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MOTHER'S DAY – MAY 12, 2024.

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www.MargFoundation.org

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A Path to Hindu Heritage

ISSN: 1556-5262 © The Marg Foundation

Annual subscription - \$25.00 ♦ Price per copy - \$5.00

Marg is published bi-monthly (6 issues a year) by the Marg Foundation to promote the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of Hindu heritage and values.

Views expressed in *Marg* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation, its directors, or the Marg editors.

Marg welcomes original articles for possible publication in the following areas: Dharma, Philosophy, Scriptures, and Culture; Hindu way of life; growing up as Hindu in America; Holistic living; problems and needs of multicultural Hindu families; and materials, including stories for the young readers

We also invite our readers to send their comments regarding the *Marg* articles, or about other issues falling within the scope of *Marg*. We reserve the right to select, abbreviate, and edit for clarity submitted materials to conform to the editorial policy of *Marg* and the available space.

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THE MYSTIC SCIENCE OF OM

(Part two)

Swami Jyotirmayanada

As we saw in Part One of this study (MARG V20N2), Om (A-U-M) was chosen by the Sages of ancient times as a perfect formula for attaining God-Realization, a mantra of highly condensed philosophy. Meditating upon this formula implies focusing your mind sequentially upon A, U, M ardha-matra and the and reflecting upon the implications and subtle meaning of each of these aspects of Om.

In part One we explored the reflection upon A, U, and M. Now we have come to the final aspect of Om—the ardha-matra.

ARDHA MATRA ASPECT OF OM

The fourth aspect of Om is the ardha-matra, a half-syllable that is represented by a vindu or point. It refers to the transcendental state beyond deep sleep, dream, waking and their positive counterparts of lower and higher samadhi. That state, wherein all these relative states of consciousness are transcended, is called Turiya, or the fourth state.

As we have seen in our previous study, in deep sleep the multiplicity of the world-process disappears. However, this temporary disappearance is not due to your realization of the fullness of the non-dual Self or Brahman, but to the fact that you are experiencing the absence of

all knowledge of time and space. That state is called avidya (ignorance).

When you enter dream, you are experiencing three factors that Vedanta refers to as the "triad" the dream subject, the objects of the world in which the subject finds himself, and the interacting experience between the subject and the objects through the mind and senses. All these three go to constitute the dream world, and all these three are unreal. The dream subject is unreal. The "unreal" you is involved in an unreal dream, experiencing pleasure and pain that are, rationally speaking, unreal. Although during dream you may have horrible experiences or very pleasant experiences, when you wake up all that becomes nothing. For this reason, you will not let your mind become completely trapped in the dream state. You have an underlying inclination to wake up from it.

The same philosophical understanding must apply to the waking state. In waking state, you again encounter the same triad—you as the subject, the world before you, and your interaction with that world through the mind and senses. Those perceptions you gather through your mind and senses become the fabric of your biography, your life story. Yet all the three aspects of the

waking triad are unreal, just as they are in dream.

Your personality in the waking state is not absolute. In this very lifetime, it has undergone many changes and will continue to do You had a different personality in your last life, many personalities through many lives. Your interacting experience with the objects of the world --indeed, the world itself—is not solid reality. Therefore, you are unreal as an individual, you are operating in a world that is unreal, all your expectations of happiness are unreal, and your experiences of pleasure and pain are unreal. However, knowing this merely on an intellectual level gives you little comfort when you deal with difficult problems each day.

But this knowledge is necessary for leading your mind to Enlightenment, for promoting vairagya (dispassion). It gives you an inkling of the truth and a sense of inner joy and freedom to know that even though you find yourself cramped by practical realities, there is an inner dimension in which you are untouched by all this.

The state that transcends the three relative states of consciousness—sleep, dream and waking—is named Turiya, which means "the fourth." That state is referred to as the fourth only

because you are counting the relative states. It is in itself the Absolute Reality, the Self. That Turiya never changes. Waking, dreams and deep sleep continue to come and go in a cyclical manner. Turiya is like a screen on which these three states are mere projections.

In a cinema show, projections create a world on the screen. Projections create the illusion of night when everyone is sleeping. They create the illusion of dreamlike experience—neither night nor day. And they create the illusion of a day when people are awake. But all that you experience on the screen is created by projections; nothing is real.

In the same way, all that you experience through sleep, dreams and waking, as well as through a process of reincarnation, is in the realm of Maya, projections. And projections require a sustaining reality that is never affected. That sustaining reality is your Essential Self. To wake up from the world of projections, to discover "I am That" wherein the three states are transcended — that is called Turiya.

When you experience Turiya, you realize nothing is real. Waking is not real, dream is not real, sleep is not real, the world of multiplicity is not real. If that is so, bondage is not real, and Liberation is not real. You don't talk of Liberation of the Self or Brahman. Liberation and bondage relate to the individual soul and the individual soul itself is unreal. Therefore, there is neither bondage nor Liberation.

However, this remarkable realization is experienced only through enlightened intellect. It is only upon waking up from a horrible dream that you realize there was no horror. While you are trapped in the dream world your experiences are very real to you. As long as the intellect has not been enlightened, even though you are in the state of Turiya all the time, your problems have not ended. You are trapped in a world, a dream within a dream. Only when you wake up from the long dream of the world-process through Enlightenment do understand your true identity as Turiya Consciousness.

Thus, meditation on Om—A, U, M, and the ardha matra—leads the mind gradually to the higher levels of samadhi in which all sublime truths are revealed. In this meditation, one constantly reflects on his higher nature and affirms, "I am beyond the body, mind, senses, intellect, ego—even beyond the vast realm of the unconscious. I am one with Brahman, the Absolute Self."

Obviously, you should not expect to complete the entire process this of reflective meditation in one sitting. It may take some time even to become established in the "A" aspect. But even though you are not fully established at this level, you may go on trying the higher aspects of reflection with the help of your feeling or bhavana. This is perfectly in order in sadhana (practice of spiritual discipline). Be patient and persistent and meditate on the formula of Om

again and again. Gradually you will ascend the ladder of Vedantic wisdom in the proper way.

MEDITATION ON OM IN THE LIGHT OF KUNDALINI YOGA

As a result of intense and profound medita- tion on the A-aspect of Om, you will gradually remove karma granthi, the involvement in karma that binds you to the physical body. That's the first great obstacle or knot that is to be united on the spiritual path in order to pave the way for subtler movement. In the language of Kundalini Yoga, this is the stage at which kundalini pierces the Manipura Chakra at the navel center and your spiritual journey has really begun.

As you advance in meditation on the U-aspect of Om, you begin to break Kama Ganthi, the knot of subtle desires that exist in the unconscious and glue you to your astral body. This is the stage at which kundalini pierces the Anahata Chakra at the heart center. As you go on breaking that knot, Divine qualities (Daivi Sampat) develop fearlessness, joyousness, serenity, equanimity of mind — all the great qualities that enable a human being to become a Saint.

As you continue your meditation on the M aspect of Om, kundalini continues to move up from your heart to your throat, and then finally to the Ajna Chakra between the eyebrows. When the kundalini has pierced the Ajna Chakra, the knot of avidya or ignorance is

broken. There is intuitional knowledge.

As a result of all this, the kundalini moves up to the Sahasrara Chakra, the thousand-petalled lotus at the crown of the head, transcending the three knots of the heart: karma at the navel center, Kama at the heart center, and avidya at the center between the eyebrows. Here there is full revelation of your identity with the Absolute. This is the highest fruit of meditation on the ardha-matra of Om.

