace on His *pushti mārga* Vaishnavās who obtain spiritual nourishment thereby. In this Bhakti Mārg, Pushti Vaishnavas perform *Sevā* along with responsibilities of family and society life (i.e. they remain *Grihastha*). *pushti mārg* is do not renounce life to become sannyāsis, but perform their Dharma to life and *Sevā* to Krishna with support of family. As per Hindu tradition, one has to be initiated by a Guru to follow *pushti mārg*, and the gurus (*Goswamibālaks*) are from the lineage of Mahāprabhu Vallabhāchāryaji. *Griha Sevā* – personal service performed at home to a personal God (Swaroop/Thakorji) is sanctified by the Guru. *Sevā* can be performed after initiation/permission of the Guru through taking of *Brahma-sambandh*. God is invited home rather than sought outside and this Pushti *Sevā* is undertaken selflessly without asking for any returns or rewards – just out of pure sincere love and devotion. The mind is always focussed on Krishna only. *Tulsi kanthi necklace* and *Tilak (U)* for males, red *Bindi* and saree for women are the main symbols.

Source:

Based on an article by Rajan B Pitamber

■



- Swami Chidananda



Geeta is practical. It is a book of wisdom that supplies a hundred pieces of golden advice, ever relevant to human life. "Do this," the holy text says at a few places, and also, "Don't do that," at others. In this article, we examine

two do's and two don't's that we have selected from this divine song.

1. ***Do your duty with dedication, while lovingly remembering Me¹:***

One of our major problems in daily life is that we are 'disconnected' from God, and firmly anchored

in egoism!

Some know that they have quite a big ego

and others

imagine they are free of ego. Rare is a person who does not suffer from this malaise – EGO (Edging God Out!)

Egoism is the fertile ground for numerous likes and dislikes to grow. About persons, places and objects, we develop attachments and aversions when we are operating from egoism. We lose our objectivity; our thought, word and deed get coloured by these forms of bias.

Geeta provides the medicine: loving remembrance of God. Ego and love of God

cannot stay together, so inviting the divine is, at once, showing the door to self-centred activity. True love of God does not preclude commitment to duty; on the contrary, being freed from prejudice through love of God, we can attend to our work with much freshness.

Doing our duty with dedication and lovingly remembering God complement each other. When we live a distracted life, we move away from either of these. Disturbed in some way or hurt in some form, we turn averse to performance of duty. In such a state of mind, the impurities in our mind prevent us from thinking of God also. These two evils – neglecting duty and forgetting God – together make a vicious circle, one nourishing the other. Our problem soon

snowballs into a

tremendous

degeneration

of the

personality,

which can lead

Doing our duty with dedication and lovingly remembering God complement each other.

to bad conduct on our part either in public or in privacy, or both!

How do we break this vicious circle? We must gather our will and take either of the two areas: duty and divine contemplation. We must start "doing what needs to be done" with whatever little energy and self-confidence are left with us. We must earnestly pray God with whatever little faith is left in us! These two good things feed each other and pretty soon we emerge strong. Our personality gets 'straightened'! Small victories lead to big victories!

2. *Do exercise control over your sense organs, to begin with*²:

Why do we turn a blind eye to our weaknesses? Where does all our scholarship disappear in the face of temptations? Why do we settle for fleeting pleasures and, in the process, let go of lasting peace?

“The refinement of an individual is measured by the yardstick of sense-control,” says Shri Sathya Sai Baba.

In the Geeta, Lord Krishna explains how selfish desire operates from three locations: the

senses, the mind and the intellect. In the concluding eight verses (36 through 43) of the third chapter, he supplies a beautiful blueprint of *sādhana*, spiritual practice, which is needed to get out of the prison of worldliness and enter the garden of spirituality. “Why do we err, despite knowing right and wrong?” is the question of Arjuna. The Lord’s answer exposes the culprit hiding within us, foolish desires (*kāma*) that have grown on the soil of ignorance (*avidyā*)!

Without mincing words, the great teacher exhorts us, “First and foremost, train your senses!” Of the three ‘areas of operation’ of desire, the senses are the grossest. The mind and the intellect are subtler and much subtler in the order mentioned. It is thus sheer common sense that we begin with our unruly senses and eventually catch up with our turbulent emotions (mind) and stubborn beliefs (intellect).

