

|| Jai Sri Gurudev ||

# Sree Kshetra Adichunchanagiri

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Celebration of Guru  
Poornima in Kshetra



Aesthete: Pilar Copete



# Sree Kshetra Adichunchanagiri



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**Padmabushana**

**Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri**

**Dr. Balagangadharanatha  
Mahaswamiji**

||Jai Sri Gurudev||

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**Adichunchanagiri**

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# BENEDICTION

## The Guru

Sri Sri Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Maha Swamiji



Remembering, adoring or even worshipping the spiritual master has been the tradition in our country from time immemorial. The day devoted to this pious ritual is the full moon day falling in the month of Ashada, in our Hindu calendar. The day is called 'Guru Poornima'. It is also named after the great epic writer Rishi Vyasa as 'Vyasa Poornima'. Disciples and spiritual aspirants worship their mentors on this day for self – purification.

*'Gu' karasya Andhakarah: 'Ru' karastejauchyate|  
Andahakaravinishatwatgururithyabhidheeyate||*

It means, the letter 'Gu' symbolizes 'dark' and 'Ru' means 'light'. Darkness (ignorance) that has existed over many years can be erased only by bringing in light. Similarly the ignorance in humans (and consequent difficulties) will be driven away by only a capable path-finder mentor. This path-finder is the GURU. He will enlighten our life by driving out the innate worldly desires due to which one's life appears difficult. This is called 'Moksha' – 'Mo' stands for 'moha' – desire and 'ksha' standing for 'kshaya' – ruin. So, the Guru leads you towards 'moksha' – destroying the moha in your mind and guiding it in the right path; in other words you get moksha with 'Guru's blessings.

A Guru should be a great devotee of the Lord, very knowledgeable and simple living by himself. Such a Guru will teach his pupils ethical (vedic) values and such knowledge as will be beneficial to the world. The disciples' mind will be purified so that he will be in a position to find bliss in God. Thus, a Guru is a bridge between God and the human being. Such Gurus are called 'Bhavarogha Vaidyas'. Saint Poet Purandaradasa has said the path of reaching God is through service to the Guru; thus, Guruvinagulamaganuvathanakadoreyadannamukuthi.

Indian culture gives an exalted place to Guru.

*Ajnanathimiramdasayagnananjanashalakaya|  
Chakshurunmileethamyenatasmaishreegurvanamaha||*

The above sloka describes Guru as the burning fire which drives out the darkness of ignorance. The teacher is called Guru. Guides who teach us basic knowledge and some social knowledge are also called as Gurus. But, those whose guidance and teachings will help us find emancipation from worldly bondages and lead us towards God are considered as great Gurus.

Present day society is starved of Gurus of the aforesaid second category. Consequently, the number of people living by morals and ethics has gone down. Devilish thoughts and habits are outnumbering the pious and moral characters. Life is not a bed of roses. Everyone has problems to contend with. But following a true and rightful path, mindful of human values of life is a correct solution to all problems. It will lead to peace and comfort in everyone's life. In difficulties, we should be in search of God for help and it will definitely be on hand if and only if the prayer is sincere. Herein also comes the Guru. He will find a solution to your problem or lead you in praying to God.

Gurus are there not only for humans. Even Gods have their Guru- Brihaspathi is their guru. The demons too had their Guru, Shukra. Our emperors had their Gurus, called 'Rajagurus'. They used to enlighten the kings in matters of justice and morals. They used to find suitable solutions in case of difficult times. The kings used to discuss with Rajagurus and take and implement decisions so that they do not go against righteousness. The Gurus not only propagated knowledge but also guided the administration in the welfare of the society.

It is said that the Guru is even greater than God. Guru has seen the world- the good and bad. We can get a right choice and path with the guidance of Guru. That is why, we salute the Guru and then we pray to the God shown by him in the particular fashion as suggested by him.

*Shlokardhenpravakshyamiyadhukthamgranthakotibhih|  
Paropakarahpunyaya papaya parapeedanam||*

All that is said in multitudes of scriptures can be summarised in half a sentence. Helping others is virtue and troubling others is the sin. Helping others includes our concern for others. Putting yourself in the other man's position, behaving in such a way that it (the behaviour) does not trouble him. The opposite type of behaviour towards others is bad. That is why everyone should tread the right path so that no one will be hurt by your way of life. It leads to peaceful living and good for the nation.

Human desires like wishing for a good wife, good husband, good in-laws, good children and the like, will come true when we first make ourselves deserving of it. Develop good thinking, good habits and behaviour and look upon others as our equals and friends. Then human life becomes happy. When the same love and affection is shown to God, it is called 'Bhakthi'. Such a life will be satisfying. Everyone should live happily, with smiles and pray God wholeheartedly to bless all to live happily.

May Lord bestow His benediction upon all.

# The Aesthete: Pilar Copete

*Sudhamahi Regunathan converses with Pilar Copete who straddles many worlds.*

“She was a sanyasin wearing ochre robes and lived in India,” Ana told me. “She is an artist and has her studio,” added Ana and then there was a pause after which Ana continued softly, “She is married well and to the love of her heart. Her husband is a kind man and supports her in everything she wants to do.”

Ana Ilonka Pinzon, my dear friend in Bogota was telling me about her friend, another Colombian, Pilar Copete. And all the statements above were made about Pilar. I found them not really contradictory, but an intriguing mélange of aesthetics: be it expressed in a spiritual manner, an artistic manner or as a lady who was standing tall in society...more adjectives than most people can handle.

This was more than ten years ago. True to her word, Anna had introduced me to Pilar.



**Pilar Copete**

The impression she made on me prompted me to call her, eleven years later. It was early morning in India. For Pilar it was seven in the evening. Thanks to the electronic media, we met across time zones, across the seas, across the turbulences in her country as of now, across Corona and had a heart warming conversation. All that I was too polite to ask at our first meeting, I asked her now so that more people can find the peace and harmony she revels in. Pilar Copete:

**S.R :** I always like to begin with a question that, I think, takes us to the best moments of our life....can you share some or one or many of your most fulfilling moments or experiences of your life?

**P.C...**I think one of my best moments was when I received the name of ‘Swamini Nigamananda’ in India. I was told my new name meant ‘the one who answers her own questions’. Swami Satyananda, my guru, was the forerunner in initiating women as sanyasins. That created a lot of controversy in those times. But he used to say that sanyasins can contribute to preserving and spreading the knowledge of yoga and it has nothing to do with gender.

...Another amazing moment was after I came out of the Ganges after almost drowning in a whirlpool in the river. I was so happy to be alive. It had indeed been a very frightening experience...

...when I reached a breath rate of four times per minute in my breath control.

...When I felt health coming back to me after my practice of shatkarmas in India for about two months. It was like beginning life all over again.

...In 2017, the Indian Government recognized the activities of the School, granting the Padma Bhushan to the School, represented by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

...When I saw the aura of Ernesto and I decided that if I would marry, he would be my husband. One day my father said, “Come with me to meet my boss.” So I went with him. As we were in the room, I saw someone flashing past outside...he just walked past. But the moment I saw him, I knew that if I ever got married, I would marry only him. Ernesto is a partner at Posse Herrera Ruiz, a renowned law firm in Colombia .

**S.R: How did you come to India? When did you join the Bihar School of Yoga?**

P.C.I was living and studying art in Buenos Aires. The director of the Museum of Modern Art, Bogota, invited me to present my work. At the same time they were celebrating the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Bihar school of yoga. The founder of the school, Swami Satyananda had come to Bogota. The year was late 1975. They were all sitting on the floor and doing yoga.

I must mention here, that I was the only one in my family who was not practicing yoga. My father was already a swami, wearing ochre clothes and so was my sister. I was thinking of myself as an artist and feeling different.

I was also very skinny, not very healthy... Since birth I suffered from breathing diseases such as asthma, skin problems such as eczema. Buenos Aires had been very humid and the weather was not suiting me. I had to be hospitalized often.

Then Swami Satyananda saw me and said, “You know what, in two months you will be in India and I will cure you.”

I had my exhibition and went back. I had no intention of going to India. But I did.

In April 1976, my mother bought me my ticket to India. With a box full of medicines, since I expected to stay in India for 2 months, I landed there. Swami Satyananda suggested I take that box and leave it in the waters as an offering to the river Ganges, which I did.

**S.R: May I interrupt...How was you father a sanyasi?**

**P.C :** My father was a very interesting person. He was fascinated by all things mystical. He wanted to become a priest earlier in life but could not become one.

And then he went to India and became a swami during the Jubilee celebrations in India. This was a shock for our society because he was a professor in the University and he was known for having changed the way in which constitutional law was taught in Colombia. But my father himself was very happy.

My sister was deeply influenced by my father and so she too got initiated. My father was a great follower of Swami Yogananda and he bought many of his books and would gift anyone who as much as mentioned the word yoga or evinced slight interest in it. He was very proud that we were following and practicing the teachings of someone like Swami Yogananda.



And then he was given a magnificent but difficult task of travelling from Central America to the South of Buenos Aires, founding ashrams and teaching yoga for many years.

An interesting memory of mine is when someone told me, “You and your sister are the daughters of a nun and a monk.” This was because my mother, who passed away two years ago, worked and retired as the sacristan of the Basilica of San Pedro Clever in Cartagena (Colombia). And my father, as I have said, was a swami at the Satyananda ashram.

**S.R. So it was not surprising that you joined the ashram in Bihar?**

**P.C :** Well, it was. Because every time my parents told me to practice yoga, I would bang the door and stalk out of the room. I would say, “No I like to paint. For me my meditation is to paint...”

In fact once my father took my watch to a lady who could predict the future on the basis of your personal belongings. She held it in her fist and started laughing uncontrollably. She told my father, “You don’t have to worry about her. Her life is going to revolve around yoga.” And it came true.

**S.R. : So what happened after you came to India?**

**P.C:** I came to stay for two months but instead stayed much longer. I got initiated, started wearing ochre clothes and following the routine of a sanyasin.

I travelled through various areas of Bihar where I had the opportunity to learn from the teachers of each of the towns I visited. They taught me different yogic techniques. Yes, I learnt Hindi and still remember some of it.

