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Inner Flame

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happiness



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Hari Om,

This issue of *Inner Flame* comes to you in the form of yet another bouquet made of a variety of flowers – in the form of stories and other narrations, in prose and poetry. With apologies for the delay in the release of this issue, we once more commit ourselves to *good material and prompt delivery!*

Shri Nārāyana Bhattathiri, the saint-poet from Kerala, became immortal through his *magnum opus* – Shri Nārāyaneeyam. Associated with the famous temple of Shri Krishna in Guruvāyoor, this genius had much suffering and finally, bliss and beatitude by the grace of the Lord. We cover his fascinating story under the column 'Featured' in this issue. We appreciate the caring contribution of Dakshu ji.

Under 'Fleeting Moments, Enduring Impressions,' I have gone down the memory lane to my precious moments with Paramāchārya, the Sage of Kānchi. Under another column, 'Perceiving Phoenix,' I have attempted to throw some light on the theme of this whole volume - 'happiness', taking help this time of that vast repository of wisdom known as '*subhāshitas*' (wise Sanskrit couplets).

The readers get to know of a place of pilgrimage – Āttukāl Bhagavathy – and a woman of substance – Ahalyā, of Purānic lore, thanks to the contributors / compilers Ratna and Vijayalakshmi respectively.

Our magazine has an open door policy. We welcome great thoughts from the East or the West, from Buddhism or Islam, from ancient seers or modern thinkers. Of course, we are primarily trained in the Indian wisdom of Geetā and Upanishads but we fully acknowledge that God has been showering His blessings upon the entire globe over thousands of years. He has surely packaged the *liberating wisdom* in diverse ways. His compassion has been covering even the atheists to whom He supplied masters and mystics who spoke with no reference to God!

Therefore, the stuff of which *Inner Flame* is made can be local or imported! What is important, however, is that this stuff is good food for the thoughts and emotions of the readers, and is nourishing to the soul of everyone. The writings here are required to provide a mid-course correction to anybody who, during the voyage of life, feels he has lost the right direction and is heading towards some dangerous part of the vast sea of the countless names and forms (*nāma-roopa*) of this Creation! We do admit that many a time, the question of what is right and what is wrong itself is difficult to answer. At the same time, it is a pity that most human beings live in self-contradiction. If the articles in our magazine can help the readers bridge the gap between what they believe and how they act, our effort in putting together the material will perhaps be fruitful.

Hearty best wishes to one and all!

Swāmi Chidānanda
Solan, Himāchal Pradesh
August 19, 2019



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CONTENTS

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FEATURED

Melpathur Nārāyana Bhattatiri
- *Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani* 1

PERCEIVING PHOENIX

Age-old Wisdom On Happiness
Verses from Here and There Throw Light on the Art
of Being Happy
- *Swāmi Chidānanda* 8

STORIES TEACH

Thinking Out-of-the-Box 11

PLACES THAT BECKON

The Āttukāl Bhagavathy Temple
- *Compiled by Ratna Viswanath* 12

THEY WERE FORCES TO RECKON WITH

Ahalyā
- *Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon*..... 15

**FLEETING MOMENTS, ENDURING
IMPRESSIONS**

The Symbol of Great Austerity
Remembering my meeting The Paramāchārya
- *Swāmi Chidānanda* 20

**WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE
UPANISHADS?**

Grief and Confusion Must End
- *Swāmi Chidānanda* 22

RHYTHMS FOR THE SOUL

Casabianca
- *Felicia Hemans (1826)* 23

ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

Bhakti In the Upanishads

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani

Among the ancient ones still remembered today, Veda Vyāsa, despite all that he had achieved in his search for complete satisfaction, was dissatisfied. He had done what few, if any, have ever done: compiled the 4 Vedas, culled and briefly articulated the whole Vedic philosophy in 555 definitive aphorisms called *Brahma Sutra*, and recorded the mighty *Itihās Mahābhārat*, in whose contents is embedded the *Bhagavad Geetā*, considered to be the essence of the mass of Indian philosophical and religious thoughts. Yet he was despondent, he felt unfulfilled. But, when on the advice of Sage Nārada, he wrote the *Bhāgavatam Purāna* he regained peace and equanimity. The *Bhāgavatam Purāna*, considered to be "a Gangā, emerging from the Lord and merging in Him" (N. Kasturi) is a massive manuscript consisting of twelve books (*skandhas*) totalling 332 chapters (*adhyāyas*) covering between 16,000 to 18,000 verses (depending on the recension), packed with stories of creation and dissolution, incarnations and devotees, reaching its apex in narrating the life and deeds of Sri Krishna, the Perfect Incarnation of Divine Love.

In the more modern world, the 16th century, there came another who attained the same satisfaction and who blessed the world with a shorter, more pragmatic version of the *Bhāgavatam Purāna* without losing its essence of

Love and adoration. Called **Nārāyaneeyam**, the sourcebook of which is the *Bhāgavatam*, the condensed version consists of a 100 chapters (*dasakams*) of roughly 10 *shlokas* (verses) each, totalling a mere 1034 *shlokas* which deal mainly with Sri Krishna. To even attempt to undertake such a task must point to an extraordinary devotee; to complete it, giving it the same colour of reverence (derived through knowledge) as the *purāna*, an outstanding *jnāni*. Such a devotee-seeker (*bhakta-jnāni*) was Melpathur (or Meppathur) Nārāyana Bhattatiri, a Namboodiri Kerala Brahmana, one of the most famous among the Guruvāyur saints.

Bhattatiri was born circa 1560



A.D. at a place close to the famous temple at Tirunavayi, on the banks of river Bharatapuzha. He himself makes a reference to this in *Dasakam* 92.7 of Nārāyaṇeeyam: "There would be an abundance of devotees in Kaliyuga. The majority of them will be in Dravidadesa and even among them a large number will be on the banks of the Kāveri, Tāmraparni, Vaigai and the holy Nilā. O Lord, I have been born in this region..."(English translation by S.N. Sastri).

He was the second son of Māthrudutta, a great scholar and devotee of Lord Mahāvishnu whom Melpathur considered to be his primary Guru. His elder brother Dāmodara was also revered by him as were Madhavācharya, Tirukandiyur Achyuta Pisharoty who played a very important role in his life. Little is known about his mother. He had a younger brother, named after his father Māthrudutta, who was said to have copied one manuscript of the famous Nārāyaṇeeyam.

Being of a precocious, pious and religious disposition, he is said to have mastered the ancient Hindu scriptures, *Vedas*, *vedāṅgas*, etc. and studied *mimāṃsā*, *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *tarka* (logic), and other subjects, all by the age of sixteen years. He composed Nārāyaṇeeyam at the age of 27. Later, he authored works on Sanskrit grammar and other subjects also.