Meditation on Om in the light of Devi Puja or Worship of the Divine Mother

The insight presented above from Kundalini Yoga is drawn upon poetically in the nine days of Devi Puja or worship of the Divine Self in its Mother-aspect. To help an aspirant attain Selfrealization, Devi or the Divine Mother tirelessly destroys all the obstacles on his or her path. In her aspect as Durga Devi, she destroys the gross obstacles (mala or impurities) that manifest in the physical plane. Like Lakshmi Devi, she destroys the subtle obstacles (vikshepa distraction) that exist in the subconscious and unconscious mind. Like Saraswati Devi, she destroys the subtlest obstacle (avidya orignorance)—the mystic veil obscuring the identity of the individual soul with Universal Divinity.

As you meditate on the A-aspect of Om, men-tally visualize Goddess Durga, who represents kriya shakti, the universal energy that operates in the physical

world. Feel that you are becoming one with the Devi and together you are removing all sense of physical limitation within you. Feel that the Divine Hand of the Devi, manifesting at the Manipura Chakra at the navel center, is resolutely untying the knot of karma that binds you to the physical plane.

Next focus on the U-aspect of Om and men- tally visualize Goddess Lakshmi, who represents "Iccha Shakti", the universal mental energy. As you feel increasing oneness with that Devi, feel her sublime power infusing your mind with spiritual strength and all Divine qualities. Feel your heart expand as the knot of subtle desires, which binds you to the astral plane, is lovingly broken by the Divine Mother.

Next focus on the M-aspect of Om and mentally visualize Saraswati, Goddess who represents "Inana Shakti", the energy of Divine wisdom, of Knowledge Absolute. Feel that Saraswati Devi, the giver of that Knowledge, is glowing radiantly at your Ajna Chakra between the eyebrows and that she is endowing you with the blazing light of intuition. Feel that Her divine Hand is shattering the illusion of the world-process with a single blow as the knot of avidya or ignorance is removed forever.

Now focus on the ardhamatra of Om and visualize the radiant Devi seated on the thousand- petalled lotus at the Sahasrara Chakra at the crown of your head. As your conditioned personality dis- solves in her

Divine Presence, you and the Devi become one in the bliss of Turiya.

OM IS IDEAL FOR ALL LEVELS OF MANTRA REPETITION AND MEDITATION

Since ancient times Sages have exalted the profound science of mantra—repeating different names of the Divine Self. Mantras are formulas that link your soul with God. Om is the mother of all mantras. Most of the mantras begin with Om such as Om Sri Ramaya Namah, Om Namah Shivaya, Om Sri Krishnaya Namah, Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Mahalakshmyai Namah, Om Mani Padme Hum. All mantras are considered extensions of Om. which is the basic mantra and the highest mantra.

You may choose Om itself as your mantra, and as you repeat Om feel the presence of the Divine Self enveloping you. This approach, however, requires more mental subtlety and an ability to enjoy abstraction. Otherwise. you may extend Om into a mantra such as "Om Namah Shivaya" and allow your mind to enjoy the image and form of Shiva and all that Shiva stands for.

With Om you are invoking God according to your concept, understanding, faith — enjoying the Divine Presence in a way that is consistent with your personality and spiritual evolution. Thus, Om is used for saguna upasana (meditating on God as the epitome of all good

qualities, with or without form) as well as nirguna upasana (meditating on God as transcending all human qualities, concepts, and forms while existing as the eternal and immutable Reality behind all these).

OM AS THE BASIS FOR NIRGUNA UPASNA

In nirguna upasana you are using Om for a reflective meditation—a meditation that is directed towards understanding "Who Am I?" Our reflection on the four aspects of Om (A, U, M and ardha-matra) is an example of such upasana. The fruit of meditation nirguna is the revelation that "I am not an individual personality. I am the Absolute Self'—that which has come down from ancient times in the biblical literature as God's voice ringing in the ears of Moses: "I Am That Am I." That "I am" is your target when you use Om.

In nirguna nirakar meditation, you meditate on God without qualities and without form. You come that abstract to understanding of God as the underlying Reality behind all, transcending all mental concepts, all names and forms. Upon such a God it seems trivial to superimpose any limited human concept of a quality. The human idea of compassion, for example, can in no way comprehend the mystic complexity of the allcompassionate Divinity. When you assert your identity with that transcendent Divinity or Self (Brahman) you are practicing nirguna meditation.

As you mentally repeat Om, reflect and meditate upon the following affirmations. When the meditation is intense, you may drop the repetition of Om and flow on with the profound feeling, experiencing increasing expansion of the Self.

Adopt some of these affirmations during the practice of meditation on Om. These powerful affirmations will the formation promote of "Shubha Samaras" the impressions of the perception of Self, the Cosmic the impressions of the glorious expansions of the egotranscending levels consciousness. Shubha samskaras "Ashubha will destroy the Samskaras" (the impressions formed on the basis of egodominated consciousness). Thus, you will be led gradually to higher and loftier states of personality integration, and finally to the glorious goal of Self-realization.

OM AS THE BASIS FOR SAGUNA UPASNA

Many people find it easier or more delightful to practice Saguna rather than Nirguna meditation while mentally or vocally repeating Om. You can meditate on God as "Saguna Sakar''—God with qualities and a form that enchants your mind. You may meditate upon your Ishta Devata (your chosen Deity such as Vishnu, Shiva, or Devi). Think of the Divine attributes of peace, bliss, compassion, beauty, infinite knowledge and power—all that the Divinity stands for in your awareness.

The Indian scriptures have generously brought out inspiring stories about Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Devi, and all gods and goddesses. In those texts the Vedic imagination is colorful and vivid. Not only does God speak to you, but he comes and dances before you, or sings, or plays a melody to delight your heart!

Therefore, as you mentally repeat Om, feel as if you have transported yourself to a sacred place far away from the world, a place where God is radiantly shining before you. Feel that your Deity is actually there with you, and you are basking in the living presence of God.

The next level as you advance is "Saguna Nirakar" — God with wondrous qualities, but no form. You are thinking of God in an abstract way. At the same time, you are expecting that abstract God to give to you his grace, help you to bear your problems lightly, resolve your doubts, guide you, lead you on to overcoming obstacles. That concept has been adopted in most major religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, where God communicates with people but never appears in human form.

In all forms of saguna meditation, it is bhavana or feeling that is most important. Allow your imagination to expand and your heart to become magnanimous.

TRY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE IN SAGUNA MEDITATIONS

As you repeat Om mentally, form a picture of your Deity

(Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus, Divine Moses, or any religious ideal according to your faith) in the deeper part of your mind. You may focus your mind at the heart center.

Feel that a Divine temple grows within your heart, and in it, seated on a luminous throne, there exists the Divinity, the source of endless love, power, and wisdom. Feel that you are adoring Divinity and coming closer to his glorious presence. As you mentally repeat Om, reflect upon the glories of God and feel that you are entering into God, as a river enters into the ocean.

Feel that various Divine qualities-fearless- ness, universal love, peace, bliss, wisdom, and dispassion—are flowing into your personality as an act of Divine Grace. Feel the sweetness of letting go the hold of the ego and relaxing in the infinite glory of God. Complete surrender to God leads one to the highest samadhi in no time.

THINK ON OM

Before you begin your meditation practice, you may keep a picture of the Sanskrit letter Om, and gaze at it, illumined by candlelight. Gaze at it without winking. When your eyes are tired. close your eyes,

then open them again. Gradually. You can develop steadiness of the eyes and mental concentration.

While gazing at Om, you may repeat Om mentally and feel its deeper implications along the lines of Jnana Yoga (the Yoga of wisdom) or Bhakti Yoga (the Yoga of devotion).

OM IS EVER NEW

Om is called Pranava, which literally means "ever new." In the beginning of your practice of meditation on Om, you may erroneously think that you have understood all about it and have reached the limits of reflection and devotion. But as you advance, you realize that the boundaries of Om are limitless. Even the implications of the very first aspect — the A-aspect — are so profound that you will be amazed as you continue to practice reflection on this ancient formula for attaining Enlightenment.