No doubt, alert silence is the great panacea for all the ills that plague our psyche. The ground reality, however, is that most of us, most of the time, are just unable to stay in ‘alert silence’. We naturally ask

ourselves, “What shall I do now?” Therefore, it is, that training the senses is the most practical advice.

In the context of eating, for example, the tip that Eknath Easwaran shares is so suitable to our times: *Stop one bite before you are full!*

3. *Don’t behave with cowardice*³:

Of ten people who have the capacity to do a piece of work, only two or three actually do it. The other seven or eight hesitate, look left and right, fear failure or imagine criticism from some quarters. As a result, they keep themselves busy with ‘other things’ and just do not do ‘what needs to be done’! “Don’t allow this weakness of the heart to come in the way,” exhorts Shri Krishna and urges Arjuna to go ahead boldly with the performance of his duty.

“I will do my duty only if it is pleasant,” says the man who is lacking in clarity of thought and suffers from cowardice. Pleasing or otherwise, the conscientious man goes ahead and, with focussed attention, performs his duty.

*In the world’s broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife!*

H W Longfellow’s words in his famous poem A Psalm of Life, echo Shri Krishna’s call for being bold, assertive and forth coming.

There is no denying that, when our duty is not clear, we must deliberate and find out what the right course of action is. “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread,” goes the adage. It is therefore not foolish heroism that

“Why do we err, despite knowing right and wrong?”

Geeta advises but right action without delay, without dilly-dallying.

4. **Don't get stuck in inaction⁴:**

A proper study of the Geeta helps us see how much Shri Krishna goes into meticulous details of issues involved. Playing the role of an astounding psychologist, the Lord warns us not to get lost in the morass of inaction.

This is an unfortunate pitfall in the spiritual field, where withdrawal from worldly pursuits leads many seekers to a life of inaction. It should not happen if there is truly good understanding of the teachings. A student refused to join his friends, when they invited him to a movie, and had all the good intention to sit and study for the examinations that were approaching. Alas, as he sat at home and was planning to get down to work, his mind went to the delicious samosas that were in the kitchen. Thinking he would just take one or two, he began eating them. The taste was so good that he overate. Laziness and sleep soon overpowered him. He neither went to the movie with friends nor studied at home.

On a serious note, all that is required to ensure that we channel the energy we save,

by withdrawing from selfish or pleasure-centred activities, into self-less work or spiritual study or contemplation, is managing our energy. Very carefully, we must plan the way we spend our hours. We must give to our body enough exercise, adequate rest, nutritious food and, when there is good energy, we must do "first things first," as Stephen Covey puts it. We must not fritter away our 'peak performance hours' in engaging with less important things. Neither inaction (*akarma*) nor self-centred action (*svārtha*) should grab priority over noble ways of living.

It is indeed a tragedy if, in the name of spirituality, we become lazy or directionless. This state of the body and the mind is referred to as the 'unprepared' personality in the Geeta (*akṛita-ātmā*, 15.11). Their efforts fail because they are essentially unfit. In contrast, those who are truly 'prepared' (*kṛita-ātmā*), whose energies are properly aligned, thanks to their orderly daily life, succeed in their efforts.

End Notes:

- (1) | *māmanusmarayudhya cha* | (8.7)
- (2) | *indriyānyādauniyāmya* | (3.41)
- (3) | *klaibyamāsmagamah* | (2.3)
- (4) | *mātesango'stuakarmani* | (2.47)

■



- Christopher Reeve



It's been 21 years since Christopher Reeve asked himself that question. After playing Superman in four Superman movies, Christopher fell off a horse and broke his neck, leaving him fully paralyzed. (May 27,

1995)

He had his head reattached to his body with a titanium pin and looked ahead at a life without the use of his body. As an actor, it also meant the end to his acting career.

What did he do?

He said to himself "Your body is not who you are. The mind and spirit transcend the body."

He chose to live a bigger life in Part 2 than he had in Part 1. He co-founded the Reeve-Irvine Research Center which is now a world-leading spinal cord research center. He created the Christopher Reeve Foundation, which has now given over \$70 million to disability research and quality-of-life grants to the disabled. He became Chairman of the American Paralysis Association, Vice Chairman of the National Organization on Disability and hosted the Paralympics in Atlanta.

