



PEACE

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Kaivalyopaniṣat

अचिन्त्यमव्यक्तमनन्तरूपं शिवं प्रशान्तममृतं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ।
तथाऽऽदिमध्यान्तविहीनमेकं विभुं चिदानन्दमरूपमद्भुतम् ॥

acintyamavyaktamanantarūpaṃ

śivaṃ praśāntamamṛtaṃ brahmayonim,

tathāऽऽdimadhyāntavihīnamekaṃ

vibhuṃ cidānandamarūpamadbhutam ..

May one contemplate on the Lord who cannot be captured by thought or senses. He manifests in infinite forms. He is all auspicious changeless Being. He is the immortal cause of the Creator. He has no beginning, middle, or end. He is one without a second and all pervading. He is the Awareness Absolute. He is the Bliss. He is the formless wonder of wonders.

Adbhutam, wondrous. Atman is the eternal, One-without-the -second Reality pervading the myriad forms of living beings, yet transcending all. That is the wonder of wonders. The one who knows It is a wonder, the one who expounds It is a wonder, the one who listens to it is a wonder (*Kathopaniṣat*, 1-2-7).

(The Detailed explanation of this Mantra can be had from *Kaivalyopaniṣat* (mantra 6) Published by Brahma Vidya Kuteer, #501, Deccan Corner Building, Diamond Point, Sikh Village, Secunderabad - 500 009, Telangana, India, Ph. 040- 2750 2035).

(*Tattva Prakāśikā* by Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati)

Prayer

VERSE 3

सुखचिदखण्डविबोधमद्वितीयं वियदनलादिविनिर्मिते नियोज्य ।
भ्रमयति भवसागरे नितान्तं त्वघटितघटनापटीयसी माया ॥ ३

*sukhacidakhaṇḍavibodhamadvitīyaṃ
viyadanalādivinirmite niyojya,*

*bhramayati bhavasāgare nitāntaṃ
tvaghaṭitaghaṭanāpaṭīyasī māyā. 3*

अघटितघटनापटीयसी *aghaṭitaghaṭanāpaṭīyasī* = capable of making the impossible possible; माया *māyā* = illusion; तु *tu* = indeed; सुखचिदखण्डविबोधम् *sukhacidakhaṇḍavibodham* = Bliss, Awareness, and undifferentiated Knowledge; अद्वितीयम् *advitīyam* = one-without-a-second; वियदनलादिविनिर्मिते *viyadanalādivinirmite* = in the construct of space, fire etc.; नियोज्य *niyojya* = having embedded (through identification); भवसागरे *bhavasāgare* = in the ocean of worldliness; नितान्तम् *nitāntam* = relentlessly; भ्रमयति *bhramayati* = encircles.

Māyā is capable of making the impossible possible. It causes Atman, which is Bliss, Awareness, and undifferentiated Knowledge, to identify with the construct of space, fire etc. (the physical body), thereby relentlessly encircling it in the ocean of worldliness.

(From tatvaprakāśikā of māyā pañcakam, Published by Brahma Vidya Kuteer, # 501, Deccan Corner Building, Diamond Point, Sikh Village, Secunderabad - 500 009, Telangana, India, Ph. 040- 2750 2035).

(Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's Māyā Pañcakam)

MEDITATION

स्वकृतपुरेष्वमीष्वबहिरन्तरसंवरणं
तव पुरुषं वदन्त्यखिलशक्तिधृतोऽशकृत्तम् ।
इति नृगतिं विविच्य कवयो निगमावपनं
भवत उपासतेऽङ्घ्रिमभवं भुवि विश्वसिताः ॥

*svakṛtapureṣvamiṣvabahirantarasaṃvaraṇaṃ
tava puruṣaṃ vadantyaikhilāśaktidhṛtośakṛtām,
iti nṛgatiṃ vivicya kavayo nigamāvapaṇaṃ
bhavata upāsateṅghrimabhavaṃ bhuvi viśvasitāḥ.*

The sages declare that Your infinite Power, which is unmistakably manifest everywhere as the support of the universe, has Itself become the *jīva* in all the beings and they are aspects of Yours.

Thus realising the real nature of the *jīva* and discriminating between the real and the unreal, the wise ones worship You with whole-hearted devotion; for, they have known beyond all doubt that all vedic rites and sacrifices find their sure fulfilment at Your lotus-feet.

- from *Śṛtigīta* by Swami Gabhirananda,
Advaita Ashram Publication

BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS

-Swami Omkarji Maharaj

A Parsee friend from Bangalore sent us flower seeds, we sowed them and planted the sprouts in rows in front of our prayer hall.

How beautiful are they! So fresh, pure and innocent, with open hearts looking towards the Sun Light. They are the messengers of God with messages of spotless purity, sweet fragrance of service and innocent beauty of culture.

Where were they a month ago? These beautiful flowers were in Bangalore in a nursery, in the form of seeds. They were lying for sometime in the paper packets even after we received them.

Now look at them! Pray, come and see our little messengers of God! Let us commune with their souls for the Peace and freedom of our souls as well.

Dear friends, where are your flowers now? Are they still in the SEED FORM, in the far away heaven in the nursery of God, or are they lying idle, unused in your home in the dark closets of your heart.

Please bring out the flowers from your hearts! Do not keep them any longer in the seed form. The time to sow them is NOW-today, in the fertile soil of your well prepared mind. Water the seeds with LOVE UNIVERSAL.

In no time, may be next week or even tomorrow, you will be surprised to see your latent seeds, long neglected hidden seeds, sprouting and growing! Pray continue to wet them with the daily life-giving waters of love. They will surely will bloom in no time. Your seeds will be blessing to yourself as well to others, by bringing them out of your hidden closets of your hearts by sowing them in the field of the world.

If we use what we have, what we have will grow. So let us not

hide our light under a bushel, a basket or bury our talents unused. Let us merge within, introspect our lives, search for all the unused latent seeds within and lose no time in taking them out to sow them, before the season passes away.

Pitiable are they who are finding their joy in hoarding and accumulating the seeds that may be eaten away by moths of selfishness or stolen by thieves of aggression any day!

Compare the unused dusty seeds in the packet of your heart, with the blooming sweet smelling flowers, the sun-shine in the soul of your life! While life is sweet, youth is fresh and the day is bright, let us sow the seeds of service and sympathy in our individual hearts, to reap the benefit of blooming flowers on the morrow, with the fragrance of Peace and good-will all over the world. May Adorations may be unto all sweet, silent and precious flowers of Humanity!

OM! OM! OM !

COME OUT OF THE CAGE OF THE BODY

Swami Omkar

You are not the body itself;
A cage it is for your Soul,
Cling not to the earthly bonds;
The boundless Earth is your goal.

Do you wish to be imprisoned forever in this small and lightless, dungeon and blood, that is, the body – the physical body? Yearn you not for freedom? Wish you not to soar in the skies of delight, unfettered and free? Then, come out and feel your self, in tune with the infinite. How could the finite and earthly give you unlimited happiness? Emerge from the small ego in which you are enmeshed and acquire cosmic – consciousness.

Why do you identify yourself with the body, its joys and sorrows? Body-consciousness is the root of all misery. It is bondage. Cling not to this corpse, realize that you are the boundless, the *Brithat* and the vast, *Bhouman*

OM TAT SAT OM!

BLUNDERS

- Swami Omkarji Maharaj

"If you desire to be one with God, do not complain. If you do complain, you cannot be one with Him." Today I came across these wise words, uttered by a Muslim saint in his tests and trials. This is the last examination in God-identification. If a man puts both his hands round your throat, to choke your life out of you, you are to see only the sweet face of God in him. If man gives a fond embrace with one hand, and the other hand stabs you in the back, you are to feel the God's Presence in the very touch of his hand. Then alone will the latent Light in you manifest in all Glory! The saints and sages have done it in the past. They never complained in their tests and tribulations. Here is a chance for you too to recognize God. When others have done it why can't you do it? Do it now and be a blessing to the world of humanity.

HE PRAYETH BEST

He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast
He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small!
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

To err is human and to forgive Divine. God has not created one man as all good and another man as all bad. Wherever there is good, there is bad also. Wherever there is bad, there is good also. The wise man sees good and ignores bad. The wise and ignorant are two poles apart such as North and South Pole. The resentment or anger of an ignorant man is like that of a furrow drawn by a plough (Naagali in telugu), where as the resentment or anger of a wise

man is like that of a line drawn on water. Darkness comprehends not the Light. A selfish man can never understand a selfless man.

The path of Truth is rugged and full of thorns and stones. Narrow and rugged is the way that leads to heaven. All tests and trials are given to devotees, the brave, to see whether we can stand by God or Truth in our very tribulations.

We all commit blunders. But, when everything fails, it is Love that conquers. The divine law of Love never fails. Truth Alone Triumphs. In our tests and trials, the memorable words of the blessed Christ are our comfort and consolation. "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*"

May Love alone flow from us in all our tests and tribulations, towards one and all especially towards those who do not understand our good intentions. Anyone can be happy when adored and worshipped when all is going on well. He alone is the greatest soul who is happy, when criticised and condemned, even if placed on the cross. Verily, Truth triumphs, Love wins.

Even at the cost of death for the Peace of our soul, let us cling to Truth and Love. How inspiring and life giving is the following Universal Anthem, helping us all!

THE UNIVERSAL ANTHEM

One cosmic brotherhood
One universal God
One source, one sway
One law upholding us
One purpose moulding us
One life enfolding us
In love always!

The past is dead and buried. Let us cling to the living present

moment NOW, seeing Him within and without, in friend and foe, in all the living images of the one Indivisible God. Let us remember always the golden adage, LOVE OF MAN IS LOVE OF GOD. When we cannot love God who comes to us in the form of man, how can we love God, Who is formless and nameless? As today alone is ours and not tomorrow. Let us do our good deed now itself!

OM! OM! OM!

THE INFINITE IN THE FINITE

Swami Omkar
(From Cosmic Flashes)

Still I am bound to the body.
How long shall I bear this weight?
When its function gets fulfilled,
Then like a dry leaf will it fall.
O Glory, when the soul leaves the body,
In the Omnipresence to merge !
When the jug is forever broken,
The infinite soul gets new birth.

I feel free and complete within. But this is only inner feeling, for, it is still bound to the body, though it be an illusion. The Infinite within the finite, is the idea that expresses my present feeling. Though this is not the highest state, the Videha Kaivalya, yet this state gives one peace and poise.

But how long can the Infinite be confined within the finite body? How long can the body bear the weight and immensity of the infinite? When its function is fulfilled, like a dry leaf the body will drop off without effort. Then will the soul come out of the body and will completely merge within its own Omnipresence, Omnipotence and Omniscience. The ether enclosed within the jug, becomes entirely one with the all-pervading ether if the jug is broken, though it was not different from it even before. These are all mysteries known only to the knowers of the soul.

OM TAT SAT OM!

ON LIBERATION

- Swami Sivananda

(continued from December 2014)

Sikhidhwaja said, "O venerable Guru! the liberated sages work for the solidarity or well-being of the world. Do they not perform action through the mind? How can one work without a mind? Please enlighten me on this point."

Kumbha Muni replied, "Manas (mind) is said to be of two kinds, namely, pure and impure. That which is associated with, the thought of desire is the impure mind and that which without desire is the pure mind. The pure mind is otherwise known by name 'higher mind', the impure mind is called 'lower mind'. To men, their mind alone is the cause of bondage or emancipation. That mind which is attracted by objects of the senses tends toward bondage, while that which is not so attracted tends toward emancipation. Now, in as much as to a mind free from desire for sensual objects there is salvation; an aspirant after emancipation has his mind ever free from all longings after material objects."

The impure or Asuddha Manas is filled with impure Vasanas and Rajs and Tamas; and the pure mind or suddha Manas is filled with pure Vasanas and Sattva. The impure Vasanas generate rebirths. The pure mind with pure Vasanas leads to Moksha or liberation from births and deaths. The worldly minded persons work with the lower or impure mind. They are bound by their Karmas. The liberated sages work with the pure or the Sattvic mind (higher mind). They are not bound by their Karmas as they have no egoism and as they do not expect fruits for their actions.

The impure mind is unsteady. It ever fluctuates. It jumps from one object to another. It ever hankers after sensual objects. It is filled with various sorts of fears and pains. The pure mind is steady. It does Brahma Vichara. It rests in the Supreme Self. It does not move toward sensual objects. It is free from all sorts of fears and pains.

The impure mind is none other than the Vasanas (subtle desires) that generate countless births. The mind becomes a prey to various kinds of desires through its fluctuation. Fluctuation is caused by Rajas and Vikshepa Shakti. When the mind fluctuates it wanders from one object to another.

An Ajnani or worldly-minded man is swayed by the impure mind. He acts according to the dictates of the lower or impure mind. But a sage or Jnani keeps his mind under perfect control. He acts in accordance with the voice of his intuition.

Just as a washerman removes dirt through dirt (sand), just as a traveller removes a thorn in his foot by using another thorn, so also the impure mind should be slain by the pure mind.

He who has annihilated the lower or the impure mind drives away rebirths a great distance away from him. No pain will affect him. The pure Vasanas with which the sage performs actions cannot cause rebirths for him.

All impure Vasanas are fried *in toto* when you attain knowledge of the Self or Brahma Jnana. Meditation, Japa, Kirtan, Pranayama, Brahma Vichara, study of religious books and Satsang generate pure Vasanas.

When the mind is freed from desires for objects and when it rests in the Self or Atman, you enjoy eternal bliss. When the mind is freed from all cravings or longings for objects, when it is controlled and centred in the heart and when it attains the Reality (or the Atman) you attain Moksha or the final beatitude of life.

O King do not allow your mind to fluctuate. Keep it ever free from all longings after material objects. Annihilate the impure or lower mind with the help of the pure or higher mind and transcend the higher mind also. May you be as firm as a rock! May you be endowed with the pure or Sattvic mind! May you ever rest peacefully in the blissful Self.

Sikhidhwaja said, "O venerable Guru! tell me something regarding the origin and destruction of this universe; how can we

intermingle the conception of the individual soul or mundane soul with the idea of Brahman or the Supreme Soul, who is ever pure and self-luminous?"