Suppose you have repeated Om a hundred and eight times. If your repetition has been performed with proper sincerity and feeling, the one hundred and ninth Om will be new, different from the one before.

Om is the highest support in spiritual movement. As you learn the art of repeating Om, you gain immense mental strength. You realize that great obstacles move away from you in an amazing manner and the world becomes conducive to your advancement.

That mental strength endows your face, your personality with a special effulgence. Allowing your mind to think constantly of material things deprives you of a special glow, a glow that you cannot get from any cosmetic in this world. Meditation on Om restores that Divine luster.

Every meditative repetition of Om is a jewel of immense value. Let the world not distract you from your practice. Nothing that you are doing in the world is of much significance. But every moment that your mind has been involved in feeling the Presence of God will stand out and give your life meaning and purpose. If that is properly understood, then repetition of Om becomes a lamp in your hand, ever-shining, showing you the path leading to Enlightenment.

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Excerpted from International Yoga Guide, Vol 58 No 10, June 2021 (pages 16-21) with permission from: Yoga Research Foundation.

6111 SW 74th Ave., Miami 33143. www.yrf.org – (305) 666-2006

As one thinks, so should one speak; and as one speaks, so should one act. For good people, there is uniformity between thought, speech, and action.

Volume 20, Number 3 May-June 2024

WHAT BEING HINDU MEANS TO ME

Dr. Jeffery Long

Anyone who sees me, who hears my voice, or who knows my name could be forgiven for not immediately assuming that I am Hindu. After all, roughly 93 percent of the world's Hindus live in India and an even higher percentage are of Indian descent. I, on the other hand, am a mostly Irish American, raised Roman Catholic in a small town in rural Missouri. So why am I writing here about what being Hindu means to me?

Contrary to popular belief, although the overwhelming majority of Hindus are born Hindu, it is indeed possible to become Hindu: to take up a Hindu spiritual path, to receive initiation from a teacher in an established Hindu lineage, or guru-shishyaparampara, and to live one's life in accord with principles rooted in Hindu traditions. Indeed, even though other traditions, such as Islam and Christianity, are widely seen as missionary traditions that grow through winning converts, most Muslims and Christians are also born to their religions. According philosopher John Hick, roughly 99 percent of religious adherents are born to the tradition with which they identify, or against which they, in some cases, react.

My own story, briefly, is of being raised, again, in the Roman Catholic tradition, a tradition to which I still look with gratitude for providing my initial spiritual formation in this lifetime, and for instilling within me certain values that continue to ground my life and my journey. When I was ten years

old, my family faced a crisis whose aftereffects still reverberate in our lives, even today, more than forty years since it occurred. My father, after whom I am named, was in a truck accident which left him paralyzed from the shoulders down. Our lives were shattered, especially my mother's and my own, by this event. For about a year and a half, we lived to comfort my father, who was left in a state of deep depression by this accident. He had always been an active person: a highly gifted musician and carpenter who now could no longer use his hands. Even basic actions such as combing his hair or brushing his teeth had to be done by us. We converted a room in our home into a hospital room where we could care for him, and where all the equipment that was needed for his survival could be kept and maintained.

After, again, a year and a half, when I was twelve years old, Dad left this world. He had an electric wheelchair which he was able to control with his mouth, which gave him some amount of independence. At first, with us accompanying him, and eventually on his own, he was able to freely navigate the streets of our small town. During one such venture, he was struck by a train.

Living through all of this at an early age prompted me to think very deeply about the big questions of life. Why does suffering like that of my father occur? What happens after we die? Did my father continue to exist on some other plane of reality or in some other form, or was his death not a

departure, but simply the end? The Catholic faith in which I was raised of course had many answers to these questions, many of which I found deeply comforting and continue to find comforting today. At the same time, I had a very strong sense that if I really wanted answers to my questions, I should cast a wider net than looking only at the teachings of a single tradition. I started to study the world's religions and philosophies, finding fragments of wisdom in every tradition I explored.

I found myself particularly drawn to the traditions of India. The answers they provided, in my view, seemed to provide a wider context for the insights I had already gained from Christianity and to go deeper regarding some topics, particularly the afterlife. I came to be persuaded of the reality of the phenomenon of rebirth (widely known as reincarnation in the West). A particularly dramatic encounter with the Bhagavad Gita when I was fourteen years old sealed the deal. I found in Hindu texts a wisdom that resonated with me deeply and drew me in. I read more and more books-whatever I could find on Hindu traditionsand was also befriended by a Hindu family in my small town, just a couple of years before I graduated from high school and continued my journey in college and graduate school. I took up a career of studying Indian philosophies and religions, met my wife (who is from India and was born and raised Hindu, but whose field of study is Japanese language and culture), and finally found my

true spiritual home in the tradition of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

What does being Hindu mean to me? To me, what it means to be Hindu is beautifully encapsulated in the welcome address that Swami Vivekananda gave at the start of the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893. In that address, Swamiji says several things that are as relevant today as they were one hundred and thirtyone years ago. He says, "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true." This expression of spiritual cosmopolitanism is something I have always found deeply compelling, and I find that it is echoed in numerous places in the Hindu tradition, going all the way back to the Rig Veda: ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti-"Reality is one; the wise speak of it in many ways."² The first time I became aware of this teaching, when I still identified as Christian, it seemed far more in keeping with the idea that God is love than the popular idea that all non-Christians are damned for eternity.

In his welcome address, Swamiji cites two other Hindu scriptures which express the idea of many paths to the one infinite reality: the *Shiva Mahimna Stotra* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. From the *Shiva Mahimna Stotra*, he cites a verse that reads, "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the

sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee." And from the *Bhagavad Gita*, he cites the following verse: "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me."³

If taken in tandem with the idea of rebirth, the ideal of universal salvation that is expressed in the Hindu scriptures just mentioned, and throughout the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, suggests a powerful integration of the ideals of divine justice and divine love. God loves us all and draws us ever onward toward a reunion of the individual soul and the divine Self. We will all reach this universal destination. At the same time, we need to learn lessons and right the wrongs we have done throughout cosmic time if we are to reach that state. We have, in short, potentially infinite second chances-as many as we need-to reach that which, in reality, has been within us all along.

Regarding what being Hindu means to me today, the concluding part of Swamiji's welcome address conveys this with great power. "Sectarianism, Swamiji says, horrible bigotry, and its descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilizations sent whole and nations to despair. Had it not been

for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."4

It is very important to bear in mind that when Swamiji points to the flaws in human beings that have led to destruction throughout history, he does not point to any specific religion or ideology. He points, rather, to three tendencies to which any of us may succumb under certain conditions: sectarianism, bigotry, fanaticism. We all, regardless of our religious affiliation or our worldview, must remain on guard against these tendencies. To me, being Hindu means being ever vigilant against sectarianism, bigotry, and fanaticism in all their forms.

This, in turn, means cultivating those virtues which are the opposite of these three vices. These virtues are delineated in the sacred works of many traditions. In terms of Hindu sources, the virtue that is the opposite of sectarianism is the cosmopolitanism which Swami Vivekananda has taught. Sectarianism is a tendency to separate ourselves from those whose views or practices differ from ours. Religious traditions divide into sects because adherents of the same tradition

¹ Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works*, Volume One (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), p. 3

² Rg Veda (1.164.46), translation mine.

