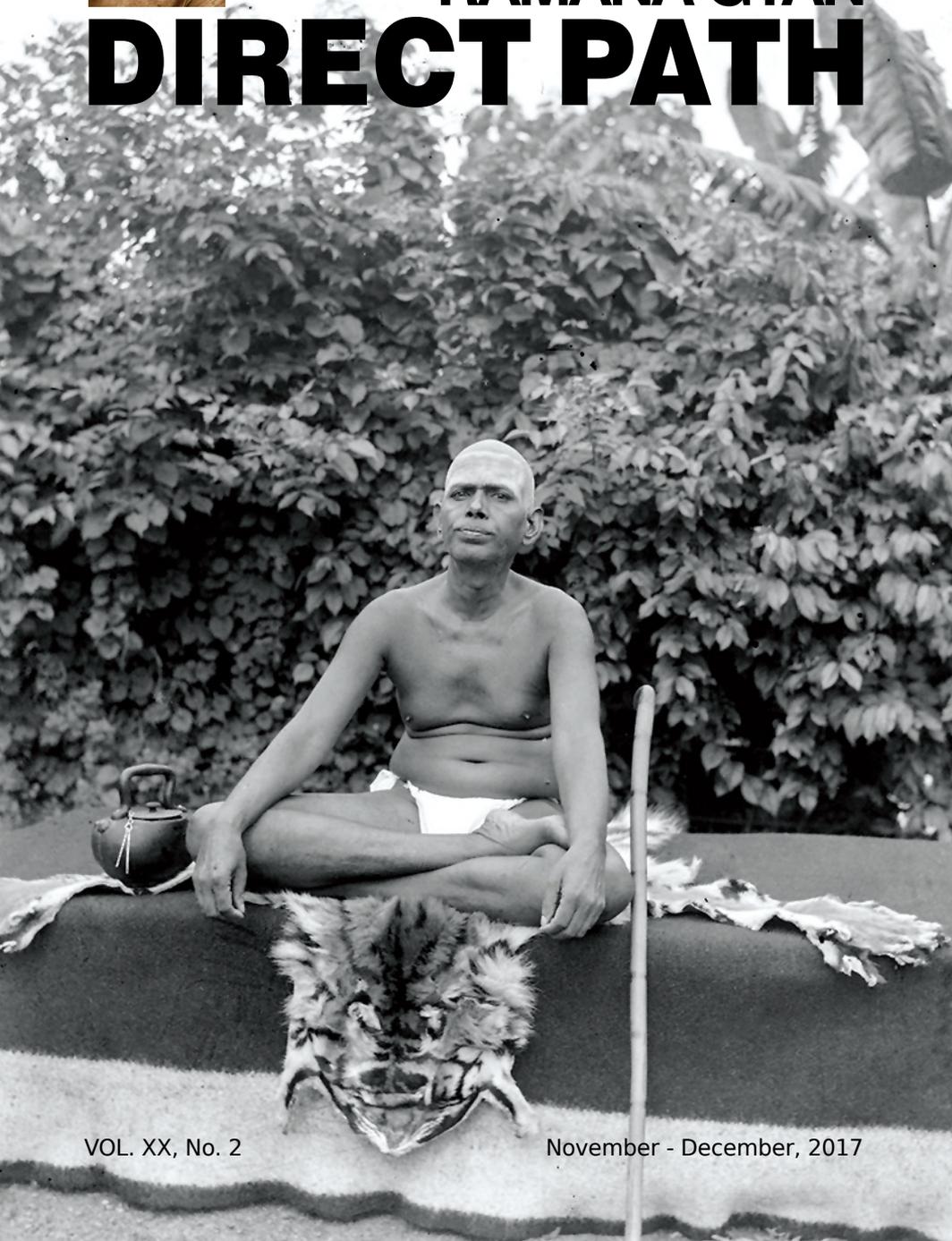




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RAMANA GYAN DIRECT PATH



VOL. XX, No. 2

November - December, 2017



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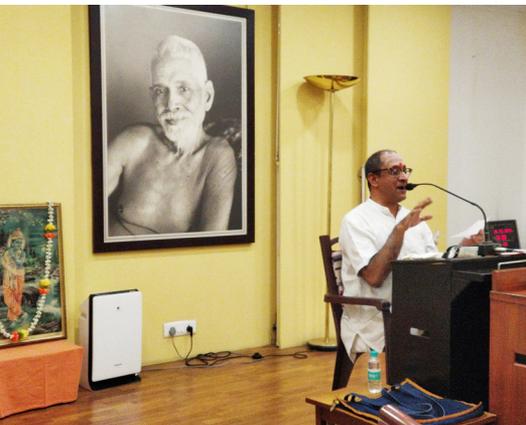
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Best wishes for the prosperous and glorious 50 years and many more to come!

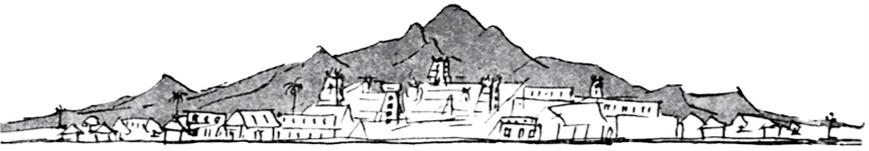


Ramesh Nair
CEO & Whole Time Director
Balco



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Original ink sketch of Arunachala by Sri Ramana Maharshi from Kunju Swami's notebook

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Editor's Note

This issue contains a face-to-face between Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi and Swami Chinmayananda. It is in the Hindi section, please read this interesting piece.

Please make a note of the new name of our Kendra website. It had to be changed due to some technical problems. The current name is **Ramanakendradelhi.in**

We are planning a one-day seminar to coincide with Ramana's Jayanti celebrations on 30th December. Mark your calendar and attend along with your likeminded friends.

All views are welcome to make the magazine better. Some of the articles may have been edited for clarity and brevity.

Please send your articles for consideration to **directpath@rediffmail.com** cc **shiromani.vijay@yahoo.co.in**

Readers are welcome to express their views on the articles printed (in not more than 200 words) and send them to **directpath@rediffmail.com** cc **shiromani.vijay@yahoo.co.in**

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Light in the Midst of Darkness

Shiromani Vijay

All of us celebrated Deepavali with much fervour recently. The festival signified hope and cheer even amidst disconcerting rise of violence, crime, corruption, man-made and natural disasters all over the world. The festival persuades us to build strong families and communities shunning wrongdoing and evil, and choosing the right path. It urges us to live for others based on high principles like our idol Shri Ram.

Though most of us are familiar with this festival, on this occasion it is nice to take a closer look at its meaning and significance, and purpose.

“Diwali or Deepavali” means an array of lights. It is celebrated on the darkest night of the year when the beauty and mystery of lights can be experienced in a special way. It is celebrated by Hindus all over the world with much grandeur

with family and friends, clay lamps (*diya*), colourful designs (*rangolis*), exchange gifts and treats, and burst of firecrackers. With so much of pomp and show, people tend to associate Diwali only with riches and wealth but we must pray to be enriched and conferred upon with spiritual prosperity and wealth of God’s light in our hearts and minds. It is celebrated over 5 days according to our puranas – mainly based of the episodes of Srimad Bhagavatam:

1st Day as Dhanatrayodashi (or Dhanteras): Ayurvedic doctors worship

Deity *Dhanvantari* as he appeared with the *amritakalasha* on this day. This is also a very important for business people.

2nd Day as Narakchaturdashi: This day *Shri krishna* with *Satyabhama (Bhumadevi)* on his side, slayed the evil demon *Narakasura* freeing and marrying 16000 women who were

imprisoned. Narakasura entreated Krishna before he was slain, that on this day people should dispel darkness with light and celebrate with crackers. Persons of south Indian origin celebrate this as the main Deepavali starting the day with a very early morning oil bath, new clothes, sweets and greetings.

3rd Day as Lakshmipuja: This is the darkest night of the year. *Sri Mahalakshmi* appeared on this day from *Samudramanthan* and chose *MahaVishnu* as her consort. Goddess *Lakshmi* (the Goddess of Wealth) is worshipped to drive off poverty (*Alakshmi*). “Lakshmi pachayatan” composed of - *Lakshmi* (as *shakti*) *Vishnu* (as happiness), **Kubera** (as generosity), *Indra* (as opulence), *Gajendra* (as carrier of wealth)- enters the universe on this day. Further, Deepavali signifies Sri Rama’s return from exile (*vanavasa*) after defeating *Ravana*. And hence the joy of celebration of people of Ayaodhya to welcome him, Sita and Lakshmana with rows of lights, rangolis. According to Bengal tradition, Diwali is associated with the divine mother Kali as Devi Chandika. Kali destroys the lower self to obtain higher levels of knowledge through *Ajna chakra* or the third eye.

Moreover, on this Amavasya Yama gave his advice to Nachiketa as stated in Kathopanishad.

For north Indians, this is the most important day. The houses are spruced up and rangolis made to welcome Lakshmi. Evening all the houses are beautifully lit with lamps and there is sound of crackers all around symbolising homecoming of Shri Rama. For many it marks the beginning of a new year.

4th Day as Balipratipada: It symbolises *Vishnu’s* (as *Vamana*) crushing of the demon king Bali – totally suppressing his ego. It is also celebrated as *Govardan puja* signifying Krishna lifting the *Govardan* mountain to save the people of Vrindavan who had taken refuge in him, from Indra’s onslaught. The worship reminds us to care and protect our environment. In Krishna temples, there is *Annakuta* signifying the offer and sharing food. Scores of devotees go around the Govardhan hill on this day.