Kumbha Muni replied, "All the visibles are perishable. They are extinct at the end of every Pralaya or Mahakalpa. Brahman alone, who is quiet, all-pervading, full of bliss, indestructible, pure and bright, ever exists. Just as the water becomes the wave at a certain time, so also this world rises and falls in the supreme self of Brahman. Just as bracelets, rings and various kinds of ornaments come out of gold, so also this world of names and forms comes out of Brahman. This universe is nothing but the non-dual Chinmatra (Absolute Consciousness), just as the wave is nothing but the water of the ocean."

Brahman, Shiva, Satyam, Chinmatra, Sat and Chit are all synonymous terms. A slight motion in the mind generates this world. If you attain self-realisation, the universe will disappear. Just as the snake appears in the rope, so also this illusory world appears in Brahman. This world is the Vivarta of Brahman, just as rings, bracelets, etc., are the Vivarta of gold. For an Ajnani alone is this world real. If you practice deep meditation you will develop divine vision and behold Brahman or the Supreme Self through direct intuitive perception.

Brahman alone is the real existence. He is the Soul of all. He is all-in-all. He is the essence of this universe. He is a unity that never admits of a duality under all the varieties and diversities in nature.

It is useless to make an enquiry regarding the nature of the world and our egoism, because they do not really exist; they are mere illusory appearances like the snake in the rope. The feeling of egoism and the world are meaningless; they are mere creations or inventions of the mind. "I, thou, this, and that" are mere inventions of men to distinguish one from another. They are merely coining of our imagination. They do not really exist. The knowledge of "I, thou, he, that, this, etc." is like the appearance of our dreams.

Sikhidhwaja said, “O venerable sage! now I understand that there is no such thing as the mind also.”

Kumbha Muni replied, “The world does not really exist. There is no such real entity as the mind at any time in any space whatsoever. How can there be a mind where there is no world in existence? This world is the essence of the one Brahman only. There is no world apart from Brahman. Whatever is manifest here before us exists in Brahman. Just as the wind merges in the air, just as ornaments melt into gold, so does this world merge in Brahman. The sage does not behold this world as the world, he beholds only the Self everywhere. This world appears only in the ignorant men. This world is as false as a circle described by the whirling flame of a torch. Mind is another name of ignorance. Mind is nothing. It is an unreality appearing as a reality. The gross desire which causes men to take rebirths is known by the name mind.”

“O King! Always identify yourself with Brahman, who is unborn, beginningless, endless, decayless, eternal, indivisible and ever tranquil – and rest in supreme peace for ever.”

Sikhidhwaja said, “O sage! tell me, how do the Jivanmuktas or liberated men conduct themselves in this world?”

Kumbhamuni replied, “the liberated sages are free from longings or desires. They have annihilated their minds. They have their senses under perfect restraint. They are endowed with virtuous qualities. They possess equanimity (samata) or evenness of disposition and equal vision at all times. They have no desire for heaven and for rewards for their actions. They keep a balanced mind under all circumstances of life.”

Sikhidhwaja said, “Tell me O venerable Guru! how can the motion of a thing be one and the same with its immobility?”

Kumbha Muni replied, “There is only one thing – it is Brahman. This is the only essence. This is all-pervading, inexpressible, inconceivable and attributeless. One can attain the knowledge of the Self through long study of books which deal with Atma Jnana, Satsang and constant meditation.”

This Self is like the water of the ocean; it is agitated by intelligence just as the water of the ocean is moved by great waves. This Brahman is seen in the form of the universe by the ignorant. The intellect is ever busy and active but the Self is motionless and inactive. A slight variation in the intellect generates the universe. The intellect forms the moving principle of the universe. When intellect ceases functioning, this seeming universe vanishes and Brahman alone shines, all motion ceases and the immobile Brahman alone exists. O king! Thou art this immortal, immovable, all-blissful Brahman. Know this and rest in Samadhi like an immovable rock.

Sikhidhwaja sat as quiet and still as a statue, entered into Samadhi and remained in this state for full three days.

Kumbha Muni meanwhile resumed her original form as Chudala, moved in the sky through her Yogic power and reached her palace. She discharged the royal duties of her absent lord. After three days she journeyed through the Akasa, assumed the form of Kumbha Muni again and went to the hermitage of Sikhidhwaja in the forest.

She found that the king was in a state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. She wished to awaken him from his Samadhi. She roared like lion. This startled the wild beasts but did not rouse the king from his Samadhi. Then she shook him with her hands to bring him back to his senses, but even that did not help. Then she threw him down on the ground and yet he neither awoke nor came back to his normal senses.

She thought within herself thus, “I see that my lord is absorbed in the Supreme Self. I will concentrate on his subtle body and find out through my eye of intuition whether there is any residue of Sattva or intelligence or life in his heart. If there is, I will wake him up through another method and live with him happily. Otherwise, I will also give up this body and attain Videhamukti or disembodied salvation.”

Chudala concentrated her mind on the subtle or astral body of Sikhidhwaja and through her inner eye of intuition (Divya Chakshus), found out that there was still a residue of sattva or intelligence or

some relic of life in his heart. Chudala did the Yogic Kriya known as Parakaya Pravesa (entering into another body). She abandoned the physical form of Kumbha Muni, withdrew her subtle body and entered into the mind of Sikhidhwaja. There she caused that part of the mind which contained the residue of pure Sattva to vibrate. She put that part of the mind in action and motion. Then she returned to her own body (as Kumbha Muni) just as a bird flits on the twig of a tree and comes back to its own nest again.

She then sat upon a flowery bed and chanted the Sama Veda songs in a melodious manner. The king experienced an intellectual exhilaration on hearing the songs and his dormant life gradually blossomed, just as the lotus bud blossoms at the sight of the sun. He slowly opened his eyelids. The whole body of the king was filled with renewed life. He beheld Kumbha Muni before him and praised him.

Sikhidhwaja said, "Through thy Grace I have enjoyed the bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. I have attained liberation from the trammels of births and deaths. The pleasures of heaven are nothing when compared with the bliss of Samadhi."

Kumbha Muni said, "O King! are you free now from all pains, doubts and delusions? Have you fully tasted the bliss of Brahman? Are you free from attraction and repulsion towards sensual objects? Have you developed equal vision? Have you rooted out your longing for the sensual pleasures of this earth?"

Sikhidhwaja said, "O venerable Guru! by thy Grace I am absolutely free from all sorts of pains, doubts, fears, errors, delusions, love and hatred. I am free from decay, death and disease. I have gained all that is to be gained. I am quite contented in my own Self. I enjoy supreme satisfaction. I have nothing to know that is unknown to me and nothing to obtain that is not obtained by me. There is nothing more for me to long, to see or to hear. I do not want to hear any further advice from any one for my enlightenment. I am endowed with equal vision."

Then Kumbha Muni and Sikhidhwaja both wandered happily

in the forests and hills. They saw many lakes and rivers. One day Kumbha Muni said to the king, "Today there will be a big festival in Devaloka. I must present myself before Narada in the assembly. My departure is ordained by destiny. It cannot be averted by any means. Who can go against the force of the irresistible law? I shall positively return at sunset." He gave a bunch of flowers to the king and parted his company.

Kumbha Muni assumed the form of Chudala once again, journeyed in the sky, reached her city and discharged her royal duties. Then she resumed the form of Kumbha Muni, travelled in the air and alighted at Sikhidhwaja's abode.

Sikhidhwaja said, "O venerable sir! why are you sad today? Thou art a sage."

Kumbha Muni replied, "Knowers of Truth who are not firm and patient under trying conditions are not truthful men but imposters. As long as we have our bodies, we must exert our bodily organs in the proper manner. Even the great Brahma and the gods are subject to the conditions of their physical bodies. No one can go against the irresistible supreme law. It is beyond the power of any one to check the force of destiny which makes all things run in their destined course, as the waters of the rivers run in to the ocean."

Sikhidhwaja said, "If such is the case, why should you be sorry for anything that has befallen you?"

Kumbha Muni replied, "Hear, O King, the amazing accident that has befallen me. You will be struck with wonder indeed."

Chudala wanted to test Sikhidhwaja to see if he was established in Brahmacharya or not. She narrated an incident to the king as follows. "After I gave the bunch of flowers to you, I journeyed on in the air, went to my father in Devaloks and attended the court of Indra. Then I entered the region of air in order to come down to the earth. I met Rishi Durvasa. I told him: 'you are wrapped in your blue vest clouds. You seem to move in haste as an amorous woman to meet her lover.' Hearing this, the sage became angry, cursed me and said, 'Be thou transformed every night into an amorous woman!'

How shamefully have I behaved before the sage! I shall hereafter have to assume the body of a female everynight. I am very much pained over the matter.”

Sikhidhwaja said, “do not feel sorry, O Muni! No one can go against the force of irresistible law. You are a sage. You are the changeless soul. The transformation of the body will not affect the intangible soul. The soul or Atman undergoes no change.”

Chudala spent the days in the form of Kumbha Muni and the nights in a female form.

One day Kumbha Muni said, “How long am to remain as a virgin? I will choose you as my husband. Be pleased to accept me as your wife every night.”

Sikhidhwaj said, “You are at liberty to do as you like.”

Then the marriage was celebrated on the Mandara hills according to Gandharva rites by mutual choice and consent, on the day of full moon of Simha (August-September). Chudala was now known by the name of Madanika.

On every third night, as soon as Mandanika found the king asleep, she used to assume her previous form and go to her state to discharge the royal dutie. She returned to her husband in the forest after the duties of the state were over.

She made Indra appear before Sikhidhwaja through her Yogic power. Indra said, “O King, I am very much attracted by your Tapas and virtuous qualities. Come to Devaloka. The celestial maidens, Rambha and others are awaiting your arrival there. Plunge yourself in all sorts of enjoyments there.”

Sikhidhwaja replied, “O Indra! wherever I am, there is Swarga for me. I have known all the pleasures of Devaloka. I do not want anything.”

Sikhidhwaja remained in perfect equanimity of mind. He was quite indifferent.

Chudala wanted to test Sikhidhwaja further. She entered a bower and created, through her Yogic power, a lover. She made a show of embracing him. Sikhidhwaja sought her in the garden and groves and at last found her with her paramour in mutual embrace. But he was not in the least affected. He felt no change in his disposition. He did not show any sign of anger.

Chudala, in order to find out his behavior, appeared before Sikhidhwaja with a bashful countenance as if ashamed of her past misconduct. Sikhidhwaja spoke to Chudala with a sweet voice, “Why do you come so soon to me? O lady! return to your lover, and satisfy your passion. Do not think that I am angry or sorry for this affair. I am always contented in my own Self.”

Madanika, alias Chudala, said, “I am but a frail woman. I am ignorant. I cannot check my passion. Woman is by nature ten times more passionate than man. Neither prohibition nor the threatening of man, nor regard for chastity is of any avail to check her lust. Please forgive me. Forgiveness is the most important quality of pious men.”

Sikhidhwaja replied, “O sweet Madanika! anger has no seat in my heart, just as a tree has no seat in the sky.”

Chudal did not want to test Sikhidhwaja any further. She was convinced that her husband had attained the knowledge of the Self and that he was absolutely free from passion and anger. She gave up the body of Madanika and assumed her original form of Chudala and appeared before the king.

Sikhidhwaja said, “O lady! who are you?”

Chudal said, “ I am Chudala, thy lawfully wedded wife. I assumed the forms of Kumbha Muni and Madanika through my Yogic power and intiated you into the mysteries of Kaivalya or Atma Jnana. I remonstrated with thee on thy mistaken course and used every art and trick to take thee away from the right path. I tested you in diverse ways and sounded the depth of your knowledge. Now enter into Nirvikalpa Samadhi and you will know everything in detail.”

Sikhidhwaja sat for meditation. He saw vividly the whole affair

that had taken place from the date of abandoning the kingdom till his meeting with Chudala at the end.

Chudala said, “O Venerable lord! are you free from all doubts? Has thy delusion, caused by ignorance, been destroyed? Are you resting in your own Swaroopa? Are you enjoying the bliss of the Eternal?”

Sikhidhwaja replied, “I am now free from distractions, errors, doubts and delusion. I am liberated from the trammels of the world. I am always tranquil. I have no desire. I do not expect anything from anybody. I have nothing to choose for myself. I am neither this nor that; I am neither glad nor sorry at anything or at any event in the world. I am always resting in my blissful Self. Nothing can distract my peace. I am free from dualities, distinctions and differences. I do not think of objects. I am the all-pervading, pure Consciousness. I am like the omnipresent ether which permeates all objects and is yet untainted.”

Chudala said, “My venerable lord, resume thy regal duties now. You will not be bound by Karmas.”

Sikhidhwaja agreed. Then Chudala anointed him and performed the rites of his installation as king. She installed him on a beautiful throne with gems and blessed him with long life. Then Sikhidhwaja and Chudala mounted upon a beautifully decorated elephant and went back to their own town, accompanied by two regiments on both sides and attended by bands of musicians playing in harmony with the singing and dancing parties. He entered his royal palace with all his retinue and was welcomed by his ministers, courtiers and attendants. He reigned over his kingdom for a period of a thousand years and attained Videhamukti together with his wife.

Hearing the story of Sikhidhwaja so beautifully narrated by his Guru sage Vasishtha, Sri Rama asked him, “How can there be a residue of Sattva in those who have merged themselves in Brahman and who have annihilated their minds? How can there be the little spark or relic of the vital flame in a Yogi whose mind is as cold as

stone and whose body as callous as a clod of earth or a block of wood?”

Vasishtha replied, “The relic of life or the residue of Sattva, the cause for intelligence, remains in the heart as an imperceptible atom, just as flowers and fruit are latent in a seed. There is vibration of intellect in a Yogi who is calm and who remains as a statue or a rock in Samadhi. Though the mind of a Jivanmukta is annihilated, yet the subtle body is not altogether destroyed. His mind is not affected by the pleasures and pains. It has no craving or longing for the objects. Though his mind moves among the sense-object, it is free from attraction and repulsion.”

Vasishtha further said, “O Rama! follow in the footsteps of this king who ruled the kingdom till he attained Videhamukti. Do your regal duties. Have equal vision and a balanced mind. Be indifferent amidst pleasures. Be free from anxiety amidst pains. Have no attachment. Have no longing for objects. Never be sorry if you are in difficulties and troubles. You will not be affected by anything. Karmas will not bind you. You will attain Moksha. You will get knowledge of the Self. You will enjoy eternal bliss and supreme peace.”

- From the “Stories from Yoga Vasishtha”, a DLS publication.