³ Swami Vivekananda, Volume One, p. 4

⁴ Ibid.

find the views or the practices of some of their co-religionists to be so objectionable that they no longer regard themselves as practicing the same religion. The opposite tendency, cosmopolitanism, would involve seeking out those whose views and practices differ from ours and learning from them. This does not mean we will give up our own views and practices. But it does mean that we will see the views and practices of the other as enriching the totality of the human experience. I may not want to convert to the religion of my neighbor, but I am glad that my neighbor practices religion, because it makes the world a more beautiful and interesting place to inhabit. At the maximum, it could absorbing that which we find appealing in the thought and practice of our neighbor so that we may gain deeper insight into progress further spiritually than if we were practicing in isolation, or only with others of the same religious disposition. Swami Vivekananda mentions this when he says that his goal is not conversion, but mutual learning. He says, "Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid...The Christian is not to become a Hindu or Buddhist, nor

a Hindu or Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the others and yet preserve its individuality and grow according to its own law of growth."⁵

The virtue opposed to the vice of bigotry is open heartedness. This can be seen to be rooted in the ideal of ahimsa, nonviolence in thought, word, and action, proclaimed in such texts as the Yoga Sutra of Patañjali, as well as in the Bhagavad Gita itself. Ahimsa, in its roots, means "absence of even the desire to do harm." Our reflex encountering the other should be an open heart and mind, rather than simply assuming that because someone is a member of a particular religion, ethnic group, age group, nationality, or gender that they will necessarily have certain undesirable traits.

Finally, the virtue opposed to fanaticism is humility. If we are fanatical, it means we are so convinced of the truth of our own view that we are unwilling even to listen to another perspective, and we may even be willing to do physical or mental harm to those whose views differ from ours. But even if we are deeply convinced in the truth of what we believe (or else we would not believe, and would believe something else), it is always the case that there is more to learn, more to discover. The opposite

of growth is death, and fanaticism stems from an outlook which believes that no further growth in our understanding is needed or possible.

Being Hindu to me means far more than I have been able to encompass in this essay. There are entire topics that I have not even mentioned, such as the ways in which a regular spiritual practice, sadhana, ortransform one's personality and outlook on life, the aesthetics of rituals, such as puja, which make our beliefs concrete and heighten our ability to see the divine reality everywhere, or the profound psychology that underlies the four yoga. Given, however, the ongoing prominence sectarianism, bigotry, and fanaticism in human affairs, even one hundred and thirty years since Swamiji gave his welcome address, I find it particularly urgent to human survival that we learn to cultivate the virtues that will counteract these destructive tendencies-or "horrible demons," as Swamiji called them. "That is what being Hindu means to me."

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About the author: Dr. Long is Professor of Philosophy, Religion and Asian Studies; at Elizabeth Town College, Elizabeth Town, PA

Among the languages, the speech of the gods is the foremost, sweet and divine: Sweeter than poetry; Sweeter than any good saying!.

⁵ Ibid, p. 24

SWAMI DAYANAND SARASWATI "AN ALL-ROUNDER REFORMER"

By Acharya Dharma Dev

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (Feb. 12, 1824 – Oct. 30, 1883) was one of the greatest men that the world has produced. He was an embodiment of truth, purity, Brahmachaiya, fearlessness, and indomitable courage willpower. How true is the following description of Swami Dayanand Saraswati's personality as given by Shri Aurobindo — a Yogi and Philosopher worldwide reputation:

"Here was a very soldier of light, a warrior in God's world, a sculptor of men and institutions, a bold and rugged victor of the difficulties which matter presents to spirit. And the whole sums itself up to me in a powerful impression spiritual of practicality. The combination of these two words, usually so divorced from each other in our conception, seems to me the very definition of Dayananda. This was what he him-self was, a man with God in his soul, vision in his eves and power in his hands to hew out of life an image according to his vision". (Bankim, Tilak and Dayanand by Shri Aurobindo). It appears to me that Swami Dayanand was an allround reformer. He was a religious reformer, a social reformer, an educational reformer and even a political reformer, as I propose to point out in the course of this article mostly in the memorable words of many great thinkers of the East and the West.

RELIGIOUS REFORMER

Let me take up these different aspects of his life one by one and throw some light upon them. As a religious reformer, Swami Dayanand laid the greatest stress the worship of Omnipresent, Omni-potent and Omniscient God and denounced polytheism and idolatry. He raised his powerful voice against superstitious, irrational, immoral and pernicious ideas and customs that were prevalent in those days in the name of religion, such as, animal sacrifices, bigotry sectarianism pilgrimage with the idea of washing away one's sins etc. He never claimed to be the founder of any new sect but advocated a revival of the Vedic Dharma in its original and pure form.

Paying warm tribute to him as a great teacher and path maker, Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, Noble Prize winner, poet and philosopher of world-wide reputation wrote:

"My reverence to the great teacher Dayanand whose vision found unity and truth in India's spiritual history, whose mind luminously comprehended all departments of India's life, whose call to India is the call of awakening to truth and purity from inertness of unreason and ignorance of our past. I offer my homage of veneration to Swami Dayanand, the great path maker in modem India who through bewildering tangles of creeds and practices, the dense undergrowth of the degenerate days of our country, cleared a straight path that was meant to lead the Hindus to a simple and rational life of devotion to God and service of man."

Sir Saived Ahmad Khan, founder of the Aligarh Muslim University, paying his tribute to Swami Dayanand, soon after his death on 30th October 1883, wrote in 'Aligarh Institute Gazette dated 6th November "Swami Dayanand 1883, Saraswati's adherents look upon him as a devata and verily he deserves to be so looked upon. He taught the worship of One Resplendent Formless God and of none else. We were intimate with the late Swami Ji and always reverenced him extremely. He was such a learned and good man that he merited veneration at the hands of followers of all religions. He was a man whose equal is not to be found at this time in the whole of India."

Sir Yamin Khan KT. CIE., Exmember of the Central Assembly in the pre-independence days, wrote about Swami Dayanand in his well- known book named "God; Soul and Universe in Science and Islam": "Swami Dayanand Saraswati, a man of great learning started preaching

the old religion of the Vedas which conceived unity of God."

SOCIAL REFORMER

Swami Dayanand Saraswati was an ardent and bold social reformer. He fought against all social evils like child-marriage, hereditary caste system, untouchability, enforced widowhood, purdah (vail) system. low position of women, and others which were canting into the vitals of the Hindu society at that time, and which are still in vogue in some parts of the country, particularly in rural areas. Paying his tribute to Swami Dayananda as a social reformer, Romain Rolland. in his book on "Life of Ram Krishna Paramahans" ("Vie de Ramakrushna", 1929) wrote:

"Dayanand Saraswati was a personality of the highest order — Dayananda transformed into the languid body. of India his own formidable energy, his certainty. his lion's blood. His words rang with heroic power. Dayananda would not tolerate the abominable injustice of the existence of untouchables, and nobody has been a more ardent champion of their outraged rights."

"Dayanand was no less generous and no less bold in his crusade to improve the condition of women. a deplorable one. in India".

Neta Ji Subhash Chandra Bose writing about Swami Dayanand said. "He is certainly one of the most powerful personalities who have shaped modem India and are responsible for its moral regeneration and religious revival.

His Arya Samaj is clearly and unquestionably one of the most potent factors in rebuilding. reforming and rejuvenating the institutions of Hindu India. I for my part look upon him (Swami Dayanand) as essentially a religious and social reformer and a Karma Yogi. "

Dr. Winternitiz, a distinguished German Scholar paying his tributes to Swami Dayanand Saraswati wrote:

"If the founder of the Arya Samaj had done nothing else but roused his followers to a vigorous fight against the folly and dangers of the caste-system. he would deserve to be honored as one of the great leaders of men in modem India."

Dr. Sten Konow. Ph.D. of Norway, expressed himself thus on Swami Dayananda as a social reformer:

"There is still another feature in the Swami's work. which strongly appeals to European minds, the stress he laid on the uplift of the depressed classes. Also, here he showed himself as a nationalist with lofty ideals and high aims." Thus, we see how many distinguished inert of the East and West have acknowledged Swami Dayanand Saraswati as an ideal social reformer.