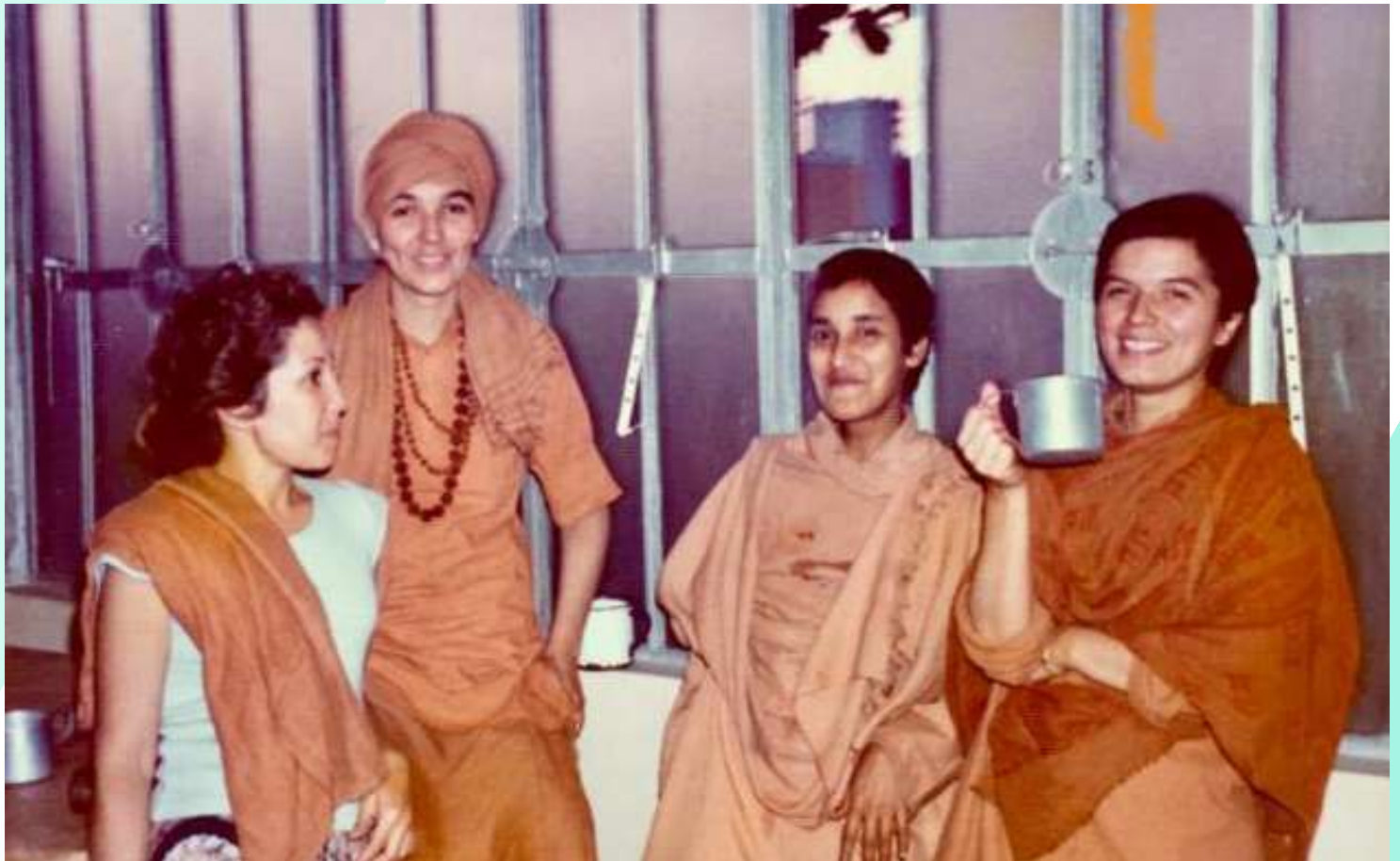
Swami Satyananda asked me to tell him, since I had been there for so many years, what had I learnt. I told him: “To stand on both feet as you told me as soon as I came.” “What else did I tell you”, he asked. I answered, “To be here and now.”



### **S.R. How was your life as a nun?**

P.C.: I used to fast a lot. I would wake up early at 2 in the morning and do my ritual prayers because during the day there was no time. And sometimes I would eat only one meal. I did a lot of bastrika pranayama. I would work with farmers in the ashram, helping them with planting, and later to thresh the harvested paddy. I worked with miners.

I was always in the present. There was no contact with the outside world, no letters, nothing. If I saw someone brushing their teeth with toothpaste I would say, "Ah that is Colgate!" and knew that person had come from outside.



### **S.R. You say you lived with miners...why? And how was that experience?**

P.C After the practice of shatkarmas I was cured of my respiratory problems for life. Swami Satyananda asked me to help others with the same problem by teaching them the techniques. Then, I was sent to a place where there were copper and coalmines, the latter at Dhanbad, where I lived for 3 years, teaching miners. Their hours of work were very long...they worked for 48 hours, without a break. So when they came for yoga and kirtan it was like a breath of fresh air for them.



## **SR : How did you return to Bogota?**

**P.C :** My father came to fetch me. Actually no one knew where I was except for my sister and brother in law who were both initiated and lived in New Zealand. My father got in touch with them and got my whereabouts.

At that time I was the director of the ashram in Dhanbad, One day, when I was at work, I was told I had a visitor by the name of Copete waiting for me at the gate. I refused to believe that, since no one at home knew where I was and no one here knew what my original name was. I thought these people were just trying to play with my mind. It was 8 a.m. It was only at 2 pm that I could find time to go and get myself a cup of tea. When I went out to get my tea, I found someone jumping up and hugging me saying, 'I want you to come and live with me. To come home.' I was amazed to see my father. I replied saying, "Let us see." But, soon my father was persuasive enough and we started planning our return. In those days Dhanbad was not so well connected. We had only rickshaws. I had to go by rickshaw to the station when we left Dhanbad to return to Bogota.

## **S.R. How was your art when you were in India?**

**P.C :** I tried to use it to understand yoga. I illustrated several books like pranavidya and some more. I still illustrate the sequence of my practice with my drawings of yoga asanas.

**S.R. You have said and I quote," In search of simplicity of the invisible forces of colour's structure and vitality, I studied art at Corcoran School of Washington" That which is not visible to the eye is called paroksha in Sanskrit as you may know.....even meditation is a search for that invisible force....you seem to have found many connections in the invisible world...can you describe it to me.**

**P.C :** Yes, for example, when I learned about the structure of Sriyantra, which is the male / female representation, with the formation of five downward triangles and four upward triangles, 43 in total. The number of triangles, 9, is a perfect number. I remembered the drawing that Leonardo Da Vinci made of the Vitruvius man. It is the representation of the perfect human body. I did a drawing of the Da Vinci Vitruvius, and superimposed it onto the Sri Yantra . This was a very exciting moment since I was putting together the two representative icons of two cultures that were united by their geometric shapes, The Vitruvian human body was standing on the square and the circle, and the Sri Yantra was also a circle with at least one square full of triangles... it was like putting the shapes of the mandalas of two cultures together!

**S.R. That is truly amazing! Tell me, how could you adjust to life in Bogota again? Was there a conflict between the pratyaksha and the paroksha or the visible and the invisible?**

**P.C** It took me a year to return to normal life, to social life. All the conversations were meaningless to me. Two schoolmates rescued me... they had a music academy and they lent me a place where I could work again as an artist. I took up drawing, painting. I shared the place with them for several years. I taught yoga again, I even gave separate lessons to people who could not leave their room and shared my knowledge of yoga with them. All the time, my heart was in India. I was thinking only of India.

I started my daily routine as an artist when I had my studio and after each yoga practice I went to the studio where I dedicated myself all day to the work.

**S.R Today you run a group called the circle of knowledge...tell us more about it**

**P.C :** I have been invited by friends to share the practice of yoga in a group called the “Circle of Knowledge” where we share what we know about different disciplines.

**S.R Leave us with a thought that can spin dreams, hold hopes and is borne out by your experience.**

**P.C :**

Run after the sun,

Keep silence,

Search for rhythm

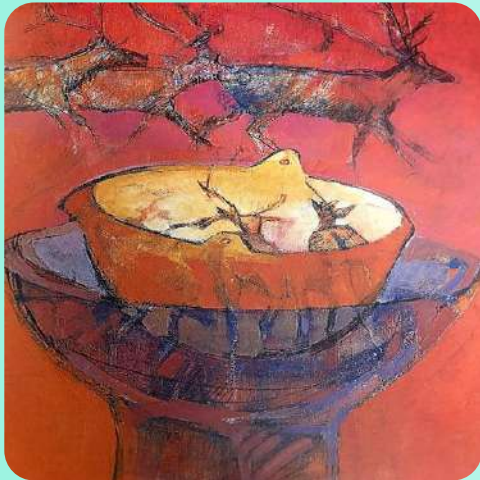
Sing your mantra

Capture the rainbow

Draw

From time to time come to reality

and find the person who lets you follow your dreams ...



**SR :have you come back to India, since?**

**P.C :** No (Laughs) I am afraid if I do I will never come back....

**S.R: What is your favourite prayer?**

**P.C :**

OM Sahana Vavatu

Sahanau Bhunaktu

Saha viryam karavavahai

Tejasvi navaditamastu

Ma Vidvhsavahai

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

# Avatars of Action and Compassion

## My Encounters



**Y.S Rajan**

### Science, Skills and Spirituality

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*Y.S Rajan recollects the pioneering and sensitive steps taken by Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha swamiji in equipping the youth for their future.*

We have seen briefly as to how some great persons like late S.K. Sinha and late C. Subramaniam had dedicated their lives to bring to the Indian farmers, especially the marginal and medium size farmers, science-based skills to increase productivity of their small pieces of lands, in order to bring better incomes without which they would sink into poverty.

Science based skills and equipment have saved Indian people from terrible famines they faced even a century ago and in the earlier centuries. Post-independence India has tackled the problem of famines though many other problems of poverty are yet to be solved. Terrible epidemics like smallpox, measles, and cholera have been eliminated. Cases of malaria have come down significantly, to be fully eliminated by 2030; yet many other serious illnesses like TB are still there.

We need to remember that the total population of India has increased by about five times (500% increase) post-independence. This is so although children born per one woman has drastically come down from that of earlier centuries and even the rates that were prevalent at the time of independence. Increase in population now is mainly because of huge reduction in infant mortality and death of young women post-delivery.

One may wonder as to what is happening with new forms of diseases like cardiac problems, diabetics, hypertension, drug addiction, obesity, etc. We will address them later in another article.

Immediate issues we are going to address here is about poverty elimination. All persons cannot be farmers as arable lands are limited. Also, if there is over production of agricultural products, the growers, that is farmers will lose as prices will fall or the products will have no takers and perish. So many persons need to be given other forms of skills required for the modern world. We have addressed the demands for new products in terms of Store Keeping Units (SKUs) Article 3 of this series in June 2021 issue.

Great persons like Dr. Mahalingam and Sri Sri Sri Poojya Sri BGS Swamiji were aware of these and they built up a number of polytechnics in addition to colleges for science, arts, commerce and engineering. BGS Swamiji built up several nursing schools as well, as he was deeply aware that paramedics are essential component of the healthcare delivery, not just top doctors and researchers.

BGS Swamiji realized while building up many such institutions that there is some asymmetry in terms of admissions.



Children from the rural areas where much fewer to join higher classes in science and engineering and of course medical streams and even for nursing. While analyzing the issues with the experts and brother Swamis, it was found that admission to such courses require Pre-University (PU) science streams. After doing 10th standard (Board Exams) they had to make do with whatever PU colleges were available nearby.

Parents could not afford to send them to hostels to some nearby towns. Problems were more severe for girls as most Indian parents (I have seen all over India) are reluctant to send their girls out at that tender age after 10th standard.

The clear solution was to create more PU (Science) opportunities in rural areas. BGS Swamiji did not believe in slow and steady, tortoise speeds with which most Indians are comfortable. They would make a 10-year plan and implement in about 20-years!! Swamiji was deeply aware as to how many students have been denied this opportunity in their lives and how many more would miss out if we move slowly.

So he decided to open up 5 or 6 PU (Science) colleges in different parts of Karnataka within a year. Of course, Swamiji never compromises on the quality of buildings and other infrastructure so that aspiring students from rural areas can have a good PU (Science) college nearby. By doing well in the courses they become eligible to take up B.Sc., B.Tech, MBBS, Nursing, etc.

I have explained the above in some detail, because Swamiji was kind enough to share these plans with me. At that time I was at Delhi and used to visit Bangalore.

Fast forward.... I was invited for the inaugural function of all 4 or 5 PU Science colleges held together at Chikabalapur Mutt near Bangalore airport. Sri Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji was then in charge of those institutions and had specially told me to stay back beyond the function and leave the next day. I don't remember the year and date of the function. BGS Swamiji was exceptionally busy with many other demands on his time. I think he came to give blessings and went away or perhaps asked Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji to depute on his part to conduct. My memory is a little vague on this as my mind is full of those children who had passed class 10 and had got admitted to the colleges; some had returned home as their homes were far away. Even then, some 200 students were there.

