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Tattvaloka

THE SPLENDOUR OF TRUTH

BLISS OF THE SELF

**Two Key Words
for Meditation**

**Time Management
and Srimad Ramayana**

**The Grandeur of
Kumarasambhava**

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Tattvāloka

THE SPLENDOUR OF TRUTH



Founder His Holiness Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Mahaswamigal
Patron-in-Chief His Holiness Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji

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तत्त्वं जिज्ञासमानानां लोकानां प्रीतिमावहन् । तत्त्वलोको विजयतां शारदादयया सदा ॥
May Tattvāloka always excel, by the grace of Sharada, delighting the seekers of Truth.

His Holiness Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji

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Surrender to Guru

The All-Pervading *Isvara's* glory and powers are endless. He is the Supreme magician who is the creator of the world. Nonetheless, he is not affected by the world. In fact, He is the Truth behind this shadowy world.

A devotee's mind is purified by total surrender to Him alone. By whole-hearted surrender, his union with *Isvara* takes place and there will be the end of all his sufferings. For this merger with the Lord to happen, the devotee's mind should be purified by constantly meditating on Him, through love, *bhajan*, *nishkama karma* or *Vedantic* enquiry.

But in the process, there may be certain obstacles needed to be removed such as attachment to objects, lack of sharpness of intellect, wrong reasoning and futile obstinacy.

प्रतिबन्धो वर्तमानो विषयासक्तिलक्षणः ।
प्रज्ञामान्द्यं कुतर्कश्च विपर्ययदुराग्रहः ॥

As no one can underestimate the power of the senses to lead even a diligent aspirant astray, by digressing to false justification and unnecessary compromise, it is always proper to seek the *upadesa* of a realised Guru.

Fire burns well after removal of the counteracting elements in the firewood. Likewise, only after the obstacles are

dispelled from the mind of a seeker, meditation becomes fruitful.

पुरुषापराधविगमे तु पुनः प्रतिबन्धकव्युदसनात् सफला ।
मणिमन्त्रयोरपगमे तु यथा सति पावकाद्भवति धूमलता ॥

Once the defects are removed by total surrender to the Guru, the devotee's mind becomes pure and clear. He will remain contented and unconcerned by all external entities and actions.

This opens the window for *Isvara's* Grace to descend. Such grace paves way for the aspirant to remain in Truth.

Thus the door of *moksha* will be within reach.

We bless every aspirant to understand this and lead a fruitful life.



Dear Sir,

The article “*Ten Potent Verses from Sivanandalahari*” (February 2023) is illuminating. What is important is that you have selected the verses as done by Sri Ramana Maharshi, the greatest *advaitin* of the modern day.

Through these verses, devotion to Lord Siva and how it should be cultivated in mortals have been described in an easy and simplified way, for even a layman to understand.

While all the ten verses selected are equally great, I consider verses 3, 5 and 8 as outstanding. Verse 3 provides a clear distinction between worshipping *devatas* to derive 'little happiness', and worshipping Siva and Amba to gain 'supreme pleasure'. Verse 5 has rightly described attaining immortality through intense devotion, citing the case of Markandeya, who forced even Yama, the Lord of Death, to flee from the scene. And, verse 8 points out how one, by laying a single flower, the heart, at the feet of Lord Siva, could attain 'peace'.

Such articles would help to transform people to reach the supreme goal of developing a never-wavering *bhakti* to the Lord.

V. Raghuraman
vraghuraman9189@gmail.com

Dear Sir,

The article '*Devotion to Mothers*' (January 2023) emphasizing the need for realising and acknowledging our 'Five debts' and depicting poignantly the salient qualities of a mother's boundless love and sacrifice, as described by Adi Sankara in *Matru Panchakam*, is arresting and emotionally moving.

A mother can take the place of all others, but whose place no one else can take.

R.Pichumani
rpjayav@gmail.com

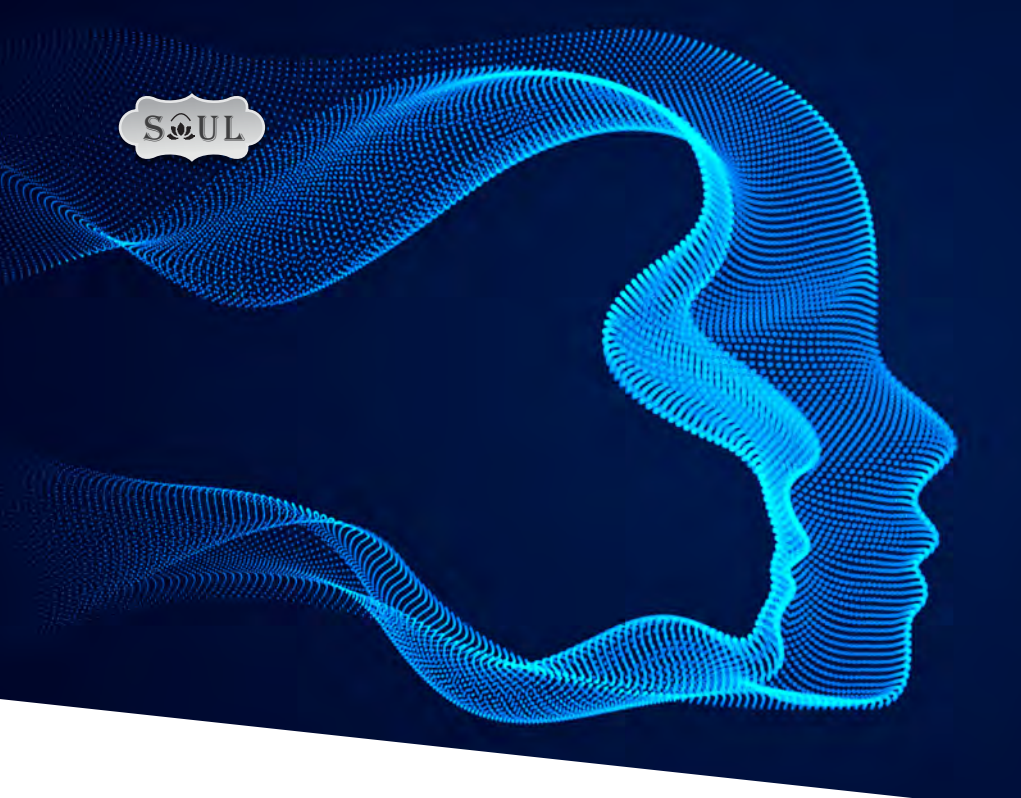
Dear Editor,

Tattvāloka as a small monthly book is handy, and very enlightening.

In the name of my Lord Sri Rama, the near-perfect human being, I bless you all for a long association with *Tattvāloka*.

L. Swaminathan
bargavram12@yahoo.com

Editor's Note: *The above writer is close to age 100. He has recently completed a nine-volume English translation of Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam. The Tattvāloka team values his blessings.*



Politeness Versus Humility

In the absence of humility any spiritual attainment
vanishes like dew upon sunrise

Politeness is often nothing more than a projection of being humble, whereas humility is true renunciation of a sense of being special.

The former is a social etiquette at the most, while the latter is a state of mind.

Many polite people walk the spiritual path, but only the

humble reach the pinnacle of attainment. Think Buddha, Mahavira, Guru Nanak. Does not their humility strike you as one of the foremost traits of their personality?

One can have a cluttered mind and a dark heart, and yet he can be an utterly polite person. In other words, with politeness one can portray a certain purity and character that he may not possess at all. Politeness is how we want others to see us.

To be humble, however, is a different ballgame altogether. Humility is how we actually are.

Simplicity at Core

Only a simple heart can be humble. A mind that is unafraid of believing and dreaming, a childlike heart that is both sensitive and vulnerable can aspire to be humble. Think again of the above lists of enlightened souls. Are not their lives and

conduct an example of simplicity?

That is because simplicity and humility go hand-in-hand.

Failure to grasp this fundamental difference between politeness and humility is what trips most seekers. All the time I meet aspirants who have spent many hours in meditation, but their focus remains only on the number of hours clocked and not on cultivating the essential virtues (compassion, empathy, humility etc.).

As a result, they become increasingly rigid and carry about themselves an air of superiority and entitlement.

It is missing the whole point of treading the spiritual path. When we evolve spiritually, we learn to respect and love others. Empathy and compassion

flows out from the vessel of your life like the Ganges from Gangotri: constant and drip-by-drip.

Secretly, each one of us feels we are important and special. A polite person often feels that he or she is more important and special than others.

And most ironically, it is their politeness that evokes such feelings in them. Even humble people quietly harbour feelings of being special, for humility does not mean that you cannot think highly of yourself, or that you deprecate yourself.

It simply means that while you see yourself as special, you give others the same right to feel that about themselves. Humility does not require that you strip others of their personal sense of entitlement because, as said earlier, it is not a mannerism, but a state of mind.

Two Ways to Cultivate

There are two ways to cultivate humility. The easy way and the hard way.

The latter is often not in our control. It is when life puts us through suffering or springs up on us some nasty surprise that forces us to put things in perspective. Like life's most methods, it is painful but transformational. It can smash our false sense of superiority in a single blow.

The easy way is in our control. It begins by being a keen observer and a good listener. It is instilled by taking the time to know those around you.

As you observe and listen, you will discover that you are surrounded by people who are talented and skilled at something or the other.

These quiet ones do not go around marketing their talents or staking any claims

of being special, but when they are in a state of flow, they are a sight to behold. In my vocation, I meet highly skilled musicians, artists, writers and poets all the time. While their skill fascinates me, their humility melts me more than their talent.

Think of someone very ordinary around you. Now go and take the time to know that person. You will be surprised at how special this person may turn out to be. It is humbling. Try it any day.

Of little use are our prayers and practices if we cannot get over our sense of superiority, if we cannot see the goodness and divinity in those around us.

Any spiritual attainment without humility vanishes quickly, leaving the seeker worse off than ever before.

In a rushed world where we promote competition, where we thrive on exerting superiority and authority for gains of all kinds, where humbleness is sometimes seen as a sign of weakness, the reality is that blessed are those who carry in their hearts the warmth of humility.

Be humble if you wish to be strong, for humility is the ultimate strength.

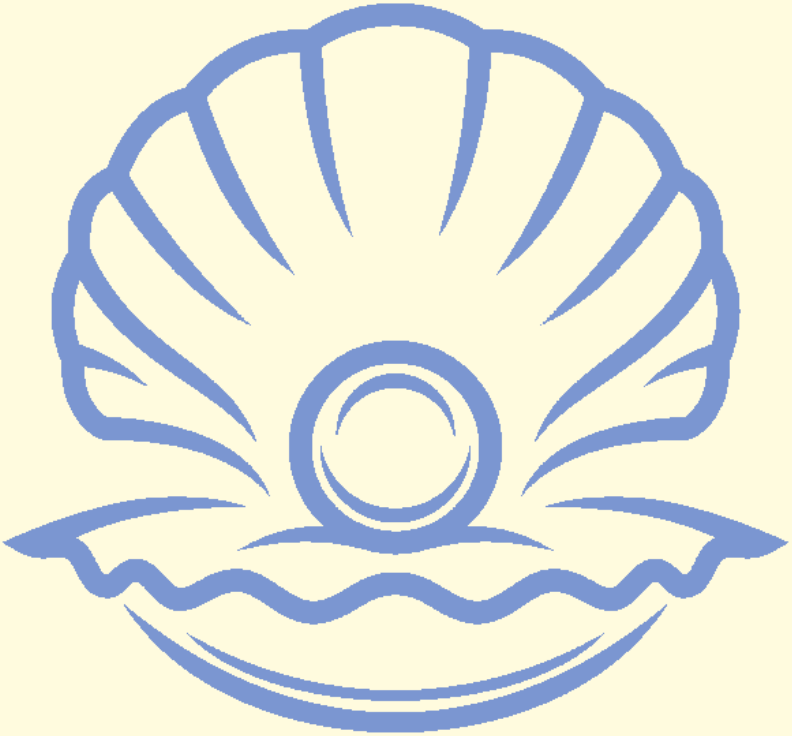


Good or Bad Action

Whatever is done lovingly, with righteous purity and with peace of mind, is a good action.

