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Inner Flame

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

EVERYTHING IS MEANINGLESS WITHOUT COMPASSION

Even a common man knows it: compassion is the essence of spirituality. Neither impressive scholarship nor any amount of supernatural powers can take its place. The eighth volume of Inner Flame, the first issue of which is now in your hands, will have "compassion" as its theme for the six issues of the year.

The narrow 'me' dissolves in compassion, making service of the poor or the needy one's second nature. In contrast, any service without our ego getting erased will have a hidden agenda, sometimes not clearly recognized by us!

This issue features Mā Ānandamayi who was a born saint, a divine manifestation par excellence. Her life lets us know the heights of consciousness that every soul can reach. Spontaneous in her reaching out to people, she was a great blessing on the earth.

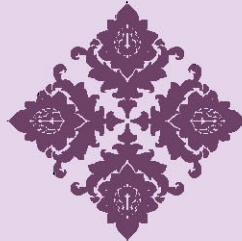
The much-talked about Swāmi Nārāyan temples are covered under *Places that Beckon*, with special attention to the first temple of the sect in Ahmedabad. The worldwide movement has made millions raise their eyebrows in awe and admiration. We get a peep into their view of life in the article.

Buddhism comes close to Advaita Vedānta. The falsity of the individual self is a common teaching. A piece on *Cultivating the Mind* gives good tips on *sādhana*, our spiritual practices.

A lot of wealth and yet great humility mark a remarkable lady of our times - Smt. Sudha Murthy. A fine example of 'simple living and high thinking', she has been serving the society with tremendous energy and enthusiasm. We have presented the transcription of a short video that went viral sometime ago, inspiring large numbers of people.

As always, we request you, the readers, to come out with suggestions for further improvement of this little magazine.

Swami Chidananda



Inner Flame

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CONTENTS

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FEATURED

Ānandamayee Mā

..... 1

PERCEIVING PHOENIX

Compassion

Swami Chidananda..... 9

GEN - NEXT CORNER

Secrets on Cultivating the Mind

Chinul (1158-1210)..... 11

STORY TEACHES

How do we Qualify?

..... 14

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE UPANISHADS?

Swami Chidananda..... 15

TO BE TRUTHFUL IS NOT EASY

Sudheendra Chaitanya..... 16

PLACES THAT BECKON

Swāmi Nārāyan Temples

Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani..... 17

GUEST CORNER

Compassion And Money

Sudha Murthy..... 21

RHYTHMS FOR THE SOUL

Compassion

Robert Service..... 22

OBITUARY

..... 22

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

..... 23

SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

Living With Bhagawan..... 10

G I Gurdjieff..... 16

Lao Tzu..... 20

ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

How Do We See The Liberating Truth?



Introduction

An Irish journalist asked Ānandamayee Mā, "Am I right to believe that you are God?" Sri Mā answered, "There is nothing save He alone; everyone and everything is but a form of God. In your person also He has come here to give darshan". He persisted, "Why are you in this world?" "In this world?" Sri Mā answered, "I am not anywhere. I am myself reposing within myself". During the same conversation the Irishman said, "I am a Christian." Sri Mā answered, "So am I, a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like".

No wonder then that Sri Ānandamayee Mā is widely recognized as a personality of great spiritual eminence. She was born a hundred years ago and she took *samādhi* at the age of 86; these limitations, however, cannot be said to have conditioned her utter freedom to be just herself under all circumstances. She was the embodiment of a joyous self-sufficiency, which enraptured the hearts of all who came near her.

The mysterious aloofness of her personality was totally beyond human understanding. Yet it was so tempered by

her compassionate love for all living creatures that she seemed closer than the most indulgent friend ever could be. She was the Teacher whose guidance was sought by the learned as well as the simple, the old as well as the young (including children), people from alien cultures as well as from traditional backgrounds.

Although she travelled incessantly, it was seen that she was at home everywhere and no one was a stranger to her. Throughout the length and breadth of India and also beyond its shores, people found her to be the personification of their own inner vision of the Adored One who is most dear to their hearts.

Born in Dhaka where she first gained recognition, she was known as "Manush Kālī", that is, the 'living Kālī'. When she moved out of Bengal and visited other provinces, her presence elicited a similar response, even at her first appearance. On the shores of the Holy Narmada, she was greeted as "Devi Narmada". In Madurai she was hailed as the Goddess Mīnakshi by surging crowds who waited for hours for a glimpse of her. In the Punjab she was given the same place of honour as the Holy Granth Sahib. In Vrindavan, a revered Mahārāj saw in her his adored Deity, the Lord Gaurāṅga. The Sindhi devotees of Sri Udiyababaji Mahārāj paid her homage as the visible form of their Deity Jhoolalal. One Muslim devotee used to see a vision of her with a Taj on her head during his meditation. A Christian devotee remarked quite spontaneously,

"Now we have a Face to put on God". The simple highland women of Almora would say to her, "Now that we have you with us, we do not need to visit the temple"

In general, Sri Mā's inimitable smile disarmed all questions regarding her identity. She once answered a devotee's query in these words: "What a childish question to ask! People have various visions of gods and goddesses (in me) according to their own predilections. What I was before, I am now, and shall be hereafter. I am also whatever you or anybody may think I am; why don't you look at it this way: the yearnings (of seekers after Truth) have brought about this body. All of you have wanted it and so you have found it. That is all you need to know."

On 30th April 1896, a child named Nirmala Sundari Devi was born into a pious, prestigious but non-affluent Brahmin household in a small village, in what is now Bangladesh. The name, translated as 'Immaculately Beautiful' seemed appropriate as the infant grew up to be a lovely child. Blithe and happy, Nirmala spent her childhood in agreeable village surroundings, being a favourite with everyone - ready to fetch and carry and to render to anyone who asked for it, whatever service she was capable of. The entire village, consisting mainly of Muslim families, extended to her a love and affection which has endured through the years. Even now, the Muslim population of the village refers to her as "Our own Mā."

Sri Mā's father, a devout Vaishnava, was well known for his beautiful rendering of devotional songs. Sri Mā's mother was a gentle woman of upright nature, totally dedicated to the welfare of her family. That

she was not just like countless such others became evident as the years went by. Many will remember her as the ochre-robed Swami Muktānanda Giri who accompanied Sri Mā on her travels.

Sri Mā was barely thirteen when she was married to Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravarty whose family had a tradition of Shakti-upāsana. As a child-bride, Sri Mā was received into the family of Ramani Mohan's eldest brother Sri Revati Mohan and his wife Pramodā Devi. She remained with them for nearly four years while Ramani Mohan was in Atpara and in Dhaka. From a carefree childhood in her parents' home, she was catapulted into a demanding situation of considerable physical hard work in an atmosphere of restrictive discipline. She cooked, cleaned, fetched water, took care of the children and served her sister-in-law in every way possible. What sets Sri Mā apart from all such girls placed in similar situations is the fact of her total adequacy and a little extra, as it were. She remained uniformly cheerful, good-humoured, and more than willing to shoulder other people's burdens. Nothing was a chore to her. Her serene and equable temper was never disrupted by thoughtlessness or unfair treatment at the hands of the elders.