Is it Institute or some official in the institute who said? "In the years following his injury, Christopher did more to promote research on spinal cord injury and other neurological disorders than any other person before or since."

Not being able to act, Christopher became a director. For his directing, he won four Cable Ace Awards and was nominated for five Emmy Awards, a Golden Globe and won a Screen Actors Guild Award. His book, "Still Me", became a New York Times Best Seller and he won a Grammy Award for Best Spoken Word Album.

Christopher worked right up to his death in 2004, the last time it was the Chinese Year of the Monkey (which it is again in 2016). He died of a heart attack while co-directing "Everyone's Hero."

He achieved more in the 8 years after his accident than in the 44 years before. Instead of just acting as a fictional Superman, he became a real life Superman.

Simply by deciding to fly.

He said "Some people are walking around with full use of their bodies and they're more paralysed than I am."

What decision can you make today to free your own superpowers?

What could you achieve in the next 8 years if you knew you had no limits?

■



- Ajahn Chah



To calm the mind means to find the right balance. If you try to force your mind too much, it goes too far; if you don't try enough, it doesn't get there and misses the point of balance.

Normally the mind isn't still, it's moving all the time. We must strengthen the mind. Making the mind strong and making the body strong are not the same. To make the body strong we have to exercise it, push it but to make the mind strong we must make it peaceful, not thinking of this and that.

For most of us, the mind has never been peaceful, it has never had the energy of *samādhi*, so we must establish it within a boundary. We sit in meditation, staying with the 'one who knows.'

If we force our breath to be too long or too short, we're not balanced, and the mind won't become peaceful. It's like when we first start to use a pedal sewing machine. At first, we just practice pedaling the machine to get our coordination right, before we actually sew anything.

Following the breath is similar. We don't get concerned over how long or short, weak or strong it is, we just note it. We simply let it be, following the natural breathing.

When it's balanced, we take the breathing as our meditation object. When we breathe in, the beginning of the breath is at the nose-tip, the middle of the breath at the

chest and the end of the breath at the abdomen. This is the path of the breath.

When we breathe out, the beginning of the breath is at the abdomen, the middle at the chest and the end at the nose-tip. Simply take note of this path of the breath at the nose-tip, the chest and the abdomen, then at the abdomen, the chest and the tip of the nose. We take note of these three points in order to make the mind firm, to limit mental activity so that mindfulness and self-awareness can easily arise.

When our attention settles on these three points, we can let them go and note the "in and out" breathing, concentrating solely at the nose-tip or the upper lip, where the air passes on its "in and out" passage. We don't have to follow the breath, 'just establish' perhaps? mindfulness in front of us at the nose-tip, and note the breath at this one point-entering, leaving, entering and leaving.

There's no need to think of anything special, just concentrate on this simple task for now, having continuous presence of mind. There's nothing more to do, just breathing in and out. Soon the mind becomes peaceful, the breath refined. The mind and body become light. This is the right state for the work of meditation.

When sitting in meditation the mind becomes refined, but whatever state it's in we should try to be aware of it, to know it. Mental activity is there together with tranquility. There is *vitakka*. *Vitakka* is the action of bringing the mind to the theme of contemplation. If there is not much

mindfulness, there will be not much *vitakka*.

Then *vicāra*, the contemplation around that theme, follows. Various weak mental impressions may arise from time to time, but our self-awareness is the important thing; whatever may be happening, we know it continuously. As we go deeper, we are constantly aware of the state of our meditation, knowing whether or not the mind is firmly established. Thus, both concentration and awareness are present.

To have a peaceful mind does not mean that there's nothing happening; mental impressions do arise. For instance, when we talk about the first level of absorption, we say it has five factors. Along with *vitakka* and *vicāra*, *pīti* (rapture) arises with the theme of contemplation and then *sukha* (happiness). These four things all lie together in the mind established in tranquility. They are as one state.

The fifth factor is *ekaggatā* or one-pointedness. You may wonder how there can be one-pointedness when there are all these other factors as well. This is because they all become unified on that foundation of tranquility. Together, they are called a state of *samādhi*. They are not everyday states of mind, they are factors of absorption.