THE OBSTACLES ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

-Swami Chidananda

(continued from December 2014)

Faith develops gradually. Full faith can be possessed only after realisation of God. Please do not worry on this point, with what faith you have to proceed onwards. Practice of spiritual life makes faith to grow. Doubts and questions will be there occasionally. None is free from these. Know this much, that God exists. The divine is the only unchanging Reality. All things change and pass including our own present personality, which questions and seeks. In essence, thy true nature is unchanging, eternal being.

Submit yourself to the will of god. It is the lord who is running all the show in this vast Universe. We are only His instruments. Nothing lies in our hand. The only thing that we can do is to pray to Him. He will hear the prayer that comes from the earnest and sincere heart. Therefore, pray to the Lord and seek His mercy. God is an ocean of mercy. He will always take care of His bhaktas. Have full trust in Him. Whatever He does, it is for the good of a bhakta. In His hands we are all safe.

Never worry about your future. Dedicate your actions to God unconditionally. Then alone misery is left behind forever. This is the simplest method of Yoga. May you attain the joy of Self through prayer.

Beloved Self, do not feel despondent. The little physical difficulty will soon pass away. It is only a little Karmic purgation. Feel that you are getting cured. Be positive in your thoughts and you will soon be well.

Surrender to the will of Lord, under all circumstances and conditions, brings immediate peace of mind. Therefore, remember Him constantly and feel that everything happens through His will only. He, who is an ocean of mercy and compassion always looks always to the welfare of His bhaktas, even though the bhakta does not see His hidden hand.

Read spiritual literature regularly. Books written by Gurudev are the source of inspiration. They will guide you in the spiritual path. They will remove most of your doubts.

Feel the presence of the Divine Being within you and ever draw light, joy and strength from Him. He is ever with you. He is your indwelling father, Guide and Friend. When you have Him you lack nothing. Drop all anxieties and carry on with your work with calmness and cheerfulness. Trust him and rest in Him.

We can but witness the movements of God's will upon His earth. And at the same time pray and seek to know His will for us under these circumstances. Ultimately we find that His will prevails anyhow.

This human body is constituted of past Karma. Its various changing conditions constitute inevitable processes in the course of working out this Karma. The indwelling Atman is ever unaffected by these changing processes. You ever remain the unchanging Witness or Sakshi to the changing conditions of body and mind. Know this Truth. Base thyself upon thy real Swarupa. Thou art the glorious inner Self ever before, now and hereafter. Boldly and bravely stand by the Reality. Smile. Smile under all circumstances. Practice this Vedanta in daily life.

It is the body that undergoes the changes of age and conditions of health and ill-health. You ever remain the unchanging Kutastha Atman; and Peace and Ananda is your Swarupa. Ever rest in this inner awareness. Passing experience will not touch the unbroken inner Atmic Experience. Live in the presence of the Divine.

Beloved Atman! the dual throng of experiences makes up this early life. Having come as an embodiment, they are to be gone through with fortitude. From such experiences, one matures in wisdom. Also, they are inevitable. Please carefully make a study of the 2nd chapter of the great and holy work "Srimad Bhagavad-Gita." The truth about things will be known therein.

This plane is Karma Bhoomi, meaning, the plane of working

out one's previous action. The individual souls take on bodies to undergo experiences and further their evolution towards their ultimate release. Until this process is completed, they have to come again and again into various bodies. No one has any ultimate connection with anyone else. Just as logs of wood floating down a river at times come close to one another in mid stream, even so do beings related through connection of physical body. When the time comes, even the logs separate and float away in different directions even so, souls journey apart. This is the truth. This is inevitable. We have to accept the inevitable with fortitude. But, there is not an extinction of life. There is separation, no destruction. He who thus knows, abides in peace. The heart is not troubled, recognizing that all these different processes constitute LIFE. That, which the human world calls death is as much a part of the great plan of life as any other process accepted as such. There is a deep reason, a hidden necessity behind all things that take place upon this Cosmic stage we call the world, in this unfolding of Universal life plane of which every individual is a part.

Make the divine name of God your all-in-all. Let it never be absent from your tongue. This is the greatest strength and solace in this age. The Divine Name will help to bring you unscathed through all problems and difficulties. To be absorbed in Divine Name is to experience true peace.

Have perfect trust in God. What He does for you is the best for you. He will do to you what He knows is the best for you.

Revered self, despair not. Have faith in the Lord. All troubles and tribulations will pass away. All such trials and difficulties are part of life. They come to strengthen you. Face them bravely. Though Sri Krishna, the Lord of the Universe was dear to the Pandavas and He closely moved with them there was no end to the sufferings of the Pandavas. Only, devotees' faith and sincerity will be tested. Take shelter in God. He will take care of you.

Love all those who harm you. Never think ill of them. They do not know what they do. They are ignorant. Pray to the Lord to enlighten their minds. Give only love to those who hate you. Always talk to them, whenever you meet them during the course of your

work with them, with a smiling face. Let them know that you have nothing against them. Everything will change.

Ever repeat God's Name, for God's Name is the sovereign remedy for all ills of life. There is nothing which cannot be cured by the recitation of Lord's name. God is merciful and kind. There is no end to His mercy.

Try to get up early in the morning and take a brisk walk. You must go for a walk in the very early hours of the morning and return home before the sunrise. After a while take a cold water bath. Then do some Asanas, like Halasan, Sarvangasan, and Matsyasan. Do the Asanas for 10 to 15 minutes. Repeat each Asana 4-5 times. Then do Pranayama for 5 minutes. Pray to God for the strength; repeat the name of the Lord constantly. You will gain strength. Also repeat the Asanas and Pranayama in the evening and do not fail to take an evening walk, in the fresh air.

Sickness is only in this perishable body. The real 'You' is all beyond sickness. This real 'You' is beyond all these mundane afflictions. Your real nature is divine. Know this through regular meditation, contemplation and by right Vichar.

Be in prayerfulness. Seek and find guidance from Him who is enshrined in the altar of your heart.

Have faith and trust in the Lord and always feel that He is working and talking through you. Then there will be no cause for anxiety and fear. Gradually you will be able to talk boldly and freely. Feel that you are serving the Lord in all. Think of the Lord just before you begin your talk and feel confident that he will guide you.

God is everywhere. Feel His presence everywhere. His eyes behold everything. His hands protect all. Trust in Him. Take refuge in His sweet Name. You need not despair. May goodness be your ideal and goal. May you all be good and attain God-head.

Have full trust in God. Pray to the Lord. He is an ocean of mercy. Everything happens by His will. He is the only real protector and savior. He ever takes care of His devotee.

Keep your mind always in communion with God, then all

depravity of mind will vanish. Please practice Japa and meditation daily. The more you can devote yourself to the contemplation of God, the more fruitful your life will become.

Do all your Sadhana in a spirit of dedication. Struggle is a sure condition of progress. Shrink not, faint not. The Lord is your real helper. Go forward with full steam. Don't feel disturbed.

- from eternal messages, a DLS publication

NOTHING CAN BE ADDED TO OR TAKEN FROM COMPLETENESS

-Swami Omkar

*There is nothing for which I should anyhow crave
If I feel complete in a perfect way.
Nothing can be added to or taken from it.
Completeness is perfect eternally.*

There are moments when I feel complete in a perfect way. The present moment is one such, I do not wish to close my eyes and meditate, for what I have to gain thereby? Neither do I wish to open my eyes and gaze at the outer beauty. For how do I profit from it? Everything is complete and perfect. There is nothing for which I should crave, there is nothing that I should work for, for I have been always complete.

Suppose I do not recognise this perfection, this completeness and remain silent, do I lose anything? Nothing whatsoever. Does the rock lose its rockiness, if it toils not? Does the rose forego its sweet beauty, if it works not? Nothing can be added to, or subtracted from, perfection by our exertions. *Purṇamadaḥ purṇamidaṁ, purṇāt purṇamudacyate; purṇasya purṇamādāya purṇam eva avasiṣyate.* Realise that you are perfect and complete eternally. After that you may do or stop doing anything.

OM TAT SAT OM!
(from Cosmic Flashes)

THE NEED FOR INNER REGENERATION

-Swami Krishnananda

The supremacy of the Absolute, the brotherhood of man, the blessedness of peace and goodwill and the paramountcy of love and unselfishness have been the central teaching of all saints, prophets, philosophers, the noble minds and the great hearts of all nations at all times. The glorious message of love and selflessness should be proclaimed to every home and every heart.

In this age of atomic armament, racial hatred and policies of national greed, organized exploitation, the international exclusiveness, intolerance and distrust, our task is not so much the alteration and transformation of the patterns, policies and plans of the governments of the nations of the world, as the creation of a great world-enveloping movement for a mass spiritual education and for the purification and the transfiguration of the nature and the personal propensities of the individual. The necessity for the moral, ethical and cultural refinement of the individual upon a world-wide scale is to be realised first and foremost. For, the prime and fundamental unit of all wider groups like class, race, nation and human society, the world over, is the Individual, Man.

Great masses of mankind have to be weaned from the unfortunate hedonistic and individualistic tendencies of thinking and feeling, acting with the grossness and greed of the mere beast. This is not an impossible proposition, for a perfection that is not seen by the mortal eye exists in all beings and it is the essence of every individual consciousness. The method to draw it out is right and true education. This task of gradually, yet surely, regenerating the nature of the masses has to be seriously undertaken in all earnestness and worked out in the educational and the domestic spheres, in particular and the wider social sphere, in general, - if the hope of creating a new generation and bringing into existence a new humanity which will elect and manage the future governments of nations in the best interest of all, is to be fulfilled.

I know this is a difficult task, but no great thing is ever done as

if by a magic. All constructivity implies hard work and more so does a creative and constructive task of a world-wide nature. The results may not be immediate. To a large extent the fruit of such work will be for the posterity, while the tempo and the sincerity of the movement will set the elders a thinking and gradually transform them as well. Just as a farmer who wishes to reap a rich harvest of healthy and luxuriant crop does not so much attempt to change and improve the existing crop that is already standing in the field – though he exerts to safeguard them from rot and pestilence – but rather starts to treat the soil in which the seeds of the next harvest are lying and germinating in silence, even so, all those who are to work for future peace and universal well-being should first of all strive to create a right and ideal condition that will ensure the freedom necessary to enable the future generation to fulfil the hopes and ideals that we cherish to day. If the world is to have peace, there has to be less hypocrisy, less of prejudice and fear-complex, less of slavery to outdated traditions and exclusive material values. Above all, the ideal of righteousness to live and to let live and to consider the other man's rights, necessities and self respect as much as our own, should have to be realised first.

Man should cultivate unlimited love. Patriotism, love of one's nation, one's own race, one's own religion, should never be allowed to be factors encouraging disunity, discord, hostility and superiority-complex. The love of your country and personal freedom should all the more emphasise the same in the other country and other person. True religion is Love. True religion unites all in fellowship. Sages call upon man to see good in all, but our endeavour should be to see God in all, the stupendous Eternity in us, for only then will we be able to see the good in all. Let man be taught truth, purity, love, contentment and selflessness. Let there be a living faith in the pervading goodness in the hearts of men, for this is the very essence of the spirit of true religion. In this faith, alone, lies the hope of our victory. Having achieved this, the main task is all but over and such humanity in whose bosom the divine flame has been kindled up will spontaneously direct all endeavours towards the materialisation of these sublime ideals.

May the world be free from the fear of war and destruction, from the delusion of fostering civilization through enslavement, from the self-righteous pride of charity and of doing good to others, from ungodliness and the unhealthy dialectics of materialism. May peace be unto all beings.

The vital need for the hour is the real education of the students, who are worthy future citizens, who are the hope and glory of the country, who shall be the physicians to minister to the sore heart of the nation, who shall be masters of themselves and shall sow the seeds of peace and abundance harmony and happiness, unity and brotherhood everywhere. Education has been well said to be the process of the finding of the divine perfection which is already in man. It is meant to gradually universalize the self, not to thicken egotism and self-consciousness. The ideal of education is an integral development of the multiple facets of human life. It has to prepare the students for perfection in every walk of living. The purpose of true education should be to enlighten humanity, to destroy the lower nature of man, to better the social order, to promote human well-being by training the students both for external achievement and for internal attainment. The consummation and test of true education is to be found in an all-round development of the faculties of knowledge, of love and of service.

It is only students who have disciplined their lives in academical centres, who have cultivated gentleness of spirit, acquired strength and fineness of character and who dedicate their lives to the cause of unearthing the eternal verities that can achieve the ideal of brotherhood, peace and harmony that is being aspired for. It is only students whom the universities have equipped with a knowledge of the method of unfolding their intrinsic abilities in the physical, mental and spiritual fields through a scientific scheme of the right kind of education, that will be able to build a mighty nation and accelerate the spiritual evolution of humanity as a whole.

Educational centres should not impart mere vocational and technological education, but must provide means for an all-round, harmonious development of the entire personality. The schools,

colleges and universities should, besides turning students into leaders and statesmen, scientists and scholars, soldiers, politicians and adepts in the various walks of life, transform them into sages, philosophers and seers. A thorough change in the present day curriculum of educational institutions is the utmost necessity. Books that are best calculated to furnish the students with lessons on sweetness of deportment, spirit of sacrifice, control of self, purity of heart and integrity of nature should be prescribed and made available. The making of man into a perfect, integrated being and really enlightening education are not two different things; indeed, they are inseparable. The objective should be not merely a training of the intellect, but an illumination of the very being and stuff of the individual. May the student population be exalted in moral excellence, truth and purity, learning and wisdom, culture and religion, the spirit of service and self-abnegation, strength of character and will.

(Part of the lecture delivered by the author at the University of Allahabad during September 1960.)

From the book "Resurgent culture", DLS publication.

LET THE SUN OF SUNS DISPEL THE CLOUDS

-Swami Omkar

*As the sun will rise after dawn,
Let the sun of your soul arise.
Dispelling all the dark clouds,
Let the sun of the suns make you wise.*

It is dawn now. Darkness has not as yet vanished completely. The sun has not yet risen. But shall arise. There are signs of his advent. The "ushas" heralds him.

Let the Sun of your Soul also arise. Let Him dispel all the dark clouds of ignorance and egoism. May he shine in His glory parching up the little ponds of envy, malice, good-will and sweetness thrive !

