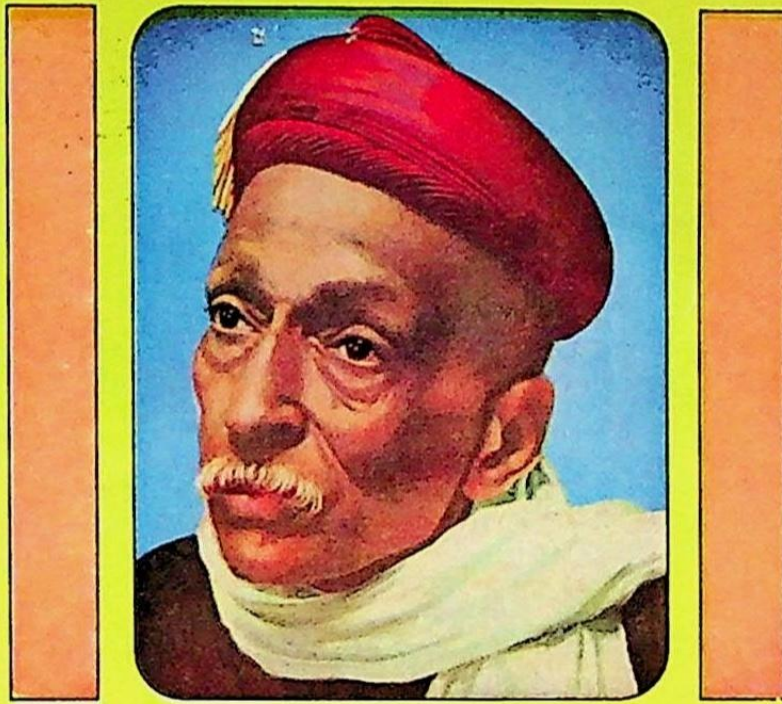


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PATHWAY TO GOD

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DEVOTED TO RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, MYSTICISM & SCIENCE OF YOGA*

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Editor :
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Prayer

to Lord Vishnu

(With Stanzawise translation in English)

नमामि सर्वं सर्वेशमनन्तमजमव्ययम् ।
लोकधाम धराधारमप्रकाशमभे दिनम् ॥१॥
नारायण मणीयांसमशेषाणामणीयसाम् ।
समस्तानां गरिष्ठं च भूरादीनां गरीयसाम् ॥२॥

My Salutations to Lord Narayan,
Who occupies the whole universe, who is the Ruler of the
universe,
Who is without beginning, without end & undiminishable,
Who resides in all (seven) Lokas i.e. celestial abodes,
Who is invisible and indivisible,
Who is the support for the Earth.
Who is smaller than the smallest (atom)
Who is bigger than the biggest and heavier than all celestial
bodies like the earth.

यत्र सर्वं यतः सर्वं सर्वमुत्पन्नं मत्पुरः सरम् ।
सर्वभूतश्च यो देवः पराणामपि यः परः ॥३॥

All that is here, all that is anywhere else is created in my
presence (Says Bramha) by Him.
He, who is the God of all living beings is beyond the
Beyond (परब्रह्म)

परः परस्मात् पुरुषात् परमात्मस्वरूपधृक्।
योगीभिश्चिन्त्यते योऽसौ मुक्तिहेतो र्मुमुक्षुभिः ॥४॥

He is the God Beyond, in the form of the Supreme Self,
Who is meditated upon by sages aspiring for liberation.

सत्त्वादयो न सन्तीशे यत्र च प्राकृता गुणाः ।
स शुद्धः सर्वशुद्धेभ्यः पुमानाद्यः प्रसीदतु ॥५॥

He, who is not touched by the worldly qualities of Satva,
Rajas & Tamas, who is purest of the pure,
Who is the most Ancient One, may please condescend to
bless us.

कलाकाष्ठा मुहूर्तादि कालसूत्रस्य गोचरे ।
यस्य शक्तिर्न शुद्धस्य स नो विष्णु प्रसीदतु ॥६॥

Lord Vishnu, who is pure and whose Might is not covered
by the worldly time measures like Kala, Kashtha, Muhurta
etc., may please condescend to bless us.

□ □

To study the Gita, as a practical guide from the scientific and rational point of view, much perhaps remains yet to be done. The Bhagawad Gita awaits a treatment of the type which Dr. R. D. Ranade has managed to give to the Upanishads in his Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy. With the latest theories and findings of science on cosmology, metaphysics, philosophy, psychology, physics and so on in the background, Dr. Ranade has tried to examine the teachings of the Upanishads.

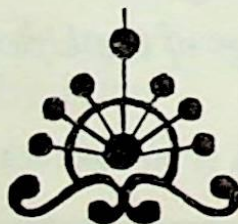
– R. R. Diwakar
in 'Gita in the light of Modern Science' by R. B. Lal.

SHRI GURUDEV DR. R. D. RANADE



Birth :
Jamkhandi
3-7-1886

Nirvana :
Nimbal
6-6-1957



Thus Spake Gurudev.....

The only criterion for the reality of a man's experience is himself and God and nobody else. No intellectual rule, no logical sequence can stand before him, either to support or to deny what he might say. The reality of his experience and the heights to which he has reached, are known only to himself and to his Maker.

- (The Bhagwadgita as a Philosophy of God Realisation P 236)

□ □

If you cannot deliver your heart immediately to God, then at least do this; think of God at least for a moment during the twenty four hours of the day. Then every moment you will spend in the enjoyment of God's happiness, will be of help to you in taking your mind away from sense. As when the autumn sets in the river dwindles, similarly your mind will gradually go out of the bounds of Samsara : and as, after the full-moon day, the disc of the moon diminishes every day, until it vanishes altogether on the new-moon day, similarly, as your heart will go out of the objects of sense and begin to enter into the Being of God, it will gradually end by becoming God.

- (Mysticism in Maharashtra P 115)

□ □

Modernity & Spirituality

The modern man of to-day has attained his progress through the evolutionary intellectual development of the primordial man. The first men who walked on the earth were in a situation entirely different from the world of to-day. With all the simplicity & innocence, man was an undifferentiated part of the whole of the synthesized world. The environment, the nature & the cosmos were together as a synthesized whole alongwith the human species. Man was in harmony with all. Man had instinctive knowledge about all his surroundings, the plants, animals & the inanimate world of rivers, seas, oceans & mountains. He was aware of the forces of nature & the cosmos through direct perception. He might have got scared of calamities like earth-quakes, lightnings, storms, typhoons & the like and might have prayed to the Superior powers that he imagined to exist, to save him from the catastrophies. He might not have discovered, the law of gravity, nor the laws of the movement of celestial bodies, but he was aware of the forces & phenomena that occurred

in nature. In his amazement of the vastness and varied nature of his surroundings, he was intuitively aware of some super powers that would exist to look after the world & prayed to them for his well-being.

His consciousness probably embraced the whole surrounding world, which developed his instinctive & intuitive knowledge. He had the instinctive knowledge of the medicinal properties of the variety of shrubs, fruits, roots, leaves, tree-barks etc. to cure his ailments & diseases, as most of the animals do, in their case. Even to-day, despite the vast number of laboratories & libraries, medical men & scientists are touring the forests of different continents in search of medicinal plants that the uneducated tribal people use to cure their ailments & diseases, that are known to them traditionally since ancient times.

According to the Indian Philosophical lore, after every great deluge, God recreates man with all the surroundings of nature. The almighty created Brahma, the Prajapati, who created Manu & Manu created the manavas, the human species. God was then known to man as the progeny knows the fore fathers. Man was the son of God and the son knew the Father. In the great time cycle of aeons (yugas), this was the case in the first aeon,

the Krita Yuga. Man was then in the ideal state of morality, purity of mind & heart, that was natural. Man was almost the embodied state of God. The disembodied souls in the seventh i.e. the highest stage are asked by God to take birth on earth, on recreation after the deluge. These souls i.e. the first men who walked on earth, were in communion with God through their universal consciousness. Their consciousness was one with the whole world & the cosmos. The learning & knowledge of these sages was intuitive & they taught the same to their disciples.

With the passage of time, man started differentiating himself as a superior separate identity from the surroundings. The physical man is constituted of the elements of earth, water, air, light & sky and is additionally endowed with intellect, mind & ego – the abstract principles which are unique & powerful enough to differentiate himself as superior to all his surroundings. With progressive development of the last three qualities, he could solve many problems and difficulties he encountered in his daily life, which supplemented his feeling of superiority. But this was, to some extent, at the cost of the universal spiritual fellow being with the environment, nature & cosmos, the universal consciousness diminishing into his individual self-identity. The son gradually & unknowingly started distancing himself from the father and considered

himself the master of all the surroundings and everything on the ground on which he walked. Thus started the human pilgrimage from the perfect to the imperfect, towards the physical material progress, straying farther & farther from the spiritual existence.

From the near perfect, almost Godhood state of man in the Krita Yuga, there was a gradual decline of the moral & mental disciplines and the true perception of God & spirit, during the following aeons of Treta & Dwapar. From what we learn through the historical sense of mythologies, though the rivalries between the various kingdoms through desires of supremacy, power & wealth resulted in wars & annihilations, this decline was limited, as the groups of sages dedicated to spiritual pursuits, unravelling the mysteries of cosmic doctrines & spreading their knowledge through their disciples, were left undisturbed.

The sages not only used to guide the society but also had the power & respect from the people, to rectify any King's rule, if the governance lacked in law, justice & altruism. About five thousand years ago, after the great Mahabharat war, this institution of sages disappeared, giving way to sharp decline in moral & mental disciplines and spirituality.

During the last two centuries, the progress of material sciences took roots in the social psychology and the belief in scientific visible proof surpassed the intuitional faith in religion & spirituality. The scientific progress during the last few decades through television, atomic energy, satellities, computers, genetic science has been at such a fast rate, that the current, age is aptly termed as the 'Modern age of Science'. Most of the scientists have however, expressed their belief, through their study of basic sciences like theoretical physics, chemistry, biology etc., that there is some super power seen in the intricate design in creation and sustenance of the Universe. Dr. Oppenheimer, the father of Hydrogen bomb said that when he saw the blast of the atomic bomb, he remembered the verse in Bhagwadgeeta which says "If the splendour of a thousand suns were to blaze forth all at once in the sky, even that would not resemble the splendour of the exalted Being". (दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य...) He had also remarked that the Vedic verse describing the everlasting undiminishable indivisible Parabrahma "पूर्णमदःपूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते" as nothing but enunciation of the well-known principle of "Conservation of Energy" in physics. As many spiritualists & yogies like Swami Vivekanand have said, science & spiritualism are complementary to each other.