Everything which is done with the stain of desire and with agitation filling the mind is classified as a bad action.

--Sri Ramana Maharshi



Wisdom for Self-Improvement-18

Tattvāloka continues the series on key *slokas* in *Bhagavad Gita* on the journey towards self-improvement and attaining true knowledge

योगस्थः कुरुकर्माणि
सङ्गंत्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा
समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

*YogasthaH kuru karmāṇi
saṅgam tyaktvā
dhanamjaya |
Siddhy-asiddhyoḥ
samo bhūtvā
samatvam yoga ucyate ||
Bhagavad Gita 2-48*

Being anchored (firmly established, located) in yoga, renouncing all attachments and being equanimous to success and failure, do your actions.

Yoga is nothing but equanimity. In doing actions, there are exactly two basics to be taken care of; and these two run throughout the *Gita* as not only two specific

teachings, but also as an undercurrent in every advice that *Gita* gives.

These two are non-attachment and equanimity to whatever happens. So we shall elaborate these two concepts.

What is non-attachment? It is not a negative virtue. Detachment is the positive way of describing it.

Detachment does not imply ineffectiveness as some critics would have it. Only when you are completely detached, can you do a job without being confused by excitement.

This does not mean that you are not involved. Certainly you are. As an actor on the stage, you have to be involved with

everything that goes on there, and especially with the part you play, and you must play it well. Even if you have to be angry on the stage, you have to be; but the real you - whatever you are outside the stage - is not angry. This is *karma yoga*.

You are acting in the world according to the role given to you, according to your *sva-dharma* (one's own duty), and performing it effectively, never for a moment forgetting the fact, that it is your duty to act without expecting anything out of it.

The thief in the play who is stealing currency notes can never for a moment believe that the currency will stay with him, the real him!

So the *Gita* says: 'Do your duty, don't be attached to the outcome thereof.' This is the meaning of '*sangam tyaktva*'.

Now about equanimity. Twenty-four *slokas* of the

Gita directly bear on this concept. They mention four different aspects of equanimity depending upon what we are talking about. They are:

1. Things that disturb your mental equilibrium, pleasure and pain, (*sama dukkha sukhah kshami* 12-14 and 14-24), success and failure (*siddhy asiddhyor nirvikarah* 18-26), honour and dishonour (*manapamanayos tulyah* 14-25);

2. People around you – your likes and dislikes of them (*tulya-priyapriyo dhirah* 14-24);

3. Their praise or criticisms of you (*tulya nindatma-samstutih* 14-24 and 12-19); and

4. Material objects and property around you (*sama-loshtashma kanchanah* 14-24)





Sri Chandrasekhara

I once asked You My Lord
How do I reach Your Feet
To be near my dearest Lord
What do I do now and again.

My Master You do speak to me
In silence Your words reach me
Know You as my true friend
Do not hold on to anything.

Leaving all thoughts behind
I will reach You in a while.
Then You give a divine smile
Tell me there is a easier way.

You ask me to leave my ego
Shed everything I call my own.
Not the slightest feeling of I
Firmly believe You own my life.

You will now walk towards me
In a moment making me Yours.
Speechless I stand where I am
Such affection I do not understand.



Bliss of the Self – 6

Worship of any form varies according to the imagination of the worshipper. For the same reason, it cannot by itself be the absolute experience of Truth.

In the third verse in his treatise *Ulladu Narpadu*, or 'Forty verses on Reality' (covered in the last issue of *Tattvaloka*), Sri Ramana Maharishi drew attention of spiritual seekers to the futility of engaging in verbal arguments about the phenomenal world, such as 'the world is real'; 'no, it is an illusory appearance', as such arguments only go to strengthen the individual ego.

Now, in the fourth verse, the Maharishi discusses the

progress from worshipping forms to the formless reality.

If one considers oneself the form of this body of flesh, then the world and God will also be forms. If one realises himself to be formless, as pure awareness, then who remains to perceive the form of the world and God? And how is one to perceive?

Once dissolved in the form of *jnana*, the mind-eye, *Atman*, hitherto perceived as other forms, now shines as

the limitless eye of *jnana*. Can there be perception without the perceiver? Can perception be different from the perceiving eye?

Split of Consciousness

The individual-'I' arises in pure consciousness, and expands into subtle names and forms as thoughts. Gradually, it becomes the organs of the senses.

It is when the *chit jyoti* (the Light of consciousness) flows outward through the sense organs, the picture of the visible world unfolds itself.

But, by this time, it splits into the seer (the 'I'), the seen (the world), and the instruments of seeing (the mind and the senses).

At this stage, the seer is with a body, his mind is tainted with thoughts about objects, and the visible world is filled with inert gross names and forms. This is the projection of the world

caused by the mysterious divine energy, which Bhagavan Ramana calls as *atisaya sakti*.

However, if the seer turning inwards completely absorbs the body in the mind, and the mind in the heart (or the witness consciousness), there will be the vision of *prajna netra*.

In that state, the vision will be free of all images (*padartha abhavani*).

Patanjali Yoga Sutras call this as '*Rtambhara tatra prajna*' (*Sutra 48*). The *sutra* explains the state wherein a *sadhaka* is brimming with pure intelligence. This happens when the consciousness resides in a wisdom-like state. Such an illuminated state is pleasurable, saturated with radiance and matured understanding.

That vision is One, Boundless, Whole. This is the third eye of Siva (His

jnana netra). This is the I-consciousness.

The ultimate vision is the radiance of the I-consciousness as *suddha samvit* (pure awareness), unmixed with thoughts. It is that very consciousness which sees through the holes in the body called the 'eyes'.

Dawn of Chit Svarupa

In *Atma Vidya Keertanam*, Sri Ramana beautifully expresses this as, “The mind is that which gives light to the five senses of perception like the eyes, which in turn light up the entire material cosmos beginning from sky. The eye that gives light to the mind-space is that infinite space of awareness.”

“Remaining steadfastly as that *chidakasa* and without thinking of anything else and in perfect stillness, my own Self shines forth in all splendour. For this, His grace is required. For that, abundant love must be there

for that divine Self; then the love, the bliss of the Self, wells up from the heart.”

As is the vision, so is the seen, is the law.

As long as the mind-eye exists, the world (*prapancha*) will be seen. When the mind subsides, and the *chit svarupa* blazes forth, the world transfigures as *Brahman*.

As long as we believe that we are the body, it is not wrong to worship the Lord with name and form. It is relevant to note in this context that all religions which do not accept the mystic traditions that worship forms, do not seem to advance spiritually.

Thus, Bhagavan says in the *Ramana Gita*, “*upasanam vina jnanam naivasyad iti nischaya*,” meaning, without *upasana*, one cannot attain *jnana*; this is certain.

However, worship varies according to the imagination

of the worshipper. For the same reason, it cannot by itself be the absolute experience of truth.

When the *mumuksu's* mind is made one-pointed by *upasana*, the Upanishad guides him through a process of negation saying, *nedam yadidam upasate*— 'what you meditate on is not *Brahman*, but by which you meditate is *Brahman*'. Thus, a seeker's attention is slowly shifted from the seen to the seer.

Hence, *sastras* say, *vastu tantro bhavet bodhah, kartr tantram upasanam*, which means, 'Self-knowledge is based on absolute reality, while *upasana* depends on the imagination or free will of the worshipper.'

No Name and Form

In sum, all ignorance arises out of the primal ignorance due to your thought, 'I am the body'. Until this primal ignorance is destroyed, the sequence of ignorance will

continue. When this ignorance is destroyed, all other ignorance will disappear.

As long as one believes, 'I am the body' and 'I have a form', it is not wrong to worship God in a form. At the same time, if the mind that is always thinking of one's own body and the bodies of others, is made one-pointed by focusing on the name and form of the Lord, *sarupa bhakti* results.

When the mind gets purified and knowledge is attained, it becomes clear that one has no name and form, but he is the formless Self; all names and forms will disappear and consciousness alone will then shine forth.

*Nochur Sri
Venkataraman*



*(Edited excerpts from the
author's book 'Swatmasukhi')*



Two Key Words for Meditation

Both *Vishnu Sahasranama* and *Bhagavad Gita*
provide a succinct meditation technique

The standard question that many people ask at the end of any discourse on *Bhagavad Gita* is: Who is the doer-experiencer that *Gita* repeatedly mentions, if it is not 'Me'?

The answer that any learned expositor would provide is: It is the one who thinks he is the doer-experiencer.

Transactional and Transcendental

This brings to mind the beautiful quote from *Vishnu Sahasranama* (sloka 2) that says, *pūtātām paramātmā cha muktānām paramāgatih | avyaya puruṣha sakshi kshetragno akshara eva cha.*

The words 'eva cha' appear twice in the entire *Vishnu Sahasranama*. 'Eva' means 'only' in Sanskrit, with a focus on the context. 'Cha' is the connective article 'and' or 'also'.

One of the most enlightening commentaries of Adi Sankara is on *Vishnu Sahasranamam*. Sankara remarkably delves deep into the context, and gives special meanings to the above two words *eva* and *cha*.

Vishnu Sahasranamam provides multifarious ways in which you can think of God. And in the above *sloka*, it says *kshetrajna* as well as *akshara*.

Kshetra is the material universe born of *prakriti* and its creations. *Kshetrajna* is he who is aware of this *kshetra*. We as individuals seem to be aware of all the *kshetra* around us, so the agent of this awareness in us is *kshetrajna*.

Akshara is the imperishable self within us who is only a witness to whatever happens, but nothing more. *Vishnu sahasranamam* says God is ultimately both *kshetrajna* and *akshara*.

The text of *Vishnu Sahasranamam* adds the epithet '*eva cha*'. '*Eva*' to denote that the two are certainly one, but '*cha*' to denote the definite difference between them in the transactional world.

It is wise to remember the difference between the 'transactional' world and 'transcendental' world. When we go to a temple, we worship the deity we see there. In another temple, we worship another deity, perhaps with a different name. In the transactional world, the two deities are different.

But that single moment when we realise that both the deities are the same in reality, we have touched the 'transcendental' world.

The subtle difference between *kshetrajna* and *akshara* can be understood with reference to the nuances of the concept of Self.

We have a psychological self, with body and mind, all amenable to the medical world. We have a *jiva* because of which we are alive. *Vedanta* says there is an internal Self which is nothing but the Absolute Supreme. We do not realise this.

The *jiva* which has come to reside in this body, wrongly identifies with the body-mind complex and the outer physical self, and this is what creates the problem. We feel the pleasures and pains of the body because of this.

But if the *jiva* identifies with the Absolute Eternal Supreme (which is everywhere and so also within us), then we are the real Self. This is the real Self which is declared by *Vedanta* to be '*aham brahma asmi*'.

Now the *kshetrajna* is what operates when the *jiva* identifies itself with the outer

self. When the *jiva* identifies itself with the Supreme Self, then it is 'akshara'. That is the difference.

Practising the Oneness

How do we get this practice of identification with this outer self or the inner self?

Bhagavad Gita gives a beautiful hint in *sloka* 5-13, beginning 'sarva karmani manasa sanyasyaste sukham vashi.' The *sloka* means that the self-controlled yogi, doing nothing himself and getting nothing done by others, rests happily in God. He mentally relegates all actions to the body with nine openings.

The key word here is 'aste' (*sanyasyaste* in above). *Aste* means one who 'sits' or is 'stationed'. We are supposed to be 'sitting' in this nine-gated body.