OM TAT SAT OM! (from Cosmic Flashes)

THE MEANING OF PILGRIMAGE

-Swami Ramdas

There was a great saint named Tukaram. He was a votary of God's name. Once some people from his village decided to go on a long pilgrimage and they requested Tukaram also to follow them. Tukaram expressed his inability; but requested them to be kind enough to take with them to all the places they visited a bitter gourd that he would give them. He wished that the bitter gourd should be given a dip in all the holy waters where they took bath and also have it taken to all the temples they visited. Not caring to know the significance of what the saint said the villagers took the bitter gourd from him and carried it all along the pilgrimage, obeying the instructions of the saint in regards to dipping it in the holy waters and taking it to the temples.

In a few months, the party returned from the pilgrimage and handed the bitter gourd back to Tukaram. Tukaram was happy and invited all the members of the party to a feast the next day to celebrate the successful completion of their pilgrimage. Tukaram made a special dish out of the bitter gourd which he has sent on the pilgrimage. They were served with the various preparations and they started eating. When they tasted the gourd dish, they all remarked it was bitter and asked Tukaram why he had served it. Tukaram as if greatly surprised, asked them how could it be bitter when it was made out of the gourd that had gone on a pilgrimage. It was no doubt bitter when he handed it over to them before the pilgrimage, but he wondered why it had not lost its bitterness inspite the pilgrimage. This was a great lesson to all the pilgrims.

There are so many who go on pilgrimage and return as bitter as before. But, if you go on pilgrimage as urged by the God within and continuously remember Him all through the pilgrimage and see only purity and goodness of God everywhere, you will achieve purity. Such a pilgrimage will surely be beneficial to you.

- from stories as told by Swami Ramdas, Anandashram Publication.

TRUE SANNYAS IS AN INTEGRAL STATE OF MIND

-Swami Satchidananda

Our Beloved Papa (Ramdas) had reached the highest peak of devotion with the result that his mind was filled with Ram through and through. He wanted Ram only. He talked about Ram only. He was living for Ram only. Nothing else mattered to him. It was in that mental condition that Ram prompted him to leave Mangalore to throw himself entirely in the arms of Ram. On the banks of river Kaveri, he put on himself the ochre robes, as directed by Ram, leaving it to the current to carry away the white clothes – the last material that he was till then wearing – that broke his connection with the worldly life. During that momentous few minutes he was praying to Ram.

“Oh Ram, Oh Love Infinite, protector of all the worlds! It is by Thy wish alone that Thy humble slave has been induced to adopt Sannyas. In Thy name alone, Oh Ram, he has given up Samsara and cut asunder all ties.”

“Oh Ram, bless Thy poor devotee with Thy grace. May Ramdas be endowed with strength, courage and faith to carry out Thy name, Ram, the following vows and bear all trials and all kinds of privations that may beset the path of a Sannyasi in his passage through the rough and perilous life of the mendicant:

- This life be henceforth entirely consecrated to meditation and service of Sri Ram.
- Strict celibacy be observed, looking upon all women as mothers.
- The body be maintained and fed upon the food procured by Bhiksha or on what was offered as alms,”

From the worldly point of view, it was an act of great renunciation. But from Beloved papa's side, it was 'induced' by Ram and therefore a natural 'falling off' everything that was holding him back to the world. What was left with him was his intense devotion to

Ram. The same devotion had started purifying his mind and at this stage possessed it so thoroughly that nothing of the lower nature could influence it. In a short time, his mind was made so pure that it could not remain a mind any longer; it became quite still, calm. The individual sense that was sustained and nurtured by the mind till then could also not exist. What was left is pure consciousness alone. The darkness of ignorance which was preventing him from realising his true Being had vanished and along with it all that made one's life unhappy. He could not say "I" any more. "The dew drop had become one with the sea." He had become a vehicle for God to work through. The love and bliss of God radiated through him.

Beloved Papa's life and experiences show that renunciation or Sannyas is not something that can be given or adopted by merely changing external conditions. Though certain rituals are done externally, it is mainly an inner or mental development and transformation after attaining certain amount of purification. When the process is complete, when the mind is perfectly purified, the real transformation takes place and then one will be able to identify oneself with the Atman, giving up one's wrong identification with the body. The moment one identifies oneself with the Atman, attachment to the body, its relatives and friends, possessions etc., drop off without any effort. That is real Sannyas. It might be possible for everyone to reach this stage of Sannyas without any change in external life and activities provided one intensely aspires to release one's true being and Existence and dedicate one's entire life and activities to Him. It is purely an internal change, a mental exercise in the process of which the mind itself will dissolve.

It is superfluous to narrate here the different paths, as most of you must be already following any one path suited to your temperament. What is required now is to intensify whatever Sadhana you have been doing so that your mind may be possessed by God-thought only. Anything not conducive to spiritual progress may drop off and ultimately the mind may be pure, free of all thoughts, become still and dissolve itself leaving only the experience of pure consciousness.

What is said here is not meant to criticise the traditional way of initiation into the order of Sannyas. The tradition of Sannyas had started centuries ago. Many heads of spiritual and religious institutions initiate their chosen disciples into the order of Sannyas if and when they find them fit for a life of renunciation and austerity so that the young initiates may perform their Sadhana and also learn the scriptures in the holy and austere atmosphere under strict discipline and thus prepare them for the inner transformation which alone will qualify them to shoulder the responsibilities of guiding others on the spiritual path.

- from the Points to Ponder, Anandashram Publication

HINTS TO ASPIRANTS

- Swami Ramdas

There is no evil outside you. In reality, there is no evil at all. The external enemies, so-called, the evils you see outside, are, in fact, projections from your own mind. On the face of it, this may seem to you to be not only an astounding proposition, but also a very hard one to accept. Still that is the truth. Nobody is conspiring against you except the uncontrolled passions within your heart. You yourselves are responsible for what you are – happy or miserable. You yourselves make or mar your lives. Still you are busy blaming and finding fault with everybody in the world for your sufferings. You fail to probe within and remove the seed of discontent which is in your mind. You should turn your vision inwards, and by watching the working of your own heart, remove the evils lurking there.

If you closely examine with the necessary depth of thought, all the experiences you have gone through so far in life, you will inevitably come to the conclusion that your environment has not been the cause of the peace or happiness you have enjoyed during certain moments or periods of it. The same environment which appears to have yielded peace at one time, appears to have caused dissatisfaction at another, and vice versa.

श्रीगणेशाय नमः
श्रीमच्छङ्करभगवत्पादाचार्य विरचितं
माया पञ्चकम्
Śrī Śaṅkarācārya's
Māyā pañcakam

-Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati

Śrī Śaṅkara has composed a number of *prakaraṇa* texts that are a very significant addition to the compendium of primary scriptural literature available to us. They are explanatory texts that pertain to the vast commentaries on the primary scriptures, which are the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahmasutras. The *prakaraṇa* texts play a very important role in shaping our vision of Vedānta. They contain several *pañcakams* or collections of five verses, including the *Sādhana Pañcakam*, the *Upadeśa Pañcakam*, the *Kāśī Pañcakam*, the *Nṛsiṃha Pañcakam*, and the *Maniṣā Pañcakam*. The *Māyā Pañcakam* is one of the most important of the series of *pañcakams*.

In his commentaries on the Upanishads and the Gita, *Śrī Śaṅkara* operates within the confines of the scripture, in the sense that he does not have the freedom to present his vision in its entirety; to that extent, his scope remains linear, as determined by the text. The Brahmasutras, on the other hand, offer greater freedom of elaboration than the Upanishads or the Gita because the sutra or aphorism is, by definition, *viśvatomukha*, amenable to a broad vision. Indeed, the words of aphorisms act more like pointers than affirmative statements; *sūcanat sūtram*. This difference in treatment becomes clear during the study of the *bhāṣyas*. In the context of the *prakaraṇa* texts, however, *Śrī Śaṅkara's* vision is clearly offered complete and unfettered freedom of expression, without any of the restrictions or considerations imposed by a text; it is as if a bird is let out of its cage.

He is direct and very forthright and unequivocal in his treatment of the subject matter and speaks his mind in no uncertain terms. The *prakaraṇas* are, therefore, very important to students of Vedānta.

The *Māyā Pañcakam*, as its name suggests, delineates Śrī Śaṅkara's analysis of *māyā*, which is an important concept in the vision of Advaita. *Māyā* is *indrajāla*, quite literally, the 'net' of God, the 'cosmic magic show.' The word *indrajāla* comes from a Vedic mantra, *Indro māyābhiḥ pururūpa īyate* (B.U. 2-5-19), in which God is seen to assume multiple forms in association with various adjuncts. Here Indra is not the puranic Lord of heaven, but one who signifies *Īśvara*, and the universe is seen to be of the nature of an *indrajāla*, a magical web that has apparently emerged out of *Īśvara*. It is something that appears but is not, being as illusory as the bewitchment of a magic show. We have always had prominent and well respected magicians in India, like Dr.P.C.Sorkar of Bengal. Also, the state of Kerala, which is the birthplace of Śrī Śaṅkara, is legendary for its magicians of the past, proverbially known as *malayāḷa māntrikas* and renowned for having created some remarkable illusions. In fact, in his commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya kārīkā*, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya describes an illusion involving 'rope-magic' in vivid detail (1-7). He must have witnessed such magic shows in his childhood. Therefore, *māyā* is that which appears to create or make possible something that does not exist in reality.

In Advaita Vedānta, the word *mithyā* is often used in the context of the world being described as unreal, *jagat mithyā*. Yet what is *mithyā*? It is something that creates the illusion of its presence or appears to be, without truly being there. The well-known example of the rope-serpent illustrates such an occurrence perfectly. What one sees is a length of rope, but it is mistaken for a serpent; the serpent appears on account of one's ignorance of the true nature of the rope. Such ignorance is called *avidyā* or *māyā*. While one may argue that the perception of an unreal serpent would not pose a problem at all, it may not be as simple as that. Firstly, we believe the appearance to be real and suffer its consequence. More importantly, the ignorance

deprives us of the knowledge of the reality that liberates. Knowing the false as false is knowledge. Knowledge solves the problems created by the delusion right away. Therefore, the proper understanding of *māyā* alone frees us from the projections of *māyā*.

The nature of the world as it appears to be is so compelling that it can overwhelm great thinkers. Much less a worldly person, it is a tall order even for a philosopher to appreciate the world as being but an unreal appearance. In spite of their intellectual acumen, scholars are deluded by *māyā*, and take the world to be real. In this short text, Śrī Śaṅkara's treatment of *māyā* is radical and truly eye-opening. He describes *māyā* as very potent and dangerously powerful. Let us take the example of the rope-serpent again. A serpent is a creature that crawls, *sarpati iti sarpaḥ*. In a typical agrarian set-up, there is a natural abundance of trees, plants, and bushes and, therefore, a profusion of tiny crawling creatures. The impression of the serpent is thus strongly imprinted in the mind, as is also the constant fear of serpents. This fear also causes any piece of rope lying in the way to be immediately mistaken for a serpent. I still remember how, whenever I went to the fields, my mother would always caution me to look where I stepped. Some people live their entire lives in fear of serpents. Mistaking rope for a serpent may be harmless, but it can be very harmful in a number of ways. Fear is a dangerous mental toxin. How is it possible that a non-existent serpent can cause such problems? Such is the power of *māyā* that it is capable of making the impossible happen; *aghaṭita ghaṭanā paṭīyasī*.

There are dualist philosophers who have argued that the notion of *māyā* is promoted by Śrī Śaṅkara and that *māyā* need not be taken into consideration in any attempt to understand the contradictions of the world. However, they have missed the point on both counts. In the first place, Śrī Śaṅkara is not a *māyāvādī* as they have claimed. He is a *brahmavādī*, a champion of the Supreme Reality. Also, Brahman is not a concept but the Truth that needs to be known within and known deeply. It is therefore necessary to address this appearance that we call the world in order to realize Brah-

man as one's true Self. The world must be recognized as a mere appearance. It is entirely as part of his effort to present the truth, Brahman, that *Śrī Śaṅkara* explains the workings of *māyā*.

The Vedas do acknowledge the fact of *māyāvāda*, as we have seen in the quote from the *Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣat*. The *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* says, *māyāṃ tu prakṛtiṃ viddhi māyinaṃ tu maheśvaram*, know that *māyā* is the cause of the universe and *Īśvara* is the one who wields it. *Māyā* is mentioned many times even in the *Bhagavatam* (11-7-7).

The first verse of the *Māyā Pañcakam* defines the illusion of *māyā*:

निरुपमनित्यनिरंशकेऽप्यखण्डे

मयि चित्ति सर्वविकल्पनाऽऽदिशून्ये ।

घटयति जगदीशजीवभेदं

त्वघटितघटनापटीयसी माया ॥ १

nirupamanityaniramaṣakespyakhaṇḍe
mayi citi sarvavikalpanāssdiśūnye,
ghatayati jagadīśajīvabhedaṃ
tvaghaṭitaghaṭanāpaṭīyasi māyā. 1

अपि api = even though; मयि mayi = I am; निरुपमनित्यनिरंशके nirupamanityaniramaṣake = beyond comparison, timeless, and without parts; अखण्डे akhaṇḍe = undivided, divisionless; सर्वविकल्पना-आदिशून्ये sarvavikalpanā-ādīśūnye = free from all kinds of imaginations etc.; चित्ति citi = awareness; तु tu = but; अघटितघटनापटीयसी aghaṭitaghaṭanāpaṭīyasi = capable of making the impossible possible; माया māyā = illusion; जगदीशजीवभेदम् jagadīśajīvabhedaṃ = the divi-

sion of universe, God, and individual; घटयति ghatayati = creates.

I am the timeless, partless, divisionless Awareness Absolute-without-a-second. In me are absent all kinds of imaginations (superimpositions) etc. Yet the illusion, which is capable of making the impossible possible, creates in me the division of universe, God, and individual.

The effect of an illusion is capable of accomplishing that which cannot be accomplished. This statement captures the essence of the primary argument of the *adhyāsa bhāṣya*, the introduction of *Śrī Śaṅkara* to Brahmasutras. *Adhyāsa* means superimposing the nature or qualities of one thing over another, such as in the context of the seer and the seen. That which is seen or is perceptible is multifarious and insentient, whereas, the seer or perceiver is single and sentient. Though they are confused with each other, there is nothing common between the two. Considering that the possibility of confusion itself presupposes some degree of commonality, there is no logic in any confusion that occurs between the seer and the seen. It is not yukti siddha, logical. One may ask, 'Could it be possible that the confusion is perhaps caused by the means of cognition, such as perception or inference?' Yet that cannot be the case here. For instance, in the rope-serpent *adhyāsa*, one's eyesight may not report the rope; but it does not report a serpent either. So there is no valid reason to cognize the presence of the serpent. Therefore, this confusion in distinguishing between the knower and the known is not *pramā*, a siddha or cognitional. It is neither established by logic nor by the available means of cognition. One may also argue that there is, therefore, no possibility for confusion at all. Yet this argument is not tenable because such confusion is indeed experienced in life. It is anubhava siddha, experiential. Such confusion as this is attributed to *māyā*.