EDUCATIONAL REFORMER

Swami Dayanand Saraswati was not only a religious and social reformer but also an educational reformer. He knew that the system of education introduced in India by Lord Macaulay in 1834 was not meant to preserve

the religion and culture of India but as unambiguously put by Macaulay in his minutes. "English education would train up a chaos of persons. Indian in blood and color but English in tastes. in opinions and in morals. "

In other words. it was meant to Indians into turn Englishmen and to produce agents and servants strengthening the British Rule in India. Swami Dayananda, therefore, set before the people the ideal of the ancient Gurukul system of education based upon Brahmacharya (perfect purity and self-control) and the most intimate relation between the teacher and the student.

He laid great stress on the study of the Vedas and Vedanta, the Upanishads, Six Systems of Philosophy, the Ramayana, the Mahabharat, and other ancient Sanskrit literature along with the study of Science and Technology. He taught on the authority of the Vedas themselves that all men and women were entitled to study them. Romain Rolland, the most distinguished French savant, referring to this aspect of Swami Dayanand's life and teachings, has rightly remarked:

"It was in truth an epochmaking date for India when a Brahmin not only acknowledged that all human beings have the right to know the Vedas, whose study had been previously prohibited by orthodox Brahmins, but insisted that their study and propaganda was the duty of every Arya". ('Life of Shri Ram Krishna' P. 159)

He advocated the right of women also not only to study the Vedas, but also to teach and preach them to others. This elevated the position of women considerably and many Kanya Gurukuls like Boy Gurukuls, were started in different parts of the country. Patriotism and spirit of service and sacrifice were instilled into the minds of all students in these institutions. According to Swami Dayananda, "Education is that which is conducive to learning, civility, righteousness, and sense control and which frees men from the blemish of ignorance etc." He laid the greatest stress on character building and discipline.

POLITICAL REFORMER

Swami Dayananda Saraswati did not confine himself to bringing about religious, social and educational reform, but also awakened political consciousness among his countrymen.

Dr. Annie Besant, Ex-President of the Indian National Congress wrote in her famous book "India - a Nation" that "Swami Dayananda was the first to proclaim India for Indians."

Dr. Shyam Prasad Mukerjee in his Presidential address to the All-India Aryan Congress. held in Delhi on 20th February. 1944, rightly observed:

"The illustrious founder of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, in his monumental work – the Satyarth Prakash - dealing with all phases of an individual life and national life (with special reference to India) wrote his view, in the clearest possible language, on the political condition of the country. Thus, he observed: '

"At the present moment the Arvans - Hindus, through indolence, negligence and discord possess not independent, uninterrupted, and fearless rule even over their own country. Wherever rule is left to them is being crushed under the heels of the foreigners. When a country falls upon evil days, the natives must bear untold misery and suffering Say what you will; indigenous native (Swaraj) is by far the best.

A foreign Government perfectly free from religious prejudices, impartial towards ails the natives and foreigners, kid, beneficent and just to the natives like their parents though it may be, can never render the people perfectly happy."

Could there have been a clearer and bolder analysis of our political bondage? Swami Dayanand was the first in the last century to use the word Swaraj in the Political sense. He was the staunchest advocate of Swaraj and Swadeshi. He has used the word Swaraj in his book of prayers named Aryabhirinaya where one of the prayers is:

"O Thou King of all Kings, develop in us all the qualities of prowess, valor, courage, modesty, justness and the like, which are needed for Swaraj. Let us be the sole rulers in our land and let not the foreigners ever rule over us". He realized that the following were the main causes of the downfall of India and urged upon his countrymen to do away with them:

"Among the agencies that led to the foreign domination of India are intimal dissentions, religious quarrels, the loss of Brahmacharya, the loss disinterested pursuit knowledge, spread of premature marriage, the loss of speaking truth, addiction to material pleasure and pursuits and above all, the decay of the Vedic Lore." Laving stress on unity, he wrote: "It is only when brothers begin to quarrel with one another, that a third party comes in under the pretext of trying to compose the quarrel.

May God in His mercy rid us of this disease of disunity." In order to bring about national unity, Swami Dayananda urged upon all Indians to adopt Hindi as. the National Language. It is thus clear that Swami Dayananda was an all-round reformer. Let us try to follow his noble and universal teachings!

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Excerpted from Navrang Times Volume 6.09, July 1999 (Pages 9 - 11), Troy, MI..

The greatest value of having good people around you is not what you get from them.

But the better person you become just because of them!

NARI SHAKTI (WOMEN EMPOWERMENT)

Nisha Narayan (Rockville, MD)

नारी शक्ति का करो सम्मान, जिसने अपनी प्रबल ज्योति से किया उथान, दुर्बल समझ ना करना अपमान, नारी ने ही तो रचाया विधान ॥ हां वो नारी है वो नारी है

जीवनदायनी, जगजननी, ममता की अवतारी है, प्रतिभा और धैर्य की मूर्ति, खुद इतिहास रचाती है, गौरव और अभिमान से सशक्त, अपनी पहचान बनाती है ॥ आँचल मे किरदार समेटे, अनगिनित भूमिका निभाती है, सत्यमार्ग दर्शाने वाली, नित्य नए मकाम बनाती है, संस्कारों की खान नारी, धरती स्वर्ग बनाती है ॥ झाँसी की रानी बनकर, युद्ध में उत्तर आती है, अष्टभुजा से अलंकृत काली, अपराजिता कहलाती है, कर्म, निष्ठां, साहस से, अपना परिचय कराती है ॥ उसके होने से ही तो, संगीत में सुर और ताल है, पायल की झंकार बिना, जीवन सूना बेहाल है, नूतन युग के निर्माण में, सदैव उसका हाथ है ॥ शांत नदिया, निर्मल जल, विशाल उसका पाट है, स्नेह, प्रेम, करुणा से लबालब, गहराई की नहीं साध है, अरुण पथ पर कंचन रेखा, शिक्त की सौगात है ॥

हे नारी, चेतावनी दो समाज को, नर मानसिकता को अवश्य बदलना होगा, अन्धविश्वास के बंधन तोंड़, नारी क्षमता को परखना होगा, रूढ़िवादी विचारधारा को, शिक्षा से बदलना होगा, ॥

प्रजज्वल दीप से आलोकित होकर, नए दीप को जलना होगा, समाज को नया प्रकाश दे कर, नए रंगों से भरना होगा, नारी का सम्मान करना होगा, हाँ, उसे प्रणाम करना होगा ॥ हां वो नारी है वो नारी है ॥

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NARI SHAKTI (WOMEN EMPOWERMENT)

Nisha Narayan (Rockville, MD)

Regards, venerate that revered flame,
Of Woman's Power, that has elevated its name.
Scaling past every stigma or blame,
Setting a pattern of her own universal acclaim.

Yes, Woman it is, who bears continuing generations, With her undying love in reincarnated venerations.

Silent patience her virtue; honor and pride her story, Her personality carved from such elements, to reach that special glory.

> She cloaks and masks different roles, Setting herself innumerable variable goals.

And on the Path of Truths and Honesty, Creates innovative new milestones of Modernity.

Her treasure house of virtuous verities – blesses the earth to heavens, In the garb of Rani Jhansi – transforms a battlefield with her own weapons.

The eight arm adorned Kali transforms to Aparajita the queen conqueror, Reintroducing herself as a symbol of undaunted honor, spirit and valor.

Like the ever-steadfast faithful Savitri - her husband's personal shield, Yamraj himself had to bow to her with Fate and Destiny to yield.

'This Woman who makes all melody, the very tinkles of rhythmic bells, There's but despair and disarray in the world today without her binding spells.

