

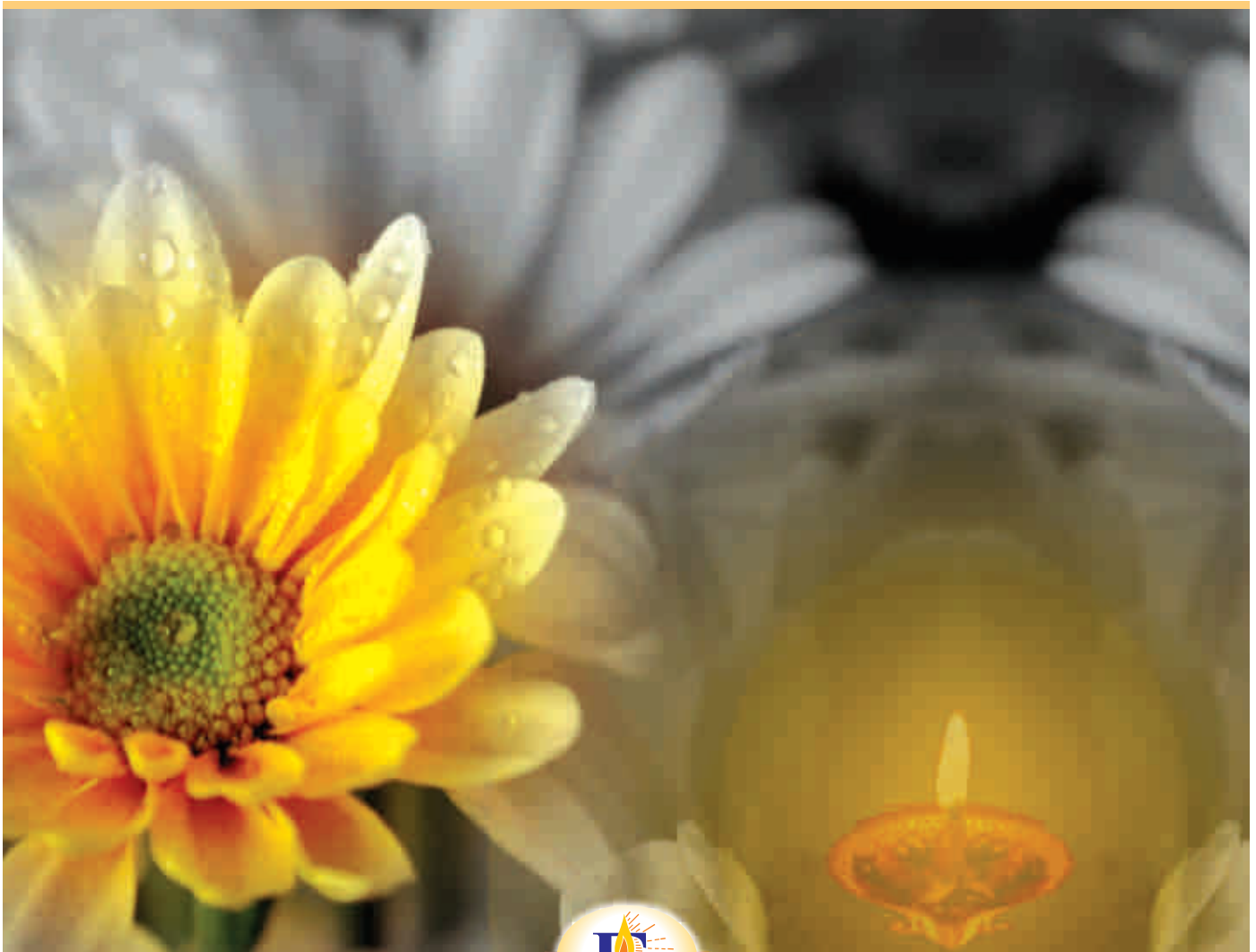
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Inner Flame

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Many are the paths that have been traversed across the world by the mystics, to search for truth. In our tradition, all the different paths have been called as different forms of yoga, viz., *jnāna-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, etc. In a sense, yoga can be imagined as a spiritual highway, into which all the different bylanes merge.

One of the 'guiding lights for seekers on the path of yoga' is Yogi Gorakshanāth. This quintessential Yogi fittingly seems to have appeared at various locations of this country across many time periods. Please read the fascinating saga of this great teacher, who was instrumental in spreading the tenets of practical wisdom of right living through the '*Nāth sampradāya*', which is a much venerated tradition of exalted teachers.

As the world is reeling under the spectre of conflicts across many regions, the threat of the world plunging into World War III seems more real than ever. Alas, who would have thought that things could deteriorate so rapidly to this mess, given the last few decades of massive technological advances made by mankind by way of the digital revolution? This only goes to show the futility of technological advancements without the accompanying refinements in the culture of soul of human beings. This harmony between 'the inner and the outer' alone can lead to lasting inner peace within and without. Swāmi Chidānanda throws light on this topic of great relevance, drawing from the burning flame of wisdom that is the Upanishads.

Where 'the rubber meets the road', as far as spiritual evolution is concerned, is the intelligence we are able to muster and bring to bear during our daily interactions with people in our own lives. Eknath Easwaran shares his subtle insights on how 'putting others first' can strengthen our spiritual muscles.

Under our series 'Places that Beckon', we are taking you to the Tuljābhavāni Mandir, the powerful *Shaktipeetha* that empowered the great Maratha ruler, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

There can be no greater goal than to strive to be the worthy torchbearers of the wisdom handed over to us by the *rishis* of yore, across many millennia. May the force be with you, as you try to be the change you wish to see in the world outside. The world surely needs the transformation rather urgently, as the human race seems to be facing its greatest threat in the shape of a nuclear holocaust.

Cdr HC Guruprasad (IN, Retd)
For Swāmi Chidānanda

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THE BEACONS

Gorakshanāth

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani.....1

PERCEIVING PHOENIX

The Search For Profound And Lasting Peace -
The Upanishads Show The Way

- Swāmi Chidānanda.....8

STORIES TEACH

Single-mindedness is Another Name for Devotion

- as narrated by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.....11

PLACES THAT BECKON

Shri Tuljābhavāni Mandir

- Compiled by Ratna Viswanath.....12

GEN NEXT

Conversations with The Holy Mother

- Swami Tapasyananda.....17

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE UPANISHADS?