Human beings have certain ideas about what they are, what they know, and what they have. Yet these ideas, which are based on *vyavahāra*, one's interaction with the world, are imaginary; they are

far from the truth. Worldly experiences do not prove anything about Reality, because they are relative to the senses and the mind. Therefore, one should be open-minded and ready to examine the shortcomings of these ideas. An idea of the truth is not the truth. A mental conception of Brahman is not Brahman. What we can ever conceive of is, at best, a mere mental conception. The seeker should be ready to put even the most inveterate beliefs to the test. *Māyā* can delude us all the way, not just here and there, or occasionally. It is *paṭīyāsī*, very powerful, and capable of deluding even those who have a strong and long standing involvement in Vedānta. The delusion is deep-seated and deeply entrenched in our lives. It is truly a mystery how the imaginary throes of *māyā* appear real. One must, therefore, be in a receptive frame of mind while studying this text.

Truth and freedom go together. The truth is known when one breaks asunder all the possible limitations imagined by the ignorant mind. The *Taittirīya Upanishad* invokes the analogy of an eagle to present Brahman. The eagle soars unhindered in the open sky that seems boundless. It is a very significant and effective analogy. An openness or unrestricted earnestness such as this is necessary to know the truth of Brahman; the mind must break free from its pre-conceived notions and take flight like the eagle soaring in the skies. Only then can one achieve communion with the truth. Every self-definition or self-designation, such as, 'I am Dutch,' 'I belong to this particular caste,' 'I am male,' or 'I am female,' is restrictive. Even in saying, 'I am a human being,' we restrict ourselves in qualifying the simplicity of being as human. The beauty of truth is that the truth never contradicts itself. However, as we embrace ignorance, we live with contradictions. Contradictions signify ignorance. Those who aspire to know the truth should strive to keep contradictions at bay.

That which is impossible cannot come to pass. Yet the way of *māyā* or *avidyā* is such that even the impossible appears to take place; such contradiction is the mark of ignorance. It is on account of ignorance that one sees a serpent where there is no serpent and is then afraid of it. Similarly, it is ignorance that creates an appearance

of division in the world where there is none. It would be correct to assume that whatever happens on account of ignorance does not happen at all, or that whatever appears due to ignorance does not exist at all. If in your ignorance you see a snake, it only means that there is no snake. The snake is not partially false, not more or less false, and not perhaps-false-later-but-not-now; it is entirely false. The snake does not exist at all in all the three periods of time. Any alternate descriptions of the fact of its appearing only betray our own fear of the truth. Clinging to the unreal out of a fear of the truth is nothing short of insanity.

Avidyā or ignorance makes divisions appear where they do not exist. Whose ignorance is this? It is the collective ignorance. Indeed, there is no who; there is only ignorance. This ignorance makes non-existent divisions appear. The world does not exist independent of the Self. It is an appearance in the Self alone. However, it is taken as the other and as real. This notion causes us to become 'limited,' because, unless one is limited, the world cannot be the other. The body doesn't say that it is different from the world; it is we who say that we are different from the world. With this assumption in place, we proceed to examine the world and see the beauty of the creation, the order that obtains, etc. and then *Īśvara* is in place. This *Īśvara* is different from us and also from the world. The world does not claim, 'I am the world.' It is we who say, 'This is the world.' The world does not say that it was created. It is we who call it the other and say that it is created by *Īśvara*, who becomes, therefore, yet another entity. All the divisions happen simultaneously and are perpetuated thus.

It is on account of ignorance alone that the one Reality is split into three entities. It is out of sheer ignorance that we allow ourselves to be what we are. The fact is that we are accustomed to this illusion from our childhood. One is a Brahmin, one is a bachelor or married, one is a husband or a father, one is a family person or a *sannyāsī*, one is a guru or a disciple, one is a friend or a foe, one is happy or sad, one is this or one is that. First we take ourselves to be

what we are not and then look for reasons to remain what we are not. We are constantly searching for causes and solutions for being or becoming that which we are not; such is the power of *māyā*.

What are we, really? We are *cit*, the awareness, and *akhaṇḍa*, divisionless. If I were to place a long rod along the center of this room, would it divide the space? No, but it would appear to divide the space in the room. Sri Ramakrishna used to cite the example of the bamboo 'divider' in the river. This divider would be put up parallel to the flow of the river, to indicate the side of the river where its flow was less swift and, therefore, safe to step into for a ritual bath. The bamboo appears to divide the river into two parts, but in reality, there is no division. Similarly, the ego-centered existence seems to divide the Being-Awareness, but the true nature of the Self is both undivided and indivisible.

In sleep, one is aware of nothing in particular. It is upon awakening that one becomes aware, though of nothing in particular; one is just aware. However, the awareness gets differentiated instantly, and the bamboo divider-like ego is back in place, dividing the existence into 'me' and the 'other.' Suppose one becomes aware of a pot at that time, the idea of the pot or a 'pot-thought' is illuminated in the awareness. There is no pot other than the idea of the pot. The pot is not the object that exists on the outside; outside, there is only clay. The clay, which was formerly in the shape of a lump, now appears in a different form, yet it is clay alone. The pot doesn't say, 'I am the pot.' The clay doesn't say, 'I am the pot.' It is the person who says that it is a pot, because it is obviously his 'pot-thought' objectified. Yet what is the locus of the knowledge of the pot? Is it somewhere outside? Or is it in the heart? The locus lies not outside, but within the heart. Therefore, the pot is not outside the waking consciousness; it is the very content of the waking consciousness. The pot is an idea shining in the awareness.

Awareness alone is real; the names and forms that reflect in it are unreal. For instance, the pot appears to condition the aware-

ness, but it is not really the case. Awareness is pure and absolute, even as it appears as the awareness of the particular. Is there a true division in the awareness due to reflection of the particular? No, there isn't. Both the pot and the knower of the pot arise simultaneously. There is no pot without the knower of the pot. The knowledge of the pot belongs to the knower. The selfsame awareness appears as the relative duo. Neither the knower nor the known are outside the awareness; they are both relative movements in the awareness alone. As the verse says, 'I am that undivided and indivisible awareness.' The analogy of the pot applies to every object in the entire world. Therefore, where is the world? It lies within you, the individual, but appears as though out there; such is the power of *māyā*.

The entire universe exists in *mahākāśa*, the universal space, which, in turn, exists in the space that obtains within the mind, mental space. Mental space has its origin in the *cidākāśa*, the space-like awareness that is sat, the Being. That *saccit* alone appears as both the knower and the known. *Sattā*, the is-ness, and *sphūrṭi*, the 'shining' or evidence, of an object, say the pot, are not outside; they are within the Self. If we contemplate on is-ness, such as 'I am' and 'pot is,' it will not be difficult to appreciate that they both are the same being. They enjoy the same degree of is-ness. They may indeed be described as opposites, such as one being the knower and the other the known, or as one being sentient and the other insentient, but both are in the Self, the awareful being, both shine in the awareful being, and both appear in the awareful being without causing any modification or division. Therefore, where there is no division, the division appears real, logical, and validated by both perception and understanding. The appearance of dissimilarity is caused by *māyā*.

to be continued....

THE LORDS PRAYER IN THE LIGHT OF YOGA

- Swami Jyotirmayananda

*Prayer: - Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory, for ever.
Amen.*

St. Matthew 6. 9-13.

The importance of prayer is recognized in every religious system of the world. It is the most effective means of elevating the mind and raising the level of one's consciousness to the lofty heights of heavenly glory.

In the Yogic tradition, prayer is practiced in many forms: 1. Verbal prayer according to one's choice. 2. Chanting or reciting scriptural prayers composed by great sages and saints. 3. Japa or the repetition of mantra (the Divine Name in the form of sacred mystic formulas). 4. Kirtana or singing the Divine Name or the glories of God. 5. Repetition of mantra along with devout meditation on the many attributes of God. 6. Allowing the mind to flow on to God in silent meditation. 7. Awareness of Divine presence and total resignation to God.

In the midst of the alternating experiences of pleasure and pain, you must not forget that you are merely a traveller through the world process. You should not forget your goal – God-realisation or Self-realisation. In joyous way, you must gain the insight that intrinsically that you are one with God, because you have been fashioned in the "Image of God." As Lord Jesus taught, "the Kingdom of heaven is within thee." This is also expressed in the Upanishadic statement, "*Tat Twam Asi*" – "*Thou Art That*."

With this insight, you gradually learn the art of living in communion with God. Your life becomes a stream of prayer flowing to wards the ocean of god. You practice prayer not only through words, but also through your thoughts (by entertaining thoughts of love, compassion and goodwill towards all beings) and actions (by serving God in all beings). The spirit of prayerfulness eventually permeates your entire personality.

In the light of these points, let us study the Lord's prayer:

"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

Japa or repetition of Divine Name is the mystic art of glorifying the name of God. It is also the easiest method of moving towards God.

The various Sanskrit mantras are nothing but names referring to the different aspects of God. Choose a Divine name (mantra) and repeat it with the help of a mala(rosary). Along with every repetition, feel that you are being enfolded by the presence of God. By constant practice, a divine association is generated between the unconscious mind and the mantra, so that when the mantra is recited, the unconscious awakens lofty impressions of Divine Presence. Similarly, you may sing the name of God and thus practice *kirtana*. Any mantra put to music or chanted becomes *kirtana*. Have a selected period during the day (preferably in the early morning) when you can practice *japa* intensively for half an hour or more. Then perform your daily duties with a mind filled with the sublimity of spiritual vibrations.

As you advance, the sense of prayerfulness and the awareness of Divine Presence should permeate your entire existence. A sweet stream of Divine remembrance should continue to flow deep within your heart at all times – while you walk, sit, or rest, while you talk, perform actions, experience pleasure and pain, or sleep.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

As the practice of prayerfulness advances, you will begin to see the hand of god behind every development in your life and the world around you. At first you feel the Divine Presence in the glorious

objects of the world – you see the effulgence of God shining in the sun, his bliss radiating through the moon, his fullness surging in the ocean. Thus, you see the glory of God permeating all objects that inspire your mind.

Next you begin to feel the Divine Presence even behind the objects that are generally disliked hurricanes and earthquakes, snakes and scorpions, diseases and adversities. In this state, you enjoy absolute surrender to the Divine will. You become an instrument in the Divine Hands, asserting, “Thy Will be done.”

Finally, the climax of this spiritual vision is the realization, “All this is nothing but God Himself.” It is then that heaven is brought down even on this earth. Divine Consciousness is realized even in one’s limited personality.

This ideal is expressed in the Upanishadic peace chant: “Om. That (the Divine Self) is Full; and this (the mortal world which is nothing but God manifesting through Cosmic Illusion) is also Full. When this world (of illusory names and forms) is negated, what is left is Full (the Divine Self). Let there be Peace! Peace! Peace!”

When you advance on the spiritual path leading to the realization of this mystic Fullness, you continue to be a source of increasing peace and harmony for the world around you. You become a cosmic benefactor and thus, figuratively speaking, bring heaven upon the earth.

“Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

The message of this stanza focuses the mind on the present day and its realities. Mental energy that is spent dwelling on negative memories of the past and worrying about the future is wasted. You must develop a sense of dynamic contentment with your “daily bread,” that is, the realities and duties of daily life and accept them as a gift from God.

Also, life in this relative world must be lived to fulfil fivefold debts: 1. Debt to the gods or angels in heaven (which are aspects of the God in the relative world), paid by the practice of prayer,

meditation and other devotional exercises. 2. Debt to the sages and Saints, paid by studying their spiritual works and following their teachings. 3. Debt to one’s forefathers, paid by promoting righteous conduct in life that brings glory and fame to the family in which one is born. 4. Debt to human beings, paid by serving them in various selfless ways. 5. Debt to animals, paid by being kind and compassionate towards all living creatures.

For whatever imperfection may exist in the proper fulfillment of these debts, you must seek the forgiveness of God. In turn, you must develop the quality of forgiveness towards others. To the extent you forgive another and have the capacity to understand him lovingly, to the extent you become the recipient of Divine Grace and Forgiveness.

“And lead us not onto temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

According to Yoga Philosophy, the source of evil is avidya or ignorance, which is the lack of the awareness of one’s Divine Identity. When ignorance is removed by the intuitive knowledge, “I Am One with God,” you become a Jivanmukta – one liberated in life. This is the goal that must be sought through your prayer to God.

That which leads you away from the path to self-realisation is called temptation. Numerous temptations are as if arrayed before every individual. As an aspirant you learn to turn away from what is merely and apparently “pleasant” and direct your steps towards what is truly “good.”

By developing constant devotion to God, you draw inner spiritual strength that helps you withstand the manifold expressions of the lust, greed and anger (the triple gates to hell). But those who lack devotion continue to be led astray by the numerous temptations of the world.

“For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”

One must develop Supreme Dispassion and thus should not be tempted by the pleasures of the earth and all the subtle planes

extending up to *Brahmaloka* (the highest plane in the world of relativity). Then and only then, can one abide in God – in the Divine Kingdom – forever.

Nothing is impossible. With the assistance of the boundless power and glory of God, you can cross the ocean of the world-process and abide in Him forever.

“Amen” is the mystic word – a modification of Om, which symbolizes Brahman or the Absolute Self. The power of prayer is enhanced by the utterance of the sacred formula Om (or Amen). When the spirit of prayer rises to its fullness, the world of multiplicity is effaced. God alone remains as the Truth that was, is and ever shall be!

May you repeat this glorious prayer composed by Lord Jesus and live in its spirit until your life flows as a stream of prayer communing with the ocean of god!

- from International yoga Guide, December 2012.

Hints to Aspirants

- Swami Ramdas

Where then lies this subtle seed of discontent? You will admit this poisonous seed is nowhere else but in your own mind. So long as the mind seeks to derive happiness from external sources – from one's possessions and one's achievements – Ramdas can definitely assert, from the fullness of experience which God has granted him, that it can never know what true and lasting happiness is.