Actually, Sri Mā's untroubled happy disposition caused her new family some anxiety: her attitude could only mean a simple mind. In her childhood also, she had invoked this fear in her parents' thoughts - perhaps the little girl was just a little below par, not to be at all mischievous and naughty like other children? It took many years for Sri Mā's close companions to realize that she was ever established in her often repeated Vani: *jo ho jaye*: 'Whatever comes to pass,

let it be'. Her boundless compassion overflowed in concern for whoever came within the orbit of her ministrations: family, neighbours, servants as well as animals and plants felt the magic touch of this innate interest in their welfare. She also had a very ready and impish sense of humour which always took note of the foibles of her companions. It gave her and perhaps a friend, much quiet enjoyment. However, being without malice, she never made fun of anyone. She had the aura of perfectibility all around her but somehow, it never overwhelmed her companions. On the contrary, by her gentle ways and ready smile she endeared herself to everyone who came in touch with her.

At the age of 18, Sri Mā came to Ashta gram to stay with her husband at his place of work. In later years, Sri Mā used to refer to her husband by the name 'Bholānāth' so we shall use this title for him in this account. Bholānāth-ji met with a friendly but deferential treatment, which was very endearing. The mantle of a responsible guardian in charge of a precious treasure descended on his shoulders, as it were. It may be stated that he wore this mantle with circumspection and competence all his life, till his death in 1938. Much has been written regarding the purity and perfect celibacy of Sri Mā and Bholānāth-ji's married life. These words are rather inadequate because it would be much better to say that such questions never arose where they were concerned. Bholānāth-ji obviously bore the impact of a beautiful young wife who was ready to obey his slightest bidding with an exemplary calmness of spirit.

From Ashta gram, Bholānāth-ji and Shri Mā came to Bajitpur on a transfer. This

township has acquired special significance as the place where she went through the various processes of intensive *sāadhanā*. How this came about may be best related in her own words: "One day in Bajitpur, I had, as usual, gone to the pond near the house where we lived, for my daily bath. While pouring the water over my head, the *kheyāla* came to me, 'how would it be to play the role of a *Sādhaka*? And so the *līlā* began" [*Kheyāla* may be best explained by the words 'a spontaneous thought', distinct from an act of will or a wish for some desired end. It generally came into being perhaps taking shape out of the needs of her companions. '*Līlā*' means 'sportive play', an activity which is an end in itself.]

Once expressed, it was seen that a concatenation of events led to its fulfilment. Sometime *kheyāla* could be invoked by repeated requests or deflected also. Sri Mā seemed equally agreeable toward any of the results accruing from her *kheyāla*. With Sri Mā, *Kheyāla* was simultaneous with spontaneous action in relation to it. Following the routine of an ordinary housewife, she would engage in *sāadhanā* after her husband came home and she had seen to his comfort, even to the detail of preparing a *hookka* for his after-dinner smoke. Orally repeating the word '*Hari, Hari, Hari*' for no special reason than that she had heard it from childhood from her father, Bholānāth-ji would see her gradually becoming absorbed in a world of inner joy. Soon, he saw her assuming some yogic postures or Yoga *āsanas*, of which she had no previous knowledge. One day he asked her, "Why do you say 'Hari'? We are not Vaishnava's". Sri Mā asked, "Shall I then say *Siva, Siva*?" The change of Name had no effect on the *kriyās* of *sāadhanā*.

Sri Mā has said that she did not contemplate on any visual form when she repeated the words. The sound was all-in-all. The syllables were like the resonance being struck off an all pervasive beat. Her body was, as if in tune with the universal rhythm of that power, which underpins all that exists. Her body became, as it were, an instrument for the play of this cosmic music. She seemed to become one with the sound of the letters that she uttered; her limbs, her entire body moved rhythmically as if in vibrant dance-forms of an extra-ordinary choreography directed by an inner Power. Sometimes she lay for many hours absolutely still and totally absorbed in an inner bliss. At such times, her body emanated a radiance which was visible to onlookers as they watched her enthralled, never doubting the genuineness of the manifestations. Sri Mā lived the life of a pilgrim on the path of spiritual endeavour for nearly six years; during this time, she initiated herself and proceeded thereafter in a more systematic manner. Bholānāth-ji realized that he was in the presence of a very special embodiment of Divine Power. He himself accepted the much-coveted initiation from Sri Mā within the first year of this manifestation. Thereafter, their relationship acquired a new dimension - that of Guru and disciple, although Sri Mā never changed in her attitude of complete obedience and deference to Bholānāth-ji's wishes.

Referring to this period of her life, Sri Mā has said, "*Sāadhanās* by which man endeavours to attain self-realization are of endless variety, and each variety has innumerable aspects. All these revealed themselves to me as a part of myself". In later years, she had occasion to talk about her

experiences in select gatherings of ascetics, scholars or other seekers of Truth. The pundits have marvelled at her knowledge of all tenets of faith, in all their doctrinal details. Sri Mā has said that, even so, she has not talked about one thousandth part of all that was revealed to her during her years of intensive *sāadhanā*. Sometime in 1922, she became *maunam* [silent] which came as a mark of the fulfilment of *sāadhanā*. After the period of *maunam*, she began to converse with visitors on religious topics.

Sri Mā and Bholānāth-ji moved from Bajitpur to Shahbagh in Dhaka in 1924. Relatives of people who had earlier known Sri Mā and Bholānāth-ji heard of the young housewife; visitors came out of curiosity and stayed to become life-long devotees. Among the early devotees were people from all walks of life including Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukherji (later Swami Akhandānandaji) and his daughter Adorini Devi, known to all devotees as Gurupriyā Devi or Didi. Sri Mā's parents were invited by Bholānāth to come and stay at Shahbagh. From them, the devotees of Dhaka heard about Sri Mā's childhood days.

In Dhaka, Sri Mā lived amidst an atmosphere of the miraculous. Her healing touch was sought by strangers from far and near. She was seen in ecstatic states of *samādhi* and *mahābhāva* during *kīrtans*. An eyewitness account of a *mahābhāva* on the occasion of a *kīrtan* is described in these words: "At one moment, Sri Mā was sitting like one of us. The next moment, she had changed completely. Her body was swaying rhythmically. Her sari's border fell back from over her head (she always kept her head covered as was the custom among women).

Her eyes were closed and the entire body swayed to the rhythm of the *kīrtan*. With her body still swaying, she stood up or rather was, as if drawn upwards on her feet. It looked as if Sri Mā had left her body, which had become an instrument in the hands of an invisible power. It was obvious to all of us that there was no will motivating her actions. Sri Mā was evidently quite oblivious of her surroundings. She circled round the room as if wafted along by the wind. Occasionally, her body would start falling to the ground, but before it completed the movement it would regain its upright position, just like a wind-blown leaf which flutters toward the ground and then is uplifted and blown forward by a fresh gust of wind." After such *bhāvas*, she would lie in a *samādhi* for many hours. Didi Gurupriya writes in wonder "It amazed me that Sri Mā so naturally entered into a state of God-intoxication, a state which is coveted by *sādhakas* of all times. No, not God-intoxication, her state could not be called that, I do not know how to describe a state which was at once sublime and yet normal". This interplay of the dimensions of normalcy and transcendence was a constant and inalienable feature of Sri Mā's behaviour.