Woman who creates the world anew, with Purity. Gentility in overflow, Over the vastness of life, turmoil, and strife – unmeasured in its known.

Inked with gold, on paths untold – she makes a powerful indentation, With sheer unfathomable empathetic Love, and affectionate fortification.

---- Woman, make aware -- make Man beware ----

Time for Man to acknowledge this new advancing force.

Break staid chains, recognize Woman - thus, her extreme potential endorse.

Use a path changing prefix - Light newer lamps with Wisdom wicks.

To an enlightened world, with a bright modern educational mix.

'This time to repaint the whole wide world.
With illustrious colors anew.
Let Woman prevail in her fresh entail!

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SPIRITUALITY - THE ULTIMATE RELIGION OF MAN

Swami Nirviseshananda Tirtha

The purpose of spirituality is to enable us to grow with the right knowledge about ourselves as well as the world, and to live a life of freedom and fulfillment.

There is a widespread misunderstanding that spiritual study and practice are 'mystic' and 'other-worldly', and necessary only at the end of our life. But in truth, the purpose of spirituality is to enable us to grow with the right knowledge about ourselves as well as the world, and to live a life of freedom and fulfillment. So, the earlier one takes the spiritual path, the better.

The goal of spirituality is to make us master of the world, by making us master of our own mind and intelligence. Right from birth, each day we become more and more a slave to the objects and the objective situations. Spirituality redeems us from this slavery, enables us to embrace any world situation with poise and unaffectedness.

It is wrong to consider spiritual practices as 'religious' in the conventional sense. In fact, Hinduism is neither a 'religion' nor any 'ism'. It represents the thoughts and experiences, discoveries, and conclusions, of a civilization on the path of its quest for the ultimate goal of human life as well as society. And the core of Hinduism is its eternal spiritual wisdom enshrined in the Upanishads. Upanishads are truly the record of experimental discoveries made by our Rishis, the

spiritual scientists of India, who researched into the ultimate Reality and discovered our Real Identity.

As the knowledge of Physics, Chemistry, or Mathematics does not depend on whether you are an American, African or Indian, whether you are a Hindu, Christian or Atheist, the knowledge of one's Real Identity, as revealed in the Upanishads, is also independent of one's racial, ethnic, and religious identity.

A God-believing person is a believer in his 'concept of God'. An atheist is also a believer, but in the 'concept of No-God'. Both of them are believers. They believe in some concept of their mind. This a priori belief stifles their enquiry. A seeker of ultimate Truth should start with no belief. That is why spirituality begins where religion concludes.

Why do we look for a Creator of the world? Because we find that everything in the world follows 'causality'. The causality we see all around makes us think that there must be a Cause' of the objective universe. But, the same rationality, which compels us to look for a cause behind everything, tells us that the very nature of causality is a never-ending chain, and the ultimate Reality, by definition, has to be beyond causality. Causality works within the ken of duality. But the ultimate Reality must transcend duality.

Or, in other words, there cannot be any 'objective cause' behind the objective

Universe. Then, how do we proceed to find the ultimate Reality? Is there any truth that transcends 'Objectude'?

Look within, to discover the transcendental non-dual Self, on which appears the "entire objective as well as the subjective".

So, as one takes to 'spiritual enquiry', the focus shifts from the external God to our deepest core within, to our Real Identity. The pursuit becomes one of integration and evolution of our own

personality. The truth being about our own Self, a mere theoretical knowledge either from the scriptures or from lectures will not be sufficient. We must discover the truth of our identity ourselves. We must live the truth.

"The goal of spirituality is to make us master of the world, by making us master of our own mind and intelligence."



Courtesy: Bhavan's Journal (December 31, 2015)

KNOWLEDGE

न चोर हर्यम न च राज हर्यम् न भ्रातृ-भाज्यम न च भारकारी व्यये कृते वर्धति एव नित्यम् विद्याधनम् सर्वधनम् प्रधानम्।।

Na chaura haryam na cha raja haryam; Na bhratra-bhajyam na cha bharakaree Vyaye krate vardhati eva nityam, Vidyadhanam sarvadhanam pradhanam!.

The Knowledge cannot be stolen by thieves, nor it can be taken away by kings.

It cannot be divided among brothers, and it does not increase load on your shoulders.

If spent, it indeed always keeps growing.

"The wealth of knowledge is the most superior wealth of all."

VIŚNU OR ŚIVA

The town of Pandharpur situated on the banks of Chandrabhanga River (Maharashtra) was famous for its temple of Viṭhoba, a form of Bhagavān Viśnu. In that town, a long time ago, lived a famous goldsmith named Narahari. He was a great bhakta (worshiper) of Śiva and he spent a lot of his time in worshiping lord Śiva. He always refused to offer his prayers to any other deity, also he refused to follow his other family members and friends to go to visit Vithoba temple.

Once, a rich merchant who had no son made a promise to Bhagavān Visnu that when he becomes a father, he would give a gold waistband for Vithoba's (Viśnu's) Murti to thank Bhagavān. His prayers were answered. Soon, a boy was born to him and his wife. To fulfill his promise, the approached Narahari merchant requested him to take the waist measurement of the murti of Vithoba for making the gold waistband. But Narahari, being a Shiva bhagat, refused flatly even if that meant losing the business. So, the merchant offered to measure it himself and bring the measurement to Narhari. He went to the temple, took the measurement, and then gave it to Narahari. Unfortunately, when the gold waistband was put around the murti, it was found to be somewhat shorter than needed. The merchant took it back to Narahari and requested him to add one more section to make it a bit longer. But this time the merchant discovered that the waistband was a little too long.

Annoyed, the merchant requested Narahari to go himself to the temple to take the measurement of the murti's waist. Narahari did not even want to see the murti of Viśnu Viṭhoba, but he agreed on the condition that he would go to the temple only if he was blind-folded. The merchant agreed to this condition. While Narahari was being taken to the Mandir with the blindfold, the pilgrims took pity on him for his foolishness for not seeing the beautiful murti. But Narahari would not change his mind.

There inside the temple, the blind-folded Narahari placed his tape-measure around the Murti of Vithoba. But instead of feeling the stone murti, he felt elephant skin, just like the skin that Siva wears on His waist. Narahari was a little shocked. He put the tape-measure around the waist again. But once again, he felt a murti of Siva with an elephant skin around it. Narahari was convinced that the foolish worshipers of Vithoba were actually worshiping a murti of Siva.

So, he took off his blindfold. But now he got a bigger surprise. He saw that he was indeed looking at the murti of Viṣṇu Viṭhoba and there was no elephant skin around its waist. He tied the blindfold again around his head and started measuring the waist. But once again, he

felt that he was touching the Murti of Śiva. Upon taking off the blindfold, Narahari now saw again that it was actually Viṭhoba and not Śiva.

Narahari understood what Śiva was trying to teach to him that Śiva and Viṣṇu are one

and it was foolish on part of Narahari to assume that he could worship Siva but totally ignore Visnu, because they are two different forms of one Brahman!

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STONE SOUP

There are many variations on the story of stone soup, but they all involve a traveler coming into a town beset by famine. The inhabitants try to discourage the traveler from staying, fearing he wants them to give him food. They tell him in no uncertain terms that there's no food anywhere to be found. The traveler explains that he doesn't need any food and that, in fact, he was planning to make a soup to share with all of them. The villagers suspiciously as he builds a fire and fills a cauldron with water. With areat ceremony, he pulls a stone from a bag, dropping the stone into the pot of water. He sniffs the brew extravagantly and exclaims how delicious stone soup is. As the villagers begin to show interest, he mentions how good the soup would be with just a little cabbage in it. A villager brings out a cabbage to share.