Post function, Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji requested me to interact with those children, boys and girls, all in school uniforms. I should specially mention about Shivaram Reddy. Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji had explained to me that he is the anchor for him to connect with schools, maintain quality standards etc. The children sat in a big lecture hall yet to be furnished, but all clean and neat with a good low-level stage and huge blackboard etc. These children had studied everything in Kannada medium and could not understand Hindi or English. That was the challenge. A chemistry teacher offered to be the translator. Swamiji except for initial remarks and blessings, sat quietly. Some teachers were present.

I used a method of starting from the audience, by asking questions. What is mass?... Examples. We moved onto many aspects of physics, atoms, molecules and then to chemistry, biology. The language barrier was not felt. I wrote on board their replies. We built on to find right answers. About 30% of students - boys and girls - were very active. At one point, a girl was trying to stop me; when I paused, she pointed out a mistake in my writing. For Manganese I had written Mg and she corrected it as Mn. I asked all of them to applaud her.... It was reaching lunch time; we were to enter further into evolution, then some issues on consciousness and brain etc. It was already 2 pm; beyond lunch time.

They were not ready to stop. We convinced them to wait for next time. I asked them where they learned all these: the response in chorus was “teacher”. I think there was a special teacher in each of the schools! That episode is still within me, and I have written about it. It encouraged me to be confident of brighter future for India. With Shivaram Reddy's help, later I visited some schools from which these students came... pity I could not go to any of their PU colleges later.

BGS Swamiji's insight was very useful to benefit these village boys and girls.

BGS Swamiji, as he was always in touch with ground realities, knew that even with such an outreach only 10% to 15% of Indian children can be given some good education for better incomes in the modern world.

What about the rest? Let me illustrate the dimensions of the problem. Very recent statistics will show that we have 911 million people in 15-64 years age group. They are to contribute economy. Of this 465 million are in the workforce. They earn salaries or wages. Others may work at home without pay or may not. Of this workforce, 201 million are in Agriculture; 116 million are in Industry; 149 million are in Services. Yearly about 4.75 million join the workforce (less than half of those who are ineligible group).

Look at this stark fact: 93% of our workforce are in informal sector. Only 7% have the luxury of regular job in government, private sector, etc. with some terminal benefits, medical coverage. Of this 93% workforce, only 2.4% are formally trained in skills. This is so even now though we hear periodically slogans of Skilled India. National Skill Development Corporation, etc. If formally trained (need not be for 1 or 2 years – but a few weeks to few months is enough) they would earn more.

BGS Swamiji took a step in this direction also by establishing the first ever Skill imparting school under aegis of FUREC (Foundation for Understanding Religions and Enlightened Citizenship). Sudhamahi Regunathan may write about it sometime, as BGS Swamiji played a great role. This golden period of FUREC were the years when he was FUREC President.

He got the best machines as in the final production in export sector. I recall his telling the professors who planned, to visit such units to select machines and not to go by some ordinary lab type machines. In tailoring section, he managed to get a young Muslim lady to be the teacher as she was the master in her skills in a production unit.



Dr. Kalam as Rashtrapati and a patron of FUREC inaugurated it. FUREC went dormant for a long time, otherwise BGS Swamiji would have expanded the Skill network.

So far, we have surveyed the need for knowledge in science-based education of higher types, and varieties of skills throughout the supply chain-- from the knowledge to actual practice of production and distribution to the markets and people. Imagine for example, the research on vaccines, clinical trials, to production to actual delivery to people. Some 1000 different small segments of specialties and specific skills for each of those segments are involved.

A society having such capabilities for all its people would be prosperous. Would it be enough? BGS Swamiji was clear that it was not, hence he integrated through examples, opportunities for spiritual learning.

We will have to carefully see what Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji had given in the benediction In April 20-21, May 20-21 issues. I quote: Having described some of the inadequacies of modern societies which pursue only science, he states: “That doesn’t mean that we need to ignore modern education; but any lopsided emphasis on it would prove to be detrimental to our existence...”

In May 2021, he says.. “we need to take the lamp of science along with knowledge... only when a man carries science and wisdom or spiritual knowledge simultaneously in an equitable balance a sustainable and stable society can be built.”



## WHAT IS HAPPINESS?



Ezekiel Isaac  
Malekar

*Ezekiel Isaac Malekar tries to tie down happiness in some words and possible actions.*

Life is filled with all sorts of unexpected twists and turns -- with darkness, thunder and lightning. But still there is a lot of joy in life and the challenge is to feel that joy.

A number of Jewish teachings stress the importance of joy and demonstrate methods of happiness such as Ditzza- a sublime happiness and Osher - a deeper and lasting happiness. According to Pirke Avoth -- Sayings of the Father -- the one who is rich is he who rejoices in his lot.

We need our lives to have meaning with a higher purpose. What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him. When we struggle to achieve our ideals, we live a life of meaning and to be sure, happiness will follow.

Personal success devoid of meaningfulness, without commitment to social justice is a wasted life. While we should strive to live with joy, we should balance this with other life commitments and values. When we actively cultivate gratitude and idealism, we can become happier individuals better equipped to change the world and live inspired lives committed to doing good.

What is a successful life and what is a satisfied and happy life? Your successful life is measured or judged by others whereas your satisfied and happy life is measured and judged by your own mind, heart and soul.

There are several methods to do so. Firstly, start thinking of other people; devote less time to thinking of yourself. A person who is always thinking about himself will worry, feel sorry for himself, get aggressive about what he wants etc. and so remains unhappy. The greatest misery in life is self-pity.

Look at a child. The child is not self-conscious. Children are free and happy because they are not yet aware of themselves. It is only when we mature that we develop self awareness and become self-absorbed. We have worries and concerns, unfulfilled desires and unrealized dreams. The child's lack of self-absorption leaves him/her free to enjoy life and be happy. Children do not need to learn strategies for positive living and they don't need a reason to be happy. We feel that we need a reason to be happy.

The more we are concerned with our own happiness, the farther we move away from achieving it. As soon as we forget about what we need and focus on what we are needed for -- the good we can do for others rather than the good we can get for ourselves -- our childlike joy comes flowing back and we are happy.

The prerequisite to living a directed and purposeful life is the choice of being happy with our lot in life.

By choosing happiness, one progresses to the second stage, which is weighing the relative advantages of the options at one's disposal, what to do, how to do it and so forth. By deciding to be happy, we subdue evil inclinations and nagging thoughts of dissatisfaction that we are missing something. We maintain the clarity of mind that enables us to make good choices that further increase our satisfaction in life.

According to Judaism Happiness in our daily routine is : 1. Simha - celebration of a wedding, etc. 2. Gila - Happiness of discovery. 3. Rina - refreshing happiness 4. Sasson - a sudden unexpected happiness 5. Tzahala - Dancing and Chedva - happiness of togetherness.

Materialism also depletes happiness, threatens satisfaction with our relationships, harms the environment, renders us less friendly and empathetic and makes us less likely to help others and contribute to our communities. Materialism in religion is a form of philosophical monism which holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature and that all things including mental states and consciousness are results of material reactions.

#### **Some truth to meditate upon them:**

1. You are not the things you own.
2. Relationships are about doing and not having.
3. Create a system of goals and challenges.
4. Serve and trash the memory of having done so.
5. See wealth as a challenge and not a result
6. Place experience over objects.
7. Build intangible assets.

#### **There are four hormones which determine human happiness :**

1. Endorphins - when we exercise the body releases endorphins, so do not forget your daily exercise.
2. Dopamine - when we accomplish many little and big tasks it releases dopamine. Or when we get appreciation for our work at home or office, or when we buy assets like a car or house, etc. Just set yourself small targets and get a rush every time you tick it as done.
3. Serotonin - when we act in a way that benefits others. When we need to be nice to others or use our precious time to help others. Try to do one good act everyday.
4. Oxytocin - when we become close to other human beings, hug children or friends, Jaduki Jhappi, shake hands, etc. But beware of this during covid times!!!



# Finding Happiness

*Prema Raghavan recounts some personal experiences on the route to happiness*



We live in a world of good and bad. Nothing exists without its opposite. Life is about the fine balance at the intersection of happiness and sorrow.

Where there is light, there is darkness  
Where there is happiness, there is sorrow

Our experiences with this dual are meant to make us wise, light and unconquerable. The appreciation for the good things comes when we go through the hard phases of life. We enjoy success with more gratitude based on our memories of failure. Duality exists within us as well. There is nothing white and black, we are all a mix of every colour. We have our share of right and wrong choices which is the building block of our personality. Diversity in thinking is the origin and foundation all human progress and innovation.

When I was a young girl, my 'happiness mantra' was that I would be happy when I got the first rank in studies and sports and could speak English fluently, as I studied in a Tamil medium school. When someone so much as asked me whether I studied in a convent, I would imagine it was due to how I spoke and explode with joy. The euphoria of these feelings quickly faded away. Happiness is an emotion which, as a rule, is fleeting. Positive thinking is logical, not emotional. This happiness trap is shared by many of us.

My favorite aunt Rukmini Athai's death, was my first experience of the irreversible nature of the death of a loved one. Even though I had achieved many of my earlier goals by then, at that moment all I wanted was the return of my athai to be happy. There was a paradigm shift in my attitude. Towards gratitude and joy to have the company of loved ones. My friend Chandrika lost her mother the earlier year and all of us in the class cared for her with great empathy. But realisation of what such a loss meant only dawned on me when it hit at close quarters. This trauma clarified my understanding of the happiness goals I truly valued.

What is happiness? It is not a trait or a long-lasting, permanent feature, but a more fleeting, changeable state.

Many happy people realize happiness is a choice and it's up to them to intentionally choose it every single day. Happy people are not held hostage by their circumstances and they do not seek happiness in people or possessions. Fully experiencing it still requires a conscious decision to choose happiness each day.

No matter how bad life seems, there's always something positive you can find to focus on. It could be the fact you have a place to live, friends and family that love you, have clothes to wear, or even that you have eyes to see and legs to walk with. There are millions of people in the world that don't have some of these things.

What is the greatest kind of happiness? Yaksha asked. "Contentment", said Yudhisthira

The root to happiness is our work. Choose a purpose, set noble goals and manage time effectively. A lot of volunteers took this opportunity to serve people in their own way. These people shared meaningful relationships/interactions which is a source of joy. This was telecast on TV creating a positive ripple effect. This anecdote proves 'every cloud has a silver lining'

Even cooking and cleaning, when done well, is a pleasant experience. Writing this article for the magazine is a meaningful and satisfactory activity for me. It is important to be disciplined especially in these dark days, even if there is not much work.

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy. I smile as soon as I get up, thereby producing serotonin, the happy hormone in my body.

One day when I was in a footwear store, there were young children outside selling balloons barefooted on a very hot summer day. I took them inside and bought them slippers. The joy on both the sides cannot be expressed in words but has to be experienced.

When you choose to do kind acts for other people, it boosts your serotonin, the neurotransmitter responsible for feelings of well-being and satisfaction. Endorphin levels also rise, leading to a phenomenon known as a 'helper's high'.

There isn't one right way to be happy or a specific formula for it. In fact, what works for one person may not work for another as it is deeply personal. Happiness is a choice. Whether we want to believe it or not, we are responsible for how happy we are.

There is a lot of power in realizing that we are in charge of our own happiness. It is like hunger and eating food. Others can bring it up to your mouth, but you have to eat and digest it. Our friends and family can be a part of our 'happiness team'. Once we have made the decision to be a happy person, then we need to do whatever it takes to be happy. Happiness is a journey and not a destination.



Author Prema Raghavan buying footwear for children

Covid affected the whole world, rich and poor nation's alike. The strength of the commonalities of humanity, trust and compassion is binding us together, ushering changes. This affirmed the Burkean thought that "No man made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he felt he could do so little". Individual sensitivity to mother earth and ecology due to corona gives hope redesigned around our power of choice. The world we step out to will be definitely better!