In the end, Science will prove all the tenets of spirituality.

One cannot, however, ignore the fall-out of the scientific progress, adversely affecting the humankind through the huge industrial & economic complexes, into which the whole world is transformed giving rise to what is termed as Modernity. Man has not only lost the universal consciousness, but has also lost his individual identity & became a mere cog in the wheel of the gigantic machine. Peace of mind is replaced by worry of existence in this highly competitive modern world, loss of leisure, pursuit of inane pleasures, craze for disproportionate wealth, which in turn has given rise to a variety of addictions, psychiatric imbalances, suicides, criminality & terrorism. Man is unable to manage the industrial economic complex of the world for the welfare of the common man. This sad state of the society tending to disintegration cannot be overemphasized.

In contrast, the few tribes in the hilly forest tracts of north-east region of India are lucky as there is not much communication with the outside world, due to lack of roads. They produce their own food grains, store annual stock for each family, weave their own cloth, stitch their own clothes and lead a peaceful life with prayers to God and entertainment through their festivals & folk dances. Modernity has not reached them as yet.

What is the remedy for these perils of modernity? How to bring the society back of ethics, moral & mental discipline and value & merit based behavioural pattern? Looking to the rapid pace, at which the craze of modernity is engulfing the younger generation, the task is not easy. The effort to build up a spiritual society needs to be started with education right from the primary levels & higher up since a continuous training of the mind is essential during the younger days & sustaining the same in later life. The teaching of Sanskrit language & its verses in some of the western primary schools in England looks to be a beginning in the right direction, as Sanskrit and its literature does not profess any one faith as such, but tries to give a realistic insight in the active life of man leading to spirituality.

□ □

"To be a philosopher", "Said Thoreau, is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live, according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust". It was in this sense of the term that Gurudev Ranade was a great philosopher. As Dr. Radhakrishnan so rightly said, he lived philosophy while others talked about it; it was with him, not a mere intellectual exercise but the pursuit of wisdom, and what is more, a dedicated way of life.

*- C. P. Nair
in Bhavan's Journal*

The Vision of the Invisible !

Filled with Atmic power.

And lit with the light of intuition,

My heart perceives 'Him', as an invisible power

Abiding in the entire creation of the Universe.

I am only an atom of that great power,

And so are all human beings.

The countless stars and planets too,

Seem to possess that power alone !

Blind are the people,

As the blindest of the blind could be,

If they cannot perceive 'Him',

Who pervades the entire Universe.

The Universe that comprises of variety of forms,

Being filled with that mystic power,

Is in reality 'His Own Self'

Appearing in 'His Universal Form'.

Oh! How I find to my blissful joy,

That the humanity though of different caste,

creed and nationality,

Projects the picture of homogeneity,

Possessing the same power as that of the Universe.

There springs the fountain of Heavenly bliss,

When the Humanity is realised as the "Universal Self",

Bearing the stamp of His pristine qualities,

Of being omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient.

Oh! How splendid is the vision of 'Reality',

Perceived by me in the entire humanity !

And how I wish, that this blessed experience,

Is shared by one and all !

That marks the beginning of a New Era,

When the entire humanity, perceives its identity,

Not only with the variety of forms,

But with the "Universal Self" itself !

- K. K. Adkar

□ □

Kaivalya Upaniṣad

(Continued from last issue)

न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन
त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः ।
परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां
विभ्राजते यद् यतयो विशन्ति ॥३॥

A person does not secure immortality (= liberation) either through (performance of) actions or offsprings or wealth or mere abandonment. Ascetics enter into that (Brahman) which remaining in a cave shines beyond Heaven (3).

Expl. :- Sacrificial acts do not lead to Brahman. Actions rendering good to others like construction of wells, temples, lakes, etc. cannot work out salvation. Power of wealth is incapable to secure liberation. Mere abandonment of certain things such as giving up food also does not lead to Brahman. The word "prajayā" in the stanza suggests the life of a householder. A man having a successful life of a householder is not able to bring about release from mundane life. According to Kaivalya Upaniṣad, only ascetics (yati) who have abandoned everything are able to secure Brahman. The reason is simple: An ascetic can easily undertake whatever is needed to know Brahman.

Brahman the ultimate reality is immanent in the world and also transcendental to it. The words "beyond the heaven" indicate the transcendental nature of Brahman. Further, as the self of the universe (viśvātmā) (St.16), Brahman is

immanent in the world. Naturally it is inside the bodies of human beings. There it is said to be in the cave in the form of intellect.

Brahman is knowledge. Knowledge is usually compared to light. Hence here Brahman is said to be shining, with its light of sentience.

In ancient times, it was thought that asceticism is a prerequisite for redemption. Hence here it is said that the ascetics enter in the place of Brahman.

वेदान्त-विज्ञान-सुनिश्चितार्थाः

संन्यास-भोगाद् यतयः शुद्ध-सत्त्वाः ।

ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले

परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे ॥४॥

All those mendicants who have clearly and surely understood the meaning of the knowledge (of Brahman) stated in the Upaniṣads, and whose minds have become pure can reach through ascetic way the world/place of Brahman, after death, and (then) being fully immortal they are completely released (from the cycle of birth and death) (4).

Expl. :- The word "Vedānta" means the end-portion of Vedas i.e. the Upaniṣads which form the concluding part of the Vedas. The Upaniṣads mainly propound and discuss the nature of Brahman. After studying the Upaniṣads, one can very well understand the nature of Brahman. Then, thinking over the matter thus understood brings about certainty of the knowledge. For obtainment of such knowledge, purity of mind is essential. Purity of mind is obtained by the removal of passions like attachment, anger, hatred, avarice, etc. Just as there is clear reflection of face, etc. in the mirror from whose surface dirt has been removed, so also knowledge of Brahman is reflected in the pure mind.

After giving up all thoughts about mundane matters, the ascetics who have realised Brahman become liberated in this very life (For liberation while living, see verses Nos. 19-23). Then after death, they go to the place of Brahman, become identical with Brahman, and thus become fully freed. This is liberation after death (videha-mukti). Once this videha-mukti is secured, none is then ever subject to birth and death in this world. Those who are released after death are absolutely freed from the cycle of births and rebirths; there is no rebirth for them.

विविक्तदेशेच सुखासनस्थः, शुचिः समग्रीव शिरःशरीरः ।
 अंत्याश्रमस्थः सकलेंद्रियाणि, निरुध्यभक्त्या स्वगुरुंप्रणम्य ॥५॥
 हृत्पुंडरीकं विरजं विशुद्धं, विचिंत्य मध्ये विशदं विशोकम् ।
 अचिंत्यमव्यक्तमनंतरूपं, शिवं प्रशांतममृतं ब्रह्मयोनिम् ॥६॥
 तमादि मध्यांत विहीनमेकं, विभु चिदानंद मरूप मद्भुतम् ।
 उमासहायं परमेश्वरं प्रभुं, त्रिलोचनं नीलकण्ठं प्रशांतम् ।
 ध्यात्वा मुनिर्गच्छति भूतयोनिं, समस्तसाक्षिं तमसः परस्तात् ॥७॥

The sage staying in the last stage of life becomes purified (through proper method); (then) after devoutly saluting his own preceptor and after fully controlling/checking all his sense-organs, he sits, in a solitary place, on a comfortable seat (in order to meditate); he brings his neck, head and body in a straight line (5); (then) in his pure (visuda) lotus-like heart, he meditates on Śaṅkara (here identified with Brahman) who is free from the quality of Rajas, who is exceedingly pure, free from sorrow, unthinkable, and unmanifest, who is of infinite forms, very calm/peaceful, free from death, the source/cause of Brahma (-deva), who has no beginning, middle and the end, who is (only) one/unique, all-pervading, who is of the form of consciousness and bliss, who is formless, miraculous, who is accompanied by Umā/Pārvatī, who is peaceful/quiet, who is

Lord, Great God with three eyes and with darkened throat; and then (in the end) he (i.e. the sage) reaches Brahman which is beyond darkness, cause of all beings and all-witnessing (6-7).

Expl. :- Here the words "viśudam puṇḍarikam" are to be taken in the sense of locative namely "in pure lotus-like heart".

It has been already mentioned that only an ascetic is qualified for the knowledge of Brahman. He is here called "staying in the last stage of life". According to ancient Dharmaśāstras, there were four stages of human life namely a celibate, a householder, a vānaprastha, and a sannyāsin; the sannyāsin/ascetic was in the last stage of life-period.

This ascetic has to practise meditation on Brahman. Now, before he starts his meditation, he bows down to his teacher. In spiritual matters, a preceptor is the most important. An Upaniṣad remarks, "A person who has a teacher knows Brahman." A teacher being worthy of respect, he is saluted first.

Before undertaking meditation, restraint of all senses is absolutely essential. Further, for meditation, selection of a solitary place is necessary, in order to avoid external disturbances.

In a solitary place, one is to occupy a comfortable seat. Further, a comfortable posture of body is required to avoid physical trouble that can create disturbance in the process of meditation.

The ascetic meditates on Brahman. This Brahman is thus described here :- Brahman is devoid of the quality Rajas. Here Rajas is indicative of other qualities namely Sattva and Tamas. Hence Brahman is devoid of the three qualities namely Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Brahman is extremely pure, as it is

free from all faults/defects. The quality Rajas is responsible for grief/sorrow; it creates excitement and unsteadiness. As Brahman is without Rajas, it is free from grief, is calm/quiet, and is auspicious.

Brahman is without birth and death, as it has no beginning and no end. Brahman creates Brahmadeva, at the time of the creation of the world. Hence it is the source/cause of Brahmadeva.

Brahman is only one without a second.

Brahman is existence-sentience-bliss. It is *sat*, as it exists in all times - past, present and future. It being of the form of knowledge is *cit*, sentient, self-luminous. Further it is of the nature of bliss.

Though Brahman is one, it is all-pervading. It is miraculous, as it is different from everything in the universe. It is formless, as it has no visible form. Being the subtlest, it is unmanifest. But as it is present everywhere, it can be said to possess infinite forms. Further, it is unthinkable, as it does not come in the range of human mind.

Brahman is the source/cause of all beings. It is beyond darkness i.e. beyond ignorance/Nescience. Being immanent, it is all-witnessing.

This Brahman is here identified with Śaṅkara who is Trilocana; his third eye is in the middle of the eye-brows. His throat was darkened, when he drank the virulent poison springing from the churning of the ocean, by gods and demons. His spouse is Umā/Parvatī. Śaṅkara is the Lord, the Ruler, the Great God.

After meditating on such Brahman identical with Śaṅkara, the ascetic gets identical with Brahman.