As per custom, being the younger son, Melpathur Nārāyaṇa could not get married to a Namboodiri girl. However, he fell in love with the niece of his Guru Achyutha Pisharoty, and had his

sambandha (visiting-relationship kind of marriage) with her. Ensnared in the trappings of married life for a while, it took a remark from his Guru Achyutha Pisharoty that changed his view of life. His Guru remarked that being born in the superior caste of Brahmins, Bhattatiri was wasting his time in search of pure sexual lust and pleasures. This stinging remark transformed him, after which he led an almost saintly life. Leaving all his old habits, Bhattatiri concentrated on purifying his mind. He was inspired to pray to Lord Nārāyaṇa to take onto his own body the affliction that plagued his Guru, Sri Pisharoty, who was suffering from acute rheumatic problems, and was unable to walk. He therefore fervently prayed that the disease be transferred to his own body and that his Guru be relieved of suffering. He himself became a rheumatic patient. He consulted many native doctors (*vaidyas*) since during his time English medicines and doctors were not available. He gladly took the medication but they proved to be of no avail.

When Nārāyaṇa Bhattatiripād did not get any relief from the rheumatic pain, he asked a few of his Brahmin disciples to go to Sri. Ezhuththachchan and ask him whether there was any remedy for his sufferings. Sri Ezhuththachchan told them to tell Bhattatiripād "*matsyam thottu kazhikkuka*" which in Malayalam literally means "touch Matsya and eat". Being pure vegetarians, the Brahmin disciples were very offended; disgusted and anguished by the message, the Brahmins nevertheless came back and repeated the exact words to Melpathur, adding the words "*vashalan*" which

means "dirty fellow". Imagine their surprise when Bhattatiri was delighted with what he heard, for what he had heard was totally different from what the disciples took to be the meaning of this strange advice. Immediately understanding the subtle, inner meaning contained in it, Bhattatiri started composing what was first thought of as *bhajanam* (devotional prayer). Residing at the Guruvāyur Temple he spent the next 100 days condensing the *Bhāgavat Purāna* starting with the *matsya* [Fish] *avatāra*, writing one chapter a day (roughly 10 *slokas*), lost in the ecstasy of the outpouring of devotion to Guru and God. The outcome of his vow was the now famous Nārāyaneeyam. He was doubly blessed in that he had a *darshan* of Venugopal Murthi. One story told about his recovery is that when Lord Guruvāyurappan appeared before Bhattatiri, He showed two hands and said that one of His hands had the power to cure his disease and his other hand had *kārunyam* (compassion). Bhattatiri thought for a moment and chose the hand which had *kārunyam*. He later explained that if we have *kārunyam* we automatically get all the prosperity and well-being. Lord gave the *kārunyam* and it is said that Bhattatiri's disease was cured. Bhattatiri was never in need in this life and he attained the highest love for the Lord.

A thought-provoking story is remembered about how his deep and lasting friendship with another great devotee of Lord Guruvāyurappan started. Poonthānam was also a poet who wrote many great works about the Lord, including the *njanappana* in

Malayalam. One day Poonthānam showed Bhattatiri some of his work so that it could be corrected and improved upon by him. Instead, Bhattatiri dismissed the work haughtily saying that the work was silly, that Poonthānam did not know the correct meaning of words and that he would waste his own time reading it. That same night Bhattatiri had a dream in which Lord Guruvāyurappan criticized him saying that He preferred Poonthānam's *bhakti* to Bhattatiri's *vibhakti* (meaning thereby, knowledge of Sanskrit grammar). A chastised Melpathur Nārāyana apologized to one who became a fast friend.

Melpathur continued to associate with many learned contemporaries among who, to name a few, were his favourite *bhakta* Poonthānam Namboodiripād, Kuttanchery Ravi Chākyar and Sri Rāmānujan Ezhuththachchan who is the author of the *Adhyāthmarāmāyanam Kilipāttu*, the most popular Malayalam version of the Sanskrit epic Rāmāyana which became a classic of Malayalam literature of the early 17th century.

Though Bhattatiri is today famous for his Nārāyaneeyam, his devotional work, his achievements in the field of scholarship and his fame among his contemporaries, both within Kerala and outside, had a much broader basis. The various chieftains of Kerala vied with one another in extending their patronage to this erudite poet. To all of them, who included Zamorin Manavikrama and Rājās of Vatakumkar, Cochin and Ambalapuzha, he offered poems of felicitation called *prasastis* (Panegyrics) for which he must have received honour

and ample rewards. Most of his works were written in Sanskrit and Malayalam among which is the *Prakriyāsarvasva*, his famous treatise on *samskrta* grammar, much appreciated in the discussions that took place among the Namboodiri pundits on the *Siddhānta Kaumudī*. It was with this grammatical work that his fame spread outside Kerala also. So much so that the noted grammarian of the time, Bhattoji Dikshita, author of the *Siddhānta Kaumudī*¹ was so impressed by this work that he actually set out on a journey to Kerala to meet Melpathur. He gave up the idea as the news of Bhattatiri's passing away reached him. Bhattatiri also revolted against the Paninian grammatical tradition by composing the *Apāniniya Pramānaya Sāadhanā* where he built upon his teacher Achyuta Pisharoty's work of non-Pāninian approach to grammar. He wrote one half of the *Mimāṃsā* text *Mānameyodaya* and did not lag in writing about the epic *Rāmāyana* which describes Surpanakhā's lament to Rāvana after Lakshman had cut off her nose. He composed many works in the *champu* style which is a mixture of prose and poetry. That he had knowledge of astronomy can also be gleaned from a reference he made in the *Nārāyaṇeeyam*.

His crowning glory, written at the young age of 27 in 1587, has to be the remarkable Vaishnava Bhakti text, the *Nārāyaṇeeyam*, a glorious work of Sanskrit poetry which shines both with Melpathur's intense love for God (*bhakti*) and his clear understanding of the Vedānta (knowledge). *Bhakti* transcends

geographical, socio-cultural and literary boundaries and the same can be said about *bhakti* literature as well. India is known for its spiritual and *bhakti* culture and tradition which underscores the faith that whenever the balance of the universe is disturbed by external interference from any of its parts, the Redeemer, as the power of eternal balancing, appears for the protection of those who are in harmony and the rectification of everything disharmonious. This Sanātana Dharma has survived even as Abrahamic religions and atheism spread across the world in the last 1000 years, not the least credit for which must go to the much loved and recited *Nārāyaṇeeyam* of Melpathur Nārāyaṇa Bhattatiri.

A brief but penetrating in-depth look at *Nārāyaṇeeyam* would not be out of place here since it is a major work which reflects his great poetical expertise, his knowledge of the scriptures and his unmatched devotion. It is appreciated by both devotees and scholars. No less a personage than Swāmi Chinmayānanda penned the forward to Shri S. N. Sastri's "beautiful work", *Srimannārāyaṇeeyam*, published in 1988 by CCMT publications. Swāmiji draws attention to "the literary beauty, devotional content and Vedāntic insight" built into the text. "No ecstasy of ritualistic devotion could have created such a touching hymn. *Nārāyaṇeeyam* is also a standing monument to Bhattatiri's deep insight into Vedānta."