There are these five characteristics, but they do not disturb the basic tranquility. There is *vitakka*, but it does not disturb the mind; *vicāra*, rapture and happiness arise but do not disturb the mind. The mind is, therefore, as one with these factors. The first level of absorption is like this.

We don't have to call it first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna* and so on, let's just call it 'a peaceful mind.' As the mind becomes progressively calmer, it will dispense with *vitakka* and *vicāra*, leaving only rapture and

happiness.

Why does the mind discard *vitakka* and *vicāra*? This is because, as the mind becomes more refined, the activities of *vitakka* and *vicāra* are too coarse to remain. At this stage, as the mind leaves off *vitakka* and *vicāra*, feelings of great rapture can arise, tears may gush out.

But as the *samādhi* deepens, rapture too is discarded, leaving only happiness and one-pointedness, until finally even happiness goes and the mind reaches its greatest refinement. There are only equanimity and one-pointedness, all else has been left behind. The mind stands unmoving.

Once the mind is peaceful, this can happen. You don't have to think a lot about it, it just happens by itself when the causal factors are ripe. This is called the energy of a peaceful mind. In this state, the mind is not drowsy; the five hindrances – sense desire, aversion, restlessness, dullness and doubt – have all fled.

But if mental energy is still not strong and mindfulness is weak, "intruding mental impressions" will occasionally arise. The mind is peaceful, but it's as if there's a 'cloudiness' within the calm. It's not a normal sort of drowsiness though; some impressions will manifest – maybe we'll hear a sound or see a dog or something. It's not really clear, but it's not a dream either. This is because these five factors have become unbalanced and weak.

The mind tends to play tricks within these levels of tranquility. 'Imagery' will sometimes arise when the mind is in this state, through any of the senses, and the meditator may not be able to tell exactly

what is happening. "Am I sleeping? No. Is it a dream? No, it's not a dream..." These impressions arise from a middling sort of tranquility; but if the mind is truly calm and clear, we don't doubt the various mental impressions or imagery which 'arise'.

Questions like, "Did I drift off then? Was I sleeping? Did I get lost?..." don't arise, for they are characteristics of a mind which is still doubting. "Am I asleep or awake?"... Here, the mind is fuzzy. This is the mind getting lost in its moods.

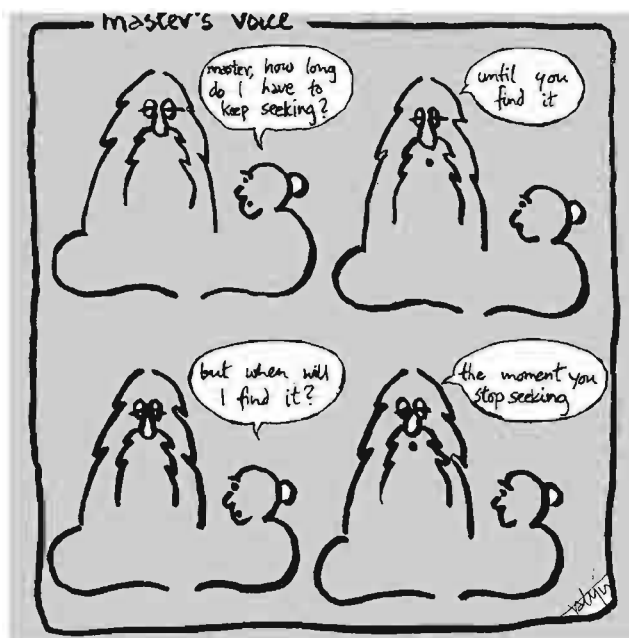
It's like the moon going behind a cloud. You can still see the moon but the clouds covering it render it hazy. It's not like the moon which has emerged from behind the clouds- clear, sharp and bright.

When the mind is peaceful and established firmly in mindfulness and self-awareness, there will be no doubt concerning the various phenomena which we encounter. The mind will truly be beyond the hindrances.

We will clearly know everything which arises in the mind as it is. We do not doubt, because the mind is clear and bright. The mind which reaches *samādhi* is like this.