5th Day as Bhaubij or Yamadwitiya (also called as *bhai duj*): *Yama* and *Yamuna* meet on this day sharing a meal and exchanging gifts. It is a symbol of divine bond of love between brother and sister. Also on this day, *Krishna* slayed the evil

demon *Shakatasura*.

Thus, the five day festivities start with acquisition of wealth and health (*Dhana trayodashi*), removal of all the negativities and sins (*Naraka Chaturdashi*), moving from darkness to light and ignorance to knowledge that is realisation (Deepavali Amavasya), having realised sharing of joy with others (*Balipratipada*) and finally conquering death - *Mrityunjaya* (*yama dwitiya*).

In the Hindu tradition, light is a symbol for God and for truth. God is described as the Light of all lights, beyond darkness. All the light we see - of the sun, the moon, the stars and fire is the reflection the eternal light of God. Light is a symbol for knowledge, even as darkness symbolizes ignorance. On Diwali, we pray to be led from darkness to light (*tamaso ma jyotir gamaya*). Many a times we feel that for embracing the self within or to go towards God, we need to shun the world outside. However, on the night of Diwali the most significant lamp that is lit, is the light at the threshold of the home. This light is awakening us to the light of God in our hearts to radiate outwards from within us to illumine a world shrouded in

darkness. This signifies that with the light of knowledge we look at the world in the right perspective. If the light at the threshold reminds us that the inner light must radiate outwards, it also reminds us that we cannot dispel darkness if we are not awake to the light within. We cannot do much good in the world outside if our own hearts are deep in the darkness of ignorance (*avidya*), greed (*lobha*), lust (*kama*) and hate (*dvesa*). Lost in darkness, we will contribute to the world's suffering and not help in its overcoming. The light that shines out must first shine within. Darkness does not dispel darkness. Let our first Diwali be going from Adharma to Dharma. Then following the tenets of Vedanta, let us strive to remove our spiritual ignorance (Avidya) and celebrate the real Diwali. In Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna proclaims that out of compassion for us, He, residing within our hearts, certainly destroys the darkness born of ignorance with the radiant lamp of knowledge.

To conclude, let us see what Deepavali meant for Ramana Maharshi and what he said about Deepavali in his inimitable style:

“Two verses from the Purana describe Deepavali festival -

The Conquest of Hell (Naraka)

-Lord Narayana has killed the demon [of misery], Naraka Asura. This demon is none other than the one who lives as “I am this body, the source of misery”. One who seeks Naraka Asura’s [i.e., the ego’s] source, and thus annihilates him, is truly Lord Narayana Himself.

The Deepavali-bath, which is taken by all people on the fourteenth moon in remembrance of the conquest of Naraka, signifies the bath of Jnana, which is taken after destroying the ego Naraka Asura, by searching for his source.

The above two verses were summarised in the following way by Sri Bhagavan:

He who kills Narakasura (the ego) with the Wheel [i.e. weapon] of Jnana, by enquiring, “Where is the source of Narakasura who rules over Narakaloka, this wretched body, as ‘I’?”, is Lord Narayana; and that day [of the ego’s destruction] is the auspicious day of the fourteenth moon.

Deepavali signifies the great Self-Effulgence which shines after destroying the reflected light [i.e. the ego], Narakasura, who was ruling this filthy body, which is the form of hell, as ‘I’.

Deepavali signified the shining

of Self after the destruction, through enquiry, of the greatest sinner, Naraka [the ego], who took the abode of this filthy body, which is the form of hell, as ‘I’.

He is Narakasura (a demon) who feels attached in the thought that he is the body. That attachment to the body itself is a Naraka (hell). The life of a person who has that attachment, even if he be a Maharajah, is hellish. Destroying the attachment to the body, and the self shining by itself as Self is Deepavali.

He is the king of hell who says that he is the body which is hell itself. He is Narayana who ascertains who Naraka is, and destroys him with His vision of wisdom, Jnana Drishti.

That is the auspicious day of Narakachathurdasi.

The false belief that this hell-like house called body is me, is Naraka himself. To destroy that false belief and let the self, shine as Self, is Deepavali.”

Om asato ma sat gamaya | Tamaso ma jotir gamaya | Mrityor ma amritam gamaya | Om shanti shanti shantihi ||
असतो मा सद्गमय। तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय।
मृत्योर् मा अमृतं गमय। ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः
शान्तिः ॥ ■

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To Be

Dr. Vijay Vancheswar

What is it that we are consciously or unconsciously seeking?

Question: What is the purpose of life that we unwittingly are searching for? Whether we admit it or not we seek to find answers to what can give us lasting Peace and Happiness. We seek this through many options: satsangs, discourses, spiritual compositions, books and sacred texts.

Why do we do this? Because what we regard as success through our career, status, material comforts, association and relationships, health and well being, does not satiate us fully. There seems to be some sense of incompleteness that constantly gnaws us.

What is this that creates this gnawing? Obviously, if we were at the level of animals or even children, we would be bereft of this issue! However, this would deprive us of the sense of being consciously present. Sri Ramana clarifies this, 'As children we

are at peace but not conscious of it'. Bhagavan calls the state that we aspire for (albeit at the wrong places) as the state of 'wakeful sleep'. This state which Ramana Maharshi demonstrated exudes perpetual peace and joy. So what is this culprit that gnaws us and keeps us perpetually restless, some mercifully less and many unfortunately to a very high degree? It is our inability to extricate ourselves from the process of thinking. Thinking is a function of time. In other words, when we think we are either recalling memories of the past in the present or projecting future scenarios to the present. The present is the state of 'Here and Now'. Eckhart Tolle explains this beautifully, "The past or the future can survive only in our absence". We are absent when we are disconnected with our sense of being. Time related past or future cannot survive in our conscious presence. It flourishes in the realm of thinking. Indeed, 'compulsive thinking' is the source of our misery. Time and

mind are inseparable. Only when we end the delusion of time can we remain connected to our timeless being.

How do we remain timeless? As Sri Ramana says the only freedom that we have, is to remain connected to our sense of being. As a simple exercise, we can redirect our attention to the interval between two thoughts-the state of being-ness. The simple exercise of asking what is my next thought will keep the mind vigilant and attentive, giving it no time to rewind or fast-forward. A question in the Zen tradition that does not require an answer in the realm of the mind, "If not now, when?" is designed to keep our attention deeply into the Now.

Unfortunately, we seek glimpses of this peace through intense and strenuous activities-mountain climbing, car racing, adventure sports or tasks demanding complex mind engagement. These activities certainly give us a flavour of peace and joy. Alas, they do not sustain beyond the end of the activities. The mind thereafter loses its poise and reverts to its state of unease. No wonder people find it difficult to handle natural phases of change in life like -retirement, loss of a partner. Associations and activities that seemingly appear worthwhile and satisfying can many times be crutches

that keep us enslaved to our mind which always oscillates in the sphere of duality. Pleasure followed by pain, happiness by sadness, thrill by despair. All these cumulatively lead to suffering. The Buddha termed enlightenment as the 'end of suffering' - not the gaining of something new, but the end of the perils of compulsive thinking.

Finally what is the process to be out of the clutches of time and compulsive thinking? This is as Sri Ramana pointed out a very individualistic process. For this very reason he did not advocate mass lectures and doctrines as there can never be a one path that fits all diverse temperaments. The spiritual journey is indeed a path to be treaded individually. It sprouts as a result of an inner quest. A quest that addresses one's assortment of beliefs, values, mental disposition and tendencies. The teachings and guidelines of Masters act as signposts and pointers. The modalities of the journey are left for each one us based on what suits us best. The experience and gains are personal not something that can be conveyed through speech and discussions. To Ramana Maharshi the power of here and now is best demonstrated and transmitted through the timeless strength of silence. ■

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Siddhis only Retard Spiritual Progress

P.N. Vijay

The Advent Day which marks the entry of Bhagavan Ramana to Tiruvannamalai, to become one with Arunachala, is always very special to the devotees. This year we had the privilege of listening to Swami Chidananda (of FOWAI - Flame of “Who Am I”) on the occasion. Swamiji based his talk on Verse 37 of Bhagavan’s composition Sad Darshanam which talks of the futility and transience of Siddhis (special powers). We summarise some of the points Swamiji made on in his talk.

“ Today we are going to discuss how seeking special powers prove to be the undoing of many aspirants.

I will start this part of the discussion with a little story which will bring out the point. There was a man who lived in Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu who was keen to actually meet a Siddha Purusha and get his blessings. People

told him there lived such a man in the Himalayas. Not deterred by the distance, he travelled all the way by foot and finally reached the village. When he enquired among the locals they told him that the man did live there and pointed to a nearby hill. When he reached there, lo and behold the man was actually seated in deep meditation with eyes closed. He waited and waited, and the hours went by. Still the Siddha did not open his eyes and give him Darshan. He got frustrated and decided to leave. At that the thought came to him “How I wish there was some cold water”. Suddenly a bowl appeared in front of him and was soon filled with water. He drank it and got excited. He thought it would be nice if he got some food and immediately food appeared. Still the Siddha was in deep meditation and his eyes remained closed. After a while he returned to the village where he saw

some children playing. He thought it would be wonderful if those children got some marbles to play and food to eat; and sure enough these appeared for them. The villagers crowded around and for them also he got a lot of gifts.

Suddenly he thought “Let me get back to the Siddha; I came for his blessings and I have forgotten that. He rushed back; only to find that there was no sign of the Siddha. He had disappeared completely. He lamented “What a fool I am! I got some power and got totally diverted from my main purpose and went astray”. He came back sadly to Kumbakonam.