In the long introduction to his translation of the *Nārāyaṇeeyam*, SwāmiTapasyānanda of Rāmakrishna Math, Madras call it a unique work in

Sanskrit that combines in itself three distinct features. It is a "literary masterpiece, a great poetical work (*kāvya*) comparable to the compositions of any of the classical Sanskrit poets. It is a hymn of rare devotional fervour having several distinctive features shared by no other hymn and is an exposition of Vedānta with a dominance of devotional teachings. "Its purpose is the salvation of man..." "While dealing with *bhakti*, Bhattatiri has brought within the ambit of his poetry all the well-recognized human sentiments like the heroic, the erotic, the terrible, the sublime, the pathetic etc., all brilliantly portrayed in the fifty-two of the one hundred cantos."

Regarding the language used in the *Nārāyaṇeeyam*, Swāmi Tapasyānanda writes "a master of the Sanskrit language, as Bhattatiri was, especially of its grammar, his literary artistry and felicity of expression are evident throughout the work." He uses the great wealth of metres that Sanskrit poetics provides such as the *sragdhara*, *shikharini*, *prithvi* metres to name but a few. He employs them for producing rhetorical and delightful poetic effect. He particularly points out Bhattatiri's descriptions of *Nrisimha* Incarnation in Dasakam 25 in the *shārdulavikridita* metre and the *Rāsa-Lilā* episode in Dasakam 69 written in the *kusumamanjari* metre. The *kāliya* episode (Canto 56; metre--*dhrutavilambita*) is another striking example of his mastery; these verses of the *Nārāyaṇeeyam* depicting the incident have become the theme for dance recitals by talented artistes.

As a hymn of praise, the

condensed Bhāgavatam Purāna of 1036 verses is "...praise worthy, wherein almost every verse is directly addressed to the Lord as a fervent prayer and as an exposition of His divine glory and excellences.." As a devotional poem with strong undertones of Vedāntic understanding, one might object to Bhattatiri praying for relief from his physical ailment. But he, the *jñāni* devotee praised in the *Bhagavat Geetā*, shows in the course of the work that his only objective in praying for relief from pain, was that he might afterwards devote all his mental energies without any distraction to the practice of whole-hearted devotion to the Lord. He acknowledges that his body with its incurable ailment was the greatest of his teachers because it was responsible for driving him to seek shelter in the Lord.

The philosophic teaching of the Bhāgavat Purāna is not neglected in the *Nārāyaṇeeyam* though they are scattered wide over the text in its various dialogues and hymns of praise. These include the teaching of Kapila to his mother Devahuti and those that Shri Krishna gave to Uddhava in Book III and XI respectively. The essential points are selectively gleaned out of all these and put in magnificent verses in the first four and the last eight cantos wherein philosophy has been transformed into poetry by the author's genius. In the very first verse of the text, Bhattatiri "describes Brahman in both its aspects, namely the Impersonal Absolute (*nirguna*) and as the Personal God (*saguna*), the latter by implication."

"*Brahman, which is pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, which*

is without parallel, which is absolutely free from the limitations of time and space, which is always free from the control of māyā, which is very well explained by innumerable statements in the Upanishads, but is yet not clearly grasped (by a mere study of the Upanishads), but is the realization of whose identity with one's own self is what constitutes the highest purushārtha, namely liberation from the cycle of birth and death; that very Brahman is present in concrete form in the temple of Guruvāyur (in the form of Lord Krishna). This is indeed a great good fortune for the people."(Dasakam 1.1)

"Bhattatiri was, by upbringing a Bhatta-mimāṃsaka (follower of Vedic ritualistic philosophy) and he shows himself to be a Vaishnava in his eulogy and an Advaitin in his philosophy. Lord Vishnu (who is identical with Krishna) is depicted, as in the Bhāgavata, to be not a conception of God but the very God of whom all other deities are expressions (elaborately argued in cantos 89 and 90). But in his metaphysics he goes all the way with Shankara's Advaitism and upholds the doctrine of the Impersonal Absolute (*nirvisheshabrahman*), from whom the individual soul is non-different." (Swami Tapasyānanda).

According to Swami Tapasyānanda, Bhattatiri's personal position, finally, is that of many seekers of today: "his heart is more for Bhakti as eternal service than for the Moksha of dissolution in Brahman. But what exactly his final metaphysical position is, is difficult to pinpoint, because in the last nine cantos of the work he seems to approve of all forms of monism and

theism known to Indian thinkers. It looks, however, that the traditional hold of the Sankara School of *kevalādvaita* was very strong on his intellect, in spite of his perception of its inadequacy and impracticality as far as he and most spiritual aspirants are concerned." Swāmiji adds, "The full metaphysical implication of accepting *bhakti* as the fifth *purushārtha*, as superior even to *mukti* which forms the unique feature of Bhāgavata, is articulated only hesitatingly" by Bhattatiri in spite of his leaning towards it.

It is only from actually performing the *pārāyana* (reading the whole text with devotion that confers great benefit) that one can appreciate its effectiveness for faith therapy. It makes one God-conscious, concerning as it does our very human emotions and feelings, our physical health and freedom from disease (*ārogyam*) along with happiness (*saukhyam*). In the final verse of *Nārāyaṇeeyam* Bhattatiri specifically says this:

"May this hymn which is full of the narrations of Thy sportive incarnations which are described in the Vedas as worthy of praise confer long life, sound health and happiness on everyone in this world." (Dasakam 100. 11)

It is not surprising therefore that at the temple of Guruvāyur, where this magnificent hymn was expressed, *Nārāyaṇeeyam* is of utmost importance. No work of this magnitude has ever been dedicated and addressed to the deity of any other temple in India. It offers to the devout devotee an opportunity to visualize and worship Mahā Vishnu by

reading it or listening to its rendition especially during the yearly celebration of *Nārāyaṇeeyam*, marked with great enthusiasm and splendour at the Guruvāyur Temple. Even when the *Nārāyaṇeeyam* is recited in private homes, the joy that it confers stands testimony to its greatness. One devotee had this to say after one such *pārāyana*: ‘Dashakam 10 [named ‘The Variety of Creation’] is enthralling’; ‘it always brings a smile to my face when I read that Bhattatiri is worried that the Lord’s name and fame would be affected since those who are indifferent to Him seem to be doing well, while a sincere devotee like Bhattatiri is suffering.’ (Dashakam 3, verse 9). Despite its brevity compared to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, in 20 verses [Dashakam 34 and 35] Bhattatiri shows his genius by retelling the whole Rāmāyana with its important events. In the home of the aforementioned devotee, these two chapters are recited whenever they wish to recite the Rāmāyana in just fifteen-odd minutes!