The halcyon days of happy gatherings round Sri Mā were rather short lived. Sri Mā set out on her travels in 1927. Bābā Bholānāth liked to visit places of pilgrimage. They travelled quite extensively. The devotees of Dhaka gradually got accustomed to Sri Mā's frequent absences. It became clear that Sri Mā had the *kheyāla* to leave Dhaka. The devotees had built a small Ashram for her but Sri Mā's *kheyāla* to move out proved too strong. Accompanied by Bholānāth and Bhaiji, Sri Mā left Dhaka in mid-1932.

Travelling in a haphazard way, they

found their way to Dehra Dun and Raipur, a remote village in the interior. They took up their abode in the dilapidated Siva Temple a little away from the village. This was the beginning of a new way of life for the two of them. Bholānāth-ji devoted himself to his *sādhanā* whole heartedly but in general, Sri Mā wandered around alone or sat surrounded by the village women. Back in Dehra Dun, Kamala Nehru visited Sri Mā and became an ardent devotee, introducing many, including those residing in Switzerland to Sri Mā's love and teachings. Mā met Gandhiji at Wardha. In later years, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi were also drawn to Sri Mā, through their memories of the last days of Kamala. Dehra Dun became another Dhaka. The tradition of joyous gatherings spread to other towns such as Delhi, Meerut, Lucknow, Solan and Simla where the festival of Hari-*kīrtan* under the aegis of the Hari Sabha received a new lease of life in Sri Mā's presence and by Bholānāth-ji's enthusiastic participation. Bholānāth-ji had re-joined Sri Mā on coming down from Uttarkashi. He had been introduced to the new devotees and accepted whole-heartedly as Pita-ji (father). Sadly, in 1938, Bholānāth-ji left his sorrowing family of devotees. His passing away resulted in a new understanding of Sri Mā and her ways. Sri Mā had been a very devoted wife and she had tirelessly rendered personal service to him whenever he had been ill. During his last illness, she was constantly at his bedside. He died with her hand on his head and breathing the word *ānanda*. It was felt that he was giving expression to his own state of *ānanda* and peace.

Most of the devotees had thought that Sri Mā would be distraught but they were amazed to see that there were no signs of grief. She remained as serene as always. She noted their reaction and said gently, "Do you start to wail and cry if a person goes to another room in the house? This death is inevitably connected with this life. In the sphere of Immortality, where is the question of death and loss? Nobody is lost to me". Sri Mā's followers began to understand a little of the meaning of her total detachment and yet an over-flowing compassion for her people. As the years passed, the enigma of her personality deepened; from the very moment of her birth, she had been fully conscious of her Self; when she engaged in *sādhana*, everything was revealed to her by her own *kheyāla*. She was practically an illiterate village girl but when she began to teach, she spoke in the language of erudite scholars, never making the slightest mistake in her logical presentation of a thesis. She seemed fully aware of all doctrinal differences, never confusing one with the other in her conversations with the learned pundits; yet she had not been initiated into any particular religious order or trained by any yogic instructor. She had not encountered any Guru who could have exerted any influence on her life. In fact, she had never retired from the world to become a recluse; neither did she withdraw herself from her kith and kin. She had not performed *sādhana* as it is generally understood in the tradition, yet she could speak with authority on all aspects of the life of a spiritual quest for enlightenment. It is on account of such facts that the word 'unique' is applied to describe her.

Sri Mā continued to move around in her own style of unstructured itineraries and wherever she stayed, it immediately became

the centre for a gathering of thousands. Sri Mā, in her compassionate regard for the organisers, moved out as soon as things began to get out of hand. There was no central management in Sri Mā's vicinity; whoever was able, took charge for as long as he could. Things arranged themselves, as it were. In all the major cities Sri Mā visited frequently, the devotees got together to construct one Ashram after another. However, it did not serve the purpose of restricting her movements or providing her with some comforts while she stayed in one place since, as often as not, she would not visit the Ashram at all but go to some other place.

Sri Mā was invited to join in a council of *sādhus* at Jhansi in 1944. Here, other *Mahātmās* came to know her; So far the *Sādhū Samāj* had avoided her because she happened to be in the form of a woman. But this artificial barrier was broken down. Thereafter Sri Mā was given the highest honour possible. The heads of other Monastic Orders recognized in her the quintessence of the Upanishadic tradition and accepted her word as *Shāstra* itself. At Sri Mā's *kheyāla*, a great Savitri Yagna was started at Varanasi in the newly built Ashram in January 1947. The *sankalpa* was for "The Good of Mankind" because there was great tension in the country just before Independence in August of the same year. Notwithstanding all these negative factors, the Yagna proceeded unhindered and came to a spectacular conclusion on January 1950. A great concourse of renowned Mahatmas graced the occasion. It was attended by princes, artists of repute, political personalities, and the ordinary mass of people. In Sri Mā's presence, all functions took on an extra-ordinary glamour.

This Yagna, solemn and grand in itself, was overwhelming in its impact on the participants.

The most attractive function under Sri Mā's aegis turned out to be the *Samyam Saptāh*. Sri Mā very often spoke on the importance of observing restraints in one's way of life at least once a month if not once a week. It was suggested that a *Saptāh* of *samyam* be arranged in Sri Mā's vicinity so that all devotees could assemble for this purpose. The first such *saptāh* (week) was organised in Varanasi Ashram in 1952. The participants would observe total fast on the first and last days. In between, there would be very simple meals, partaken once a day. The menu was drawn up by Sri Mā herself. The popularity of this function was phenomenal. The whole Ashram geared up to it. *Mahātmās* came from far and near. People heard lectures from learned orators whom they would never have had the occasion to listen to, in the ordinary course. They heard rare scriptures and listened to good music. The best part of the day was at 9.30 P.M. when Sri Mā answered questions from the audience. The whole day passed by like a flash in looking forward to this half hour of *mātri satsang*.

The best way to understand Sri Mā is not to compare her with any of the luminaries in our spiritual skies. The recognition that she gained in her own lifetime was just by her presence. The harmony of opposites was the underlying theme of her way of life. Amidst the splendour and magnificence which seemed inevitable wherever she was, she lived like an ascetic.

Throughout her life, she was a very small eater. Apart from the months of abstention from food, which happened

periodically, she followed other rigorous penances. For many years, she used to eat on alternate days. When remonstrated with, Sri Mā would say, "It is not necessary to eat at all to preserve the body. I eat only because a semblance of normal behaviour must be kept up so that you should not feel uncomfortable with me." The intake of food was not related to any of her illnesses. Actually, she was in perfect health when she was not eating anything. Illnesses came and went following a rhythm of their own.