स ब्रह्मा स शिवः सेंद्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट् ।
 स एव विष्णुः स प्राणः स कालोऽग्निः स चंद्रमाः ॥८॥
 स एव सर्वं यद् भूतं यच्च भव्यं सनातनम् ।
 ज्ञात्वा तं मृत्युमत्येति नान्यः पंथा विमुक्तये ॥९॥

That (very Highest Self i.e. Brahman) is Brahmā (=Brahmadeva); that is Śiva; that is Indra; that is imperishable; that is the supreme² self-ruler; that alone is Viṣṇu; that is vital breath; that is Time and Fire (or :- that is Kālāgni); that is the Moon (8); that is all that which had been in the past, (which is in the present) and which will be in the future; that is eternal. After knowing Him, the spiritual aspirant (or the ascetic) goes beyond the death. There is no other way (except the knowledge of Brahman) for securing salvation (9).

Expl. :- As, seen already, Brahman or the Highest Person or Self is Śiva. He is whatever had been, whatever is and whatever will be in the future. Hence he is said to be the same as Brahmadeva, Indra, etc. i.e. Brahman exists in their various forms.

There is nothing which is superior to the Highest Person; hence he is supreme and self-ruler.

In ancient days, some philosophers maintained that Kāla (=Time) is the highest principle. But according to Kaivalya Upaniṣad, Time³ is not different from Him.

After knowing Brahman, The knower goes beyond death i.e. getting freed from death and rebirth, the knower secures salvation. Liberation cannot be obtained without the knowledge of Brahman. "Salvation through knowledge" is one of the fundamental doctrines of Upaniṣads.

सर्वं भूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
 संपश्यन् ब्रह्म परमं याति नान्येन हेतुना ॥१०॥

A person who sees himself in all beings and who sees all beings in himself goes to the highest Brahman; this happens not by any means other than this (10).

Expl. :- Brahman is all-pervasive; hence it is present in all beings. Naturally a man who after realisation of Brahman has become identical with Brahman sees himself. (i.e. Brahman) in all beings and sees all beings in himself (i.e. Brahman). Thus a person who has realised that Brahman is everything (sarvam khalvidam Brahma) goes to Brahman and gets identical with Brahman.

Here it must be remembered that he who has realised himself as Brahman can see Brahman everywhere. Realisation of one's identity with Brahman is the only means for liberation and to see unity everywhere.

(To be continued.....)

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□ □

"Those who believe in personal God, believe in design. Those who believe in an impersonal Absolute, believe only in order".

- Gurudev Ranade

in A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy, P.189

"The Mystics of all ages and countries form an eternal Divine Society. There are no racial, no communal, no national prejudices among them. Time and space have nothing to do with the eternal and infinite character of their mystical experience".

- Gurudev Ranade

in Mysticism in Maharashtra, P.2

The Application of Santometry to Sri Shivalingavva

Sri Shivalingavva (1867-1930) is a great mystical poetess of Jat and perhaps the most prominent female disciple of the Saint of Umadi (1843-1914) and a spiritual sister of Gurudeo Ranade (1886-1957). Shri Gurudeo Ranade and some other followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya have compared Shri Shivalingavva to Sri Mirabai of Rajasthan, Sri Muktabai and Sri Venuakka of Maharashtra, Matosri Sharakka (1905-1986) and Mahadeviakka of Karnataka. A brief account of the same is presented below from the standpoint of Santometry (assessments of saints in relation to some other saints).

First, we shall see how Sri Shivalingavva's life has been compared to the life of Sri Mirabai. It is quite evident from the biographies of both Shivalingavva and Mirabai (the great lady disciple of Raidas) that they used to forget their worldly miserable lives by intensifying their devotion to Lord. In this connection, Gurudeo Ranade (1960 b:271-72) observes that in the prime of her youth, Shivalingavva lost her son and took to her spiritual practices with great zeal and as a result of her great devotion to God a new spiritual son was born to her. Mirabai, the great saint of Rajasthan, had also lost two of her sons, and perhaps she might have had such an experience which in a way enabled her to keep her spiritual life steadily progressing.

Now let us consider how Gurudeo Ranade has assessed the spiritual height reached by Shivalingavva, Muktabai, Sharakka.

Muktabai, the younger sister of the three brothers (Sopan, Jnanadeva, Nivrittinatha) is perhaps the greatest of the Indian mystical poetesses. Muktabai is initiated by Nivrittinatha in the spiritual line. As Janabai derived her poetic inspiration from Namadeva, similarly Muktabai derived hers from Jnanadeva. Janabai's place among the spiritual poetesses of Maharashtra is just next to that of Muktabai. Muktabai's samadhi is at Edalābāda (Ranade 1988 : 179, 205) Gurudeo Ranade in the following manner has compared the spiritual ability of Shivalingavva to that of Muktabai. Gurudeo Ranade in this context points out that there are many great and authoritative lady saints. But of all the great and authoritative lady saints the spiritual ability of Sri Shivalingavva and Sri Muktabai is unique (Karkhanis 1977:22).

However, there seems to be an exception to the above cited case. Matosri Sharakka - a great female disciple of Sri Amburao Maharaj (the spiritual brother of Gurudeo Ranade) has attained a greater spiritual height than even the spiritual height attained by Sri Shivalingavva and Sri Muktabai in the opinion of Gurudeo Ranade (Gajendragadakar 1991:39).

Finally, we shall proceed to see how Sri Shivalingavva has been compared to the most prominent female disciples or spiritual sisters of Ramadasa Swami, Jnanadeva, Prabhudeva by Gurudeo Ranade and Sri. M. S. Deshpande of Athani.

Venubai and Akka are the two female disciples of Ramadasa Swami the spiritual teacher of Chhatrapati Shivaji. Venubai is the author of the 'Marriage of Sita' and had a Matha at Miraj. She died in the presence of Ramadasa Swami. (Ranade 1988:373). According to Gurudeo Ranade what

KALEIDOSCOPIIC TABLE OF SANTOMETRY

Sl. No.	Name of the Saint	Compared to	Compared by	Aspect/s of Comparison	Remarks
1.	Shivalingavva	Mirabai	Gurudeo Ranade	Forgetting worldly sufferings by intensifying devotion	Equal (=)
2.	Shivalingavva	Muktabai	Gurudeo Ranade	Spiritual ability	Equal (=)
3.	Sharakka	Shivalingavva and Muktabai	Gurudeo Ranade	Spiritual height	Sharakka > Shivalingavva and Muktabai
4.	Shivalingavva	Venuakka	Gurudeo Ranade	Most prominent female disciples of spiritual teachers.	Similar position
5.	Shivalingavva	Muktabai Venuakka Mahadevi	M. S. Deshpande	— do —	Similar position

Venubaiakka was to Ramadasa, that was Shivalingavva to Maharaj (the saint of Umadi) (Ranade 1960 a:110). In this context Sri. M. S. Deshpande of Athani - a disciple of Sri Amburao Maharaj (1856-1933) echoes the same view of Gurudeo Ranade and adds a few more similar instances. M. S. Deshpande (1978:133) states, "What Muktabai was to Jnanadev, what Venuakka was to Ramadas, what Mahadevi was to Prabhudev, that was Shivalingavva to Maharaj (the Saint of Umadi)."

The table on page 23, mirrors the essence of all the aforesaid instances of Santometry.

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- 4) Ranade R. D. 1960, a : "Nityanemavali" 8th Edition, Athani, K. D. Sangoram.
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□ □

There might be limitations of body and mind so long as the saint subsists on earth, and hence we can never fully identify the Saint with God. On the other hand, when the Saint has left off his body, there is nothing to prevent his spirit from merging into the highest spirit.

- Gurudev Ranade

in Pathway to God in Hindi Literature, P.332

Bhagwadgeeta & its exposition by Sant
Dnyaneshwar

Chapter XIV गुणत्रयविभाग योग

The Father of all Beings. The Three Basic Modes of Life

श्रीभगवानुवाच -

परं भूयः प्रवक्ष्यामि ज्ञानानां ज्ञानमुत्तमम् ।
यज्ज्ञात्वा मुनयः सर्वे परां सिद्धिमितो गताः ॥१॥

Lord Shrikrishna said -

I shall again tell you about the Supreme Knowledge, the best of all knowledge, by attaining which the sages reached the highest eternal state, after leaving this world.

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Lord Shrikrishna said,

Oh Arjuna, I have told before in various ways about the Supreme Knowledge. But it has not removed all your ignorance. Therefore I shall again explain to you further about the same. The Vedas have chosen the word 'Para' i.e. Superior or Supreme, to the knowledge of our own real Self, because we know ourselves usually in terms of the transient, everchanging world, without perceiving the Real Self. The knowledge of the Real Self is the Supreme knowledge because it is like Fire while all other types of knowledge arising out of worldliness and duality are like fodder, which is burnt

away due to the Fire of the Supreme knowledge. The worldly knowledge is transient like a dream. The biggest stormy wind that rises in the sky, also disappears after a time. When the sun rises, the lustre of the moon & stars disappears. When the level of oceans rises & inundates the lands, after the Deluge, the difference between rivers & rivulets is of no account. Likewise when knowledge of The Self is realised, all the types of knowledge arising out of worldly duality disappear. Therefore, we call the knowledge of The Self as The Supreme knowledge. Oh, son of Pandu, the liberation from the bondage of the world, is easily available to us because of this Supreme knowledge & this is known from ancient times. When one turns one's mind away from sensual pleasures & worldly desires, it comes to a natural state of rest. Then, one is like a disembodied man, though having a body & when he casts off the body, he attains the highest state as mine.

इदं ज्ञानमुपाश्रित्य मम साधर्म्यं मागताः ।
सर्गेऽपि नोपजायन्ते प्रलये न व्यथन्ति च ॥२॥

Those who take recourse to this knowledge and attain qualities similar to mine, do not have to undergo birth at the time of creation, nor distress at the time of the great deluge.

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

Oh Arjuna, when they attain the everlasting state as mine, as perfect as I am, everblissful, always exuding truth, in short, similar in all characteristics to my nature, for them it is the end of all duality of the world and there is no difference between them & me. Their self and my Supreme Self are the same. In consequence, therefore, they don't have to take on a new body when I create the world anew, nor they get affected at the time of dissolution of the world. Thus, they go beyond the state of birth and death and attain my nature by taking refuge in This Supreme knowledge. Thus, The Lord

explained the importance of the knowledge in great detail to create interest in listening the same, in his beloved disciple, Arjuna. When The Lord saw that the attentiveness of Arjuna cannot be contained even by the sky, He said "To-day I have succeeded in marrying my daughter in form of my oratory to the marriageable boy in form of your attentive and responsive intellect". Thus pleased, The Lord said "I will now tell you how the three attributes of Goodness, Worldly desires, and Inertia & dullness (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) induce me to take on different forms to create this world through the mysterious action of Māyā, the Nescience". The seed in the form of my contact is sown in the cultivable land in the form of the world and helps in the growth of all animal life.