It is said that Bhattatiri lived at least for 86 years, since his wish was to have a happy, healthy, long life as seen at

the end of *Nārāyaṇeeyam*. One poem says that he lived for 106 years, and accordingly he should have died in 1666. But, 86 is considered more reliable. He lived in many places after his cure of rheumatism, like Kochi, Ambalapuzha, and Kozhikode and finally he settled in Mookkola near Changaramkulam in the present-day Malappuram district. He stayed in the Devi temple there for around 20 years, and he wrote his last work there. One day, after returning from Mookkola Temple, he collapsed and died instantly. Thus, he had the peaceful end that he wished.

Notes:

1. *siddhānta kaumudī* re-arranges the sutras of Pāṇini under appropriate heads and offers exposition that is orderly and easy to follow.

Sources:

“Nārāyana Bhatta of Melpattur”, in The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature, Madras University Sanskrit series #23.

guruvayurdevaswom.nic.in/smelpathur.html
https://en.gyaanipedia.co.in/wiki/Melpathur_Narayana_Bhattatiri



None can destroy iron, but its own rust can! Likewise, none can destroy a person but his own mindset can.

- Ratan Tata



- Swāmi Chidānanda



Happiness has been the subject of interest in the vast literature in Sanskrit across various categories. Great poems (*kāvya*s) that cover all the sentiments (*rasa*s) of human life talk about happiness and its secrets. Upanishads (*Vedānta*) that highlight dispassion (*vairāgya*) and are keen on leading us towards liberation (*mukti*) also unravel the mystery of happiness. There are verses in the ancient lore with the flavour of simple common sense and then there are those that plumb philosophical depths.

Stop being lazy

Employing common sense, an old verse¹ (*subhāshita*) says, "How can a lazy man gain knowledge? How can an uneducated man earn wealth? How can a man without money win friends? How can happiness come to him who has no friends?"

Gaining knowledge or education should be taken here to mean certain expertise in some field, which any of us can get by hard work only. Formal school education need not be the meaning, for we see in the world many successful people who did not go far in their schools or colleges. Bright during their school days or drop outs, those who discover a passion for a field of activity and then work hard are seen to come up in life. Laziness is a curse indeed.

In these days when we increasingly see the connection between the body and the mind, it is possible that laziness is because of either physical causes or psychological ones. Malnutrition or some hormonal imbalance can throw a person off balance every time he or she tries to focus better and work hard. Some say cooked food has less energy and therefore advise raw vegetables to enjoy more energy, and thus overcome the apparent laziness. On the psychological front, some fear or an old wound (hurt) can withhold a person from self-application. Listening to good counsel and opening up before a good friend can lighten the burden on the chest, freeing one from the apparent laziness. Either way, if we are sincere, we can find out the deeper causes for our limitations. We can overcome our laziness.

Dependence is sorrow

Another well-known *subhāshita*² highlights self-reliance as a source of

happiness. Anything that is in somebody else's control is a cause of sorrow, it says, and anything that is within our own control brings relief. This has to be understood carefully. It does not mean that we should grab everything and keep it in our custody. Great businesses today like Uber or Air BNB do not possess their own vehicles or properties but provide the services to customers with elegance. Mutual cooperation and healthy interdependence are great strength. Those who excel in teamwork share freely with others and thus there is no misrepresentation of the phrase 'within our own control'.

To be precise, therefore, psychological dependence is sorrow. Physically or financially, certain things could be with others. If our relationship is such that those others give us what we need, and we give to them things when they need them, it can be a happy situation.

In spirituality also, devotion to a teacher (*guru*) is praised but undue psychological dependence is discouraged. Learning from a wise person is good but following the person blindly, superstitiously is dangerous. Such dependence is said to harm both the leader and the led. On the other hand, we are warned against pursuing Self-knowledge fully on our own. Ādi Shankara says³ in his commentary on an Upanishad mantra. We therefore see that this '*svavasham* (in one's own power)' and '*paravasham* (dependence on others)' are a bit subtle.

Attachment to comforts brings sorrow

Common sense, which is

unfortunately not very common, is enough for anybody to realize that happiness becomes elusive when our mind is frequently hijacked by seeking comfort. Swāmi Chinmayānandaji used to say, "Comfort comes as a guest of ours; stays to become our host; lingers on to enslave us!" It is one thing to go for comfort to avoid inconvenience and waste of time, but it is quite another to give high priority to comfort. Many are the cases of bright and resourceful people who were at one time high performers but go down on a slippery path because of their increasingly getting attached to comfort.

An old verse⁴ warns us, "A true seeker of wisdom gives up hankering after comfort; someone who is bent upon enjoying comforts give up learning!" The two are not compatible. Technology has been continuously making life more comfortable for every one of us in travel, communication, medical care, etc. These things are indeed welcome. If, however, we wish to travel by the most comfortable vehicles but forget the task at hand, we will surely invite sorrow. Our happiness decreases by the day when we, for example, sit in air-conditioned rooms but while away our precious time in checking Whatsapp messages or watching YouTube videos.

Some are unhappy because of their own procrastination

There was a man who was crying that he had hurt somebody on the road. When asked how it happened, he explained, "I was riding a motorcycle and I hit him!" His friends were curious, "Did you not apply the brakes when you saw that pedestrian?" His answer was, "I

increased the speed instead!"

Some are unhappy that their work never gets over. When you ask them, "Don't you give some time daily to that work?" They reply, like the motorcycle rider in the example above, "No. I daily find other things to do!"

"Addiction to distraction is end of your creative production," observes Robin Sharma in one of his best sellers⁵. Smartphones have become a major cause of distraction these days. Attending to the mobile on hand, people procrastinate things that really need to be done. Vidura in Mahābhārata advises⁶ us, "Finish things in the day so you can peacefully sleep at night. Do such things all through your life so you can leave this world with peace inside you!"

Five tips together on happiness

Lastly let me share with you yet another ancient verse⁷ that gives five pieces of advice to those of us who are keen on finding happiness.

- 1 *Be honest (especially in speech)*
- 2 *Spend money carefully*
- 3 *Eat healthy food*
- 4 *Eat moderately and*
- 5 *Train your senses (to walk the path of moderation)*

There are many more in the vast repository of Sanskrit literature, paying heed to which we can certainly show the exit door to unhappiness in our life. Let us be happy; let us make others happy.

1. *alasasya kuto vidyā, avidyasya kuto dhanam*
-adhanasya kuto mitram, amitrasya kutah sukham?
2. *sarvam paravasham duhkham sarvamātma vasham sukham*
-etadvidyāt samāsenā lakṣhanam sukha-duhkhaḥ || (Manu-smṛiti 4.160)
3. *śāstrajño'pīsvātantryena brahma-jñāna-anvешvanam nakuryāt – Mundaka Bhāṣhya on mantra 1.2.12*
4. *sukhārthi tyajate vidyām vidyārthi tyajatesukham |*
-sukhārthinah kuto vidyā kuto vidyārthinah sukham ?
5. The 5 AM Club, Chapter 6
6. *divasenaiva tat kuryāt yena rātrau sukhamvaset |*
yāvajjeevam tat kuryāt yena petyasukhamvashet || (Vidura-neeti)
7. *sukham shetesatya-vaktā sukham shetemita-vyayee |*
hita-bhukmita-bhukchaivatathai vavijitendriyah ||



In a small Italian town, hundreds of years ago, a small business owner owed a large sum of money to a loan-shark. The loan-shark was a very old, unattractive looking guy that just so happened to fancy the business owner's daughter.