### **Our frailty towards natural forces**

The corona virus has put humanity to test. Everyone is feeling the emotional burden of this crisis. It has impacted and changed lives on a global scale, reminding us of our interdependence and the fragile balance within which human life exists. There are no separate Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Buddhist vaccines. Most of us have realized that to be fully human and fully alive, we need to care as well as be cared. This crisis is evoking the intrinsic humanity of people – which is our only religion.

Daily lifestyles have transformed overnight for many families. Work from home for children and adults, absence of domestic assistance and uncertainty about the future has put tremendous pressure on people.

Some of my friends said, despite the fear of the virus in the background, their family bonds have deepened. From a fast life with little time for human interaction, the time released from commuting has come to occupy other household activities and interactions. Some of them now eat together every day. Household work has become a team effort, enabling them to appreciate each other's role in their lives. The dynamic is almost like a holiday, without the associated expenses, with more mundane activities - but with the primary ingredient of a vacation – time with each other.

Many have utilized their time to return to old hobbies or develop alternate income-generating occupations.

Others were reminded by the pandemic that man alone cannot rule. That there is a higher power guiding all of this. Waking us up to the value of family, society and friends, who we tend to take for granted.

People have live with a constant fear. Hoping this would pass off with time. The opportunity to socialise and to visit friends and relatives was missed. Lack of outdoor activity such as walking resulted in a monotonous routine.

It did not make any difference in their personal life for some friends. There was no major change as their world is within the four walls of the house. They were feeling happy that their 'unsocial' life paid dividends! Their routine consists of prayers, house management, reading, tailoring, music and TV. There are others who have live in domestic staff and they are glued to the TV and Netflix. So the sedentary life style continues without full stop.

Then there are those who are the real victims of this crisis. Migrant labourers, self-employed people, small businesses and those who lost their jobs a decade before retirement amidst the pandemic. The pandemic has taught us about the resilience and fragility of our people. Who trudge for days to return to their native places. Dismantle their dreams for their children as they stare at a grim economic future. But, the suffering also brought out the best among fellow human beings, some of whom undertook incredible personal efforts to help those in distress.

Even big business houses had to terminate some of the employees due to lack of contracts, resulting in labour strikes etc.. Many sectors like hospitality, entertainment trade and religious institutions have almost come to closure. Manufacturing sector also suffered due to little or no production.

Children have to rely on on-line classes, resulting in more screen time which has a negative impact on their health, particularly vision-related problems. They do not have any outdoor activity. It is a chance to forge a better relationship with children and teenagers.

For some the loss was very heavy. Some children became orphans. Many could not see their loved ones when they were sick and succumbed. It was a traumatic experience for many.

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We read stories of how doctors and nurses shrugged off their own personal setback or grief in order to focus on caring for patients. Witnessing the death of patients despite their best efforts and having to break the news to their families too has been a devastating experience for the doctors. The agony of turning away patients and their relatives due to paucity of beds while desperately scouring for oxygen for the admitted patients, at the peak of the pandemic, was emotionally roiling; and yet, the fraternity continues courageously.

Amidst the gloom and the uncertainty, nature sprang some pleasant surprises. What followed reduced economic activity was less pollution.

Life is not easy, pandemic or not, as we will always have challenges. But happiness does not come from your circumstances or your situation. Happiness comes from a choice that you make within.



# In Search of The Holy Grail Called Happiness...

*Wellbeing and happiness are notoriously fuzzy concepts. How could, something as subtle as wellbeing, be measured, much less be pursued as a goal? Aruna Srinivasan brings a report on the institutional efforts being taken to realise the dream of a Happiness Economy*

In a 2006 survey, GfK - Growth from Knowledge, a UK-based global market research agency, found that the proportion of people saying they are "very happy" had fallen from 52% in 1957 to just 36% in 2005. Interestingly, when the survey asked people about whether the government's prime objective should be the "greatest happiness" or the "greatest wealth", 81% declared "greatest happiness". Only 13% thought the government's role was to ensure "greatest wealth". In addition, the question "What happiness means for you?" had 34% of respondents choosing the answer, "contentment/ peace of mind/fulfillment/no stress." Other surveys on happiness in the US and other parts of the world have received similar results.

In no survey was gross domestic product, 20% corporate revenue growth, low inflation and other rather academic measures of success mentioned.

Analyzing happiness and economic performance in a paper published in the Economic Journal 1997, Andrew Oswald, Professor of Economics at Warwick University in the UK, observed that people are not genuinely concerned about GDP and other conventional economic measures. They "have no innate interest in the money supply, inflation, growth, inequality, unemployment and the rest.... The relevance of economic performance is that it may be a means to an end..."he observed in a paper.

Today, 'wellbeing' and 'happiness' are no longer flaky pursuits of the flower-power generation. For a small but growing number of governments, institutions and corporations, the pursuit of wellbeing is a structured, well-researched effort. In recent years, the movement has produced happiness indices, holistic governmental policies, employee work-life-balance schemes and other strategies that are hoped to lift entire populations toward the elusive state of 'happiness'.

## Heaven On Earth?

Bhutan, the tiny kingdom nestled in the Himalayas, has been a pioneer in this regard. In 1972, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, who was king at that time and is the father of the present king, decided that people's happiness is more important and coined the term Gross National Happiness (GNH) to measure the wellbeing of his country.

Bhutan may be merely a dot on the world map and its GDP growth might be nowhere near the classification of a "rich" nation. But the efforts and the commitments the nation has taken to ensure an economic growth without compromising the traditional values of culture, heritage and ecological balance are intriguing at least.

They believe in sustainable growth and feel that there should be a balance in economic development. Gross National Happiness (GNH) is an indicator that was conceived by the small nation. Joining with the Canada-based non-profit research organization Genuine Progress Index Atlantic (GPI Atlantic) the Bhutan government formed plans and methodologies to reach the goal of GNH.

The government is guided by four policy pillars regarding development: Promotion of equitable and sustainable socio-economic development; preservation and promotion of cultural values; conservation of the natural environment; and establishment of good governance. Every government department should conceive and formulate every policy based on these values and every project should have clearance from all these angles.

Bhutan has certain restrictive measures for tourists, so that the country's natural resources are not wasted or destroyed by an excessive and indiscriminate tourists inflow. The country's every step towards modernity is cautious, calculated and taken at its own pace, not to disturbing the ecosystem or the ancient cultural heritage. Eco tourism is encouraged but polluting industries are not allowed to set up shop.

The country's mission is to achieve economic growth without compromising on the country's heritage and natural resources.

Over the decades Bhutan has registered progress in many of the human development indicators. Education is one area where the country has placed emphasis. Until 1960 there was no public school system but today schools are everywhere and through a process of shifting the teachers to various pockets across the country the government makes sure that the best teachers are available to all students.

Meanwhile, the idea of searching for happiness has caught the imagination of the people. Nations and organizations are putting their minds together and evolving ways to attain this elusive state of mind. Happiness and Its Causes is an annual conference initiated by Sydney-based Vajrayana Centre, a Tibetan Buddhist centre in 2006. Due to the Covid 19 Pandemic, the 2020 conference was held virtually.

Thailand is another country taking wellbeing as a national undertaking. Its concept of 'sufficiency economy' is akin to Bhutan's GNH.

The Public Policy Development Office (PPDO), a policy agency body instituted in 2005 by the Thailand government to evolve national policies that ensure the overall happiness of the country's people, has been holding national workshops or international conferences on Happiness and Public Policy from 2006. PPDO works as a 'connecting bridge' between the government, academics and civil society. PPDO works on an innovative public policy development process, where the people of all sectors in Thai society collaboratively push for the successful execution and implementation of the policies.

The goals are to create a populace with a happy mind, body and soul; knowledge and understanding of their heritage; a conscience that benefits society; ability to make a decent living; a loving and caring family; living in a safe environment; having rights and freedom and mutual respect for all humankind.

The United Nations is on the happiness bandwagon too, and has drafted the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for a happy global society. The goals include eradicating poverty; achieving universal primary education; reducing child mortality; combating HIV, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability and so on.

Yet other institutions are pursuing ways of generating economic growth that are in harmony with nature. UK-based New Economic Foundation for instance believes in building an economy that cares about the wellbeing of humanity and the planet earth. They question the approach of acquiring money for money's sake. Their New Economics broadens the definitions of wealth, rather than narrows them down to an abstraction that may or may not relate to human fulfillment.

But wellbeing and happiness are notoriously fuzzy concepts. If you ask 10 people what is 'happiness' or 'wellbeing', you might get 12 answers. If you ask them again after an interval, their answers might alter. How can something as subtle as wellbeing be measured, much less pursued as a goal?

Even so, there are universal causes of wellbeing.

## **Rewards of Work**

The American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who evolved the theory of "Flow" observed that people usually are most happy when they are in a state of 'flow'. This is a state of concentration or complete absorption into the activity at hand. It involves engaging an individual's key talents, such as painting, writing, designing an engine or any other skill that one feels passionate about.

Now, many companies try to apply this concept in their workplaces. Human resource managers try to address the calling of each individual. If one employee is able to do a job of his or her calling — a job that they are passionate about — they will not feel their work is monotonous. When the employees find happiness in what they do at work, productivity increases.

Some corporations take an active interest in their employees' satisfaction with both their personal and professional lives. One Indian software company even has a Cupid Section to help loners find their life partner. The company also supports the idea of spouses working together in the company. With happy couples, the workplace would be a happier place, is the line of thinking.

Another key strategy is to create a sense of belonging in the unit. One way of keeping the workforce happy is to make them feel part of a family. A team spirit is inculcated in the workforce. The management makes sure that they facilitate everything that is needed to make an employee perform his best.

The senior managers find out an employee's plus and minus point and encourage him or her to work on the weaknesses to perform better; recognise the plus points and the talents with suitable rewards. More importantly, employees are given greater power and responsibility and they are made aware that they are entrusted with a great deal of trust.

In Lucas TVS, an automobile electrical systems maker in Chennai, there is a practice of managers keeping their team of workforce in constant dialogue since they believe that effective communication is very essential to build up a good rapport in the unit. The strategies include communications and presentations in Tamil to make those employees on the shop floor comfortable and "at home" in the workplace.

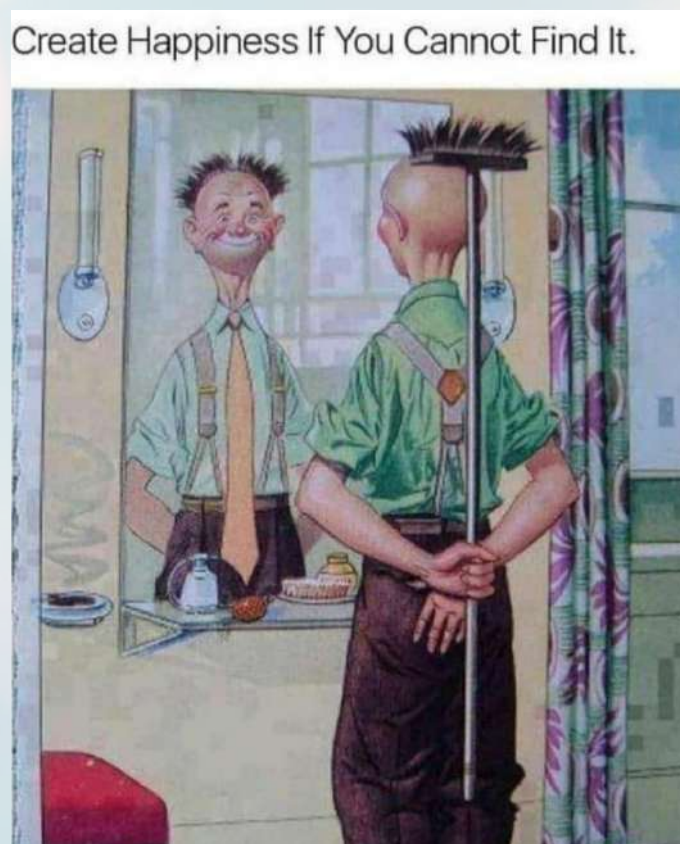
In an Internet solutions and e-commerce services company, tackles testy times by keeping employees in the loop of things. Transparency and openness are part of the work culture today. In many companies, any employee could pick up the phone or interact with the management through Intranet and come up with their ideas or complaints.