The Signs of Spiritual Progress

- Swāmi Chidānanda.....18

INSIGHTS 'N' REVELATIONS

Putting Others First

- Eknath Easwaran.....19

SUBHĀSHITA

Though Human

.....21

RHYTHMS FOR THE SOUL

From Stone to God

- Swāmi Advaitānanda.....22

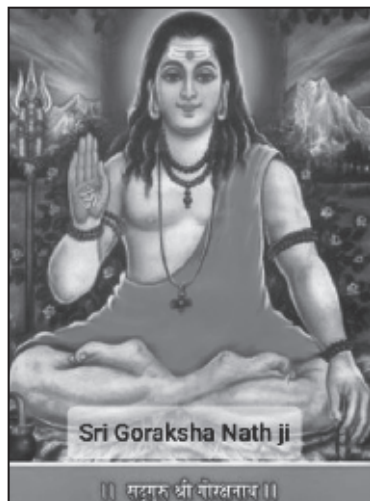
ETERNAL VIBRATIONS

Birds Of A Feather Flock Together

.....23

- Compiled by Dakshu Mansukhani

*“Only the person who has a guru, can hope to drink the elixir of immortality;
the one who is without a guru, remains thirsty.”*



An Overview

Gorakshanāth, also known as Gorakhnāth, is arguably one of the greatest yogis who ever lived. He is well-known as the saint who founded the influential Hindu *Nāth* monastic movement. While he is considered one of the two notable disciples of Matsyendranāth, he became more famous and influential than Matsyendranāth himself. His followers are found at Garbhagiri in Maharashtra. Gorakshanāth has been revered and deified. He is considered a representative, even an embodiment, of Lord Shiva. Along with Matsyendranāth, Gorakshanāth is mentioned in ancient texts, such as the *Padma Purāna*,

Brahmānda Purāna, and *Skanda Purāna*.

He was one of nine saints, known as the *Navanāths*, and is widely popular in Maharashtra. Hagiographies describe him as more than a human teacher and as ‘someone beyond the laws of time’, who appeared on earth during different ages. Historians state that Gorakshanāth lived sometime during the first half of the 2nd millennium CE, but they disagree on the century. Estimates based on archaeology and texts range from Briggs’ 15th- to 12th-century to Grierson’s estimate of the 14th-century. The position of the *Nāth* lineage is considered supreme in the annals of spiritual practice in the *Sanātana-Dharma* of India. It is believed to have originated from *ādināth* (Primordial Master) Lord Shiva, in which lineage, there are believed to have been nine *Nāths* and eighty-four *siddhas* (perfected yogis, adepts).

Matsyendranāth and Gorakshanāth (guru and disciple) command the leading position among the *siddha* yogis of this lineage. Tradition holds that *ādināth* Shiva himself was the guru of Matsyendranāth, who himself was, in turn, Gorakshanāth’s guru. In this pair of guru and disciple, Gorakshanāth has

achieved greater popularity and influence. Many *mahātmās* of the *Nāth* lineage consider Gorakshanāth to be an incarnation of Lord Shiva. In *Mahākālayoga*, a text of the *Nāth* lineage, Lord Shiva has stated: “*I am Goraksha. Consider that as my form. I have taken that form for the propagation of the path of yoga.*”

From medieval times onwards, Gorakshanāth has been the well-known wonder-worker and master yogi of Northern and Western India. He and the members of his order are celebrated in legend and song in countless villages. From Nepal to Rajasthan, from the Punjab to Bengal, from Sind to the Deccan, tradition and folklore are full of allusions to Gorakshanāth, recounting his wonderful deeds. He is the founder and outstanding teacher of the Shaivite sect of ascetics, original instructor of Hatha Yoga, founder and leader of the *Nāth* yogis, and patron saint and tutelary of the state named Goraksha in Nepal,



Gorakhnāth Temple at Gorakhpur

whose royal house was the land's rulers. Gorakshanāth, considered a *mahā-yogi*, did not emphasize a specific metaphysical theory or a particular Truth,

but stressed that the search for Truth and the spiritual life should be a valuable and typical goal of man. Gorakshanāth championed Yoga, spiritual discipline, and an ethical life of self-determination, as a means to reaching *samādhi*.

His influence is widespread among Masters as well. References to him are found in the poetry of Kabir and Guru Nanak, which describe him as a compelling leader with a large following, suggesting thereby that he was a contemporary of these spiritual leaders, both of whom lived in the 15th century. Historical texts imply that Gorakshanāth was originally a Buddhist in a region influenced by Shaivism, and that he converted to Hinduism, championing Shiva and Yoga. Gorakshanāth led his life as a passionate exponent of the ideas of Kumarila and Ādi Shankara that advocated the Yogic and Advaita Vedānta interpretation of the Upanishads. He considered the controversy between dualism and non-dualism theories in medieval India, as useless from a practical point of view. Instead, he emphasized that the choice is for the yogi to make, and that the spiritual discipline and practice by either path leads to a “perfectly illumined *samādhi* state of the individual phenomenal consciousness.” It has been professed that Gorakshanāth wrote the first books on Laya yoga.

It is said that Gorakshanāth spent time in meditation in many caves, some with temples built over them. According to Bhagawān Nityānanda (of

Ganeshpuri), the *samādhi* shrine of Gorakshanāth is at *Nāth* Mandir near the Vajreshwari temple, about one kilometre from Ganeshpuri in Maharashtra. According to legends, Gorakshanāth and Matsyendranāth did penance at the Kadri Temple in Mangalore, Karnataka. They are also instrumental in consecrating *shivalingas* at Kadri and Dharmasthala.

The Gurkhas of Nepal and India take their name from this saint. He has long been considered the *rāshtradevatā* (the Lord of the State) of Nepal, with his name appearing on numerous versions of Nepalese coins and currency notes. Gorkha, a historical district of Nepal, is named after him. There is a cave with his *pādukā* (footprints) and his idol; on the full moon day in the Hindu month of *Vaishākha*, there is a grand annual celebration called *Rot Mahotsav*; it has been observed for the last seven hundred years.

Osho has this to say about Gorakshanāth -

“Without Gorakh, there could be no Kabir, no Nanak, no Dadu, no Vajid, no Farid, (and) no Meera - without Gorakh, none of these are possible. The fundamental root of all of them is in Gorakh. India’s whole saint tradition - those innumerable devotees of love - is indebted to Gorakh. Just as without Patanjali, there would be no possibility of yoga in India, just as without Buddha, the foundation stone of meditation would be uprooted, just as without Krishna, the path of love would not find expression - similarly, without Gorakh, the search that

began for methods and techniques of *sāadhanā*, of spiritual practice to attain the ultimate truth would not have been possible. Gorakh made many discoveries within man for the inner search, more perhaps than anyone else. He has given so many methods that, in terms of procedures, Gorakh is the most significant inventor.”

Life History

Traditionally, Guru Gorakshanāth is believed to have been born sometime in the 8th century, although some believe he was born hundreds of years later. He travelled widely across the Indian subcontinent, and accounts about him are found in several places, including Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam, Bengal, Kathiawar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and even Sri Lanka.

Gorakshanāth’s life and works are extraordinary. Tradition maintains that he was not born from the union of male and female as in the ordinary course. The *Nāth Rahasya*, which translates as ‘The Mystery of the Masters’, recounts the birth, work, and death of nine such *Nāths*; and Guru Gorakshanāth was the ninth *Nāth*, preceded by his guru, the eighth *Nāth*, namely, Matsyendranāth.

