

Gurucharanam Saranam

# **SANTHIGIRI RESEARCH JOURNAL**

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SPIRITUALITY AND SCIENCE**

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‘The diversity and contradictions in human experience are based on insurmountable karmic liability involving good and evil. This expands as human history recording known details which are under subtle influence of unknown factors. Spiritual wisdom and its guidance is the panacea for all human ills and it reaches humanity because of the gracious Will of God through the Guru authorized for such a task. This happens to be one among the most important themes of spiritual experience especially in relation to the spiritual mystery latent in revelatory visions. Any number of explanatory treatises will not be enough to express this phenomenon fully. The fullness and single-minded reciprocity between Guru and disciple are the means to realize this. In Santhigiri the entry to this wisdom and experience is open for the whole world... The work here is spiritual and not religious. It is corrective action intended for taking humanity forward.

**- Navajyotisree Karunakara Guru**

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## ON SANTHIGIRI RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Santhigiri Research Foundation is being set up under the auspices of Santhigiri Ashram which was founded by Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru nearly forty years ago. Santhigiri has been recognized by the Ministry of Science and Technology Government of India as a scientific and Industrial Research Organization (SIRO) and exempted under income tax rule 35 (i), (ii) and (iii). Guru led an extremely simple life. He helped the sick and the needy. He realized the spiritual potential in several young people, and brought out their sparkle. Of them, the most priceless gem - Sishyapoojitha Janani Amrita Jnana Thapaswini is the present spiritual head. Guru's work is being carried forward under the guidance of Her Holiness.

Spiritual change of an individual and his family plays a vital role in transforming society. This is the key to peace and development Guru has shown us with His spiritual purification processes. This idea of development needs to be introduced to society. Today spirituality is misunderstood. Ritualism and fanaticism have taken over. This degradation has affected all areas of life. An error seems to have crept in somewhere. It appears that spirituality of India has taken it backward, while other nations, which accepted the teachings of masters like Buddha, Jesus or the Prophet, have expressed more vitality in recent history. For example, while the deserts of Arabia produced wealth, the fertile India suffered poverty and slavery. While technological revolutions took place in nations with large Buddhist and Christian followings, India depended upon their know-how. What happened to us, with our golden past? There is a spiritual crisis here, probably the result of wrong interpretation of spirituality.

It is this crisis that Guru is seeking to reverse. There is a method of correction Guru administers for bringing up new generations with spiritual, intellectual and physical vitality. Against this background our new Research Foundation would seek to establish the connection between spirituality and social as well as scientific aspects of life. The Foundation would bring under one roof our ongoing research activities dealing with spirituality, the relation of karmic and genetic problems with diseases and afflictions, and indigenous medicine and treatment. It would be the parent institution for our future research institutions in various fields.

I am happy to dedicate this inaugural issue of the Foundation's interdisciplinary research journal at the Lotus Feet of Navajyotisree Karunakara Guru.

Swami Gururethnam Jnana Tapaswi  
MANAGING EDITOR



Participants in the Colloquium on the dias-Swami Navananma jnanaTapaswi, Prof: Dr. Manoranjan Mohanti, Sri P. Parameswaran et al



Prof. (Dr) M.G.S. Narayanan former Chairman ICHR inaugurating the lecture series of SSRI



Dr. Jan Jarab, Human Rights Activist from Czech Republic speaking at SSRI

## EDITORIAL

The second half of the 20th Century was reverberating with the discussion on the explosion of knowledge. The advancement of electronics has enhanced the knowledge boom further. The human kind has made spectacular strides in its scientific and technological searches.

Still, life on earth is far from peaceful. In fact a considerable part of the skill, efficiency and advancement is spent on destructive pursuits, disturbing the environment and creating undesirable problems for the world. Many peace movements have been coming up to counter this suicidal march.

Santhigiri Ashram is one such, arising from Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru's extraordinary vision of peace and evolution of mankind. Essentially a movement based on prayer and devotion, Santhigiri strives, in accordance with the Guru's guidance to engage in activities that build a bridge between the socio-spiritual and material aspects of life.

In other words the pursuits of the Ashram are not confined to philosophical reflections alone. The path is that of action-blending the spiritual and the social, giving due consideration to economic and technological aspects and becoming a model for sustainable development. That is the rationale behind Santhigiri Research Foundation and the Journal it has launched.

Prof. (Dr) J. Ramachandran Nair  
EDITOR

## MESSAGES TO THE FOUNDATION

**Smt. Sonia Gandhi**

*Hon'ble UPA Chairperson*

Distinguished dignitaries on the dais, devotees, sanyasins, sanyasinees, brothers and sisters,

First of all I want to share with you that I feel very fortunate to have darsan with Her Holiness Sishyapoojitha Janani Amritha Jnana Thapaswini and to receive a message of peace, of love and service. Although I have been to Kerala many



*Smt. Sonia Gandhi, A.K. Antony and other dignitaries at the foundation stone laying ceremony of Santhigiri Research Foundation*

times in the past, it has never been my privilege to visit this beautiful and historic Ashram which draws lakhs of devotees and well wishers from the state and from other parts of the country.

The founding Guru of this Ashram, Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru was one of the most remarkable personalities that Kerala has produced in the 20th century. Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru was both a social reformer and a spiritual leader and his essential message was one of universal love and brotherhood and one of total rejection of casteism, intolerance, fanaticism and other social evils. His basic message is even more relevant in these troubled



times, when religion is being used to divide people and to trigger conflict. However, it is a matter of great pride for all of us that Kerala stands out in the country and in the world for its spirit of unity and brotherhood among people professing different beliefs and following different religions. And this is what really sets Kerala apart and makes it an example to the rest of the country.