He decided to offer the businessman a deal that would completely wipe out the debt he owed him. However, the catch was that he would only wipe out the debt if he could marry the businessman's daughter.

Needless to say, this proposal was met with a look of disgust.

The loan-shark said that he would place two pebbles into a bag, one white and one black.

The daughter would then have to reach into the bag and pick out a pebble. If it was black, the debt would be wiped out, but the loan-shark would then marry her. If it was white, the debt would still be wiped out, but the daughter wouldn't have to marry the loan-shark.

Standing on a pebble-strewn path in the businessman's garden, the loan-shark bent over and picked up two pebbles.

Whilst he was picking them up, the daughter noticed that he'd picked up two black pebbles and placed them both into the bag.

He then asked the daughter to reach into the bag and pick one.

The daughter naturally had three choices as to what she could have done:

Refuse to pick a pebble from the bag.

Take both pebbles out of the bag and expose the loan-shark for cheating.

Pick a pebble from the bag fully well knowing it was black and sacrifice herself for her father's freedom.

She drew out a pebble from the bag, and before looking at it 'accidentally' dropped it into the midst of the other pebbles. She said to the loan-shark;

"Oh, how clumsy of me. Never mind, if you look into the bag for the one that is left, you will be able to tell which pebble I picked."

The pebble left in the bag is obviously black, and seeing as the loan-shark didn't want to be exposed, he had to play along as if the pebble the daughter dropped was white, and clear her father's debt.

Moral of the story:

It's always possible to overcome a tough situation through out-of-the-box thinking, and not give in to the only options you think you have to pick from.

Compiled by Ratna Viswanath

The Āttukāl Bhagavathy Temple, one of the ancient temples of Kerala, is situated at Āttukāl in Thiruvananthapuram. The temple is popularly referred to as 'the Shabarimala of Women', as women form the majority of devotees at this shrine. Āttukāl Bhagavathy is worshipped as the Supreme Mother who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the manifested universe.

Pilgrims from all over the country, who visit *Shri Padmanābhaswāmy* Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, consider their pilgrimage complete only after a visit to the shrine of *Shri Āttukāl Bhagavathy*. The all-powerful and benign Āttukāl Bhagavathy reigns eternally supreme at Āttukāl and cares for Her devotees as a mother would care for her own children. She redresses their affliction and agony and blesses them.

The Legend

It is believed that *Vishnumāyā* incarnated as Bhagavathy to annihilate evil and to protect the good. The State of Kerala is home to many temples dedicated to Bhagavathy, the Mother Goddess.

The story goes that Bhagavathy revealed herself to an ardent devotee who was the head of a well-known family namely, the Mulluveettil family. One evening, as he was performing his oblations in the Killi river, a young girl appeared before him and requested him

to help her cross the river. He was very much impressed by her charismatic demeanour and bowed to her in awe and reverence. He not only helped her cross the river but also took her to his house nearby.

As the family members were busy with preparations for extending a warm welcome to the young girl, she vanished. That very night, the head of the family had a dream in which she appeared before him as an icon and demanded that he should establish an abode for her in the nearby *kāvu* (a sacred ground of shrubs and herbs) at a sacred spot marked by three lines. The next morning, the old man went to the spot that was revealed to him in his dream and he did find three lines indented on the ground.

He lost no time in erecting a temple at this specified spot to house the Goddess. This was how the temple first came up in Āttukāl. Many years later, the temple was renovated by the local devotees. The devotees also installed a beautiful and majestic icon of the Goddess; she had four arms and sported weapons such as spear, sword, shield, etc. The consecration ceremony of the new deity was performed by the high priest of the Badarinātha Temple.

Āttukāl Bhagavathy is believed to be the divinised form of Kannaki. Kannaki is regarded as an incarnation of *Devi Pārvathi*. The legend goes that Kannaki lived in the ancient city of

Madurai in Tamilnadu and that after the destruction of Madurai, she left the city and reached Kerala via Kanyākumārī. On her way to Kodungalloor, she took a halt at Āttukāl. The Kodungalloor Bhagavathy temple is also a very famous temple.

Chilappathikāram, a famous work in Tamil literature, written by Ilamkovadikal, the Tamil poet, has Kannaki as its heroine.

Architecture

The structure of the Āttukāl Bhagavathy temple is a harmonious combination of Kerala and Tamil styles of architecture. A visitor to the temple is struck by the majesty and charm of the structure.

The decorated gate at the main entrance is by itself an excellent example of architectural beauty. In and around the temple, there are beautifully carved figures of *Mahishāsūramardini*, *Kālī*, *Rājarājeshwari*, *Devi Pārvathi* with Lord *Paramashiva* and various other depictions of the Goddess. Around the corridors surrounding the temple, there are figures of other gods as also the depiction of the stories of the *dashāvatāras* (ten incarnations) of Lord *Mahāviṣṇu*. On either side of the elegant main *gopuram* (tower) are images depicting the story of Goddess Kannaki. On the southern *gopuram*, the episode of *Dakṣayāga* is depicted in sculptured images.

There are two idols of Āttukāl Bhagavathy in the sanctum sanctorum. The original idol installed by the head of the Mulluveetil family is preserved in all its pristine beauty and majesty. The

second idol is installed beside the first one.

The temple-complex also houses shrines to Lord Shiva, Lord Ganapathi, Lord *MādanThampurān* and Lord *Nāgar*.

There is also a shrine to *Shri Vidhyādhirāja Parama Bhattāraka Chattampi Swāmikal*¹, a great saint of modern Kerala.

Special Pujā-s and Festivals

The *Pongāla Mahotsavam* is the most important festival at Āttukāl Bhagavathy temple. It is part of a ten-day festival that is celebrated in February-March every year.

The offering of *Pongāla* is a special practice prevalent in the southern part of Kerala and in some parts of Tamilnadu.

Pongāla (meaning 'to boil over') is a ritual in which women prepare over hearths in earthen pots, a sweet pudding or *pāyasam* with rice, jaggery, coconut and plantains and offer it to Bhagavathy. The ritual can be performed only by women. Each lady individually prepares the *pāyasam* and offers it to the Goddess Bhagavathy, fondly called *Āttukālaammā*, who is said to be pleased by this offering. The signal for lighting the hearth is given by the chief priest of the temple at a predetermined auspicious time. Lakhs of women-devotees assemble from various parts of Kerala and outside to participate in this annual ritual. The women arrive well in advance, mostly carrying on their head, materials such as firewood, earthen pots, and the ingredients for the *pāyasam*. The event has been recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest

congregation of women for a festival anywhere in the world. An atmosphere of celebration and festivity prevails during the ten days. Processions of colourful floats of the deity, carried with pomp and devotion by the devotees congregating in the temple premises is a sight worth seeing.

