

# Vivekananda Review

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1 • FEBRUARY 2015



Institute for Vivekananda Studies

*A unit of the Vedanta Society of Toronto*

# The Vivekananda Review

## VIVEKANANDA REVIEW

*A bimonthly publication dedicated  
to the study of Vivekananda's ideas*

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Published by the Vedanta Society of Toronto

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In this issue, Professor Ram Murty gives a beautiful overview of Mahatma Gandhi's perspectives on the Bhagavad Gita. Mahatma Gandhi was not a philosopher in the usual sense of the term. However, his comments on the Gita are full of insights and practical perspectives and they make for very interesting study. Dr. Prema Nandakumar (a regular contributor from Srirangam, India) presents an interesting article which begins with a discussion of the Nile river and travels through a wide range of philosophical and spiritual ideas related to Krishna and Kali, quoting extensively from the works of Sri Aurobindo. She remarks that the concepts of Kali and Krishna "have been seen as separate and as one in Puranic mythology as well as the Bhakti Movement". The 'fierce' Kali and 'pleasant' Krishna are compared to the dual aspect of a river that can be the support of civilizations, but which can also destroy them. The final article is by Prof. Balaji of Chennai who explores the concept of vijñana as presented in the Taittiriya Upanishad. He quotes verses from the Upanishad as well as other Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, and also draws on insights from Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and Sri Aurobindo's writings to expound this important and deep concept.

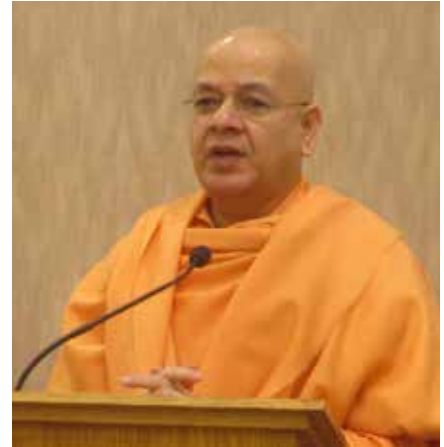


Photo Credit: Abhijit Bhatnagar

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“From this ocean of the Vedanta, waves of light from time to time have been going Westward and Eastward

Complete Works, Volume 3, p. 323



# MAHATMA GANDHI'S COMMENTARY ON THE GITA

**M. RAM MURTY**

The Bhagavadgita is a philosophical discourse between Arjuna and Sri Krishna which takes place on the battlefield as the war between the Kauravas and Pandavas is about to begin. It occurs in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata, the grand epic poem written by the ancient sage Vyasa. Set in the context of a long historical and spiritual narrative, it is considered one of the finest compositions of spiritual philosophy. Some academics have classified it as masterful psychology. It is not known precisely when it was composed, but scholars such as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan put it around 500 B.C.E.<sup>1</sup>

In his lectures on the Gita delivered in San Francisco in May 1900, Swami Vivekananda said, "The origin of ancient Sanskrit is 5000 B.C; the Upanishads are at least two thousand years before that. Nobody knows exactly how old they are. The Gita takes the ideas of the Upanishads and in some cases the very words. They are strung together with the idea of bringing out, in a compact, condensed, and systematic form, the whole subject the Upanishads deal with."<sup>2</sup>

But it was in the 8th century C.E. that the Gita was taken out of the Mahabharata and studied independently of the epic. This was the genius of Shankaracharya. In addition, Shankara wrote an extensive commentary on the Bhagavadgita and as far as we are aware, this is the earliest. Radhakrishnan writes, "There were other commentaries older than his, to which he refers to in his Introduction, but they have not come down to us."<sup>3</sup> Swami Vivekananda wrote, "The great glory of Shankaracharya was his preaching of the Gita. It is one of the greatest works that this great man did among the many noble works of his life – the preaching of the Gita, and writing the most beautiful commentary upon it."<sup>4</sup> Since that time, over the centuries, countless philosophers and spiritual personalities have written commentaries on the Gita. The earliest commentaries were all in Sanskrit and the readership was still confined to a few scholars. It was the Marathi saint Jnanesvar who first translated the Gita into Marathi in his work, Jnaneswari. Since then, it has been translated into many Indian languages.

When the British came to India, several scholars were impressed by the wealth of philosophy and began to translate many of the works. Sir Charles Wilkins wrote the first English translation of the Bhagavadgita and the first British Viceroy of India, Warren Hastings, wrote the introduction. He wrote, "The writers of the Indian philosophies will survive when the British Dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance."<sup>5</sup> A century later, Sir Edwin Arnold gave a poetic rendering of the Gita in English by writing 'The

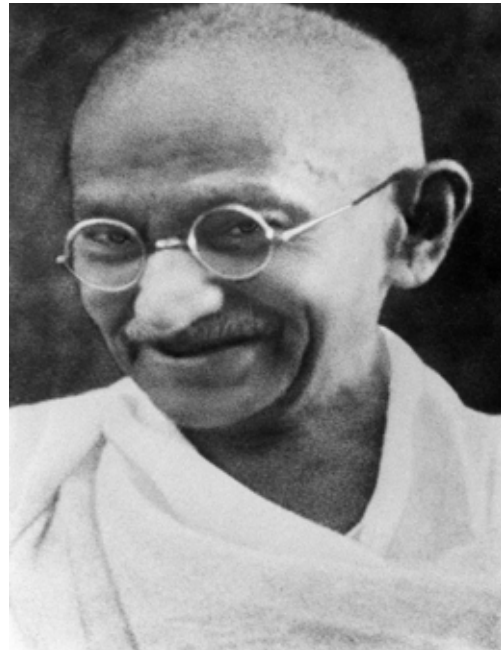


Photo Copyright: Public Domain

Mahatma Gandhi

Song Celestial', which became famous in the 19th century. This brought the Gita to the attention of many European philosophers, and one can already hear in the writings of Carlyle, Emerson, Schopenhauer, Thoreau and Whitman echoes of the verses of the Gita.

The 19th-and 20th-century translations of the Gita into the Indian vernacular languages had a two-fold importance. First, they brought the profound ancient philosophy to the doorsteps of the common man and second, they became, as it were, manuals for numerous leaders of India's struggle for freedom from British colonialism. From the two-volume work of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *The Gita Rahasya* (written while he was imprisoned in the Mandalay jail in Burma), to the lectures on the Gita by Vinobha Bhave (also delivered by the author while he was in prison), and on to the more modern commentaries of Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and Mahatma Gandhi, we see the Gita emerging as a spiritual guide in India's struggle for independence. It is as if the perplexed consciousness of our 'freedom fighters' standing on the battlefield to eliminate colonial rule beseeched Sri Krishna for guidance and direction and Sri Krishna showered his benevolent grace.

There have been many commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita but Gandhi's remains one of the finest, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it is not an academic discourse, in which each Sanskrit word is parsed and analysed and each verse is critiqued. Rather, it is an inspired discourse based on his informal talks delivered in Gujarati, at the Sabarmati Ashram (near Ahmedabad) over a nine-month period ranging from February

24 to November 27, 1926. During this time, Gandhi strove to understand the Gita himself, by translating each verse into Gujarati and then giving informal talks after the morning prayers to the members of the ashram, highlighting what the verses meant to him. His lectures were faithfully transcribed by his close associate and friend Mahadev Desai, along with some other members of the ashram, and finally published in Gujarati in 1955, long after Gandhi's death. An English translation was prepared in 1969 when the Government of India published the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi consisting of 150 volumes.

Writing about how his work came to be, Gandhi wrote, "It was at Kosani in Almora on 24th June, 1929 ... that I finished the introduction to my translation of the Gita. The whole was then published in due course. It has been translated in Hindi, Bengali and Marathi. There has been an insistent demand for an English translation. I finished the translation of the introduction at the Yeravda prison. Since my discharge it has lain with friends and now I give it to the reader. Those, who take no interest in the Book of Life, will forgive the trespass on these columns. To those who are interested in the poem and treat it as their guide in life, my humble attempt might prove of some help."<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi's commentary is highly original and innovative in many places largely because it was spontaneous and given amidst the background of the independence movement against British rule. Each verse seems to have been tested in the crucible of Gandhi's experience and his struggles to achieve India's freedom. In many ways, to understand Gandhi, one must understand his commentary of the Gita. The two seem inseparable. This is perhaps best demonstrated by quoting Gandhi himself, who said, "When disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the Gita. I find a verse here and a verse there and immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies – and my life has been full of external tragedies – and if they have left no visible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the Gita."<sup>7</sup>

Before we amplify Gandhi's thoughts on the Gita, it may be helpful to the reader if we give some background on how he was led to its study. In his autobiography, Gandhi describes the year he went to England at the age of 19 to study law. There he met the Olcott brothers, who were students of theosophy. They were studying the Gita based on Edwin Arnold's 'The Song Celestial'. Thinking that Gandhi would know Sanskrit and could help them in their study, they approached him for the meaning of the verses, but he could not help. Gandhi wrote, "I felt ashamed as I had read the divine poem neither in Sanskrit nor in Gujarati. I was constrained to tell them that I had not read the Gita, but that I would gladly read it with them, and that though my knowledge of Sanskrit was meagre, still I hoped to be able to understand the original to the extent of

telling where the translation failed to bring out the meaning."<sup>8</sup>

As he began his study with his friends, he was gripped by several verses in the second chapter: "If one ponders on objects of sense, there springs attraction; from attraction grows desire; desire flames to fierce passion; passion breeds recklessness; then the memory – all betrayed – lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind, till purpose, mind and man are all undone." In his autobiography, he writes that these verses "made a deep impression on my mind, and they still ring in my ears. The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom."<sup>9</sup>

Thus to understand Gandhi, we must understand how these verses in particular evoked such feelings and sentiments. He was only twenty years old when he experienced the power of these verses and they struck a sensitive chord in his psyche. Why? They reverberated in his consciousness because they reminded him of his sixteenth year, when having attended to his ailing father, he retired to his bedroom with his wife; only moments later, news came that his father had died. Writing candidly about this episode, Gandhi lamented, "So all was over! ... I felt deeply ashamed and miserable. I ran to my father's room. I saw that if animal passion had not blinded me, I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father during his last moments. I should have been massaging him, and he would have died in my arms."<sup>10</sup>

I believe this episode lies at the heart of Gandhi's spiritual journey. Shame had been transformed into a spiritual struggle. His zeal to achieve perfect mastery over his passions is explained in the episode. Indeed, Gandhi wrote,

The shame, to which I referred in a foregoing chapter, was the shame of my carnal desire even at the critical hour of my father's death, which demanded wakeful service. It was a blot I have never been able to efface or forget, and I have always thought that, although my devotion to my parents knew no bounds and I would have given up anything for it, yet it was weighed and found unpardonably wanting because my mind was at the same moment in the grip of lust.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, his encounter with other students of the Gita in England had a personal dimension, and he began his study in earnest. In his introduction to the commentary, he wrote,

Even in 1888-89, when I first became acquainted with the Gita, I felt that it was not a historical work, but that, under the guise of physical warfare, it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind, and that physical warfare was brought merely to make the description of the internal duel more alluring. This preliminary intuition became more confirmed on a closer study.<sup>12</sup>

Immediately, Gandhi recognized the Gita as being spiritual psychology. It represented the struggle that exists within oneself, or, if you will, the constant battle that takes place in the arena of the human mind.