There is no confirmed report of Gorakshanāth’s birthplace or date of birth. However, several theories have arisen from different parts of India, where the locals of distinct ethnic regions claim that Gorakshanāth was born in their area. One myth says he was born in Tilla, near Jhelum, in Punjab, while another

claims that initially, Gorakshanāth had been a Buddhist named Ramnavajra. Another theory is that he was born in Assam, and a fourth theory claims that he was born in Uttar Pradesh. A fifth theory is that he was born in the Kathiawar Peninsula of Gujarat.

According to a legend, Shiva and Pārvati quarrelled, and Pārvati, with a vain mind, told Shiva: “*ādideva*, everywhere you are, I am. You do not exist without me. You do not exist apart from me!” Shiva answered: “Maheshwari, wherever you are, I am. That is true. But to say that everywhere I am, you are - that is not true. It is like when there is a jar, there is always earth, but when there is earth, there is not always a jar.” To give a lesson to Pārvati, Shiva divided himself into two parts, one as himself and the other as Gorakshanāth. Gorakshanāth, the true form of Immaculate Shiva, went to a remote location and entered into deep meditation. Shiva and Pārvati later approached the place, and Shiva told the goddess that there was a great Yogi who had been meditating there for a long time. Upon seeing a Yogi as radiant as a thousand suns, Pārvati understood that he was a form of Shiva, and wondered if he was not a creation of Mahādeva, intended as a response to her previous assertions. She thus decided to test the Yogi. “If the acts of *māyā* are irresistible, *māyā* herself must be more irresistible,” she said. “My name is *māyā*. My power is superior.” Using the power of her *māyā*, she filled the universe with her presence. But Gorakshanāth remained

unprovoked and did not turn from his meditation. Pārvati then went back to Shiva and said, “Lord, you were right. You can be without me. I have seen it. Who is this Yogi who did not consider my power and stayed in *samādhi*?” Shiva answered, “This Yogi you saw is Gorakshanāth. He is superior to all gods and men. He is free from *māyā*; he is the death of death. I am Gorakshanāth. Gorakshanāth is my essential form – we have no difference between us. Light is not different from light. I took the form of Gorakshanāth for Veda, Cow, and Earth to be safe. Whosoever knows yoga, can conquer death.”

In the *Nāth* tradition, it is believed that Gorakshanāth appears in each *yuga* (epoch) in various parts of Bhārata, teaching yoga. According to Gorakshanāth, *Paramātmā* is ever present everywhere and is incomprehensible. However, embodied beings cannot see Him as *Paramātmā*; this is why he appears to ordinary people in His temporal form. Yogis claim that Gorakshanāth paved the way to achieve the highest goal of yoga, which is *moksha* (liberation).

One section of the *Nāth* lineage believes that Gorakshanāth is not born of a human womb, and that he is a *siddha* Yogi with an immortal body that manifests in each of the four Yugas. He manifested in the Peshawar province of Punjab in the *satya yuga*, after that in Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh in *tretā yuga*; in *dwāpara yuga*, he manifested at Harmuj, which is farther away than

Dwarka on the western coast of India and is now under the sea, and in *kali yuga*, he appeared as Gorakh Madhi on Girnar Mountain in Saurashtra area of Gujarat. It is believed that in *dwāpara Yuga*, Gorakshanāth was a contemporary of Lord Krishna.

In a legend known throughout northern India and Nepal, Gorakshanāth is himself the product of ashes and cow dung – hence, his name Go-Rakh (cow-ash). As the story goes, Matsyendranāth enjoyed the hospitality of a Brahmin couple, and upon hearing that they were childless, as a sign of appreciation, he gave the woman a piece of magical ash to eat. Matsyendra instructed her to eat it together with milk, following her purificatory bath after her next menses. However, persuaded by her friends, instead of eating the ash, she threw it onto a heap of cow dung behind her hut. Twelve years later, Matsyendra returned, and asked for the news of his son. When the woman avowed that she had discarded the ash, Matsyendra scooped away twelve years of accumulated cow dung to reveal a perfect 12-year old child, a *yogin*, for the boy had been practising his *sāadhanās* (spiritual practices) there since birth. He named him Goraksha (the Master who protects the senses – the word ‘go’ refers to the senses) and made him his disciple. Just as Matsyendra exhumed Goraksha from his ashes, Goraksha does the same to his disciples, first creating them from ashes and then initiating them with more of the same. According to a well-known

narrative, Matsyendranāth temporarily forgot about his yogic identity while living in the country of women, married their queen, and enjoyed the pleasure of sensual and family life. He returned to his yogic vocation, only after Gorakshanāth personally intervened - disguised as a female dancer - and through a series of poems, he imparted the teachings of yoga back to his teacher.

Teachings

As a yoga teacher, guru Gorakshanāth always emphasized the practical side of yoga and was always against creating any kind of sophisticated philosophical doctrines. Instead, he created the *Nāth Panth*, which presents within itself the living body of his teaching. His followers, the *Nāth Yogis*, reach their goals not by proving the superiority of their doctrines over the doctrines of others or by arguments in the philosophical disputes, but achieve it practically, as a way of life, by following in his footsteps. The *siddha* yogis (another name by which members of *Nāth Sampradāya* are sometimes known) consider any attempts to grasp and express the Absolute Reality with words, or comprehend it by the mind, as useless. He always stayed away from creating too many theoretical conceptions, and even his most philosophical book, *Siddha Siddhānta Paddhati*, is counted by modern researchers as only a semi-philosophical work. This is not a matter of wonder, because he states, right at the beginning of this book, that it is impossible to express Absolute Truth in

writing. Yet, to give to the masses, an idea of enlightened *siddha* Yogis, he attempts to express them. Thus, he steps away from all possible future disputes by accepting that, from the point of Absolute truth, what he is going to narrate is only the relative truth, and only one of many points of view. He insisted that Higher Spiritual Reality can only be realized and experienced individually through Yogic practices and cannot be defined by debates. His teachings are straightforward, based on correct knowledge of subtle structures existing inside the body, and laws existing in the universe. It is so logically interconnected that even today, his teachings appear most wonderful. 'Life as yoga, and to be a real example of what a yogi should be like' constitutes the core of his teachings.

The metaphysical doctrine, which Gorakshanāth preached along with his instructions on yogic discipline, was not purely the result of any logical reasoning, nor did he attempt to put his doctrine in exact logical forms. The ultimate basis of his philosophy was his supra-mental and supra-intellectual experience in the *samādhi* [self-realized] state of his consciousness. It was an intellectual expression of his transcendental experience, presented as an enlightening way of thinking and meditation, to seekers of truth, peace and freedom from bondage and sorrow.