(Ajahn Chah (1919-1992) was an influential teacher of the Buddha dharma and a founder of two major monasteries in the Thai Forest Tradition. *Food for the Heart* and *Being Dharma* are among the well-received books by him.)

■



- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani

Nishkalank Mahādev Temple in Koliyak, Bhāvnagar, in Gujarat is full of wonders and awe. This temple is buried inside the sea. On a heavy tide day, all that can be seen are the flag and a pillar. It is beyond one's comprehension that there is a Lord Shiva temple just under the fierce sea. This temple is still in use, and people visit this place on foot! The temple has 5 distinct swayambu Shiva lingas spread across a square platform.

The origins of the temple date back to the Mahābhārata era. The Pāndavās had killed all the Kauravas and won the battle. But the Pāndavas were grief-stricken, knowing that they had acquired sins for killing their own relatives. In order to

find redemption for their sins, the Pāndavas met Lord Krishna and sought his advice. To remove their sins, Krishna handed them a black cow and a black flag. He told the Pāndava brothers to follow them until both cow and the flag turned white. That was the signal that they had all been pardoned. Krishna also advised them to thereafter do penance in devotion to Lord Shiva.

The anxiety-stricken brothers followed the cow wherever it went and carried the flag.



They walked for days, to different places but the colours did not change. Finally, when they arrived at the Koliyak beach, both the cow and the flag became white. The Pāndavas were delighted. All the five brothers sat for deep penance, meditating on Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva, impressed by the brothers, appeared in the form of a linga in front of each brother as they meditated. In total there were five (*swayambu*) lingas that appeared

on their own. The Pāndavas were delighted to see this and they worshiped all the five lingas with great devotion. Lord Shiva here is known as Nishkalank Mahādev. 'Nishkalank' has many meanings: clean, pure, guiltless, etc. It is

said that the Pāndavas established the Nishkalank or Nakalank Mahādeva on *Amāvāsyā* (new moon day) of the Indian calendar month of *Bhadarva*. The famous fair popularly known as '*Bhadarvi*' is held on the moon-less night in the month of *Shrāvan* (August), as per the Indian calendar. An idol of Lord Shiva was established on an island, over the sea about 3 km to the east of Koliyak. Each linga has a Nandi facing it. The lingas are spread across a square platform.

There is a pond called Pāndavas' pond and devotees first wash their hands and feet there and only then they visit the Lord Shiva shrines.

Devotees throng this temple during every *Amāvāsyā*; it is to be noted that the tides are very active during full moon day and no moon day; yet devotees patiently wait for the tides to recede. There is a strong belief that when loved ones are cremated their ashes are to be immersed in these waters and by doing so, they attain salvation or *moksha*. Besides ash, milk and curd, whole coconuts are also offered to the Lord here. The temple festival is initiated by hoisting the

flag by the clans of Mahārājas of Bhāvnagar. This flag flies for 364 days and is changed only during the next temple festival. And for the record, the flag has never fallen down or been washed away by the tides. It stands undisturbed by the ferocious tides and has seen the deadliest earth quake that killed more than 50,000 people in 2001. Not many temples are 'buried' under rough waves of the sea; this temple is an exception. It is said that, at least, once in a lifetime one should visit this Nishkalank Mahādev Temple to experience the spirituality that resonates therein.

Source: Internet

■



SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

Leave the desirables to those who desire. Change the current of your desire from taking to giving. The passion for giving, for sharing, will naturally wash the idea of an external world out of your mind, and of giving as well. Only the pure radiance of love will remain, beyond giving and receiving.

- Nisargadatta Maharaj

Think on this

The Outstretched Hand - Musings on Begging

- Malathi Moorthy

About 700 years ago, Saint Jnaneshwar wrote the Jnaneshwari, The Marathi commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, which remains a classic to this day. Despite his superhuman greatness, Jnaneshwar and his siblings were persecuted and hounded by a society for the 'sins' of their parents. Their father had returned to the householder's life after donning the ochre robe, an "unforgivable sin"! The orphaned children had to beg to survive and were treated as pariahs!!

Centuries later, Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples also sought alms to survive, so that they may spread the gospel of Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna. The glory and recognition would come later – much later!!

Reading the travails of these great souls, my brother and I decided that we would never again judge – to give alms would be a spontaneous decision depending on our feelings at the moment which we would neither justify nor condemn!