But we never realise, or even say we are 'sitting' in

this body, because we never feel we are different from the body. We may say we 'sit' on a sofa or chair, but we never say or feel that we 'sit' in the body, because intrinsically we feel we are one with the body.

Now the true *Vedantic* practice starts by thinking, and sustaining that thought, that we are a 'resident' of the body, and we are 'sitting' in the body as a resident.

Gita advises us to practice this thought as strategy for spiritual growth. In *sloka* 6-19, it advises that as a light does not flicker in a windless place, such is the picture of disciplined mind of a yogi practicing meditation on God.

What are you supposed to think steadily without flickering?

Again, *Vishnu Sahasranama* comes to help. With a bang, it starts: '*Viśvam viṣṇur*

*vaṣaṭkaro bhūta bhavya
bhavat prabhuḥ'.*

Visvam is indicative of the immanence of the Absolute, and the second word *Vishnu* is indicative of the transcendence (beyond every frontier) of God. He is the master, and beyond the past, present and the future. He is the creator and destroyer of all existences in the universe. He is the essence who supports or sustains or governs the universe.

So, when you meditate, hold on to these two characteristics of Immanence and Transcendence.

Coupled with the conviction that you are 'sitting' as a resident in the body, it takes you on the rare spiritual journey to the realisation of the Absolute!

Chinmudra Posture

Countless seekers practise this meditation with *chinmudra* posture of the

fingers. As readers may know, the *jiva* or *kshetrajna* is symbolically represented by the index finger in our right hand. The index finger indicates the *jiva* because, it is the index finger we use to point out ourselves, or to point out another person before us.

The absolute *brahman* is indicated by the right thumb and so it represents the '*akshara*'.

When the right thumb and the (right) index finger are made to touch each other's tip, with the other three fingers (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) not in touch with them, that is what is called *jiva-brahma aikyam*, known in *yoga sastra* as *chinmudra*.

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Be a Valued Human Resource

The devoted service of a minister in *Ramayana* can be a role model for performing one's duties as a sincere team player

Organisations have been becoming more professional and effective in managing their employees. The attitude has evolved

progressively. Initially, employees were 'just hands,' workers, staff, personnel etc. In the last two decades, the term HR, Human Resource, is widely used.

The challenge is to develop and optimally utilise HR. The organisation alone cannot do it fully. The employee's involvement and effort are essential.

Sumantara is an outstanding example of a self-made HR. Does the name ring a bell? Who was he? Hint: He is part of *Valmiki Ramayana*. Does that help?

What was his role? He was a minister of Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya. What are the contributions he made? Sumantara advised Dasaratha to perform the *Putra Kameshti Yaga*, for being blessed with children. As you know, the king performed the ritual and got four sons.

Sumantara played a particularly sensitive, important role during the sad period of Rama going on *vanavasa*. Sumantara would have been deeply involved in making all arrangements for

Rama's coronation. Sage Vasishtha was guiding Rama on the preparatory rituals.

Then, trouble broke out. Goaded by Mantara, Kaikeyi demanded the two boons that Dasaratha had given to her earlier. She wanted her son Bharata to be crowned the King of Ayodhya and Rama to be sent to forest for 14 years.

Naturally, Dasaratha was shocked. He begged her to ask for anything else but that. She was adamant. She herself asks Sumantara to fetch Rama to Dasaratha's palace. Of course, he does not ask her why. He performs his duty.

When Rama comes, Kaikeyi conveys the king's wish for Rama to go to forest. Rama, as a dutiful son, agrees despite the sad bemoaning of his mother Kausalya and anger of Lakshmana. Rama goes to Dasaratha to take

leave. Dasaratha faints. At this point, Sumantara takes the big risk of criticising Kaikeyi for her greed and damage.

Sumantara accompanies Rama to the river front, for guiding Rama to take a boat to the opposite bank of the river. The people of Ayodhya have so much love and respect for Rama that they want to go with him on *vanavas*. A *dharma sankata* for Rama!

Sumantara helps him by taking a different route, avoiding the crowds. Sumantara joins Rama on the boat across the river in order to get him safely to the other shore. He continues his efforts to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya. Rama, of course, will not go back on his vow. He advises Sumantara to go back to Ayodhya and continue to assist the king Dasaratha in governing the empire.

The boatman Guha gets a boat ready, with royal decorations, to take Sumantara back. Sumantara does not wish enjoying the pomp and luxury, any more. He cries with pain, on the impending long separation from Rama. Still, as a dutiful minister he will go back. His *kartavya* is in Ayodhya. He will perform that, without *apeksha*.

On return to Ayodhya, Sumantara conveys Rama's message to Dasaratha. Dasaratha weeps with sorrow. Sumantara takes the initiative of consoling Kausalya, the senior most queen.

Sense of Ownership

Based on Sumantara's shining example, one can implement the following kind of Action Plan in his life.

First, if you are working in a formal organisation, such as Business, Non-Profit, or

Government, identify yourself with the Vision, Mission and Purpose of the organisation. Do not work in a routine manner. With modern technology, you may be replaced by Artificial Intelligence!

Second, continuously diagnose the changing challenges and needs of the organisation and give to your seniors your considered advice. Accept their modifications. Do not stand on ego or professional superiority complex.

Third, in the organisational interest, when necessary, take the risk of differing with your seniors. Do it in

the most agreeable and acceptable manner.

Fourth, when your seniors are in an unusually difficult situation, go out of the way, and give them extra, creative help.

Fifth, have a sense of ownership for your organisation.

Sixth, do all this without claiming personal credit. Trust your seniors. Believe that they will see and reward merit, commitment and contribution.

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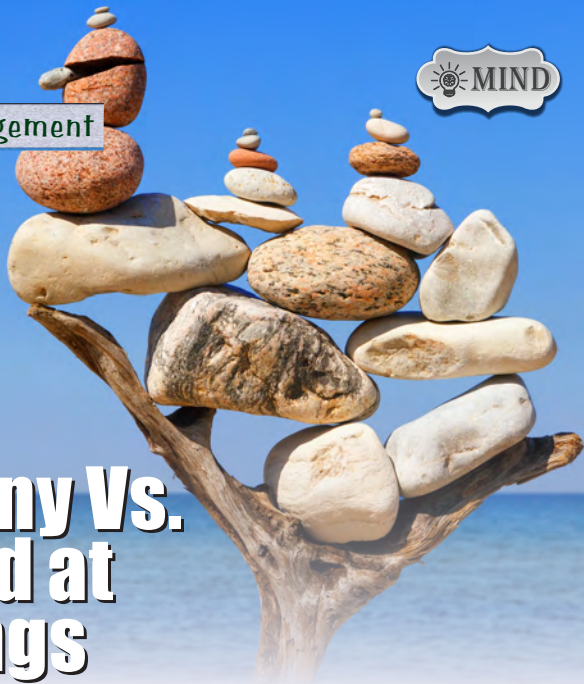


Selfless Service a Source of Joy

The human body is meant solely for service, never for indulgence. The secret of a happy life lies in renunciation. Renunciation is life. Indulgence is death. Therefore, everyone has a right and should desire to live 125 years while performing service without an eye on the result. Such life must be wholly and solely dedicated to service.

Renunciation made for the sake of service is an ineffable joy, of which none can deprive one, because that nectar springs from within and sustains life. In this, there can be no room for worry or impatience. Without this joy, long life is impossible and would not be worthwhile even if possible.

--Mahatma Gandhi



Harmony Vs. Discord at Meetings

Managing inter-personal relationships in a *sattvic* way is the key attribute of a wise manager

Meetings are a fact of working life, and often they can be the cause of waste of time. Endless meetings, many of them witnessing discordant notes from the participants, can be a pain for everyone involved.

Productive and harmonious meetings requires careful

planning, clear communication from the leader, and cheerful participation from all those who attend.

While meetings are considered important to engage with colleagues and foster creativity, it is the experience of many that meetings are often long and unorganised.

A study showed that managers considered 83 per cent of the meetings as unproductive. People spend on an average about 18 hours a week in business meetings, and feel that they would be better off refusing at least a third of them.

Some managers tend to assume that attending several meetings a day is an indication of their importance - to 'show' to outsiders how busy they are, despite the emotional and stress levels involved.

Some business leaders seek and attract appreciation for themselves by holding frequent long meetings as a personal 'ego-trip'. They expect others to please them by listening more attentively, and agreeing to everything they say. This is known as 'hubris syndrome' in psychology, a form of mental disorder arising from possession of power.

Benefiting from Wise Counsel

Our scriptures are replete with examples of wise kings holding sessions with groups of ministers or sagely persons with genuine intent of benefiting from the counsel.

Such sessions are characterised by three features: the sessions are brief and to the point, there is a sense of respect that every participant enjoys at such meetings with the king showing humility and listening to the viewpoints, and there is a conclusion or decision on the way forward at the end of the confabulations.

Ramayana describes two contrasting sessions to illustrate the above.

The first is where Dasaratha calls a meeting of his ministers and *rishis* to seek their view on crowning Rama as the *yuvaraja*.

Valmiki describes how, in words full of meaning and charming to ears, Dasaratha spoke, saying he had tended the kingdom as a mother cared for her child, and now due to his old and infirm body, he wished to follow the holy custom of his forefathers to spend the rest of his life in austerities in the forest after entrusting the kingdom to Rama.

While there were shouts of joyous acclaim to the proposal, the king spoke again, “You agree with my proposal, but give no reason. This will not do. Let the wise men explain why they agree”.

Then, several speakers rose and explained Rama's virtues and his fitness to rule.

Contrast this to the assembly that Ravana called to mull the next steps after witnessing the havoc caused by Hanuman following his

meeting with Sita at the *Ashoka vana*.

Speaking at the great hall of council, sitting on his splendid agate throne, with his key ministers and military commanders in attendance, Ravana, blinded by lust, sought their 'counsel', saying that his desire for Sita entirely possessed him with no question of her being sent back and begging forgiveness from Rama.

He added that while a big monkey contrived to cross the sea to Lanka and wrought 'some mischief', it would be hard for Rama and his *vanara* army to land in Lanka, and “even if they did come, what need we fear?”

Thus, before seeking any 'counsel', Ravana makes his viewpoint clear, thereby expecting everyone to just endorse it. Valmiki describes how everyone of course

endorsed Ravana's view with vainglorious words, boosting his ego and strengthening his *adharmic* stand.

Conflicting Views

An important principle behind productive meetings is to give people space to disagree. The most common mistake people make in dealing with differences is to insist on commonality, and to push hard for agreement and conclusion.

The key to enabling collaboration among people who disagree is not to force them to agree, but give freedom to express their own experiences and beliefs.

When there is a conflict of views, there is always the potential for tensions to rise. Wise leaders handle the situation knowing the difference between healthy conflict resolution and a hostile working environment.

In every meeting, the team members closely observe how the leader reacts to any criticism or conflict. Staying calm and balanced by the leader is vital to de-escalate a situation, which can set a positive standard, and demonstrate how the team should handle future disputes.

If the leader loses his balance, makes underhanded comments, or take sides, he sets an unsavoury example. By keeping things calm and collected, he would gracefully defuse the situation and guide the team toward unity.

Meetings, especially inter-departmental meetings, are thus a good opportunity for a leader to stress his vision of growth based on *dharmaic* principles, and build harmony among people. For this to work, the leader needs to remember the maxim 'Ego is the enemy of good leadership'.

An inflated ego narrows one's vision, as it always looks for information that confirms what he wants to believe. As a result, managers tend to lose touch with the people they lead, and falter in creating the right culture that stresses on selflessness, reflection, and courage.

'Moral Manager'

In *Neeti Shatakam*, Bhartruhari, the great philosopher-poet, who was the king of Ujjain, shares in hundred verses the essentials of morality.