Over the years, this Ashram has had many distinguished visitors, I know, and they have been drawn here by the distinctiveness that is embodied in its very name. I know that in February 2006, our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh dedicated the Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru International Research Centre for Ayurveda and Siddha, at Kottayam. We all know that many critical ailments that do not respond to modern drugs are being treated successfully with the traditional medicines of Ayurveda and Siddha. Ayurveda and Siddha now need to be given a solid scientific basis and I have no doubt that Santhigiri Research Foundation for which I have placed foundation stone just now, will make lasting contribution in these areas and in the other researches that it has taken up and will take up. Spectacular advances in science and technology have been one of the defining characteristics of our times. Without research, we cannot extend the frontiers of knowledge and understanding. Institutions such as yours are seeking to bring about better contemporary understanding of the knowledge and wisdom that has come to us through the ages. And your quest will help us to better understand practices and precepts that have been bequeathed to us. The scientific advances must also most fundamentally make a visible difference to the daily lives of the less privileged and the less fortunate. We should not allow these advances to increase disparities which exist already within our society. And that is why universal education and skill building is so very critical. And that is why we need to inculcate a scientific temper among our young people even while at the same time we inculcate in them the basic sense of values. Our youth also need to be anchored in an ethical framework that is in harmony with the principles of secularism, of equality and tolerance, which are the foundation of our heritage, of our ancient heritage and which your Ashram espouses.

Yesterday in Kochi, I had the privilege of addressing a meeting organised by the Kerala Pulayar Mahasabha which is the torch bearer of Sri Ayyankali's legacy and after this function I will be going to the South Kerala Diocese, another organisation that is making contribution to education and health and therefore I consider myself triply fortunate to have had this opportunity for interacting with a number of social organisations which are playing such an important, such a vital role in our society. I would like once again to congratulate Santhigiri Ashram for its

many achievements. I know that lakhs and lakhs of people come here to seek solace. The special feature of the Ashram is not just the tranquillity it radiates but the efforts that are being made here to interlink tradition with modernity, science with spirituality and to integrate ethics with technology. I really hope, that one day I will be able to find enough time to spend not just an hour as I have done today in the Ashram but a number of days and to stay with you.

**Sri. A.K. Antony**

*Hon'ble Minister of Defence, Govt. of India*

.....Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru is a Guru, who proved how scientific and technological advancement can be used for the welfare of the common man....Santhigiri acts in all spheres of life in a praiseworthy manner. I offer my support to all your activities.....

**Smt.P.K.Sreemathi**

*Hon'ble Minister for Health, Govt. of Kerala*

.....Santhigiri aims to achieve everyone's dream— the building of a society devoid of conflicts .... It is laudable that Santhigiri has come forward to establish a Research Centre committed to spreading the message of peace. Santhigiri's activities are paving the way for a change in society....

**Sri. Oomen Chandy**

*Leader of Opposition, Kerala Legislative Assembly*

.....The activities of Santhigiri Research Foundation should become an asset to the human society at large.....The great insights Guru has shared should shed light in the life of the common man....

**Sri. Varkala Radhakrishnan**

*Member of Parliament*

.....Santhigiri is marked by its readiness to serve human society without the consideration of caste, creed, colour or class.....

*(From the speeches delivered on the occasion of laying the foundation stone for Santhigiri Research Foundation in Santhigiri Ashram, Thiruvananthapuram on 15<sup>th</sup> Feb 2008)*

## THE PHENOMENON OF NON-PHENOMENAL LIGHT AND WORD

DR. C.V. Babu\*

Spiritual experience of 'light' by many seers across all religious traditions can hardly be underestimated as far as the knowledge of ultimate reality is concerned. Almost all the seekers of truth experienced light of heaven as man's salvation. In order to get access to God's presence, they transgressed the boundaries between the phenomenal world and the world of light. In order to get such experiences, one needs to transcend the sphere of sensation, emotion and speech-thought. By means of intensive meditation he reaches the realm of the immortal, of the really existent, where the 'light of light' is seen. Man begins in the darkness of ignorance. Once the presence of light is reached, consciousness is awakened to the vision of truth. To represent the phenomenon of vision of 'light', almost in all traditions, the image of sun is used generally. Of course, the experience reveals it as the dazzling sun with a flood of oceanic light. Indians, Greeks, Egyptians, Babylonians and others, in their age-old scriptures depicted the sun as an eye, the eye of heaven, the eye of universe, the eye of God, God Himself. Nothing can escape the eye. None can deceive the eye. It does not mean the phenomenal sun, though it can be considered as the symbolization based on spiritual experience. However, the sun and its physical light represent most nearly the light-form of God. As an evidence for this experience of such a reality, it follows the exalted psychic state of happiness or bliss as a source of inspiration. When one is blessed with such an experience it leads to glory, victory, deliverance, immortality etc. The ancient Babylonian mystic poets sang that light is joy, life and welfare.<sup>1</sup>

### Biblical Tradition

According to the Biblical tradition it is said that in the city of God there is radiant light. All Biblical prophets regarded light as the supreme. All Semitic religions are based on such experiences. St. John presents God as 'light'. According to Corpus Hermeticum, God, the Father is light and life.

### Zoroastrianism

In Zoroastrian tradition 'light' is of supreme importance. Ahura Mazdah in his visible form is described as the sun and the light. Fire is considered as identical with his Holy Spirit. In this tradition there is a distinction between *Ohrmazd* and *Ahriman*. The substance of *Ohrmazd* is light opposite to that of *Ahriman*. The

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former is hot, moist, bright, sweet-smelling whereas the latter is cold, dry, heavy, dark and stinking,

*Ohrmazd* was on high in omniscience and goodness; for infinite time he was ever in the light. That light is the space and place of His, some call it the Endless Light.<sup>2</sup>

According to Sassanian Zoroastrianism the divine personality is made up of *Ohrmazd* himself. The *Ohrmazd*, his Space, Religion and Time together constitute the four hypostases of the one God. In this tradition Space means Endless Light. It might signify that space is nothing but the flow of divine light that emerges from God. Religion means divine omniscience or wisdom.

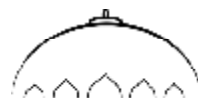
### Vedas

The use of the term 'light' in a religious sense was present in India. This Highest Principle was denoted by the term *Jyotih* in Vedas. It is generally defined as that by contact with which man becomes illuminated. In Indian tradition the origin of light is considered as supra-human. This powerful light penetrates into the heart of man and illumines his mind. Hence, Vedic people used to pray to God for the blessings of light. For example, Vedic poets pray to Brhaspati for the bright substance that procures brilliant light.