He taught people that Truth was the same, in whatever form of language it might be expressed, and in whatever paths the intellect might approach it. The

mind must seek the Truth with sincerity and earnestness and must not be led away by undue attachment to particular forms of language or particular methods of thinking. Among the dozen or so books he authored, *Gorakh Bodh* (Illumination of Gorakh) is an obscure ancient Hindi text, written as an intense dialogue between Gorakshanāth and his teacher, Matsyendranāth. In it, he is described as the founder of the *Nāth Sampradāya*. It is stated that the nine *Nāths* and the 84 *siddhas* are all human forms, created as yogic manifestations, to spread the message of yoga and meditation to the world. It is they who reveal *samādhi* [self-realization] to humanity.

The *Siddha Siddhānta Paddhati* is a Hatha Yoga text in Sanskrit, attributed to Gorakshanāth by the *Nāth* tradition. According to Feuerstein, it is one of the earliest Hatha Yoga scriptures, containing many verses that describe the state of an *avadhoota* or liberated yogi. This text is based on an *advaita* (non-duality) framework, where the yogi sees "himself in all beings and all in himself," including the identity of the individual soul (*ātman*) with the universal Soul (*brahman*). This idea appears in the text in various forms, such as the following example of the caste system, as viewed by the *Nāths*:

"The four *varnas* (castes) are perceived as part of the nature of the individual, i.e., *brāhmana* in *sadāchāra* (righteous conduct), *kshatriya* in *shaurya* (bravery and courage), *vaishya* in *vyavasāya* (business), and *shudra* in *sevā* (service).

A yogi experiences all men and women of all races and castes within himself. Therefore, he has no hatred for anybody. He has love for every being.” Gorakshanāth, *Siddha Siddhānta Paddhati* III.6-8 (Translator: D Shastri)

Sacred Practices/Sādhana

The focus is on yoga. Here, the mastery of the body does not strictly refer to an ability to assume various postures. More importantly, it implies an ability to redirect the *bindu* [vital essence] flow, and thus escape death or achieve immortality. *bindu* is the drop of immortality that ordinary and ignorant people waste in the form of semen ejaculated in sexual activity, thus falling into the claws of death. Therefore, *bindu* needs to be controlled through celibacy and returned to the top of the head through yoga. At its highest station, on top of the head, the *bindu* turns into an elixir (amrit). In its journey from the bottom of the spine to the top of the head, the *bindu* passes through a set of chakras.

One man told Goraksha that he was thinking of committing suicide.

Goraksha said: “Go and commit it, but I tell you, afterward you will be amazed.”

That man said: “What do you mean? I came to you so that you would tell me, ‘Don’t do it!’ I went to other sādhus.

They all cautioned me: ‘Brother, don’t do it, suicide is a great sin.’”

Goraksha replied: “Are you mad? No one can commit suicide. No one can even die. Dying is not possible. I warn you, do it, and you will be very surprised. After committing suicide, you will discover, ‘What! The body is left behind, but I am exactly as I was!’... If you want to commit real suicide, then stay with me. If you want to play nonsense games, then it’s up to you - jump from some mountain, put your neck in a noose. But if you want the real death, then stay by my side. I will give you the art which brings on the great death. Then there will be no possibility of coming back again.”

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gorakshanath>

<https://Gorakshanath.org/legend.php>

https://nathas.org/en/parampara/nine_nathas/gorakshanath/

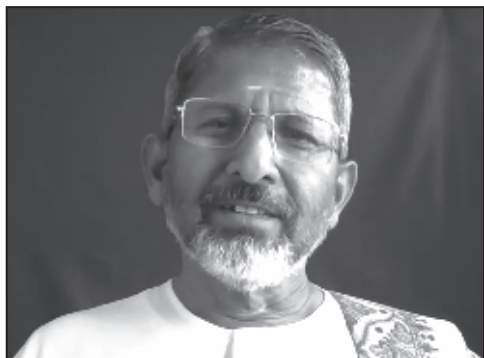


Your nature is to keep quiet. You came from silence, and you have to return to silence... you are dancing only for a little while, you see... a little while, you are dancing.

Papaji



- Swāmi Chidānanda



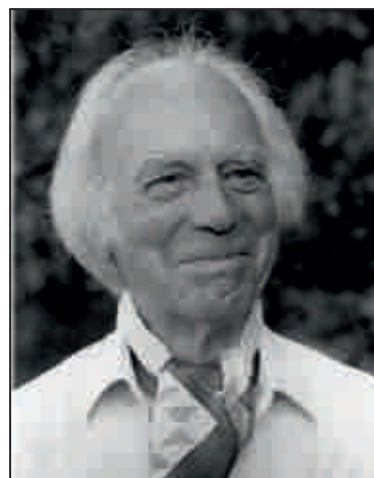
One morning, I had a wonderful visitor named Brahmachāri Gatavyatha Chaitanya. His name means *one whose worries are gone*. This word appears in Geetā¹. This middle-aged man indeed seemed to be free of fears and anxieties. In spite of being connected with a lot of people, institutions and programmes at several places in the country, he exuded such vibrations, as though he had no responsibilities or pressures on his mind.

All problems are inside only

The Vedānta asks us the question, “Are we in the world? Or, is the world in us?” That is one of the hundred ways in which the wisdom of the Upanishads turns our world *upside down*. In his immortal work *Saddarshanam* (The Vision of the Reality), Shri Ramana Maharshi declares², “This world is made of thoughts only!” Even if we say the physicality of the world is not a creation of our mind, we will have to admit that the likes and dislikes towards anything (or

anybody) in the world are certainly our mind’s conditionings.

“Perceive, do not conceive,” said Jean Klein³. For example, when we see a rose, we *perceive* its shape, colour, fragrance, etc. Meanwhile, if our memories begin their mischief, we may remember how, on an occasion in 2012, some organizers had given a rose to each of some six of us, who were on the stage, except to the two of us! It hurts us even now, after ten



years have passed, why we were left out. Thoughts revolving around ‘I, me and my’ rise with a certain force and, in fact, we may almost cease to observe the flower in front of us; we get carried away by the memories of the past. To be in the grip of a memory of the nature of “I was not honoured; I was insulted” is the meaning of ‘conceive’. Can we see the



rose, without memories casting their shadows on our perception?

Be Nobody, while Playing the Role of Somebody

In a beautiful story that Mata Amritanandamayi narrated at one of her *satsangs*, a stranger somehow finds his way to the royal court of a king, when the ruler was yet to arrive. To the astonishment of all who had gathered, the man went straight to the king's throne and occupied it. No less an officer than the Prime Minister angrily asked him, "How dare you take that seat? Are you a king of another country?" The intruder calmly replied, "I am above any king."

"Are you an extremely wealthy man somewhere?"

"I am above any wealthy man anywhere."

"Are you a Nobel Prize winner?"

"I am above any award winner."

"Are you God?"

"I am above God."

"Come on, there is nothing above God."

"You are right. I am that *nothing!*"

Amma shared this story with her audience, pointing out the bliss of being *nothing* or *nobody*. We may, therefore, reflect on the teachings of the Upanishads, which ably dismiss our ego, the separate self, and bless us with the discovery of our natural state, where we are neither success nor failure in life.