You Cannot Buy Happiness

- Swami Chidanand Saraswati (Muniji)

The “American Dream” is a good education, a well paying career, a nice home, a large bank account, two children, and frequent vacations abroad (or to the beach or skiing, or....).

But this is not happiness. Ask anyone who has all these things whether they are really “happy”, and you will usually hear “no”. That is because in order to achieve these things, they have had to frequently give up the things that bring real happiness: a deep spiritual life, time spent meaningfully with the family, time to do seva.

This is not to say that having money isn't wonderful. Yes, it gives you the freedom to make many choices in life. It allows you to provide well for your children. It allows you to live comfortably. It allows you to make sure that there is money left for your children and for your retirement. But, it is not what will bring deep happiness and fulfilment to your life or to your children.

It is fine to make money, fine to become wealthy. Even in our scriptures, Bhagwan Shri Krishna and Bhagwan Shri Rama were both kings and lived in palaces. However, the point is how that wealth is acquired and how it is used.

Dwarka (the city of which Bhagwan Krishna was the king) was made of gold. So was Lanka (the city over which the demon-king Ravana ruled). What made Dwarka Heaven and Lanka Hell? Bhagwan Shri Krishna lived a life of purity, a life of non-attachment, hedonism and parsimony.

Whereas Bhagwan Krishna used his wealth and his power to help those in need, Ravana never gave one pinch of gold to help another. Bhagwan Krishna's life was one of sharing and caring. Ravana neither shared nor cared for others.

It is not the gold in the walls that makes a true palace. It is the gold in the hearts of the King and the inhabitants who live there. If there is gold in the heart, then the home is a palace whether there

are two rooms or two hundred rooms. If the heart is made of stone, then the home is a slum, even if the walls are lined with diamonds.

Look around you in the Western world. Do you see happiness? Do you see joy? Do you see true satisfaction? Not a lot. Yet, look at the rishis, look at the sadhus: what do they own? Nothing. But look at the light shining in their eyes...

There was once a king and he had everything, all the luxuries money could buy – palaces, chariots, beautiful wives, fancy clothes, sumptuous food – but he was not happy. He sent his messengers out with an order, “Find a happy man and bring me back his shirt. I will wear his shirt and then I will also be happy”. So the king’s men searched far and wide, but they could not find a happy man.

When they asked people if they were happy, everyone said things like, “Well, as soon as I get this promotion, then I’ll be happy”. Or “As soon as my children are in good colleges then I’ll be happy”. Or “If only my husband was kinder to me, then I’d be happy”. There was no one who could claim to be completely happy, right then and there. Discouraged, the messengers were wandering back through the forest to the king. They had asked all the wealthiest, most successful people in the kingdom, yet none was happy.

En route, they became very tired and thirsty. They saw a man sitting by the edge of a stream. He was singing joyfully to the fish, while he fed them small bread crumbs. The men stopped and asked him if he could give them some water and maybe a place to rest for awhile. The man immediately jumped up, brought them back to his humble shelter and offered them everything he had. He quickly prepared lunch with his own hands, and made them all sit comfortably on whatever he had.

As he worked, he sang and seemed to dance around. “What do you do?” the men asked him. “Do? Well, I take care of all the pilgrims who come this way. I give everyone food, drink and a place to rest. I take care of animals too, whenever I can. I meditate on God and chant His holy name. A few days in the week I walk into the city and give my time to help in the hospital. They always need extra

hands. Mainly I do whatever God tells me to do. Whatever money comes to me, I use it for others.” The men were stunned and ate their meal in silence.

As they were getting ready to leave, one of the messengers had an idea. He looked up at their selfless host and he queried, “By the way, Sir. Are you happy?” The man, clad in nothing but a small cloth around his waist, said, “Oh, yes, definitely. I could not be happier. My life is so full and rich. All day long, helping people and chanting God’s name.” The men were ecstatic. They had finally fulfilled their mission for the king. They said. “Sir, please, one last request. Please, give us one of your shirts. Then our king can wear it, and he too will be happy.”

The man jumped up and down and danced with amusement. “Shirt? I have no shirt!” he sang gleefully.

The point is not that being poor makes you happy or that having money (or being wealthy) breeds discontent. The point is that the priorities of your life determine whether you will find happiness or not. Those whose lives are dedicated to serving the world, those whose lives are spent in close communion with God, those who are pure and honest, these are the people who are happy.

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TRUTH

-Edited by Sista Subbarao

Truth is one Reality in the Universe, the inward Harmony the perfect justice, the eternal Love. Nothing can be added to it, nor taken from it. It does not depend upon any man but all men depend upon it. You cannot perceive the beauty of Truth while you are looking out from the eyes of self. If you are vain your will colour everything with your own varities. If Lustful, your heart and mind will be clouded with the smoke and flames of passion and every thing will appear distorted through them. If proud and opinionative, you will see nothing in the whole universe except the magnitude and importance of your own opinions. The humble Truth-lover has learned to distinguish between opinion and Truth.

You may easily know whether you are a child of truth or a worshipper of self, if you will silently examine your mind, heart and conduct. Do you harbour thoughts of suspicion, enmity, envy, lust, pride; or do you strenuously fight against these? If the former, you are chained to self, no matter what religion you may profess; if the latter, you are a candidate for truth even though outwardly you may profess no Religion. Are you passionate, self willed, ever seeking to gain your own ends, self indulgent and self-centered; or are you gentle, mild, unselfish, quit of every form of self-indulgence, and are ever ready to give up your own? If the former, self is your master; if the latter, truth is the object of your affection.

In every heart there are two Kings, but one is a usurper and tyrant; he is named self, and his thoughts and deeds are those of lust, hatred, passion and strife; the other, the rightful monarch, is named Truth and his thoughts and deeds are those of purity and love, meekness and peace. Brother, Sister, to what monarch dost thou bow? What king hast thou crowned in thy heart? Well is it with thy soul if thou can't say. "I bow down to the Monarch of Truth; in my inmost heart of hearts. I have crowned the King of Peace". Blessed

indeed and immortal shall he be who shall find in the inward heavenly places the king of Righteousness and shall bow his heart to Him.

Upon the battlefield of the human soul, two masters are ever contending for the crown of supremacy, for the king-ship and dominion of the heart; the master of self, called also the "Prince of the World", and the master of Truth, called also "the Father God." The master self is that rebellious one whose weapons are passion, pride, avarice, vanity, self-will, implements of darkness; the master Truth is that meek and lowly one whose weapons are gentleness, patience, purity, sacrifice, humility, love, instruments of light.

In every soul the battle is waged and as a soldier cannot engage at once in two opposing armies, so every heart is enlisted either in the ranks of self or of truth. There is no half and half course. Jesus, the manifested Christ, declared that "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

Do you seek to know and to realise Truth? Then you must be prepared to sacrifice, to renounce to the uttermost, for Truth in all its glory can only be perceived and known when the last vestige of self has disappeared.

The eternal Christ declared that he who would be His disciple must "deny himself daily." Are you willing to deny yourself, to give up your lusts, your prejudices, your opinions? If so, you may enter the narrow way of Truth, and find that peace from which the world is shut out. The absolute denial, the utter extinction of self is the perfect state of Truth, and all religions and philosophies are but so many aids to this supreme attainment.

When men lost in the devious ways of error and self, have forgotten the "Heavenly birth", the state of holiness and Truth, they set up artificial standards by which to judge one another and make acceptance of and adherence to, their own particular theology the test of Truth; and so men are divided one against another and there

is ceaseless enmity and strife and unending sorrow and suffering.

Reader, do you seek to realise the birth, into Truth? There is only one way: Let self die. All those lusts, appetites, desires, opinions, limited conceptions, and prejudices to which you have hitherto so tenaciously clung, let them fall from you. Let them no longer hold you in bondage and Truth will be yours. Cease to look upon your own religion as superior to others, and strive humbly to learn the supreme lesson of charity.

When all else fails, Truth does not fail. When the heart is desolate and the world affords no shelter, Truth provides a peaceful refuge and a quiet rest. The cares of life are many and its path is beset with difficulties; but Truth is greater than care and is superior to all difficulties. Truth lightens our burdens; it lights up our pathway with the radiance of joy. Loved ones pass away, friends fail and possessions disappear. Where then is the voice of comfort? Where is the whisper of consolation? Truth is the comforter of the comfortless and the consoler of them that are deserted. Truth does not pass away, nor fail, nor disappear. Truth bestows the consolation of abiding peace. Be alert, listen, that you may hear the call of Truth, even the voice of the Great Awakener.

Truth brings joy out of sorrow and peace out of perturbation; it points the selfish to the way of God and sinners to the Path of Holiness. Its spirit is the doing of Righteousness. To the earnest and faithful it brings consolation; upon the obedient it bestows the crown of peace. I take refuge in Truth; yea in the spirit of good and in the doing of good I abide. And I am reassured and comforted. It is to me as though malice were not and hatred had vanished away. Lust is confined to the nethermost darkness, it hath no way in truth's transcendent Light.

Pride is broken up and dissolved, and vanity is melted away as a mist. I have set my face towards the Perfect Good, and my feet in the Blameless way; and because of this I am consoled.

The spirit of love which is manifested as a perfect and rounded life is the crown of being and the supreme end of knowledge upon this earth. How does a man act under trial and temptation? Many men boast of being in possession of Truth, who are continually swayed by grief, disappointment, and passion, and who sink under the first little trial that comes along. Truth is nothing if not unchangeable, and in so far as a man takes his stand upon Truth does he become stead-fast in virtue, does he rise superior to his passions and changeable personality. Men formulate perishable dogmas, and call them Truth. Truth cannot be formulated; it is ineffable, and ever beyond the reach of intellect. It can only be experienced by practice; it can only be manifested in a stainless heart and a perfect life.

Truth will never be proved by wordy arguments and learned treatises, for if men do not perceive the Truth in infinite patience, undying forgiveness and all embracing compassion; no words can ever prove it to them.

It is an easy matter for the passionate to be calm and patient when they are in the midst of calmness or when they are alone. It is equally easy for the uncharitable to be gentle and kind when they are dealt kindly with but he who retains his patience and calmness under all trials, who remains sublimely meek and gentle under the most trying circumstances, he, and he alone, is possessed of spotless Truth. And this is so because such lofty virtues belong to the Divine and can only be manifested by one who has attained to the highest wisdom, who has relinquished his passionate and self-seeking nature, who has realized the supreme and unchangeable law and has brought himself into harmony with it.

The giving up of self is not merely the renunciation of outward things. It consists of the renunciation of the inward sin, the inward error. Not by giving up vain clothing; not by relinquishing riches; not by abstaining from certain foods; not by speaking smooth words; not by doing these things is the Truth found. But by giving up the

spirit of vanity; by relinquishing the desire for riches; by abstaining from the lust of self-indulgence; by giving up all hatred, strife, condemnation, and self-seeking, and becoming gentle and pure at heart, by doing these things is the Truth found.

What the saints, sages, and saviors have accomplished, you like-wise may accomplish if you will only tread the way which they trod and pointed out, the way of self-sacrifice, of self-denying service.

Truth is very simple. It says “give up self” “come unto Me” (away from all that defiles) “and I will give you rest”. All the mountains of commentary that have been piled upon it cannot hide it from the heart that is earnestly seeking for Righteousness. It does not require learning; it can be known inspite of learning. Disguised under many forms by earring, self-seeking men, the beautiful simplicity and clear transparency of Truth remains unaltered and undimmed, and the unselfish heart enters into and partakes of its shining radiance. Not by weaving complex theories, not by building up speculative philosophies, is Truth realised; but by wearing the web of inward purity, by building up the Temple of stainless life, is Truth realised.

He who wishes to acquire Truth must practise it. He must begin at the very first lesson in self-control thoroughly master it and then pass on to the next and the next, until he attains to the moral perfection at which he aims. It is common with men to imagine that Truth consists in holding certain ideas or opinions. They read a number of treatises, and then form an opinion which they call “Truth”, and then they go about disputing with their fellow-men in order to try to prove that their opinion is the Truth. In worldly matters men are wise, for they do things in order to achieve their ends, but in spiritual things they are foolish, for they merely read and do not do things, and then imagine they have acquired Truth.

By its very nature, Love can never be the exclusive possession of any religion, sect, school, or brotherhood. The common claim, therefore, of such sections of the community to the exclusive possessions of Truth in their particular religious doctrine is a denial

of Love. Truth is a spirit and a life and though it may manifest through manifold doctrines, it can never be confined to any one particular form of doctrine. Love is a winged angel that refuses to be chained to any letter, doctrine, whatsoever. Love is above and beyond, outside and greater than all the opinions, doctrines and philosophies of men; yet Love includes all the righteous and the unrighteous, the fair and foul, the clean and the unclean. He whose Love is so deep and wide as to envelop all men of all creeds is he who has most of religion and most of wisdom, and also most of insight, for he knows and sees men as they are.

The principles of Truth were discovered by searching and practice, and are so stated and arranged as to make the path plainer for other feet to tread; and it is the path along which every being has travelled who has passed from sin to sinlessness, from error to Truth. It is the ancient way along which every saint, every Buddha, every Christ has walked to Divine perfection and along which every imperfect being in the future will pass to reach this glorious goal. It matters not what religion a man professes, if he is daily striving with his own sins, and purifying his heart, he is walking this path; for, while opinions, theologies, and religions differ, sin does not differ, the overcoming of sin does not differ and Truth does not differ.

- from the Book of Meditation for everyday in Life by James Allen, published by Geeta Pracharak Sangham, Secunderabad. Andhra Pradesh, India.

Durga Puja or Navaratri

- Swami Sivananda

SALUTATIONS to the Divine Mother, Durga, who exists in all beings in the form of intelligence, mercy, beauty, who is the consort of Lord Shiva, who creates, sustains and destroys the universe.

This festival is observed twice a year, once in the month of Chaitra and then in Aswayuja. It lasts for nine days in honour of the nine manifestations of Durga. During Navaratri (the word literally means “nine nights”) devotees of Durga observe a fast. Brahmins are fed and prayers are offered for the protection of health and property.

The beginning of summer and the beginning of winter are two very important junctions of climatic and solar influence. These two periods are taken as sacred opportunities for the worship of the Divine Mother. They are indicated respectively by the Rama-Navaratri in Chaitra (April-May) and the Durga Navaratri in Aswayuja (September-October). The bodies and minds of people undergo a considerable change on account of the changes in Nature. Sri Rama is worshipped during Ramnavmi, and Mother Durga during Navaratri.