मम योनिर्महद्ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम् ।
संभवः सर्वभूतानां ततो भवति भारत ॥३॥

The great Brahma (Prakṛti, the source of all matter) is my womb. I cast the seed (the spirit) in it & from which all beings are born.

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

The Mahat-Brahma, the source of all matter in various forms is called Mahat (Great) because it is greater than the whole world & also because it undergoes mutations with a number of forms & attributes. The Vedant opinion calls it 'Māyā' while the Sankhya opinion calls it 'Prakṛti'. However, to be brief it is the deepest of ignorance, the Nescience. Oh Dhananjaya, it is the same ignorance that keeps us away from realising our Self. It is like the darkness that we do not see when we have a lamp in our hands. When we meditate on the nature of our Self, it disappears. When we continuously shake the milk, the upper layer of crust disappears. It is the same as the deep sleep, when one is neither in the state of wakefulness, nor in dreams state nor in the state of Samadhi

(spiritual trance). It is that state when the sky is alone without a wind. When we see something in front of us, but are unable to decide whether it is a tree - trunk or a man, when we are unable to see the true form of The Self nor are we able to decide what we actually see, it is that state of ignorance called Māyā. The peripheral state between day & night is called evening. Similarly, the peripheral state of knowledge between that of the Self and the world, is that state of ignorance. This state of ignorance, the Nescience, the Māyā covers the real nature of the Self from true cognition. The individual Self is the Real Self covered by this Māyā. The Real Self of the Creator, The Universal Self, thus takes on a variety of individual forms, coming in contact with Māyā and in this process, forgets its real nature. Thus the individual Self identifies itself with the outward form, which is due to Māyā, forgetting the Real Self residing within him. Like a poverty-stricken man, when mentally deranged, says he is a king or like a man, who wakes up from a faint & says he had visited heaven. Similarly, once the cognition strays away from Real Self, different imaginations arise to take shape what we call the world. Oh Arjuna, the origin of the world is in me only. An individual is one, but he sees so many things in his dream, as if a world is created by him for his dream. Similar thing happens, when The Real Self forgets its own identity. What happens when The Real Self re-discovers its own identity, will be seen later. But oh Arjuna, do not forget that the world is a form in the nature of a cover on the Original Real Self.

This 'Māyā' is like my married woman, who is without beginning and without end, youthful, unique and possessing many attributes. If you ask me about her form, she is formless, but she can spread herself far & wide. She is in contact with ignorance but far away from knowledge. When she sleeps with my Real Self, from Self-potency, she conceives to produce

an offspring that grows with eight fold worldly elements. When it conjoins with The Self, the first to emerge is the element of intellect. When the intellect gains strength, the mind is produced. Love of one Self which is an adjunct of mind, gives rise to ego & thence the five elements of earth, water, air, lustre & Sky (पंचमहाभूतानि), which form the body. The five senses and their objects of enjoyment are natural accompaniments of the five elements. When the senses & their enjoyments act, the three attributes viz. goodness, worldly desires & enertia (त्रिगुण) (सत्त्व, रज, तम) follow in effect. The corresponding inclinations & desires shape the life of the individual beings. When water comes in contact with the seed in the ground, sprouts shoot out from the seed & grow into plants & trees. Similarly, when Māyā comes in my contact, a number of sprouts start growing from it to create life on earth. Some create life through eggs, some out of sweat, some out of seeds & some out of coition. All these four types are in the embryo of the gross body of the Mahat (महत) produced by Maya on my contact. When the elements of sky & water are in excess, the foetus is born out of an egg; when there is excess of water & lustre, it is out of sweat; when the excess of earth & water, it is plant-seed; when all the five elements join together with intellect & mind, it is out of coition.

The Māyā thus gives birth, out of my contact, to a child whose head is the eight fold Prakṛti, whose stomach is the worldly desires, the back is renunciation, throat is the heaven, the mid part is world of transient life & below the waist are the lower regions of the world (पाताल) The hands, feet & fingers represent various regions of the different worlds which produce the eighty four hundred thousand types of beings. Māyā, the mother, nourishes this child with her milk of passions & desires, to grow into the form of the universe. The universe has to go through the three stages of creation,

maintenance & dissolution. The child, in the form of the universe, stays on the bed of the great deluge (महाप्रलय). After enjoyment of playing different games, it goes to sound sleep. When it is time to rise, it does so again in the ignorant state of nescience. Imagining different desires is the play of this child & knowledge of the Real Self is its demise. To tell you, in short, Oh Arjuna, this universe is created by my omnipotent Power, through Māyā.

सर्वयोनिषु कौन्तेय मूर्तयः संभवन्तियाः ।
तासां ब्रह्म महद्योनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता ॥४॥

Whatever forms are produced in all different wombs, Oh Kounteya, the great Prakrti (महत् ब्रह्म) is the mother and I am the seed-giving father.

Dnyaneshwar explains -

Therefore, Oh Arjuna, I am the Father, Māyā the Mother & the whole universe is our child. Though the Universe is my child, one sees so many different bodies in the world. But still, do not doubt my oneness with all of them, though each of them have separate mind, intellect & other elements that have gone into forming their bodies. The tree has some branches long, some short, some thick & some thin, but still they are one with the tree. A pot made out of clay has oneness with the clay. We take cotton, make thread & weave different coloured cloths & clothes, but still all have oneness with cotton. Thousands of waves rise on the sea, but they are all one with the sea. Flame & Fire are together. Likewise I have oneness with all the animate & inanimate world. Because the world is created out of me, One cannot say I have lost my Identity in the world. Even after creation of the whole universe I still retain my identity as Supreme Self. Whether the individual is covered by the limbs or the individual exists along with the limbs? I exist along with the

universe. I am not separate from the Universe. There is oneness between the universe & myself. Just like the clouds are seen because of Sun's light and also that the sun is covered by clouds, is also seen by sun's light. Similarly, though there are several different bodies in the world, they exist because of me & I have oneness with all of them. The individual talks of bondage & liberation from worldly existence, because of his ignorance. Oh Arjuna, I myself love my own existence in the body, feel the bondage & again want to liberate myself. The attributes which make one feel so, is the riddle, which I will explain to you in detail as to how many are these attributes, what are their characteristics and their effect on the individual self.

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसंभवाः ।
निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥५॥

Oh Arjuna,

The three characteristics viz Sattva (Goodness) Rajas (worldly desires) and Tamas (inertia & dullness) which have their origin in the Nature (called the three modes of Nature), bind down the individual Self in the body ceaselessly.

Sant Dnyaneshwar explains -

The three characteristics viz. Sattva, सत्त्व (Sublime Virtuous Goodness) Rajas, रज (Active worldly desires) & Tamas, तम (Inertia & dullness) emerge from प्रकृति (Mother nature) also called Māyā. These three main characteristics are really modes of mental attitudes, that arise in a man's mind on acceptance of the world-view because of Māyā i.e. Nescience or ignorance. If we take Sattva as the Purest like Gold, then the other two are gold with mixtures of base metals. The lowest is Tamas, while Rajas is of middle order. These states are like the three states of human beings viz. the childhood,

youth & old age. A man, overcome by sloth loses his sprightliness & succumbs to sleep. Similarly the three characteristics of Sattva, Rajas & Tamas overtake a man, who succumbs to them, because of ignorance. Having succumbed, his mental attitudes undergo mutations & his whole life is moulded accordingly, resulting in bondage of his individual Self ceaselessly throughout his life. How does it happen? It starts with pride of the body, then his total identification with the body, disregarding his individual Self, resulting in a false ego. This traps him in a series of pleasures & pains, happiness & unhappiness, which is an unending duality of worldly life. Then the condition of the individual is like an insect caught by the spider in web or like a fish caught by the fisherman with the hook, ultimately drawing him towards the inevitable death.

तत्र सत्त्वं निर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम् ।
सुखसंगेन बध्नाति ज्ञानसंगेन चानघ ॥६॥

Of these, Sattva, being pure, causes illumination and is blameless. (However) it binds (the individual Self) with attachment to happiness and attachment to intellectual knowledge.

Dnyaneshwar explains -

The Sattva, though pure & blameless, like hunter after the deer, draws the individual in his trap with enticements of happiness and intellectual knowledge. Once trapped thus, he boasts of his highest intellectual knowledge & his false ego grows further with self-praise that nobody is wiser than him in this whole world & drifts away from the knowledge of the Real Self. If somebody calls him a "Learned man", honours him with awards, it gladdens his heart & he enjoys the happiness, little knowing that he has strayed far away from the Real knowledge of the Self. However he feels himself

happiest, with his false ego growing skyhigh. Oh Arjuna, the individual self reaches this pitiable state because of the undue pride of the body. He develops proficiency in various activities related to worldly learning like the technicalities of performing a sacrifice (यज्ञ) and even the description of heaven. He thinks the moon of his intellectual skills has illumined the whole sky, which is but the imagination of his mind. As a matter of fact, the Sattva mode of Nature rides the horse, the individual Self, by putting the reins of happiness & intellectual knowledge in nostrils of the horse and keeps him completely under his control. In the next stanza, I will explain to you how the Rajas mode holds the individual Self in its bondage.

(To be continued...)

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One-pointed Devotion

A sparrow on a barge in the mid-ocean, when the tempest is raging high and the night is falling and when there is no other place to go to, address the ship thus 'Thou art my sole resort, O my Barge !' Even so the devotee regards God as his only Barge, on whom he is to rely and in whom he is to rest. There is no other place to go to. Where should the Sparrow go in the midst of the ocean? Wherever she casts her eyes, she finds only high seas and mountainous billows, similarly in the tempestous sea of life, the only resort for us is God..."

- Gurudev Ranade

in Pathway to God in Hindi Literature, P.127

Religion and Moral Agency

I

I do not have to tell you that there are many religions in the world, and further that every religion possesses several dimensions, such as the moral, the doctrinal, the legal, the social, the ritual and so on. In other words, the study of comparative religion, as they say in the jargon current in my field, is multitradeitional (i.e., it embraces many religious traditions or religions), as well as multidimensional (i.e., each religion embraces several dimensions of existence). I need hardly add that the study of moral agency in such a multitradeitional and multidimensional context can easily get out of hand and become unmanageable. I hope, therefore, that you will indulge me in two ways : 1) permit me to deal representatively rather than comprehensively, allowing me to refer only to a few religious traditions or to families of religious traditions, as the occasion requires; and 2) permit me to address only those dimensions of religion which have an important bearing on our theme of moral agency, instead of engaging all of them.