All of us intuitively attach some divine qualities to people who seem to exhibit supernatural powers. Many “Gurus” acquire huge followings by showing such Siddhis. How relevant are they to a spiritual seeker? Bhagavan provides the answer in the verse 37 in his text Sad Darshanam

सिद्धस्य वितिः सत एवं सिद्धिः

स्वप्नोपमानाः खलु सिद्धयोऽन्याः ।

स्वप्नः प्रबुद्धस्य कथं नु सत्यः

सति स्थितः किं पुनरेति मायाम् ॥ ३७ ॥

“To discern and abide in the ever-

present Reality is true attainment. All other attainments are like powers enjoyed in a dream. When the sleeper wakes, does he think dreams are real? Those who stay in the state of Truth, having cast off the unreal - will they ever be deluded?”

Bhagavan alerts us that all the Siddhis are like a dream; in a dream one may do very extraordinary things; but when we get up do we take it seriously and wonder why we have lost those powers? No, we do not; we go about our normal life and soon forget about the dream. Siddhis are no different from powers in a dream. As Bhagavan says in the very first line, the biggest power is to discern the ever-present Reality and live in a state of Self-abidance and not body-mind abidance as we do now.

One may ask: “This warning is very useful no doubt. But does this make us progress in any way?”. The answer is when we go deeper all achievements are similar to Siddhis. We are all the time going after achievements; achieve a bigger salary, achieve a bigger house, go for a holiday abroad rather than in India. We force our children to be achievers. There is nothing wrong in wanting to achieve something but without our

own knowledge our life becomes “achievement driven”. According to Bhagavan in the final analysis even achievements are like a dream. They do not in any way contribute to the progress in our spiritual journey; in fact they become a block after some time.

Many of us intellectually understand and absorb the concept of a liberated or realised Soul. Such a person is the final product of the journey into oneself to realise one’s own true nature. But we wonder “Does such a person exist in this day and age or is he really an ideal that the Scriptures talk about?”. Maharishi Ramana is a perfect answer to such people; a realised person who moved around with all of us like a normal person but fully realised, forever blessing us with his Grace.

The Vedas are esoteric and the Upanishads are very difficult to comprehend. Commentators like Adi Sankara have tried to simplify them so that common people like us can follow them. But even these commentaries which were written very long ago are difficult for many. Bhagavan with his Grace made Advaita so simple to understand

and his technique of Self Enquiry- which is fully based on Vedantic texts- helps us go deeply into oneself without much effort. To use modern terminology his works are “Reduced Instruction Sets”!

Let us illustrate this point with an example from Upadesa Saram to show how the wisdom of the Upanishads is captured and encapsulated by Bhagavan in short verses. Verse 18 of Upadesa Saram is

वृत्तयस्त्वहं वृत्तिमाश्रिताः।

वृत्तयो मनो विद्ध्यहं मनः॥

Thoughts alone make up the mind; And of all thoughts the 'I' thought is the root.

What is called mind is but the notion 'I'

Spiritual seekers who are puzzled by the complex analysis of the mind find refuge in this direct path to understanding the mind.

To conclude, let us stick to Self-Enquiry and pursue it with great enthusiasm and commitment and with the Blessings of Bhagavan we will realise our true nature.” ■

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Kendra Bulletin

We had a grand event on September 1 st - “Advent Day” with Swami Chidananda as the chief guest. On that occasion Justice Ramamurthy spoke about how his association with Bhagavan Ramana and his teachings, have given him strength and solace in his life. He urged all of us to surrender to Ramana with total faith. We have published a gist of Swami Chidananda’s Advent Day lecture in this issue.

Swami Durgeshananda concluded his talks on Bhagavan’s composition Upadesa Saram. The talks were very well received. He is continuing his talks on Atma Bodha. Swami Prabhuddhanana continued his classes on Katopanishad.

We have started talks on Bhagavan’s Saddarsham by an eminent speaker Shri Shankarnarayanan. It is drawing a large audience.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Nov 5 th , 19 th & Dec 31 st	Shri Shankarnarayanan	Saddarshanam
Nov 12 th & Dec 10 th	Swami Prabhuddhananda	Katopanishad
Nov 26 th & Dec 24 th	Swami Durgeshananda	Atmabodha
Dec 17 th	Shri P N Vijay	Bhagavad Gita Ch VI
Dec 3 rd	Karthigai Deepam Festival	
Dec 30 th	Bhagavan’s Jayanti celebrations	

Other discourses hosted at the Kendra:

Swami Prabhuddhanda continues his daily (except on Saturdays) morning discourse on various scriptures.



Season of Festivities

Tuktuk Ghosh

There is a popular Bengali saying that there are 13 Festivals in 12 months of the year. This memorably underscores their deep significance in our lives. The country's major festive season has just gone by, encompassing Navratra, Durga Puja, Diwali, Bhai Dooj and Chatth Puja. While festivals are occasions for communities to celebrate and are anchored to particular mythologies, beliefs, rituals and practices, of late there is a discernable trend to focus on displays of ostentation and identity assertiveness through them. This has given rise to legal interventions referred to as "management of celebrations" in deference to larger public, primarily environment-related, interests; like the recent ban on the sale of crackers in the NCR by the Supreme Court taking into account last year's deadly pollution levels during Diwali. Apart from

the important implementation and livelihood associated issues of the order, which were expected to cause some concern, there were also attempts to give it a communal spin.

Without either being completely dismissive of these conspiracy theories or unduly self-righteous, it would be useful for religious and spiritual organizations, to provide much needed leadership and use the order as a window of opportunity for introspection, while retaining their core vision of spiritual growth and self-realization. To my mind, this would also be in perfect sync with the teachings of Sri Ramana, suitably adapted to our prevailing context. Instead of endorsing a meditative life of celibate asceticism, Sri Ramana advised his devotees that it would be spiritually more productive for them to discharge their duties and obligations with heightened levels

of awareness.

When we are confronted with charlatans, fake godmen-cum-commen duping millions so easily, it becomes all the more important for credible organizations to take on the mantle of serious change-agents. Down the ages, it has been observed that religions and belief-systems have to evolve. The change that comes from within is the most durable and sustainable, not one that is foisted by laws or orders.

History is witness to Buddhism and Jainism branching off on independent courses as a reaction to what was experienced as being a deviation from the core Hindu beliefs. The Bhakti movement in medieval times and the religious reforms in colonial times, were part of the same process of renewal and recharging. The fanatical fringe of Islam which masquerades today as “true” Islam would not have reigned supreme had there been reflection by religious and spiritual authorities on the destructive potential of its millennial trajectory.

More than religiosity and

spirituality, the present trends emphasize the outward forms and assertions of identity. This is unfortunate both in the short-term and in the long term. The divisiveness, hate and misunderstanding that it breeds can do no good. Rationalism has to be given its space and cannot be sacrificed in the name of religious freedom. We cannot turn unquestioning, rabid or dominants for it is clearly against our long, cherished civilizational ethos. Incidentally, this ties in with the thesis of this year’s Nobel Prize winner for Economics, Richard Thayer who has popularized the idea of “nudging” people towards doing what was best for them, building a bridge between economics and psychology, rational markets and human nature.

In the backdrop of this Season of Festivities, the nudge towards addressing holistically contemporary societal and environmental concerns should receive top priority. ■

Shiva Arunachalaya!

Shiva Arunachalaya!

Shiva Arunachalaya!

[e-mail: tghoshk@gmail.com]



Guru ki Maseet

Neera Kashyap

About 45 kms beyond Gurdaspur in Punjab is a small town, Hargobindpur. Tucked away on a side street in a residential area is a masjid that boasts an unusual genesis: it was built for Muslims by the sixth Sikh guru, Guru Hargobind Singh in the 17th century. While the space was built for prayers and namaz on the request of local Muslims who lacked the capacity to build such a space, the Guru's proviso was that it would be controlled and maintained by Sikh devotees themselves. This purpose of worship was served for nearly four hundred years till the violence and bloodshed unleashed at the time of Independence led resident Muslims to flee to the other side of the border.

The masjid lay abandoned between 1947 and 1970, sometime during which its upkeep was taken over by a group of Nihang Sikhs. In 1997,

a survey team from the Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative (CRCI) recognized the value of this masjid or *maseet* (as termed by the Sikhs) and planned its restoration in 2000 under the UNESCO and UNDP-UNV's 'Culture of peace' program, with additional financial support from the US-based Sikh Foundation. The restoration work concluded in 2004. A small group of us heritage enthusiasts visited this site in early September this year under the aegis of Herithart, a not-for-profit trust specializing in heritage guided tours. As a structure, I found the maseet in a curious state of part maintenance, part neglect. The outer walls and gateway were discolored with algae, the thin *lakhauri* tiles exposed beneath the broken lime plaster and paint, the garden overgrown, the well in neglect. The inside still retained its calmness, the *mihrab* and old tiles with floral motifs vivid still, despite

flaking sections. The Urdu verses in praise of Allah still visible.

In our current time of communal discontent, it may be worth going into the history of the *maseet* and the vision of religious harmony that lay behind its construction. Sri Hargobindpur was known as Rohilla, once the capital of the Ramgarhia Misl, an Indo-Aryan tribe of Punjab. The town was founded by the Sikhs in 1595 and named Hargobindpur after the birth of Hargobind, the fifth guru Guru Arjan Dev's son in the same year. It may be worth recalling that it was Guru Arjan Dev's savage torture and subsequent death at the hands of the Mughal emperor Jahangir that turned the Sikhs - a reconciliatory and reform-oriented community - to militancy that carried them into bitter battles with Mughal and other Islamic forces for over 150 years.