This view that the Gita depicts the inner battle between our own virtues and vices acquires momentum even in Gandhi's interpretation of Chapter 1, which is often glossed over as being unimportant. Many experts write that the message of the Gita really begins with Chapter 2, verse 11, when Sri Krishna begins his discourse. Gandhi sees things differently. In his view, the essential message of the Gita begins with Chapter 1. In the opening verses, we have a description of the many warriors aligned on different sides. The mighty Bhishma, Drona and Karna are aligned with the Kurus. Why? Gandhi writes: "Besides Karna, Duryodhana had good men like Bhishma and Drona on his side. This suggests that evil cannot flourish in this world by itself. It can do so only if it is allied with some good. Duryodhana required men like Bhishma and Drona in order to show that there was justice on his side." And making the quantum leap of analogy between the battle of Kurukshetra and the colonial rule of India, Gandhi says, "This is the principle underlying non-co-operation – the evil system which the Gov-

ernment represents has endured only because of the support it receives from good people; it cannot survive if that support is withdrawn."<sup>13</sup> Thus, his inspiration for the non-co-operation movement is rooted in Chapter 1 of the Bhagavad Gita.

## Gandhi recognized the Gita as being spiritual psychology.

Gandhi sees the idea of non-co-operation as the essential message of the Gita from the individual level also. In fact, our negative tendencies that impede our spiritual growth gain power and energy because we unwittingly co-operate with these tendencies. For Gandhi, this is the meaning of renunciation. For this reason, he renamed the Gita 'anāsakti yoga', or the 'yoga of selfless action'. We must not renounce action but rather the fruits of action. This renunciation is tantamount to non-co-operation with our negative tendencies. "This is the unmistakable teaching of the Gita, Gandhi stresses.

He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto, and the capacity for it. He, who, being thus equipped, is without desire for the result and is yet wholly engrossed in the

due fulfillment of the task before him is said to have renounced the fruits of his action.<sup>14</sup>

This is the essence of the Gita according to Gandhi. It also agrees with Sri Ramakrishna's summary that tyaga is its central message.

But Gandhi derives from this principle another corollary which is quite striking. The renunciation of the reward is not an option, but rather a necessity for the spiritual aspirant.

Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit. ... He who is ever brooding over result often loses nerve in the performance of his duty. He becomes impatient and then gives vent to anger and begins to do unworthy things; he jumps from action to action never remaining faithful to any. He who broods over results is like a man given to objects of senses; he is ever distracted, he says goodbye to all scruples, everything is right in his estimation and therefore resorts to means fair and foul to attain his end.<sup>15</sup>

*Dhyayato visayan pumsah sangas tesu pajayate  
Sangat samjayate kamah Kamat krodho bhijayate  
Krodhad bhavati sammohah sammohat smrit vibhramah  
Smriti bhramsd buddhi naso buddhi nasat pranasyati*

Thus, Gandhi makes a dramatic connection between renunciation and the celebrated verses 62 and 63 from the second chapter about how a man attached to the senses perishes. From this, he derives the doctrine that worthy ends deserve worthy means. The ends and the means must be one.

This echoes the secret of work given by Swami Vivekananda in his work, Karma Yoga. There, Vivekananda relates how Pavhari Baba had taught him the secret of work. It is to "join the ends and the means." In other words, the ends and the means must be equal. Rather, worthy ends deserve worthy means.

Gandhi emphasizes this point again and again in his commentary. Referring to verse 48 of the second chapter, he writes, "If we are attached to our goal of winning swaraj, we shall not hesitate to adopt bad means. Hence, we should not be attached even to a good cause. Only then will our means remain pure and our actions too."<sup>16</sup> And making the symbolic link between swaraj for the nation with swaraj for the soul, he writes, "we are slaves of our senses. From this slavery we must win swaraj for the atman."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the word "swaraj" for Gandhi had spiritual connotations.

In a powerful invocation, he wrote about swaraj as follows.

The aim is to bring about spiritual awakening in us. Our aspiration to go from untruth to truth, from darkness into light, is not something for the distant future; it is immediate. For us, non-violence and truth are symbolized in the spinning wheel. It may

be made only of wood, but if we see in it the chintamani then it becomes the chintamani<sup>18</sup>. It is intelligent to regard the spinning wheel to be what it is, but it is more intelligent to regard it as chintamani. If even the dullest can see God in a clod of earth, what may we not see in the spinning wheel?<sup>19</sup>

Referring to a verse in Chapter 3, he identifies the dharma chakra of Sri Krishna with the spinning wheel. In Chapter 3, we find Sri Krishna teaching, "He who does not follow the wheel set in motion is evil in his nature, sensual in his delight and lives in vain."<sup>20</sup> Thus, for Gandhi, the spinning wheel becomes a symbol of God. In addition, it becomes a symbol of self-reliance and Gandhi seems to be quite aware of the power of symbols. In his work on Karma Yoga, Swami Vivekananda highlights the use of symbols as being an integral part of this yoga.

Indeed, in his commentary of Chapter 2, he writes, "Let others think that the spinning wheel is useless and believe that we cannot win swaraj by keeping fasts. ... If we can achieve self-realisation through fasting and spinning, then self-realisation necessarily implies swaraj."<sup>21</sup>

For Gandhi, the Gita was not a sacred scripture to be put on a pedestal and worshipped there. It was a laboratory manual and he conducted numerous experiments to test out the wisdom against the background of his own experience. Since his student days in London, he had been studying it and comparing it with several commentaries. In and out of jail countless times during the freedom struggle, he began to translate the Gita into Gujarati over a ten-year period from 1920 to 1929. His translation, titled 'Anasakti yoga', was finally published on March 12, 1930, the day of the famous Dandi salt march. That was when Gandhi led 78 members of his ashram on a barefoot march from the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to the Arabian coast at Dandi in southern Gujarat traveling nearly 400 kilometers over a period of 24 days. Gandhi was sixty-one at the time! The symbolism was powerful and it riveted the nation and consolidated all of its energies into a creative and noble cause.

Thus, we see that Gandhi transformed the Gita into a practical manual in the struggle for swaraj. He believed that each individual should work on himself and fashion a character of high spiritual norm. He had the rare quality of combining leadership with humility, which can only be achieved through sincerity. Till the end of his life, he was sincere about attaining spiritual enlightenment.

To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics ... But the path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing cur-

“...the word “swaraj” for Gandhi had spiritual connotations...”

rents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know that I have not in me as yet that triple purity, in spite of constant ceaseless striving for it.<sup>22</sup>

What comes through is his sincere spiritual struggle.

A focal point in Gandhi's understanding of the Gita is the concept of purushartham, which refers to the four goals of life: dharma (social justice), artha (wealth), kama (pleasure) and moksha (liberation), and in that order. These four are not independent but rather interdependent and must be sought together and in this sequence. Notice that moksha or liberation comes at the end. Social justice is the first and represents a peaceful society as the foundation. The pursuit of wealth must be in the context of dharma and the same with kama and moksha. Wealth does not refer only to monetary wealth but also to the wealth of knowledge and spiritual wisdom. Pleasure does not mean only sensual pleasure but also artistic, intellectual and spiritual pleasure. This four-fold purpose of life must be shared by all individuals and all nations. Explaining this, Gandhi writes,

*Purushartha* means striving and supreme purushartham means escaping from the pairs of opposites. Living in the world of opposites is no better than collecting dust with our hands. It is, however, the purpose of the Gita to show that every particle of dust can become as valuable as a jewel in certain conditions. The three gunas are aiming arrows at you from all sides. If you remain unmoved as they pierce you, you can win. These arrows may fall on the body and on the atman dwelling in the body, but let them fall as long as they may, what harm can they do me so long as my atman is awake?<sup>23</sup>

Of course, Gandhi did not discover the concept of *purushartham*. This goes back to the epic period and is delineated in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

There is another important concept that Gandhi highlights in his commentary and that is the notion of svadharma. This is the theme of verse 35 of the third chapter,

*Sreyan svadharmo vigunah paradharmat svanusthitat Svadharma nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah.*

Translation: Better is one's own law though imperfectly

carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. Better is death in the fulfillment of one's own law for to follow another's law is perilous.

We all find ourselves in various stations of life and have to perform diverse duties. If we carry out these duties diligently and honourably, we progress on our spiritual path. In his ashram, the members had to do many duties, ranging from menial duties such as cleaning the washroom or sweeping the floor, to the more sedentary tasks such as keeping accounts. Gandhi comments,

"Suppose that one's job is to clean the lavatories. Such a person should not envy another whose job is to keep accounts. The man who cleans lavatories as carefully as he does the utensils in his home observes his dharma in the truest manner. It would not be right for Arjuna to think of retiring to a forest and spending his days telling beads on the rosary. His duty was to fight [and to protect the innocent]"<sup>24</sup>

Inherent in this verse is the law of psychological tendency and aptitude. We each have different aptitudes and different talents, and our duties can all be used efficiently to help us on the spiritual path. Thus Gandhi would say the work of the harijan is as meritorious as the work of the scholar or the work of a king or the work of a soldier or a farmer.