This episode repeats itself until the soup has cabbage, carrots, onions, and beets -- indeed, a substantial soup that feeds everyone in the village.

This story addresses the human tendency to hoard in times of deprivation. When

Imagine a world in which we all shared our gifts and bounty with each other, rather than focusing on self-preservation.

resources are scarce, we pull back and put all of our energy into self-preservation. We isolate ourselves and shut out others.

As the story of stone soup reveals, in doing so, we often deprive ourselves and everyone else of a feast. This metaphor plays out beyond the realm of food. We hoard ideas, love, and energy, thinking we will be richer if we keep them to ourselves, when in truth we make the world, and ourselves, poorer whenever we greedily stockpile our reserves. The traveler was able to see that the villagers were holding back, and he had the genius to draw them out and inspire them to give, thus creating a spread that none of them could have created alone.

Are you like one of the villagers, holding back? If you come forward and share your gifts, you will inspire others to do the same. The reward is a banquet that can nourish many.

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SAINT KABIR

Sages do not belong to any nation, community, cast or religion. They embody in themselves universal consciousness and, therefore, transcend all restrictions of race, caste, and religion. They are the property of the whole world because their teachings are universal. They are the sweetest fruits of the fleeting world process.

Such was Saint Kabira. He was born in an age when there were great conflicts in social, religious, philosophical, and cultural fields of life. There was general restlessness everywhere. People were torn by communal strife; Hindus and Muslims hated one another. The teachings of the Gita and the Upanishads were misinterpreted by the scholars of the time and life was estranged from the scriptures and religion. India was in great need of a powerful saint who would, by his personality, dynamic bring reorientation in the pattern of society and in the understanding of religion and philosophy, and would contribute to social harmony and peace.

THE BIRTH AND LIFE OF KABIR

Kabira was the answer to the problems A of the time. He was born about 1397 A.D. and lived until 1517 A.D. His exact time of birth and death is shrouded in mystery. Some of his followers believe that he lived for 300 years.

According to the followers of Kabira, he was of Hindu parentage. A brahmin widow

ii gave birth to Kabira and left her baby in a lake called Lahar near Benares. A Muslim weaver 1, named Niru and his wife, Nima, were attracted toward the babe by Divine ordination. They f adopted the child and brought him up as a 'Muslim weaver. The child was named Kabira, which means "Great" in the Arabic language.

Kabira was reflective from his very childhood. He studied the scriptures and served Saints and Sages. Although brought up by a 1 Muslim family, he was attracted to the Hindu religion and desired to become a disciple of Swami Ramananda, who was a well-known Saint in those days. However, it was difficult for him to approach Swami Ramananda because he feared that the Swami would not take a Muslim as a disciple. But his aspiration to follow the path of sadhana (spiritual discipline) became so intense that one day he found an easy method.

He laid himself at the steps of the river Ganges where Swami Ramananda used to descend to bathe in the waters. It was still dark. As usual Swami Ramananda passed down the steps and suddenly cried "Rama, Rama!" when his feet fell on the body of Kabira. Kabira, highly delighted, stood before Swami Ramananda and said, "Blessed am I to be initiated by you in Rama Mantra (the sacred name of Rama used in initiation). You are my Guru." At that moment Swami Ramananda accepted him as his disciple.

His foster father married him to a devoted wife, Loi by name. He had a son named Kamal. Sikandar Lodi was the king of Delhi in Kabira's time. Jhali, the queen of Chittor, was one of the disciples of Kabira. Tulsidas, Narsi Mehta, Vidyapati, and Mira Bai were some of the great saints contemporary with Kabira Das, as he become known. ("Das" is an expression of great humility, meaning roughly "servant.")

Kabira was fearless in criticizing both Hindus and Muslims in order to arouse in them true understanding of the secrets of life. He had a large following in both communities, Hindu and Muslim, and succeeded to a great extent in removing differences between the two groups.

beautiful legend, retold by Rabindranath Tagore, tells us that after his death his Mohammedan and Hindu disciples disputed the possession of his body, which the Mohammedans wished to bury, and the Hindus wished to cremate. While they were arguing, a vision of Kabira appeared before them and told them to look under the shroud. There, in place of his dead body, they found a beautiful mound of flowers. The Mohammedans then buried half of those flowers at Maghar, and the Hindus carried the other half to Benares to be cremated!

Kabira was one of the greatest mystical Saints of India and his life was full of miraculous deeds. He was a powerful philosopher and poet whose songs are still sung in thousands of homes throughout India. His greatness is still recognized in

the world of mystics, and his teachings are still vibrant with devotion, sincerity, and insight.

Kabira's teachings are a unique blend of devotion and wisdom. He combined Bhakti Yoga (the Yoga of Devotion) and J nana Yoga (the Yoga of Wisdom) to elevate the people of the world. His profound understanding of life and his deep spiritual experience lend charm and depth to his poems.

TEACHINGS

Kabira's teachings are founded on the truth that Brahman is one without a second. Brahman is the essential nature of man. Through ignorance one remains attached to his passing personality, develops egoism and egoistic action, and whirls in the wheel of birth and death. The highest goal of life is the attainment of one's essential nature through the removal of ignorance, through devotion and wisdom. Kabira encouraged his disciples to follow spiritual life in all its details. Here are some of his verses that reveal his experience, devotion and wisdom:

 The light has flashed, the sun shines in the clear sky,

The darkness is dispelled, Anahata music sounds.

Nectar showers down, Brahma Jnana has dawned,

The transcendental Absolute shines within.

The mind enters ecstatic meditation,

Through supreme love.

There is a lady living in the nether world.

She draws water from the inverted well, And rare is that soul

Who drinks that water. So says Kabira.

2. Everyone turns his mind to God During adversity.

But no one remembers God During prosperity.

If one were to remember God, during prosperity,

How could he be beset with adversity!

3. Rama is the wealth of the poor, Rama is the wealth of the wealth-less. This wealth cannot be stolen by thieves. It cannot be destroyed. It comes to one's aid in desperate conditions.

Therefore, while awake or lying down, sitting, or standing, repeat the Name without break.

This wealth grows more and more, day by day. It costs nothing.

At the time of death nothing goes with man, not even a penny.

Therefore, sayeth Kabira:

I have the wealth of the name of Ramn. What I have to do with the philosopher's stone?

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Courtesy: International Yoga Guide, www.yrf.org

MEMORIES OF THE SOUL

The effects of a past life can manifest in your current life in many ways, but they should be used as a tool, not an excuse.

Inside our subconscious lies our memories from past lives. Though we seldom remember even having lived these past lives, the experiences we had living them have had a hand in shaping who we are today. The effects of a past life can manifest in a later lifetime in many ways — phobias, self-limiting beliefs, physical problems, or innate creative abilities. Violence, death, and trauma in a past life may show up as fear, uncontrollable anger, or low self-esteem in this one, while positive experiences from an earlier lifetime may cause you to feel strongly drawn to certain people, places, or objects without knowing why. You may also feel drawn to a particular period in history, a seemingly unfamiliar locale, or a new person you've met who seems oddly familiar.

To discover more about your past lives, consider keeping a notebook where you can record anything that could be a memory from a different lifetime. Pick a time and choose a place where you can relax. Envision your body being filled with healing white light. Remember that nothing you see or hear will harm you. The significance of your past life memory may not be obvious until much later. You can make the most of your past lives by learning from them. While past life regression can be an exciting journey, it is not a substitute for living in the present where we are most needed — right here and now.

Courtesy: www.dailyOm.com

KARNA IN MAHABHARATA - HERO OR VILLAIN

Maharishi Sadhguru

In India, for people who are conversant with the Mahabharata, there is a whole culture where Karna is a kind of anti-hero. He is a sweet mango gone bad. He was a wonderful human being who had gone totally bad because he invested in bitterness. His bitterness took him into a disastrous life story. He was a man with a phenomenal sense of integrity and generosity, but all this was lost. He died in the battle in a bad way.