Hinduism accepts begging as a social phenomenon – giving alms is considered a duty by Hindus and Muslims and, in a slightly different way, by Christians also. A tithe¹ to be donated is an honourable thing to do – of course it adds to our stock of 'punya'!!

The beggars we see on the streets are not all monks, we know. And yes, they are often children who have been kidnapped, maimed thereafter and even brutalised by 'bosses' who 'employ'

them and live off their earnings.

To give or not to give remains a baffling question - and there are no real answers.

The response to the outstretched hand must, of necessity, remain a spontaneous decision. A coin dropped into that outstretched hand may make all the difference between surviving another day as the 'boss' doles out just enough food to survive or being beaten, starved and even brutalised for failing to make the mandatory collection². For a young girl, it may mean one more day of remaining 'innocent' or she may face being sold into prostitution!

I repeat, there are no real answers.

The other option of giving to charity is the NGO. But this is not always a 'safe' choice either. Consider the following true story.

An NGO, with the declared intention of donating to a charitable cause, arranged a fund raiser with a lot of *Band and Bajaa*. At the conclusion of the event, the charity received a letter to the effect that the event had raised Rs. 885/- of which Rs. 875/- were deducted for expenses and a cheque for Rs.10/- was sent to the cause.

This is not an isolated case. Organisations ostensibly set up for charitable purposes frequently claim 70 to 80 percent for administrative expenses!

I REPEAT: THERE ARE NO PERFECT ANSWERS – THE CHOICE IS YOURS – JUST LISTEN TO YOUR HEART AND DROP A COIN IN TO THAT OUTSTRETCHED HAND OR MOVE ON WITH A SHRUG!

Notes:

1. The word *tithe* means a tenth part of one's income – agriculture, crops or of any other kind – which should be set aside for charity (though when this was applied to taxes etc. it soon came to mean basically charity).

2. The UK Prime Minister (Harold Wilson, 1964 – 70, 1974 - 76) made a statement, when Britain introduced Social Security and some people argued that this would encourage people to live off charity without 'working'! Wilson responded by saying that he would rather a hundred people used Social Security to live off the State without working than deny one needy person who genuinely deserved it.

■



Sit like a Monk



To sit like that monk - serene and composed - we need to be very wise OR highly stupid... That was for humour.

Actually we (all of us) have the potential to calm ourselves and, with a little study / *satsang*, we can assume a peaceful disposition. To do that again and again is *sāḍhanā*.

SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

"Attachment is the great fabricator of illusions; reality can be attained only by someone who is detached".

– Simone Weil

Osho on Sri Ramana Maharshi

Happiness and suffering happen due to our past actions. So do not think that physical suffering or happiness will not happen to those who have become liberated while living.

Ramana Maharshi died of cancer. It was very painful, naturally. It was a deep malady - there was no way of escaping it. Many doctors came, and they were very puzzled because the whole body was torn with pain but there was no sign of any pain in his eyes. His eyes remained the same serene lakes as ever. Through his eyes only the witnessing self arose; it was the witnessing self that looked, that observed.

Doctors would ask, "You must be in great pain?" Ramana would reply, "Yes there is great pain, but it is not happening to me. I am aware that there is great pain happening to the body; I know that there is great pain happening. I am seeing it, but it is not happening to me."

A question arises in the minds of many people as to how a man like Ramana, who is liberated and enlightened, get a disease like cancer.

This sutra has the answer to it. Happiness and sufferings will be happening to the body, even to those who are liberated while living, because these are related to past actions and their impressions, they are related to whatsoever has been done before becoming awakened.

Understand it this way: if I have sown some seeds in a field and then I become awakened, the seeds are bound to sprout. Had I remained sleeping, then too the seeds would have sprouted, flowered and come to fruition. Now too they will sprout, flower and

come to fruition. There will only be one difference: had I been still asleep I would think it to be my crop and keep it close to my chest. Now that I am awake, I will understand that the seeds were already sown and now they are reaching their destiny; nothing of it is mine, I will just go on witnessing. If I had remained asleep I would have harvested the crop and preserved the new seeds so that I could sow them next year. Now that I am awake I will just go on witnessing: seeds will sprout, flowers will come, fruits will grow, but I will not gather them. Those fruits will grow and fall off on their own accord and die. My relationship with them will snap. My relationship with them before was of having sown them - now I will not do that again. Thus no further relationship will be formed.