The entire area of about 5-7 km radius around the temple - homes, open fields, roads, commercial institutions, premises of government offices, etc. - gets transformed into sacred ground for observing the ritual. People of all castes and religions open up their homes and premises for conducting the *Pongāla*. The entire city of Thiruvananthapuram lights up in festive fervour. The crowd reminds one of the *Kumbhamelā* festival.

Kuthiyottam is another annual festival. It is performed by boys between the age of 6-12 years. The young boys who undertake this penance are believed to represent the wounded soldiers of the

Goddess *Mahishāsūramardini*. The Goddess is believed to bestow on them internal and external beauty, health, wealth and happiness.

Chattampi Swāmi jayanthi and samādhi days are both celebrated every year with great fervour.

Getting there

The temple is in the East Fort area of the Thiruvananthapuram district. It is at a distance of about 3 km from Thiruvananthapuram railway station and about 5 kms from the Thiruvananthapuram airport.

Notes:

1. Please refer the Featured article in issue 10-2 of Inner Flame to know about this great saint.

Sources:

www.attukal.org
www.keralatourism.org



They Were Forces To Reckon With

Ahalyā

- Compiled by Vijayalakshmi Menon

In Hindu mythology, Ahalyā (Ahilyā) was created by Lord Brahmā. With great effort, He 'moulded' her using His pure creative energy, to be the most beautiful of all women ever created. Ahalyā is often described as an *ayonijasambhavā*, one not born out of a woman. The word Ahalyā can be divided into two parts: 'a', as a prefix, indicating negation and 'halyā' which is defined in Sanskrit dictionaries as 'being related to the plough', 'ploughing' or 'deformity'. In the *Uttara Kānda* of Rāmāyana, Lord Brahmā explains the meaning of Ahalyā as 'one without the reprehension of ugliness' or 'one with impeccable beauty'. He thus explains to Indra how he created Ahalyā by taking the special beauty of all creations and expressing it in every part of her body. Some Sanskrit dictionaries also translate Ahalyā as 'unploughed'. Some recent authors also refer to the name Ahalyā to mean a virgin or a motherly figure. However, Nobel laureate Rabindranāth Tagore interpreted the name Ahalyā as a symbol of stone - like, infertile land that was made cultivable by Shri Rāma. Professor Bharati Jhaveri concurs with Tagore and interprets Ahalyā as unploughed land on the basis of the tribal Bhil Rāmāyana, an undated oral tradition of Gujarat.

The *Uttara Kānda* of Rāmāyana (regarded by most scholars as a later addition to the epic) states that after Brahmā created this extraordinary beauty, He came to the conclusion that

the most appropriate, virtuous and learned person to take care of this lovely girl would be the much older Maharishi Gautama who was a saint and *tapasvi* and who was intelligent and possessed thorough knowledge of the *Vedas*. At the time of handing over Ahalyā to Rishi Gautama, Brahmā asked him to take care of this flawless beauty until she became a young woman. When that time came, the Rishi handed her back to Brahmā.

Rishi Gautama was already free of all his worldly attractions as a result of the severe penance he had been undertaking. He looked after Ahalyā well. On seeing the greatness of the Maharshi, Brahmā was surprised. He thought that there could be no better husband suitable for her. However, Brahmā told the other Devatas and Rishis that he would get Ahalyā married to the one who could travel around the three worlds - heaven, earth and the underworld - and be the first one to return. On hearing this, all the Rishis and the *Devatās* set out to circumambulate the three worlds to win beautiful Ahalyā's hand in marriage. As part of his daily *pujā*, Gautama circumambulated a *Shivalingam* and the wish-bearing cow Surabhi as she was giving birth to her calf. The calf's body was half outside its mother. Gautama looked at the cow and calf with reverence and with the feeling that it symbolized the earth. According to the *Vedas*, this was equivalent to circumambulating the three

worlds. Thus Gautama completed the circumambulation around the three worlds before Indra did. Thereafter, Gautama went to Brahmā and told him of his achievement. Brahmā knew everything through His meditation and agreed that what the Maharshi had achieved was truly regarded as doing the *parikramā* of the three worlds. Brahmā was satisfied and got Ahalyā married to Sage Gautama. Thus Rishi Gautama and his faithful and pious wife Ahalyā began to live in his *āshrama* in a forest near Mithilā (Mithilā Upavana) spending their days in peace and holy meditation. The Brahma Purāna says that the hermitage was near the River Godāvari and the Skanda Purāna places it near the River Narmadā. The Padma Purāna describes the *āshrama* as being near the holy city of Pushkar.

The Rāmāyana mentions Ahalyā's son Shatānanda, the family priest and preceptor of King Janaka of Mithilā. In this version he anxiously asks Vishwāmitra about the well being of his 'renowned' mother. In contrast, Mahābhārata mentions two sons Sharadavana, born with arrows in his hand and Chirakāri, whose extensive brooding over the actions to be undertaken by him lead to procrastination. Besides this, an unnamed daughter is also mentioned. The Vāmana Purāna mentions three daughters: Jayā, Jayanti and Aparājitā.

Among the many disappointed admirers of Ahalyā was Purandara, who was the king of heaven at that time (the post of the king of heaven is called Indra). This Indra who believed that the

best women were meant for him, resented Ahalyā's marriage to the forest-dwelling ascetic, while he himself was the valiant leader of the *devās* or gods and the lord of *swargaloka* or heaven. He became enamoured by Ahalyā's beauty and he decided to make her his own. He got to know that the sage woke up everyday at the break of dawn and left the hermitage to go to the river for his morning ablutions. Indra colluded with the sun and the moon and succeeded in confusing Gautama that it was morning while actually it was night. Brahma Purāna states that Indra took the form of a cock that crows, in order to dispatch Gautama for his morning ablutions. Believing it was morning, Gautama left for the river as usual. Indra, disguised as Gautama, approached Ahalyā and expressed his desire to her. Deceived by the impersonation, Ahalyā yielded to his desires. Just as Indra was getting ready to flee the hermitage, Sage Gautama, who was returning after his morning ablutions, bumped into him. The Sage immediately guessed as to what had happened. He was livid and cursed Indra that he would lose his manhood as a punishment for the grave sin he had committed. As soon as the Rishi spoke, Indra turned into a eunuch. He also came to be known as a god with '*sahasrayoni*' as a thousand vulvas broke out all over his body as a result of Gautama's curse. Indra's predicament became a joke in all the worlds but later proved to be tragic as he had to always stay in the darkness, hiding from all. The gods became deeply concerned as Indra's multifarious activities and duties remained suspended. Later, on Brahmā's advice,

Indra did a lot of *tapas* to regain his manhood. In some versions of the story, it is said that Ahalyā saw through the disguise of Indra but yielded out of curiosity or impetuosity (*'kutuhalāt'*) or because of her lust and her pride in her own beauty.