Using familiar symbols and the ancient spiritual heritage of the bhakti tradition, he often had people sing in his ashram. He also emphasized chanting of the Gita verses. Most common was the recitation of the sthitaprajna state (or the state of one established in the highest consciousness). These are verses 55 to 72 of the second chapter describing the qualities of a realized sage. In addition to his emphasis of karma yoga, he highlighted the path of devotion, or bhakti yoga too. The famous song of the Gujarati saint, Narsi Mehta, titled 'Vaishnava janato', was sung regularly in the ashram. In this hymn, Gandhi felt the true fusion of the highest state of *sthitaprajna* with that of a true devotee. He cleverly improvised new verses to traditional bhajans. The most famous is the bhajan '*Raghupati raghava raja ram, patita pavana Sita Ram*', to which he added: '*Isvara Allah tero nam, sabko sanmadhi hey bhagavan*', thus infusing Hindu-Muslim unity in the congregation and also in the national consciousness. D.V. Paluskar took Gandhi's improvisation and popularized it in his recordings.

Mahatma Gandhi used soul force, satyagraha as he would call it, instead of brute force and thereby managed to break the backbone of the British empire. In this endeavour, he found inspiration and guidance from the Bhagavadgita. It is interesting to note that on January 8, 1900, when Swami Vivekananda delivered a lecture in Los Angeles titled 'Powers of the Mind', he said: "You know what the Hindus would often say when they have to fight their enemies – 'Oh, one of our yogis will come and drive the whole lot out!' It is the extreme belief of the race. What power is there in the hand or the sword? The power is all in the spirit."<sup>25</sup> True to this prophecy, the master yogi was Mahatma Gandhi. Using spiritual force, he initiated the demise of colonialism not only in India but around the world.

In summary, Gandhi's commentary of the Bhagavadgita is an inspired commentary, based on his personal experiences and findings as he journeyed through his own turbulent life, groping, like all of us, for understanding and enlightenment. He did this with an intense zeal and ardour that are perhaps unmatched by anyone in recent times. What his example shows is that we too can benefit from this study and lift ourselves to a higher spiritual plane.

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## NOTES

- 1 Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgita, p. 14.
- 2 Swami Vivekananda, Complete Works, Volume 1, p. 446.
- 3 Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgita, p. 16.
- 4 Ibid., p. 328.
- 5 See p. 13 of Ranganathananda, The Bhagavad Gita, Volume 1, p. 13.
- 6 Gandhi, The Bhagavadgita, p. 11.
- 7 Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgita, p. 10.
- 8 Gandhi, The Story of my Experiments in Truth, p. 57.
- 9 Ibid., p. 57.
- 10 Ibid., p. 26.
- 11 Ibid., p. 26.
- 12 The Bhagavad Gita according to Gandhi, p. 12.
- 13 Ibid., p. 23.
- 14 Ibid., p. 17.
- 15 Ibid., p. 18.
- 16 Ibid., p. 49.
- 17 Ibid., p. 62.
- 18 A mythical gem that fulfils all the desires of the owner.
- 19 Ibid., p. 64.
- 20 Ibid., p. 88. See also verse 16 of Chapter 3 of Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgita.
- 21 Ibid., p. 66.
- 22 Experiments, p. 420.
- 23 Gandhi, The Bhagavadgita, p. 314.
- 24 Gandhi, Bhagavadgita, p. 107.
- 25 Complete Works of Vivekananda, Volume 2.

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- 2 M.K. Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments in Truth, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 2000.
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# Neela Nadhi – Krishna – Kali

## PREMA NANDAKUMAR

The eminent American poet said it all: “As one lamp lights another, nor grows less, so nobleness enkindleth nobleness.” This is true in all fields of human life, which are tuned to the glory and good in human existence. I must confess that it took me sometime to go through V.Kumar Murty’s thought-provoking essay, ‘Discovery of the Source of Nile’ (Vivekananda Review, April 2014) which was itself inspired by M.Ram Murty’s article, ‘What is Civilization’ in an earlier issue of the journal. The title interested me because the Nile is connected with Egypt’s Cleopatra and as a student of English literature, Antony and Cleopatra has had a permanent fascination for me. It had an important place in the Shakespeare Paper for my Honours examination so the quotes remained important with Nile appearing now and then, as when Antony tells Octavius early in the play:

“Thus do they, sir: they take  
the flow o’ the Nile  
By certain scales i’ the pyramid; they know,  
By the height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth  
Or foison follow: the higher Nilus swells,  
The more it promises: as it ebbs, the seedsman  
Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,  
And shortly comes to harvest.”

What a wonderful picture of a nation’s prosperity as we speak of the rise and dip in the flow of rivers! Growing up on the banks of the Tambraparni River, this was experiential education. Again, can I ever forget the day when the Professor explained the famous line, “where’s my serpent of Nile”?

I came down from romance to reality in 1956 when my father, Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar delivered a two-hour lecture on the Suez Crisis in a packed auditorium of the Andhra University. He was a Professor of English but left even the Political Science department speechless at his mastery of facts and figures. So Nile is a word that usually brings back rich and personal memories for me and I read Prof. Kumar Murty’s article with increasing interest.

Much of it is historiography and yet very interesting for it introduces us to how Swami Vivekananda was interested in this discipline and how he viewed with skepticism dependence upon translations when dealing with the history of cultures. Also, he speculated that there might have been closeness between the Egyptians and people of Malabar in ancient days. After placing before us the views on the possible origins of the Egypt’s Nile civilization, Prof Murty closes by opening a casement “into faery lands forlorn” of conjecture and evidence:

“Can we substantiate Vivekananda’s assertion that the ancient Egyptians actually originated in Malabar? What is the source of the map that Lt. Wilford put his name on? What other evidence might we find of people in ancient Africa? Far from being the end of the story, this chapter of history clearly needs further analysis in order to fill the various gaps in our knowledge.”

So I fell to studying the map given along with the article. A rather beguiling exercise because of the names: it is presented as a map detailing “the course of the river Cali or Great Krishna through Cusha Dwip without and Sankha Dwip proper from the Purans by Lieut Francis Wilford.” Other names familiar to our ears are scattered throughout the map.

Palli  
Paribhadra  
Cumud-adri or the Mt. of the White Lotus  
Padmawan  
Sharmasthan  
Chandristhan  
Lake of Amara or of the Gods  
Rupavati  
Somagiri  
Pulinda (Kingdom in the Himalayas)  
Mountains of Ajagara  
Arunodhadhi

One word caught my attention, Arun Odhadhi being equated with Arundhati. I cannot think of a connection between Arundhati and ocean, though we do connect her with the sky. Arundhati who is a star in the sky is pointed out to the newly weds as an inspiration to lead an ideal married life as Arundhati and her husband, the sage Vasishta had lived in ancient times. This ritual is followed even today in marriages in South India.

However, Arunodhadhi could be a corruption of Arun + Ambudhi, for Ambudhi is a Sanskrit term for ocean. It is also appropriate to call the Red Sea Arunombhudhi (the Ocean of Aruna), for Aruna who is the charioteer of the sun is associated with dawn and its red shade (Ushas, russet-sheened) prior to the coming of the sun (Ahas, White Sun).

There are innumerable Puranas, apart from the eighteen major Puranas and eighteen minor ones, so it is not really easy to put the pieces of the puzzle together unless we chance upon a Puranic tale that would have many of the names mentioned in the map.

Anyhow, we could begin with the beginning. Why was Nile called Cali or Krishna? Did the Egyptians bring strong



memories of these two deities when they migrated to Africa? These two names have been seen as separate and as one in Puranic mythology as well as the Bhakti Movement. Yet, both are contrastive. Kali is fierce, associated with death. Krishna is pleasant; he is a statesman for it is very rarely that he gets angry. His suave ways associate him with all that is calm and creative and prosperous.

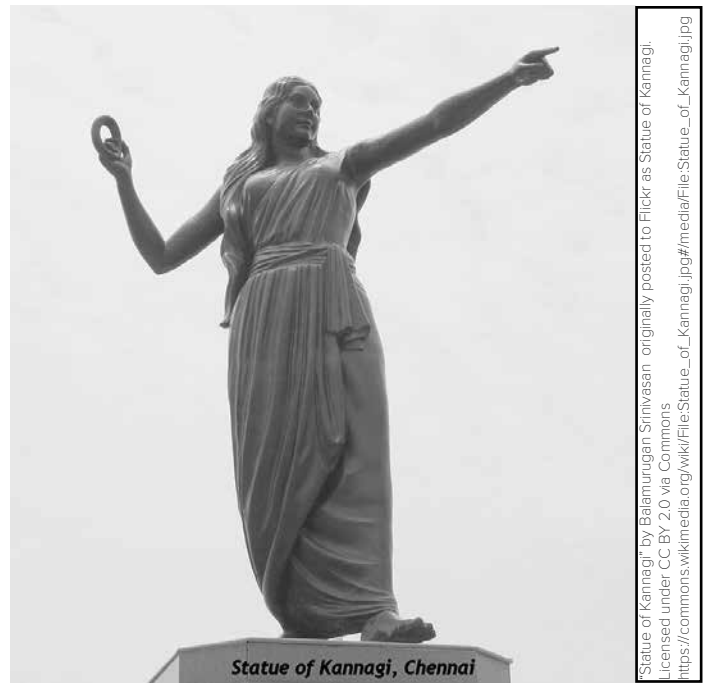
The ancients may have wondered how the same item is terrible at one time and is life-giving at other times. Of the gifts of nature with which we are constantly interacting, the first and foremost is the river. Where water flows as a river for miles and miles, there rises the cream of civilizations. Farming is easy in these areas and where there are plentiful harvests, cultures blossom in a rich manner. This is how we speak of the Kaveri delta civilisation, the Tambraparni delta and of course, the Gangetic delta. Indologists tell us that there was a rich civilization that had grown on the banks of the Saraswati River. Once the stream starts drying up, the people naturally shift to other places in search of water sources and through that wandering find a prosperous life leading to the rise of cultures. It is also in these areas that cattle wealth is abundant. Krishna and his Yadava tribe are always associated with the Yamuna.