The Durga Puja is celebrated in various parts of India in different styles. But the one basic aim of this celebration is to propitiate Shakti, the Goddess in Her aspect as Power, to bestow upon man all wealth, auspiciousness, prosperity, knowledge (both sacred and secular), and all other potent powers. Whatever be the particular or special request that everyone may put before the Goddess, whatever boon may be asked of Her, the one thing behind all these is propitiation, worship and linking oneself with Her. There is no other aim. This is being effected consciously or unconsciously. Everyone is blessed with Her loving mercy and is protected by Her.

Durga Puja or Navaratri commences on the first and ends on the tenth day of the bright half of Aswayuja (September-October). It is held in commemoration of the victory of Durga over Mahishasura, the buffalo-headed demon. In Bengal Her image is worshipped for

nine days and then cast into water. The tenth day is called Vijaya Dasami or Dussera (the “tenth day”). Processions with Her image are taken out along the streets of villages and cities.

The mother of Durga (that is, the wife of the King of the Himalayas) longed to see her daughter. Durga was permitted by Lord Shiva to visit her beloved mother only for nine days in the year. The festival of Durga Puja marks this brief visit and ends with the Vijaya Dasami day, when Goddess Durga leaves for Her return to Mount Kailas. This is the view of some devotees.

In Bengal, Durga Puja is a great festival. All who live away from home return during the Puja days. Mothers reunite with their sons and daughters and wives with their husbands.

The potter shows his skill in making images, the painter in drawing pictures, the songster in playing on his instrument, and the priest in reciting the sacred books. The Bengalis save money throughout the year only to spend everything during the Puja days. Cloth is freely distributed to the Brahmins.

The woman of Bengal welcomes the Goddess with a mother's love and sends away the image on the last day, with every ceremony associated with a daughter's departure to her husband's home and with motherly tears in her eyes. This signifies the parting of Durga from Her beloved mother.

Durga Puja is the greatest Hindu festival in which God is adored as Mother. Hinduism is the only religion in the world which has emphasised to such an extent the motherhood of God. One's relationship with one's mother is the dearest and the sweetest of all human relations. Hence, it is proper to look upon God as mother.

Durga represents the Divine Mother. She is the energy aspect of the Lord. Without Durga, Shiva has no expression and without Shiva, Durga has no existence. Shiva is the soul of Durga; Durga is identical with Shiva. Lord Shiva is only the silent witness. He is motionless, absolutely changeless. He is not affected by the cosmic play. It is Durga who does everything.

Shakti is the omnipotent power of the Lord, or the Cosmic Energy. The Divine Mother is represented as having ten different weapons in Her hands. She sits on a lion. She keeps up the play of the Lord through the three attributes of Nature, namely, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. Knowledge, peace, lust, anger, greed, egoism and pride, are all Her forms.

You will find in the Devi Sukta of the Rig Veda Samhita that Vak, symbolising speech, the daughter of the sage Anbhirna, realised her identity with the Divine Mother, the Power of the Supreme Lord, which manifests throughout the universe among the gods, among men and beasts and among the creatures of the deep ocean.

In the Kena Upanishad, you will find that the Divine Mother shed wisdom on Indra and the gods and said that the gods were able to defeat the demons only with the help of the power of the Supreme Lord.

The worship of Devi, the universal Mother, leads to the attainment of knowledge of the Self. The story in the Kena Upanishad known as the “Yaksha Prasna”, supports this view. It tells how Uma, the Divine Mother, taught the Truth to the gods. Goddess Shakti thus sheds wisdom on Her devotees.

Devi worship is, therefore, worship of God’s glory, of God’s greatness and supremacy. It is adoration of the Almighty. It is unfortunate that Devi is ignorantly understood by many as a mere blood-thirsty Hindu Goddess. No! Devi is not a vicious demoness nor is She the property of the Hindus alone. Devi does not belong to any religion. Devi is that conscious power of God. The words Devi, Shakti, etc., and the ideas of different forms connected with these names are concessions granted by the sages due to the limitations of the human intellect; they are by no means the ultimate definitions of Shakti.

The original or Adi Shakti is beyond human comprehension. Bhagavan Krishna says in the Gita: “This is only My lower nature. Beyond this is My higher nature, the life-principle which sustains the universe”.

The Upanishad also says: “The supreme power of God is

manifested in various ways. This power is of the nature of God, manifesting as knowledge, strength and activity”.

Truly speaking, all beings in the universe are Shakti-worshippers, whether they are aware of it or not, for there is no one who does not love and long for power in some form or other. Physicists and scientists have now proved that everything is pure, imperishable energy. This energy is only a form of divine Shakti which exists in every form.

A child is more familiar with the mother than with the father, because the mother is very kind, loving, tender and affectionate and looks after the needs of the child. In the spiritual field also, the aspirant or the devotee-the spiritual child-has an intimate relationship with the Mother Durga, more than with the Father Shiva. Therefore, it behoves the aspirant to approach the Mother first, who then introduces Her spiritual child to the Father for his illumination.

The Mother’s Grace is boundless. Her mercy is illimitable; Her knowledge infinite; Her power immeasurable; Her glory ineffable; and Her splendour indescribable. She gives you material prosperity as well as spiritual freedom.

Approach Her with an open heart. Lay bare your heart to Her with frankness and humility. Be as simple as a child. Kill ruthlessly the enemies of egoism, cunningness, selfishness and crookedness. Make a total, unreserved, and ungrudging self-surrender to Her. Sing Her praise. Repeat Her Name. Worship Her with faith and unflinching devotion. Perform special worship on the Navaratri days. Navaratri is the most suitable occasion for doing intense spiritual practices. These nine days are very sacred to the Divine Mother. Plunge yourself in Her worship. Practise intense repetition of the Divine Name, having a regular “quota” of repetitions per day, and the number of hours spent on it.

Devi fought with Bhandasura and his forces for nine days and nine nights. This Bhandasura had a wonderful birth and life. When Lord Shiva burnt Cupid with the fire of His “third eye”, Sri Ganesha playfully moulded a figure out of the ashes, and the Lord breathed

life into it! This was the terrible demon Bhandasura. He engaged himself in great penance and on account of it obtained a boon from Lord Shiva. With the help of that boon, he began harassing the worlds. The Divine Mother fought with him for nine nights (the demons have extraordinary strength during the night), and killed him on the evening of the tenth day, known as the Vijaya Dasami. The learning of any science is begun on this highly auspicious day. It was on this day that Arjuna worshipped Devi, before starting the battle against the Kauravas on the field of Kurukshetra.

Sri Rama worshipped Durga at the time of the fight with Ravana, to invoke Her aid in the war. This was on the days preceding the Vijaya Dasami day. He fought and won through Her Grace.

In days of yore, kings used to undertake ambitious expeditions on the day of the Vijaya Dasami. Those kings who did not go on such expeditions used to go out hunting in the deep forests. In Rajputana, India, even up to this date, people arrange mock attacks on some fort on Vijaya Dasami.

This day, however, has much to do with the life of Sri Rama. Nowhere in the history of the world can we find a parallel to the character of Sri Rama as a man, son, brother, husband, father or king. Maharishi Valmiki has exhausted the entire language in describing the glory of Sri Rama. And, we shall be rightly celebrating the Dussera if we make honest efforts to destroy the demon of our ego, and radiate peace and love wherever we go. Let us all resolve to become men of sterling character. Let us resolve and act. The story of Sri Rama is known in almost all parts of the globe and if we but succeed in following even a hundredth part of His teachings, we shall make our lives more fragrant than the rose and more lustrous than gold!

Dussera can also be interpreted as “Dasa-Hara”, which means the cutting of the ten heads of Ravana. So, let us resolve today to cut the ten heads-passion, pride, anger, greed, infatuation, lust, hatred, jealousy, selfishness and crookedness-of the demon, Ego, and thus justify the celebration of Dussera.

Religious observances, traditional worship and observances at times have more than one significance. Apart from being the adoration of the Divine, they commemorate stirring events in history, they are allegoric when interpreted from the occult standpoint and lastly, they are deeply significant pointers and revealing guidelines to the individual on his path to God-realisation.

Outwardly, the nine-day worship of Devi is a celebration of triumph. This nine days' celebration is offered to the Mother for Her successful struggle with the formidable demons led by Mahishasura. But, to the sincere spiritual aspirant, the particular division of the Navaratri into sets of three days to adore different aspects of the Supreme Goddess has a very sublime, yet thoroughly practical truth to reveal. In its cosmic aspect, it epitomises the stages of the evolution of man into God, from Jivahood (the state of individualisation) to Shivahood (the state of Self-realisation). In its individual import, it shows the course that his spiritual practice should take.

Let us, therefore, examine in detail the spiritual significance of Navaratri.

The central purpose of existence is to recognise your eternal identity with the supreme Spirit. It is to grow into the image of the Divine. The supreme One embodies the highest perfection. It is spotless purity. To recognise your identity with That, to attain union with That, is verily to grow into the very likeness of the Divine. The aspirant, therefore, as his initial step, has to get rid of all the countless impurities, and the demoniacal elements that have come to cling to him in his embodied state. Then he has to acquire lofty virtues and auspicious, divine qualities. Thus purified, knowledge flashes upon him like the brilliant rays of the sun upon the crystal waters of a perfectly calm lake.

This process demands a resolute will, determined effort and arduous struggle. In other words, strength and infinite power are the prime necessity. Thus it is the Divine Mother who has to operate through the aspirant.

Let us now consider how, on the first three days, the Mother is

adored as supreme power and force, as Durga the Terrible. You pray to Mother Durga to destroy all your impurities, your vices, your defects. She is to fight with and annihilate the baser animal qualities in the spiritual aspirant, the lower, diabolical nature in him. Also, She is the power that protects your spiritual practice from its many dangers and pitfalls. Thus the first three days, which mark the first stage or the destruction of impurity and determined effort and struggle to root out the evil tendencies in your mind, are set apart for the worship of the destructive aspect of the Mother.

Once you have accomplished your task on the negative side, that of breaking down the impure propensities and old vicious habits, the next step is to build up a sublime spiritual personality, to acquire positive qualities in place of the eliminated demoniacal qualities. The divine qualities that Lord Krishna enumerates in the Gita, have to be acquired. The aspirant must cultivate and develop all the auspicious qualities. He has to earn immense spiritual wealth to enable him to pay the price for the rare gem of divine wisdom. If this development of the opposite qualities is not undertaken in right earnest, the old demoniacal nature will raise its head again and again. Hence, this stage is as important in an aspirant's career as the previous one. The essential difference is: the former is a ruthless, determined annihilation of the filthy egoistic lower self; the latter is an orderly, steady, calm and serene effort to develop purity. This pleasanter side of the aspirant's Sadhana is depicted by the worship of Mother Lakshmi. She bestows on Her devotees the inexhaustible divine wealth or Deivi Sampath. Lakshmi is the wealth-giving aspect of God. She is purity itself. Thus the worship of Goddess Lakshmi is performed during the second set of three days.

Once the aspirant succeeds in routing out the evil propensities, and develops Sattwic or pure, divine qualities, he becomes competent to attain wisdom. He is now ready to receive the light of supreme wisdom. He is fit to receive divine knowledge. At this stage comes the devout worship of Mother Saraswathi, who is divine knowledge personified, the embodiment of knowledge of the Absolute. The sound of Her celestial veena awakens the notes of the sublime utterances of the Upanishads which reveal the Truth, and the sacred

monosyllable, Om. She bestows the knowledge of the supreme, mystic sound and then gives full knowledge of the Self as represented by Her pure, dazzling snow-white apparel. Therefore, to propitiate Saraswathi, the giver of knowledge, is the third stage.

The tenth day, Vijaya Dasami, marks the triumphant ovation of the soul at having attained liberation while living in this world, through the descent of knowledge by the Grace of Goddess Saraswathi. The soul rests in his own Supreme Self or Satchidananda Brahman. This day celebrates the victory, the achievement of the goal. The banner of victory flies aloft. Lo! I am He! I am He!

This arrangement also has a special significance in the aspirant's spiritual evolution. It marks the indispensable stages of evolution through which everyone has to pass. One naturally leads to the other; to short-circuit this would inevitably result in a miserable failure. Nowadays many ignorant seekers aim straight at the cultivation of knowledge without the preliminaries of purification and acquisition of the divine qualities. They then complain that they are not progressing on the path. How can they? Knowledge will not descend until the impurities have been washed out, and purity is developed. How can the pure plant grow in impure soil?

Therefore adhere to this arrangement; your efforts will be crowned with sure success. This is your path. As you destroy one evil quality, develop the virtue opposite to it. By this process you will soon bring yourself up to that perfection which will culminate in identity with the Self which is your goal. Then all knowledge will be yours: you will be omniscient, omnipotent and you will feel your omnipresence. You will see your Self in all. You will have achieved eternal victory over the wheel of births and deaths, over the demon of worldliness. No more pain, no more misery, no more birth, no more death! Victory, victory be yours!

Glory to the Divine Mother! Let Her take you, step by step to the top of the spiritual ladder and unite you with the Lord

Controlling Your New Year's Destiny

- Paramahansa Yogananda

If you saturate with devotion a thought of God, and by your concentration impress that thought deep within you, then in the temple of superconsciousness the Lord of the universe will come to receive that loving thought.

Ask God to help you fulfil all the good thoughts and resolutions that you are making now for the New Year. Resolve that you are going to do just what you think you should do, and that under no circumstances are you going to be cowed into doing otherwise by your old bad habits.

There was a great lesson for me in the book I have been writing. I used to write without ever reading over the manuscript – a task I always avoided. But I had to go over and over every bit of my autobiography. The Lord disciplined me, yet in a noble way, because I have enjoyed reliving those wondrous experiences as I read the account again.

I have ventured many projects in this life. I have lectured, designed and built buildings, done artwork, played musical instruments, planted gardens, founded a school, but always the secret of my success was will power. I can truthfully say that destiny is what you make it.

Analyze yourself. What happened to your good intentions and noble ambitions of the past year? Did you let them die for want of dynamic will-to-accomplish? Make a strong determination to avoid repetition of old errors in this New Year. Plan your time. Resolve that you are not going to be an automation run by the world and by your own habits; that is not the way to true happiness. You must change; you must be able to change. Vague desire to improve is not enough. You have made yourself what you are now, and you can become whatever you want to be, but you have to use will power.