*'Brhaspate ati yad aryo arhad dyumad, vibhati kratumaj janesu  
yad didayac chavasa rtaprajata tad asmasu dravinam dhehi citram'*

O Brhaspati, put us in possession of the bright substance which excels in worth that of the outsider; which procures brilliant Light, and is resourceful among men, which shines powerfully, O thou that art born of the *rta* (i.e. sun or manifestation or the universal law which is at the same time truth).<sup>3</sup>

In Rigveda we can see even one god is named after fire *Agni*. He is the god of light and inspiration. He brings the light of the trembling of inspiration. This light enables man to see visions, to see his light itself. The light of *Agni* opens one's eyes. It is considered that the light is placed in his heart (13, 22 and 2): "O Agni, help us to light and to people with those lights of thine in the sun that overspread the sky by their beams; O ye gods, bestow light upon us with the lights that are in kine and horses...."<sup>4</sup> In Rigveda (6, 9) *Agni Vaisvanara* is glorified as both external and internal light. *Agni* enables man to see in both external and internal aspects. The light that is placed in the heart is *Jyotih*. The internal light glows spontaneously. It is also denoted by the term *dhitih* in 8, 6, 8. The internal light of intuitive or inspired insight or knowledge is also called *Keter*. At times, in its internal aspect, light is considered as the faculty of intelligence, vision and insight. The term light is used for victory, welfare, etc. as well. In Vedas light is considered as immortality



for which the *rishis* pray. It can be considered both in internal and the external aspects. In the former case, realizing which, one becomes immortal since the light is eternal. In the latter case one becomes immortal uniting with the Ultimate light, God, the everlasting reality.

We see references to internal light as well as external light in some passages of Atharva Veda. The wonderful structure of man is explained as having *Kosah* or internal vessel of light. In ‘...that impregnable stronghold of the gods there is a golden vessel (case: *kosah*) which goes to heaven and is covered with light.’<sup>5</sup>

Heaven is considered as the seat of highest Light. Into this Ultimate destination the internal light ascends when freed from ignorance. “We have gone out of darkness, ascending the highest firmament, to the sun, god among the gods, highest light.”<sup>6</sup> Atharva Veda says that whoever goes to heaven is united with the sun’s light.<sup>7</sup> It declares that *Jyotih*, the bright, shining sky light counters witchcraft and evil influences.<sup>8</sup> Rig Veda describes sun as the organ of sight of gods.<sup>9</sup> The rishis considered that not only God but all divine beings are also *suracaksuh* i.e. “sun-eyed.”<sup>10</sup>

### Upanishads

In the Upanishads the term Brahman is used to denote light. It is also known as the ‘light of lights’. According to Mundaka Upanishad, Brahman is pure without stain and the ‘light of lights’ - *jyotisam jyotih*. Maitri Upanishad states: “...the formless Brahman is real, it is light.”<sup>11</sup> Svetasvatara Upanishad considers purusha – the individual soul – as imperishable light.<sup>12</sup> According to this Upanishad, purusha is the colour of the sun, beyond darkness. This Upanishad shows a sense of difference between individual soul and the Ultimate: the colour of sun or ray of sun as purusha and the sun himself as the *parampurusha* i.e. God. In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad the term light is used to denote sun, moon, fire, speech, and self in a hierarchical order. Self or Atman is the last in that order in which the highest is the sun.<sup>13</sup> It is explained(4,3) that the light (*jyotih*) which a living being has here is the sun; when the sun has set, he has the moon; when this luminary has also set, he has fire; when the fire has gone out, speech (*vaak*)– “...speech, indeed, is his light for, with speech indeed, as the light, one sits, moves about, does one’s work and returns.” When speech has stopped, the self is his light (*atmaivasya jyotir bhavati*).<sup>14</sup>

According to this Upanishad (1,5,12) sun is the “light-form” or “jyotirupam” in the heaven which is the body of mind (*athaitasya manaso dyauh sariram jyotirupam asav adityah*).<sup>15</sup> Chandogya Upanishad brings an identity between the light in the



heaven and the light in the body- "...the light which shines above this heaven ... that is the same as which is here within the person."<sup>16</sup>

Katha Upanishad states that the ineffable light is the glory of reality and is beyond all phenomenal Light.<sup>17</sup> It is like a 'light without smoke' that abides in one's self as the eternal Lord.<sup>18</sup> Brahmasutra<sup>19</sup> and Chandogya Upanishad<sup>20</sup> establish the light as Brahman and differentiate it from physical light.<sup>21</sup> Bhagavad Gita assures that this light is seated in the heart of everyone.<sup>22</sup>

"... the Light of all Lights, is said to be beyond darkness; knowledge (*jnaanam*,) the object of knowledge, to be reached by wisdom; it is seated in the hearts of all."<sup>23</sup>

### Buddhism

In Buddhist texts, terms for highest insight or knowledge are accompanied by the term 'light'. According to *SamyNik*, the conscious recognition of clear light induces an ecstatic condition of consciousness.<sup>24</sup> It is clear that there is a difference between the concept of 'light' and that of consciousness. Consciousness itself is not a self-illuminating substance; rather consciousness is illuminated by light to higher states. It makes Buddhism different from Vedantic tradition in which consciousness itself is considered as the self-illuminating substance. In Buddhism, ecstatic condition of consciousness is called illumination: it is the awakened consciousness of means of light. It is the characteristic of 'Saints' and successful mystics.

According to Miss Harner,<sup>25</sup> there are two words in Pali texts that denote 'light' viz 'abhasa' and 'dassana'. Both the lights result from meditation. The light 'abhasa' gives rise to the capacity for extra ordinary perception. This vision is known as non-psychical *deva*-vision. 'Dassana' is mediated for the perception of objects otherwise seen by the senses. According to the text both the lights do not occur simultaneously. Once the vision of the light happens then there comes knowledge, insight and wisdom. According to the text *Itivuttaku* such monks who have this vision are the producers and bringers of light. They are known as teachers, caravan-leaders, dispellers of gloom, torch-bearers, and enlighteners.