Some devotees, in their praise of her all-encompassing message, sometimes say that she welcomed all faiths as true paths to God. This could be an understatement. The fact was that Sri Mā saw no differences which had to be cemented; to her, indeed, everything was the One only. The same may be said about her treatment of women. She recognised no inferiority or superiority. She demanded (if such a word can be used for her) the same high quality of asceticism from the brahmacharis as well as brahmacharinis of the Ashram. Purity of speech, action and thoughts was ever the ideal, which she set forth for all travellers on the path of God-realization.

Sri Mā, when speaking with modern young people, showed herself to be fully aware of the trends of the times; even so, her interlocutors could never make her accede to their demands for compromises. With great humour and understanding, she could always bring them around to accepting her request to begin the search for Him who is hidden in the cave of the heart.

In retrospect, it now seems that Sri Mā started the process of withdrawing herself much ahead of time. She became increasingly unavailable because it was said

she was not well. All her devotees know that illness happened to her because it was not her *kheyāla* to deny them access to her. Many times, she had said, "Why do you feel so antagonistic to illnesses? They also come to this body like you do. Do I tell you to go away?" Many-a-time, acceding to the prayers of her companions, Sri Mā had also been seen performing certain Yogic kriyās to get rid of her ailments. In the late seventies and in 1981, she did not have *kheyāla* to respond to any kind of prayers for her recovery. She went about fulfilling her various engagements. She did not look ill but as beautiful and serene as ever; but definitely the mass of devotees got used to the idea of not getting her *darshan* as easily as always. For all practical purposes, she had withdrawn herself from public audiences apart from a few exceptions. Her last *kheyāla* seemed to have been for the performance of the *ati Rudra Yagna* at Kankhal. This was the greatest of the Vedic Yagna-s. Under Sri Mā's Guidance, it was celebrated with great splendour and scrupulous adherence to every detail of scriptural injunctions.

In the last days, Sri Mā was serene but uncharacteristically seemed to be removing herself beyond the prayers of people around her. Ordinarily she always gave the greatest heed to the words of the Mahatmas, but now to all prayers for her own recovery, she would smile and say, "There is no *kheyāla*". On the occasion of the Annual Durga Puja, Sri Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Shringeri wanted to invite her and urged that she should get rid of her illness speedily. She replied in her usual gentle tones, "This body

has no illness, Pitaji. It is being recalled toward the Unmanifest. Whatever you see happening now is conducive toward that event". At the moment of bidding him farewell next day, she again reiterated her inability to accede to his wishes, saying "As the *ātmā*, I shall ever abide with you".

Sri Ma spent her last days at Kishenpur Ashram. She made no farewells apart from saying "*Sivāyanamah*" on the night of the 25th; this mantra is indicative of the final dissolution of worldly bondages. She became Unmanifest on Friday evening of August 27th, 1982. Sri Mā had said that she belonged to everybody and so everybody participated in bidding farewell to the human body which had sustained their beloved Mā for 86 years. Sri Mā came at a time when India as well as the world passed through many crises. She remained as one of the people, at all times, imparting hope and solace and upholding the age-old ideals of our tradition in the midst of overwhelming impacts of alien influences. She fully understood the existential implications of the present age of technology and by her way of being in the world, put it in a correct perspective for those who wished to see beyond it. That God is as much present in the world given over to scientific research as in the age of mythology we may say is the "Message" conveyed by her sojourn on earth. Sri Mā will ever remain in the form of her immortal words, the dearest of which are, "Mā is (I am) here, what is there to worry about?" (*Mā āchen, kiser cintā?*)

Source: reduced from
www.anandamayi.org



- Swami Chidananda



“They are ever engaged in (acts of service that bring about) the good of all living beings,” says¹ Lord Sri Krishna while pointing to advanced spiritual practitioners. Pursuing the Reality that defies² description, these “adorers of the imperishable³ truth” are a blessing on the earth for every thought, word and deed of theirs has the fragrance of compassion.

The ego in us is the breeding ground of endless insecurity, which makes it next to impossible to care for others. Guided by the spiritual teachings of lofty scriptures like the Geeta, we begin to contemplate upon our true nature – the Self (*Ātmā*) – which weakens and finally destroys the ego. Compassion then is natural to us.

“She is full of friendliness and compassion,” goes another pointer⁴ to the person on the path, in whom her ego is on fast decline, if not erased, thanks to her inquiry and reflection. Having no violent⁵ thought towards anybody, she also exhibits tremendous amount of accommodative⁶ spirit, which reflects as tolerance and forgiveness.

1. Dealing with your imperfections

“There’s no need to be perfect, to inspire others. Let people get inspired by how you deal with your imperfections,” said someone

beautifully. When we are less mature, an endless battle (or a game) goes on within us; the process of self-judgment makes us swing between the two extremes of a pendulum, proud of ourselves at times and condemning ourselves at another! As we understand the subtleties of the working of the ego, we begin to give up our reactions to what we notice about our own thought, word and deed. We may slip here or fall there but either way, we stay in a state of watchfulness and avoid jumping to some conclusion like, “Oh what a fool I was,” or “Now everybody should know how good I am” etc.

Self-judgment lands us in a mounting spiral and our old tendencies hardly diminish. Self-awareness, on the other hand, causes this spiral to come down and die away. We learn in every situation and do not react. Compassion – for others and for ourselves – emanates from the poise that we discover within us following this centeredness, from this awareness.

2. Will can go a little distance

Deciding, “I will be compassionate,” can go a little distance but not far. Decisions emerge from our will and they often lack intelligence. A course of action, backed by will power, impresses the immature mind but fails to deliver in the long run. Engaging in social work and activities involving service to the poor etc. also have serious limitations, considering the clever nature of the ego. That is where organized religions have also always failed in the history of mankind to

really make a significant contribution to suffering humanity. Members pretty soon develop of a group, which commits itself to some noble cause, develop pretty soon the sense of “we are right and noble; others need to join us” and become the cause of much division and conflict in society. This has often even led to bloodshed.

No wonder we find many a times a man not belonging to any religion is very kind; and at another a staunch member of some religious group who is aggressive and violent. So we learn that there are processes that truly bring about deep inner change, which are independent of all the structured theories and practices.

3. Intellectualism is not the way either

Intelligence is different from intellectual eminence. There are mighty scholars in the world who lack compassion. They get lost in their concepts and are often not aware how their self-interest has blinded them to the real concerns of humanity. Both head and heart, unless illumined by the light of awareness, can lead us astray. We can be vigorous in our thinking and get caught in the web of thought before realizing what is happening. We can similarly be swept away by emotions rising

from narrow identifications, in which case it is mere emotionalism.

Geeta therefore emphasizes⁷ certain inner qualities like purity of motives, self-control, absence of personal likes and dislikes, a taste for solitude and a sense of detachment with regard to worldly acquisitions. True love of God and the rise of these qualities go hand in hand; they are like the two sides of the same coin. Self-awareness too is another facet of this very inner transformation. When there is clear understanding of the falsity of the ego and we see how all its processes are in vain, we “let go” of umpteen ways of self-seeking. Our eyes open to a new dimension of life and compassion is then natural.