Be a Donut

The donut, a popular sweet, has wonderful symbolism. It is sweet all around but empty at the centre.

As there is increased clarity about the



Vedānta, we realize the falsity of the ego in us. To think high of ourselves is a folly, and to imagine we are less worthy, is foolish too. We are empty at the centre. The word 'empty' goes better with Buddhist terminology while, in the Vedānta, we would say we are *sat-chit* (Existence-Awareness) with no name, form or boundaries. While Self-knowledge helps us let go of all identifications with our personality, which includes our physical and emotional descriptions and our qualifications, etc.,

the wisdom meanwhile leads to such a 'sweetening' of our personality that the illustration of the donut fits in very well. The noble qualities of the head and the heart spontaneously rise in us, making us great contributors to the society around us. When we were egoistic, people used to be happy whenever we would 'go away from' them; now, when we are free of egoism, people are happy whenever we 'go to' them. We begin to enjoy the bliss of being zero within us while, to our pleasant surprise, we emerge as heroes in the outer world, without our seeking to be so.

There is Profound Peace in Letting Go of the Ego

Expressions in the Geetā such as 'does not get bound though doing a lot' (5.7), 'sees inaction in action' (4.18) and 'to think that we are doers is sheer delusion' (3.27), all of which are echoes of Upanishadic revelations, point to the attainment of lasting peace in Self-

realization. The misconceived self (ego) is proud or ashamed, living in self-congratulation or regrets. The Pure Self stays in natural peace, which is not at all the result of any memory. We must, therefore, do listening (*shravana*), reflection (*manana*) and meditation (*nididhyāsana*) upon the statements of the Upanishads (or the Geetā, which is an excellent restatement of the Upanishadic truths). In the light of the new outlook that we develop, every one of us can come upon lasting peace.

Notes:

1 *anapekshah shuchir-daksha udāseeno gatavyathah* – Geeta 12.16

2 *manomayam tad-bhuvanam vadāmah*– Saddarshanam, verse 8

3 Jean Klein (1912 – 1998) was a Vedānta master, who wrote books like *The Transmission of the Flame*.



All ways, all Paths go somewhere else.
What is the Path to here?
What map do you need to find your ever-present Self?

Mooji



- as narrated by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

A man was angling in a lake, all by himself. After a long while, the float began to move. Now and then, its tip touched the water. The angler was holding the rod tight in his hands, ready to pull it up, when a passerby stopped and said, "Sir, can you tell me where Mr. Bannerji lives?" There was no reply from the angler, who was just on the point of pulling up the rod. Again and again, the stranger said to him in a loud voice, "Sir, can you tell me where Mr. Bannerji lives?" But the angler was unconscious of everything around him. His hands were trembling; his eyes were on the float. The stranger was annoyed, and went on. When he had gone quite a way, the angler's float sank under water, and with one pull of the rod, he landed the fish. He wiped the sweat from his face with his

towel and shouted after the stranger. "Hey!" he said, "Come here! Listen!" But the man would not turn his face. After much shouting, however, he came back and said to the angler, "Why are you shouting at me?" "What did you ask me about?", said the angler. The stranger said, "I repeated the question so many times, and now you are asking me to repeat it once more!" The angler replied, "At that time, my float was about to sink; so I didn't hear a word of what you said."

A man can achieve such single-mindedness in meditation, that he will see nothing, hear nothing. He will not be conscious, even of touch. A snake may crawl over his body, but he will not know it. Neither of them will be aware of the other.



One is always bliss. The undisturbed state of being is bliss;
the disturbed state is what appears as the world.
In non-duality, there is bliss; in duality - experience.
What comes and goes is experience,
with its duality of pain and pleasure. Bliss is not to be known.
One is always bliss, but never blissful. Bliss is not an attribute.

Nisargadatta Maharaj



- Compiled by Ratna Viswanath



Shri Tuljābhavāni temple is located in Tuljapur tāluka in Osmanabad District in Maharashtra. Tuljābhavāni is a highly revered goddess in the whole of Maharashtra. She is also the *kuladevatā* (the family deity) of many families. Tuljābhavāni is also known as 'Turjā'. She is among the *sāde-teen* (three-and-half) *shaktipeethas* of Maharashtra, and fifty-one *shaktipeethas* of Bhārat. Pilgrims from all over Bhārat throng to this temple.

Marathawada, which is part of Maharashtra, is situated in the ancient forests of Dandakāranya. This region was known as Yamunāchala *parvata* (mountain) or Balaghat. Tuljapur is situated in the hilly area of Yamunāchala.

The idol of Shri Tuljābhavāni is *swayambhu* (self-manifest, emerged by itself). It is made of *sālagrāma* stone. In most temples, the idol is fixed and cannot be moved. However, the idol of Tuljābhavāni is dynamic or *chala*; i.e., it



can be moved. The installation ceremony of this idol was done by Ādi Shankarāchārya on the *Shriyantra*. Being *chala*, the idol is taken out from the *Shriyantra* thrice a year for *pradakshinā*.

Once a year, the *pradakshinā* or *parikramā* is done by the idol, along with *Shriyantra*, Mahādeva and Khanderāya.

The Legend of Tuljābhavāni

In *kṛtayuga*, there was a simple Brahmin sage, Kardama, who lived with his wife Anubhuti. Anubhuti had many good qualities, and was endowed with divine beauty, similar to that of Rati. When Kardama died, she began preparations for undergoing *sati*. At that juncture, *ashareeree* (a divine broadcast) advised that a woman with a young child need not undergo *sati*. Thereafter, she changed her mind & decided to practise penance in the beautiful surroundings of the river Mandākini. She became a *yogini*. Kukara, the king of *asuras*, saw her while

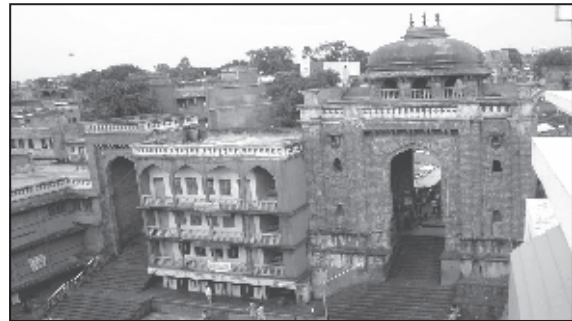
she was in the state of *samādhi*. Gazing at her charming beauty, lust arose in the mind of Kukara. At first, he tried to win her with sweet words. He then tried to use brute force, in an attempt to breach her chastity and her penance. Anubhuti prayed to the Goddess for mercy, and began to cry for help. Tuljābhavāni responded to her call immediately, and appeared at the place of penance, to kill Kukara. As Tuljābhavāni attempted to kill him, he changed form, assumed the form of a *mahisha* (buffalo), and began to dance on the battlefield. On *Ashwina shuddha dashami* (the 10th day of the bright lunar fortnight in the month of *Ashwina*), the goddess killed Kukara. Hence, the day is celebrated as *Vijayadashami*. As the goddess responded and rushed in haste for the protection of her devotee, she is also called *tvaritā*. Tuljā or Turjā is a Marathi word for *tvaritā*.