According to the author of the *Suttanipata* the inspired wise ones (*dhira*) are bringers or producers of light (*pajjotakaro*). The first among them is, of course, the noble Gotama (5, 19; 11, 36), the fair uprising dawn of light (*suppabhatam*



*suhutthidam*, 1, 9; 178). “Vision, light and wide wisdom are indeed his (3, 6,539): *jutima mutima pahutapanno*: Gloom wraps the shrouded, darkness wraps the blind; but for the wise there is an opening, a very light for those with eyes” (*aloko passatam iva*).<sup>26</sup>

The Buddhist text *SamyNik* enumerates four sources of light viz. the sun, the moon, the fire and the light of insight. The light of insight may arise from enthusiasm, trust and from the teachings of the Buddha. The light of insight that arises from the word of Buddha is considered supreme.<sup>27</sup> In Buddhist tradition, Buddha himself is considered as emanating the rays of Light illuminating a vast space. The Buddha-light is often represented by flames emanating from a halo around his figure.<sup>28</sup> These rays of light appease the pains of all creatures. It is the tenth or the highest stage of Bodhisattva.<sup>29</sup>

Extolling the Buddha in *SamyNik*, (8,8, I, 193) Vangisa says *inter alia* that the Exalted One is the conqueror of Mara and the deliverer of all bondage, that he is a light-bringer (*pajjotakaro*) who has pierced beyond, who knowing and realizing himself the topmost height shows his adepts that vantage-point of sight.<sup>30</sup>

### Metaphysical Tradition of Vedanta

According to A. Hoherberger, Ramanuja teaches the supreme lesson of the Upanishads that Brahman is the immaculate Light, pure clearness.<sup>31</sup> According to texts like Sri Bhashya and Bhagavat Bhashya, Light is the Highest Principle that illumines all phenomenal light. It diffuses itself in all parts of the physical personality. Sankara considers consciousness as ‘Atman’, the concept of consciousness in its general sense of self can be considered as different from ‘light-form’ in the spiritual sense of soul. For Sankara, consciousness is the essential nature of self whereas for Ramanuja it is one of the accidental qualities. For Buddha, the unborn light-form is a fact of visual experience and better to be silent about it to those that are inexperienced. Moreover, to consider it as sheltered in the body as eternal presence will definitely lead to an egoistic tendency of atman as in Upanishadic proclamation as ‘*Aham Brahmasmi*’.

Sankara, on the one hand, accepted Buddha’s no-soul theory and undermined Upanishadic experiential aspect of light-form or ‘*jyotirupam*’ and on the other hand, rejected Buddha’s theory of ‘anatman’ and considered consciousness as transcendental self-presence. In a different sense, Sankara combined both the Upanishadic concept of ‘light’ and ‘consciousness’ and considered consciousness as self-illuminated. For Sankara, it means consciousness is experienced intuitively



and immediately by consciousness as self-consciousness. But the transcendental non-empirical nature of consciousness led him to 'Aham Brahmasmi', positing essential identity or pure identity between atman and Paramatman or Brahman. After Sankara, Soul and God, from the experiential aspect of light, got a crucial shift to metaphysical speculative enterprise with reference to the concept of consciousness. The Vedic and Upanishadic experiential aspect of light was concealed by the Vedantic immediate and intuitive experience of self consciousness. Sankara was successful by this attempt to make the Vedantic truth most popular and widespread all over India sweeping away Buddhism from its motherland. He knew very well that if he had stuck to only the spiritual experiential aspect, the awareness of this truth would be limited to a few members of spiritual fraternities. Here he again made use of Buddha's practical intelligence of keeping silent about the highest spiritual experiential reality and revealing only those things that are common to day-to-day experience of people which will enable them to ascend to spiritual experiences. This had made Buddhism spread across the world. In the case of Vedantic or Advaitic religion the experiential aspect of truth came to be concealed by metaphysical principles. It ended in a vast tradition of interpretation. It made those without spiritual experience to indulge in thought-exercises about eternal truth and reality. Hence in Vedanta tradition metaphysics dominated especially in the form of interpretation of Upanishads marginalizing the experiential sparks in the texts. It can be considered as the period of continuity with the process of concealment. In metaphysical tradition, logic played the major role as a strategy to furnish truth. Naturally metaphysicians or interpreters adopted only those concepts and texts that are suited to their logical tools as well as to their intellectual understanding. Moreover, only those terms can be used as communicating to people.

### **Tradition of Experience**

The identity thesis of Sankara became familiar even among the common masses as the sense of consciousness. For Sankara, jiva is different from the self, which is identified with the universal Self. Hence, according to Sankara, the individual atman does not participate in the evolution like jiva, which undergoes evolutionary process in phenomenal, rather illusory, life. All the versions of identity thesis may show the truth that both the source and the ultimate destiny of the individual Atman are yet undiscovered facets of experience.





However, in Indian tradition Aurobindo makes a point of difference to the non-evolutionary atman. Aurobindo's philosophy, unlike theoretical metaphysics, is validated by its experiential content. In the identity thesis the origin is not a problem since there is nothing new or different in the origin. Aurobindo's experience shows that there is manyness of atman with individual evolutionary differences. According to Aurobindo, a certain spiritual principle called "Supra-mental Light" descended into the material plane. According to him, the world of supermind or supramental light is the link world between the supreme and lower worlds.<sup>32</sup> And the purpose of descent is to catalyse the process of evolution. A similar example is seen in the spiritual experiences of Jesus Christ also. The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus after he was baptised by St. John. At the end of his life Jesus promises the same.

According to Aurobindo, the supramental light descended upon the physical plane on 1926, April 24, which is considered as 'siddhi day' and celebrated annually in Aurobindo Ashram. A.B.Purani describes the holy evening as follows:

From the beginning of November 1926 the pressure of the Higher Power began to be unbearable. Then at last the great day, the day for which The Mother had been waiting for so many long years, arrived on 24 November. The sun had almost set, and everyone was occupied with his own activity—some had gone out to the seaside for a walk – when the Mother sent round word that all the disciples to assemble as soon as possible in the verandah where the usual meditation was held. It did not take long for the message to go around to all. By six o'clock most of the disciples had gathered. It was becoming dark. In the verandah on the wall near Sri Aurobindo's door, just behind his chair, a black silk curtain with gold lace work representing three Chinese dragons was hung. The three dragons were so represented that the tail of one reached up to the mouth of the other and the three of them covered the curtain from end to end. We came to know afterwards that there is a prophecy in China that the Truth will manifest itself on earth when the three dragons (the dragons of the earth, of the mind region and of the sky) meet. Today on 24 November the Truth was descending and the hanging of the curtain was significant.