However, what makes one feel successful or what gives the sense of accomplishment to someone, differs from time to time. Ten years ago, one's definition of success would have included a bank account figure and other material gains. But after a few years of reaching that level, the definition of sense of accomplishment might revolve around issues that are less tangible and more spiritual in nature. For many individuals, after reaching material success, Spirituality has a far bigger role to play with happiness.

Once the founder of Wal-Mart, Sam Walton, and the richest man in the world at one point of time, was driving an old Renault 1958 truck. When he was asked why he shouldn't switch over to a newer model, he said he would do so soon. After a few years he did change his vehicle — to a 1967 model of another Renault! To him it was simply a mode of transport. It served his purpose and there ends its utility and his motivation or desire for a vehicle. His definition of happiness was different.

Indeed, the reasons for unhappiness often are the rat race for money and status. For many caught in such a whirlpool, moving from an over-working obsessive work culture would help. Working for larger good - working on a mission to achieve some common good or working for a cause, might channelize such individuals' energy towards a state of well being and happiness.

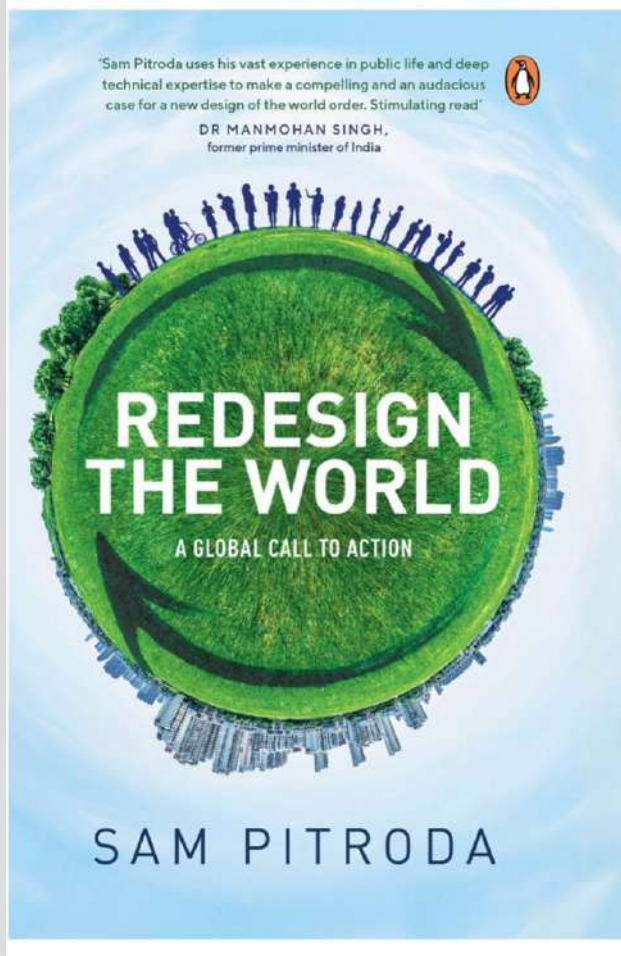
Human beings' search for achievement and acquisition is as perennial as the universe is. Today, it does not end with the search for material acquisition or success; it has grown beyond the boundaries of material search. The new culture of wealth and achievement has a different benchmark for success - the well being of individuals as well as that of humanity.





# A NEW WORLD WITH FOCUS ON PEOPLE AND PLANET

*R. Dasarathy says Sam Pitroda's latest book calls for a commitment, at all levels, to 'real' happiness and growing to one's full potential.*



For the first time in human history, we have the resources and capacity to meet, fully, the basic needs of the entire population, in terms of food, shelter and security. Logically, with their needs satisfied, there is potential for happiness all-around, as never before. As a consequence, poverty and destitution can be eradicated.

Happiness is a feeling of contentment, that life is just as it should be. In other words, happiness comes when you feel satisfied and fulfilled. Sam Pitroda's book comes from this space – the author having seen success, material wealth and achievement both in the corporate world in the US and in the development sector in India, is looking for 'real' happiness, both for an individual and the community in general. The book tries to find a resonance between the traditional wisdom of 'simple living and high thinking' and Gandhian thought, with the latest discoveries in science and technology.

The value that is created in the Information Age is a new paradigm. An example would be an Uber, a Zomato or a Byju's where new goods are not produced, however existing assets are better utilised, thereby creating additional value. This is achieved through the three dimensions of the Information Age – Connectivity, Content, Context.

Connectivity is almost synonymous with community – whether your co-workers or your friends and family, you are always in touch, forming a 'global village'. Content is all about awareness and knowledge, freely available and limited only by your capacity to absorb and commitment to learn. Context is the empowerment of the individual, 'a segment of one' in contrast to the Industrial age, where standardization was the norm and objective ('one size fits all').

Hence in the Information Age, we move from scarcity mind-set to an abundance mind-set. This mind-set comes out of an idealist objective to optimise not just Capital, but also human capital and natural resources. And instead of 'use and throw' disposable items, we move to 'cyclic' durable items. We do not create mountains of waste, but conserve natural resources and build products in a sustainable manner.

The author is the founder, investor, chairman of six start-ups and five non-profit foundations. He holds over 100 patents and 20 honorary PhDs. He laid the foundation for India's telecommunication revolution in the 1980s. Pitroda born in 1942 went to the US in the mid-sixties, after completing his basic degree in Physics from Baroda. After his Master's in electrical engineering in Chicago, he designed an electronic telephone switch. He acquired many patents and became a telecom entrepreneur and a millionaire.

Pitroda's zeal and perseverance is legendary, which won him the trust of India's then young Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. We recall the 60's and 70's as a period of acute shortages – symbolised by the 'ration card' and telephone was one of those things, that you waited for a long time. In the late 80's the telecom sector in India leapfrogged with new innovations like STD/ PCO's – which changed the landscape completely.

Meanwhile the Government in India changed and Pitroda faced allegations and his health suffered, as a consequence. But as they say 'you can't keep a good man down'. With determination and hard-work, Pitroda recovered and re-established himself in the US. Thereafter he had another stint with the Government of India between 2004 and 2014 – as the chairman of Knowledge Commission, National Innovation Council. The Covid-19 pandemic and the enforced stay at home set him thinking. The result is this ambitious book suggesting a new world order, where the contradictions of our age, known to all of us, but still bewildering, are addressed. For example, there is enough food for everybody, but children still go hungry, the money spent on military world-wide can completely eliminate poverty many times over, ...

The author also states that his own brush with mortality, in terms of cancer and multiple heart surgeries inspired him to leave a legacy for his grandchildren, which is 'global and human'.

The author starts with the end of the second World War (1945), when there was a new commitment to peace or more accurately an abhorrence for war, which leaves everybody a loser. The last 75 years after the Second World War can be divided into two parts – the first 45 years dominated by the Cold War between the two super-powers and the last 30 years with the US as the sole super-power. The last 35-40 years has also seen the rise of China and later on India, as an economic power-houses.

The construct of the new world in 1945, led by the US was based on five pillars: democracy, human rights, capitalism, consumption and military. The alternative governance model to this was the Soviet system consisting of dictatorship, socialism, limited human rights, controlled consumption and of course military.

The book identifies seven 'tipping points' – points which caused the world, as we knew to topple over: Decolonization in the mid-20th century, The Rise of China, Fall of the Soviet Union, 9/11: The Terror, Information Technology, Increasing Inequality and finally Covid-19. And yet this can also be seen as an opportunity. This opportunity can be seized by consolidating the strengths and correcting the excesses of the last 75 years, within the context of an abundant mind-set.

The author argues for a ‘third vision’ – besides the two competing visions i.e. the American (democracy, freedom and capitalism) and the Chinese (military prowess and manufacturing strength). In contrast, the ‘third vision’ will have people and the planet at the centre. In the ‘third vision’ there will be global collaboration and cooperation, ideas will be shared due to enhanced communication across national boundaries, new organizational structures will be created, ... all focused on people and the planet.

This opportunity for a new design for the world has been classified under five new pillars: inclusion, human needs, new economy, sustainability/ conservation and non-violence.

The author discusses the injustice of exclusion and prejudice, and the not-so-obvious benefits of inclusion and diversity. The basic human needs have sought to be addressed directly, by schemes like mid-day meals for children, and have been tremendously successful on several fronts – nutrition, education, health, .... In an age of abundance, this can definitely be provided, thereby promoting peace and prosperity.

The old adage that ‘there is enough for everybody’s needs, and not for everybody’s greed’ is more true today than ever before. The book, for example, details the difficulties the poorer women face, in providing water for their families, contrasted with the water-intensive lifestyles of the rich (exemplified by the number of clothes, including unused ones!)

In the New economy, there will be new products and services, better back-end management to anticipate requirements, many free services and totally new organizational architecture. The key by-product of this would be less wastages and conservation of natural resources.

The new design of the world will also include more time for family and friends and less time spent on stressful commuting to work etc.

To sum up, the book calls for a commitment at all levels to ‘real’ happiness – an opportunity to live life fully, enjoy more time with family and friends, seek knowledge and grow to your full potential. During our interaction with the author over a Zoom call, the author stated rather disarmingly, that though he has raised many questions and suggested an organizational structure, he has no answers! He would expect that the solutions come bottoms-up, as those at the bottom are more aware of the reality. This approach is also consistent with the decentralized architecture for decision-making – instead of Delhi dictating the solutions, he expects the districts to come up with the solutions and that is shared across the country. The change proposed is a total change of mind-set – which requires a new organizational structure to implement and monitor “the Mission”.

Redesign the World: A Global Call to Action

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# EXPERIENCING ALL OF CREATION

*Neeraja Raghavan, experiences the joy of living on this earth with so many different forms of life.*

In this time of the pandemic, we have received the loudest possible warning that we have been abusing our environment. However, the warning has long been articulated by many environmentalists and naturalists, like Jane Good all and David Attenborough. It is just that the pandemic has made it difficult for anyone to shut his or her ears to it.

Today, sitting indoors, when I turned to reading and watching videos, I had a surfeit of films by David Attenborough. We are not new to his works and they have always been awe-inspiring. What came to me rather strongly was the determination and effort he had put in to give us such delightful experiences.

David Attenborough (now 95 years old) has lived a unique life in more ways than one. I spent the last week reading his autobiography, LIFE ON AIR and it was so riveting that my mornings dawned with the eagerness of a child looking forward to visiting a new terrain and seeing yet another form of life each day. It was difficult to tear myself away from the book every night. Indeed, most of my waking hours found me deeply engrossed in its pages.



Where was he going to fly me to, today? From Kenya to New Guinea, Russia to Colombia, South Pole to the North Pole – in one fell swoop, this book took me across vast vistas and showed me the stunning wonder that Nature is. It simply took my breath away – just to read about this man’s travels and stunning work. How must it have been to actually live such a life!

The world got this brilliant broadcaster by chance. He was working as an editor of children’s science textbooks when he chanced upon an advertisement calling for radio talk producers. Although he applied, he was rejected. But his CV was seen by the Head of BBC’s fledgling television service, Mary Adams. He answered her call (and he had himself seen only one television programme at that time, not owning a TV himself), then underwent a mere three-month training – and the rest, as they say, is history.

From starting as a full-time employee of BBC in 1952, he switched to becoming a freelancer in 1973. His descriptions of the way that each of the fabulous series (that he is famous for) was conceptualized, scripted and finally filmed reads like a suspense story. It is hard to believe that so much adventure, novelty and variety could be packed into a single human life.