But there are also times when the river is in killer floods. That is when the people become victims and die and lose everything. Then they have to set about re-building their fortunes, and this is never easy, having lost all their possessions. Also when it dries up totally like the Saraswati in earlier times, people migrate in search of pastures new. For them Kali was the presiding deity. We can gather this much from the aethesis of ancient Tamils.

The Tamil Nadu's Sangam Age has a written literature, which is more than 2000 years old. Those people had a highly organized life and their land was divided into four types, each having its own deity and flower. The mountainous region was Kurinji, the deity was Murugan (Subramania) and the flower was Kurinji, which blossoms once in twelve years. The forest-rich area was called Mullai with Tirumal (Vishnu) as the deity and mullai (jasmine) as the forest region's flower where he resided. Marutham was agricultural land and the deity was Indra. The seashore was referred to as Neithal. The occupation was fishing and the deity was Varuna. There was also a region called Palai, which was not located on the map. Whenever drought overran any of the four lands, that area became Palai, a desert. The presiding deity of Palai was the terrible Kotravai (Kali). The ancient Tamil epic Silappadhikaram describes her even thus in the canto, 'Vettuvavari':

"You stand on the black head of the wild buffalo, clothing yourself in elephant-hide and tiger-skin; worshipped by the celestials and beyond the reach of even the scriptures, you stand steady as the sprout of supreme wisdom!

Wielding a sword in your hand, which wears bangles carved with lines, you killed the mighty buffalo and bestrode the stag with black, coiled horns. You are the effulgent light, ensconced in the lotus-hearts of Vishnu, Siva and Brahma



Statue of Kannagi by Balamurugan Srinivasan originally posted to Flickr as Statue of Kannagi. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue\\_of\\_Kannagi.jpg#/media/File:Statue\\_of\\_Kannagi.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_of_Kannagi.jpg#/media/File:Statue_of_Kannagi.jpg)



Punar-Ilango by Kasirunachalem at en.wikipedia. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Punar-Ilango.jpg#/media/File:Punar-Ilango.jpg>

The Tamil epic Silappadhikaram (literally, the story of an anklet) is about the heroine Kannagi (top) who defends the honesty of her husband who has been wrongfully executed. The authorship is attributed to Ilango (bottom) (though this is believed to be a pseudonym), and it dates from approximately the 5th century CE.

and scattering rays of light far and wide!"

However, the same sustained prayer to Mahishasura Mardini visions Krishna as well.

"You crawled through the pair of arjuna trees and felled them; you kicked to pieces the revolving wheel sent by your deceitful uncle Kamsa. Please accept this offering from the huntsmen who rob and wound wayfarers and never show

any mercy!”

Thus the juxtaposition of Kali and Krishna in the religious mind of India has an immemorial history. Much later we hear of the tradition of meditating upon Krishna as an image of Lalitha Tripurasundari and Vasudeva. The orthodox say that this brings together the seed-syllables of Vasudeva and Devi Lalitha. Leelasuka speaks of this in his Krishnakarnamrutam in the third aswasa, slokas 103 and 104:

“While meditating upon the mantra in the evening, envision for yourself Vasudeva who decimated enemies with his Discus, the Unconquerable and has reduced the weight on Mother Earth, the One surrounded by gods, worshipped by Narada and other sages in search of knowledge about the Original Cause, an image of purity and incomparable beauty, the One who grants realization, creates, guards and annihilates the worlds;

The One who is to be contemplated upon is Sri Hari, the eight-shouldered Madanagopala, carrying a bow made of strong and unbroken sugarcane, an arrow of flowers, the discus, the conch, the paasa, the goad and the golden flute, his complexion rivaling the russet of the rising sun.”

This is the figure that is evoked by meditating upon the 33-syllabled Sri Gopalasundari mantra, a figure that is seen as Krishna and Lalita at the same time. This Lalita is the goddess of Sri Vidya. Sri Vidya Upasana is an elaborate path, popular in South India, where the Supreme Mother of the Three Worlds is seen in a saumya form. But if the occasion demands she will be Mahakali too. This is what we find in the Chandi, also known as the Devi Mahatmyam. Evoking Krishna along with the Supreme Goddess who is also known as Maya, the sister of Krishna whom Kamsa tried in vain to kill, carries a lesson. This world and its movement have to be seen as a whole, always. There are no compartments. It is Nature that has to sustain and also to kill, to give sorrow and also give us delight as the occasion demands, and the two aspects of Prakriti are imprinted in our mind by the image. As for us, “Readiness is all”.

One of the greatest philosopher poets of twentieth century India was Sri Aurobindo who derived much inspiration from Swami Vivekananda’s writings. Almost contemporaries, they do not seem to have met in life. Swami Vivekananda’s passing and Sri Aurobindo’s entry into politics coincided, and the document Bhawani Mandir prepared by the latter is almost completely inspired by Sri Ramakrishna’s life and Swami Vivekananda’s founding of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission.

“Om Namas Chandikayai

A temple is to be erected and consecrated to Bhawani, the Mother, among the hills. To all the children of the Mother the call is sent forth to help in the sacred work.”

Kali to the front, then. The kind of opposition that Sri Aurobindo wanted to build against the British would not be terrorism. It would rather be one of action where the hero-warriors would not flinch even if they were decimated. Passive resistance was the ideal and poorna swaraj their goal. Swami Vivekananda had given the right message for the times.

“Who dares misery love,  
And hug the form of Death,  
Dance in Destruction’s dance,  
To him the Mother comes.”

Actually, Sri Aurobindo’s poetry does not generally use the Hindu pantheon. Spiritual diction takes the upper hand and religious symbols are used only occasionally. The two exceptions are Kali and Krishna. They become crystallized presences in his poetry as well as writings on yoga as symbolizing Power and Ananda. In the Aurobindonian sadhana of moving towards integral perfection these two are important. For he had seen both in action in his life.

During the years of his direct involvement in the independence movement in the first decade of the 20th century he had seen Kali in action because of British repression, and watched with pride and joy how the young men welcomed the dance of Kali and uncomplainingly took her gifts of hanging to death, exile to hostile islands and long years of imprisonment. He had himself endured a year’s incarceration in the Alipore Jail in 1908-9. After his being acquitted, he had retired to Pondicherry to pursue his yoga but Kali’s tread pursued him there also. He saw the march of global events, including the two World Wars, and even took part in them at the occult level. This dance was needed for the safeguarding of the good. The Supreme incarnates as Kali power at such time.

Though he had been brought up in non-Indian surroundings, Sri Aurobindo was tuned to Durga worship as a Bengali. Sister Nivedita, disciple of Swami Vivekananda and a colleague of Sri Aurobindo when he edited Karmayogin goes to the heart of the matter when she says of Mahakali:

“Others we admire; others we love; to Her we belong.  
Whether we know it or not, we are Her children, playing  
round Her knees. Life is but a game of hide-and-seek with  
Her, and if, in its course, we chance to touch Her feet, who  
can measure the shock of the divine energy that enters into  
us? Who can utter the rapture of our cry of ‘Mother?’”<sup>2</sup>

Ramprasad was a Bengali hymnologist whom Sri Ramakrishna admired, as his poems are full of potent images:

“In the market place of this world  
The Mother sits flying her kite.  
In a hundred thousand,  
She cuts the string of one or two.  
And when the kite soars up into the Infinite  
Oh how she laughs and claps her hands!”<sup>3</sup>

From Sri Aurobindo’s Sanskrit poem, Bhavani Bharati, we learn of the vision of Mother Durga he had, which inspired him to give up a tenured professorship in Baroda and leap into the independence movement in 1903. Sri Aurobindo’s aspiration to work for the freedom of India was very much in the open ever since he began writing for Indu Prakash in 1893. But sometime in 1903 the Mahakali force seems to have given him a positive opening, which led him to formulate the Bhavani Mandir Scheme. The poem opens with a

scene typical of the educated elite of the day: Sukhe nimagnah sayane yadaasam:

“As I lay sunk in the comfort of my couch and my mind wandered on the roads of Spring, I thought of my people, of poetry, of wife and enjoyments, pleasure and possessions. I shaped my delight into elegant verse in lyrical stanzas of sensuous passion; I sang of the smile on my beloved’s face and of the revered and most sacred feet of the Mother. My country wept all around me, for a villainous Titan oppressed her children. Led by self-interest, I paid homage to the feet of the evil one stained with the blood of my brothers.”

The sleeping young man woke up with a start, for he had felt the touch of a dreadful hand on his chest, *pasparsa bhimena karena vakshah*. As his eyes opened he saw Kali before him. A terrifying description of Mahakali follows, *narashtimaalam nrukapaala kancheem* ...It is a cosmic figure that had no parameters which lashes out, *uththishta dehi!* Arise! Give!

The young man leaps out of his bed and salutes the dread figure. Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that the vision is a symbol of what is happening in his heart: *kaa bhaasi naktam hrudhaye karaali*, who are thou who appearest to my heart in the night in thy terrible splendour? Pat comes the answer: *maataasmi bho putraka bhārataanaam!*

“I am the mother, O child, of the Bharatas, the eternal people beloved of the gods, whom neither hostile Fate nor Time nor Death has power to destroy.”

Then the terrifying figure makes the young man face the reality and not live anymore in an imagined paradise of a glorious past. It is very much the language of Swami Vivekananda. The Brahmin is no more the Master of Knowledge but is just a show-off with the externals of vows and piety. Isn’t he become worse than a Shudra? He better get back his original brahminic brilliance, “the incarnate luster of Krishna, the Supreme”. The Kshatriya is no more that noble clan but a weakling hypocrite. The Vaishya is only engaged in making the foreign exploiter more prosperous than ever. The Mother then gives a stirring call to the entire nation. It is amazing the way Sri Aurobindo had mastered the medium of Sanskrit in just ten years!