The Architecture and the Salient Features

The architecture of the Tuljābhavāni temple is of Hemadpanti style, which was a well-known style in ancient Bhārat.

The entry into the temple is through two *Mahādwārs* (imposing gates). After entering the temple, we first observe Kallol *Tirtha*, which is a combination of 108 *tirthas* (sacred waters). A few steps ahead, we come to Gomukh *Tirtha*, wherefrom there is a continuous flow of water. Ahead of Gomukh, there is a temple of Siddhivināyaka. Thereafter, we come across a well-designed and decorated gate, which was constructed by Sardar Nimbalkar.

After entering through this gate, we can see the idol of Rishi Mārkaṇḍeya on the left and *Nagara* (a big drum) on the right. Thereafter, there is a *homakunda* (a fire-altar, a receptacle for the sacred fire during a *homa* or *yagnya*). At the bottom of the *homakunda*, there lies Rakta Bhairava, who is among the eight *bhairavas*, who are the guards of the deity. There is also a brass gate, to the south.



We then enter the *garbhagrha* (*sanctum sanctorum*) to behold the *swayambhu* idol of Tuljābhavāni. The idol is seated on a throne, studded with jewels.

The installation of the idol is in the '*Devipanchāyatana*' setting.

The idol has eight hands. She holds various weapons, such as *chakra* (discus), *gadā* (mace), *trishula* (trident), *ankusha* (goad), *dhanusha* (bow) and *pāsha* (rope). One hand holds the hairs of an *asura* (demon). The *trishula* is piercing the chest of *Mahishāsura*, who lies at the feet of the idol. The deity is killing *Mahishāsura*. The *vāhana* (vehicle) of the deity, which is the lion, is also depicted. The images of the Sun and the Moon, as also an idol of Rishi

Mārkaṇḍeya, who is reciting the *Purāṇas*, can be seen near the deity. On the right side of the idol, there is an idol of Anubhuti. Anubhuti is worshipping the deity. Above the head of the deity, there is a *pindi* (a small idol) of Lord Mahādeva. There is a *swayambhu mukuta* (crown) on the head of the deity.

There is a silver *palanga* (cot) near the *garbhagrha*. Bhavāni goes for *nidrā* (sleep) on this *palanga*. Facing the *palanga*, there is an idol of Mahādeva. One can observe Bhavāni and Mahādeva, sitting facing each other.

There is a *kadi* (silver ring) on one of the pillars. There is a legend regarding this pillar. If there is an ache in any part of a person's body because of inflicted injury, the touch of this ring for seven days will reduce the ache.

As we come out, we get *darshana* of Yallama. Nearby, there is the idol of Lord Narasimha. A *brāhmaṇa* named Nandibuwa was His devotee. Next, we can have *darshana* of Rudrāvatāra Khanderāya. His idol is near the west-facing gate of the temple. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj used to come for *darshana* through this gate.

There is a spherical stone, which is referred to as Shakunwanti. People believe that this is a magical stone. If one's hand is gently kept on this stone and a question is asked, the answer 'yes' or 'no' will be indicated by the movement of the stone. If the answer is positive, the sphere turns towards the right. If the answer is negative, the sphere turns towards the left. If the sphere remains static, it implies that the desired work will

be done slowly.

Beyond the Shakunwanti stone, there is an *ekamukhi* (having one face) idol of Lord Datta.

All the ornaments of Bhavāni are kept in the *jāmadārakhāna*. These ornaments are worn by Her during festivals. One of the ornaments is a gold chain of 108 gold *putalees* (idols); this was donated by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

A Great Influence in the Life of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Tuljābhavāni is the family deity of the Bhonsale royal family. Shivaji Maharaj and his mother, Jijabai, were ardent devotees of Tuljābhavāni. Jijabai firmly believed that she was blessed by Bhavāni and Mahādeva.

Before the birth of Shivaji, Jijabai would earnestly pray to Bhavānimātā to bless her with a son like Shri Rama, or a daughter like Goddess Durgā, who would vanquish the enemies and protect Dharma. She would ardently pray to Bhavānimātā night and day, for the protection of her husband and her son, when they went for battle.

Shivaji is believed to have received a sword from the hands of Tuljābhavāni. The sword made Shivaji successful in all his conquests.

Jijabai ordered Shivaji to meet Afzal Khan and slay him, and thus display Maratha valour to the world. On his way to this meeting, Afzal Khan arrived at Tuljapur. On hearing that Tuljābhavāni was very sacred for the Marathas, he went on a rampage and desecrated the temple. The original stone idol of Bhavāni was hidden under water by the

priest, but the larger idol was uprooted, flung on the ground and powdered to pieces in a handmill.

The moment the idol was pounded to dust, a heavenly voice was heard, "Afzal Khan! On the twenty-first day from today, I will behead you; your whole army will be destroyed!" Afzal took no notice of this warning; he marched towards Pune, desecrating other temples on his way. He had resolved to destroy all that Shivaji held dear.

Shivaji prayed to Tuljābhavāni. She appeared in his dream and blessed him, assuring him of victory, and of Afzal's inevitable death. The next morning, Shivaji took his trusted aides into confidence, and appealed to their sense of honour. They got ready for battle.

On 10 November 1659, Shivaji met Afzal, who greeted him with an embrace, but with an intention to strangle and kill Shivaji. However, Shivaji tore Afzal's abdomen with a hidden tiger claw, and by using a dagger.

Shivaji's aide beheaded Afzal, as he was making a hasty retreat in his palanquin. The severed head of Afzal Khan was laid at the feet of Bhavāni Devi at Tuljapur.

Pleased with Shivaji, Tuljābhavāni appeared in his dream and said, "I got Afzal killed by your hands. I was the cause for defeat of the others too. Great deeds will be performed in the future. I shall live in your kingdom. Build a home for me in your kingdom and worship me."

The next morning, Shivaji Maharaj loaded a cart, and asked for five pieces of marble to be brought from the

Gandaki, to build the temple. A beautiful idol of Bhavāni was created and consecrated in Pratapgad.

Important Events and Festivals

I. Navarātri - Shārādiya Navarātri (during *Ashwina*/September-October) is the main festival of Tuljābhavāni. The important ceremonies during this festival are *Durgāsaptashati Pāth*, *Navagraha Japa*, *Abhisheka*, *Homa*, etc. **Shākambhari Navarātri** is celebrated in January.

II. Nidrā of Tuljābhavāni - The deity is believed to be going for *nidrā* thrice in a year.

1. *ghoranidrā* - On *Krishna Janmāshtami*, the idol is anointed with turmeric and kept on a special silver cot or *palanga*, which is meant for Her *nidrā*. The *nidrā* continues till *Amāvāsya*.