So happiness and suffering keep coming to the liberated one also, but such a person knows that these are part of the chain of his past actions and now he has nothing to do with them: he will just go on witnessing.

When somebody comes and offers flowers at the feet of Ramana, he just goes on watching - it must be a part of some past chain of actions that prompt this person to give him happiness. But Ramana does not take the happiness; the person gives, but he does not take it. Should he take, the journey of a new action will begin. He does not prevent the person from offering flowers - "Don't give happiness to me, don't offer flowers to me, don't touch my feet" - he does not prevent him, because that prevention too would be an action and another chain of action would begin.

Try to understand this. This man has come to offer flowers to Ramana; he has put

a garland round his neck, he has put his head at his feet. And what is Ramana doing within? He is just watching: "There must be a past transaction with this man, some past impressions of action; the man is now completing it. But now the transaction has to come to an end, no further chain has to be created. This matter is finished here, it will not continue."

So he will just sit there and will not prevent that man from doing anything... because what will 'preventing' really mean? It will mean first, that you are not ready to take back the past action where you had given, and which you would have to take back when preventing this man's action. And second, you are creating another chain of relationship with this man by asking him not to do a certain thing. Now when will this new relationship end? You are creating another action; you are reacting.

No, Ramana will just go on watching, whether a man brings flowers to him or cancer comes. He will even watch the cancer happening.

Ramakrishna also died of cancer. He had throat cancer. Even water would not go down his throat; food would not go down his throat. Then one day Vivekananda asked Ramakrishna, "Why don't you tell mother Kali? It is just a matter of your telling her and in a moment your throat would be cured." Ramakrishna just laughed and said nothing.

One day, when Vivekananda had insisted too much, Ramakrishna said, "You don't understand. It is necessary to be finished with whatsoever is one's own doing, otherwise one will have to come back again only to finish it. So it is right to allow whatsoever is happening to happen; it is not right to hinder it."

Then Vivekananda said, "Alright, if you do not want to ask to be cured, at least ask her that as long as you are in the body to let the

throat be good enough to allow water and food to pass through. Otherwise it is unbearably painful for us to see you in such a condition."

Ramakrishna agreed to ask. When he woke up the next morning he said, "It was great fun. When I told the mother she said, 'Has this throat a monopoly in doing your work? What difficulty do you have in eating through others' throats?'"

Ramakrishna further said, "Because of listening to your advice, I acted like a great fool. You harassed me unnecessarily. And this is right - does this throat have any monopoly? So from today onwards, when you take food, understand that I am also taking food through your throat."

Ramakrishna laughed continuously all day long. When the doctor came he said, "Why are you laughing? The body is in such a painful condition, and no other condition can be more painful than this."

Ramakrishna said, "I am laughing because I don't know what happened to my mind that I failed to remember that all throats are mine, that now I can take food through all throats. Why be obsessed about this one throat?"

Howsoever supreme a state an individual may attain, the past that is attached to the body will complete itself. Happiness and sufferings will come and go, but the liberated person will know that it is only the accumulated past actions. Knowing so, he will stand apart from them too and his witnessing will not be affected by them in any way - his witnessing is now steady.

Source - The Book "Fingers Pointing to the Moon" ■

- By H W Longfellow

What The Heart Of The Young Man Said To The Psalmist.

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,— act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.



The Philosophical Scientist Queen



Queen Frederika

Queen Frederika, the wife of King Paul of Greece was known as much for her outspoken and domineering nature as for an extreme patriotism and anti-communism that bordered on the fanatical. The collapse of the Karamanlis conservative government in 1963 had as much to do with Queen Frederika's trip to London as it did with the assassination of Grigoris Lambarkis. (She was met with massive riots as Karamanlis had predicted and asked her not to go) As a girl Frederika had belonged to a Hitler Youth group and while in school in Italy she was heard defending Nazi Germany. Three of her brothers served in the Wehrmacht, Hitler's army. What is not known about Queen Frederika is her spiritual quest which led her to India as a disciple of *agadguru Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Swamigal*. Queen Frederika, had been practicing meditation for sometime and had studied the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Frederika claims that it was her advanced research in physics that had started her on a spiritual quest. It culminated in her accepting the non-dualism or absolute monism of Shankara as her philosophy of life and science.