There was a deep silence in the atmosphere after the disciples had gathered there. Many saw an oceanic flood of light rushing down from above. Everyone



present felt a kind of pressure above his head. The Whole atmosphere was surcharged with some electrical energy.<sup>33</sup>

However, in the case of Aurobindo's experience, he never said that the supramental light-form is his individual atman. It is, rather, the prophetic experience. According to him, the supramental light descended into material plane accompanied by overmind.<sup>34</sup> According to Aurobindo the overmind is Srikrishna, a different atma with a different evolutionary lower level but next to supramental light. It shows that there is manyness of atman with different evolutionary levels belonging to different planes of reality. The descended supramental light-form functions like a mediatory principle between the phenomenal level and spiritual plane. It functions like a catalyst in the case of evolution of atman. The sense of evolution can be considered as the process of untying the karmic circles of *jiva* that has a tangential relationship to atman. The tangential relationship means the point of beginning of karmic stream of *jiva*. It will avoid the Upanishadic confusion of *Aham* that arises from the standpoint to consider atman as dwelling in the heart of *jiva* and physical embodiment.

According to Aurobindo, the descent of Krishna or overmind into physical plane does not mean the actual descent of supermind or supramental light. In October 1933 he wrote as follows:

It [the 24th November 1926] was the descent of Krishna into the physical....Krishna is not the supramental light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda.<sup>35</sup>

According to Aurobindo, if the descent of supermind is to be true into material plane it should be objectified. About this he was theoretically hopeful, since he had the vision of the descent though not of its objectifying in the material world. It is the necessity of the evolutionary trend of mind to supermind that it should get connected to human mundane worldly reality.

But till then we were in doubt and it may be contended that even if supermind is admitted as a reality, there can be no certainty of its advent and reign: till then all effort towards it may end in failure. It is not enough that the supermind should be actually there above us, its descent a possibility or a future intention



in Nature. We have no certainty of the reality of this descent until it becomes an objectivised fact in our earthly being. Light has often tried to descend upon the earth, but the Light remains unfulfilled and incomplete; man may reject the Light, the world is still full of darkness and the advent seems to be little more than a chance; this doubt is to some extent justified by the actualities of the past and still existing possibilities of the future. Its power to stand would disappear only if supermind is once admitted as a consequent part of the order of the universe. If the evolution tends from Matter to Supermind, it must also tend to bring down Supermind into Matter and the consequences are inevitable.<sup>36</sup>

Aurobindo is sure that the overmind descended and he is waiting for it to give the place to the supramental.

The supramental Force is descending, but it has not yet taken possession of the body or of matter— there is still much resistance to that. It is supramentalised Overmind Force that has already touched, and this may at any time change into or give place to the supramental in its own native power.<sup>37</sup>

It shows the need of actual descent of supramental light into material planes because it is not an idea but a divine personification. The actual descent into material life plane is necessary for overt action of supermind.

Supermind is the grade of existence beyond mind, life and Matter and, as mind, life and Matter have manifested on the earth, so too must Supermind in the inevitable course of things manifest in this world of Matter. In fact, a supermind is already here but it is involved, concealed behind this manifest mind, life and Matter and not yet acting overtly or in its own power: if it acts, it is through these inferior powers and modified by their character and so not yet recognisable. It is only by the approach and arrival of the descending Supermind that it can be liberated upon earth and reveal itself in the action of our material, vital and mental parts so that these lower powers can become portions of a total divinised activity of our whole being: it is that that will bring to us a completely realised divinity or the divine life. It is indeed so that life and mind involved in Matter have realised themselves here; for only what is involved can evolve, otherwise there would be no emergence.<sup>38</sup>

Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru also speaks about the evolution of jiva and liberation of the atman by means of 'supramental light'. It descended by the will of God or *Brahmanischayam* in order to fulfil the same will in all individual beings. However, the process of descent for this divine purpose has got its corresponding



jiva or physical embodiment at the phenomenal level. Then only the mission can be established in the karmic plane of *jivatmas*. The supramental light-form is envisioned in Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru's ashram at the time of the accomplishment of all spiritual evolution of Guru in 1973. The Supramental light as revealed by Sri Krishna or overmind is the '*atma-rupa*' of Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru.

Moreover, Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru had a spiritual experience throughout his early childhood that a form of Light was present inside his chest. It was the face of Sri Krishna. It lasted till he was nine and dwindled out.

According to Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru the individual atman is not one and the same with the supreme soul or God. It is only a fraction of it. Hence he gives up the concept '*Aham Brahmasmi*'. He never considered the supramental light that is envisioned in the ashram as himself. Rather, he considered it as '*Brahmaprakasam*' which means the light emerged from Brahman, the Supreme Father. Karunakara Guru agrees with Aurobindo's experience of descent and the thesis of evolution. It clearly shows the descent of individual atman that goes through phenomenal evolutionary process initiating karmic stream of jiva and accumulating different levels of karmic powers. It may be right to mention that the undiscovered source of individual atman and its destiny are discovered in the spiritual experience of Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru in Indian tradition.

### The Word

Along with the phenomenon of non-phenomenal light there is another phenomenon of non-phenomenal word. The experience of light is followed by the experience of word as well. The word revealed from light is the truth. The concept of light and the concept of truth are closely interlinked. It is light that reveals things as they are and thus of all sensible things and phenomena, most nearly the approximate truth. Hence in Psalm 43, 3 there are phrases like 'send thy light and thy truth'. The truth in its perfection is revealed from light as word. St. John's Gospel begins thus: "In the beginning there was word, word was with God, God was word." This word revealed by God is Truth. God is experienced as light. Truth is experienced as word. It is the spiritual experience of vision or *darsanam* and *asariri*, which means hearing the word from the formless. According to Plotinus vision is the highest understanding.



In Zoroastrianism ‘fire’ which is one of the visible forms of Ahura Mazda is identified with his ‘Holy Spirit’.<sup>39</sup> It is considered as the symbol of truth. According to that tradition truth is made of Light.