That his work granted him the opportunity to study numerous forms of life is common knowledge. But what struck me with full force as I read the book was the manner in which he learnt on the job. He did have a degree in Natural Sciences from Cambridge, and much later in life, he studied anthropology for a short while. But the diverse skills that the work of a BBC broadcaster demanded from him were almost all acquired on the job. From the days when cameras were first beginning to be used for filming, he lived to eventually see the use of 3D technology for some films where he was the presenter.



Attenborough's respect for Life was not restricted to animals and plants. I was struck by an incident that occurred when they were filming *Tribal Eye*, in Africa. He described his encounter with the son of the ruler, who showed them four stone axe blades that made Attenborough remark on their similarity to those used by people many centuries ago. While agreeing that that was indeed so, the tribal responded that they were in fact hurled to the earth by the gods, and were thunderbolts.

Attenborough observes wisely: I had no more wish to pursue the matter than to press a Christian priest to say whether or not the wine, after the sacrament, contains hemoglobin. It is this respect for all humanity along with a healthy skepticism of accepted practices (even one's own) that I found truly remarkable. But there is far more to the book than such singular experiences.

It sounds like a dream job: he could visualize a film series on a particular form of life, suggest places that the team would need to travel to, and voila! The project would be commissioned! But the rigor and demands of travels to places far and wide are tremendous: six of them could squeeze into a two-person tent for the entire night, the bitter cold and pouring rain could leave him and his companions wet and freezing, their night's sleep could be totally destroyed by mosquitoes or worse: by huge groups of cockroaches moving in heaps – but undeterred, his final filming of Nature's wonders would simply obliterate all that suffering in a flash! On occasion, he faced very real dangers and rarely, even life-threatening situations. The timing and planning that is needed to get what is known as a 'two-shot', i.e. the presenter (Attenborough) seen alongside the form of life that the film was focusing on, required enormous patience, precision and team work. Reaching Iceland in time to film an erupting volcano, or catching the courtship dance of a Paradise Bird so that the glorious plumage would be facing the camera are just two examples of acts that require minute detailing and maneuvering –most of which we hardly get a sense of, while watching the finely finished films. Each set of films is the result of at least three years of dedicated work, tough travel, and demanding team work that we can only imagine as we read this magnum opus.

Every time I have watched one of Attenborough's films, I have been left awestruck by the sheer beauty of Nature, the intricate detail and the enormous intelligence in so many forms of life. It has inevitably turned my mind to the Supreme Artist: and so, reading this book, I could not help seeing Attenborough's work as a unique sadhana: what better way to worship Nature than to bow down to Her beauty, record it in every detail and then share that with the rest of the world?

What comes through most powerfully in this book is the utter awe and wonder that this man has for Nature. He sums it up in the last sentence of this book most aptly: I know of no pleasure deeper than that which comes from contemplating the natural world and trying to understand it. For those of us who do not have a fraction of the blessing to physically travel and see these miracles, his book does a lot to make up for the actual experience. If nothing else, it will compel you to bow down in awe and gratitude to the wonders of Nature.

A possible link you could visit :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOkXOFy7ubA&list=PL50KW6aT4UgyQejjfgDBDzbHL25NVjNw>

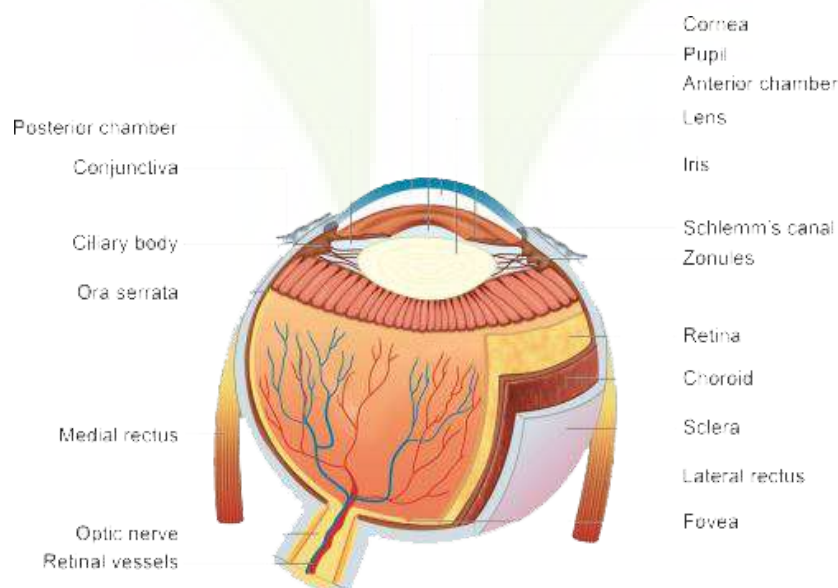
# I (EYE) CARE

*Ophthalmologist H.V.Pooja tells us how to take care of one of our most precious god given gifts: our eyes.*

What makes dawn? Sunrise? Cock's crowing? Birds chirping? Alarm bell ringing? Actually our eyes bring dawn to us. Each day begins with the opening of a great gift: our eyes.

The wonder of life never ceases...for example do you know what a complex organ the eye is? As one gets to know how it functions, an enormous sense of gratitude and awe fills our minds. We have two kinds of cells called the rod and cone cells in the retina. They are photo receptive cells, which are able to detect visible light and convey that information to the brain. The brain analyses the information sent by the eyes to tell us about colours, shapes, depth, movement and other features.

The eye has several parts, some of which is common knowledge, the eyelids for example which to, women is a spot to beautify to enhance the appeal of their eyes, The real purpose of the eyelid is to protect the cornea which spreads the tear film uniformly across the ocular surface and removes the debris. The Conjunctiva lubricates the eye by secreting mucus for the tear film and contributes to its immunity. The Sclera makes the posterior 5/6th of the outer fibrous coat of the eyeball. Cornea forms the anterior 1/6th of the outer fibrous coat of the eyeball which contributes to the refractive power of the eye. The anterior chamber is filled with a fluid called aqueous humor, which is the ocular media responsible for clarity of vision, and also provides nutrition to the lens and cornea. The Iris controls the amount of light that enters the eye by opening and closing the pupil. The pupil is the aperture through which the light enters and focuses on the retina. The lens lets in the light and focuses it on the retina. Vitreous is a gel like substance behind the lens, which gives integrity to the eyeball. The retina is the inner neural coat of the eyeball. Rod and cone cells in the retina are photo receptive cells, which detect visible light and convey the information to the brain.



**Figure 1- GROSS ANATOMY OF THE EYEBALL**

Eye reflects most of the systemic diseases, which go unnoticed. Follow a healthy life style and lead a happy life.

Sight is what your eyes give, vision is what your heart produces. Never let your sight dim so that your vision is always bright.

Now that you know the different parts of the eye, following some healthy habits could prevent diseases like glaucoma, age related macular degeneration, refractive errors, pterygium and others-

- **Say No to Mobile phones, video games especially for kids.** Staring constantly at the screen while playing games induces a type of refractive error known as Myopia at a very young age. If this goes unnoticed it can lead to amblyopia , which can cause permanent reduction in the vision in one eye. It also reduces blink rate, which leads to itching, foreign body sensation, redness, which are symptoms of Dry eye disease.
- **Follow the 20-20-20 rule:** During these COVID pandemic times screen time has increased because of online classes. The best one can do is to follow the 20-20-20 rule. After every 20minutes of screen time, give a 20 seconds break and stare at an object at a distance of 20 ft. and relax your eyes but avoid playing games on the mobile during that break keep looking into the distance. If you can afford it buy a laptop with a larger screen keeping it at a comfortable distance can reduce eyestrain.
- **Minimize brightness on the screen:** While using laptops make sure brightness is kept at a minimum level, and the laptop should be at a lower level to reduce the ocular exposed surface. Avoid using phones at night once the lights are turned off. Eye problem is seen even among software officials who work on computers for a long time, and this has increased to 12-15hours during the pandemic. They should also follow the 20-20-20 rules. If there is constant itching and a feeling of grittiness in the eye consult an ophthalmologist at the earliest, as it may be one of the symptoms of Dry eye disease, which if left untreated can lead to corneal complications.
- **Wear sunglasses- long exposure to sunlight;** UV rays can damage the ocular surface leading to a degenerative condition. Sunglasses protect the eyes from dry hot conditions, dust and wind and foreign bodies like sand particles, dust, and flies from entering the eye.
- **Eat healthy-** Vitamin A rich foods like green leafy vegetables, papaya, drum sticks, carrot , fish are good for the eyes .Children should be encouraged to eat carrots, nuts, eggs, milk, fruits, vegetables and greens. These are rich in antioxidants and necessary for ones overall health.
- **Eye exercises-** stretch out arms in front of you, focus on the thumb, move them back and forth. A good half an hour of sleep while keeping slices of cucumber on eyes can equally relax your eyes. Blink frequently while working on laptops, or using the mobile.



- Sleep well- A good 6-8 hours of sleep at night for adults and 8- 10hours for children can relax the brain so that we start afresh the next morning.
- Regular annual eye check is a must after 40years of age like any other health checkup in order to detect certain conditions like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma. If recognized and treated early the progression of the ailment can be delayed. This is especially important for people with high risk factors like known family history of glaucoma, diabetes, hypertension, chronic smokers and myopic patients.
- Quit smoking- smoking is a risk factor for cataract, age related macular degeneration(ARMD), dry eye, also toxic optic neuropathy, glaucoma; which can be permanently blinding. ARMD is a permanent cause for reduction in vision among elderly, one of the major risks being smoking.
- Eye care at work place- Protective goggles can prevent ocular injuries and other problems during welding, or in glass industries.

## A Bird's Eye view

Since we are talking of eyes do you know :

\* That the eyes of birds are so much heavier than a human's... A human's eye weighs 1% of the weight of the human head while a starling's eye weighs as much as 15% of the weight of its head.

\* That birds of prey have excellent long distance vision. It is not without reason that we call a person with sharp eyesight as having an eagle eye. An eagle can see clearly about eight times as far as humans can. Even while it is flying high in the sky it is able to spot a prey hidden in tall grass and as it flies towards the prey, its eyes keep adjusting their focus so that they can swoop down on the prey precisely. Helping them is another fact: they can see far more colours than we can and so can spot their prey even if their prey is just a shade lighter, or darker than the surrounding grass or foliage.

\*Eagles see well during day but owls rule the night. The owl's eyes face directly forward. That gives them unimaginable binocular vision. The eyes of the owl have many more rods than human eyes, so they are more sensitive to light. The reason why the owl has better sight in the dark is because their eyes have a thin layer of a reflective surface behind their retina known as tapetum lucidum. This allows light to reflect back into the animal's eye after it's already passed through. This way more light is collected in the eye. We humans do not have this provision.

Continuing the biography of  
**Sri Sri Sri Dr. Balagangadharanatha Swamiji**  
Excerpted from the Book "The Story of a Guru"

Sudhamahi Regunathan

So far: Huchchamma, Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha swamiji's great grandmother left Kunigal with her son Chikkalinga Gowda and walked through the forest of Savanadurga finally reach Banandur. There she and her son found new life. Her son married and had four children himself. In his house, was a pooja room dedicated to Bhairaveswara. Chikkalinga Gowda married Boramma, daughter of Anche Thimmiah Gowda, who lived in the house opposite theirs. They were all devotees of Kalabhairava atop Adichunchanagiri hills....



Generally, there are two main sources of information about Chunchanagiri Kshetra. One is janapada literature, as we have mentioned, and the other, the inscriptions on stones and temples in and around Chunchanagiri.