Notes:

1. *sarva-bhoota-hiteratāh* – Geeta 12.4
2. *anirdeshyam* ibid 12.3
3. *akshara-upāsakas*
4. *maitraḥkarunaeva cha* ibid 12.13
5. *advesthāsarva-bhootānām* 12.13
6. *kshamee* 12.13
7. See verses 18.50 through 18.54 of Geeta

SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

A devotee, who was quite intimate with Bhagavan, asked him, ‘Some of the devotees who live with Bhagavan behave very strangely. They seem to do many things that Bhagavan does not approve of. Why does Bhagavan not correct them?’

Bhagavan replied, ‘Correcting oneself is correcting the whole world. The sun is simply bright. It does not correct anyone. Because it shines, the whole world is full of light. Transforming yourself is a means of giving light to the whole world.’

- Living With Bhagawan

-Chinul (1158-1210)

If you want to become a Buddha, understand that Buddha is the mind. How can you search for the mind in the far distance? It is not outside the body. The physical body is a phantom, for it is subject to birth and death; the true mind is like space, for it neither ends nor changes. Therefore it is said, "These hundred bones will crumble and return to fire and wind. But One Thing is eternally numinous and covers heaven and earth."

It is tragic. People have been deluded for so long. They do not recognize that their own minds are the true *Buddhas*. They do not recognize that their own natures are the true dharma. They want to search for the dharma, yet they still look far away for holy ones. They want to search for the Buddha, yet they will not observe their own minds.

If they aspire to the path of Buddha hood while obstinately holding to their feeling that the Buddha is outside the mind or the dharma is outside their nature, then, even though they pass through *kalpas* as numerous as dust motes, burning their bodies, charring their arms, crushing their bones and exposing their marrow, or writing sutra as with their own blood, never lying down to sleep, eating only one offering a day at the hour of the Hare, or even studying the entire *tripitaka* and cultivating all sorts of ascetic practices, it is like trying to make rice by boiling sand—it will only add to their tribulation.

If they would only understand their own minds, then, without searching, approaches to dharma as numerous as the sands of the

Ganges and uncountable sublime meanings would all be understood.

As the World Honoured One said, "I see that all sentient beings everywhere are endowed with a tathagata's wisdom and virtue." He also said, "All the illusory guises in which sentient beings appear take shape in the sublime mind of the tathagata's complete enlightenment."

Consequently, you should know that outside this mind, there is no Buddha hood which can be attained. All the *Buddhas* of the past were merely people who understood their minds. All the sages and saints of the present are, likewise, merely people who have cultivated their minds. All future mediators should rely on this dharma as well.

I hope that you who cultivate the path will never search outside. The nature of the mind is unstained; it is originally whole and complete in itself. If you will only leave behind false conditioning, you will be "such" like the Buddha.

Question: If you say that the Buddha-nature exists in the body right now, then, since it is in the body, it is not separate from us ordinary people. So why can we not see this Buddha-nature now? Please explain this further to enlighten us on this point.

Chinul: It is in your body, but you do not see it. Ultimately, what is that thing which during the twelve periods of the day knows hunger and thirst, cold and heat, anger and joy? This physical body is a synthesis of four conditions: earth, water, fire and wind. Since matter is passive and insentient, how can it

see, hear, sense, and know? That which is able to see, hear, sense, and know is perform your Buddha-nature.

For this reason, Lin-chi said, "The four great elements do not know how to expound the dharma or listen to the dharma. It is only that formless thing before your eyes, clear and bright of itself, which knows how to expound dharma or listen to dharma." This formless thing is the dharma-seal of all the *Buddhas*; it is your original mind. Since this Buddha-nature exists in your body right now, why do you vainly search for it outside?

In case you cannot accept this, I will mention some of the events surrounding a few of the ancient saints' entrance onto the path. These should allow you to resolve your doubts. Listen carefully and try to believe.

Once long again, a king who believed in a heterodox doctrine asked the Venerable Bharati: "What is the Buddha?"

The Venerable one answered, "Seeing the nature is the Buddha."

The king asked, "Has the master seen the nature yet, or not?"

The Venerable answered, "Yes, I have seen the Buddha-nature."

"Where is the Buddha-nature?"

"This nature is present during the performance of actions."

"During the performance of action? I can't see it now."

"It appears in this present performance of action; your majesty just doesn't see it."

"But do I have it too, or not?"

"If your majesty performs actions, there are none in which it is not present. If your majesty were not acting, its essence would be very difficult to see"

"But when one acts, at how many places does it appear?"

"It appears in eight different places."

"Would you describe these eight places?"

"In the womb it is called a fetus. On being born it is called a person. In the eyes it is called seeing and in the ears it is called hearing. In the nose it smells, in the tongue it talks, in the hands it grasps, and in the feet it runs. When it is expanded, it contains worlds as numerous as grains of sand. When it is compressed, it exists within one minute particle of dust. Those who have recognized it know that it is the Buddha-nature; those who have not call it soul or spirit."

As the king listened, his mind opened into awakening.

In another case, a monk asked the master Kuei-tsung:

"What is the Buddha?"

The master answered, "I will tell you, but I'm afraid you won't believe me."

"How could I dare not believe the sincere words of the master?"

The master said, "It's you!"

"How can you prove it?"

"If there is one eyelash in your eye, flowers in the sky will fall everywhere."

The monk heard this and understood.

These stories I have just told about the saints of old entering the path, are clear and simple; they do not strain the powers of comprehension. If you gain some faith and understanding from these two kongans, you will walk hand in hand with the saints of old.

Kuei-feng, in a profound explanation of the meaning of initial awakening/subsequent cultivation said,

"Although we know that a frozen pond is entirely water, the sun's heat is necessary to melt it. Although we awaken to the fact that an ordinary man is Buddha, the power of dharma is necessary to make it permeate our cultivation."

"When that pond has melted, the water

flows freely and can be used for irrigation and cleaning. When falsity is extinguished, the mind will be numinous and dynamic and then its functions of penetrating brightness will manifest."

Nowadays, deluded and ignorant people wrongly assume that in the one moment of awakening, incalculable sublime functions, as well as magic and miracles, manifest in tandem. This is the sort of understanding I was referring to when I said that you did not know the proper sequence of practice and did not distinguish the root from the branches.

To seek the path of Buddha hood while not knowing the proper sequence of practice or the root and the branches is like trying to

put a square peg into a round hole. Can this be anything but a grave mistake?

Because such people do not know of any expedients, they hesitate as if they were facing a steep precipice and end up backsliding. Alas, many have broken their ties with the spiritual family of the Buddha in this manner. Since they neither understand for themselves nor believe that others have had an understanding-awakening, when they see someone without spiritual powers they act insolently, ridiculing the sages and insulting the saints. This is really quite pitiful.