It is a great call for action that is followed by yet another tremendous vision of the Kali power in action as the Indians confront the Titan (the Englishman) with Kali herself backing their action. Even as the Titan challenged those who opposed him, there arose “a white light in the form of a Woman delightful in beauty, as radiant as twenty million dazzling suns.” Gods, men and rishis saluted her and sang Her praises. As Uma Haimavati had appeared in the Kena Upanishad, the Supreme Mother had now come as Bhavani, saumyam

vapusthe ...

“Gracious is thy noble form white as snow, gracious the exalted countenance of Bhavani; I bow to the Mighty One robed in white, radiant with the bright beauty of youth, her eyes moist with compassion.”

Almost Gita-like, this transformation of the terrible cosmic form of the World-destroyer into the smiling charioteer guiding Arjuna’s horses. Sri Aurobindo calls this two-armed normal-looking goddess as Savitri carrying infinite power: *Thvaamamba saavitri subhe trinetre*...With her presence the Vedas are heard again and prosperity embraces the Indian nation, concludes this wonderful poem to Mahakali.

When he was leaving politics, again Sri Aurobindo wrote a Durga Stotra in Bengali. On Vijayadasami day in 1909, his Bengali Durga Stotra was published in Dharma, *Maata Durgē maha sakthe!*

“Mother Durga! Rider on the lion, giver of all strength, Mother, beloved of Siva! We, born from thy parts of Power, we the youth of India, are seated here in thy temple. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.”

It has the same tone of Bhavani Bharati, including a prayer for a resurgence of the Indian culture and India’s heroic spirit. However, here we have only a luminescent figure and there is nothing in Durga to strike terror. It is a prayer for success in the Yoga he would be taking up in Pondicherry. The enemy is not the Britisher any more. The enemy is within and Durga has to destroy these evils in us like ignorance, fear and selfishness. The aim now is individual perfection, which alone would lead to human perfection as a whole. This definite turn from mere destructive activism of politics to the transformational presence of Poorna Yoga is exemplified magnificently in Sri Aurobindo’s epic, Savitri.

When Savitri has defeated Death and is in the heavens along with Satyavan’s soul, the Supreme invites her to this permanent Peace and Ananda. Why go back to the earth with all its evil? But Savitri prefers to get back for the earth is the field of her work. Man, creation itself needs her to open the way for the Next Future. She returns, descending from the high heavens in a sheer fall to the earth. Sri Aurobindo says she is guided first by the youthful Krishna but as she draws closer to earth, she obviously needs Kali’s help! The image of Mahakali glides in with great ease in the place of Krishna:

“Changed in its shape, yet rapturously the same,  
It grew a woman’s dark and beautiful  
Like a mooned night with drifting star-gemmed clouds,  
A shadowy glory and a stormy depth,  
Turbulent in will and terrible in love.  
Eyes in which Nature’s blind ecstatic life  
Sprang from some spirit’s passionate content,  
Missioned her to the whirling dance of earth.”

Kali has to be at the back, ready to spring forth in crisis time. The Kali-force is thus an integral and major part of the Aurobindonian canon. It is best illustrated in his great little book, *The Mother*:

“Terrible is her face to the Asura, dangerous and ruthless her mood against the haters of the Divine; for she is the Warrior of the Worlds who never shrinks from the battle. Intolerant of imperfection, she deals roughly with all in man that is unwilling and she is severe to all that is obstinately ignorant and obscure; her wrath is immediate and dire against treachery and falsehood and malignity, ill-will is smitten at once by her scourge...”

If Sri Aurobindo’s Mahakali is Mother Supreme, the impeller to action, Krishna is also one who propels us to act. But his way is entirely different from that of Mahakali. He manages to get us to do what he wants and is as inscrutable as Dharma. We know where we are with Kali; but Krishna tantalizes us with the innumerable roles he takes on. Can we think of Kali as a little baby? But look at Krishna! While we cannot think of Mahakali as a babe in the cradle to whom we sing a ‘hush-a-bye, baby’ lullaby, we can easily watch Krishna as a bonny baby-cum-deliverer. Sri Aurobindo brings in Krishna towards the very end of his epic *Savitri* when the heroine has to make the passage from heavens to earth:

“Pursuing her in her fall, implacably sweet,  
A face was over her which seemed a youth’s,  
Symbol of all the beauty eyes see not,  
Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue  
Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile  
Insatiably attracted to delight,  
Voluptuous to the embraces of her soul.”<sup>4</sup>

Krishna was very much along with Kali Force in Sri Aurobindo, for he was close to the Gita. But then, Krishna was also the *Yogeswara* for the young Professor at Baroda, as well as the *Anandamaya* who thrilled one to the roots when one meditated upon him. Bhakti for Krishna in Sri Aurobindo is like the scent of lotus, the fire in the wood and butter in milk; it is spread all over his writings. His was not the ecstatic way but the way of meditative immersion. He was thorough with the Krishna of the Mahabharata whom he sees as giving a message that is relevant to our own times in the Udyoga Parva. He points out that Krishna on whose final word rests the future of the nation gives an answer which is such “as to shock seriously the conventional ideas of a religious teacher to which Christianity and Buddhism have accustomed us.” He proposes action but with total detachment. We can see the Bhawani Mandir Scheme in this approach. Sannyasa of personal likes and dislikes, acting for the victory of Dharma. Sri Aurobindo’s Sanskrit poem *Bhavani Bharati* falls in place, as does Swami Vivekananda and the Sri Ramakrishna Mission that he founded in India.

So action it was for Sri Aurobindo led by Krishna’s stirring

call in the Mahabharata. The logical end was the Alipore Jail that became the transformational Dharmakshetra for Sri Aurobindo. He had followed Krishna’s call and was shown the Right Action for the future of humanity by the same Krishna. He describes it all in his speech at Uttarpara. He had been very fond of his political activism and “in the pride of my heart I thought that unless I was there, it would suffer or even fail and cease; therefore I would not leave it.” But living with the poor and downtrodden as his fellow-convicts, he had learnt that it was not political freedom but the freedom of man from his evil tendencies like cupidity and hate that was the need of the hour. He had a vision of Krishna speaking to him: “Behold the people among whom I have sent you to do a little of my work. This is the nature of the nation I am raising up and the reason why I raise them.”

From now onwards Sri Aurobindo’s Krishna was not merely a political strategist. He was a Lover of Humanity. The All-Beautiful, he was the cause of love flowing in the hearts of human beings, nay in all nature. The two Krishnas, one the heroic Statesman, Prince of Dwaraka and the other the soul-ravishing Flute-player of Brindavan were thus integral to Aurobindo’s vision. If the former was to the fore in the earlier part of Sri Aurobindo career, the latter became the hero of the Mahayogi and poet of Savitri. In the essays on the Hindu scripture that appeared serially in the *Arya* (August, 1916 to July, 1920), we notice a major change. Krishna continues to be the one who is calling upon Arjuna to act but here the ground of action has shifted from the physical Kurukshetra to the inner countries of the human mind striving to go beyond the mental planes of consciousness. Krishna now becomes the charioteer, the divine guide to the aspiring mind. To put it simplistically, Sri Aurobindo insinuates that when man becomes an integral aspirant taking in the various approaches to perfection like karma, jnana and bhakti, he can achieve the life divine.

From now onwards, we find the lambent flame of bhakti yoga pervading all the writings and conversations of Sri Aurobindo. Krishna is always here! This is how he went deep into the hymns of the Bhakti Movement and translated the poems of Vidyapati, Nammalvar, Andal and Chandidas, among others.

In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Divine form and says our ancients found the perfect image to go beyond the *Sat Purusha* and *Chitanya Purusha* and came face to face with the *Anandamaya Purusha* as the Flute Player of Brindavan. Unlike other yogas, the yoga of divine love needs to have a Form of the Divine Personality. Our ancients tried to get us an image that would satisfy and inspire the heart, the emotions of the aspirant. They found Krishna:

“Therefore when the heart and life turn towards the Highest and the Infinite, they arrive not at an abstract existence or non-existence, a Sat or else a Nirvana, but at an existent, a Sat Purusha, not merely at a consciousness, but at a conscious Being, a Chaitanya Purusha, not merely at a purely

impersonal delight of the Is, but at an infinite I Am of bliss, an Anandamaya Purusha; nor can they immerse and lose his consciousness and bliss in featureless existence, but must insist on all three in one, for delight of existence is their highest power and without consciousness delight cannot be possessed. That is the sense of the supreme figure of the intensest Indian religion of love, Sri Krishna, the All-blissful and All-beautiful.”<sup>5</sup>

Kali who strikes terror into our heart; Krishna who calms our being as the Flute-player of Brindavan. During the Second World War Sri Aurobindo wrote a sonnet on 15th September, 1939, titled ‘Krishna’. Should one become speechless because another World War is in the offing? Perhaps this Dance of Destruction has some significance, says Sri Aurobindo:

“At last I find a meaning of soul’s birth  
 Into this universe terrible and sweet,  
 I who have felt the hungry heart of earth  
 Aspiring beyond heaven to Krishna’s feet.  
 I have seen the beauty of immortal eyes,  
 And heard the passion of the Lover’s flute,  
 And known a deathless ecstasy’s surprise  
 And sorrow in my heart for ever mute.  
 Nearer and nearer now the music draws,  
 Life shudders with a strange felicity;  
 All Nature is a wide enamoured pause  
 Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.  
 For this one moment lived the ages past;  
 The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.”

But the War clouds are real after all. In another poem written on 15 November of the same year, a prayer rose from his anguished heart:

Two measures are there of the cosmic dance.  
 Always we hear the tread of Kali’s feet  
 Measuring in rhythms of pain and grief and chance  
 Life’s game of hazard terrible and sweet  
 The ordeal of the veiled Initiate,  
 The hero-soul at play with Death’s embrace.  
 Wrestler in the dread gymnasium of Fate  
 And sacrifice a lonely path to Grace.  
 Man’s sorrows made a key to the Mysteries,  
 Truth’s narrow road out of Time’s wastes of  
 dream,  
 The soul’s seven doors from Matter’s tomb to rise,  
 And the common motives of her tragic theme.  
 But when shall Krishna’s dance through Nature  
 move,  
 His mask of sweetness, laughter, rapture,  
 love?”