In one of the verses, he praises those who are skilled in the art of inter-personal relationships, saying such people show generosity towards everyone, devotion to saintly persons, diplomacy in handling situations, straight-forwardness where learned persons are concerned, patience towards elders and tactfulness with women. He

says the world depends on the skill of such people.

Such team-building is exemplified in the popular Vedic prayer that begins as '*sahana vavatu, sahanau bhunaktu,*' meaning together may we move, together may we relish our work, together may we perform with vigour, so that we are filled with brilliance, and may it not give rise to hostility due to lack of understanding.

It is worthwhile to mentally chant this hymn before commencing any meeting!



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Time Management and Srimad Ramayana

A piece of wisdom from a minister to his king

In the 29th canto in *Kishkinda Kanda* of *Valmiki Ramayana*, Sri Rama and Sugriva have an understanding to start searching for Sita after the rainy season. But, once the rainy season ends, Sugriva does not initiate the search immediately as per the agreement.

Then Hanuman reminds Sugriva of his duty to send

troops to find Sita in this canto.

In one of the 27 verses of this canto that begins as, “*nahi tavad bhavet kalo vyavata...*”, Hanuman mentions to Sugriva, the key principles in time management.

He says, “Time will not be considered as having elapsed (in vain) if the work is commenced without any

pressure (from him). If, however, the work is commenced under pressure (from Sri Rama), delay will surely be regarded as having taken place.”

This is a very impactful verse, especially with the way it is worded, which is so apt, concise and capturing the essence.

Lessons

The following time management lessons are imparted by Hanuman to Sugriva in this 29th canto:

1. Start the activity on time in order to not only meet the deadline, but also to perform it efficiently.
2. Activity under pressure is sure to get delayed or not performed well. This is what we now refer to as deadline pressure and we all experience it time and again.
3. Delegation of the task to search for Sita by summoning the army.

4. Respect others' time. Hanuman reminds Sugriva that just like the way Sri Rama respected Sugriva's time and need, Sugriva should respect the same.

5. Most importantly, he told Sugriva to step out of distractions and to stop procrastinating.

Hanuman being one of the ministers in Sugriva's cabinet, he is able to impart such advice to his king, Sugriva. This shows that communication in that era was not always top down!

There is indeed so much wisdom in these simple conversations which feels so good to read as they are relevant for ever.



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The Grandeur of Kumarasambhava

The masterpiece of Kalidasa is an epic
poem in classical Sanskrit

Subrahmanya, Skanda, Muruga, Karthikeya, Kumara ... most of us know of this son of Siva and Parvathi by his very many names. Several *puranas* have recorded the appearance of this war hero elaborately and succinctly.

However, when one wants to read the interesting tale in an uninterrupted and eclectic fashion, one invariably turns to the *Kumarasambhava* of Kalidasa.

Eight elegant cantos of this *mahakavya* written with

metric perfection and panache in Sanskrit, unfolds a beautiful story filled with elements of love, hate, romance, fear, bravery, affection, hope, despair and the triumph of good over evil.

Enchanting Story

Just to recall the eternally interesting story.

Once, sage Narada visited Himavan, the king of Mountains. When princess Parvathi bowed to him, he blessed the young lady saying that she was destined to marry Siva.

Now, Himavan was aware of the fact that the said Siva was meditating in his country. He was also well aware of Siva's antecedents; how his spouse Dakshayani had immolated herself when her father Daksha Prajapati had performed a great *yajna* with the sole aim of insulting Siva; and how since then Siva had taken up celibacy.

The *dharmic* king Himavan, however, knew that the prophecy of sage Narada was profound, and it would come true to benefit the universe in some way.

As Parvati warmed up to the idea of marrying one she had never met, she chose to go to the mountains and serve Siva so as to win his heart. She was unaware of the fact that she was none but Dakshayani, the darling daughter of the megalomaniac Daksha in her previous birth.

In the meantime, a powerful *asura* named Taraka had performed a severe penance to please Brahma seeking immortality.

The creator accommodated his devotee, but not without a caveat. Taraka chose to meet his death at the hands of the son of Siva, feeling clever and confident that such an event could never come to pass. This belief

made him arrogant and he started terrorising the world mercilessly.

Indra and the other gods approached Brahma and conveyed their concerns, and Brahma reassured that Tarakasura would meet his end when Siva married Parvati.

Indra wanted to hurry up the process. He commissioned the god of love, Manmata, to induce romance into the austere heart of Siva. Manmata obliged and hastened to the place where Siva engaged in meditation in Himalayas, accompanied by his beautiful wife Rati and his inseparable friend Vasanta (spring season personified).

Even as Manmata nervously aimed a floral arrow of love at the stern yogi Siva in the presence of Parvati, Siva noticed him, and almost immediately, Manmata, the cupid, was reduced to ashes.

Rati could not digest the sight. She swooned in distress, and gaining consciousness, she desired to join her husband in death. Almost miraculously, a heavenly voice bid her to abstain from taking such a hasty decision, saying her spouse would be restored to life when Siva and Parvati were united.

Siva, however, went into a deeper state of penance, but the determined Parvati became all the more resolute to win Siva. She took up stringent vows which disciplined her mind and punished her body. Siva perceived her steadfast service to him, and yet he decided to test her determination.

Appearing as a young *brahmachari* in front of her, he got into a conversation and learnt the purpose of her vows. Then Siva indulged in self-criticism from a worldly point of view, albeit remaining in disguise

as the alm-seeking *brahmachari*.

Parvati tried to maintain a dignified front while defending her stand. When she could no longer take the self-deprecation, she warned the *brahmachari* to watch his tongue.

As she walked away in a huff, the young man revealed himself as Siva and proposed to his lady love.

Though Parvati had been waiting for this blessed moment, she wanted Siva to approach her father, the king of the mountains, to seek her hand in marriage. Himavan accepted the idea that his princess, who was a paragon of virtues deserved to be Siva's bride.

Once the formalities were completed, Manmata was restored to life in spirit. Indra and the other gods knew it was only a matter of time for the world to return

to a state of normalcy. Hence they waited anxiously for Kumarasambhava!

Mahakavya

Kalidasa rewrote a well-known story in exquisite poetry. His deep understanding of the dimensions of the human mind is beautifully interwoven in his narration.

The contrast in the response of a doting father concerned for his daughter can be seen in the characters of Daksha and Himavan.

The deep bonding is reflected in the character of Siva when he tests the love of Parvati for him. Rati's loss of interest in life after the disappearance of Manmata, and her hopes to be reunited with him, speak in volumes about her deep attachment to her spouse.

The hasty nature of Brahma in granting boon, the insecurity of Indra, the arrogance

of Tarakasura, the friendship of Vasanta, the amity of Parvati with her hand-maidens, all hold a mirror to the human emotions and feelings that are universal across time and space.

Additionally, the Mahakavi captures the reader's mind through an exquisite poetry of an enchanting and unconventional love story in the backdrop of the sylvan and scintillating Himalayan region in the spring season.

Usually a title suggests a story, but Kalidasa happily takes a detour from the convention and narrates the story that leads to the title.

And it is here we realise how Kalidasa stands at the top in the world of litterateurs.



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Sarala Panchapakesan
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Rama

the Cynosure of Opponents

Every character and development in *Ramayana* is a valuable lesson for all of us

Who is not familiar with the oft-quoted expression '*Ramo vigrahavān dharmah,*' Rama is the embodiment of *dharmā*?

What is less known is that this glorious tribute to Rama was paid by an arch-enemy of Rama, Maricha, who later became a Rama *bhakta*, as a testimony to the nobility and greatness of the *Maryada Purusha*.

Maricha's Counsel

Ramayana describes how the life Maricha, son of the demoness Tataka, was spared twice at the hands of Rama before Maricha succumbed to the malicious intent of his uncle Ravana. Greatly influenced by the noble qualities of Rama, Maricha had become an ascetic, leading a *sattvic* life.

When Ravana asked for Maricha's assistance in

abducting Sita, he dissuaded Ravana from such a heinous act, extolling Rama as virtue-incarnate with unflinching prowess. Drawing reference to the celestial head Indra, Maricha had mentioned that Rama was the king of the entire world '*Devanam iva Vasavah*'.

He added that ever since he experienced the terrible arrows of Rama, he was having nightmares, seeing Rama behind every tree, with bow in hand like death himself. “Even unconnected words beginning with the syllable 'ra' such as *ratha* or *ratna*, send shivers down my spine,” confesses Maricha.

He forewarns Ravana that Rama can destroy the entire Lanka along with Lanke-svara, and wipe out the *asuras*. “Never think of doing anything unpleasant to Rama”, he pleads (*'Ma krutha Ramavipriyam'*).

Later, when Ravana threatened to kill him if he

disobeyed, Maricha says he would choose to die at the hands of Rama instead of Ravana.

Saint Tulsidas describes in *Ramacharitramanas* that Maricha, while disguised as a golden deer leading Rama deep into the forest away from Sita and their *kutir*, was frequently turning back to check when Rama's arrows would hit him, so as to soak in Rama's *darsan* before breathing his last.

Rama the Enchanter

There is also a surprising account provided by Valmiki, how Surpanakha, who suffered terrible insult and disfiguring at the hands of Rama and Lakshmana, exhibited only her appreciation for her offenders.

Head over heels in love with them, it was as if a spell was cast on Surpanakha by the charming personalities of Rama and Lakshmana.

When Surpanakhha reported her humiliation to Ravana, she said “Two young men have come to Dandaka, very handsome like *Gandharvas*, bearing all the royal signs. They appear to be gentle yet valorous. Their eyes are beautiful like the petals of the white lotus and they have long arms”.

This exalted description of Rama from the foul mouth of a demoness is yet another instance of endorsing the magnetic charm and power of Sri Rama's persona.

It is relevant that In *Yuddhakanda*, when Ravana's eyes fell on Sri Rama for the first time, he too described Rama's splendid divine form, and particularly extolled his long arms and lotus petal-like broad eyes. He felt as though Narayana himself was standing before him holding his great bow that seemed to scrape the sky.

Rama, the *Parabrahman*

Look at the way Tara, the wife of Vali, the Kishkinda king, adores Rama after Vali is slain by Rama's arrow.

She calls Rama as the greatest mine of merits, '*gunānām ākara*'.

Earlier, as Vali gets ready to the call of the confident Sugriva to fight, backed by Rama's prowess, Vali gets some intelligence on Rama gathered by his son Angada.

After listening to his son, Tara tells Vali, '*nivāsa vrukshah sādhuunām, āpannānām paramā gatih*', like a tree, he gives shade and shelter to everyone without any discrimination to those who seek him.

“As Rama has pledged support to Sugriva, think twice before accepting Sugriva's challenge,” says she.

Tara wailed bitterly over her lord's impending death.

On facing Rama, she was all set to accuse Rama of unfairness for killing Vali hiding himself.

But when she saw Rama face to face, she forgot all about the accusations, and involuntarily underwent a tremendous change in her attitude. Before Sri Rama's impressive appearance and pleasant manners, her anger evaporated. Her *sattva guna* emerged and she recognized Rama to be none other than the Supreme and showered praises on him.

In her intense grief too, she was able to see Rama as the invisible infinite principle, the immeasurable changeless Lord in all his effulgence. Possibly, Rama, moved by compassion for the sorrowing lady and pleased with her purity, disclosed His real self!

Rama's Magnanimity

Ravana deputed two spies, Suka and Sarana, to find out

the army positions of Rama after he lands in Lanka. Both the spies, disguised as monkeys, roamed about collecting intelligence, but they were caught and brought before Rama.

Despite knowing their intentions, Rama tells the two *asuras* to visit the entire place without any inhibition and report to Ravana, and says that the captured messengers holding no weapons deserve no killing.