In the Gatha of the Seven Chapters (Gatha Hapt) Asa Truth or Righteousness, is no longer simply described as the opposite of Lie, as righteousness as opposed to Unrighteousness, as Order in contradistinction to Disorder; it is a more generalized conception and, being “most fair, bounteous, immortal, made of light”, is now more distinctly associated with the idea of light.<sup>40</sup>

The ancient seer’s concern was the divine word, called *Aksara*, the imperishable syllable, or *udgitha*, the exalted song, or just *AUM*. He was not concerned in a practical way with naming things for informative comprehension. For knowing the real names of things, and their nature, he became one with them. Each thing has a divine name, which is the vibration of the divine word sound that is its guiding power. Such words were mantras whose sound and meaning corresponded. Such mantras were the result of deep contemplation on the being of things in the state of pure perception free of fear and desire and they let the cosmos fill with the Being [Brahman]. That is why the Upanishadic philosopher understands ‘the essence of language’ to be *vak*, *sabda-Brahman* [or *sphota*], the *vimarsa* [*sphuratta*] of god etc. It suggests again that the word, logos, *vak* is eternal and non-temporal.<sup>41</sup> The *vak* or speech provides a certain way of being in the world. It is through *vak* that we communicate human emotions properly and constitute our social relations. This aspect of *vak* is described in the Upanishads as follows:

‘Speech is Brahman<sup>42</sup> [*vagaiva Brahmeti*]; Speech is *virat*;<sup>43</sup> Speech is the world;<sup>44</sup> It is the gods;<sup>45</sup> It is *agni*;<sup>46</sup> It is the Rig veda;<sup>47</sup> It is the one source of all Vedas.<sup>48</sup> These Upanishadic texts suggest that *vak* [speech] adumbrates not only the speakable but the unspeakable too. The possibility of grasping that Being [Unspeakable] takes place when speech and self make their unity.<sup>49</sup>

These considerations make it necessary to regard that *vak* is a transpersonal unity which, instead of being a product of man, can condition him. The transpersonal aspect of *vak* [language, speech] is illustrated by the fact that it is revelation. As revelation it becomes the center from which man’s recovery through thought and action is made possible. Accordingly, *vak* binds the human and the divine rather than polarize them. Language purifies thought and action as it is said: Verily, that which purifies here [i.e.; the mind] is the sacrifice, for he moving along, purifies



all this. And because moving along, he purifies all this, he is the sacrifice, of that mind and speech are the ways.<sup>50</sup> When the Upanishads testify to Reality in utterances like: 'Whence words return along with the mind, not attaining it',<sup>51</sup> it is the inadequacy of human language that is meant. But they also envisaged the possibility of expressing the Absolute [Brahman] but, negatively, the algebra of which is *neti, neti* [not this, not this].<sup>52</sup> Negative statements are used not only for the description of the Absolute but for an apprehension, suggestion and pointedness of that Self.<sup>53</sup>

Once one seer is enthroned in the stream of light he will hear the word and he utters the word. In Rig Veda, this phenomenon is expressed as "bearing light in the mouth" (*bibhrato jyotir asa*).<sup>54</sup> Rig Veda considers the sun, the light as the father of the gift of visionary speech and recitation.<sup>55</sup> It is rightly recognised that word emerges from God himself but becomes audible through the light-form of atman. This is evidenced from the spiritual experience of great seers. In the case of Jesus Christ's spiritual experience the mediatory principle is the Holy Spirit. The mediatory principle in the case of Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru corresponds to the supramental light-form envisioned by Aurobindo. It functions as a catalyst for spiritual evolution. For Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru receives word from it. Atman being a fraction of Brahman reveals the will of Brahman – *Brahmanischayam*- a concept added to the wealth of Indian Philosophy by Sree Karunakara Guru. Hence, his experience led to: "Word is Truth, Truth is Guru, Guru is God". It comprises the living principle as Guru. It is through the same principle the word of God is conveyed and each yuga or age has its own truth. The word is truth.

I have been repeatedly telling you that from time to time such great men are born as would establish the wisdom appropriate for the yuga. Through sacrifice and the grace of God they attain wisdom. After earthly life these *jivas* ascend to good planets and stellar spheres. These very same souls, by the Will of God, are born again as the children of that Supreme Father. As objects of His unbounded compassion they start receiving the *asariri*. Only those sons who take birth by God's Grace and Will are able to receive this voice.<sup>56</sup>

In the Tradition of Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru the phenomenon of conveying the non-phenomenal word remains a continuing process even after his physical departure, *dehaviyoga*. Through Guru's mediacy the visionary disciples used to receive the word, invoking Guru's *atmarupam* (astral light form) while he was in the body. Guru's *atmarupam* renders the same mediacy to the most perfected medium among the disciples, Sishyapoojitha Janani Amritha Jnanathapaswni.



## Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru and the Phenomenology of Spiritual Experience

The metaphysical culture of the Upanishads is the fertile ground from which other cultural traditions have arisen in India. Thus the descriptions of the person of the Guru in the *Kularnava Tantra*, the *Guru Gita* from the *Skanda Purana*, *Astavakra Gita*, *Tripura Rahasya*, *Uddhava Gita*, *Avadhuta Gita* and many other scriptures, are extensions of the Upanishadic archetype.<sup>57</sup> It is essential for this examination of the Guru to refer though briefly, to other scriptures within the philosophical and spiritual tradition of the Upanishads, for these reveal the impact of the Upanishadic Guru Tradition in Post-Upanishadic times. The two representative scriptures to be examined here are the *Kularnava Tantra* and the *Guru Gita*.