THE "LOW BORN KING"

He was resentful because he did not know whose child he was. But the people who brought him up did so with utmost love. His foster parents, Radha and Athiratha, loved him immensely and brought him up very well, the way they knew. He always remembered how much his mother loved him. "That is one person who loved me for who I am," he says. Out of his competence and the will of fate, he became Angaraja - the king of Anga. He got many things and was given a position and place in the palace. In many ways he was also a big king's sidekick. Duryodhana held him dear and took advice from him. He had everything that life could offer. If you look at his life, the fact of it is that he was a charioteer's son who became a king. He should have been really happy. A child who is found floating on the water grows up to become a king. Is it not a wonderful thing? But no, he did not give up his resentment. He was always unhappy and miserable because he could not come to terms with what he was being labeled as. Wherever he went, people referred to him as a Suta ("low-born") because of his ambitions. Throughout his life he complained about this. All the time, he nourished bitterness within himself about his so-called low birth.

This bitterness made a wonderful human being into such a nasty and ugly character in the Mahabharata. He was a great human being and showed his greatness in different situations, but because of this bitterness, in many ways it was he who turned everything wrong. For Duryodhana, it did not matter what Shakuni said or did, it was Karna's advice which always sealed the deal. After everything was decided, he would look at Karna, "What shall we do?" Karna could very easily have turned the direction of the whole story.

TRAGEDY AND SACRIFICE

His life went through various pitches of tragedy and sacrifice alternately. He displayed this sense of sacrifice continuously, but no good came out of it because he was destroyed by the one thing that mattered to him the most - he wanted to be somebody that he was not, at least in society. Maybe he actually was in reality, but as far as society was concerned, he wanted to be somebody he was not. Because of this obsession, he continuously blundered. He was an intelligent man. He had enough sense to

see that what Duryodhana was doing was wrong. But he was not just a passive participant, he was an active participant who goaded Duryodhana on, many times. Duryodhana's life could have been saved if only Karna used his intelligence rather than his loyalty and gratitude. He failed to use his intelligence and continuously went from one blunder to another.

A LIFE FULL OF WRONG TURNS

When Krishna came to sue for peace, he spoke to Karna. "Why are you doing this to yourself? This is not what you are. Let me tell you what your parentage is. Kunti is your mother, and your father is Surya." Suddenly, Karna broke down. He always wanted to know who he was and where he came from. He always wanted to know who it was who let him off in the river in that little box. Suddenly, he realized that he had been actively trying to nurture hatred towards the five Pandavas, even though it was not naturally so. Because of his gratitude to Duryodhana, somewhere, he believed he must hate these five people. Though there was no hatred in his heart, he worked it up all the time and came out meaner than anyone. If Shakuni said one mean thing, he would say the next mean thing. And he wouldn't stop there because he was always working up his hatred trying to prove his loyalty and be grateful for what Duryodhana had done for him. Somewhere deep inside, he knew that everything he was doing was wrong, but his loyalty was so strong that he continued to

do it. He was a wonderful guy, but he continuously made mistakes.

All our lives are like that - if we make one wrong choice, it takes ten years to recover, doesn't it? He never recovered because he made too many wrong turns.

WAS KARNA GOOD OR BAD?

Karna meets his end from Arjuna's arrow.

Existence is not making a judgment about who is good or bad. It is only social situations that try to judge people as good and bad. It is only individual human beings who try to judge you as good and bad. Existence never judges because it is not written anywhere that one thing is good, and some other thing is bad. It is just that if you do the right things, the right results happen to you. If you don't do the right things, the right things do not happen to you. I think that's perfectly fair. All the Karna fans think it is unfair that he should have been put through so much. I think it's perfectly fair. Society may not be fair, but the existence is perfectly fair - unless you do the right things, the right things will not happen to you. If existence was not like this, there would be no value for doing the right things or for human intelligence. Nothing that we value in our life would be valuable if you could do wrong things and still the right things happened to you. Life doesn't work like that!

Courtesy: https://isha.sadhguru.org/

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A Tale from Panchtantra

UNDER A COMMON DANGER - BEFRIEND YOUR ENEMIES

Once, in a forest lived a fat cat, living off its prey, rats, and mice, which always lived constantly avoiding not to be in the cat's line of sight. One day, a hunter came to the forest, and spread his net to catch small animals for his livelihood. Unfortunately, the cat was caught in the net when it was getting dark.

There came a mouse, which on seeing his arch-enemy cat trapped in the hunter's net, was gleefully happy. However, the mouse soon saw above an owl sitting on a branch of a tree, and a mongoose on the ground coming toward it, both trying to have their evening meal.

Mouse saw that his end was near, but quickly devised a plan. It got inside the net in which cat was trapped, and reassured cat that he, the mouse, would release him by cutting the nets provided he - the Cat - gives him shelter for some time.

The Cat saw that the only way for his release was with the help of the Mouse, who, under normal circumstances, would have been his meal for the day. He agreed to shelter the mouse inside the net but warned the mouse that if he failed to release him, the cat, he would not hesitate to devour him, even if he, the cat, would be caught by the hunter later.

So, here was the most unusual sight of a cat protecting a mouse inside a net, with an owl above on the branch of the tree,

and a mongoose on the ground each looking for the chance to catch the mouse.

Mouse thought: "If I am going to release the cat before daybreak, owl or the mongoose are sure to kill me, and so, I should not be in a hurry to release the cat anytime soon. Let me wait at least for Arunodayam (dawn)."

The Cat was impatient and became apprehensive that he would never be released. He was nagging mouse with threats of violence. Mouse asked cat to be patient. Eventually, there were signs of Arunodayam (dawn showing signs of light). Seeing light, owl and mongoose ran for their safety.

Mouse eventually sighted the hunter faraway coming towards the net. As the hunter approached his net, the mouse quickly cut the nets giving enough space for cat to escape, but not enough space or time for cat to make a feast of himself (mouse).

Both the cat and the mouse ran for their safety and freedom.

You can interpret this story any which way you want -- as a simple story to children or in terms of tense interplay among the family members, and friends or in terms of coalition building among the countries or even to understand what happens in the UN.

This story reflects one of Chanakya's Nitees – Political Strategies (4th Century BCE)!

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HINDU CALENDAR 2024 (VIKRAM SAMVAT 2081)

MAY (Vaisakh – Jyeshth)		JUNE (Jyeshth - Ashadh)		JULY (Ashadh – Shravan)				
04	SAT	Varuthini Ekadashi	02	SUN	Apara Ekadashi	01	MON	Yogini Ekadashi
05	SUN	Pradosh	03	MON	Pradosh	02	TUE	Pradosh
07	TUE	Amavasya	05	WED	Amavasya	05	FRI	Amavasya
14	TUE	Vrishabha Sankranti	17	MON	Nirjala Ekadashi	15	MON	Karka Ekadashi
18	SAT	Mohini Ekadashi	19	WED	Pradosh	17	WED	Devshayani
20	MON	Pradosh	21	FRI	Purnima			Ekadashi
23	THU	Purnima -				18	THU	Pradosh
		Buddha Jayanti				21	SUN	Guru Vyasa
							Purnima	
			The state of the s		31	WED	Kamika Ekadashi	



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Volume 20, Number 3 May-June 2024



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The Marg Foundation, a 50I (c) (3) tax-exempt nonprofit educational corporation, promotes the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of Hindu heritage and values. To accomplish its mission, the Foundation publishes a bimonthly magazine, *MARG*, and provides a wide range of services, including:

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MARG. Vol. 20, No.3, May-June 2024

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