(Chinul was the founder of Korean Zen; excerpted from 'Tracing Back the Radiance-Chinul's Korean Way of Zen'-Robert E. Buswell 1991)



MULLAH NASRUDDIN



The Day I came to Know that my **DONKEY** and my **MIND** are **TWINS**... I am Truly Enjoying their Company... Ha-Ha!

-Nasruddin

Story Teaches

How Do We Qualify?

One day, a young boy came into the monastery and asked the Chief Monk, to give him some work and also food.

The Chief Monk asked him: What have you read? What work can you do? What do you know?

The boy replied: I have not read in school. I have no proficiency in any work excepting some stray jobs like washing food plates, cleaning up the cottage etc., I do not know anything else.

The Chief Monk asked: Are you sure you do not know anything else?

The young boy replied: Oh, yes, Sir, now I remember.

I can play good Chess.

The Chief Monk said: Oh that's good. Now I shall test you in your game.

He asked another monk to come with chess board and coins and asked for a table to be placed so that the game could start.

Before start of the game, the Chief Monk said: Now see, I have a sword in my hand. If any one is defeated, his nose will be severed.

The boy became nervous. However, without any other way to go, he agreed.

The game started. Initially, the boy made some mistakes in moves. His position on the board became almost hopeless.

He then concentrated completely on the game and improved the position to a winning level.

Then he looked at the monk sitting

opposite and playing. He was not quite nervous but obviously disturbed a little.

The boy then thought,

"I am a useless fellow in life. Nothing will change the world if I lose the game and lose my nose.

"But this monk, is a well read person, doing meditation and is sure to attain Buddha hood. Why should he lose?"

So the young boy deliberately made a wrong move, so that the monk sitting opposite could take advantage and win the game!

The Chief Monk suddenly flashed his sword on the table. All the coins flew into different directions.

He then said: The game is over. Oh boy you are IN. You will be with us in the monastery hereafter.

The boy did not understand.

The Chief Monk explained: "I did not ask you to play chess to find out your calibre in the game. But I was looking for two essential qualities that are necessary for Self-realization.

One is *Maha Prajna*. The Great Awareness. I found that in you. When your game became positionally bad, you put your entire concentration and attention on the game and improved your game. This is Maha Prajna.

The second is *Maha Karuna* - The Great Compassion. I found that also in you. When your opponent was about to lose the game, you looked at him with great compassion and deliberately made a wrong

move so that he could win.

These two qualities are adequate to do *sādhana* and make the life *Meaningful*.

YOU ARE IN.

Life isn't about winning or losing; there is nothing to win and nothing to lose.

You can, at the best, enjoy or suffer

your limited time called *Life* but enjoyment or suffering is also only a figment of your imagination.

Going beyond enjoyment, suffering, winning or losing is the path that few choose to walk.

Win or Lose... let's have a great life.



What do we learn from the Upanishads?

DELUSION AND GRIEF ARE PSYCHOLOGICAL

Upanishads help us "see rightly". In this right seeing, a whole lot of psychological constructs dissolve away!

To see the rope as a rope is "right seeing". To see a snake where actually there is a rope is "psychological".

Our likes, dislikes, prejudices and biases are all psychological.

For example, to know somebody is a Ph. D. (if she has a Ph. D.) is right seeing. To envy her and to think we are less worthy is psychological interference of conditioning. This envy can be ended by spiritual healing.

"Where is any more delusion, any more grief, when right seeing takes place?" asks Ishāvāsya Upanishad (mantra 7).

Basis:

How can there be delusion or grief to her who sees oneness everywhere?

tatra ko mohah kah shokah ekatvam-anupashyatah

Swami Chidananda

To Be Truthful Is Not Easy

-Sudheendra Chaitanya

Worshippers of truth are indeed rare. Most people may want to be truthful in their heart of hearts but they succumb to the necessities of worldly existence easily. 'They carry a nagging feeling of compromise within; this is why they cringe when they meet a man of truth.'

Such is not the case with the worshippers of truth. Even rarer amongst them care not to be dogmatic about anything. Do you know how difficult it is to be truthful completely, stake everything of yours on something, and yet not be dogmatic? It is like playing with death! Such ones alone can find the fearlessness and purity to lay their hands on the knobs that turn the doors of truth.

Even amongst them, very few lose their individuality quickly. In such of them who do so, the sense of individuality gallops to its own death, in a matter of months. They are left with the transcendental alone, utterly choice less!

In others, the sense of individuality does take a while to die. There appears enormous resistance from within, in spite of a tremendous commitment to truth. It seems that one has to regularly walk through fire and lose a bit of the venom of untruth.

Give up that resistance! And, you shall see the individuality crumble like a huge building right in front of you, with nothing to support it.



SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

"Awakening is possible only for those who seek it and want it, for those who are ready to struggle with themselves for a very long time and very persistently in order to attain it."

- G I Gurdjieff

Places that Beckon

Swāmi Nārāyan Temples

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani

Travel to any place on the earth and you are more than likely to find a Swāmi Nārāyan Temple there!

You will discover that this is so, whether you go to far-flung places (like Fiji or New Zealand, Sweden or the UAE, USA or Wales) or closer to home within India (Ahmedabad or New Delhi or Pune).

Whether the temple is big (as is the newest one built at a whopping US\$100 million in Hollywood as recently as 2013 [see picture]) or small, each temple is a reflection of the pristine principles of the Swāminārāyan faith.

The Swāminārāyan faith is a Hindu sect, based on the Vedas. In today's times, it is practised all over the world by its millions of followers through social service. When asked how they can mix spirituality with social service, they reply "How can you separate the two?" "For, those who wish to sincerely serve society must be spiritually pure and only those who are spiritually pure can sincerely serve society".

Bochasanwāsi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swāminārāyan Sansthā or BAPS, as this spiritual organisation is known, was started by Bhagwan Swāminārāyan (1781-1830) and established in 1907 by Shastri Maharaj (1865-1951). Founded on the pillars of practical spirituality, BAPS reaches out far

and wide to address the spiritual, moral and social challenges and issues faced in the world. Its strength lies in the purity of its nature and purpose. BAPS strives to care for the world by caring for societies, families as well as individuals. Its universal work through a worldwide network of over 3,850 centres has received many national and international awards and affiliation with the United Nations.

Today, a million or more Swāminārāyan followers begin their day with *pūjā* and meditation; they lead upright, honest lives and spend regular hours in serving others.

They adhere to five lifetime vows namely, No Alcohol, No Addictions, No Adultery, No Meat, No Impurity of body and mind. Such

pure morality and spirituality forms the foundation of the humanitarian services performed by BAPS.

Its spiritual activities are rooted in the *mandirs* (the temples)-centres of faith and devotion. Devotees come to the *mandirs* to pray and offer their devotional and voluntary services. They perform daily *ārati* and hold weekly assemblies. All these activities strengthen the faith of the devotees. Medical, educational, pro-environmental, disaster-relief and similar such programmes are all undertaken through its temples and by the work of the volunteers.