2. *mohanidrā* - On *Vijayadashami*, the deity, draped in a full-length sārī, is taken out of the inner room or *garbhagrha* of the temple. The idol is taken out in a procession in a *pālakhi* (palanquin). After the completion of *pradakshinā* (circumambulation) around the temple, the deity rests on the *palanga*. The *nidrā* continues till Purnimā.

3. *māyānidrā* - On the first day of the lunar month of Pousha, the deity is anointed with turmeric and kept on the *palanga*. This *nidrā* lasts for seven days. Bhavāni sleeps for an average of 20 days in a year. *Poojā* is performed during the period of *nidrā* of the goddess. The idol is offered scented oils and perfumes for bath during this *poojā*.

III. Pāthas or Recitation of Durgā Saptashati

There are three types of *pāthas* or recitation namely,

sarala pātha - In this *pātha*, the 700 mantras in *Durgā-saptashati* are chanted.

pallava pātha - If there is some obstacle in the fulfilment of a devotee's desire, then this *pātha* is resorted to. In this *pātha*, one particular mantra has to be chanted before every mantra of *Durgā-saptashati*. In case of *pallava pātha*, the total number of mantras recited, adds up to 1400.

samputa pātha - In this *pātha*, *samputa* mantra is chanted before and after each mantra of *saptashati*. Thus the total number of mantras recited is 2100.

IV. Chandi Yagnya

Chandi Yagnya is performed on various occasions and during Navarātri.

Based on the number of times *Durgā-saptashati* is recited, *Chandi Yagnya* may be -

nava Chandi (wherein *Durgā-saptashati* is recited 10 times), *shata Chandi* (100 times), *sahasra Chandi* (1000 times), *ayuta Chandi* (10000 times) or *laksha Chandi* (100000 times).

For each type of *Chandi Yagnya*, the recitation is followed by *homa*, *tarpana* (libation), *mārjana* (cleansing with mantras) and *brāhmaṇa bhojana* (feeding) equal to *dashāṁsha* (one-tenth) of the number of recitations of *Durgā-saptashati*.

In the 12th *adhyāya* (chapter) of *Durgā-saptashati*, the deity Herself has given instructions regarding her worship. Her worship results in peace of mind,

destruction of fear and poverty, and relief from physical disorders. A true devotee of the goddess is always bestowed with good health, mental peace, financial upliftment, peaceful sleep and true knowledge.

All the *Sevā Vidhis* are performed daily, but are believed to be even more effective, when performed on auspicious days, such as Tuesdays, Fridays, Full Moon Days, Ashtami (8th day after No Moon Day), etc., as also during *Shārādiya Navarātri* and *Shākambhari Navarātri*.

Getting there

The nearest airport is at Aurangabad, 257 kms away. The nearest railhead is Solapur on South Central Railway. Tuljapur is accessible by road from Mumbai (452 kms), Aurangabad (257 kms), Pune (280 kms), Solapur (40 kms) and Osmanabad (19 kms).

Notes:

sāde-teen shaktipeethas – There are three-and-a-half *shaktipeethas* (prominent seats of the Mother Goddess) in Maharashtra.

These are four temples –

Mahalakshmi Temple, Kolhapur

Tuljābhavāni Temple, Tuljapur

Renukā Temple, Mahur (Matripur)

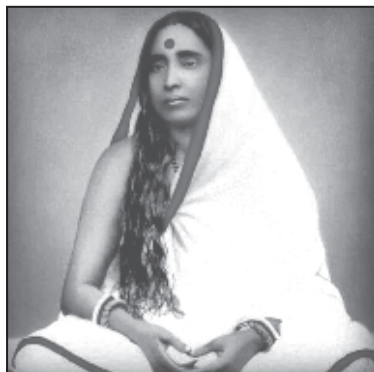
Saptashṛngi Temple of Vani.

This temple is known as a half *shaktipeetha*.

Sources:

www.shriTuljābhavāni.org

<https://sāhasa.in>



Disciple: Mother, is it good to practise Asanas (Yogic postures) and Pranayamas (breathing exercises)?

Mother: These practices lead to supernatural powers, which deflect a man from the spiritual path.

Disciple: Is it good to be going about from one place of pilgrimage to another?

Mother: If the mind feels at rest in a particular place, there is no need of pilgrimage. ...

Disciple: Is it better to do spiritual practices staying at the Math or Banaras than in a solitary place?

Mother: If you undergo spiritual practices for some time in a solitary place such as Rishikesh, you will find that your mind has become strong, and then you can live in any place or society without being in the least affected by it. When the plant is tender, it should be hedged round. But if it is grown up, cows and goats can do it no harm. Spiritual practices in a lonely place are very essential. Pray to God

with tears in your eyes whenever you want illumination or find yourself faced with any doubt or difficulty. The Lord will remove all your impurities, assuage your mental anguish, and give you enlightenment. ...

Disciple: I have been practising postures (Asanas) for some days to keep my health in good condition. These postures help one in digesting food and in practising continence.

Mother: Be a little careful about it. If you continue such exercises for a long time, the mind may be diverted to the body. Again, if you give it up, it may affect your health. Therefore, you should exercise your discretion.

Disciple: Mother, I practise it for only five or ten minutes for good digestion.

Mother: That's alright. I warned you because, if you practise any exercise and then give it up, it may ultimately impair your health. I bless you, my child, that you may realize God consciousness.

Disciple: I am practising a little Pranayama too. Shall I continue it?

Mother: Yes, you may do a little. But don't go to an excess and heat your brain and nervous system. If the mind becomes quiet of itself, then what is the need of Pranayama?

[Swami Tapasyananda - Sri Sarada Devi – The Holy Mother: Her Life and Conversations]

What do we learn from the Upanishads?

The Signs Of Spiritual Progress

- Swāmi Chidānanda

‘The inner’ and ‘the outer’ are intimately connected. Spirituality is essentially an inner journey. It is deeper than all those well-known physical exercises for fitness and better shape. As we advance on this inner path and cross certain milestones, we will surely experience that things are changing outside too. Bodily health improves, emotional stress levels come down, daily-life conflicts get reduced and, above all, we feel content and happy. Our relationships get better.

As you begin to make spiritual progress, you will feel light and fit. You will not feel the need to possess more than what you need.