### Kularnava Tantra

One of the most thorough descriptions of the nature, role and qualities of the Guru is located in the *Kularnava Tantra*. This scripture describes the rarity of the Enlightened Being by the example of light, stating that many are those teachers who radiate light equivalent to lamps, but rare is the one who reflects the Light that is comparable to the sun (XIII, 104).<sup>58</sup> According to the *Kularnava Tantra*, the Guru has the following qualities: He is charming (*manohara*); endowed with all attributes (*sarvalaksana-sampanna*); is a knower of all the *agamas* (*sarvagamartha-tattvajna*); knows the application of all the *mantras* (*mantra-vidhanavid*); bewitches the world (*loka-sammohanakara*); is of happy countenance (*sumukha*); is clean (*svachcha*); is easily accessible (*sulabha*); dissipates doubt and delusion (*bhrama-samsayanasaka*); looks upon the world with an inner vision (*antarlaksya bahirdrsti*); is all knowing (*sarvajna*); knows the mysteries of time and place (*desakalavid*); knows the meaning of gestures (*ingitakaravid*); knows past, present, and future (*trikalajna*); is capable of penetrating to the inner depths of the devotee's being (*vedhaka*); is the illuminator (*bodhaka*); is peaceful (*santa*); is compassionate to all creatures (*sarvajivadayapara*); can control the movement of the organs (*svadhinendriya sancara*); has conquered the six enemies, desire, anger, greed, delusion, jealousy and pride (*sadvargavidjayaksama*); can distinguish between the fit and unfit disciple (*patrapatravisesavid*); is stainless (*nirmala*); is ever content (*nityasantusta*); is independent (*svatantra*); is endowed with the power of mantra (*mantrasaktimana*); is a lover of genuine devotees (*sadbhakta-vatsala*); is steadfast (*dhira*); is merciful (*krpalu*); speaks with a smile (*smitapurnavak*); is



dear to devotees (*bhaktapriya*); is ever generous (*sadodara*); is profound (*gambhira*); is practising spiritual sciences (*sistasadhaka*); is free from attachment, hate, fear, pain and ostentation (*dambha*); can distinguish between what is good and what is bad (*gunadosavibhedaka*); is unattached to the opposite sex and wealth, and dislikes bad company or other vices (*anasakta*); has a feeling of Oneness with all (*sarvahambhavasanyukta*); has the power to be silent (*mauni*); is free of preferences (*nirapeksa*); and is unaffected by praise or criticism (*tulyanindastuti*).<sup>59</sup>

Following the list of the Guru's qualities (of which the above is a selection from a greater list), the *Kularnava Tantra* suggests methods for assessing the authenticity of the Guru. It first proposes that the disciple examine the competence of the Guru by analysing his "capacity for the transmission of knowledge, perfection in the science of mantra, and the ability to make a subtle impact."<sup>60</sup> If the Guru possesses these abilities, only then should one consider discipleship. If in studying with a Guru, one does not experience a subtle transformation of consciousness, then such a teacher should not be considered a Guru. According to the above quotation, a Guru is endowed with the power to assist the student to transform slowly or quickly (depending upon the capacity of the student). Secondly, the *Kularnava Tantra*, in describing the consciousness of the Guru, states that it is infused with bliss, or *ananda*. The scripture explains that upon contact with a Guru, bliss, happiness, joy, or peace is automatically experienced by the student or person present.<sup>61</sup> If irritation or agitation ensues, then one should not choose tutelage under that particular teacher. "He who imparts an instruction that is not sanctified is a sinner; his mantra is lost like paddy-seed in the sands."<sup>62</sup>

The *Guru Gita* identifies Guru as the bearer of light, and states: "He by whose light (true knowledge) arises is known by the word Guru."<sup>63</sup> The enlightened intellect is the instrument by which an avidya-ridden intellect can be illumined, much like a lit candle can be used to light an unlit one. This process of enlightenment cannot take place without the flame contacting the wick. In this respect the Guru's very presence is potent with knowledge, contact with it transforms the disciple. The *Guru Gita* claims that even by remembering the Guru, knowledge will spontaneously arise in the devotee.<sup>64</sup> The power of the Guru to illumine the devotee is so heightened that even through the subtlety of thought, illumination can be attained.

This positive notion of the Guru has always had an identical or unchanging meaning in both the Indian philosophical tradition as well as culture. The notion has managed





to incorporate the great achievements of human self-discovery for which, in turn, it has been both the stimulus and the goal. Having looked into this cultural tradition as based on the Guru Consciousness vis-à-vis *Brahma cetana*, we can see the nature of the Guru through reflection on a series of paired and progressively deeper dimensions: first, as a role, and as the one who lives out this role; second, as free self-consciousness that realizes itself as the means to God and as the subject of that freedom; and third, as moral agent who fulfils the will of Almighty.

Accordingly, a philosophical and cultural tradition which is rooted in Guru Consciousness as an image of the transcendent principle transforms and sensitises its culture.<sup>65</sup> Guru remains part of nature but is a creative and transforming nucleus. This is an affirmation of existence as sharing in *sat*, *cit* and *ananda* and reflects the meaning of the transcendent for man and of man in the Transcendent.

It would seem, therefore, that the Guru power or Guru consciousness is a creative stance reflecting the content, not only of the past, but also of the time in which one stands and of the life project in which one is engaged. It is a creative unveiling of the content of the tradition as this comes progressively and historically into the present and through the present, passes into the future. Conversely it is this sense of the good or of value which emerges through the concrete, lived experience of a guru throughout his history and constitutes his cultural heritage as the rich cumulative expression of meaning evolved through the times to the point of normative and classical perfection.<sup>66</sup> This is embodied in the person of a Sri Krishna, Sri Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed or a Karunakara. They provided a cultural, epistemic, political or moral ideal, they superseded mere historical facts. As concrete universals, they express the harmony and fullness of perfection, which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, in a word, liberating.

The concept of “Brahmanischayam”- the Will of Brahman - was introduced into the age-old tradition of Indian Philosophy by Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru who emerged as a fully realized soul from Kerala in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru has a new concept of “*Brahmanischayam*” to contribute to the wealth of Indian metaphysics firmly established on an experiential base.

Guru redefines the concept of “*Brahmajnanam*” to include “*Trikalajnanam*” i.e. the knowledge of past, present and future. It has got the status of the merging reality of both the *pramanas* of ‘sabda’ and ‘pratyaksha’.