Apparently Sri Aurobindo wanted a reassurance that Krishna’s dance spreading universal Ananda will not be far away. Wasn’t Krishna close to Arjuna in the Kurukshetra field?

“One is there, Self of self, Soul; of Space, Fount of Time,”

Heart of hearts, Mind of minds, he alone sits,  
 sublime.

Oh, no void Absolute self-absorbed, splendid,  
 mute,

Hands that clasp hold and red lips that kiss  
 blow the flute.

All He loves, all He moves,  
 All are His, all are He!”

So Sri Aurobindo’s poems take on the glorious hues of the Yoga of Divine Love and life becomes the joy of music, laughter and dance. That is the only way to overcome the forces of evil, the light that leads us out of the encircling gloom. For one who can feel the universal presence of Krishna, life is one long Ananda. That is all the truth we need to know about Krishna. This exploration into the Krishna spaces in Aurobindoniana is best concluded with the closing lines of his famous poem, ‘Ahana’:

“Come then to Brindavan, soul of the joyous; faster  
 and faster  
 Follow the dance I shall teach thee with Shyama  
 for slave and for master.  
 Follow the notes of the flute with a soul aware and  
 exulting;  
 Trample Delight that submits and crouch to a  
 sweetness insulting.  
 Then shalt thou know what the dance meant,  
 fathom the song and the singer,  
 Hear behind thunder its rhymes, touched by light-  
 ning thrill to his finger,  
 Brindavan’s rustle shalt understand and Yamuna’s  
 laughter,  
 Take thy place in the Ras and thy share of the  
 ecstasy after.”

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## NOTES

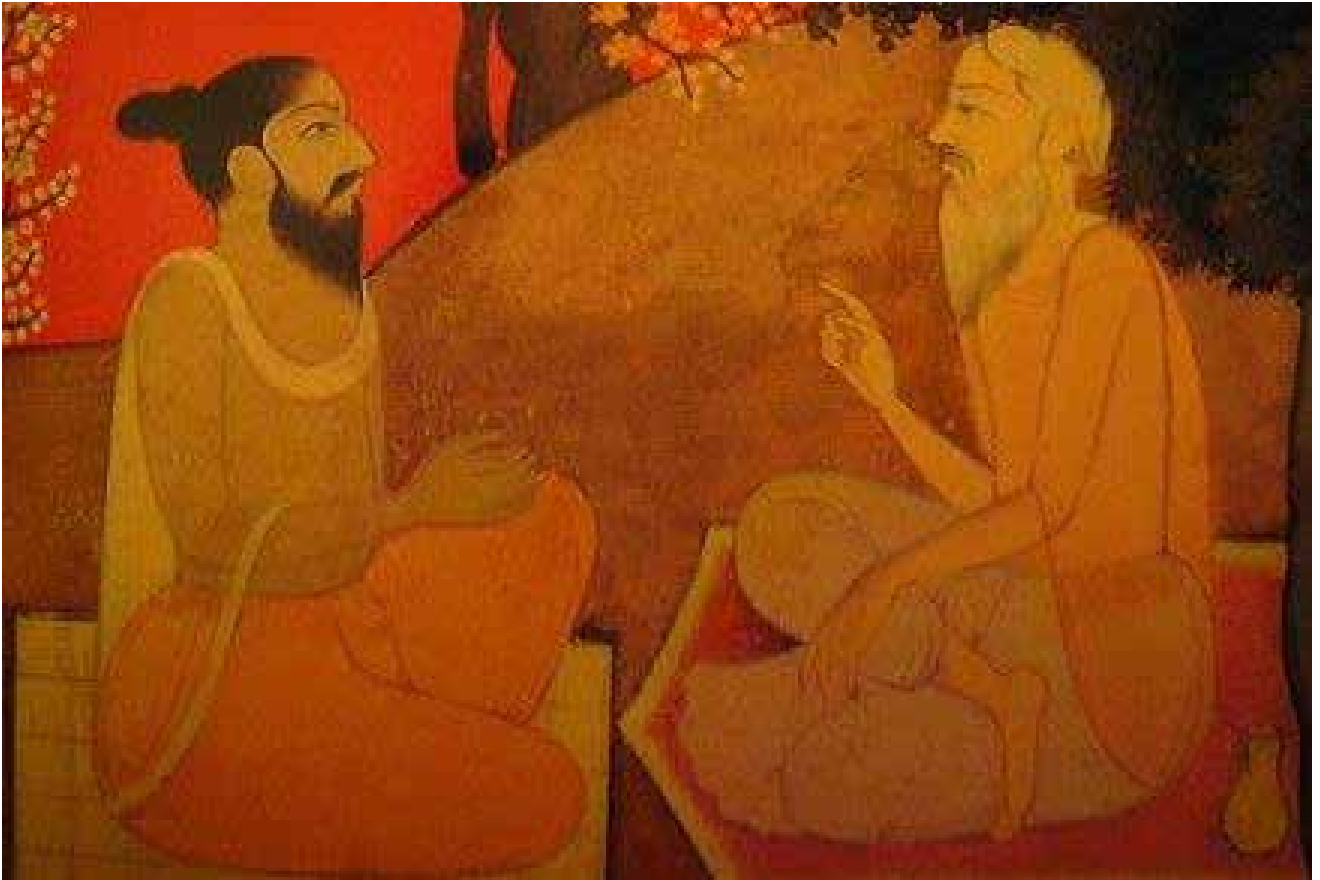
- 1 All translations from Silappadhikaram quoted in the text are by S. Krishnamoorthy
- 2 Kali the Mother (1950), p. 21
- 3 Translated by Sister Nivedita
- 4 Savitri, Book XI, canto I
- 5 The Synthesis of Yoga, Part Three, Chapter V, pp. 554-555.

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# VIJÑĀNA IN THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

**VIKRAMAN BALAJI**



In this series of articles, we will be guided by the following general principle: the deeper one comprehends the Veda, the more one unravels the mysteries in the Upanishads. Our primary sources of inspiration are the writings of Sri Aurobindo (Secret of the Veda, 1972), (The Upanishads, 1972). In this article we will dwell on Vijñāna as developed in the Taittiriya Upanishad and the role of the Vedic Agni in its realization.

So as to set before ourselves the goal and vision of the Rishi, we commence with the grand finale of the Taittiriya Upanishad, a pæan song unparalleled in the Vedantic literature and echoing the aspiration and realization of the earlier Vedic Rishis, a song arising out of a comprehensive realization of Vijñāna and its expression in this world all the way down to the material inconscient.

etat sāma gāyannaste. Haa u Haa, u Haa, u Haa uu,  
ahaṛīṁ annam, ..; ahaṛīṁ annādaḥ, .. ahaṛīṁ ślokaḥ, ...,  
ahaṛīṁ asmi prthamajā ṛtāsya, pūrvārīṁ devebhyo  
arīṛtasya nābhā I, yo mā dadāti, sa id eva mā vāḥ, ahaṛīṁ  
annam annam adantam ādmi, ahaṛīṁ viśvaṁ bhuvanaṁ  
abhyabhvārīṁ. Suvarṇa jyotiḥ!

He sings the mighty *Sāma*, *Haa u Haa, u Haa, u Haa uu*,  
I am this Food, I am the eater of this Food, ...I am the One  
who has scripted all this, I am the creator of the rhythms of  
the revelatory Word, I am the First born of the Ṛta, prior to  
the Gods, I am at the nodus of immortality, he who gives me,  
verily preserves me, I am Food and eats him who eats. I have  
entered and possessed all this that Exists, lo! Golden-Light!

The Rishi of the Taittiriya Upanishad begins by perceiving the entire being as a self-extension of a Reality, as a dynamic formation, as the flow of Ṛta enveloping and pervading all that exists. The Reality resides paradoxically at both ends of the spectrum, hidden in the deepest core *guhayatamam*, within the dense material sheath, the *annamaya kośa*, and in the highest empyrean; within the unconscious depths as well as in the highest heights of the superconscious.

He beholds the individual as a five-fold fabric whose warp and woof are an ever evolving expression of *Brahman*; the five principles being *Annam*, *Prāṇa*, *Manas*, *Vijñāna* and *Ānanda*. The five principles are in reality not a mutually exclusive layering of one sheath within another. Each is an integral part of the other and all this is a part of something else which is none of these, yet which contains all these.

Of these five principles, the Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the three manifest principles *annam*, *prāṇa* and *manas* as the “three utterances”, *tisro vyāhṛtayaḥ*, three expressions of the One Reality, *bhūḥ bhuvāḥ suvaḥ iti vā etās tisro vyāhṛtayaḥ*. Going further, in a statement of deep spiritual significance, a certain Rishi, Mahāchamasya, is said to have announced a fourth *vyāhṛti*, and because it was announced by Mahāchamasya, it is called *Mahaḥ*. The term *vyāhṛti* reveals a fluidity of ṛta, which is the nature of the Universe; the Veda calls it *ṛtasya dhāra*.

The Material *puruṣa*, the *annamaya puruṣa*, is constituted of *Annam*, of food or matter, the basic creative principle of the manifest world. Life feeds on matter and gets absorbed eventually in it. They who do *upāsana* of Brahman as Matter come to realize that Matter is the first creative principle in this manifest universe. Called *sarva ośadhi*, the all-healing herb, all beings are born out of it and all life forms increase by it. In the third part of the Taittiriya Upanishad, Bhrigu Vārūni, bidden by his father Varuna, enters into the askesis in his thought, and sees, realizes that Matter verily is Brahman, *annam brahmeti vyajānāt*.