1. The Shri Swāminārāyan Temple, Ahmedabad



This is the first temple of the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya. It is located in Kālupur area of Ahmedabad, the largest city in Gujarat, India. It was

built on the instructions of Swāminārāyan, the founder of the sect. As per the will of Swāminārāyan, the administration of the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya is divided into two *gādis* (seats) - NarNārāyan Dev Gādi and LaxmiNārāyan Dev Gādi. This temple is the headquarters of the NarNārāyan Dev Gādi. Green and yellow sculptures of Hindu gods and goddesses, their bodies fitted in opulent dress, cover the structure of this nineteenth-century temple.

With its architecture carved out in Burma teak wood, every coloured arch and bracket is in a different, bright shade; this is a feature that stands out in most Swāminārāyan temples. According to *Anjali Desai*, author of *India Guide Gujarat*, the temple resembles a fairy tale with all its colours and opulent carvings that profusely embellish every wooden bracket, column and arch. The temple attracts a million people on the day after Diwāli. It also has a multi-story guesthouse that is air conditioned and has a fully equipped medical clinic within its compound.

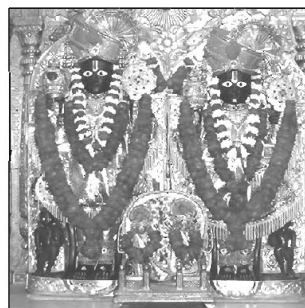
The land for construction of this first shrine of Swāminārāyan Sampradāya was given by the British Imperial Government in India to Swāminārāyan. The task of constructing this temple was entrusted personally by Swāminārāyan to Ānandanand Swami (a *paramhansa* of the sect). The

installation ceremony of the *mūrtis* (images) in the temple was celebrated in the presence of about 50,000 pilgrims representing many parts of India. The primary deity of the temple is NarNārāyan Dev.

2. Architecture

The central gateway of the temple is artistic. It blends local, regional and British styles of architecture and sculpture along with Marathi and Rajasthani folk cultures and costumes. The columns are engraved with vertical lining in the Corinthian order. The top of the projected pavilions are remnants of Mughal architecture. Statues of the women wearing frilled blouses and petticoats, carrying their kids on their waist depict the Gujarati women. This central gate is made without taking any kind of measurements. This is a reality and amazing fact of this gate.

3. NarNarayan Temple



This is the heart of the temple complex. The temple was constructed as per scriptural norms with intricate carvings in pure Burma-teak and constructed with sculptural art by depicting deities' episodes, auspicious symbols and religious icons representing axiomatic religion and Indian culture. The temple is believed to be a valuable part of cultural heritage in the socio-religious history of Gujarat and India. The images in this temple are of NarNārāyan Dev in the centre, Rādhākrishna Dev on the right, Dharmadev, Bhakti Mātā and Hari Krishna on the left of the central hall. The images were made in Dungarpur and stone came from quarries in Mimmatnagar and Dhrāngadhra.

The temple is also known for the attractive dresses that drape the deities. Dresses for the central NarNārāyan as well as Rādhā Krishna images are changed seven times a day and are never repeated.

4. Rang Mahal

An idol depicting Ghanshyam Maharaj in the form of a child has been installed in a place called the *Rang Mahal* in the temple where Swāminārāyan stayed during his visits to Ahmedabad. Some personal items of Swāminārāyan have been displayed for viewing by visitors on the ground and first floors. A carved wooden life-sized idol of Swāminarayan in standing *sambhang* position was installed here fifty years after the construction of the temple. It is one of the finest specimens of wooden art sculpting in Gujarat. The southern side of this building is known as Shree Tejendra Bhuvan and houses visiting pilgrims.

5. Temple for Women (West)

The *haveli* (mansion) to the west of the temple used to be the official residence of the *āchārya* of the NarNārāyan Dev Gādi. Now, the ground floor of the front side houses the offices and the inner portion accommodates the residency of the *sāmkhya yogi* women (ladies who have taken celibacy vows and devoted their life to the temple). In the inner temple, the Gādiwalla (the *āchārya* Maharajshri's wife and spiritual leader of the women in the Swāminārāyan Sampradāya) holds religious assemblies solely for the benefit of the women. An idol of Ghanshyam Maharaj has been installed in this temple and is served by the *sāmkhya yogi* women devotees.

This mansion is decorated with chandeliers, suspended lamps and large mirrors as it was supposed to be the residence of the *āchārya*. The brackets of the

pillars in the portico as well as arches have been adorned with carvings in geometrical designs and a variety of flower and creeper motifs.

6. The Wood-sculptured Haveli



A three-storey mansion was constructed in the year 1871. The mansion itself rests on octagonal and square wooden pillars on which *ardh-mūrti* relief sculpture

of flowers and creepers is engraved. The *sabhā mandap*, an extensive Central Hall, has been constructed on sixty pillars. There, giant sized sculptures on twelve high pillars in the front row on which rest the portico of the first floor, capture our attention with their great artistic appeal. These sculptures include a flying Hanuman lifting the Devgiri mountain in his palm; a pot-bellied Ganesha wearing a scarlet turban in the South Indian style, miniature sculptures of several soldiers armed and dressed in Maratha turbans and costumes and herds of monkeys. Interestingly, some sculptures depict the 1857 uprising, with the stories of Rāni of Jhansi and other heroes narrated in carvings of the pillars. There are a total of 12 such pillars, which depict scenes such as a Maratha warrior fighting under the Rāni of Jhansi in guise of Durgā, the Hindu goddess, Indian leader Tatyā Tope in the guise of Narsimha, the lion headed form of Vishnu, and that of parrots which tell the mood of the times. Sculptures of lions and elephants, birds like peacocks and parrots and perfectly engraved leaves and flowers decorate the panels. The beams, ceilings, and lower

sections are adorned with engravings, artistic sculptures and free-hand designs. In this mansion, the āchārya sits on the wooden seat once used by Swāminārāyan in the Congregation Hall. Vrajendraprasād Mahal, a new residence of the saints, and a dining hall for the devotees are also situated in this mansion.

7. Haveli (East)



This mansion is two-storeyed. Sculptures of animal-heads, flowers and creepers are carved on the wooden pillars of the portico on the ground floor; items relating to

NarNārāyan Dev are on the ground floor. The first and second floors house a Sanskrit and music school as well as residence for saints. The backyard hosts the residence for brahmachāri (celibate) students. A well where Swāminārāyan used to bathe under a dome is also part of the backyard.

8. Secular area and Heritage Walk

Kālupur in Ahmedabad where the temple is located is a Muslim dominated area. Nevertheless, communal harmony was shown during the 2001 Gujarat earthquake when the Muslim neighbours cooked food and gave it to the temple authorities, who accepted it for distribution to earthquake victims.

How to reach: Ahmedabad is connected by air, train and bus services from many cities in India.

Sources: wikipedia.org



SNIPPETS OF WISDOM

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength while loving someone deeply gives you courage.