According to Patwant Singh, author of the book, 'The Sikhs', the parting message of Guru Arjan Dev to his son Hargobind was to 'sit fully armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability.' Hargobind was only eleven when he succeeded his father in 1606. Writes Singh in his book, "The task before him of canalizing the burning rage of

the Sikhs into a formidable military community was daunting. But he rose to it. He sent far and wide for the finest horses and weapons, and started intensive training camps for swordsmanship, archery and physical endurance. These were now seen as an integral part of Sikh ideals, since skills and valor in combat were necessary if the religion was to be saved from those wanting to destroy it. Out of this awareness emerged Hargobind's concept of *meeri* and *peeri*, meaning equal time for temporal (*meeri*) and spiritual (*peeri*) matters."

History records how Hargobind Singh had to take recourse to both *meeri* and *peeri* to resolve issues in Hargobindpur itself. The Guru and his devotees had come to this town overlooking the broad banks of the River Beas to spend *chaumasa* or the four monsoon months. Bhagwan Das Khatri, a moneylender, took up cudgels with the Guru who wished to construct a building on a stretch of barren land, and attacked his camp with armed men. Khatri was killed in the fight. The official owner of the land, Chandu Shah, a minister in the Mughal court sought the support of Abdullah Khan, the Mughal *Faujdar* of Jalandhar. A



battle was fought for two days on the banks of the river between Abdullah Khan's large contingent of troops and Hargobind Singh's army. Despite grievous losses on both sides, the Guru's army was victorious. This gave him the leverage to construct

a new town here complete with walls and gates for fortification. It is believed that Visvakarma, the architect of the gods himself descended to plan and build this city putting it in the same league as the city of Indraprastha!

Before Hargobind's time, the Sikh places of congregation were known by many names - *dharamsala*, *dharam mandir* etc. - where people with similar spiritual and social concerns would meet. It is Hargobind's legacy that for the first time the *gurdwara* or the Sikh house of piety and prayer became the Sikh place of worship, an enduring symbol of the Sikh faith. In Hargobindpur, the Sikhs constructed a *gurdwara* for themselves. Hargobind's army and community also included Hindus and Muslims. The *peeri* aspect of his governance became apparent when he saw Muslim faqirs in the same light as he saw Hindu sadhus. Through a confluence of *gurumat* (guru's wisdom) and *sangat* (community involvement), he sought suggestions as to what could be done for the Muslims who did not have the resources to build a mosque for themselves as the Sikhs did a *gurdwara*. The community suggested building a *serai* or a *baoli*. The Guru considered these but suggested that the Sikhs themselves build a mosque for the Muslims as a prayer space. The logic: built by the Sikhs under the informed grace of Lord Visvakarma, no Hindu nor

Sikh would ever destroy it. And no Muslim would destroy a mosque! So the *maseet* was built here by the Sikhs for the Muslims and cared for by the Sikhs. Namaz was read here for nearly 400 years.

When the *maseet* lay abandoned after Independence for 23 years, the care of the site was taken up by Nihangs sent by Baba Kirtan Singh, chief of the Taruna Dal, from his base in Bakala some 20 kms away. They looked after the mosque, kept the Guru Granth Sahib there and read from its verses. A *Nishan Sahib* (a staff bearing the Sikh standard) was erected outside. We noticed in front of the central *mihrab* in the *maseet* a raised platform bearing a silver pillared temple frame with woven silk cloth pieces covering its bed and sides.

The restoration work by CRCI began in 2000 and was completed in 2004. As the land around the *maseet* had risen over the years, the building had to be excavated and cleared of debris and vegetation. The people of the town and neighboring regions, including hundreds of school children, responded to CRCI's appeal to perform *seva* by helping clear the earth around the shrine. This helped

to re-establish links between the site, its history and the town's citizens with a special project initiated in local schools to connect children with the history of Hargobindpur. Instead of bringing in a skilled force from outside, laborers were trained in the techniques required to work on the structure. Local visitors were made welcome at the site. This made the work transparent to the community and also introduced it to Balwant Singh, the Nihang caretaker here since 1984, erasing some of the mistrust the presence of the Nihangs had engendered. Since the population connecting with the *maseet* was entirely non-Muslim with very few residents having memories of its use as a mosque, the Sikh and Hindu residents saw it as a sacred legacy of the Guru, the project inadvertently eclipsing the Islamic dimension of the structure with its multi-layered socio-cultural-religious aspects.

The publicity around the restoration caught the attention of the Punjab Waqf Board, the legal owner of Muslim religious endowments. The Board and other concerned Muslims raised objections to the Sikh usage of the site. Waqf board representatives visited the site.

The police were called in to record the statements of CRCI members and locals on the mosque's history and status. The situation became tense and a site dedicated to communal co-existence ran the risk of degenerating into the site of yet another communal conflict. Realizing their mistake in excluding the Waqf Board as legal owners and Muslims in the conservation effort, CRCI and the Sri Hargobindpur community leaders began the arduous process of bridging breaches between the concerned communities. A new structure was built near the *maseet* and the Guru Granth Sahib housed in it. Various political and religious leaders across the board were invited to visit the mosque. Since the Nihangs wished to continue their *seva* at the mosque and the Waqf Board wished to reestablish its proprietary rights, a meeting took place on February 8, 2001 between Dr Mohammad Riz-wanul Haque, Secretary of the Central Waqf Council and Baba Kirtan Singh, head of the Nihang Taruna Dal to determine the future of Guru ki *maseet*.

American scholar Anna Bigelow, a doctorate in religious studies from the University of California, then in India to study the subject of

shared sacred sites and interreligious relations described this meeting in The Tribune: "As the light in the *gurdwara* grew golden.....the two men sat facing each other on simple string *charpoys* to discuss their shared interests in a masjid built by a Sikh leader. It was like observing master weavers at work as they interlaced two of the many threads that make up the rich tapestry of India's religious and cultural fabric. Dr Haque leant forward, listening raptly in order to make out the wavering but urgent voice of the elderly Sikh." After several drafts the final memorandum of understanding, written both in Gurmukhi and English, was signed by the two leaders in November 2001. It incorporated the concerns of the Nihangs who wished to continue their *seva* at the mosque and of the Waqf Board which wished to reestablish its proprietary rights over the structure.

Writes Bigelow, "The MoU was formally celebrated with a ceremony on April 23, 2002 when *namaz* was performed for the first time since 1947 at the Guru ki Maseet. The imam of the Jama Masjid came, and a representative group of Muslims

prayed together in front of the building surrounded by the Nihangs and community members."

Since no further prayers were offered by the Muslims thereafter, though Muslim groups did visit sporadically, the old lone *sevak* and caretaker Balwant Singh found it difficult to clean and organise the premises of both the maseet and the Guru Granth Sahib, so he moved the Sikh holy book back into the *maseet*.

After the renovations thirteen years ago, the premises have fallen into neglect again. The conservation and landscaping was funded for a while by the Ministry of Tourism but has gone back to the Nihangs again. This is a pity for this space needs proper funds for architectural and landscape conservation and care. In Bigelow's words, "This story illuminates the production, conversion, reconversion and ultimate transformation of a contested space into a unifying structure." ■

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-- -With inputs from Neel Dogra, founder Herithart, <https://www.facebook.com/herithart/>



Tirukkural- The Tamil Veda

P.N.Vijay

In the part II of this series, we studied some of the interesting verses of the first five chapters of the First Book of the Kural known as Arathupal or Book on Dharma. We will continue with the next few chapters.

Bk I : VI – Virtues of a Good Wife

The Sixth Chapter is on the Virtues of a Good Wife. In the third verse Valluvar says

*Illadhen illaval maanpaanaal
ulladhen*

Illaval maanaak kadai?

If a wife is eminent in virtue what is it that man does not possess?

If she has no excellence what does he really possess?

*Tharkaathu tharkondaar peni
thakagaisaandra*

Chorkaathuch sorvilaal penn

An ideal wife not only protects

her virtues but tirelessly cares for her husband

And takes care of family traditions with pride.

Bk I.VII- Joy of Parenting

The next chapter deals with the Joy of Parenting and is most lyrical.

*Amizhdinum aatra enidhetham
makkal*

Sirugai alaaviya koozh.

To the doting parents the soup in which the child has dabbled its little hand

Is sweeter than the ambrosia of the Gods in heaven.

*Kuzhalinidhu yaazhinidhu enbar
tham makkal*

Mazhalai chol keladavar

Only they will praise the melody of a flute or a harp

Who have not heard the melody of

their baby's babbling.

Bk I Section VIII- Value of Love

Having dealt with love of the wife and children, the Saint now dwells on the value of love itself. Here are one or two of the gems.

Anpilaar Ellaam Thamakkuriyar Anputaiyaar

Enpum Uriyar Pirarkku

Those who are devoid of love appropriate all they have to themselves; but those who possess love consider even their bones to belong to others.

Enpi Ladhanai Veyilpola Kaayume

Anpi Ladhanai Aram

The Lord will burn up the soul which is without love, even like the sun burns up the creature which is without bone(ie worms).

Anpin Vazhiyadhu Uyirnilai Aqdhilaarkku

Enpudhol Porththa Utampu

That body alone which is inspired with love contains a living soul: if void of it, the body is just a collection of bone overlaid with skin.

Bk I Ch IX : Hospitality towards guests

This is a beautiful chapter which

the Saint plants in the middle of the virtues of a householder illustrating how important it is to be a Good Samaritan.

Irundhompi Ilvaazhva Thellaam Virundhompi

Velaanmai Seydhar Poruttu

The very purpose of creating wealth and leading a family life, is to be able to be hospitable to guests.

Akanamarndhu Seyyaal Uraiyum Mukanamarndhu

Nalvirundhu Ombuvaan

The Goddess of wealth will reside happily in the house of a person who entertains all guests with a smile.

Selvirundhu Ombi Varuvirundhu Paarththiruppaan

Nalvarundhu Vaanath Thavarkku

One who is hospitable to his guests and on their departure awaits the next one is the honoured guest of the Gods in Heaven.