*laghutvam-ārogyam-alolupatvam
yoga-pravrittim prathamām vadanti*

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad, mantra 2.13

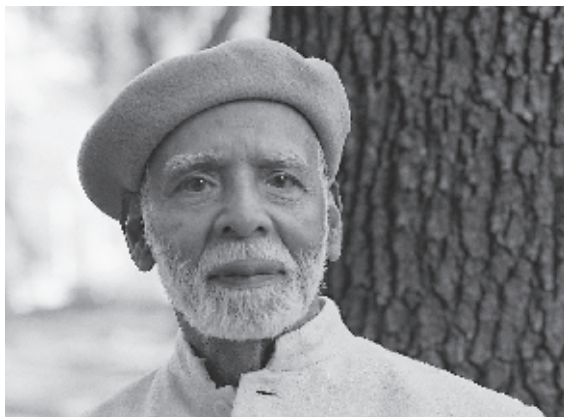


Mind is the creator of everything.
You should therefore guide it to create only good.
If you cling to a certain thought with dynamic willpower,
it finally assumes a tangible outward form.
When you are able to employ your
Will always for constructive purposes,
you become the controller of your destiny.

Paramhansa Yogananda



- Eknath Easwaran



Eknath Easwaran

In a sense, learning to love comes down to attention. When we are preoccupied with ourselves—*our* thoughts, *our* desires, *our* preferences—we cannot help becoming insensitive to others' needs. We can pay attention only to so much, and all our attention rests on ourselves. When we turn away from ourselves, even if only a little, we begin to see what is really best for those we love.

Hugh, for instance, really looks forward to watching 'The Wide World of Sports' every weekend. He has done it for years. "I've had a hard week," he says, puts his feet up on the ottoman, and leans back.

But what about his wife, Elaine? Was *her* week so easy? He might ask her what she would like to do. Go to the beach? Shop? Get the garden started? It might be painful to pry himself away, but

if he loves her - and if he wants to grow - he will choose to read the scores in Monday's paper.

For Hugh it may be 'The Wide World of Sports' that has to be forgone; for another it may be a shopping trip, a nap, a chance to make some extra money, a hobby, an unfinished painting. Whatever it is, giving it up, even temporarily, may hurt. Our preferences are sticky, like the adhesive on a bandage; there may be a wince when we tear them away. But it has to be done if we want to relate easily and lovingly with those around.

Any time we refrain from self-centered ways of acting, speaking and even thinking, we are putting others first. Anger, for example, is often nothing more than violated self-will. Hugh expected a bonus and didn't get it, so he sulks. Elaine wants their son Jack to stop tinkering with his car and spend more time on his schoolwork, but Jack has other ideas; both get resentful and quarrel. To be blunt, when we are crossed like this by people or events, we do our human equivalent of roaring, baring our fangs, and lashing out with claw, horn, tail, or hoof. The household can become quite a menagerie.

But anger is power, and Hugh, Elaine, and all the rest of us can learn to harness this power by putting each other first. Whatever the flavor of our anger -

irritability, rage, stubbornness, belligerence, or sullen silence - it can all be transformed into compassion and understanding. Those we live with will certainly benefit from that, and so will we.

This does not mean that if someone we love tries to do something foolish or injurious, we should ignore it or connive at it by saying, "Whatever you want, dear." Putting others first does not at all entail making ourselves into a doormat. In fact, if we really love someone, we will find it necessary to speak out for that person's real and long term interest - even to the point of loving, tender, but firm opposition.

Often the way we do this makes all the difference. If we are accusing or resentful we will seem entangled, judgmental, just the opposite of loving. Our words, our facial expressions, may betray a lack of respect: "I knew you couldn't stay on that diet, Hugh!" Even with the best of conscious intentions, we may provoke a nasty clash. But if we can support the other person and express our disapproval tenderly, with respect, it

will help him or her to see more clearly. When we have such a helpmate, my grandmother used to say, we do not need a mirror.

Lately I have run across best-selling books encouraging people to compete with each other, even with one's own husband or wife. Many couples, I hear, have taken this advice. Who brings home the most income? Who has the most promising career? I have even seen couples compete over their friends - or, tragically, for the love of their own children. But a man and a woman brought into union are not adversaries. They are meant to complete each other, not to compete. Their union should dissolve separate boundaries - what is bad for one can never be good for the other.

[From 'Learning to Love' (Easwaran Inspirations, Book 4); excerpt from *Passage Meditation - A Complete Spiritual Practice* by Eknath Easwaran (Nilgiri Press, 2016). Used with permission.]



Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry,
the philosophy which does not laugh and
the greatness which does not bow before children.

Kahlil Gibran, Mirrors of the Soul



एके सत्पुरुषाः परार्थघटकाः स्वार्थान् परित्यज्य ये,
 सामान्यास्तु परार्थमुद्यमभृतः स्वार्थाविरोधेन ये ।
 तेऽमी मानुषराक्षसाः परहितं स्वार्थाय निघ्नन्ति ये
 ये निघ्नन्ति निरर्थकं परहितं, ते के न जानीमहे ॥

On one side are those good men, who do good to others, even at the cost of their own objectives. The ordinary men apply their energies for the sake of others, if the objectives of the latter are not contrary to their own objectives. Those are devils of men, who destroy other people's objectives for the sake of their own. But we do not know (what to say of) those, who destroy the gains of others without any cause.

(Neeti shataka -75)



A man's ability is not measured by the number of times he has stumbled and fallen, but rather by the number of times he has gotten up, brushed off the dust and walked on.

Shakespeare – Henry VI



- *Swāmi Advaitānanda* (ADVAITAM, Bengaluru)



From a shapeless mass of stone
Comes out an intricate pillar
With the blooming lotus rising to the top
Held by tiny creepers dancing around
The art and the artist were in tune
The creation and creator come together!
Sometimes swift, sometimes slow,
The chisel worked rhythmically - blow by blow.
Chipping away with every beat of the hammer
The sculptor worked on through the summer
Amidst heat and dust,
Amidst noise and blaring horns
His heartbeat in tune with the hammers beat,
His weary eyes saw nothing else
And on his brows collected all the sweat,
Occasionally he would wipe a tear
Look around for a glass of water
And go back to his hammer and chisel.
The work was long overdue
With centuries of wait and patience!
Now was a period of closure and uneasy calm.
The king was now coming back
To the cries of "Jai Sri Ram"





मृगा मृगैः सङ्गमनुव्रजन्ति
गावश्च गोभिः तुरगास्तुरङ्गैः ।
मूर्खाश्च मूर्खैः सुधियः सुधीभिः
समान-शील-व्यसनेषु सख्यम् ॥

mṛgā mṛgaiḥ saṅgamanuvrajanti
gāvaśca gobhiḥ turagāsturaṅgaiḥ ।
mūrkhāśca mūrkhaiḥ sudhiyaḥ sudhībhiḥ
samāna-śīla-vyasaneṣu sakhyam ॥
(From subhāshita-sangraha)

Deer follow deer, crows follow crows, and horses follow horses. In the same way, fools follow fools, and wise people follow wise people. No wonder, there is natural friendship among those with similar conduct and habits.

[All wisdom finally leads to Self-knowledge, which is liberation. The path, however, is marked by 'self-knowing' by which we mean we understand ourselves; we realize why we are stuck at certain levels of consciousness, what blocks us in our upward journey. The verse above, from a spiritual point of view, asks us not to blame others but enquire instead into our own thought, word and deed. – Editors]





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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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