-Lao Tzu

- Sudha Murthy

Every human being is an island. And the only way you can connect is through a bridge. The bridge is the relationship. It is compassion, it is kind words, it is not always money. I work with the sex workers. It is very hard for me to connect with them, there everybody thinks that I am a school teacher and I have a good image, so they never open up. And later, I developed friendship with them and they told me "We don't want money from you, you should listen to our story and give a sympathetic ear to us. And there I realize, philanthropy does not always mean money. Philanthropy means being compassionate to someone who is in difficulty.

Interviewer: Lots of people think you can buy your own Jet, you can buy condominium in the South of France, so on and so forth, yet you travel in Air Deccan, yet you continue to live in a three-bed-room flat. Maybe on the one extreme, people are wearing their wealth on their sleeves and making about their money but you are the other extreme.

SM: That is because I am not a rich man's daughter. My father was a professor and doctor, my grandfather was a school teacher. I come from a distinguished academic family. Also, I have seen so many difficulties of many people in life. Money can buy you comfort, it can help you to build infrastructure, but money is not all-in-all in life at all.

Int: If you go to see, to that extent, I believe, that you have not bought anything for yourself in five years, or fifteen years; you go to that extreme.

SM: but I really feel content within, so I don't require anything. I really don't require; on the contrary, I feel repulsive when I go to shop, can you imagine? I feel extremely uncomfortable when I am in the shop, thinking what I am doing here.

Int: Did you like shop, before Infosys happened or before money happened?

SM: Before money 'happened', to some extent, I used to go. Or maybe, when you get too much of money, you lose interest in buying, probably that could be one of the reasons. But from the beginning, I was not a great shopper. Even if I had only a small amount of money, I would have not shopped. Later I lost that and I felt like at the difficulties of people, how does it matter if I wear such an expensive thing, to whom do I want to prove? What do I want to prove? And to a great extent, this book helped me a lot. It was taught to me when I was nineteen years old, the conversation between the Lord of Death, Yama and young boy Nachiketa, how you should look at life. Look at life in the eyes of Death. That is Kathopanishad. And I really learnt it but I never understood much; then, in later part of my life I realized that nothing is permanent in life and that whatever exists perishes. Also, I am greatly influenced by Buddhism, to a great extent; Buddha says that what exists, perishes. When everything is perishable, why worry about it?



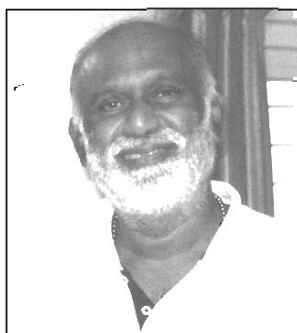
- Robert Service

What puts me in a rage is the sight of cursed cages
 Where singers of the sky perch hop instead of fly;
 Where lions to and fro pace seven yards or so:
 I who love space of stars have hate of bars.
 I wince to see dogs chained, or horses bit restrained;
 Or men of feeble mind in straight-jackets confined;
 Or convicts in black cells enduring earthly hells:
 To me not to be free is fiendish cruelty.
 To me not to be kind is evil of the mind.
 No need to pray or preach,
 Let us our children teach
 With every fond caress pity and gentleness:
 So in the end may we God's Kingdom bring to be.

{**Robert William Service** (1874 – 1958) was a British-Canadian poet and writer who has often been called "The Bard of the Yukon".}



OBITUARY



(1-5-1952 - - 25-10-2016)

Sri Nandagopal K P, a longtime associate with the friends of Fowai Forum, did the residential Vedanta Course at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya under the tutelage of Pujya Swamiji (1998-2000). He passed away on 25th October at Palghat, Kerala. He was a sincere and selfless worker. We pray that his soul attains to the higher regions of virtue and peace.

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

LOOKING BACK

Japan visit of Puja Swamiji

Swami Chidanandaji went to Japan and spent 14 days (October 5 through 18) as the guest of Rajeshwari and Raghunandana in Tokyo. He visited various museums, parks, Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines and Madame Tussad's in Tokyo and Kyoto. He also paid a visit to Hiroshima, the place where the world's first atom bomb had been dropped in 1946. His tour included an overnight stay in Kobe as the guest of Siddharth and Deepti Kambe.

Remembering Dr. Siddharth Gautam

Some 35 members – all belonging to the Core Group in Mumbai – of the Upanishad project gathered at THE CLUB, Andheri West, Mumbai on Friday, October 28 for a special event. Pragati Sharma, the daughter of the late Dr. Siddharth Gautam (Sid), had come down from New Jersey, along with her husband Dr. Anil Sharma and son Manu Sharma. One the one hand, the group deliberated on the progress of the Upanishad project and on the other, shared their memories of "Sid" who was the main inspiration behind the project. A special 'mini-issue' has reached the readers of AUPA on November 10 with details of this event; AUPA's new website was also launched at this event.'

LOOKING AHEAD

Retreat at Suvarnamukhi, Bengaluru

Fowai Forum will hold a Spiritual Retreat in Suvarnamukhi Sanskriti Dhama in Bengaluru between 2 and 8 January 2017. Please see Website: www.fowai.org

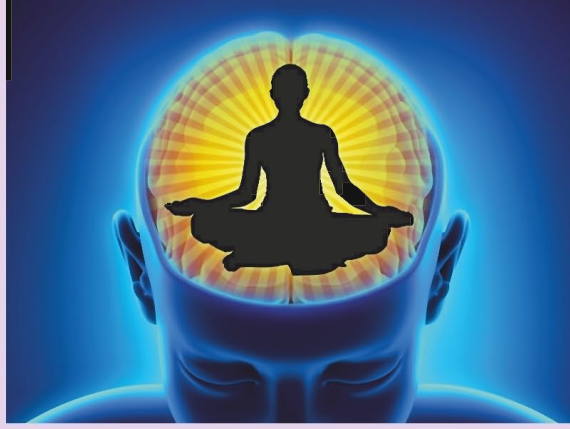
Talk Series at Pune

Talk series by Puja Swami Chidanandaji, on THE DIVINE SCREEN (Based on Geeta Chapter 7) is organised at SUNGRACE School, Wanorie, Pune from 1st through 4th November 2016.



ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

HOW DO WE SEE THE LIBERATING TRUTH?



{We have got too attached to the world of names and forms, brought to us by our senses (with the eyes leading the set of five)! The vision of the liberating truth however requires a different instrument!}

न सन्दृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य
न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसाभिवलृप्तो
य एनं विदुर्-अमृता भवन्ति ॥

na sandrishe tisthati roopam-asya
na chakshusā pashyati kaschanainam |
hridā maneeshā manasābhikripto
ya enam vidur - amritā bhavanti ||

Mahā Nārāyana Upanishad 1.11

The highest reality has no such form that can be seen. None can behold it with (the ordinary) eyes. When it is meditated upon, with a mind that is fixed in the heart and is not distracted, seekers can know it; then they become immortal.

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FOWAI FORUM

Wisdom for Right Action

Dissemination of spiritual and secular wisdom is the main objective of the Fowai Forum. Educational activities, human welfare and services to all life are its concerns. Insights and observations, especially those based on Indian culture and heritage, find expression in its activities.

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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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