Bk I Ch X Soft Spokenness

This chapter is full of advice on why being soft spoken is an important virtue for any person in his spiritual journey.

Mukaththaan Amarnthuinaidhu Nokki Akaththanaam

Inso Linadhe Aram

The kindly look, the beatific smile and the soft word are the true signs of a man of wisdom.

Insol Inidheendral Kaanpaan Evankolo

Vansol Vazhangu Vadhu?

When a person sees the happiness that his sweet words bring to others why does he prefer harsh words?

Iniya Ulavaaka Innaadha Kooral Kaniiruppak Kaaikavarn Thatru

To be nasty when you can use sweet words is like eating unripe fruits when you can eat ripe ones.

Bk I Ch XI – Gratitude

Having discussed the virtues of Hospitality and Soft Spokenness the great Saint now turns his attention to another cardinal virtue namely Gratitude.

Payandhookkaar Seydha Udhavi Nayandhookkin

Nanmai Katalin Peridhu

If we analyse the impact of a deed done without any expectation of reward it is bigger than the mightiest ocean.

Payandhookkaar Seydha Udhavi Nayandhookkin

Nanmai Katalin Peridhu

The wise man is he who remembers with gratitude the help given by another not for this birth alone but for seven births.

Nandri Marappadhu Nandrاندru Nandralladhu

Andre Marappadhu Nandru

Forget that very moment the harm done by another to you; but remember all through your life the help he rendered to you.

Kondranna Innaa Seyinum Avarseydha

Ondrunandru Ullak Ketum

Even the murder committed by a person is forgiven if only he does a favour to a needy without expecting any reward.

Ennandri Kondraarkkum Uyvuntaam Uyvillai

Seynandri Kondra Makarku

There is a salvation for every crime but not for the crime of ingratitude

Bk I Ch XII- Fairplay

The Saint considers Fairplay as an important virtue in the dealings of a householder and gives several pointers on why that is so. This is very relevant in this day and age.

Thagudhi Enondru Nanre

Paghdhiyaar

Paarpap Ozhiyap Perin

Neutrality is a virtue only when it is practised unflinchingly with friend, foe and stranger.

*Nanre Tharinum Naduvigandham
Aakkathai*

Anre Ozhiya Vidal

Even if some gain comes by being unfair in your dealings one should desist from that temptation.

*Kedum Perukkamum Illalla
Nenjathu*

Kodaamai Sandrork Ani

Ups and downs are inevitable in a person's life but true virtue consists in being fair in one's dealings in both situations.

In Kambaramayanam Kamban recalls these words from Thirukural when describing Lord Rama on the day he had to leave Ayodhya. Kamban says that like a true student of the great Thirukkural Rama was a portrait of a full blown lotus forever serene and perfect.

*Saman Saidu Seerdookum Kolpol
Amaindhoruppar*

Kodamai Sandrorkani

Like a Balance scale that weighs

things with absolute rectitude, a man of rectitude shows absolute dispassion in all that his actions.

Bk I Ch XIII- Self-Restraint

Having talked about Fairplay and Gratitude the Saint now turns his attention on another important quality that a man has to possess and that is Self-Restraint.

*Tahgudhi Enavondru Nandre
Paghudhiyal*

Paarpap Ozhiyap Perin

Practising self-restraint will give a man a place among the Gods; lack of it will land him in utter ruin.

*Sollarkum Nandram Panidhal
Avarullum*

Selvarke Selvam Thagaithuu

Self-restraint and humility are virtues for all but for the wealthy it is more important than their wealth itself.

*Yakavaar Ayinum Nakakka
Kaavakal*

Sokappap Sollizhukkap Pattu

Whatever one is unable to control, one should control one's tongue; otherwise one's own words will lead him to total ruin. ■

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Law of Action & Result

M R Kodhandaram

This is the greatest law of nature. We are born with a load on our soul in the form of *karmas* which we have formed over a number of janmas in the past. Out of this load, nature selects some for exhaustion in this *janma*. This is known as the *Prarabdha karma*. The balance of *karma* that is kept in the reserve is known as the *Sanchita karma*. The *karmas* we add in this birth are known as the *Agami karma* which are added to the total stock of *Sanchita karma*. *Vasanas* are the seeds and *karmas* are the fruits of the tree of life. 'As we sow, so we reap' is the essence of this Law of Karma or the Law of Action and Result. Our whole life is only a process of exhaustion of our *prarabdha*. These *vasanas* are like impressions on a film. Our soul in its natural state is pure and devoid of all *vasanas*. Therefore, it tries to shake off these imprints as it considers them to be foreign to it. For instance, if bacteria or virus enters our body, the body tries to destroy them by

raising the body temperature so as to burn them off, as it considers these to be foreign to it. Take another example: If you hold a handkerchief on two of its edges in the open air, it will flutter freely like a flag. Now tie a knot to it and it will no longer be able to flutter anymore. Only by removing the knot will it be able to flutter again. Our *karmas* are like the knots we have put on our soul. Unless we remove them, our soul cannot fly freely to freedom at the end of our life.

Thus, we should learn to untie all the knots we have formed on our soul and ensure that we don't form fresh ones. For this, we should lead a life of purity in thought, word and deed so as not to form fresh *karmas*. We should realise and remember that whatever we do in life will come back to us later on as pain or pleasure. We have to experience the fruits of all our actions willy-nilly. Good actions lead to happiness and bad actions lead to misery. Good actions done in the present helps us to see

through the bad *karmas* of the past. We do not know what bad *karmas* are in store for us. Therefore, without wasting our time if we engage in doing what is good and beneficial not only for us but also for others, it will help us to progress fast in life. Bhagavan Ramana says in *Upadesa Saram* (IStanza 3 – *Ishwaraapitam...*) that selfless actions or *nishkama karma* done as an offering to God will purify our mind and show us the path to Liberation.

Troubles and difficulties are common in life and there is no point in crying over them. We can only pray to God to give us the strength to face all adverse situations with courage and fortitude and to give us the wisdom to lead a life of merit and purpose. All the riches we earn and all our near and dear ones will not accompany us when it is time for us leave this world. Only the merits and demerits earned by us would accompany us in the form of good and bad *karmas*. Therefore, what is the point in wasting all of one's life in earning that which is only temporary? Through all that is temporary how can we obtain permanent happiness? Therefore, we have to strive to seek that which is permanent in this world of constant change.

When we are leading a happy life, we do not realise that it is only

a product of our good deeds done in the past births fructifying now. How long will this joy ride last? It will last only till the good *karmas* are there in our account. If we don't do anything in this birth to sustain it, they will end one day as everything will pass away. Nothing lasts forever. If we are sitting pretty thinking we don't have to do anything good in life, but just enjoy our present good life without having to worry about the future, then we are surely in for trouble when the merits exhaust themselves. There is a nice story in the life of the Buddha: Buddha and his disciples had the habit of going out for *bhiksha* daily. They are not beggars but would go with their begging bowl in the middle of the street. Those who feel like offering food would voluntarily come and drop food in their bowl and get the blessings of these monks. There was a very wise lady by the name Visakha. She was a devotee of the Buddha and a housewife in a rich family and had a desire to feed the Great One. But she did not have the freedom to offer food as her father-in-law would not allow her to give food to the monks as he had a low opinion of them. So, every day she used to feel bad that she could not earn any merit in life by feeding these monks. One day she gathered courage to go out and tell

the Lord that she could not feed them as they were eating only stale food in the house daily. Hearing her comments, the Buddha went away smilingly in understanding of her predicament. Her father-in-law was much incensed by her comments made publicly in the middle of the street. As he was a rich man, his ego was much hurt by her utterance. He was in fact used to eating daily a very tasty fare with many varieties made by her daughter-in-law who was a very good cook. In anger he asked her to go back to her parent's house as she had lowered the dignity of the family in public. But the daughter-in-law was not to be cowed down by his comments and wanted to prove her innocence in front of the town Panchayat. Thus, the panchayat was called for a meeting to adjudicate on the matter. In the meeting she admitted that she had indeed spoken those words to the Buddha but they were not to be taken literally as they were code words known only to enlightened people. She explained the meaning of the words she had used. "Stale food" meant food that was being enjoyed by them due to merits of the past. She told the audience that they were enjoying good food and comforts due to the good *karmas* of the past births and not due to any merits earned in this birth.

She told the people that such a good life would not last for long unless it is supported by good deeds done in the present life. They had not done any charity to the poor or fed any monk or saint in this life. Therefore, she had devised a plan to open the eyes of her father-in-law who was just enjoying life without knowing that it would all come to an end sooner or later. Hearing her explanation, the whole audience clapped in joy and admiration. Even Visakha's father-in-law joined the clapping as his eyes had been opened. He gave the keys of the money chest in the house to her and told her that she had total freedom to use it as she deemed fit. In the evening, the whole family went and invited the Buddha and his disciples for lunch the next day where they were all fed sumptuously to the satisfaction of Visakha.

Therefore, make haste to do good deeds in life as we do not know what awaits us and it may be too late if we waste the present moment. The time is short and the road is long. Blessed are those who have understood the value of leading a noble and virtuous life. For them, the Royal Path is easy to follow and they are the ones who will reach their Supreme destination in a short time. ■

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Poems by Allama Prabhu

Look here,
the legs are two wheels;
the body is a wagon
full of things
Five men drive
the wagon
and one man is not
like another.
Unless you ride it
in full knowledge of its ways
the axle
will break
O Lord of Caves

Translated by Ramanujan

I saw
The fragrance fleeing
When the bee came,
What a wonder!
I saw
Intellect fleeing
When the heart came.
I saw
The temple fleeing
When God came.