He adds, "If you have not seen our armies properly, Vibhishana will show them to you again entirely."

This is an example of adherence to *dharma*; virtue never leaves Rama, nor does Rama transgresses the virtue.

Yuddha Kanda describes how queen Mandodari, seeing her dead husband Ravana, extols Sri Rama in measured words as *Mahayogi*. She had visualised the killer as a

divine form wielding a conch, disc, mace, and wearing the *Srivatsa* mark on his chest, the supreme being in a human form.

Thus, the majestic and charming personality of Sri Rama was recognised even by his adversaries, while his sublime and superhuman nature drew admiration from all. Sri Rama is indeed a *ripuvatsala*, one who loved his enemies, and vice versa.

Sage Valmiki highlights Rama's unique quality as the

one who could overlook the numerous offences committed by others, but who always remembered even a single instance of help rendered by an opponent.

No wonder, Rama is revered as the icon of morality, his morals and values inspiring the entire mankind.



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Hanuman's Humility

During *Rama Navami*, millions of devotees worship Hanuman chanting *Hanuman Chalisa*, and read *Sundara kanda* with immense faith and zeal, to ward off negative thoughts.

Valmiki's narrative of Hanuman is soothing to the mind and pleasing to the ear. Sugriva tells Rama and Lakshmana about Hanuman's demeanour, communication skill, and his humility.

Grief stricken Sita, harassed by a horde of demoneses seated under the Asoka tree, finds a ray of hope from the soothing utterances of a small monkey hiding in the branches of a tree. Hanuman's first task was not to frighten Sita, but to convince her about his *bona fides* as a messenger sent by Sri Rama.

The genius of Vayuputra comes into play as he wins confidence and even praise from Sita when he presents Rama's golden ring to her. Before taking leave, Hanuman tells her with endearing humility, that Rama would come with a large number of *vanaras* more valorous than he himself. "Compared to them I am the weakest of the *vanara* army, only a messenger to convey a message," says he with matchless humility, so beautifully described by Valmiki.

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tyaga

– Letting Go

A conscious decision to abstain from something is a way to mature in meditation



In a certain monastery, a master was preaching forgiveness. A few disciples argued that while letting go was the finest act, it was hard.

They wondered what the harm in holding onto certain feelings was, especially if it did not hinder their meditation. The master listened patiently.

He asked them to take a handful of potatoes, engrave

the initials of the person they could not or did not want to forgive, one potato per person. He further instructed them to put their potatoes in a bag, bring them to the class and take them back to their quarters every day.

The disciples followed the instructions and everyone carried a bag the next day. Some were carrying bags bigger than others.

A week went by, the monks felt ludicrous carrying their sacks around. The potatoes started to rot and stink. They asked their master for how long were they supposed to do the exercise. They complained that it was becoming unbearable to put up with the stench and unnecessary weight.

“So, what have you learned?” the master asked.

“Potatoes are our negative emotions. Holding onto them is carrying burden and stench,” they replied.

“Exactly. But, can you carry potatoes without the bag?” the sage spoke. “If potatoes are your negative feelings, what is the bag?”

Pindrop silence ensued. It happens at the dawning of wisdom. They understood the bag was their mind.

Skill to Drop Emotion

It is incredible how much garbage we keep within us

as if we are attached to the stench of our rotten potatoes. No one I know wants to be unhappy. They want to let go and move on, but find it extremely difficult to do so. This is where the practice of letting go comes handy. If you consciously train your mind to let go, you can use this skill to drop any emotion.

We all have our attachments and they are the root cause of most of our disappointments. We may like to believe that we remain unaffected or that our love is pure, devoid of attachments to people or things.

The truth is, your degree of detachment can only be ascertained once you are removed from the object of your attachment.

There is a specific yogic practice to help you in cultivating the art of letting go.

The word is *tyaga* in Sanskrit. It means to let go, to give up, to renounce, to detach, to set (yourself) free from the attachment to the object.

The practice of *tyaga* is a powerful one, and the effect is profound. It is capable of igniting a radical transformation in you.

Detachment or letting go is not an automatic act. A fair bit of groundwork is required before one can acquire such state of dispassion and abandon where it comes naturally to them. A fitting question here is, “What is that groundwork?” The practice of *tyaga* is the groundwork.

Like everything else, detachment can be learned. For the purpose of better understanding and to make this a tangible practice, it is useful to segregate the practice in to two parts.

First is letting go of physical objects; this

strengthens one's mind. The second is letting go of thoughts or emotions.

I am only elaborating on the first one (letting go of physical objects), because if you meditate correctly, you will develop your own wisdom and method to let go of undesirable thoughts and emotions.

How to Do It Right

Start giving up whatever you like. Essentially, that is the practice; start giving up. So, should you give up your car, house, belongings and so forth? Not at all.

The attachment is generally not with the object, it is with the pleasure you get from such object, with the value you place on it. You are not attached to tea, but the pleasure you get from drinking tea. So, if you are willing to part with the joy you get from drinking tea, the habit of drinking tea will leave you effortlessly.

The practice of letting go starts with identifying what you love the most and then picking one to begin with, deciding to let go for a certain period. It can be one

week, a month, one year or any other duration you decide.

Please see the chart below:

PRACTISING TO LET GO

Type	Description	Weightage	Impact
Consumption	Refraining from using or consuming the object	Sixty per cent	Red
Desire	Continuously desiring the object of abandonment	Twenty per cent	Yellow
Contemplation	Contemplating on the object	Fifteen per cent	Yellow
Thoughts	Random thoughts of the object	Five per cent	Green

The complete practice of *tyaga* means abandoning consumption, desire, contemplation and thoughts of the object of attachment. In line with the framework tabulated above, let me elaborate the practice with an example.

Let us say you love drinking coffee. Your favourite is cappuccino. For the last so many years, you have been

routinely having your double shot cappuccino. You have gotten used to it. On days you cannot get your hands on your coffee, you miss it. Perhaps, you even get a headache if you are unable to get your dose of caffeine.

This is attachment; it strips you of your freedom and makes you dependent. One day, committing

yourself to the practice of *tyaga*, you decide to give up coffee for a period of forty days. During those forty days, consuming coffee even once (consumption row in the table above) is a breach of your practice. The impact is red. It is an instant failure item. You need to restart.

If you keep longing for coffee, this means you are unable to take your mind off coffee. You are curbing your desire. Your practice continues, but it brings down the overall quality by twenty percent.

If you keep contemplating on coffee, the desire for coffee will arise automatically. If only you remember to gently take your mind off and focus it elsewhere each time you think about coffee, you are doing good.

If you think about coffee, which may emerge even at the sight of a cafe, or seeing someone drinking it, is okay.

The key is to drop the thought when it emerges. Having thoughts is natural. When you stay mindful of your practice and resolution, thoughts become feeble and harmless; they disappear as soon as they emerge.

When you let go, you gain freedom. It further leads to a state of independence, peace and fulfilment. Ultimately, if you can let go of everything that gives you grief, every agonizing emotion, every discursive thought, you can well imagine your blissful state.

When you learn to let go, you are effectively learning to let yourself go free.

--Edited excerpts from 'A Million Thoughts' by Om Swami. Published by the author. Available at Amazon.com. Price Rs.399.



Om Swami



Peace, Peace, Peace



**Mrs. Purviz R. Shroff, MH
and
Late Mr. Rusy M. Shroff, BBS, MBE**

Cotton and Its Medicinal Value



Few people are aware of the medicinal properties of common cotton

We generally notice the cotton plant only while buying clothes. How many of us know that cotton has more uses than just producing fabric?

Cotton, popularly known as *kapas* in Hindi and *karpasa* in Sanskrit, is well known in Ayurveda for its medicinal properties for more than thousand years. Cotton

seeds, the seed oil root and bark of the plant are used in various medicinal preparations in Ayurveda.

Cotton seed as well as its roots contain key chemical compound such as salicylic acid (which is used in drugs to arrest skin inflammation and help shed dead cells from the top skin layer), fatty acids, and betaine (that helps in cellular

reproduction and liver function).

Cotton seeds are an excellent aphrodisiac and nerve tonic.

Validation of Masters

Acharya Charaka categorises cotton plant under strength-promoting group of herbs, while Acharya Sushruta considers cotton essentially as part of herbs that help to contain the *vata dosha* in the body.

The root bark of cotton plant is light to digest and pungent in taste, along with hot potency (*ushna*). The cotton seed is oily, unctuous and undergoes sweet taste after digestion. The seed is described as *vata-nasini*, useful in treating disorders arising from *vata dosha*, such as constipation, bloating and paralysis.

Cotton seed is a coolant and is an aphrodisiac, improving the reproductive vigour of

the person. The paste made from cotton seed is applied externally to treat inflammation, pain, poisonous bites, wounds and ulcers.

The root, flower and seed of the cotton plant are used in medicinal preparations.

Notable Medicines

There are several Ayurvedic medicines with cotton seed as the main ingredient. Among them, *Karpasasthyadi Thailam* is notable as the oil used as an effective remedy for rheumatic conditions such as facial palsy, shoulder pain, spondylosis and other neuro-muscular conditions arising from *vata* imbalance.

Makaradwaj, a juice extracted from the root of cotton plant, is another Ayurvedic medicine which is used as anti-aging and for treatment of impotence. It is also used for chronic skin conditions and lung conditions such as pneumonia and tuberculosis.

Collyrium, or the medicinal eyewash, prepared from the juices of cotton plant fruit, *jamun* seeds and mango mixed with honey, is applied to the eyes of a patient suffering from eye discharges (*netra srava*).

Cottonseed meal, which is the by-product remaining after the cotton is ginned, seeds crushed and oil extracted, is sweet in taste and cold in potency. It is used as a *vata-pitta* balancing product for consumption.

Cotton plants are usually safe for consumption, but

the root bark decoctions are advised against during pregnancy, as they can contract the uterus. However, it can be consumed by lactating mothers or children.

People with kidney problems are also advised to avoid consuming cotton seeds or root bark.

Consumption of cotton in the correct proportion and method can yield numerous health benefits to the body.



The Popularity of Indian Cotton

The Vedas recognize sage Grusthayudha as the first person to grow cotton, stating that he grew cotton plants and drew cotton thread from them.

Studies show that the cotton fibres from mature and ripe cotton seeds were extracted in India using a refined process in the 7th century BC.

Fine cotton, known as muslin, which is soft to touch, light and graceful on wearing, used to be exported from Masuli (Masulipatnam in Andhra Pradesh). It had inspired fashion styles among the Roman upper classes. As Rome gave gold in exchange for cotton and was losing its wealth, it decided to ban Indian muslin in the 1500s, perhaps the world's first trade ban.

(Source: "2012 The Real Story" by D. K. Hari & D. K. Hema Hari)

Sringeri Jagadgurus performing *Shikhara Kalashabhisheka* of Sri Bhavani Temple



A section of devotees at Sri Malahanikaesvara Temple during the *Maha Kumbhabhisheka*



Mahakumbhabhisheka of the Historic Sri Bhavani Malahanikaresvara temple

A round up of key events at Sringeri

Jagadguru Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahasannidhanam and Sri Vidhushekhara Bharati Sannidhanam performed the *Mahakumbhabhisheka* of the historic Sri Bhavani Malahanikaresvara Swami temple on February 12, 2023. The event was witnessed by thousands of devotees at Sringeri, and by innumerable number via various media.

The hilltop temple in Sringeri Town is a hallowed place of worship for thousands of years – even before the advent of Adi Sankara and the installation of Devi Sharadamba at Sringeri.

As a prelude to the event, a large group of devotees from and in and around Sringeri

had offered truckloads of various materials in the presence of Sri Sannidhanam for use during the *Mahotsava* as *Hore Kanike*.