II

Once allowed such a concessive stance I discover that the question of moral agency is subject to both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies at all levels; that is to say, one set of forces seems to operate in such a way as to confer a sense of moral agency, while another set of forces seems to operate in

such a way as to take it away, so that we find ourselves acting at the point of their delicate interface. And this seems to be true at all levels.

Consider, for instance, the moral realm per se. The very fact that religions insist on telling us that we should act one way rather than another implies that they grant a sense of moral agency to us, for otherwise such exhortation would be meaningless. At the same time, however, by telling us precisely how we should act, by insisting that we act in a certain way, they reduce our sense of independence as moral agents. (In this they are like America, which not only wants other countries to be democratic and exercise the right to vote but also wants these countries to vote on issues in a way America approves of!) Again, all human beings seem to possess a moral sensibility, that is to say, a sense which distinguishes right from wrong, and all religions implicitly acknowledge this; but not all human beings agree on what is right and wrong and each religion has its own ideas about what is right and wrong, which may not always be in agreement. So once again, on the one hand a sense of moral agency is recognized but on the other attempts are made to channel this sense in specified directions.

At this point a particular fact needs to be taken into account. It has been proposed that, differences among them notwithstanding, there is more of an overlap among religions in the moral sphere than any other. This is important. Hume argued that in "matters of religion... whatever is different is contrary," so that each religion undermines the validity of every other religion by being different from them. It can now be argued, however, that in matters of morality, the situation is reversed, for if all religions urge us not to lie, for instance, then each religion becomes the proof of every other religion which shares this moral intuition. However, if all religions are

asking everybody to act in the same manner, such a collective exhortation again seems to constrain our individual independent sense of moral agency ! I am told that the same Chinese ideogram represents "opportunity" as well as "danger." It could then serve well as a metaphor for the predicaments of moral agency we are wrestling with now.

III

Let us move the discussion now from the moral dimension to the doctrinal. Once again one finds both centripetal and centrifugal forces at work. Most religions, at the doctrinal level, address the issue of the ultimate reality, which is addressed in personal terms as God in the Abrahamic religions and more impersonally as T'ien or Heaven, or the Dao in Chinese religions. The fact that it is impersonal does not prevent it from having grave personal consequences for us, however. Electricity is an impersonal force but quite capable of affecting us in a highly personal way, as we ruefully discover on touching the wrong socket with our hands !

But irrespective of whether the ultimate reality is visualized personally or impersonally, it is often portrayed as omnipotent. Thus it is said that a leaf does not stir or a sparrow fall without the will of God, and the will of Heaven regularly trumps human will in Chinese religions. Well then, what moral agency can one possess in the face of such an overwhelming will, be it of God or Heaven?

These are heavy odds. Yet most religions try to carve out a space for human moral agency despite these heavy odds. It is argued in Christian theology, for instance, that God, because He or She is omnipotent, voluntary withdraws this power from certain areas of human life. He or She can do so precisely because He or She is omnipotent, and does so because God would want the faith of human beings to be

freely offered to God rather than extracted through coercion. Otherwise why create human beings and not automatons ! Similarly, in Confucianism, it is argued that there are things which lie within the power of human beings and things which lie outside it. Whether one is rich or poor, has a short or long life, or is successful in the imperial exams or not, lies outside of one's power and is subject to the will of Heaven. But whether one is a loyal subject or a dutiful son lies within one's power and constitutes the proper domain for the exercise of one's moral agency.

Religious traditions which accept the doctrine of karma and make the person himself or herself alone responsible for what happens in life would seem to escape this predicament – but such is not the case. It is true that they do not have to contend with the will of God or Heaven, but they have to contend with the weight of past karma, as it weighs on and weighs down the present, generating its own brand of determinism. However, once again moral agency is rescued from such a fate by the insistence in such doctrines that although *what* may happen to us may on occasion be determined by past karma, *how* we react to what happens is still in our hands and constitutes the space for generating new karma as an independent moral agent.

IV

The legal dimension of religion is another field which complicates our consideration of moral agency. On the one hand some religions, such as Christianity, for instance, free moral agency *from* the constraints of law-freedom here is freedom from law, particularly antiquated law. Other religions, like Judaism and Islam, insist on freedom for their followers too; but for them it is freedom *through* law rather than from law. How could this be possible? Consider traffic laws. Are

we not able to reach our destination more safely and quickly because traffic laws exist? Thus, religions which through their legal structures may seem to impede moral agency, on the face of it, paradoxically have the consequence of enhancing it in some ways, just as some religions might seek to achieve the same goal by bypassing law altogether.

V

Another serious obstacle to moral agency, at least on the face of it, is offered by ritual. Ritual involves observable repetitive activity almost by definition, which can easily degenerate into mere mechanical repetition or action, and ultimately into hypocrisy. Religions try to recover the lost ground here by focusing on the sense of agency as it pertains to one's interiority; hence the constant attempt to link action to conscious moral intention through a host of concepts such as *niyah* in Islam and *kavannah* in Judaism. In Buddhism karma is primarily defined in terms of moral intention in the same spirit. Would not mercy appear as a mitigation of justice rather than as a further expression of it, were it not for such considerations of moral agency and interiority?

VI

From ritual to ritualized social action is but a step. We all have our favourite examples to illustrate this point and mine is drawn from Mencius. According to the Confucian tradition one should not touch one's sister-in-law. This seems like a sensible safeguard to keep the vagaries of human sexuality from disrupting the extended family system, by keeping the tactile turning point in the relationship between the sexes in abeyance. So when someone asked Mencius: Do we observe this law when the sister-in-law is drowning? he basically called the fellow a dumbwit for asking such a question. Well, not quite. He said in effect that not to rescue

her under such circumstances would amount to effacing the distinction between being a human and being a brute.

So once again the social dimension of religion may seem to constrain our sense of moral agency, but to the extent that it is moral it will not allow itself to be trapped in a lifeless conformist denial of it. Once again then we see forces which impede moral agency interacting with other forces which assert it.

VII

How are we to relate this to issues pertaining to women? For too long the indivisibility of men and women as human beings has entailed the invisibility of women—an invisibility from which they will be rescued by the exercise of visible moral agency. Let me speak now for my own Hindu tradition. I think there is reason for hope. There is reason for hope because even in what are regarded as typically and irredeemably patriarchal texts we find chinks in their oppressive armour from which rays of light and hope steal through. The *Manusmṛiti* is considered a prototypically patriarchal text in the Hindu tradition, yet the two-hundred twenty-third verse of the Second Chapter states that all the commendable usages followed by women should be emulated by men. A text called the *Āpastamba Dharma Sutra* is one of the best known of that genre of literature. While discussing the question of doubtful points of law, it states that there are two schools of opinion in this respect. According to one the male members of the three higher castes should be consulted, but according to another view members of all castes as well as women should be consulted. This constitutes the last aphorism of the text, with which it ends.

It is clear that the first reference bears witness to actual independent moral agency exercised by women and the second

to the potential exercise of such independent moral agency by women. That such passages should appear at the very heart of patriarchal Hinduism suggests to me that the independent moral agency of women is irrepressible, if it breaks through texts which are said to deny it in so many ways.

So as I conclude I ask you: When the Prophet in the course of his famous Farewell Address declared that "my followers will never agree in an error," did he have only his male followers in mind?

I am happy to leave the answer in your hands.

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Degrees of Reality in Vedanta; Svapnika, Pratibhasika, Vyavcharika and Parmarthika. Thus the spiritual principle is the only substance in Vedanta, the highest grade of Reality. We have four grades of Reality in Vedanta. Though we speak of degrees of Reality they are in fact degrees of illusion. The grades are : 1) Svapnika - illusory creation of dreams, 2) Pratibhasika - illusions of Perception, 3) Vyavcharika - illusions of ordinary life, and 4) Parmarthika - the only reality being spiritual.

- Gurudev Ranade

in Vedas as Culmination of Indian Thought, P.31

The Bhagwad Gita is the deepest and sublimest production that the world possesses. I read it with a permanent feeling of gratitude towards fate that has kept me alive in order to study this work.

- Wilhelm Von Humboldt

Eternity Compressed in Time :
**My Reminiscences of
Shri Gurudeva**

(Continued from last issue)

Besides discussing the intoxicative element in the poem of Kudalureśa, Shri Gurudeva deals with a very fine poem of Puraṇḍaradāsa on the subject of divine lunacy viz., huccu hiḍiyitu yenage, 'I have gone mad'. Puraṇḍaradāsa possessed a better literary ability than Kudalureśa. So he has put his ideas in a more systematic manner, though the analogy of walls, clothes, and pots is common both to Puraṇḍaradāsa and Kudalureśa.

Puraṇḍaradāsa says, "I have become a lunatic; my brain has been affected by intoxication which has overwhelmed me on account of the wine of my own choice viz., "the Name of God." In a fit of lunacy of God-realisation he tears to pieces the clothes in the form of affection and illusion. Then he takes away the plaster of bad qualities from the walls of human bodies. Shri Gurudeva explains that every person indulges in bad activities since his very infancy, which results in their clinging to him as fixedly as plaster does to the walls. Next, the God-intoxicated saint breaks to pieces the pitchers in the shape of evils of human life. Moreover, he makes wicked persons the targets of his stone-throwing. He then takes away the flowers from the head of God Kesava, places them upon his own head and dances playfully like a child.

Shri Gurudeva here recalls the Biblical utterance of Christ that the Kingdom of God belongs to the child; so unless we become like little children, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. When the saint comes across devotees of God, he pursues them wherever they go. He falls at the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa with great affliction and torment on account of separation. In divine frenzy he moves about, crying aloud the names of Hari and Vāsudeva. In this context, Shri Gurudeva refers to a song of Mirabai in which a Gopī exhibits a similar state of God-intoxication. The Gopī went out to sell curds, but instead of crying aloud 'buy curds, ye, buy curds', she went on saying 'buy Hari, ye, buy Hari'. As a matter of fact, the Gopī was so much filled with the form of Kṛṣṇa, that she forgot the business of selling curds and began crying, 'buy Hari, ye, buy Hari'. Finally, the God-intoxicated saint leads a life of solitary independence. His only relative being God, he never bothers about his relations. Shri Gurudeva too says, "All our relatives are as a matter of fact, relatives only by sufferance, our real relative being God. The Upaniṣads have told us that 'everything should be dear to us, not for its own sake, but only for the sake of the Ātman' : Ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṁ priyaṁ bhavati. The mystic thus becomes a totally detached person, remembering God Purandara-Viṭhala and dancing with joy." (Pathway to God in Kannada Literature, p.289).