Translated by Shiva Prakash

Allama Prabhu was a mystic-saint and Vachana poet of the Kannada language in the 12th century. He is among the "Trinity of Lingayatism" – along with Basavanna, the founder of the movement, and Akka Mahadevi. Lingayata means "Devotees of the God Parama-Shiva or Lingadeva".



Aksharamanamalai Part 6

32

*Su/dusey/den/nai So/diya/dini/yun
Jo/diyu/ruk/katt' Aruna/chala.*

O Arunachala! Without deceiving me and testing me anymore, show me thy luminous form.

God is the wielder of maya, the power of illusion. It is as governed by this power that the soul moves in the tract of transmigration. The Bhagavad Gita says: God resides in the heart of every being and by His maya whirls them all, as though set on a machine. In Him alone seek refuge with all thy heart; by His grace will you attain the eternal state of supreme peace. (Chapter XVIII, verses 61-62) Thus, the soul that is deluded by maya can be saved only by His grace. The devotee-soul that pants for divine grace appeals to the Lord to reveal His luminous form — the form that He showed to Brahma and Vishnu which even they were unable to measure or fathom. If even the celestials failed, how can

the poor terrestrial soul succeed in passing the test. So, let not the Lord try her and find her wanting. His duty is simple and clear. He must save the devotee-soul by appearing before her as the Self-luminous Light.

33

*Sep/padi/vid/dhaikatRip/padi/
mayak/kuvit*

*Turup/padu/viddhai/katt' Aruna/
chala.*

O Arunachala! Reveal the science of perfection so that I may cease from deluding the world through learning the art of jugglery. The power of *maya* is marvellous. It makes apparently possible what is in truth impossible. So it is, that maya is compared to magic. Within this cosmic magic, so many minor feats of magic are performed by ingenious man. He deludes himself as well as others. Believing that the world of plurality is real, he manipulates it and imagines that he has the power to work wonders. Not being satisfied

with the miracles of science and empirical life, he sometimes seeks supernatural powers (siddhis). But no lasting good is to be gained by all such methods which only draw the soul away from her goal, and drag her into delusion all the more.

So, the devotee here, asks Arunachala to impart to her the knowledge of that technique which will make her perfect. This is the higher knowledge (paravidya) by means of which the Supreme Self is realized.

34

*Se/ra/yenin/mey Ni/ra/yuru/hikkan
Ni/rat/razhi/ven Aruna/chala.*

O Arunachala! If thou dost not join me, my body will melt away, my eyes shed tears profusely, and I shall be destroyed.

The devotee-soul who has chosen Arunachala as her Lord pines for Him. If He will not respond, life will become insipid for her, and will not be worth living. In the world, people are prepared to die for worthless things such as wealth and fame. Who dies for God? The devotee's love of God is more intense than that of the worldling for the things of the world. Naturally, she feels that she must either get wedded to her Lord

or perish. Of what use is the body if it does not serve as the locus of spiritual aspiration and progress? To live in a perpetual disconsolate state is worse than not to live. The devotee-soul gives expression to her inner wretched condition caused by the delay in the Lord's response to her loving appeal, and cries out that she is sure to be destroyed through emaciation and grief if the Lord did not come and save her in time.

35

*Chai/yenat/tal/lir Sey/vinai/sudu/
malal*

Uy/vahai/ye/durai Aruna/chala.

O Arunachala! If Thou dost spurn me and reject me, my prarabdha will burn me. How then can I be saved, please tell me!

How can the Lord reject the appeal for succour made by the devotee-soul? If He rejects, what is to happen to her? The alternative is dreadful even to think of. There would be certain destruction for her. Destruction need not come from any source outside. Her own prarabdha would torment her. Prarabdha is that portion of the unspent deeds of the past that is responsible for the present birth. If God whose mercy is abundant does not come and save the soul, what is

to be blamed except prarabdha? But, can prarabdha offset the flow of God's grace? In the case of Markandeya did the Lord not ward off death itself, and thus alter the so called unalterable fate? There is nothing impossible for the Lord. He can offer no excuses. If He will not save the soul, who will save her?

36

*Solla/du/soli/ni Sol/lara/nil/lendru
Sum/ma/virun/day Aruna/chala.*

O Arunachala! Saying without saying, stay without speech, Thou didst stay quiet.

In the previous verse, the devotee-soul implored the Lord with these words, 'How can I be saved, please tell me!' Here the answer is revealed to her in silence. The devotee gives expression to this in the present verse.

Silence, not speech, is the means to get saved. Although speech and thought are required upto a stage, beyond that they are of no use. The Supreme Reality is beyond the realm of speech and thought. No word and no concept are adequate to express it. So, the real teaching about it is in silence. The Lord as Dakshinamurti adopts silence as the mode of communication with His disciples. Maunopadesa was

the characteristic method of Bhagavan Ramana's teaching. There is not much point in the guru imploring the sishya to keep silent. The message of silence cannot be effectively imparted in speech. Hence, what the guru does is to say without saying. That is, he shows by example, the efficacy of silence; he makes silence eloquent. He remains quiet, not simply by not opening his mouth, but quiet in the deeper sense of the term, transcending all sense of duality. When there is duality, there will be speech, if not vocal, mental. The supreme teaching is that there is no duality. That is true silence.

37

*Som/biyay/chum/ma Sukha/mun/
duran/gidil
Sol/ve/ren/gati Aruna/chala.*

O Arunachala! Without doing anything, remaining quiet, if I enjoy happiness and sleep, which is the way other than this? Please tell me.

The Lord Himself has shown the way to perfection. It is silence which is freedom from the sense of duality. Where there is duality, there is disquiet, there is suffering. In the states of waking and dream where there is duality, one suffers even when there is apparent enjoyment. In deep

sleep there is no duality, hence no suffering. The experience of unmixed happiness in sleep is evidenced by the fact that the one who gets up from sleep says, 'I slept happily; I did not know anything'. This does not mean, however, that the ideal state for one is to go to sleep. Sloth and slumber are not the characteristics of the native state of the Self. Sleep is not sakshatkara. It is true that in sleep, there is no duality and no misery; but there is still in that state the root of all misery, viz. ignorance. In order to distinguish the true transcendent state of the Self from its three empirical states of waking, dream and sleep, it is designated as turiya (the fourth). The turiya, however, is not the fourth in addition to, or succeeding, the three states. It indicates the eternal and basic nature of the Self. Giving an account of the turiya, Gaudapada declares: 'In the turiya there is no trace of ignorance; it is the light of intelligence that never fails. In it there is neither dream nor non-knowledge. It is Pure Consciousness which is the nondual and Self-luminous reality.'

The turiya is the supreme goal. It is described as waking sleep (jagrat-sushupti) or sleeping without sleeping (tungamal tunguvadu). Bhagavan Ramana teaches in this stanza that

to realize the turiya should be the objective of the devotee-soul. Another meaning of this stanza is: 'If I sleep away in torpor and the bliss of ignorance, what means of salvation is there for me?'

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Sau/riyan/gat/tinai

Chazhak/katra/den/dre

Chali/ya/dirun/day

Aruna/chala.

O Arunachala! Thou didst show Thy prowess; and as ignorance was destroyed, Thou hast remained without moving.

The prowess of Arunachala lies in His nature as the Self-effulgent sun of knowledge. In His presence there cannot be the darkness of ignorance. When He rises in our hearts, the ignorance located there is dispelled. Just as there is no real rising or setting of the sun, and only we turn towards or away from it, there is no movement for the Supreme Spirit. We imagine that He is away from us or comes into us. But when we realize that He is Arunachala, the Hill of Light that never moves, we get rid of the blinding darkness of delusion. ■

Source TMP Mahadevan's Book Arunachala Siva Aksharamanamalai



श्री रमण महर्षि के संस्मरण

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स्वामी चिन्मयानंद (बालकृष्ण मेनोन), चिन्मय मिशन के संस्थापक थे।

हाई स्कूल की परीक्षाएँ समाप्त हो गई थी। मैं रेलवे के पेकेज टिकट पर दक्षिण भारत की यात्रा कर रहा था। गाड़ी ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में से धीमी गति से निकल रही थी। तभी मेरे डिब्बे के अधिकांश यात्री अचानक खिड़की के बाहर झाँकने लगे और दूर दिखाई देते एक भव्य मंदिर की ओर हाथ जोड़ने लगे। पूछने पर मुझे ज्ञात हुआ कि वह तिरुवण्णामलै का प्रसिद्ध शिव मंदिर था। (परिशिष्ट 1)

इसके पश्चात् मेरे सहयात्री, रमण महर्षि के विषय में बात करने लगे, जिनका आश्रम भी इसी जगह स्थित है। महर्षि शब्द सुनकर मेरे मन में पुरातन दिव्य ऋषियों और उनके आश्रमों की कल्पना आने लगी। यद्यपि उस समय मैं पक्का नास्तिक था, तथापि मुझमें महर्षि के आश्रम की यात्रा करने की गहरी उत्सुकता जगी। मैंने आश्रम जाने का निश्चय कर लिया।

आश्रम पहुँचने पर मुझे बताया गया कि महर्षि कक्ष में हैं। मैंने प्रवेश किया तो देखा कि सोफे पर एक वृद्ध व्यक्ति, मात्र कौपीन पहने, एक गोल तकिए के सहारे बैठे हैं। मैं उनके निकट ही भूमि पर बैठ गया। महर्षि ने अचानक आँखें खोली और सीधे मेरी आँखों में देखा। मैंने उनकी आँखों में देखा। मुझे लगा कि उसी एक क्षण में महर्षि मेरे भीतर की गहराई में झाँक रहे थे, और मुझे निश्चय हो गया कि उन्होंने मेरे छिछलापन, उलझन, अविश्वास, अधूरापन और भय सब देख लिया है।