A number of *Homas* were conducted in the premises of Sri Malahanikaresvara Swami temple during the occasion every day, which included *Ganapati Homa*, *Subrahmanya Homa*, *Navagraha Homa*, *Durga Homa*, *Sri Sukta Homa*, *Mrityunjaya Homa*, *Medha Dakshinamurti Mantra Homa*, *Bala Tripura Sundari Mantra Homa*, *Navachandi Homa* and others.

During the *Mahotsava* period, a total of 5 Lakh *Panchakshari Mantra Japa* and 9 Lakh *Chandika Navakshari Mantra Japa* took place.



Another view of Sringeri Jagadgurus performing *Kumbhabhisheka* of the *Rajagopuram*



Sringeri Jagadgurus performing *Kumbhabhisheka* of *Rajagopuram* of Sri Malahanikaresvara Temple

On February 9, *Laksha Modaka Mahaganapati Homa* was conducted, followed by Sri Sannidhanam undertaking the *Atirudra Mahayaga Sankalpa* the next day. The chanting of *Shatarudra*, totally 14641 times, took place over a period of 11 days until February 20 for *loka kshema* (public welfare).

On February 10, Sri Sannidhanam performed the *Prathishtha Kumbhabhisheka* of a new Sri Subrahmanya shrine adjacent to the shrine of Sri Bhavani in the Malahanikaresvara temple. The Acharya also offered worship to Sri Malahanikaresvara and Sri Bhavani on the occasion.

It is noteworthy that on the day prior to *Mahakumbhabhisheka*, as per the injunctions of the *Agama Sastras*, sacred waters from the river Tunga were brought in a ceremony called *Tirthaanayanam*, and 1000

kalashas were filled with the waters and other auspicious materials.

On the morning of the *Mahakumbhabhisheka* day, Sri Sannidhanam began performing the *Sahasra Kalasha Abhisheka* to the chants of *Shatarudriya* a 100 times by *ritwiks*, and joined by Sri Mahasannidhanam completing the *Abhisheka* to Sri Malahanikaresvara. The Jagadgurus then performed *Shankha Abhisheka* and *Mahakumbhabhisheka* to Sri Malahanikaresvara and then to Goddess Sri Bhavani.

A special golden garland was offered to Sri Malahanikaresvara on the occasion by the Jagadgurus. Scholars of Sringeri Mutt then led all devotees in the chanting of *Sri Malahanikaresvara Ashtakam* in unison, a new hymn composed by Sri Sannidhanam and chanted on this occasion for the first time.



Sringeri Jagadgurus performing
Shikhara Kalashabhisheka of
Sri Malahanikaesvara Temple



Sringeri Jagadgurus performing
Shikhara Kalashabhisheka of Sri
Malahanikaesvara Temple



Sri Sannidhanam releases
the commemorative volume of the
Kumbhabhisheka Mahotsava



Sri Mahasannidhanam performs
Mahamangalarati to Sri Malahanikaesvara on Mahasivaratri day

Thereafter, the Jagadgurus conducted the *Shikhara Kumbhabhisheka* of Sri Malahanikaresvara temple, and the new granite *Shikhara* of Sri Bhavani temple, as well as at the 65-foot tall *Rajagopuram*.

Sri Mahasannidhanam in His *anugraha bhashanam*, rendered from atop the *Rajagopuram*, invoked the grace of Sri Bhavani Malahanikaresvara, and stated that the Sri Malahanikaresvara, whose divine presence in Sringeri predates even the time of Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya, has been worshipped by all the Sringeri Jagadgurus. The Acharya recalled that His Guru, Sri Abhinava Vidya-tirtha Mahaswamiji had conducted the *Kumbhabhisheka* of the temple on the very same *tithi* 38 years ago in February 1985.

An evening Sabha on the same day of *Mahakumbhabhisheka* held in front of Sri

Sharadamba temple at the Mutt premises, was eventful.

Sringeri Math CEO Sri VR Gowrishankar explained that the Rajagopuram with a 20-foot foundation had been constructed within a year in accordance with the *Vastu Sastra*. He commended the efforts of the *Asthana Sthapati*, Sri Shankara Sthapati.

Sri Sannidhanam released a special commemorative volume titled '*Namonama Sankara Parvatibyam*,' containing valuable articles extolling the Paramesvara.

Sri Sannidhanam then released a documentary film in English titled 'Sri Malahanikaresvara' on the Youtube channel 'Sharada-peetham'. This film traces the origin and history of the temple. Speaking in lucid Sanskrit, Sri Sannidhanam explains in the film the significance of the *Sivalingam* in the temple associated with



Sri Mahasannidhanam beside the *murti* of Sri Sharadamba to be consecrated in Kashmir



Sringeri Math CEO Sri Gowrishankar flags off Sharada Murti Yatra from Sringeri to Kashmir

Sri Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya Mahasamasthanam
Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri - 577139

SHARADA MURTI YATRA

SRINGERI MUTT KARNATAKA TO
SHARADA YATRA TEMPLE LOC TEEETWAL, KSHMIR

January to 22 March 2023

the life of sage Vibhandaka and his son Rishyasringa.

The film will be released in other languages soon.

In an absorbing *anugraha bhashanam* on the occasion, Sri Sannidhanam explained the *Paramesvara Tattva* and the eight holy names associated with it. A summary of the *anugraha bhashanam* will be carried in the April 2023 issue of *Tattvāloka*.

Sri Vidyashankara temple Kumbhabhisheka

On February 3, 2023, *Kumbhabhisheka* of the famous Vidyashankara temple in the premises of Sringeri Mutt took place.

The Vidyashankara temple is built upon the *samadhi* of the 10th Acharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham, Jagadguru Sri Vidyatirtha in the 14th century. The Jagadguru was a *Mahayogi* and he undertook *samadhi* at the

spot through *Lambika Yoga*. The temple was built in the middle of the 14th century by the Mahaswamiji's successor, Jagadguru Sri Bharati Tirtha under the patronage of the famous Vijayanagara empire.

Amidst the chant of Vedic *mantras*, Sri Mahasannidhanam performed *abhisheka* to the sacred *Sivalinga*, followed by the Ubhaya Jagadgurus performing *Kumbhabhisheka* at the *Garbha Griha*.

The previous *Kumbhabhisheka* of this historic temple was performed by Sri Mahasannidhanam in February 2012.

Sannyasa Sveekara Day of Sri Sannidhanam

January 24, 2023 marked the eighth anniversary of the *Sannyasa Sveekara* day of Sri Sannidhanam.

On the day, the Jagadguru had *darshan* at the



Sringeri Jagadgurus perform
Kumbhabhisheka at
Sri Vidyashankara Temple



Sri Sannidhanam worships Sri
Malahanikaresvara on *Sannyasa*
Sveekara Day



Sri Sannidhanam worships
Sri Risyasingesvara at Kigga



Sri Sannidhanam worships Sri
Suryanarayana on *Ratha Saptami*

*adhishtanam*s at Narasimha Vanam and at all the temples in the Mutt's premises. At noon, the Acharya visited the hill temple of Lord Malahanikaesvara and performed elaborate *pujas*. Sri Mahasannidhanam was present during the *Mahamangalarati* to Sri Malahanikaesvara.

Sri Sharadamba Murti Yatra to Kashmir commences

A beautiful *panchaloha* *vigraha* of Sri Sharadamba, meant to be consecrated in Teetwal near the Line of Control in Kashmir, where a new Sharada Temple is being constructed, commenced its journey on January 24, 2023, the day marking the *Sannyasa Sveekara* day of Sri Sannidhanam. Incidentally, the same day is observed traditionally by the Kashmir Pandits as '*Guru Tritiya*.'

The Ubhaya Jagadgurus offered worship to the *murti* placed in a decorated vehicle along with a *murti* of Jagadguru Sri Adi Sankara.

The grand procession commenced from the *Rajagopuram* of Sringeri Mutt, with CEO Sri VR Gowrishankar flagging off the *Yatra* which is scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2023, well before the *Kumbhabhisheka* of the new Sharadamba temple in Teetwal with the blessings of the Sringeri Jagadgurus.

Mandalabhisheka to Sri Risyasringesvara Swami

Sri Sannidhanam offered worship at the temple of Lord Risyasringesvara at Kigga near Sringeri on Feb 2, 2023, after whom the holy town of Sringeri gets its name.

After being accorded a devout welcome, the Jagadguru offered an elaborate *puja* including *Kalashabhisheka* connected with *Mandalabhisheka* to Sri Rishyasringesvara Swami.

A *stotram* titled, *Rishyashringashtakam*, penned by the



Sri Sannidhanam leads Sri Sharadamba Maharathotsava



Sri Mahasannidhanam worships Sri Sharadamba a day prior to Sri Sharadamba Rathotsava



Sri Sannidhanam gracing purnahuti of Laksha Modaka Ganapati Homa marking the commencement of Sri Malahanikaresvara Kumbhabhisheka Mahotsava

32nd Acharya of Sringeri, Jagadguru Sri Nrisimha Bharati Mahaswamiji, was chanted in chorus at the end of the *puja*.

In an *anugraha bhashanam*, Sri Sannidhanam mentioned that it was sage Risyasringa who had officiated in king Dasaratha's *Putra Kameshti Yaga* and paved way for the advent of the *avatara* of Sri Rama. The sage had merged with the *Sivalinga* that he had worshipped, which came to be called as Sri Risyasringesvara.

Sri Sannidhanam added that the *Sivalinga* at the hill temple of Sri Malahani-karesvara in Sringeri town owes its origin to the *tapas* of sage Vibhandaka, the father of sage Risyasringa.

It is well-known that worship is offered to Sri Risyasringesvara Swami for bountiful rainfall, and the epithet of the Sringeri Acharyas as the 'harbinger

of copious rainfall' is due to the grace of Sri Risyasringesvara Swami and Sri Malahanikaresvara Swami.

It is worthy to note that as per a centuries-old tradition, besides the *archakas* of the temple, only the Sringeri Jagadgurus have the privilege to enter the *garbha griha* of Sri Risyasringesvara Swami and perform *puja*.

Lalita Panchami and Ratha Saptami

Lalita Panchami was celebrated in Sringeri on January 26, 2023, the *Sukla Panchami* day during the month of *Asvin*. Goddess Lalita, an incarnation of Durga, is revered as one of the ten *Mahavidhyas*, and as *Tripurasundari*.

Sri Sannidhanam offered a special worship to Goddess Sharadamba on the occasion.

Ratha Saptami was observed two days later on



Sri Mahasannidhanam performs *Shankha Abhisheka* to Sri Malahanikaresvara



Sri Sannidhanam performs *Sri Subrahmanya Pratishtha* at Sri Malahanikaresvara Temple



Sringeri Jagadgurus perform *Mahakumbhabhisheka* to Sri Malahanikaresvara

January 28, 2023, symbolically marking the day Surya, the Sun God, turns his chariot drawn by seven horses towards the northern hemisphere, in a north-easterly direction.

A special *puja* to Lord Suryanarayana seated on a sandalwood chariot was performed in the morning at Sri Narasimha Bharati Yagashala in the presence of Sri Mahasannidhanam.

The Ubhaya Jagadgurus proceeded to the temple of Sri Suryanarayana Swami at Elmagge, near Narasimha Vanam, where Sri Sannidhanam offered worship at the temple, set in a sylvan ambience at the banks of the river Tunga.

The elaborate *puja* was performed amidst Vedic chants including the *Saura Suktam* from the *Rg Veda*. In the evening, *Deepotsava* was conducted at the temple.

Sharadamba Maharathotsava

The annual *Sharadamba Maharathotsava* took place on February 8, 2023. The *utsava murti* of Goddess Sharadamba was taken along the main streets of Sringeri in a decorated *Ratha*, with Sri Sannidhanam leading the procession amidst Vedic chants.