Shri Gurudeva concludes the topic of divine lunacy by an exposition of the Poem authored by saint Kalameśvara viz., 'Sadguru sākida maddāmi barutade', "here comes the God-intoxicated elephant tended by the great spiritual master". This God-intoxicated elephant performs some unique functions according to Kalameśvara. These are social, eschatological, and beatific. Shri Gurudeva calls Kalameśvara as a mystic of the activist type. He demolishes the misconceptions

harboured even by some great persons in human history regarding the role of a mystic, not to talk of persons belonging to ordinary run of mankind. These misconceptions are rooted in the belief that a saint keeps himself confined to a cloister and remains absorbed in so-called meditation in the seclusion of his dungeon unmindful of the sufferings of the toiling humanity. But the fact of the matter is that the saint is the most active person in the world whose heart bleeds for the ignorant humanity. He has the greatest concern for the suffering humanity, and his only single aim is to work incessantly for 'the relief of man's estate' by reminding us from moment to moment of the infinite glory of God whose very nature exhibits "final victory and infinite auspiciousness." As Shri Gurudeva puts in his inimitable words, "These God-realizers constitute a blessed community, and on account of their intense love for the afflicted mankind, they live only for its benefaction and betterment, proclaiming from pole to pole like a rumbling cloud, the eternal Gospel of God from everlasting to everlasting". (Ibid. p.314).

Coming to the social function of the God-intoxicated elephant, Kalameśvara says that it lifts up many of its compeers who have fallen and are suffering and struggling in the pit of saṁsāra. Shri Gurudeva here recalls "the Kheddā operation" undertaken in Mysore. In the Khedda, the elephants that are too much intoxicated are driven into a pit where they are allowed to famish almost to the point of death. Then a trained elephant brings out the weakened and tamed elephants from the pit. Analogically, the saint who has been trained by his spiritual teacher or God to lift up those who have fallen into the pit of saṁsāra, performs the function of 'uddhāra' or deliverance of those persons.

Another function of the saint spoken of by Kalameśvara is that he destroys the forces of evil represented by passions

of Kama and Krodha, and the aṣṭamadas or the eight vanities associated with wealth (Dravya), youth (Yauvana), woman (Strī), learning (Vidyā), good family (Kula), beauty (Rūpa), vocation (Udyoga), and food (Anna). He recognises the reality of Evil in the world instead of wandering in the dream-world, and actively engages himself in destroying evil. Shri Gurudeva emphasises the realistic and the activistic role of the saint as against the inactive and pessimistic function attributed generally to saints.

According to Kalameśvara the realised saint puts a stop to the further process of life and death. Continuing the analogy of intoxicated elephant, the poet tells us that the elephant takes its stand at the square where four roads meet in such a way that it blocks all the four roads. It makes it impossible for any one to move from one direction to another. Similarly, the saint blocks the passages leading to life and death, and thereby secures deliverance of the people from the rounds of birth and death. This is verily the eschatological function performed by the God-intoxicated saint.

Shri Gurudeva explains that after destroying evil, the saint begins to enjoy the bliss that is hidden in himself. This beatific psychological condition expresses itself in certain physiological activities of the God-intoxicated saint. He looks at the sky. Shri Gurudeva remarks that the significance of this act of looking at the sky should be known to every spiritual aspirant. As such it needs no clarification. The saint further swallows up his prāṇa or breath for the purpose of meditation. Then he moves along producing sonorous sound. Finally, he describes the figure of 'AUM' on his forehead. Of course, Kalameśvara here continues the analogical representation of the saint by an intoxicated elephant. The elephant in great bliss describes the figure of 'AUM' on the background of his

four-cornered forehead. Shri Gurudeva surmises that the analogy of the realised saint with an intoxicated elephant "probably led Jñāneśvara at the beginning of great work (Jñāneśvari) to identify the figure 'Aum' with the elephant-God Ganeśa, and both with the Ātmarūpā : Aum namoji ādyā, Vedapratipādyā, jaya jayā svasamvedyā ātmarūpā, devā tūnci Ganeśu. "Salutations to thee ! Oh primiveal being praised by the Vedas Glory to thee ! Oh Lord, in form of Self, who can be realised by thyself ! Thou art Ganesa, my Lord !"

Shri Gurudeva, while explaining the final point in Kalameśvara's poem under consideration, says that "the only object of the vision of such an elephant is praṇavasvarūpa. The vision of the gracious Lord is the only thing that he has placed before himself, so much so, that by the continuity of this vision in beatific joy before his eyes, he becomes ultimately identified with the lustrous Ātman himself." (cinmayātmane āgi)." (Ibid. p. 292). If we take note of the spontaneity and eloquence of these remarks of Shri Gurudeva we can hardly fail to realise their autobiographical import.

I may point out here that my feeling about the autobiographical import of Shri Gurudeva's remarks given above got confirmed when I recently read Padmaśri Kākāsaheb Kārakhānis' book 'Shri Gurudevāñcyā āthavaṇi'. Sri Kārakhānis being a very close associate of Shri Gurudeva since 1910, his spiritual attainments can be easily gauged from the fact that he was one of the two great persons through whom Shri Gurudeva imparted the Name to spiritual aspirants, the other great person being Śri Kākāsaheb Tuḷapule. In his 'Āthavaṇi' (reminiscences) Kākāsaheb Kārakhānis recalls the remarks of Shri Gurudeva to the effect that all the books viz., 'Constructive Survey of Upanisadic Philosophy', 'The

Mysticism in Maharashtra', 'Pathway to God in Hindi Literature' and 'Pathway to God in Kannada Literature' authored by him are nothing but expressions of his own spiritual experiences, though they have been conveyed through the medium of the poem of different sages and saints. (Shri Gurudevāñcyā Āthavaṇī, pp.43-44). Thus Shri Gurudeva's own mystical experiences constitute the sublime subject-matter of his books.

(To be continued....)

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"Let me make my heart the seat for the Guru and let me place upon it my Guru's feet. Let all my senses sing the chorus of unity and throw upon the feet of the Guru a handful of flowers of praise. Let me apply to the feet of the Guru a fingerful of sandal ointment made pure by the consideration of identity. Let me put upon his feet ornaments of spiritual gold..... Let me place upon them the eight petalled flower of pure joy. Let me burn the essence of egoism, wave the light of self-annihilation and cling to the feet of the Guru with feeling of absorption.

- Dr. R. D. Ranade
in Mysticism in Maharashtra, P.50

At the Doorsteps of the Almighty !

[Article covering theme of the II 'Abhanga' in the 'Haripath' by Great Saint Dnyaneshwar]

We had tried to know 'Hari' through a process of churning of thoughts. Dnyaneshwar, says that, indeed this is the only process that leads you to know the ultimate reality. It is a process of elavation of thoughts where one thought conquers the other. The process involves knowing yourself and upgrade yourself through the process of 'Sadhana' and life itself is a media through which you realise yourself. Interestingly let us put the word you and spell it reverse way and you will spell it as 'Uoy' the pronounciation itself will reveal you that it reveals you owe yourself that is the life is not complete till you realise yourself. Dnyaneshwar says, that once the goal is fixed and the process of reaching it begins, do not think of different paths, which may deviate your attention. "वाया व्यर्थ कथा सांडी मार्गु" Dnyaneshwar further says, एक हरी आत्मा, जीव शीव समा, वाया तु दुर्गमा, न घाली मन. Dnyaneshwar leads the discussion on this process of self realisation by the lines. एक हरी आत्मा, जीव शीव समा. It is the highest stage where one realises that there is no difference between जीव and शीव. Gurudev has beautifully discribed this oneness of जीव and शीव while commenting on the Hindi Litterature. In one of the famous दोहाज this process of oneness i.e. non duality is discribed as below :-

लिखा पढी की बात नही,
देखा देखी बात !
दुल्हा-दुल्हन मिल गये
फिकी पडी बारात ।

In this Doha the state is perfectly described. It cannot be described in words, no encyclopedia can bring about the literal meaning of 'Hari'. It is to be understood. Once you know yourself, it itself is a grand meeting of you and yourself. i.e. once this oneness is achieved with the almighty rest everything remains meaningless. दुल्हा-दुल्हन, जीव and शीव, once they know each other the procession of several other thoughts only remains a बारात which will accompany you as an ornamental glory. The true glory of oneness to the almighty cannot really be described by any literal words.

This exactly is stated in these lines. Our true destination is achieving this oneness to the almighty. Dnyaneshwar says 'वाया तु दुर्गम्य न घाली मन' He says do not deviate from this process and also remember for once that the आत्मा, जीव and शिव are only the manifestation in different forms having only one reality.

The saints, world over, have always advocated the theory of 'कल्याण' that that is 'welfare' of the human beings. If we again relate this purpose of life to the theories advocated in the literature of the four vedas, six shastras and eighteen puranas as described in first lines of this 'Abhanga', we realise that the theories advocate only "a true welfare of human kind and nothing else". It is or can be understood by even the processes followed in the civil system today also. Every country has a law of its own which broadly envisages "A code of conduct". The code of conduct is nothing but the thought towards value based systems. There can be several times differences in understanding a precise language used in a particular law and whenever there are such interpretative

differences, recourse is taken to the 'Intentions of Legislature', i.e. yes, today also we accept that law is not the law but it is to be understood in the spirit of law. Similarly, the entire literature of the universal has to be understood in this spirit of universal motherhood of the human kind. This exactly is true realisation which is described by the term 'वैकुण्ठ' by great Shri Dnyaneshwar. Dnyaneshwar says that any interpretative interpretation will only lead to one single factor i.e. 'Hari'. This supreme तत्त्व of is everywhere. The human beings may have different forms but the humankind doesn't. भरला घनदाट हरी दीसे.

“त्रिगुण असार निर्गुण ते सार । सारासार विचार हरिपाठ ॥१॥
 सगुण निर्गुण गुणार्चें अगुण । हरिविणें मन व्यर्थ जाय ॥२॥
 अव्यक्त निराकार नाही ज्या आकार । जेथुनि चराचर हरिसी भजे ॥३॥
 ज्ञानदेवा ध्यानी रामकृष्ण मनीं । अनंत जन्मांनी पुण्य होय ॥४॥”

From Abhanga two to Abhanga three, we move in an elevated form itself. Dnyaneshwar is preparing us towards the process of 'sadhana' to reach 'Hari'. This process has to be activated on both physical and mental level. As we saw while discussing Abhanga 2, the first gift of 'manthana' was 'viveka' and we had described viveka as a degree above common sense but below surrender. Here the term "Buddhi"-the "intellect" has to be understood from different angles. What exactly we mean by the term 'we think'? What is this term 'Thinking'? What attributes does this term carry? Why is that all people do not think the same way? Whether thinking also is a process? Can the entire universe be brought to the same thinking level? If yes how? If not why?