Now there is yet another self within, other than the *annamaya puruṣa*, the *prāṇamaya puruṣa*, the self constituted by the essence of the material principle *anna rasa mayā*. This *prāṇamaya puruṣa* fills the *annamaya puruṣa*; and is verily *Puruṣa*-like, and accordingly, the *prāṇamaya puruṣa* is created and arranged in the likeness of a physical person. His head is *prāṇa*, the upward-or inward-moving life-energy; *vyāna*, the pervasive life-energy, is his right wing; *apāna*, the downward- or outward-moving energy, is his left wing; *Ākāśa*, the Void, is his very soul, while his base or tail-end is the earth. Such is the Being of *Prāṇa*, fashioned in the image, the prototype of the Person.

They who do *upāsana* of Brahman as Life-Energy attain to the fullness of life. This being the *antarātmā*, the inner-Essence of the Material *puruṣa*, the inherent secrets of matter are revealed to its *upāsaka*. Again, driven by *tapas*, the heat of askesis arising out of the self-force of the eternal Truth within us, Bhrigu Varuni realizes that Life-Energy is verily Brahman, *prāṇam brahmeti vyajānāt*.

Filling this *prāṇamaya puruṣa* as the very *antarātmā*, the inner-Essence, and in turn itself constituted by the substance of the life principle, is the *manomaya puruṣa*. His head is *Yajus*, the Veda of Sacrifice; *Rik*, the Veda of Illumination, is his right wing, *Sāma* is his left wing, while *Ādeśa* or commandment is his very soul. The teachings of Atharvan Angiras are his base or support.

Again, driven by *tapas*, the heat of *askesis* arising out of the self-force of the eternal Truth within us, Bhrigu Varuni, discovers and realizes that the mental principle itself is multilayered, involved as it is in both Matter as well as the Life principle. *Annam* and *Prāna* reveal themselves to the mind by the agency of the senses, the *indriyās*. Experimenting and plumbing the depths of the ocean of the mind, Bhrigu discovers that it itself has an infinity of levels and its superior limit is the principle of Pure mind or *Buddhi* to which certain aspects of truth is accessible, aspects which are beyond the grasp of the senses, *buddhi grāhyam atīndriyam* (Gita VI.21). This *Buddhi* as the principle of Pure mind has the ability to stand back from itself, contemplate, and view its functioning as *Prajña*, the apprehending consciousness, which works with matter and life, with its forms and forces placed before its intuitive gaze. Bhrigu realizes that Mind in its profound depths is indeed Brahman: *mano brahmeti vyajānāt*.

The highest knowledge attainable by the mental man, embodied in the *Rik*, the *Yajus* and the *Sama Vedas*, is perceived by the *Upanishad* as constituting the very limbs of the *manomaya puruṣa*; the Truth of existence as embodied in the tradition and knowledge of the Fathers is the foundation on which the body of the mental being is supported, while the soul of the *manomaya puruṣa* is Commandment, which constitutes the accumulated knowledge of all human kind, indicating a wide-traversing between the seeking mind with its knowledge external to it and the seeing *gnosis*. In Sri Aurobindo’s luminous description, “a many-sided Ignorance striving to become an all-embracing Knowledge is the definition of the consciousness of man the mental being”.

Filling this *manomaya puruṣa* as the very *antarātmā*, the inner-Essence, and in turn itself constituted by the substance of the mental principle, is the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, the Gnostic being. *Śraddhā* is his head. *Śraddhā* coming from *śrat + dhā*, literally and etymologically means, “founded on Truth”, and which in modern terms could be taken to mean the central or integral faith, which is essentially an expression of a realized Truth in the inmost core of the being and which secretly exerts its pressure; not a mental belief but an insistent and unmistakable urge from within. *Ṛta*, or the Truth rhythm, the dynamic unfolding of Reality, the working of the Order of Truth which acts in harmony with *śraddhā*, is the right arm of the *Puruṣa*. The Truth of Being, *satya* is the left arm, while most significantly, his support or foundation is *Mahaḥ*, the fourth *vyāhṛti*, the fourth plane of consciousness, elsewhere called the *Brihaḥ*, the Vast Truth. The secret soul of the Gnostic being is Yoga or Oneness, a Knowledge which comes by identity, where there is a fluid Consciousness of the Unity and at

the same time a total awareness of the fragmentation of this Unity when it gets transcribed by the mental consciousness.

Mental man does not know but only seeks to know, feeling the presence of knowledge in each object and action and attempting to make it conscious in his mind. Mental knowledge is sense knowledge, deduction from the form of things, while *Vijñāna* is self-existent knowledge, spontaneously manifested by identity in consciousness of the knower and the known. Mental knowledge is acquired by hearing, inferring and logically deducing with its base in an accumulated body of knowledge; fragmented and unsure, it treads along sinuous and uneven paths, *hvaraḥ*, *vrijinani*, *duritani panthāh*. *Vijnana* is the seeing and hearing by personal experience; supremely comprehensive, its steps are confident and firm on the straight and open paths, *ṛju panthāḥ*, *vītāni pṛṣṭāni*, where it sees the whole prospect before its Vision, the starting point, the way and the goal; the *vijñāni* sees with a simultaneous, permeating vision of oneness and a sweeping seamless perspective vision of the whole, *anupaśyati* and *paripaśyati*.

Vijnana is self-existent knowledge,  
spontaneously manifested by  
identity in consciousness of the  
knower and the known.

The Veda views the world as seven-fold and also divided into two, the upper or higher *parārdha* and the lower *aparārdha*. The triple *bhūḥ*, *bhuvāḥ*, *svaḥ* are the creation of the three divisions of the world based upon the three *tattvas*, *tamas* (of Inertia), *rajas* (of Action), and *sattva*, (of a balancing Calm), the three dominant principles of Matter, Life and Mind. This triple world of lower prakriti is realized as a reflection or *pratibimba*, a reverse formation of the triple world of higher prakriti, of *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* (or equally, of *Janah*, *Tapah* and *Satyam*). The mirror reflecting the upper (*parārdha*) in terms of the lower half (*aparārdha*) is a certain Fourth called *tuṛīya* or *mahaḥ*, being the fourth either top down or bottom up. This world of *mahaḥ*, the *maharloka*, is between the two halves where shines the Supreme Person, the *Puruṣottama* of the *Gita*, who is the *Vijñānamaya Puruṣa* of the *Upanishad*.

The *pratibimba*, or the reverse formation, realizes the material world or *anna*, or *bhūḥ*, as a reversal of *Sat*, the world of *prāṇa* or *bhuvāḥ* as a reversal of *Chit-Tapas* or *ṛta*, (the Truth-dynamis or the dynamic element of *Chit*) and the world of *manas* or *svaḥ* or *svaḥ*, as the reversal of *Ananda* and *mahaḥ* is the foundation above, the *upari budhnaḥ* of the three worlds of *bhūḥ*, *bhuvāḥ* and *svaḥ*.

Oneness, *ekatvam*, is then to realize Matter, or *annam*, as a mould of *Sat*, Life or *Prāṇa* as a mould of *Chit*, the divine

Power of Consciousness, and sense mentality a mould, a play of the universal *Ananda*. *Vijñāna* is characterized by the synthesis of a Will and Knowledge, a Will that knows and a Knowledge that effects (Sri Aurobindo, Synthesis of Yoga, page 405). The awakening and functioning of *Vijñāna* bring down in a downpour the seven rivers of the upper ocean, the *maha arnah*. The result of the downpour is the vision of *Sachchidananda* behind the phenomenal reality dominated by the mental principle, a vision which is no mere sensory sight but a dynamic participation and a functioning in a total freedom, a *svātantriyata*, of the Original Person. Such a vision sees the Reality as a luminous vibration behind all the manifested world, a vibration of all the forces that constitute the world and flow through it. This vision encompasses the ordinary vision and does not preclude it. It is a vision that is here-everywhere and now-ever, something that embodies its own Truth, a gaze which does not merely see, but which substantially modifies what it sees in its own sublime Truth. Such indeed is the “seeing in Oneness” which the Isha Upanishad describes as *ekatvam anupaśyatah*. There is a melting, as it were, of the boundaries of subjectivity and objectivity, a permeation of the inner and the outer -- the greater the permeation, the more intense the realization that all is indeed in place in the grand scheme of things except for a distorted perception through a predominant presence of the prism of the mind.

The Rishi of the Isha, steeped in *Gnosis*, knowing in oneness, *vijānatah*, exclaims: *tatra ko moha, kah śoka?* (There, what is *moha* (confusion) or *śoka* (sadness)?) These very notions do not exist except to our mental perception. The Rishi of the Taittiriya goes even further and exclaims in joy that he does not merely see but he has even become all this. We even have the profound realization that “he is the food and at the same time the eater of the food”, perhaps the most remarkable and earliest first-hand description of the realization of the *Vijñāna* Consciousness down to the grossest levels in the material world.

The *Rig Veda* (X.67) tells us of a certain *Rishi*, *Ayāsyā*, who, becoming universal, brought into being a fourth world, a new principle of *vijñāna*,

Tuṛīyairṇ svit janayat viśvajanyaḥ

born is a certain fourth, becoming universal, one is born in all this that exists.(Rig Veda X.67.1)

This cry rings in unison with the *Taittiriya's aham visvam bhuvanam abhyabhavām*, “I have become all this that exists”, and with the highest realization of the *Gita*, the realization of the *Puruṣottama* as *parā prakritir jīva bhūta*. *Tuṛīya*, the fourth status, the fourth dimension, is not a limit of the existing dimensions but an altogether new birth; a new dimension which is seemingly an ascension but in reality an unfolding; so indistinguishably interwoven are these four-folds that there is no “higher” and “lower”. The seeker no longer needs to ascend anywhere and finds the Reality here and now, moving



across both worlds with absolute ease, as Rishi Gritsamada says (Rig Veda II.24.5):

Sanā tā kā cid buvanā bhavītvā, ...Ayatantā carato anyad,  
anyad, id ya cakāra vayunā brahmaṁaspatīḥ,

Certain eternal worlds (states of existence) are these that have come into being...without effort, one moves in the other and it is these that *Brahmanaspati* has made manifest to Knowledge. (Gritsamada, II.24.5).