The inscriptions around the pond, which lies below the hill, are interesting for many reasons, one among them being that one of the inscriptions is dated Thursday, September 23, 1484. Exactly 490 years later on the same day the most powerful Guru of the Muttu assume the throne of this peetha was selected. Do dates have some significance, one wonders!

What does the inscription recorded on September 23, 1484 say? It records in 22 lines that the head of the Kattari Saliva Narasimha Raja Wodeyar's family, Virupakshadeva donates the village Harani to the Bhairava Mutt at Adichunchanagiri. It also says that Chunchanahalli was then called Virupakshapura. Further it goes on to say that if anyone dared disobey this order, he would be punished. So devoted was the king to the Lord. The inscription ends with adulations to Sri Sri Sri Bhairaveswara. This inscription is interesting not only for this date but also for the village Harani, around which more myth is entwined.

That during the 12th-13th century Bhairava was a popular deity can be understood from many other inscriptions. There is one Mula Singeshwara temple of Bellur dating to October 24, 1224 which records that Hoysala king Veera Narasimha Deva gave gifts to people of all religions: worshippers of Bhairavas, Vaishnavas and Jainas.

In yet another inscription, which dates back to 1925, similar allegiance is mentioned but this time of a king of Yelahanka called Bhairava Deva. The king too had donated some property to the Bhairava in Chunchanagiri.

Folk literature dates the temple inscriptions to the Chola period (on an average, late 9th century to early 14th century). A rock edit on the temple also seems to date to that period. It is now kept at the entrance of the Mutta.

Another rock on the hill, the galigalu or highest peak is referred to as the Gadi Bhairava in a Chola period inscription, where gadi means the border. Perhaps this Bhairava marked the border of Chola territory, for Bhairavas are always installed to mark boundaries or guard directions.

There is a story by one N T Lakshmana Gowda in Kannada, which says that in Halesandra village in Nagamangala Taluk, there lived a man called Marrianna Dannayaka. He had three accomplished daughters, Padumala Devi, Shyamala Devi and Bhopa Devi. Ballalaraya, the king of Halebid in the years around 1025 AD married all three girls.

It is customary that when a couple get married they should go and not just pay obeisance to Lord Bhairava but also draw the chariot and offer their prayers to the Guru in next year of marriage. According to this story, Ballalaraya took all his three wives and went to Chunchanagiri.

Historians say that during this period of Ballalaraya and Cholas, Chunchanagiri was flourishing. There is a folk song, which says the Cholas would pull the chariot of the Lord when it went on procession and the Ballalas would fan the deity with traditional fans called chamaras.

In those days, the neighbouring areas had small kings, who ruled over small kingdoms. They were all said to be followers of Bhairava. They are said to have given lots of gifts to Adichunchanagiri and have built small mantaps for the devotees to rest on their pilgrimage to Chunchanagiri.

Across the hill many small samadhis can be found. They all have inscriptions and often without naming their guru they just offer obeisance to him. In some, we do find some names. A book named Adichunchanagiri Sthala Mahatva in Kannada has named 66 gurus and 5 Muttadipathis who have established the tradition at Adichunchanagiri. In the appendix of the book the names are given. But before going on to the Natha parampara of the Mutt, it may be interesting to read the many folk tales associated with the shrine.

Remember the village of Harani, which was donated to Chunchanagiri by the Wodeyar king? Well, here is a story, which perhaps predates that inscription. It is said that the ruler of this village, known as Paleyagar (equivalent to chieftain) and his wife were a pious couple. They had no children. The couple undertook lots of penance and prayer, but still nothing happened. And then they prayed to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva granted them a son. But they had a promise to keep. They had to present a bamboo mat to the Lord Gangadareshwara. That by itself would not have been difficult, if they did not have to locate bamboos that have no nodes on them.

The Chieftain sent three bamboo mat weavers in search of this special bamboo. The three men went all over the countryside and just as they were about to give up they thought of going uphill to Chunchanagiri. And there they found the bamboo they were looking for! Entwined around the bamboo was a snake. As the mat weavers struck at the bamboo, one blow hit the snake and it started bleeding. Seeing blood pouring out, the men got scared. And then they heard a voice, which told them to run away without looking back.

Off they ran, but curiosity is hard to suppress. After running some distance, which, he felt, was safe enough, one of the men looked back. His head fell off. The second too suffered a similar fate. Finally the third reached the chieftains house and told him of what had happened.

The chieftain came up to the hill and in place of the snake found Gangadareshwara. He begged forgiveness for his men who had erred. Gangadareshwara forgave them, but told the chieftain that he had to build a temple in that place. So that small temple stands even today. Even today there are stones representing the heads of the mat weavers to warn of disobedience and even today a mat forms the ceiling of sanctum sanctorum. The sanctum sanctorum has the udbhava linga or self- originating linga.

Outside the sanctum sanctorum is a navranga mantapa that has 38 pillars, each beautifully carved. It is said once upon a time pravacanas, music and dance sessions were held in this mantapa. Some of the sculptures found here, depict Naradamuni playing the veena, Nandi playing mrdangam and many dancers. There are hunting scenes and figures of Siva and Parvati not to mention Vishnu. It is interesting to note that the figure of Brahma has only four heads here. (One head, the fifth one is said to have been plucked away by Kalabhairava, as we shall see later). One panel depicts the story of the Paleyagar or Chieftain. In addition to stories, there are panels depicting different symbols like the moon, the lotus, the conch, animals like the bull, the elephant and even the swan and the fish. The ceiling has reliefs of Muruga, Siva and Parvati. Once again we also see images of Vishnu. So the temple seems to glorify both Siva and Vishnu.

To sit for a few hours in this mantapa, people felt, was like experiencing the stories related in the sculptures and so called this place anubhava mantapa also.

People believe this to be the meeting place of Parvati and Shiva. Here, prayer is performed three times a day and a special prayer on the new moon night is also performed. Childless couples are said to have their prayers answered here.

The door to the temple seemed to have been donated in 1895, by Sri Kanigowda, son of Doddagowda of Swaravanahalli and Sri Paradesigowda, son of Annegowda of Jeerahalli, and it has details of the donors. It is carved in brass with figures of Gods and Goddesses.

To the left of the Gangadareshwara temple are few steps that lead to a small passage between two huge rocks. Going through it and at a height of another 300 feet we can see Gavi Gangadareshwara linga. This lord too fulfils the desires of couples that want children.

Higher above this, lies the Kathale Someshwara linga, couched between five rocks. There is no light inside the cave. To the north is a rock in the shape of a horse and so it is called kudragallu and even higher than that is the Deepastambha or the galigallu. To the south is a pillar called Cholaru khamba that is lit during jatra festival and is seen from afar by devotees.

Below the Gangadareshwara temple is the Malleshwara temple, in front of which is a magnificent Basava or bull. Lower down is Chandramouleshwara temple. This is where the pontiff performs prayers three times a day. Annapoorneshwari devi also resides in this temple.

Close to this is the jwalapeetha or the seat where Lord Siva is said to have sat in meditation.

And of course, as we have already mentioned at the main door leading up to the hill is the Bhairaveswara temple. The Bhairava murthy is beautifully adorned with snakes around his neck, and ratna kundala or earrings made of precious stones. Bhairava has four hands. In one he holds a sword, the trishula in the other, the kapala in the third and the kundala in the fourth. The Bhairava of Adichunchanagiri is also known as Bagilu Bhairava, Chunchana Bhairava, Gadiya Bhairava and Anadani Bhairava.



## ||JAI SRI GURUDEV||

Guru Poornima is an important festival in the Indian tradition, particularly in the Adichunchanagiri Mutt. Belonging as the Mutt does to the Natha tradition, the strong conviction is that while much knowledge can be acquired by oneself, only a guru can take the disciple towards spiritual liberation. Salutations to the Guru!

Sri Sri Sri Dr. Balagangadharanatha Swamiji was very devoted to his guru, Sri Ramanandanatha Swamiji. When Sri Ramanandanatha Swamiji fell ill, Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha Swamiji found there was no hospital nearby. So that day he resolved to build a hospital close to the kshetra and we have the magnificent Adichunchanagiri Institute of Medical Sciences today. It was set up in 1986.

Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji, the 72nd pontiff celebrates Guru Poornima with great devotion to His guru Sri Sri Sri Dr. Balagangadharanatha Swamiji when all the followers of the Mutt offer their prayers and obeisance to the great Guru.



# Celebration of Guru Poornima





# THE ZOROASTRIAN WAY OF LIFE

*As the Zoroastrian New year is being celebrated on the 15th of this month, Dr. Homi Dhalla, Zoroastrian scholar, gives us a glimpse into the faith*

The soul of the earth complained to the Creator that it was being oppressed by violence, savagery and cruelty and it needed a protector. In response to this call, Prophet Zarathushtra was deputed to bring about order in the prevalent chaos. It was this that moved Rabindranath Tagore to remark: “He was the watcher in the night who stood on the lonely peak facing the East and broke out singing the paeans of light to the sleeping world when the sun came out on the brim of the horizon.”

Zarathushtra was born in eastern Iran about 3500 year ago. We learn from Pliny the Elder (23-79 C.E.) that he was that rare human being who laughed at the time of his birth. Tradition tells us that all nature smiled too, because the plants and waters rejoiced and their growth increased.

Zoroastrianism was the official religion of Iran for over 1000 years, spanning the Achaemenian, Parthian and Sasanian dynasties. Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenian dynasty, has been immortalized as he liberated the Jews from Babylonian captivity. He was the first advocate of human rights in history. The Zoroastrian Kings were tolerant and did not convert their subjects in their large empires. But then in 642 the Arab armies invaded Iran and defeated the Iranians in the battle of Nahavend. In 652, the last Zoroastrian King, Yazdegird III died. It is from his coronation (632) that Zoroastrians nowadays date their calendar, using the convention AY.

In the tenth century AD life had become so unbearable that it was almost impossible for Zoroastrians to practice their religion. Hence, they began to leave for the hospitable shores of India in about 936 AD since they had been trading with Indians before this.

The Hindu ruler, who offered them asylum in India, has been known in the Parsi tradition as Jadi Rana. The story goes that when they asked for refuge, a person came with a pitcher full of milk, signifying that there was no place for them. The wise high priest of the Zoroastrians took a handful of sugar and poured it into the pitcher, indicating that we shall sweeten Indian life. The high priest told the ruler “hamehindustanraayarbashim”,(we shall be friends of all Indians).These words have been recorded in the Qisse Sanjan composed in Persian verse by Bahman Kekobad Sanjana in 1600.To this day, we Parsis have lived harmoniously with all communities and enriched Indian life.

We Parsis shall be eternally grateful to the majority community for their tolerance in allowing us to practice our religion without any interference whatsoever.

Prophet Zarathushtra’s signal contribution was his emphasis on monotheism. Prof. R.C. Zaehner remarks that: “In the Gathas (hymns of Zarathushtra) we are meet with a pure monotheism that not only has a stamp of a profoundly experienced revelation but also gives the impression of having been deeply thought out”. He called his God Ahura Mazda. The term Ahura means ‘the Lord of Life’ and Mazda ‘omniscient’. The Prophet considers Ahura Mazda as the sole Creator and the absolute ruler of the universe. He is also referred to as the first Thinker, Supreme Judge, the one who showers his grace and is changeless. There are many references in the scriptures that speak about him in the form of Light. In one such instance Ahura Mazda declares: “I am the irradiating brilliant Light, I am all Light, I am full of Light...” He is the giver of joy to men. There are 101 names enumerating His various attributes. Zarathushtra’s relationship with the Creator is one of friendship and love. He addresses Ahura Mazda as his “Friend Brother and Father”.