More confining than stone walls are the prison bars of habit. You carry this invisible prison with you wherever you go. But you can be free! Determine now to break out of the jail of habits and race for freedom. How frightful life is, that from the age of three we were limited by habit. As soon as I realized I was caged in by habit I broke through all the bars. I would not permit myself to be bound by habits that made me say, "I can't do that", or "I have to do this", or "Don't do that to me, it makes me nervous", or "I can't stand the cold", and so on.

Why are these habits so strong from early childhood? Because they have been carried over from previous-life experiences. Our moods are inkmarks traced on the graph of life by the karma of the past. Wrong habits and moods are more offensive than the odour of the skunk. Why behave like a human polecat, making everyone else uncomfortable and punishing yourself as well? At one time or another we all have done so, because we all have carried with us obnoxious peculiarities.

But we can overcome undesirable traits. The human mind is elastic. If you pull it gradually, it will yield to your tugs. Yet you don't even try. God has given us more than enough power to overcome all the trials and shortcomings of our lives. Saint Francis, though ill and sightless, could heal the sick and raise the dead. Outwardly blind, inwardly he beheld the great Light of the universe. God puts His true children such as Saint Francis to greater tests than He gives to ordinary people. But no one passes through the gates of freedom until he has passed all God's tests, until he has learned to live like a true son of God. Why should you think of yourself as a weak mortal? You are potentially a son of God. You do not have to acquire anything; you have only to know.

To try to be a millionaire in this incarnation is really much more difficult than to be a true son of God. Earthly environment is so limited that many people die without having become what they want to be. But to know God is possible in one lifetime, because you don't have

to acquire Him; He is already your own.

Even if everyone were to pray day and night to become as rich as Henry Ford, their prayers could not be granted because earth is not a place where everybody can be a Henry Ford. But everyone can be rich in Spirit, for God has given everyone equal power to become like Him. When you claim your divinity, everything belongs to you. A Henry Ford might lose his wealth or his health, but a Jesus Christ can create health or wealth or anything else he wants, at will. So don't long to be as rich or as healthy as someone else; have only one desire: to be like God. Jesus never claimed that he was the only son of God. The Father loves you, His child, just as much as He loves Jesus. And God won't deny you anything if, like Jesus, you establish your true status with Him. Meditation is the way to reclaim your lost divinity.

Habits are grafts on our real nature, which is ever-free Spirit. In my childhood I used to get very angry, but when I made up my mind not to, I never again gave in to anger. If I hadn't used my will I wouldn't have been able to accomplish that, or anything else in life. You too can use your will. The errors of a lifetime can be corrected today. Make a resolution in this New Year to realize the truth that although as a mortal man you have certain habits, as a divine being you are free. Why should you lie to yourself? Why should you ascribe to yourself the faults of the past? You must destroy them. Otherwise they will become grafts on your tree of life. You must not allow that. Affirm again and again: "I am a child of God. I am one with God."

THE STORY OF THE DIAMOND

-by Qadre Alam

Translated by Nawazuddin

In a small hut near the city there lived a woodcutter who busily occupied with looking after his family. Though his means were meager, he was a very contented man.

One day, while he was passing through the forest, he spotted a small piece of glass glittering in the sunlight. The glass was very clear and sparkled with luster. The woodcutter had heard of diamonds and their value. Thinking that this must be a diamond and that the Lord had provided him with it, he quickly picked it up and went home.

On seeing the woodcutter, his wife became perplexed and asked him why he had returned home so soon. She wondered, "Where is his stock? Has he lost it or someone taken it?"

The woodcutter said, "Do not get agitated. Look! The Lord God has given me a diamond."

The wife said, "Show me the diamond immediately, I am eager to see it."

Taking his wife to the corner of the house, he showed her the piece of the glass. On seeing it, excitedly, she said "Go and sell it. Our days of poverty and destitution are over. Finally, the Lord has granted us comfort and peace.

The woodcutter said, "Listen to me. This is a large diamond. If I take this to the bazaar, people would unnecessarily lay claim to it. They would say, "Where is this woodcutter and whence this diamond? Certainly he stolen it from somewhere." People would slander me and we would be divested of our diamond as well as our lives. It is better to devise a plan to dispose of this diamond, or else we will get into trouble. Moreover, we will not get a fair price for this diamond. It is sensible to keep it safe and sell it through a middleman."

The woodcutter kept the piece of glass in a small box and wrapped the box in rags of blankets and then hid the bundle amongst the lumber. With his meagre resources he managed to maintain his family for a few days and when they ran out of food, he started searching for an intermediary to help him sell the diamond. One of his friends directed him to a Master jeweler in the nearby city.

The woodcutter went and found the Master jeweller and he saw his authority and the exalted position he occupied. He was surrounded by many people, some sitting and others standing with folded arms. There were other jewellers too, sitting in chairs and checking the quality of gems. On seeing this, the woodcutter stood aloof from the crowd, reverentially in presence of the jeweler. The jeweller was wise mystic and has magical powers. Gently he looked at the woodcutter and summoning him enquired after him.

The jeweller said, "When the sun casts its rays often it transforms mere stones into rubies and cornelians."

The woodcutter replied, "O generous one, I am a poor man, I have come to behold your feet."

In compassion, the jeweler gave him some money, which the woodcutter politely accepted and went home. With that money he looked after his family for some time, all the while pinning his hopes on the diamond he had hidden.

Again he went to the jeweller and hopefully stood in his presence, waiting to be addressed. Again, the jeweller gave him alms. Once more for the third time, the woodcutter went to pay his respects to the jeweller. Respectfully, with folded arms, he prostrated before him and told him he had been cherishing the the hope of making an entry at his feet.

The jeweller said, " My brother, tell me whatever you have to say."

The woodcutter replied, "There is too much of a crowd here.

People of both high and low births are gathered here. If I could get a private audience I would consider myself fortunate."

The jeweller is a kind man and he invited the woodcutter into his private chamber. The woodcutter again reverentially prostrated before him and told him the story of what he had found.

The jeweller allayed his fears and said, "Fear not my friend; go and bring your diamond here and I shall fetch a good price from the king."

The woodcutter said, "I am afraid of bringing it here. Please do take the trouble of visiting my home."

The jeweller, being blessed with piety and noble manners, agreed, saying, "All right. Let us proceed to your home, my friend."

Whoever is destined to be favoured with the treasure of Divine Grace, usually undergoes sufferings in this world. When God wants to shower His Grace on someone, He merely adopts some means to exhibit it when he pleases.

The jeweller prepared his own conveyance and arrived at woodcutter's home in a dignified manner. The woodcutter spread an old mat for him to sit on and his family paid obeisance to him.

The jeweller said, "Where is your diamond? Bring it here and I shall assess its price."

The woodcutter took down the bundle from the lumber and started removing the rags. Mystified on seeing this, jeweller thought, "The diamond is a small thing, but how enormous the padding. With that terrible and dreadful things has this woodcutter wrapped up the diamond! He should have been more careful.

Finally the woodcutter, opened the bundle, took out the small box and gave it to the jeweller. The jeweller opened the box and lo! What he saw nothing but a piece of glass.

“Although this is only a glass piece, the poor woodcutter has fashioned his hope on it,” the jeweller thought. “If I tell him the truth he will become very despondent. He must have heard the name of diamond and has held on to this glass piece thinking it a diamond. Let me employ this woodcutter as an apprentice and teach him the art of identifying gemstones.

The far-sighted jeweller said, “Dear friend, very precious and of a rare distinction is your diamond. If I take this to the king, I fear he would demand it for a low price. On the other hand, if the king seeks this diamond, we shall get a better price. Till such an opportune time arrives keep this diamond safe and never look at it. And also, until then be at my service without any reservation and I shall look after you.”

Saying this, the jeweller returned to his house. Acting according to the counsel of the jeweller, the woodcutter re-packed the glass piece and hid it in the lumber. Then he hurried to the service of his new master.

The jeweller took hold of the woodcutter’s hands and called all the other jewellers to his side. Emphatically he said to them, “This poor fellow has come to serve me. Basically he is a woodcutter. Keep him with you always and teach him the art of analyzing the Jewels.”

Since every one in the assembly was under the authority of the Master jeweller, they commenced teaching him. Those lessons started yielding good results and the woodcutter profited by learning the techniques. For a long period and in this way he was groomed and he attained distinction in acquiring the skills.

After a further period, the Master summoned all the jewellers and enquired whether the woodcutter had acquired the necessary skills to distinguish various jewels. Every one present assured the Master that he was now adept in his art. The Master went inside his chambers and came out carrying diamonds mixed with quartz and crystals. He gave this mixture to the woodcutter and asked him to

find out whether those jewels were good or otherwise.

After carefully examining the stones, the woodcutter said there were quartz and crystals also in the mixture. The jeweller then asked him to separate the gemstones.

The woodcutter pointed out to him the gems and other stones. The jeweller in order to test his knowledge, insisted that they were all pure and unalloyed gems. He said, “And you say some are diamonds and a few are quartz.”

The woodcutter said, “Esteemed Master, the intrinsic value and real merit of each substance is established and has been revealed to me under scrutiny.”

The jeweller complimented him and said that he now had the talent to distinguish a precious stone from a pebble.

After some time the jeweller called the woodcutter and told him that the king desired a large sized diamond. “Go and bring your diamond and I shall sell it for a good price,” he said.

Happily the woodcutter went home, opened the bundle and looked at the piece of glass in the box. He realised that it was neither a crystal nor even quartz, but a piece of glass. With a sense of shame he sank into an ocean of remorse, like a naked man immersing himself in water.

Ruefully he thought, “Who am I? I am a mere woodcutter, how did I think I was a jeweller? How could a crystal be a diamond? I am a peasant and he is a prince; I am ignoble and he has noble virtues; he is high and I am low. How often I have lied to him about the diamond. By employing untruth as a ruse I became friendly with him. I lived on his sustenance by deceit. How stupid I was to summon his august presence to my house for the sake of a mere piece of glass. What a faithful and tolerant person he is! Even after seeing the glass piece, he gave me shelter. How kindly he tutored me. He never let my hope be shattered into despondency. Instead he taught me the art of

gemmology.

“He showed me the way so that I am clear in my understanding. By transforming a woodcutter into a jeweller he has made a beggar into a king. How can I appear before him? I am thoroughly mortified.” Ruminating thus on his follies, the woodcutter remained at home.

The jeweler understood why the woodcutter had not returned with his diamond. He sympathized with him, knowing that shame prevented him from facing him. So, once again he went to the home of the woodcutter and asked him why he had not brought his diamond.

Like a mortar of lime getting dissolved in water, the woodcutter prostrated at his feet. Tenderly the jeweler said, “O friend, indeed you have arrived at the fountainhead of truth, even though your journey started from ignorant assumption.”

“It is the aspiration to own a diamond and know its value that has shown you the way. The love of a diamond made you to seek the jeweller. From the Master jeweller you learnt the science and art of the gemmology by working with other jewellers. The love of the diamond has made you to attain an eminent position and abandoning your false and pretentious knowledge, you have adopted fidelity with fairness.”

The Master jeweller continued to mentor him and made him a jeweller among jewellers.

The jeweller’s role is metaphorical. All obstacles are removed from the path of the man that God grants true knowledge to and his heart is illuminated with the Truth.

Now listen to the wisdom of this parable. The cut glass, which the woodcutter carefully preserved, is the outward form of religion. The rags and box are the rituals of worship. The endeavour to keep the glass piece safely is faith and the dread of losing it is steadfastness. The value of the diamond is grace and the vision of the Lord. How could anybody get a fair value without the meditation

of an intercessor? When the woodcutter wanted to sell the diamond he started to search for an intermediary. The friend who directed him to the jeweller is the worldly preceptor. The Lord, in order to grant him His vision, directed him to the Master jeweller who is none other than the spiritual Master.

The spiritual Master, after noticing the sincerity in the woodcutter’s quest for the Truth, taught him by the personal grace and favour. Until the Master casts his grace, the road to salvation cannot be found. Subsequently, a novice can discern truth from falsehood. The right way is shown to one who has an earnest desire to know the truth, even if he is deluded.

The genuine diamond is the Soul of Prophet Mohammed, in whose light the entire universe is manifest. The Light of Mohammed is the Light of God. Know in certainty that the same light is reflected in the soul of Adam. Therefore the genuine diamond is essentially is the light of the perfect man. The jeweller is the Master, with whom the stations of the way can be traversed. The house of the jeweller is the soul of the man and the house of the woodcutter is the body of the man.

When Qadre Alam embraced Badre Alam as his Master, Qadre Alam too achieved the status of pir.

-from Mountain Path, October-December 2012.

ASHRAM NEWS

The 121st birth day of Puja Swami Omkarji Maharaj was celebrated at Thotapalli, main Ashram. The programme was held for three days from 20-01-2015 to 22-01-2015. Puja Swami Padmanabhananda, General Secretary, Divine Life Society, Rishikesh graced the occasion and spoke about the dedicated services of Swami Omkarji Maharaj for the upliftment of his followers in their spiritual pursuits throughout the world. He released the book "The Soul of Omkar" translated by Sri V Radhakrishna into telugu under the title "Swami Omkar Atma Darshini." Puja Swamiji gave a message about the Guru Sishya relation and how the Sanyas Deeksha is being given to the deserving disciples. He further explained how they both represent God Himself.

Puja Jnaneswari Mataji in her message said that everyday is a Birth day of everyone, if one does service to the benefit of others without expecting any reward for that service. The day he does not follow this principle will be a deathday for him. She read the message of Swami Omkar from "Everyday is a Birth Day." Various cultural programmes were organised during these celebrations.

On the first day of celebrations thousands of devotees of the Ashram gathered to pay their respects to Puja Swami Omkarji Maharaj and to receive the love and affection of Puja Mataji.

At the main Ashram and its branches at Visakhapatnam, Kakinada and Kotagiri essential commodities were distributed to the aged and needy people. Clothes also were distributed, a monthly feature, from January to April, 2015. Spiritual sadhana camps were conducted at the main Ashram.

Two Sadhana camps were being organised at Kotagiri Ashram, Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu from 25-4-2015 to 13-05-2015 and 15-5-2015 to 2-06-2015. Puja Mataji also attended these camps along with Vinamra Mataji and Suhita Chaitanya Mataji. Puja Mataji guided in conducting these sadhana camps.

The Management of the Peace Magazine regrets the delay in releasing the March 2015 issue. Now it is combined with the June issue. The readers of the magazine are requested to bear with this delay and continue to enjoy the reading as before.

FORM IV

(SEE RULE 8)

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