उस थोड़े से समय में क्या हुआ, मैं उसे नहीं समझा सकता। मुझे प्रतीत हुआ कि मैं खुल गया हूँ, धुल गया हूँ, खाली हो गया हूँ, और मेरे घाव भर गए हैं। उलझनों का चक्रवात और मेरी नास्तिकता समाप्त हो गई।

मेरी बुद्धि ने मुझे जकड़ लिया, और मैंने अपने आप से कहा, 'यह सब सम्मोहन है, मेरी मूर्खता है।' अपने को इस प्रकार आश्वस्त करके मैं कमरे के बाहर आ गया। किंतु जो लड़का उस कक्ष से निकला वह उससे भिन्न था, जो दस मिनट पहले भीतर गया था।

मेरे कॉलेज के दिनों में, मेरे राजनीतिक कार्यों के समय में, और बाद में उत्तरकाशी में अपने गुरु तपोवन महाराज के चरणों में वर्षों रहने के पश्चात् जो मैंने पाया वह मुझे कई वर्ष पूर्व तिरुवण्णामलै के महर्षि ने एक दृष्टि में दे दिया था।

1982 में एक गोष्ठी में स्वामी चिन्मयानंद ने कहा:

श्री रमण महर्षि कोई चर्चा का विषय नहीं हैं। वे एक अनुभव हैं, वे चेतना की एक अवस्था हैं। महर्षि सर्वोच्च सत्य थे, और संसार के सारे शास्त्रों का सारांश थे। ज्ञानी कैसे पूर्ण वैराग्य से जीता है, उसका वे एक प्रकट और अनावृत उदाहरण थे। वे मर्त्य शरीर में, अनंत की सुंदरता और पवित्रता बन कर जिएँ।

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स्वामी मुक्तानंद, मुंबई के पास प्रसिद्ध गणेशपुरी आश्रम के संस्थापक थे।

महर्षि मात्र कौपीन पहने सोफे पर बैठे होते थे, किंतु फिर भी किसी जरी के वस्त्र और अलंकार से युक्त राजकुमार से अधिक भव्य लगते थे, क्योंकि जैसा मेरे पूज्यनीय गुरु स्वामी नित्यानंद जी कहते थे, महर्षि देहभाव से परे थे, उनमें अपने शरीर के प्रति सर्वथा असंग भाव था। वे तीनों गुणों (सत-रज-तम) और द्वंद्वों से बाहर जा चुके थे।

महर्षि शरीर के सुख—दुख के स्तर से बहुत ऊपर थे, जो स्तर हम मनुष्यों के लिए अप्राप्य है। उनके अनुसार आत्म—साक्षात्कार सबसे अधिक महत्त्वपूर्ण था। वे आत्मा पर ध्यान लगाने का तथा उसे जानने का परामर्श देते थे। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि वेदांत के अनुसार व्यक्ति की 'निजात्मा' के अतिरिक्त और कुछ भी जानने, सुनने और देखने योग्य नहीं है।

महर्षि द्वारा दिखाया सत्य की खोज का मार्ग लंबे समय तक सबके लिए सुलभ रहेगा, क्योंकि उन्होंने उस परम सत्य की घोषणा की जो सदैव और सब परिस्थितियों में अबाधित रहता है। उनका संदेश सबसे प्राचीन और कुछ लोगों को सबसे नया लगता है। वास्तव में वह पुरातन और नवीन दोनों है। महर्षि के अनुसार पुरातन और नूतन सभी वस्तुएँ एक ही शाश्वत सत्य की प्रशाखाएँ हैं।

जो महर्षि से प्रेम करते थे, उन्हें उनसे ज्ञान योग और भक्ति से प्राप्त होने वाले सच्चे परम सुख का वरदान मिला। वे सदा पूज्यनीय महात्मा हैं, परम श्रद्धेय और आराध्य हैं। मैं उन्हें वंदन करता हूँ।

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रमणदास सदानंद (शेषगिरी ऐय्यर) मद्रास में पी एस हाई स्कूल में अध्यापक थे। वे श्री रमण से पहली बार 1915 में मिले। 'रमण दशकम्' (तमिल) इनकी रचना है।

मैं वीरुपाक्ष गुफा में ज्ञान के जाज्वल्यमान सूर्य श्री रमण के समक्ष खड़ा था। इससे पूर्व ऐसे किसी धन्य पुरुष को कभी नहीं देखा था, इसलिए मैं अवाक् उन्हें देख रहा था। मैंने उन्हें प्रणाम किया और लालायित मन से उनकी मुझ पर लगी दृष्टि का अमृत पीता रहा। मुझे लगा कि मैं सुख—दुख के द्वंद्व से मुक्त हो गया हूँ; इस संसार के अनंत दुखों और कोलाहल से ऊपर उठ गया हूँ। महर्षि अपनी समीपता मात्र से शांति की किरणें बिखेर रहे थे, जिससे मेरा हृदय हर्ष से भर गया।

डॉक्टर रोगी का रोग मिटा सकता है। चिंतित व्यक्ति को मनोहारी, प्राकृतिक शोभा कुछ समय के लिए प्रसन्न कर सकती है, किंतु तिरुवण्णामलै के अतिरिक्त ऐसा दूसरा स्थान नहीं है जहाँ कोई व्यक्ति अपने सारे दुखों को भूलकर दिव्यता के राज्य में पहुँच जाता है। यह बात कोई कैसे जानेगा जिसने इस स्थिति का लाभ प्राप्त न किया हो।

एक बार जब मैंने महर्षि के चरणों पर नेत्र छुआकर प्रार्थना की वे मुझे माया के ध्वस्तकारी आक्रमणों से बचा लें, तब मुझे सर्व-रोग-हर औषधी मिल गई, जिसके लिए मैं तड़प रहा था। महर्षि के दिव्य वचन थे, “अपने आप से यह प्रश्न पूछो, जितनी बार समस्याएँ सामने आए, उतनी बार यह प्रश्न पूछो, ‘किसे इन आक्रमणों से जूझना पड़ रहा है?’ तुम वह शरीर नहीं हो जो एक दिन नष्ट हो जाएगा; तुम आनंद से परिपूर्ण आत्मा हो। कोई भी सांसारिक कष्ट तुम्हें कैसे प्रभावित कर सकता है। ?”

उनके अनुग्रह पूर्ण शब्दों ने जादू कर दिया। संताप के जिस बादल ने मुझे ढक रखा था, उससे मैं बाहर निकल आया। मेरी उदासी चली गई। ऐसा लगा जैसे दुख, संताप आदि से कभी किसी तरह की मेरी कोई पहचान ही नहीं थी। मेरा मन आनंद के सागर में डुबकी लगाने लगा।

एक दिन मैं स्कंदाश्रम की सीढ़ियों पर बैठा था। एक आदमी अपने परिवार सहित आया और द्वार से दूर ही रुक गया। हरिजन होने के कारण उसे भय था कि वह अंदर नहीं आ पाएगा। मैं महर्षि से पूछना चाहता था, किंतु संकोच हुआ। मैंने उन्हें जाने दिया। सारा परिवार अंदर जाकर अत्यंत श्रद्धा से महर्षि के पाँव पड़ा। मुझे भली प्रकार स्मरण है कि कैसे लगभग दस मिनट तक महर्षि की अनुकंपा भरी दृष्टि उन पर पड़ती रही। मैंने कितने ही धनवान और पदवीधारी व्यक्तियों को महर्षि के सामने प्रणाम करके, बिना उनकी अनुकंपा दृष्टि प्राप्त किए जाते देखा है।

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डॉ अनंत नारायण राव लंबे समय तक आश्रम की डिस्पेंसरी के मुख्य

चिकित्सक रहे।

सन् 1929 में एक मित्र ने मुझे महर्षि का एक चित्र दिया और बताया कि वे कहाँ रहते हैं। थोड़े समय बाद ही मैं नौकरी से अध्ययन अवकाश (Study leave) पर इंग्लैंड चला गया। वापस आकर अपने उत्तरदायित्वों के कारण मैं उस प्रसंग को भूल गया। 1932 में जब मुझे तिरुवण्णामलै जाना हुआ, तब अचानक मुझे महर्षि का ध्यान आया।

मैं श्री रमण के दर्शन के लिए गया। मैंने उनसे ध्यान लगाते समय जो समस्याएँ होती थी उनके विषय में पूछा। उनके उत्तर संक्षिप्त, स्पष्ट और उपयुक्त थे। मुझे उसी समय उनकी महानता का अनुभव हुआ। मेरी आश्रम की पहली यात्रा दो दिन में समाप्त हो गई। श्री रमण की मुस्कान और दीप्त नयनों का मुझ पर सम्मोहक प्रभाव पड़ा।

महर्षि सदैव जाग्रत होते थे, चाहे वे समाधि में ही हों। एक बार मैं उनके पास मल्हम की डिबिया लेकर गया। वे हल्के से खर्राटें ले रहे थे। मैं सोचने लगा कि डिबिया धीरे से रख दूँ या उनके जागने की प्रतीक्षा करूँ। उसी क्षण उन्होंने आँखें खोली, मुस्कुराए, और मुझसे पूछा कि मैं मल्हम की डिबिया दिए बिना प्रतीक्षा में क्यों खड़ा हूँ? मैंने कहा, “आप सो रहे थे और मैं आपकी नींद में विघ्न नहीं डालना चाहता था।” वे बोले कि तुमने कैसे मान लिया कि मैं सो रहा था? मैंने अस्पष्ट सा कोई उत्तर दिया और उन्हें डिबिया थमाकर कक्ष में भक्तों के बीच जाकर बैठ गया। महर्षि ने फिर से आँखें मींच ली और वैसे ही हल्के खर्राटे भरने लगे।