As part of the celebrations, a *Shatachandi Yaga* was conducted near the Sharadamba temple, and the *puṇahuti* took place in the presence of Sri Sannidhanam.

Koti kumkumarchana

Koti kumkumarchana was performed in the premises of Sri Sharadamba temple from *Lalita Panchami* day (January 26) to February 4, 2023. About 50 *ritwiks* chanted the *Lalita Sahasranamavali* a lakh times over the 10-day period, with Sri Sannidhanam gracing the event every day.



Sri Mahasannidhanam performs
Sahasra Kalasha Abhisheka



Sri Sannidhanam performs *Shankha
Abhisheka* to Sri Malahanikaresvara



Sringeri Jagadgurus perform
Kumbhabhisheka to Sri Bhavani

Sri Sannidhanam in his *anugraha bhashanam* extolled the greatness of the Divine Mother. Noting that She is *nijagnarupa nigama*, the very form of the Vedic scriptures that are akin to Her own directives, Sri Sannidhanam also said that the Divine Mother is *punya punya phalapradha*, the one who bestows the results of both meritorious and sinful deeds to the doer.

Chaturveda Samhita Yaga at Kattchakkalu

On January 30, Jagadguru Sri Sannidhanam visited Sri Siddhi Vinayaka Swami temple in Kattchakkalu (Tirthahalli), and graced the *pujahutis* of the *Chaturveda Samhita Yaga*.

Sri Sannidhanam at Sri Madhava temple

On January 23, 2023, Sri Sannidhanam visited Tirthahalli, near Sringeri, and offered *puja* at Sri Madhava temple and

inaugurated the renovated Chandrashala of the temple.

In his *anugraha bhashanam*, Sri Sannidhanam said that Bhagavan tests the best of devotees not with a view to make them suffer, but to ensure their *sreyas*, just as a student who has studied well is progressively questioned to test the extent of his knowledge.

Our *dharma* has been propounded by the great *maharshis* for our welfare. While we may not have the capability to decode why they gave certain directives, there is always a rationale behind their utterances. They do not propound superstition. The onus is on us to follow and be benefited.

Among others, the event was attended by the Home Minister of Karnataka, Sri Araga Jnanendra.



The Divine Names of Sri Krishna-4



The 108 auspicious names of Krishna contained in *Sri Krishna Ashtottara Satanamavali* represent the collection of Krishna's divine qualities and the accounts of his incarnation.

Millions of devout people chant the *Satanamavali* daily, and they testify the immense benefits of doing so while meditating on Krishna.

10) हरये नमः ।

Haraye namaḥ ।

I pay obeisance to Hari.

Hari is a *nama* derived from the verbal root *hru* to take

away. He takes a share of the offering given in *yajna* with certain Vedic mantras and is therefore called Hari.

Bhagavan Vishnu removes the effect of past actions and

bondage within the cycle of *samsara* and is hence called Hari. He is also Hari as he is green in colour as explained in Sri Sankara Bhagavat-pada's *bhashya* on the *Vishnu Sahasranama*:

स्मृतिमात्रेण पुंसां पापं वा संसारं
हरतीति हरिः हरिद्वर्णत्वाद् वा हरिः ।
Smṛtimātreṇa puṁsām
pāpaṁ vā saṁsāraṁ
haratīti hariḥ
haridvarṇatvād vā hariḥ |

11) चतुर्भुजात्त-चक्रासि-गदा-
शन्काद्यायुधाय नमः ।

Caturbhujātta-cakrāsi-
gadā-śankādyāudhāya
namaḥ |

I pay obeisance to Sri Vishnu who carries the *chakra*, sword, *gada* and *sanku* as weapons.

The *dhyana sloka* of Sri Mahavishnu portrays his manifested form as one with *sankha* (conch), *chakra* (wheel),

gada (mace) and *sharnga* (bow), and so does the *sloka* at the conclusion of *Vishnu Sahasranama* – '*vana-mālī gadī śārngī śankhī chakrī ca nandakī ...*', where Maha-vishnu is revered as the protector.

Krishna reveals this form during his *avatara* to devotees like Arjuna. The *chakra* and *sankha* emerged from the ocean during *mathana* or churning of the ocean.

In *Krishnavatara*, Vishnu's conch is called *pāñchajanya*. The *asura* Panchajanya who had taken the form of a whale had killed sage Sandipini's son. Guru Sandipini asked Krishna to restore his son as the *guru dakshina*. Krishna approached Yama and, after killing the *asura*, retrieved the conch which originally belonged to God Varuna. It was this *Panchajanya* conch that Krishna blew to herald victory to Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war.

The *chakra* according to the *puranas* was given to Mahavishnu by Siva when he chose to worship with 1000 lotuses to acquire a powerful weapon to annihilate the *asuras*. Siva tested Vishnu by hiding one lotus. Undeterred, Vishnu offered his own eye to Siva in lieu of the lotus.

Siva blessed Vishnu with the *chakra* which was used in *Krishnavatara* in two instances, one for killing Sisupala, and the other to create the ambience of sunset so as to enable Arjuna fulfil his vow to kill Jarasandha before sunset.

The *Harivamsa* describes the empowerment of Krishna with the divine *gada Kaumodaki* and *Sarnga* bow by celestials while Krishna battled with Jarasandha.

13) देवकीनन्दनाय नमः ।

Devakīnandanāya namaḥ |

I pay obeisance to the One who delights Devaki.

Sri Krishna appeared in his dazzling form of Mahavishnu to his parents Devaki and Vasudeva, adorning the *sankha, chakra, gada* and lotus and other ornaments. Devaki was elated to see the form that is elusive to even *yogis* who spend endless years in penance.

She appealed to the Lord to end the tyrannical rule of Kamsa. In a characteristically motherly way, she beseeched the Lord to withdraw his divine form, as Kamsa should not know about his advent.

Accepting her entreaties, Krishna withdrew his glorious vision and appeared like a normal baby.

He enlightened Devaki and Vasudeva as to why they had been blessed to be his parents on earth. In their previous birth, Devaki was born in the lineage of Swayambhu Manu with her given name as Prishni.

Vasudeva was known as Sutapas.

They performed strenuous penance for long years with their mind set on Mahavishnu alone. While Mahavishnu appeared before them and offered to grant a boon, they were deluded by *maya*. Instead of asking for *moksha* as the final liberation, they submitted that Bhagavan be born as their son. Their wish was granted and Vishnu was born to them as Prishni-garbha.

Mahavishnu was born again as the couple's son under the name of Upendra when the couple were known as Aditi and Kashyapa during Mahavishnu's *Vamana Avatara*.

The *avatara* as Krishna was the third time that Bhagavan had appeared as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva to fulfil their prayers. They were blessed to meditate on the

nirguna brahmabhava of Mahavishnu to free themselves from the grip of *maya* and attain *moksha*.

14) श्रीशाय नमः ।

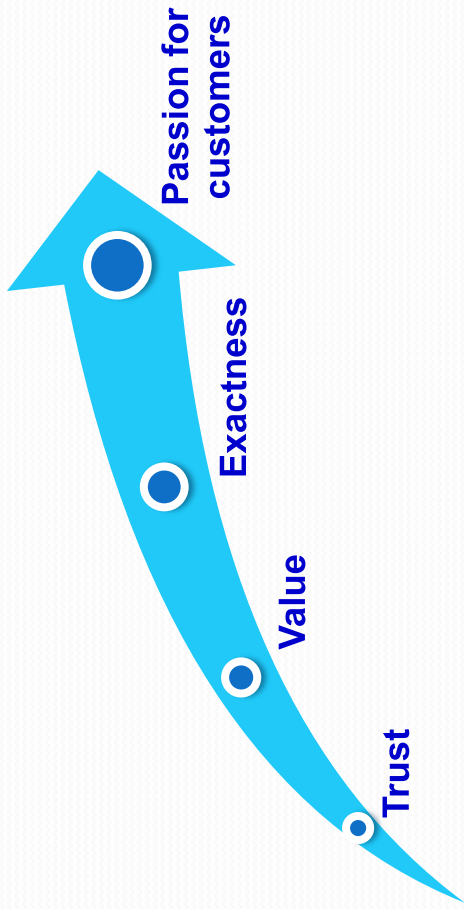
Śrīśāya namaḥ |

I pay obeisance to the one who is the lord of auspiciousness, or one who is the consort of Lakshmi.

The second *nama* Kamalanatha in this *Ashtottara* unveiled how Lakshmi chose Mahavishnu as her Lord.

Lakshmi otherwise known as Sri is the abode of every conceivable form of auspiciousness, residing in Vishnu's *vakshasthala* or chest, and the inseparable divine pair bless their devotees with auspiciousness.





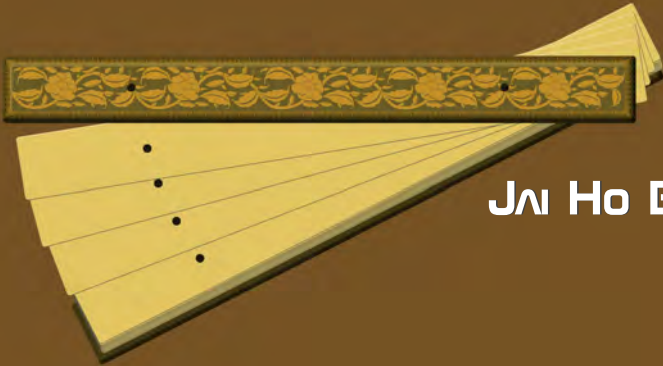
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JAI HO BHARAT...

Our Ancient Treasures in Palm Leaves

Many readers may not be aware that palm trees can last for over a century, and their leaves, or fronds, that serve as good medium as writing surfaces can last for several centuries.

The palmyrah palm was once prominent in our country, especially in the southern region, though their number is dwindling, thanks to rampant urbanisation. The leaves and other parts of the tree are also used to make fans,

mats, umbrellas, brushes and brooms.

To use as a writing surface, the leaves are first cooked and dried. The writer then uses a stylus to inscribe delicate lettering.

Palm leaf manuscripts are required to be preserved properly as they can be eaten away by white ants and small insects.

A large number of manuscripts containing ancient Sanskrit works and

held at temples and public places as treasures, were known to be destroyed during the times of Mughal invasion. Some rare manuscripts are still available in our ancient temples.

One such rich repository of ancient manuscripts is the Sringeri Peetham, where about 5000 manuscripts including palm leaf, paper as well as cloth manuscripts are stored in the centuries-old Saraswati Bhandara library of the Mutt.

The manuscripts contain works across the gamut of Sanskrit literature pertaining to various *darsanas*, *puranas* and *Vedangas*, including many works of Adi Sankara.

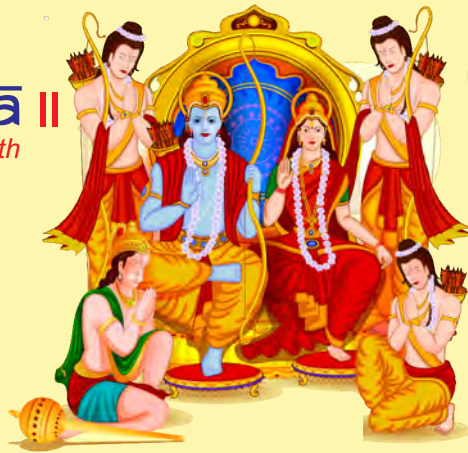
Apart from carefully preserving the palm leaves manuscripts with the aid of modern technology, Sringeri Peetham has taken the initiative of publishing the

rare texts in *Vedas* and *Sastras*, with the Jagadguru Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahasannidhanam personally editing and overseeing the publication.

About 25 such publications have been released, including *Vaktavya Kashika*, a millennium-old commentary on Padmapadacharya's *Panchapadika* composed by Sri Uttamajna Yati, a disciple of the 5th Acharya of Sringeri Peetham, Jnanottamacharya (910-954 AD).