Asha is the cornerstone upon which the Prophet built the edifice of his new faith. This lofty ideal is to be understood at many levels. In the Gathas, Asha was regarded as the Divine Cosmic Law, Eternal Truth, the one Reality of Ahura Mazda according to which He fashioned the universe.Man is told that the path of Truth is made by Ahura Mazda, and it is on this path that He dwells. The one who follows this path shall attain the highest good.

According to the Prophet, man is born free and has total freedom to make his choice. Prof. Zaehner states that it is the religion of free will par excellence. In this cosmic battle between the forces of truth and falsehood, good and evil, man has to choose.



He may choose to be in the spiritual army of Ahura Mazda, to fight for the ultimate destruction of evil, or he may tread the path of evil itself. And once he makes a decision, he has to be responsible for its consequences. No Saviour can come to his rescue except his own good thoughts, words and deeds.

Moreover, man is expected to live in hamazor (harmony/unity) not only with the Creator, and his fellowmen but also with nature. Prof. Hinnells has stated that “Zoroastrianism is the world’s first ecologically conscious religion”. Besides treating the various creations of God with respect, he is to develop a seminal bond with nature. He is not to defile the waters or pollute the earth or even the fire.

One of the most inspiring concepts of the Prophet is the opening line of the UshtavaitiGatha: “Joy comes to the one who brings joy unto others.” This is a significant teaching. Here was a message that combined the spiritual quest with a deep social concern. For Zarathushtra service to mankind was the first duty. God’s peace comes to him as a reward for loving service.

Another facet of social concern is active philanthropy. Although Zoroastrians number about 55,000 in a population of 1.3 billion, several of their charities are cosmopolitan. This inspired Mahatma Gandhi to state: “I am proud of my country, India, for having produced the splendid Zoroastrian stock, in numbers beneath contempt, but in charity and philanthropy perhaps unequalled and certainly unsurpassed.”

A report in The Times of India (24.06.2021) made us all proud that “Jamsetji Tata top donor in 100 years.” Called ‘Philanthropists of the Century’, the study by EdelGive Foundation and Hurun India identifies 50 of the world’s top philanthropists. The donation of Jamsetjistood at \$ 102.4 billion over the century.

Over the years there have been many illustrious Parsis who have contributed immensely to our dear motherland. In this brief article, only very few names are mentioned. Dadabhai Naoroji was the first Indian to be elected, in 1892, as member of British Parliament; Bhikaiji Cama was the first woman crusader for India’s fight for freedom. Justice Sam Bharucha & Justice Sarosh Kapadia were both appointed Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of India at different periods; Sam Maneckshaw rose to be the first Field Marshal in the Indian Armed Forces; Dr. Homi Bhabha has been regarded as the father of India’s nuclear programme and Jamsetji Tata father of Indian industry.

# KRISHNA KRISHNA



**Maharaj Kumari  
Kamal Prava Devi.**

There are customary ways to celebrate festivals, but when the devotee’s heart is celebrating, customs fall to the wayside and it is only the emotion of adoration that stands out, sparkling.

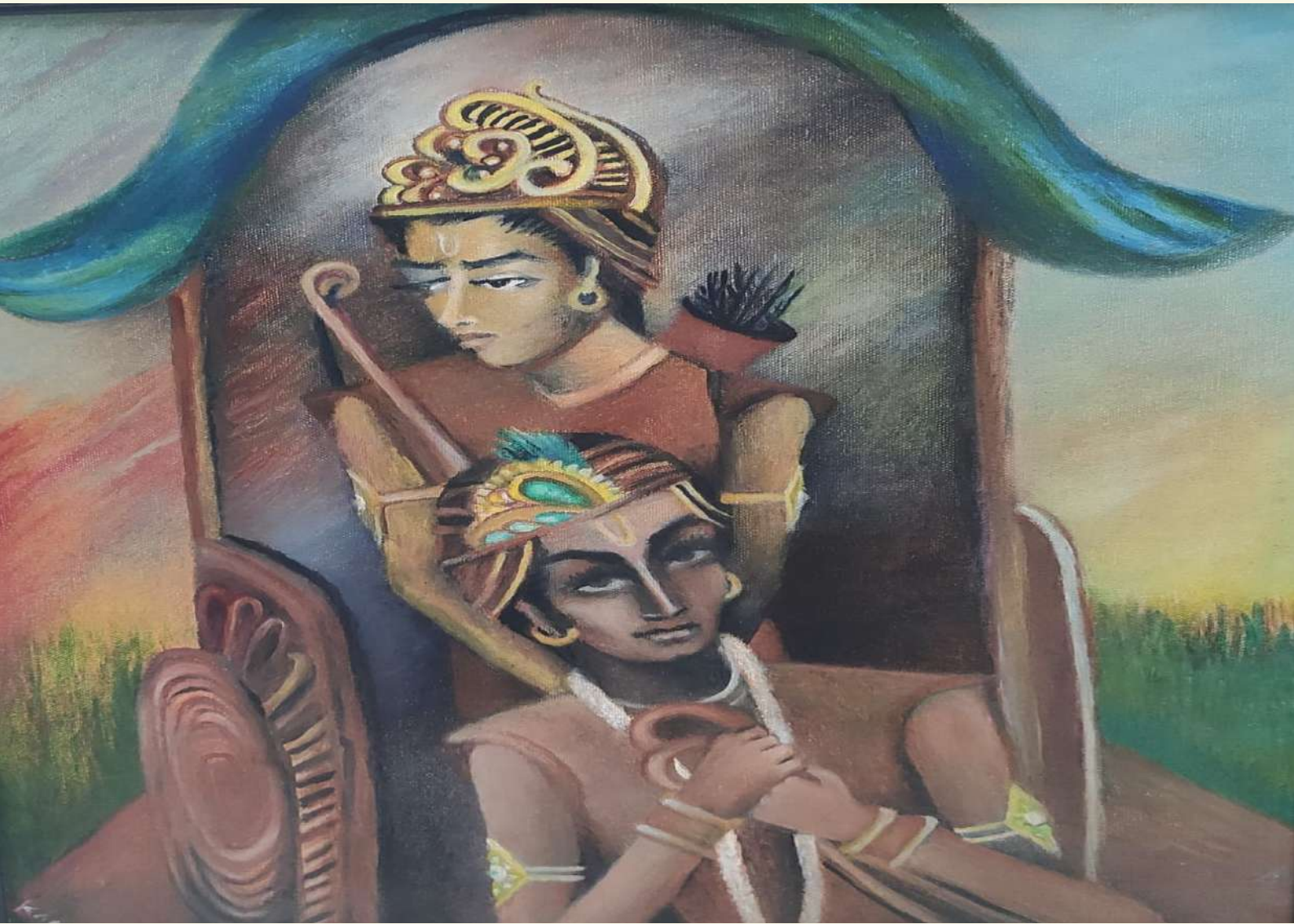
This year, on the 31st of August, people all over India will be celebrating Janmashtami, the birth of Lord Krishna.

Now loved and adored as a child stealing butter, makanchor, now as the charming lad dancing with gopis in raslila, now as the sarathi or charioteer to Arjuna and thus delivering the sermon of the Bhagvad Gita, Krishna is loved in myriad ways.

Living to the age of 105, Kamal Prava Devi poured out her love for Krishna in poetry and painting and metal cast sculpture (as in pic).

Kamal Prava Devi, wife of Maharaj Kumar Ramendra Kishore Devvarma and daughter of Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikyia of Tripura and Princess Jeevaneshri Devi, daughter of Ranendra Vikram Shah of Nepal , was a princess of the erstwhile kingdom of Tripura.

We bring to you some of the paintings of Maharaj Kumari Kamal Prava Devi.



# VEERAMANGAI

*As we celebrate Independence day on August 15, Sudhamahi Regunathan suggests we take a little time to hear about the many people who have fought to get the freedom India is enjoying today, to understand that we have to use this freedom prudently.*

## The Queen of Sivaganga



This is the story of a brave princess. Her name was Velu Nachiyar. She was born to the king and queen of Ramanathapuram on the 3rd of January 1730. The only child of the loving parents, she grew up to learn everything an heir would need to know.

She was trained in the martial arts of Valari (the name of a type of spear) and in Silambam (name of a long bamboo stick used in self defense), and in archery and sword fighting.

The brave princess was also fluent in French, English and Urdu in addition to her mother tongue of Tamil.

She was married at the age of sixteen to King Muthuvadunganatha Periya Udaiyathevar. He ruled the small kingdom of Sivaganga, which lies to the south of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. They had a daughter called Vellachi.

One morning they got the news, “The Nawab of Arcot with the British as his allies is marching towards us. We have to mount our defense.”

The small kingdom galvanized itself and all men strode fearlessly in war but alas, they met defeat and what was worse, the King was killed too. As the invaders came rushing into the kingdom killing women and children in their wake, the queen quickly disguised herself and her daughter Vellachi and escaped from the kingdom.

She lived in Din Digul, also near Madurai for eight years. During this period, Queen Velu slowly started gathering her troops to form a new army and regain her kingdom.

At one level she forged alliances with the rulers of nearby kingdoms like Hyder Ali (ruler of Mysore) and Gopala Nayaker (polygar of Dindigul; polygar was the feudal title for a class of territorial administrative and military governors appointed by the Nayaka rulers.).

At another level the clever queen-in-exile also employed strategic measures. She found out where the British stored their ammunition. Then her faithful and courageous commander in chief, a general called Kuyili, sacrificed herself for her brave queen. She drenched herself in oil and set herself aflame as she walked into the British armory and everything blew up.

Queen Velu commanded such devotion from her soldiers that another woman, Udaiyaal too set fire to another armoury. In honour of the dead soldier who Queen Velu Nachiyar had adopted as her own, she created a woman’s division of the army.

In search of support, queen Velu Nachiyar met the ruler of Mysore, Sultan Hyder Ali and impressed him with her knowledge of Urdu and statecraft. He pledged his alliance to her cause and gave her the support of his army too in her fight against the invaders.

She commanded the loyalty of many brave women. She marched into battle once again with her allies and in 1780 defeated the British and regained her throne. Her bravery and fearlessness made her known across Tamilnadu as Veeramangai or 'brave woman'. In 1790, she gave the throne up to her daughter Vellachi and watched her kingdom prosper and flourish once again in peace. It is said that in her later years she fell ill with heart problems and even went to France for treatment.

In honour of her friend the Sultan Haider Ali, she built a mosque in her kingdom and he too built a temple inside his palace, when his son, Tipu Sultan, took the throne, Queen Velu, the brave queen, sent him a golden tiger.

**Name:** Queen Velu Nachiar, popularly known as Veeramangai

**Fathers name:** Raja Chellamuthu Vijayaragunatha Sethupathy

**Mother's name:** Rani Sakandimuthal

**Husband's name:** Muthuvadunganatha Periya Udaiyathevar

**Region:** Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga, Dindigul

**War:** Fought against the British in 1780 and won

**Died:** 25 December 1796 A Stamp was issued by the Indian Government in her memory in 2008

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Please take care:

- Not to send stories, poems or essays copied from anywhere. They must be original
- Please do not take your parents help
- Please mention your name, class, school and age clearly
- Please remember the editorial board will decide which of your contributions to use. If it is not used, please improve and send another contribution...do not be disheartened.

## Our Contributors

R Dasarathy is former banker, who worked in the areas of Banking Operations, Information Technology, Risk and Project Management.

Dhalla Homi B is a Zoroastrian scholar who has been representing his community at various conferences, speaking on Zoroastrianism, ecology, human rights and interfaith dialogues.

Malekar, Ezekiel Isaac is the head of the Jewish community in India and the Honorary Secretary Judah Hyam Synagogue.

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Raghavan Prema is a special educator and counsellor. She has been studying and practicing nature cure for the past four decades.

Rajan Y.S is Former Vice-Chancellor, Punjab Technical University, Honorary Distinguished Professor in ISRO.

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Srinivasan Aruna is an author and freelance writer.