When we start to dwell upon this situation, we can analyze several factors contributing to this thinking process. Some believe that a man is born with his 'Karma'. Some say that it is his past deeds that make him take a birth, some say 'nothing-contributes it is Srishti krama. Some say it is 'vasana'.

No one has really come out with a concrete analogy behind a birth of a man or woman. We go even in differentiating this birth in what we call it 'yoni' and we further believe that it is 84 lacs is the total of yonis on record. What can be a real cause of birth of an individual? Okay leave aside this thought for a while.

Let us turn to another topic as to why all men-human beings do not behave in the same pattern?, the same logic? The same thinking? Can you find a solution? Can these solutions also be uniform? Whether saints, world across, have a single thought? Do they agree amongst their philosophies? Then why Catholics? Why Protestants? Why Jews? Why Brahmins? Why Boudhas? Why Jains? Why Muslims? Oh no why Shiyas? Why Sunnis? Why Mujahidins?

Several sects, several religions, several philosophies. There is really no difference in the constitution of a human being whether you are there in America or in the India or in Japan. Your body requires sleep. Once you are asleep, America, India or Japan these terms become redundant. Take hunger! Wherever are you placed, your body demands food. The body does not distinguish between an American food or a Chinese variety. Yes here you may say that yes, the food 'Tastes' different. Exactly here we start differentiating between the two. Food is food, it serves the same purpose but what we say is that the taste differs! Who has created this taste? Wherefrom it has come?

In Hindu Philosophy this topic is studied in depth. Whatever we can aspire or feel we call it 'Sanskara'. It can be good or bad. It leaves its impact on mind and body. What exactly we mean when someone says that "Today I am little nervous!" It is a state where some feelings hurt your mind and disturbs your calmness. Your body reacts. Take example of

people having a high Blood pressure! Science has proved that thoughts alone are sufficient to increase your Blood pressure. No bodily exertion is envisaged. You become angry? What exactly you mean by the term you become angry? What is temper? What exactly happens when you say you lose it? Coming back once again, the focus is on state of mind. A smallest of a thing, but it has direct impact on mind. We call it 'Sanskara'. These impacts of thought called sanskaras over mind results into some 'form'. This 'form' of thoughts are popularly known as Guna's! And the Vedic Literature says that yes, it is these 'forms' or chain of sanskaras that is responsible for the tireless routine of the universe described by Vedas in terms of Utapatti, Sthiti & Laya. When a man 'acts', in science we say that the brain activates body which results into some action.

Hindu philosophy says that the impacts of different thoughts activate brain! They get together in some form. They can be good or bad but they are there. These forms are called 'Trigunas' which really control the activities of brain. These trigunas are Satva, Raja, Tama i.e. any thought getting activated can be grouped into either of these three gunas i.e. Satva Raja & Tama. To classify the thought into these Gunas also is a thought.

Then when we go to the root of reality the reality will be formless mind formless 'Chitta'! It is only we aspire a reality and reality is that we aspire! What exactly could be the form of formless! Nothing! Because once the thinking stops, it reaches its limitations or we can say the end point. It is this state of formlessness which is rated supreme.

Dnyaneshwar beings his third Abhanga with the lines that describe whole of the above description. "त्रिगुण असार निर्गुण ते सार । सारासार विचार हरिपाठ !" He says try to reach the

reality. Trigunas, though responsible for the activation of life, it is not true reality it is 'Asara'. The true reality can only be 'Nirguna' a thoughtless state. Interestingly we find the same description in Bhagvadgita in Chapter II where Lord Krishna tells Arjuna "त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन!" II/45.

Haripath is activation of process of judgement between the 'Sar & the Asar', the reality and the Fallacy ! 'सारासार विचार-हरिपाठ!' The second line begins or leads the discussion ahead with words "सगुण निर्गुण गुणाचे अगुण हरिविण मन व्यर्थ जाय!" He has tried here to study the roaming of mind over different thoughts. Like a detective following an individual - to know his moments - he travels with him un-noticed. Try to follow mind - like a detective - without making it known to the mind. Follow the chain of thoughts. One thought for fraction of second and the mind has changed its way! Follow it! You are on job of a detective. Look! Mind has another path of another thought! Follow it. You will find the mind changing its path or track even at fraction of seconds. Limitless paths, unknown tracks, tremendous speed! Mind has every capacity.

Dnyaneshwar says that once you know you have to rise above all aspirations, beyond all feelings, you have to control the mind from roaming around. How to control it? Once you know the probable destinations your mind can travel -सगुण- try to bring it to the original reality -निर्गुण- The next phrase used is still more interesting "गुणाचे अगुण!" An action has to be actionless!

"अव्यक्त निराकार नाही ज्या आकार जेथोनि चराचर हरिसी भजे"

Let us study this particular term from a mathematical angle. To compare with each other you need two figures - the duality. Then the process of comparison starts. One figure can be greater than the other & the other is termed smaller to the former. You can add, subtract, multiply, divide & put

the figures to different formulas, cross-formulas etc. etc. Do you know which was the original figure invented which gave a birth to mathematics? It is the figure 'Zero'! The world still rates '0' 'zero' as a supreme figure. It is 'Nirakar' but still anything multiplied by zero is zero and anything divided by it is infinity".

“अव्यक्त निराकार नाही ज्या आकार जेथोनि चराचर हरिसी भजे!”

It is such a figure that “जेथोनि चराचर हरिसी भजे! ”It has a power to bring the mathematics under control. It is possible because zero has non-duality as base. Its origin itself is rated as wonder-struck achievement in mathematics. When this origin transcends itself in different forms we get different figures. But the figures have a origin of zero i.e. 'Guna' has 'Aguna' at base and Aguna can be described only by 'Guna'. It has no other medium to get expressed. Any decimal expressed without any base figure, base is assumed at zero. Zero is “अव्यक्त, निराकार” but it has all the power to control. Assume thoughtless position in place of zero now. It is 'Avyakta' अव्यक्त, non described, formless! But it is the starting point of controlling mind, the starting point of control of the universe!

Dnyaneshwar says that once the thoughts begins to get conquered by the supreme thought of thoughtlessness, it is state of vacuum “रामकृष्ण मनी” And this state is not easily achievable. Tireless efforts, tireless keeping track of mind like a detective, cornering it on all of its weak-points, filling it with the thought of common good and rising beyond all, 'the Nirguna state', the state of mind being without thoughts, such state can only become due after series of births. “अनंत जन्मांनी पुण्य होय!”

(to be continued)

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BOOK REVIEWS

Vaiṣṇavi : Women and the Worship of Krishna

Edited by Steven J. Rosen, *Publisher : Motilal Banarasidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007, 1996. Pages : 301, Price : Rs. 195/-*

This book contains nine research papers written by leading western scholars, who shed light on the lives and teachings of some female saints of Vaiṣṇavism.

Mirabai, the embodiment of absolute devotion to Krishna lived in the sixteenth century. She was a member of the Rathor family of Marwar. She married Bhojraj Sisodiya of Mewar. She ignored all social expectations for Rajput women to live out her limitless devotion. Through the wide-spread popularity, of her songs, Mira has become more than a saint to be remembered. Mira cared nothing for family honour or shame and sang as well as danced fearlessly for Giridhari. She drank the poison offered to her as if it were elixir and remained unharmed. She disregarded all except God. She suffered for her devotion, but she was defiant. She kept company with holy men. Akbar along with Tansen came for the darśana of Mira. She then went to Vrindavan and met Jīva Gosvāmi. He had vowed never to look at a woman, but broke his vow to meet this great devotee. Then she went to Dwaraka and merged herself into the image of Krishna, never to be seen again.

In her songs Mira longs for the direct experience of union with the Lord. She is the perfect example of absolute

devotion in the face of insurmountable opposition. Mira has become a living presence in the religious landscape of India. Though decidedly religious and circumscribed within the bounds of existing social structures, the space created by Mirabai allows for spiritual and personal growth, for cultivation of talents, education and leadership and for the creation of a life beyond that of wife and mother for women.

One of the positive results of Chaitanya movement in Bengal was the elevation of the social and religious status of women. Women in Bengal have always enjoyed a comparatively higher status than elsewhere in India. This fact is both reflected in and supported by the existence of cults of feminine deities.

In the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) no discrimination is made between men and women. The movement's leadership teaches a view of equality-in-difference. Practical opportunities for advancement are supposedly made available for people according to their propensities and abilities. As in society at large, the practical outworkings of these theories and intentions are conditioned by a range of local, social, historical and psychological circumstances. This movement teaches spiritual equality.

The self-realization sought in the Hare Krishna movement is not primarily the liberation of the soul from the round of rebirth (samsara), although this is a by-product of the process, but the attainment and perfection of a relationship of loving service to God. Bhakti or devotional service is both the path and the goal. It is a path open to everyone. It is a path whose success is dependent not just on keeping the regulative principles, but particularly on a "service attitude", a position of surrender to Krishna, the spiritual master or guru and all the other devotees. Egoism, pride, envy and greed, whether they are directed to material or spiritual

attainments, are signs of deviation from the realization that one is by nature a servant of God.

The body is there to enable the soul to experience service to God. The opportunity of human embodiment is to be treasured for providing the soul with the occasion for liberation. Human beings may respond to God's call in a way that other living beings may not. Living out a spiritual path in which the body is used with care as a vehicle for liberation is extremely difficult. The way is full of material temptations.

The life of Bahiṇābāi, the seventeenth-century Vaisnava bhakta from Maharashtra seems quite ordinary when compared with the life stories of other women bhaktas. Bahinabai's life stands out, in some sense, because of its ordinaryness. She renounced neither marriage nor motherhood. Her songs reveal her anguish and uncertainty as she experiences the conflict between her duties as a wife and her desire to focus her devotions exclusively on her guru and God.

The Varakari tradition, which greatly influenced Bahinabai's own articulation of her spirituality, emphasizes the caring, affectionate and protective nature of God; thus Vitthal is often addressed by Bahinabai and other Varakari poets as a caring friend, a helpful brother or a nurturing mother (in this case God is addressed in the feminine as Vithai).

Bahinabai rationalized that the abuse she suffered at her husband's hand either must be some kind of test that God was putting her through, or else was due to some sin she had committed in a former birth. Bahinabai came through the worst of her physical ordeals spiritually strengthened.