Apart from palm leaves, cloth manuscripts called '*kadatas*' contain a wealth of information on the history of Sringeri Peetham. The original inscriptions and other records throw light on political, administrative, religious, economic and social conditions prevailing in the region during the 14th to 19th century.





Ahalya's Stuti in praise of Rama

Here is a beautiful *stuti* of Lord Rama that appears in *Adhyatma Ramayana* embedded in the *Brahmanda Purana*. It is a narration of Valmiki's *Ramayana* in the form of a dialogue between Siva and Parvati.

भवभयहरमेकं भानुकोटिप्रकाशं
करधृतशरचापं कालमेघावभासम् ।
कनकरुचिरवस्त्रं रत्नकुण्डलाढ्यं
कमलाविशदनेत्रं सानुजं राममीडे ॥

*Bhavabhayaharamekaṁ bhānukoṭiprakāśaṁ
Karadhṛtaśaracāpaṁ kālameghāvabhāsam |
Kanakaruciravastraṁ ratnakuṇḍalāḍhyaṁ
Kamalaviśadanetraṁ sānujaṁ rāmamīḍe ||*

Ahalya Stuti, Bala Kanda, Adhyatma Ramayana

I sing Rama's praise; Rama, accompanied by Lakshmana alleviates the fear of *samsara*, whose colour is dark blue like

the cloud, whose eyes are clear and beautiful like lotus, who has the resplendence of countless suns, who is holding the bow and arrow in his hand, adorning a shimmering yellow garment, and ornaments embellished with gems.

Adhyatma Ramayana is an allegorical representation of the epic, presenting Rama as the supreme *Brahman* from an *advaitic* view. Siva tells Parvati that the recital of the *stuti* by Ahalya to Rama can purify a person, and bestow many worldly and spiritual benefits.

Sage Gautama's wife Ahalya was turned to an inert, invisible state, and the arrival of Rama was the only hope to restore her original form.

When Rama arrived, a speck of dust from his holy feet brought her back to her original state. The sight of Rama overwhelmed her into eulogising Rama in 23 *slokas* that give the essence of Rama *tattva*.

It was Rama's feet that freed her from the curse - the feet that purified the Ganga, and which was lovingly held by Lakshmi. He was the *Paramatma*, the prime origin of all beings, the indescribable One who manifests as many in this world.

Ahalya humbly says that it was beyond her capacity to fathom Rama's true form, and all that she could do was to bow down to him. She concludes her *stotra* with this *sloka* (verse 18) that brings Rama's form before the devotees' eyes.





INSCRUTABLE ARE THE WAYS OF DIVINE

Human mind is just incapable of understanding
how destiny works

There was a beautiful Krishna temple in a village. The all-beloved and blue hued Lord Krishna stood gracefully with a flute on his lips. Numerous devotees used to visit the temple for regular worship.

A sweeper employee of the temple was regularly observing the steady stream of devotees. He felt that the Lord constantly standing

with a smile on his face for blessing the devotees was a strain for Krishna. He felt concerned that the Lord never took any rest and was ever standing only for the benefit of the devotees.

One day, when he found himself alone in the sanctum of the temple, he gently asked the Lord with great sincerity whether he could relieve the Lord of His fatigue.

With his usual smile, Krishna asked him how he could do that. The sweeper told the Lord that if the Lord would change Himself into the appearance of the sweeper, and interchange the sweeper into the appearance of the Lord, he could take the Lord's place in the temple for a day and thus give Him some rest!

The Lord smilingly agreed, but told the sweeper a condition. The sweeper, in the place of the Lord, should be strictly silent and not interfere in anything that happened before him. In other words, the sweeper should agree to just remain a silent witness.

The sweeper agreed, and they changed their respective appearances and positions.

Later that day, a rich man came to the temple, and placed his fat briefcase containing cash on the

ground. He prayed to the Lord to bless him in his business ventures and left the temple, forgetting the briefcase.

Soon after, a poor, sincere devotee came to the temple, and prayed to the Lord. He offered a single rupee coin that he had with him, and prayed with closed eyes for better times for him and his family who were in dire poverty.

As soon as he opened his eyes, he saw the briefcase in front of him, and was convinced that this was God's gift to him in answer to his prayer, and left the temple with the suitcase.

A little later, a sailor came and prayed to the Lord to bless him before he left on a long voyage. As he was praying, the businessman who had forgotten the suitcase arrived there with a policeman, and asked the policeman to arrest the

sailor, saying he was convinced that the sailor had stolen his briefcase. The sailor protested, but the policeman refused to believe him.

The sweeper, standing on the pedestal in the sanctum in the place of the Lord, felt sad and compelled to protect the innocent sailor. So, he announced that the sailor was not the thief.

The startled policeman and businessman thought that this was some trick played by the sailor, and they felt more convinced that he was the thief, and he was arrested.

At the end of the day, the Lord returned and swapped the places with the sweeper, and asked him how the day had passed. The sweeper then related the happenings of the day, and how the sailor had been wrongly arrested.

The Lord asked the sweeper if he did not trust the divine force fully. Krishna explained that the businessman's money was obtained by unfair means, but the poor man was very sincere and offered the only rupee he had to the Lord.

The sailor was destined to die due to bad weather had he left on his voyage, but now he was safely in jail, and he would soon be set free once the policeman found that he was nowhere to blame for the theft.

The Lord told the sweeper that His divine plan covered everything in the universe, and that if one did his own duty well with total faith in the Lord, everything would be well.

जयोऽस्तु पाण्डुपुत्राणाम् येषां
पक्षे जनार्दनः ।
यतः कृष्णस्ततो धर्मो
यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ॥

*Jayostu pāṇḍuputrāṇām
yeṣām pakṣe
janārdanaḥ |
Yataḥ kriṣṇastato dharmo
yato dharmastato
jayaḥ ||*

Success be to the sons of
Pandur on whose side is
Janardana.

Where Krishna is, there is
justice, and where there is
justice, victory prevails.

Anuradha Sundara Raman
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Say it in Sanskrit

Here is a story to help you brush up with the 'ktva' and 'tumun' suffixes learnt in the previous lessons.

कश्चिद् भरद्वाजः केदारे नीडं निर्माय निवसति स्म ।

तस्य बहवः शावका आसन् । केदारे धान्यानि पचेलिमान्यभवन् ।

Kaścid bharadvājaḥ kedāre nīḍam nirmāya nivasati sma |
Tasya bahavaḥ śāvakā āsan | kedāre dhānyāni
pacelimānyabhavan |

यदा क्षेत्रस्य पतिः धान्यानि लवितुं आगच्छति तदा भरद्वाजः

अन्यं स्थानं शावकान् नेतुं निरणयत् ।

Yadā kṣetrasya patiḥ dhānyāni lavitum āgacchati tadā
Bharadvājaḥ anyam sthānam śāvakān netum niraṇayat |

स प्रतिदिनम् आहारं सम्पादयितुं बहिर्गच्छन् शावकान् एवम् अवदत्
'क्षेत्रस्य पतिः आगत्य यद् वदति तत् अवधानेन श्रुत्वा मां बोधयत' इति ।

*Sa pratidinam āhāraṁ sampādayitum bahirgacchan
śāvakān evam avadat 'Kṣetrasya patiḥ āgatya yad
vadati tat avadhānena śrutvā mām bodhayata' iti |*

एकदा क्षेत्रस्य पतिः पुत्रेण साकम् आगत्य क्षेत्रं विलोक्य एवम् अवदत्
'वत्स धान्यानि पक्वप्रायाणि । एतेषां लवने साहाय्यं कर्तुं शक्यानि
अस्माकं मित्राण्याहूयन्ताम् इति ।

*Ekadā kṣetrasya patiḥ putreṇa sākam āgatya, kṣetraṁ
vilokya evam avadat 'Vatsa dhānyāni pakvaprāyāṇi |
Eteṣāṁ lavane sāhāyyaṁ kartum śakyāni asmākaṁ
mitrāṇyāhūyantām' iti |*

तस्य वचनम् आकर्ण्य शावकाः सायं भरद्वाजं सर्वम् अवबोधयन् ।

*Tasya vacanam ākarṇya śāvakāḥ sāyaṁ bharadvājaṁ
sarvam avabodhayan |*

तत् श्रुत्वा स 'वत्साः इदानीम् अस्माकं न भीतिः । इतोऽपि तस्य वचनं
श्रुत्वा माम् अवबोधयत' इति उक्त्वा अपरेद्युः आहारस्य स्वीकरणार्थम्
अगच्छत् ।

*Tat śrutvā saḥ 'Vatsāḥ idānīm asmākaṁ na bhītiḥ |
ito'pi tasya vacanaṁ śrutvā mām avabodhayta'
iti uktvā aparedyuh āhārasya svīkaraṇārtham agacchat |*

तस्मिन् दिने क्षेत्रपतिः तत्र मित्राणि अदृष्ट्वा अवदत् 'तनय श्वः

अस्माकं बन्धून् साहाय्यं कर्तुम् आह्वय' इति ।

Tasmin dine kṣetrapatiḥ tatra mitrāṇi adṛṣṭvā avadat

'Tanaya śvaḥ asmākaṁ bandhūn sāhāyyaṁ

kartum āhvaya' iti |

शावकाः सायं पुनः भरद्वाजं वार्ताम् अकथयन् ।

'इदानीमपि न भयस्य आवश्यकः' इति वत्सान् प्रति अवदत् भरद्वाजः ।

Śāvakāḥ sāyam punaḥ bharadvājaṁ vārtām akathayan |

Idānīmapi na bhayasya āvaśyakaḥ' iti vatsān prati

avadat bharadvājaḥ |

अन्यस्मिन्दिने बन्धून् अदृष्ट्वा खिन्नः पतिः अवदत् 'वत्स श्वः

आवामेव धान्यानि लुनीवः ।

Anyasmindine bandhūn adṛṣṭvā khinnaḥ patiḥ avadat

'Vatsa śvaḥ āvāmeva dhānyāni lunīvaḥ |

भरद्वाजः तत् वचनं ज्ञात्वा शावकान् अवोचत् 'वत्साः अयमेव

अन्यदेशं गन्तुम् उचितः समयः' । तथा अन्यत्र शावकान् अनयत् ।

Bharadvājaḥ tat vacanaṁ jñātvā śāvakān avocat

'Vatsāḥ ayameva anyadeśaṁ gantum ucitaḥ samayaḥ |

Tatha anyatra śāvakān anayat |

अन्येषां साहाय्यं प्रतीक्ष्य वर्तमानानां कार्याणि न सिध्यन्ति ।

Anyeṣāṁ sāhāyyaṁ pratīkṣya vartamānānāṁ

kāryāṇi na sidhyanti |

A certain skylark, building a nest, lived in a paddy field. She had many young ones. The grains were green in the paddy field. The skylark had decided to take the children to another place when the landlord came to cut the grains.

She went out every day to collect food telling the children, 'You listen carefully to what the landowner says and let me know'. The landlord came with his son one day and said 'Son, the grains are almost fully grown. You call those friends who will be able to help us cut them'.

The children reported everything to the skylark in the evening. The bird said 'There is no need to fear now. Listen to his words further on, and let it be known to me.' So saying, she went away to collect food.

The landlord came with his son, and not seeing any friends there, told his son 'Son, you call our relatives for help.' The children reported this to the skylark in the evening. The bird told the children, 'Even now there is no need to fear.'

Not seeing the relatives on the next day, the disappointed landowner said, 'Son, we two shall harvest the grains tomorrow.'

Learning about this, the skylark said 'Children, it is the right time now for us to move to another place'.

The task will not be achieved for those who wait for others' help.



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Jagadguru Sri Mahasannidhanam performing puja on Vinayaka Chaturthi day



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