After cursing Indra, the sage turned to his wife and he cursed Ahalyā that she would become a stone for an indefinite period of time. He then added that she would turn into a woman as and when the son of King Dasharatha, Lord Shri Rāma touched this stone with his foot and sanctified it. While most versions agree that Gautama cursed Ahalyā after Indra visited her, the nature of the curse varies from text to text. However, almost all versions describe Rāma as the agent for her liberation and redemption. Then the sage left the *āshrama* and headed for the Himalayas to do penance. Ahalyā's truthfulness is also mentioned in the Kathāsaritsāgara. It is mentioned that Indra tried to flee in the form of a cat. When asked by Gautama about her visitor, Ahalyā wittily answers that it was a *majjara*, a word meaning 'cat' or when split as *mā-jara*, meaning "my lover".

Ahalyā spent years in earnest repentance as a stone hidden from all, tormented by guilt, until years later when Lord Rāma, Lakshmana and Sage Vishwāmitra came visiting the hermitage. Ahalyā regained her form after she was redeemed by the grace of Shri Rāma's feet. By offering hospitality to Shri Rāma, she was purified of delusion as ordained. Rāmabhadraacharya, while commenting

on the Rāmacharita mānasa says that in doing so, Shri Rāma destroyed three things namely, the sin of Ahalyā by his sight, the curse on her by the dust of his feet and the affliction of delusion by the touch of his feet, as evidenced by the use of the word *tribhangi*, meaning 'destroyer of the three'. Later, she joined her husband in the Himalayas and her penance is quoted as an example to this day. However, Ahalyā's son Shatānanda abandoned her and lived comfortably in Janaka's court, expressing relief that she was finally acceptable in society following Shri Rāma's visit.

In some versions of the story, there is no reference to the curse. In an instance in the Mahābhārata, where details of the seduction are absent, an agitated Gautama orders his son Chirakāri to behead his polluted mother and leaves the *āshrama*. However, Chirakāri is hesitant to follow the orders and later concludes that Ahalyā is



innocent. Gautama returns and repents his hasty decision, realizing that Indra is the guilty party. In the Bhil Rāmāyana,

Gautama attacks and imprisons Indra who is freed when, as the rain-god, he promises to shower rain on the crops. He was also to ensure that one quarter of the crops was dedicated to Gautama. Here, Ahalyā is interpreted as dry and burnt land, eager for rains sent by Indra, who is tamed by the wild cyclonic Gautama.

Some scholars like Pradip Bhattacharya (an indologist and expert in Mahābhārata) and Meena Kelkar, regard Ahalyā as an independent woman who made her own decisions, took risks and was driven by curiosity to experiment and then to accept the results. This part of her character comes out very strongly in the way she undauntedly accepted the curse imposed upon her. Ahalyā accepted the verdict without debate. Nowhere is it said that she pleaded for a boon to set her free from this curse; this establishes her inherent righteous nature! It is this that makes The Rāmāyana praise and venerate her. She had been true to her independent nature, fulfilling her womanhood in a manner she found appropriate. Ahalyā has been examined in a new light by several modern writers and poets in various Indian languages. Although Ahalyā is a minor character in all ancient sources, 'stigmatized and despised' by those around her for violating gender norms, modern Indian writers have elevated her to the status of an epic heroine!

It is also said in the Indian folklore and the Thai version of Rāmāyana, The Rāmāyana that Vāli and Sugriva were born out of Ahalyā's illicit relationships with Indra and Surya. Initially, she passed them off as Rishi Gautama's children until one day her daughter

Anjani reveals this secret to her father Rishi Gautama. On hearing this, the Rishi flew into a rage and cursed Vāli and Sugriva and thus they became monkeys. Hearing this, Ahalyā's anger knew no bounds and she cursed her daughter Anjani that her child would be born a monkey. Thus Hanuman, the monkey God came into being. Similar tales are found in other adaptations.

The place where Ahalyā is said to have done penance and was redeemed is called Ahalyā *Teertha* in the scriptures. But the location of this place is disputed. Some say it is on River Godāvari and others say it is on River Narmadā. One is located near Ahalyeshvara Temple in Bhalod on the banks of the Narmadā and the other is supposed to be located in Darbhanga Dist, Bihar. There is also an Ahalyā Āsthāna temple in Ahalyāgram in the same district.

There is an ancient exhortation naming five maidens (*kanyāh*) as '*prātaḥ smaraniyāḥ*', urging that they be invoked daily at dawn and by whose constant remembrance, the greatest of sins are destroyed. They are Ahalyā, Draupadī, Kuntī/Sitā, Tārā and Mandodari. The scriptures extol these five *kanyās*; none of them were considered sinners. Vishwāmitra, the mighty Rishi, repeatedly refers to Ahalyā as '*mahābhāgā*', meaning 'most virtuous and noble'. It is the nobility of her character, her extraordinary beauty and the fact of her being chronologically the first *kanyā* that places Ahalyā at the head of the five maidens. In the Devi-Bhāgavata Purāna, Ahalyā is included in a list of secondary Goddesses, who are 'auspicious, glorious and much

praiseworthy', alongside Tārā and Mandodari as well as some of the *panchasatis* (five *satis* or chaste wives) including Arundhati and Damayanti. Although Ahalyā's transgression blemished her and denied her the high status and reverence accorded to

women like Sitā and Sāvitrī, this action made her immortal in legend.

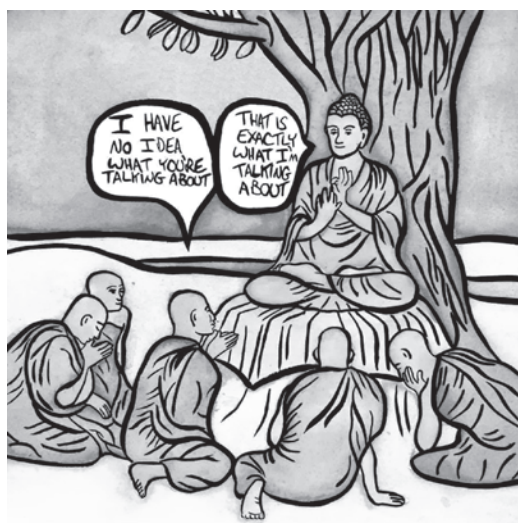
Ref: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahalya>

Ahalya



Unconditional love really exists in each of us. It is part of our deep inner being. It is not so much an active emotion as a state of being. It's not I love for this or that reason, not 'I love you if you love me'. It's love for no reason, love without an object.