"In the nineteenth century, scientists had thought that the cosmos was made up of ninety-two basic elements, such as hydrogen, oxygen and iron, which were indestructible. This implied that the universe had a diversity of independently existing materials. However, during this century research had revealed that all elements were in fact made up of a single energy. The cosmos was therefore intrinsically one, whether it appeared as a speck of dust, a tree, a Nobel Prize-winning genius or a black-hole beyond the galaxies. The differences were merely appearances. Our senses give us a knowledge of what is apparent, but not of the underlying one reality of the cosmos. This one energy which permeates the whole of creation was what Hinduism calls 'brahma'. Long before physics discovered it, Shankara had argued that the world of sense experience, that is the world of matter, was a world of appearance (maya), because at the root of each individual existence is the same energy which forms the cosmos. The human self (atman) is ultimately not distinct from the universal self (brahma). Duality is illusion. Reality is not dual, but one. Science has yet to catch up with what the seers in India had already understood over 2500 years ago. While Greece is the country of my birth, India is the country of my soul."

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

LOOKING BACK

Talk in Chennai:

On 14th June Pujya Swami Chidanandaji spoke on the topic "Gentle Strength while Facing Hard Times" to members of the Club of Madras R I District 3230, the oldest Rotary Club in Chennai, having been established in 1929. The President of the Club, Shri Venkat Ramani, had taken special interest and initiative in putting together this event, held at the Hyatt Regency in Teynampet. Swamiji presented appropriate Power Point slides to convey his message and fielded a few questions from the audience of approximately 130 people.

LOOKING AHEAD

Swami Abhishek Chaitanya Giri and Pujya Swami Chidanandaji will present the webinars on 17th and 24th July respectively.

What do we learn from the Upanishads?

Your Basic Nature is Good

One of the simplest summaries of the teachings of the Upanishads is - You're OK, I'm OK.

Our true nature, the Vedanta declares, is divine. Somehow, the mind and the body have got into bad thoughts and habits. This defilement can be undone. That is what *sādhana* is all about.

"I am Shiva, "says a mantra" and asks, "What more is needed?"

Shiva here does not mean Lord Shiva, the loving husband of Mother Pārvati. The word Shiva means "purity, goodness, auspiciousness." The essence of Lord Shiva, of course, is this unbounded auspiciousness. From the One Truth - sat, chit, ānanda - come Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva.

"I am Shiva," means I am the One Truth. To realize this, we have to rise above our body identification.

We need to rise above all self-evaluations based on wealth, position, health etc., and recognize our true nature. We must put things like wealth in their proper places; they should not define our self-worth, really speaking.

"I am good; I am lovable; I am loving," is the practical dimension of the Upanishadic teachings.

Basis:

I am good; my true nature is auspiciousness! What more do I need?

shivo'smi, kimatah param / शिवोऽस्मि किमतः परम् |

Skanda Upanishad, mantra 1

Swami Chidananda

ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

MEDITATE ON THE ONE



सर्वखल्विदं ब्रह्म ।
तज्जलान् इति
शान्तउपासीत । ।

(छान्दोग्य - उपनिषद् ३ :१४ :१)

*sarvamkhalvidam brahma |
taj-ja-lān iti
shāntaupāsieta ||*

Chāndogya Upanishad (mantra 3.14.1)

Brahman, the Supreme Reality, alone is all this (entire creation, the universe including all the inert things and sentient beings). Staying calm (without likes and dislikes), we must meditate on this ONE TRUTH as being that in which everything is born (*ja*), everything dissolves (*la*) and everything stays alive (*ana / an*).

{An extremely concise expression, *tajjalān = tad – ja – la – an*, is supplied here for deep meditation. '*ja*' stands for *jāyate*, takes birth; '*la*' stands for *leeyate*, merges back; '*ana*' (Vedic usage '*an*') stands for *aniti*, breathes.}



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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www.fowai.org

E-mail : fowaiforum@yahoo.com