Some abhangas of Bahinabai emphasize the importance of fulfilling one's duty, while others sing of the path and

realization of bhakti as "at the root of indifference to worldly things" and the very highest means of salvation. Her own life choices suggest that it is possible to live in the world, fulfilling one's socially prescribed duties, while cultivating knowledge, detachment and discrimination (viveka), which Bahinabai emphasizes as critical factors in the practice of bhakti.

Bahinabai preaches a path of living in the world but not being of the world. She recognized that "the life of business and the spiritual life can both go on happily together, if one cultivates goodness, attention and devotion. Bahinabai's writings and life provide an important model for the domestication of bhakti, its reconciliation with the world and with the orthodox tradition.

Bahinabai's spiritual wisdom was a strength and allowed her to live in the world and within the conditions of her household. She attained great spiritual enlightenment as she approached the ultimate stage, namely oneness with God.

The poetess-saint Āṅṅāl is the most famous female devotee in the world of Tamilian Vaishnava bhakti. Infused with passionate longing for union with God, her poetry is representative of the highly emotional devotion. She refused to marry a human husband, because she considered herself married to God. Mirabai regarded Krishna as her husband. Antal also regarded Krishna as her husband. But the songs of Antal are more erotic than those of Mirabai.

One bhakti tradition that illustrates the improvement in the position of women is the sect called Śrivaishnavism, a Vaiṣṇava sect in Tamil Nadu that recognizes the devotional poetry of Alwars (7th - 9th century) as the Tamil Veda and also the theological and philosophical writings of a series of Acaryas from the 11th century to the present. Srivaisnava women according to the traditional texts of this sect were to

be absolutely certain that surrender to God assured them of *mokṣa* (liberation) at the time of death. Srivaisnava texts often praise women as exemplary devotees.

An orientation of inclusivity, universality and equality is found in the hymns of Alvars. The Acaryas in their theological reflections have stressed the universality of means (*upāya*) and goal (*upeya*) for all devotees of Nārayaṇa. Srivaisnava women have had access to *Śruti*, because of the claim that the hymns of Alvars are the Tamil Veda.

Various religious acts that involve no special expertise such as chanting the name of God, offering flowers to Him, or serving Him are said to be a means for salvation. *Prapatti* means complete surrender to God. It is for everyone at any time. If people are thinking about fulfilling desires on the ordinary level (*vyavahāra*), they cannot selflessly and steadily direct their mind toward God.

In Srivaisnavism at the time of death a person is to focus his or her thoughts on God and view death as a joyous moment that initiates the journey from life on earth to Vaikuntha, the supreme Heaven. As the means is said to be non-different from the goal, in the sense that surrender to God is most likely to be reciprocated by God's grace as salvation, liberation is virtually guaranteed. In fact Srivaisnavas who have surrendered are to live in this world as if liberated. Srivaisnavism integrated a domestic and spiritual life for women. Srivaisnavas agree that being a householder and a spiritual seeker need not be mutually exclusive orientations.



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The Book of Life : by Roy Eugene Davis, *Publisher : Motilal Banarasidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-110 007, 1995. Pages : 157, Price : Rs. 65/- only.*

Roy Eugene Davis is a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda. He is a teacher of meditation practices and spiritual growth processes. He is the founder-director of Centre for Spiritual Awareness in the mountain region of northeast Georgia in the United States of America.

We need to know and live the Truth of ourselves : That we are spiritual beings with only temporary identification with mind and matter, not mere human beings with perhaps hopeful aspirations for divine status. Every person, even the spiritually unawake, is impelled by an innate soul urge to become increasingly conscious and have awareness restored to its original, pure condition. This is the final consummation of our right actions and spontaneous spiritual unfoldments.

We need to expand our consciousness and grow spiritually in order to be healthy-minded, emotionally mature and creatively functional. Sensory perceptions provide superficial knowledge of the environment, intellect provides more comprehensive knowledge, and intuition allows total realization.

Our hearts are stirred and even thrilled when we are made aware of the existence of noble-minded, completely selfless men and women who seem to us to be grounded in peace of soul, which can only be the result of their open relationship with God. We are certain they represent the ideal toward which we all are moving. And, hopefully, we aspire to be like them.

Live with the understanding that you are a spiritual being, innately superior to your thoughts, emotional states and environmental circumstances. Out of your awareness of who you are, your thoughts, emotional states, relationships, actions and circumstances are determined. Knowing this assume command of your life. You will then more easily

function as a self-responsible being.

Clear focused vision is required for absolute success, and nothing else should be considered or allowed to confuse your mind and disorganize your life. This will ensure that creative forces flow without interference from confused thought-processes, unstable emotional states, or involvements and behaviours which are not relevant to actualizing spiritual growth.

The world, while it exists, is false in that it is but an outer appearance of a subjective permanent reality. This is why seers teach that the world can be enjoyed but that attachments to it are to be avoided, if peace of mind and spiritual awareness are to be maintained. Blind attachment to, or dependence upon that which by its very character is impermanent, results in grief when the objects of attachment or dependence are removed by the inexorable transformations common to transitory circumstances. The recommended way to relate to the world is for us to play our roles in the light of understanding, while remaining focused on the ideal of facilitating awakened spiritual consciousness.

When sufficient interest awakens curiosity and inspires enthusiasm to learn and to grow, our innate abilities and creative forces quite obviously become directed toward the acquisition of suitable knowledge which can enable us to fulfil purposes. More, when we help ourselves, Something larger than we are provides us with resources out of the fullness of Itself.

Once committed to learning and experience, which practice can provide, it is not difficult to acquire higher knowledge and become God-realized. The important factor is to awaken to our full potential. Choosing the higher way results in surrendered commitment. Surrendered commitment

is the way of discipleship, and discipleship leads to enlightenment - full comprehension of the reality of God and liberation of consciousness.

Progress is determined by depth of holy desire, participation in spiritual practices and other wellness and growth enhancing processes and God's grace. Even if a devotee is new on the spiritual path and the goal of enlightened God-knowledge seems far in the distance, that perception itself is illusory because every soul is ever grounded in the unbounded field of pure Existence-Consciousness, which is the foundation reality of every soul and every thing. All that is needed is to learn how to comprehend this fact and realize it.

When the mental field is well-ordered or its operations are stilled during meditation or moments of transcendence, the light of pure consciousness shines clearly in the intellectual aspect of the mind, illumining it. Just as God is not limited by the cosmos, so we, spiritual beings, are not limited by body or mind when we are enlightened.

The ideal is for our increasing self-realization and the expanded states we experience. As this occurs, our powers of perception improve, psychological states undergo orderly transformation, and the body's nervous system becomes more refined and capable of processing higher states of consciousness. It is occasionally possible to experience transcendent states of consciousness. What is more desirable is to have higher states of consciousness persist during ordinary states of consciousness and everyday activities.

We may continue to be aware of mental function, feelings and the body, but we remain as the objective witness of these conditions. As superconscious states are purified as a result of surrendered prayer and meditation, mental

operations become naturally ordered, emotional states are harmonized, and undisturbed awareness of pure consciousness prevails.

The most useful advice to follow is : find the way that is most result-producing and persist in it. The important thing is to remember that spiritual growth experiences are between you and God. You need not then be influenced by opinions of unenlightened people or do anything that will distract you from your high purpose.

Once on the spiritual growth path, other obstacles may be encountered but cannot stand against right resolve, right application of known principles, and prudent exercise of common sense. The spiritual path is not one of escape from reality, but a more comprehensive realization of it.

Meditate daily to experience superconsciousness and to allow its healing, redeeming influences to flow into your mind, body and affairs. When superconsciousness is coincidental with your normal waking states while you are active, you will experience cosmic conscious states at all times. From this level of awareness you will steadily awaken to God conscious states and all necessary knowledge will be revealed to you.

When we meditate, we allow ourselves to relax and withdraw attention from external circumstances, while remaining alert. Then no longer disturbed by outer conditions, we are aware only of our moods and thoughts. When these become subtle and cease to be dominant, we can rest in a state of relaxed, alert awareness and experience preliminary superconscious states. From here we can proceed to more refined states of consciousness. Any meditation process we use is merely for the purpose of removing our attention from all that we are not, in order to experience what we are.

If love for God is the dominant urge to God-realization, prayer can be the most direct approach to contemplative meditation. For this, prayer for the purpose of God communion is the immediate accessing process. Simply pray from the heart until there is no longer any inclination to pray. Then, be still, absorbed in your love for God, and surrendered to God's way with you. Sit in the after-silence and tranquility of prayer for as long as inclined. Do not give up too soon. Wait upon God until you experience a soul response, until you feel soul satisfied.

Select a specific time and place for your daily meditation practice. Then and there be resolved to be alone with God, with no possibilities of disturbance or distraction. Choose to set aside at least one hour a day for prayer, meditation and divine contemplation. Even if you are a novice meditator, know that the relatively brief duration of time you invest in meditation practice will result in such an abundance of positive benefits that you will soon realize what a good practice it is. Maintain an attitude of alert watchfulness throughout, to ensure conscious participation.

Prayer at its best is interactive communion with God. The deeper we go into God's consciousness, the more we are led by it to pray in the most useful ways. "Admit your nothingness and God's allness." There is no need for conflict about this approach, for our ego-sense is only a false sense of being and must be dissolved or renounced if God's reality is to be known and expressed in our lives.

Live easily and enjoyably in the world but be attached only to God. That is the way of true happiness and real fulfilment. Even while enjoyably participating in life's drama, remember your ultimate goal of liberation of consciousness.

Be sure to meditate every day until you experience deep mental calm. Sit for a few minutes in the tranquil after-effects calm of meditation. During this interlude know that your inner awareness is illumining your mind and beneficially influencing your body. Extend your awareness to include your environment and feel yourself to be in harmony with the rhythms of Nature. Feel yourself to be in your right place in life's span. Be happy. Be thankful for the gift of life and God's goodness.

If you are elderly and know for certain that you are not long for this world, make peace with it and devote your time and attention to further spiritual growth, so that your transition will be easy and comfortable as you move to a higher plane of experience. For this a daily self-care regimen, removed from outer influences is the most beneficial. Remember that good intensions without skilful actions are impotent.

You will be pure in mind, motive and deed. You will be soul content, self-disciplined as a matter of choice, grounded in contemplative meditation, surrendered to God and will compliantly live with absolute reliance on grace. Exceptional powers, perceptions and abilities will be natural to you. All of these unfoldments and characteristics are natural to the spiritually awake soul.

The book is a must for those seeking spiritual advancement.

- Dr. B. R. Modak

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