- Rām Das



यतो वाचो निर्वर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह explained in one more way



- Swāmi Chidānanda

H H Swāmi Chandrasekharendra Saraswati (May 1894 – January 1994), known also as the Sage of Kānchi, the Paramāchārya and *Periyavā*, was an astounding personality. His life and teachings have been an inspiration to large numbers of people, both within the fold of Hinduism and outside of it. He lived the life of a true sannyāsi (monk), setting very high standards of *simplicity*, *austerity* and *submission to God*.

It was perhaps the second half of 1988, when I used to live in Bengaluru, that a friend of mine and I decided to go to Kānchi with the sole purpose of having the Paramāchārya's *darshana* (a glimpse of the holy man). When I look back, I regard this episode as one of the most blessed moments of my life. It is certainly among my highly cherished memories.

The Devi Kshetra

Shri Malleshiah and I took a bus and reached Kānchi, the famous pilgrim centre close to Chennai, the evening before our great day. We visited the well-known Kāmākshi temple, and walked around the area a little bit. Having *darshana* of Mother Kāmākshi was also of great value to both of us. I distinctly remember how Malleshiah cried like a child while both of us were standing before the Devi. I could not understand why he was so emotional. When I asked him later, all he said was, "I sought the Divine Mother's help in resolving various conflicts I have in my life."

We were told by local people that we had to go early, say 3.30 am, to a certain place in the temple precincts to have the *darshana* of the Paramāchārya. Accordingly we got up very early, took bath, wore fresh clothes and made our way to the spot that had been shown to us.

Surprise at 4 am

A fairly large crowd had already gathered and we could somehow manage to go to the front. There were a few things in front of us including a palanquin. We were told the Sage would show up anytime now. We were wondering whether he would come from the right or from the left. We thought he might be getting ready in some nearby cottage and might walk towards the spot where so many of us were waiting with abated breath.

All of a sudden, we heard the blowing of conch, playing of drums and other musical instruments. We looked to our right and then to our left, wondering where the holy man was. To our shock, he was not 'coming' from anywhere. They had opened the curtain of the palanquin and there he was – seated inside the palanquin – holding his *japa-mālā* (string of beads to keep count while reciting a mantra). We hadn't realized that the mahātmā (great soul) was already in front of us, just a few feet away, up and active from maybe 3 am!

He held his right hand up, with the

gesture of blessing all of us. Then he slowly came out of the palanquin and got closer to the crowd. The two of us were flabbergasted and did not utter a single word, even as some devotees spoke to him, mostly in Tamil, asking perhaps for his grace and blessings.

He interacted briefly with a few people. Aged 94 at that time, he was a picture of peace and serenity. He left the place, if I remember right, after half an hour or so.

A little more about the Paramāchārya

The life of this 68th Jagadguru of the famed Kānchi Kāmakoti Peetham was awe-inspiring from the beginning. Born to Kannada-speaking parents, he



was less than 13 years of age when a

cousin of his was selected to be the 67th Jagadguru. This cousin developed high fever and passed away! As a result, the boy Swaminathan was made to ascend the *peetham* (throne of Jagadguru) in the year 1907. Along with Vedic studies, the young *āchārya* took much interest in a variety of subjects like mathematics, photography and astronomy. He grew up to be a great scholar who knew many languages and who was steadfast in various religious observances. Many are the stories about him, where he impacted the lives of people. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Westerners and others were among them. It was he who had directed Paul Brunton to Ramana Maharshi. By his own example and magnetic presence, he made many heads of states turn towards God and religious practices.

He travelled widely in the country on a palanquin and often walked long distances. Though quite orthodox in his views, his vast erudition and personal *tapas* made him reach out to people, cutting across all sorts of barriers. His discourses – on diverse subjects like dharma, ancient culture etc. – were written as his *magnum opus* based on Hindu philosophy in a Tamil book titled - '*Deivathin Kural*.' Its English translation – Voice of God – and another book – The Vedas – published by Bhāratiya Vidyā Bhawan are worth mentioning here. The Paramāchārya continues to be an icon of high morality, great spirituality and deep mysticism.



What do we learn from the Upanishads?

Grief and Confusion Must End

- Swāmi Chidānanda

Across many Upanishads, we find that the outcome of true wisdom is the ending of sorrow. Kathopanishad (1.2.12) declares that the wise one lets go of both ego-born elation (*harsha*) and grief (*shoka*). Mundakopanishad (3.1.2) describes the enlightened one as being free from grief (*veetashokah*). Chāndogya Upanishad (7.1.3) confirms that we cross (the wide river of) sorrow upon gaining Self-knowledge. Ishāvāsyā Upanishad (mantra 7) asks us, "How can there be any sorrow and confusion for that person who sees the all-pervading oneness?" In his commentary on Geetā, Āchārya Shankara clubs *shoka* (grief) and *moha* (delusion) while describing Arjuna's condition. The prince was sad and he could not see matters clearly.

In clouded awareness, we perceive situations wrongly. That is *moha*. The result is that we get overpowered by unpleasant memories and begin to relive sad episodes of the past. That is *shoka*. These two – *shoka* and *moha* – become a vicious circle. They form a catch-22 situation. We must break it through *bhakti* and *jñāna*.

| *tarati shokam, tarati pāpmānam* |
|He crosses sorrow; he rises above sin. |

Mundaka Upanishad 3.29

| *na tvam shochitumarhasi* |
| You must not sink in sorrow! |
Geetā 2.27



Love is the ability and willingness to allow those that you care for to be what they choose for themselves without any insistence that they satisfy you.

- Wayne Dyer



- Felicia Hemans (1826)

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though childlike form.

The flames rolled on – he would not go,
Without his father's word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud – 'Say, father, say
If yet my task is done?'
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

'Speak, father!' once again he cried,
'If I may yet be gone!'
– And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath
And in his waving hair;
And look'd from that lone post of death,
In still yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
'My father! must I stay?'
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapped the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound –
The boy – oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part,
But the noblest thing which perished there,
Was that young faithful heart.



ETERNAL VIBRATIONS BHAKTI IN UPANISHADS



यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः *yasya deve parā bhaktih*
यथा देव तथा गुरौ । *yathā deve tathā gurau ।*
तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः *tasyaite kathitā hyarthāh*
प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥ *prakāshante mahātmanah ॥*

These truths talked of here are revealed to those noble souls who have supreme devotion to God and likewise to Guru!

श्वेताश्वतर - उपनिषद् SHWETĀSHWATARA UPANISHAD - 6.23

{If someone imagines that the Upanishads are all about wisdom (*jnāna*) and there is no emphasis on devotion (*bhakti*), they are mistaken. The above *mantra*, the last word in fact of the Upanishad, declares that they alone will be able to see the transcendental truth who have supreme devotion to God and Guru. The insights of the Vedānta remove the dividing line between pure knowledge and true devotion. At the highest level, *jnāna* and *bhakti* are one.}

~



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.

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“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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