दिसंबर 1948 में जब मैं महर्षि के हाथ की मालिस कर रहा था, मुझे उनकी कोहनी के ऊपर एक छोटी सी गांठ महसूस हुई। जुलाई 1949 तक वह एक बड़ी गांठ बन गई और घाव भी हो गया। जब मैंने उनसे प्रार्थना की कि वे अपने को ठीक करने का संकल्प करें, तो वे मुस्कुराकर मौन हो गए। मैंने फिर से अपनी बात दोहराई। तब उन्होंने उत्तर दिया, “यहाँ मन ही नहीं इसलिए संकल्प का प्रश्न ही नहीं उठता।”

महर्षि के लिए शरीर और उसके कष्टों का कोई अस्तित्व नहीं था किसी

भी घाव को साफ करते हुए पीड़ा होना स्वाभाविक है, किंतु उन्हें कभी नहीं लगता था कि वे कोई पीड़ा सहन कर रहे हैं। वे अपने दाहिने हाथ से पट्टी बँधवाने में ऐसे सहयोग देते थे कि घाव वाली बाँह किसी और की है।

सन् 1949 में एक वार्तालाप के दौरान उन्होंने हमें बताया कि जब मनुष्य बहुत प्रसन्न होता है तब उसके आँसू बाह्य अपांग (Outer canthus) से निकलते हैं, और जब वह अत्यंत दुखी होता है तब उसके आँसू भीतरी अपांग (Inner canthus) से निकलते हैं। उनकी यह सही टिप्पणी सुनकर हमें बड़ा आश्चर्य हुआ।

महर्षि के महानिर्वाण की संध्या, 14 अप्रैल 1950, को मैं औरों के साथ छोटे से निर्वाण कक्ष में था। उन्होंने नेत्र बंद कर रखे थे और उनकी साँस हल्की पड़ती जा रही थी। कक्ष के बाहर बैठे सैकड़ों भक्तों ने उनका प्रिय भजन 'अरूणाचल शिव, अरूणाचल' गाना आरंभ किया। उन्होंने आँखें खोलीं। जिस दिशा से ध्वनि आ रही थी, उस दिशा में देखा, फिर आँखें बंद कर लीं। आँखों के बाहरी अपांग से झर-झर आँसू निकल पड़े। मुझे लगा कि वे 'एकमेव अनन्य' से मिलन के आनंद के अश्रु थे। उन्होंने बहुत ही शांति के साथ देह का त्याग कर दिया।■

क्रमशः

**“श्री रमण महर्षि 120 व्यक्तियों के प्रबोधनकारी, प्रेरणादायक संस्मरण”
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(संपादक - प्रो. लक्ष्मी नारायण
अनुवादक - डॉ. छाया तिवारी)

Translated from Hindi version of book

'Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi'



श्री रमण महर्षि से बातचीत

23 जनवरी, 1937

338. एक अमरीकी महिला, श्रीमती जैनिंग्स ने, कुछ प्रश्न किये:

भक्त : क्या परमात्मा में दृढ़ भावना, “मैं कौन हूँ ?” की खोज से अधिक प्रभावशाली नहीं है ? दृढ़ भावना विधेयात्मक है, जबकि दूसरी निषेधात्मक है। इसके अतिरिक्त यह अलगपन का संकेत करता है।

महर्षि : जब तक तुम यह जानना चाहते हो कि साक्षात्कार कैसे करें, तुमको अपने आत्मा को खोजने का परामर्श दिया जाता है। तुम्हारा पद्धति को खोजना अलगपन का द्योतन करता है।

भक्त : क्या यह श्रेयस्कर नहीं होगा कि “मैं कौन हूँ” की अपेक्षा “मैं परब्रह्म हूँ” कहा जाय ?

महर्षि : इसकी पुष्टि कौन करता है ? उसे करने वाला कोई एक होगा ही ? उस एक को खोजो।

भक्त : क्या खोज की अपेक्षा ध्यान श्रेष्ठ नहीं है ?

महर्षि : ध्यान में मानसिक आकृति विशेष का भाव होता है, जबकि खोज परम सत्य के लिए की जाती है। ध्यान पदार्थनिष्ठ होता है, जबकि खोज आत्मानिष्ठ होती है।

भक्त : इस विषय के प्रति वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोण होना चाहिए।

महर्षि : असद् का त्याग तथ सद्द्वस्तु की खोज वैज्ञानिक है।

भक्त : मेरा आशय यह है कि धीरे-धीरे निरसन हो, पहले मन का, फिर बुद्धि का, फिर अहंकार का।

महर्षि : आत्मा ही सत्य है। अन्य सब मिथ्या है। मन तथा बुद्धि तुमसे पृथक नहीं रहते।

बाइबिल कहती है, “शान्त हो जाओ तथा जान लो कि मैं ईश्वर हूँ।” आत्मा के ईश्वर के रूप में साक्षात् हेतु केवल शान्ति की आवश्यकता है।

भक्त : क्या पश्चिम क निवासी इस उपदेश को कभी समझ पायेंगे ?

महर्षि : देश और काल का प्रश्न नहीं है। समझ मन की परिपक्वता पर निर्भर करती है। पूर्व में अथवा पश्चिम में किसी के रहने से क्या अन्तर पड़ता है ?

श्री भगवान् ने ‘सत्य उद्घाटित’ (Truth Revealed) तथा ‘थायूमा नवर’ के कुछ अंश उद्धृत किये। तदुपरान्त महिला ने विदा ली।

कुछ समय पश्चात् श्री भगवान् ने कहा : सम्पूर्ण वेदान्त बाइबिल के दो वक्तव्यों में है : “अस्तित्व ही मैं हूँ” और “शान्त हो जाओ तथा जान लो कि मैं ईश्वर हूँ।”

रेलवे के एक अधिकारी, श्री के एस एन अय्यर ने श्री भगवान् को बताया कि समष्टि बुद्धि (अर्थात् महत्तत्त्व) (Cosmic Consciousness) के संग्रहकर्ता के अनुसार व्यक्ति की कुछ विशेष आयु तक ही साक्षात्कार सम्भव है।

महर्षि : क्या कभी कोई कहता है, “मुझे अमुक आयु से पूर्व अथवा पश्चात् अस्तित्व में आना है” ? वह अभी तथा यहीं है। इस प्रकार के कथन भ्रान्तिजनक हैं। इससे लोगों की यह धारणा बन जाती है कि इस जीवन में आत्म-साक्षात्कार करना असम्भव है तथा अगले जन्म में पुनः प्रयास करना होगा। यह सब हास्यास्पद है।

339. शिव विशिष्टाद्वैत (अर्थात् शैव सिद्धान्त) के सम्बन्ध में श्री भगवान् ने कहा : ‘गरुड़ोहम्’ भावना द्वारा मानव का गरुड़ होना सम्भव नहीं। तथापि सर्पदंश के विष का शमन हो जाता है। ऐसा ही शिवोहम् भावना के सम्बन्ध

में भी है। जीव के शिव के रूप में परिवर्तन न होने पर भी अहंकार के विनाशकारी प्रभाव नष्ट हो जाते हैं। अथवा साधक अपने व्यक्तित्व को बनाये रखकर भी शिव के शरीर का अंश बनने योग्य शुद्धि प्राप्त कर लेता है। ऐसा बनकर वह परमानन्द का उपभोग कर सकता है। शैव सिद्धान्ती इसी को मुक्ति कहते हैं। इससे केवल उनके व्यक्तित्व के प्रति मोह ही प्रकट होता है और किसी भी प्रकार यह मुक्ति का वास्तविक अनुभव नहीं है।

340. श्री बोस ने कहना आरम्भ किया: “देह—चेतना के वापस आने पर.....”

महर्षि : देह—चेतना क्या है ? पहले हमें यह बताओ। चेतना से पृथक तुम कौन हो ? चूँकि देह—चेतना है, देह का आधार बनता है, जो ‘मैं’—चेतना से उदय होती है, और इसका उदय चैतन्य से है।

चैतन्य → ‘मैं’—चेतना → देह—चेतना → देह।

शुद्ध चैतन्य ही सदैव विद्यमान है, तथा इसके अतिरिक्त कुछ भी नहीं है। जिसे अब तुम देह—चेतना मान रहे हो वह अध्यारोपण के कारण है।

यदि केवल चैतन्य है और उसके अलावा कुछ भी नहीं; शास्त्र का अभिप्राय “आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वम् प्रिय भवति” (आत्मा के प्रेम के कारण ही सब प्रिय है) से स्पष्ट हो जायेगा।

एक प्रश्न उठता है, उस अवस्था में आत्महत्याएँ क्यों होती हैं ? जीव आत्महत्या क्यों करता है ? चूँकि वह दुखी है और अपने दुःख का अन्त करना चाहता है। वह वास्तव में ऐसा करके अपनी देह से अपना सम्बन्ध—विच्छेद करता है जो सारे दुःखों की जड़ है। देह की हत्या करने वाला हत्यारा अवश्य ही होगा। वही आत्महत्या के पश्चात् जीवित रहेगा। वही आत्मा है। ■

क्रमशः

“श्री रमण महर्षि से बातचीत” पुस्तक से उद्धृत

(संग्रहकर्ता - श्री मुनगल एस. वेंकटरामैया

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Translated from 'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi'

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Ramana Maharshi {Upadesa Saram (2)}

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its source, consciousness. This is Self-abidance.”**

Ramana Maharshi (Upadesa Saram-16)

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“Consciousness is the screen
on which all the pictures
come and go. The screen is real,
the pictures are mere shadows on it.”

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi



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