The *ātma* which is present in all that is created, *sarva bhutani*, is ever Conscious of its Oneness with *Vijñāna*, and as our consciousness reaches the core more and more, the laws of space and time engulfing the mental perception get modified into new laws, mental logic gets transformed into a new logic of the infinite. The *Vedic Rishi* realizes the Lord of *Chit-Tapas*, *Agni* as the representative of the Divine Power in the *aparārdha*, while *Agni*'s own home, *svaīṁ damam*, is in the *parārdha* towards which he perpetually ascends and in which he increases (*vardhamānam sve dame*) and simultaneously makes manifest here. *Agni* is invoked by an extraordinary array of names, each name bringing to life a key aspect, a *mantrā*, for the gradual unfolding of *Vijñāna*. The invoking, feeding, tending, a bringing up-front and a complete surrender to this Flaming Godhead become then a sure means of realization of *Vijñāna* in all levels of being, mind, life and matter.

*Agni* is *jātavedas*, the “knower of births”, the ray of divine knowledge in all that exists here or elsewhere, the self-luminous Consciousness force which, being present here and there, knows the origin of all manifestation. *Agni* is *kavi kratu*, the “seer-will”. By *tapas*, he transmutes Action into Knowledge and Knowledge into Action, a synthesis of *kriyaśakti* and *jñānaśakti*, which is *vijñānamaya*. *Agni* is *tanūnapāt*, “son of the body”, *Agni* is *vaiśvānara*, the “universal breather”, he is *narāśamsa*, the “expression of the mortal”, he is *kumara*, the “ever-youthful”. There is an intense aspiration for the spiritual birth of *Agni* in man which is seen as the commencement of the journey, an epiphany of the immortal in the mortal, the coming upfront and leading of the Seer-Will. In his poem, “Rose of God”, Sri Aurobindo describes this epiphany in his magnificent style:

Ablaze in the Will of the mortal, Design the wonder of  
his plan,  
Image of immortality, Outbreak of the godhead in man.

Once born, the young flame, *kumara*, is recognized as the child of Divine Grace and any activity one is called upon to undertake could be offered to this Divine Flame seated within the secret cavern of the heart. To the *Rishi*, this *Agni* is no imaginary presence but an intimate living entity, a son, a friend one can look to for guidance and protection. The hymns reveal an endearment, love, reverence and adoration bringing out a wonderful multifaceted relationship between

the seeker and this Presence, integrally one with him in Ignorance and yet having his roots in Knowledge.

We will now present a few *Riks* from the hymns to *Agni* that reveal the birth the relationship and the effect of the advent of *Agni* on the journey towards the manifestation of the Truth, the Reality.

“He is born to us as if a son rapturous in our house”  
(I.69.3),

“he is the urgings of the Truth, the thinking of the Truth,  
the universal life” (I.68.3),

“he is the child of the waters, the child of the forests, the  
child of things stable and the child of things that move.  
Even in the stone he is there for man, he is there in the  
middle of the house, --- he is as one universal in crea-  
tures; he is the Immortal, the perfect thinker” (I.70.1),  
“he is in the secret cave, he who has come to the  
stream of Truth” (I.67.4).

“Set in your front the divine ecstatic Fire, place him in  
front by your words, ...the Knower of all things born;  
his light shines wide and he shall make easy for us the  
progressions of the sacrifice” (VI.10.1).

Let us now hear *Rishi Bharadvaja* (from VI.9) singing his magnificent hymn on *Agni*. He exclaims,

“I know not the woof, I know not the warp, nor what is  
this web that they weave around...there are secrets that  
must be told and someone speaks them here...”

Then *Bharadvaja* goes on to describe *Agni*,

“He knows the warp, he knows the woof, he tells in  
their time the things that must be spoken...walking here  
below he is one highest beyond who sees through  
another...the Immortal light in the mortals (jyotiramṁtam  
martyeṣu) this is he that is born and grows with a body  
(tanva vardhamānah) ...an immortal light set inward for  
seeing, a swiftest mind within men that walk on the way,  
...With the *Agni* established and growing, *Bharadvaja*  
sings ecstatically, “my ears range wide to hear and wide  
my eyes to see, wide this light that is set in the heart;  
wide walks my mind and I set my thought afar; some-  
thing here is that I shall speak, something that now I  
think”.

And we hear the *Rishi* of the *Taittiriya* sing (I.4.1):

Amṛtasya deva dhāraṁo bhūyasam  
Śarīram me vicarṣaṁam,  
Jihvā me madhumattamā  
Karṇābhyam bhuri visruvam  
Brahmana kososi medhaya apihitah,  
srutam me gopaya.  
May I O Luminous One, become a vessel of immortality,

May my body be wide-visioned,  
May my tongue drip honey (or be Rapturous),  
May my ears hearken to the Vast and Abundant!  
The mind (Indra) is the sheath that covers Brahman,  
Guard for me the inspired knowledge.

We close our brief essay with Sri Ramakrishna's profound observations which bring into direct focus our entire discussion. We will simply quote him without comment, allowing his words to vibrate in the consciousness of the reader and reveal their content in the passage through this journey.

*Vijñāna* means knowing with a greater fullness. Some have only heard of milk, some have but seen it, while others have tasted it. He who has only heard of it is an ignorant man. He who has seen it is a *jñāni*. But only he who has tasted it has attained *Vijñāna*, that is, has known it in its entirety. To see God and have intimate relation with Him as with a near kinsman is what is called *Vijñāna* ... After attaining *Vijñāna* a man can live in the world as well. For then he clearly perceives that He Himself has become the world of living and non-living substances, that he is not outside the world. (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, No: 926)

Elsewhere, we have the fundamental and startling vision of the Divine in Matter, where Sri Ramakrishna, steeped in *Vijñānamaya* consciousness, exclaims:

"I had once a vision: I felt that One Substance had taken the form of the cosmos with all living creatures, which resembled wax, with men, animals, gardens, roads, and the rest, all made of the wax and nothing but that" (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, No: 997, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1954, see Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmṛta, 15 March, 1886).

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## NOTES

1 Utterance or expression, as for instance in the phrase "In the beginning this universe was un-expressed (avyāhṛti)" (Maitrī Upanishad, VI.6).

2 We note here a clear gap in the Taittiriya Upanishad text. A few lines seem to be lost; consistent with the other passages, the Upanishad, instead of saying that they who do upāsānā of Brahman as Mind attain mastery over the mental principle, simply speaks of the inherent inability of the mind as a means to attain Brahman. A phrase (see Taittiriya II.4.1) almost identical with (see II.9.1) is repeated here but which seems out of place, a possible addition by later authors.

3 Buddhi is a faculty within the principle of mind, albeit a superior limit of its normal functioning, much in contrast with Vijnana, which is a newer creative principle, intrinsically and organically distinct from anything mental. An unfortunate confounding of these terms happens in the extant Vedantic literature, a confusion which is not without its consequences.

4 Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, page 585.

5 See page 1095, Monier Williams, A Sanskrit-English dictionary, etymologically and philologically arranged, with special reference to cognate Indo-European languages, Motilal Banarasidas, New Delhi.

6 Sri Ramakrishna says "...I feel as if the Mother has wrapped Herself in different clothes and is peeping out from them" (Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, No: 1000, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1954).

7 Turīya, gets its derivation as follows. In Sanskrit, 'catur' means "four". When the suffix ṛyat is added to 'catur', 'ca' gets dropped and the 't' of ṛyat also gets dropped and the word 'turiya' gets formed, which means "fourth".

8 See the earlier articles on "Maitreyi" and "Two birds" in this series.

9 see page 179, Sri Aurobindo, Secret of the Veda.

10 The word kratu has multiple shades and significances, actions and activities, which can be loosely translated as "Will" or "design", but truly, it is simply Conscious-Force, Chit-Shakti.

11 Translations by Sri Aurobindo, Hymns to the Mystic Fire, 1972.

12 Compare this with Kena Upanishad, where the mind as Indra has to be led by Uma Haimavati, the Chit-Shakti to attain to Brahman.

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# News from the Institute

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## Seniors Appreciation Day at the Vedanta Society of Toronto

Menaka Rajasingham

“Older persons make wide-ranging contributions to economic and social development. However, discrimination and social exclusion persist. We must overcome this bias in order to ensure a socially and economically active, secure and healthy ageing population.”

-- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

The International Day of Older Persons is celebrated by the United Nations on October 1 annually. To celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of our seniors, the Vedanta Society of Toronto has started to host its own Seniors Appreciation Day, also in October of every year. The second such day was held on October 19, 2014.

The program started with a prayer and welcome address by the President of the Vedanta Society of Toronto, Swami Kripamayananda, followed by reading, singing and a short meditation. There was a slide presentation on the activities of the Vedanta Society and volunteer yoga teachers from the Patanjali Yogpeeth demonstrated yoga with participation from the audience.

Talented volunteer actors from the Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo area performed a play titled Just a Phone Call, written and directed by Aaron Haddad. The cast included the young actor Ujaini Muralidharan and a senior, Lisbeth Haddad. The play highlights the difficulties seniors face with new technologies and how these technologies affect their ability to communicate with youth.

Mike Sullivan, NDP member of Parliament for York South – Weston, and Laura Albanese, Liberal member of provincial Parliament for the same general riding, spoke on issues facing seniors and invited audience members to express any concerns facing old persons in the community. They expressed appreciation of the community’s involvement in various programs, especially the soup kitchen activities, which are carried out nine times a month. (Sullivan is the disability issues critic for the Official Opposition.)

The talks by Sullivan and Albanese were followed by a

motivational video showing active seniors in their nineties inspiring younger seniors to engage in physical activities.

Dr. Dilpriya Mangat, a geriatrician with the University Health Network in Toronto, delivered the final presentation. She said keys to healthy living include moderate activity, healthy eating, community engagement, and volunteerism.

There was also participation from vendors who displayed various health-care aids and shared information about retirement homes.

The event concluded with lunch for all the participants.

## Volunteer Opportunity

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