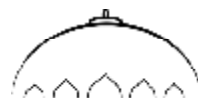
Karunakara Guru is a teacher in the absolute sense of the term in the tradition of revelations and prophecies.<sup>67</sup> In his life and mission Karunakara Guru proves that he is not an island in the floods of Prophecy and Revelation. There have been teachers/ prophets who revealed the same thing, but perhaps not with such immediacy and fullness. Revelation is like constant rain that saturates the knowledge of man. In Santhigiri Ashram, which the Guru has set up near Trivandrum, is such a center of knowledge. Revelations which were received here are said to complete the earlier revelations by former prophets.<sup>68</sup>

Guru took birth at Chertala in Alappuzha District of Kerala State on September 1, 1927. The birth was in a humble family of a simple village named Chandiroor. After a few months of Guru's birth his father died. His lonely mother struggled immensely to look after the newborn baby. But his childhood was rich in spiritual experience. There was a 'light-form' filling the region of his heart. Till the age of nine, he did not talk except for a few words like 'yes' or 'no'. He was considered dumb<sup>69</sup> and was not sent to school. This Light dwindled and faded away by the age of nine. Then he was sent to the village school. Though he attended this for a couple of years he did not pursue formal education. He took up a job in a coir factory in order to share his mother's hardships. His stepfather used to drink and was quarrelsome.

These circumstances disillusioned him and kindled a desire in him to take to an Ashram life, at the tender age of 14. He joined the Sivagiri Ashram established by Sree Narayana Guru at Varkala in Kerala and rendered his service there for 17 years. In those years he was called 'Little Santhi' which meant the boy who does duties at the prayer place. Those were years of hardship. He was at great grief, that he could not get a Guru of spiritual experience. He felt that his path was blocked.

Eventually he got a spiritual Guru in Qureshi Fakir, a Sufi mystic at Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala.<sup>70</sup> The Fakir led him to spiritual experiences and enabled him to evolve further on his own. Fakir realized that his disciple was an extraordinarily elevated soul with an exalted destiny, though the disciple himself knew nothing of that. During discipleship, Guru set up his own ashram on the hill opposite to Sivagiri, and people began to call it "Santhigiri". Later he shifted to Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Kerala.

In 1964 Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru built a thatched hut at Pothencode in Koliyacode which is 23 km north of Trivandrum. This was the humble beginning



of Santhigiri Ashram. In the Ashram, Guru still followed the traditional Hindu system of worship i.e. that of Trimurti and Devi-Devas. Guru had disciples in his Ashram who got visions from the spiritual forces. Through these visions they received solutions to the various problems of those who approached Guru. Guru gave effective directions according to those visions. Thousands of people began to flow to his Ashram seeking guidance and relief in their life. The followers found that their prayers were gratified and even their long-standing and chronic ailments were cured. Disciples realized that their hardships are removed when they obeyed the directions from Guru.

Two of the followers received the Akhandamantram as 'asariri' (the word from the formless):

*Om Sree Karunakara Guru Para Brahmane Nama*

*On Sree Karunakara Guru Satya Pradaya Nama.*<sup>71</sup>

These two lines were to be chanted and made potent with chanting. Guru didn't allow it since his name was part of the chant.

After a certain period, predictions went wrong and became ineffective. As the problems of the followers began to multiple they turned against Guru. Guru knew that those were the hard obstacles and oppositions to him from the evil forces of the material and subtle planes. Guru, felt that he should receive word emanating from the white radiance only. He knew that the other astral forces are trying to thwart him deliberately. The voice from the formless affirmed his decision.<sup>72</sup> In a critical situation of threat against his life Sri Krishna Paramatma appeared to a disciple in vision and asked to chant the *Akhandanamam* and to consider only the vision and word from the Brahma Prakasam, only in order to solve the difficulties.<sup>73</sup> Thus in the Ashram the *Akhandanamam* began to be chanted. *Brahmaprakasam* appeared and gave directions, which proved to be faultless and effective up to this time. On 20 September 1973 it was revealed from this supreme light that the Will of Brahman (*Brahmanischayam*) was established and Guru accomplished all spiritual stages. By this fulfilment of spiritual evolution Guru began to be worshipped by his followers.

From 1973 to 1979 there had been a series of intimations from *Brahmaprakasam*. The two most significant of them are regarding the first error that happened in Manu lineage and the second error that happened in Trimurti System.



## The Error

The present Kaliyuga is of the 28<sup>th</sup> *Chaturyuga* of the 7<sup>th</sup> *Manwantara*.<sup>74</sup> The first seer of the present 7<sup>th</sup> *Manwantara* is Vaivaswathamanu. Life on earth went on in accordance with *Brahmamischayam* or the Will of Brahman, but up to the end of third *Chaturyuga* of the 7<sup>th</sup> or present *Manwantara*.

According to what is revealed from the Light an Error of perception occurred to a Guru in the lineage of Manu. He realised, through his evolved perception, that he was the spiritual authority of all *karma* pertaining to the whole *Manwantara*. And he concluded that he was the supreme Brahman. Out of this experience came the *chaturvakyas*, the four great enunciations. The first one is *Aham Brahmasmi*—I am Brahman, the Absolute.<sup>75</sup>

This was a perceptual error. In the Manu tradition Guru is considered as Brahman. Brahman has authorised him to be the Guru. It is the *Brahmanischayam*. For ordinary followers Guru is the accessible reality and through him the guidance is possible. Since, Brahman is formless Guru is the only object of worship. Vaivasvatha Manu is such an Adi Guru or First Seer of that *Manwantara*. Guru is Brahman. It is the state of authority accorded by the will of Brahman. It does not necessarily mean identity or oneness.

Guru being the highest evolute has secured the power of *karma* to perform the will of Brahman. Besides, only an agent with physical aspect can act in the midst of mankind being one among them. In a sense, it is the identity of the agent with the Absolute. Yet it is not an essential identity, but only a functional identity. This functional identity was mistaken as the essential identity.

This erroneous perception had grim consequences. The very memory of Manu was banished from the heart of man.<sup>76</sup> “All that remained of that memory was Manu’s time scale, the *manwantara*. Ancient texts, which might have spoken of the Manu, are no longer extant. After this curse, three *chaturyugas* drifted directionless”.<sup>77</sup>

Thus spiritual darkness reigned supreme. It went on for ages. Three *Chaturyugas* passed directionless. No message was revealed from the Light. None could evolve and get spiritual realization. The period of darkness and directionlessness went on up to 7<sup>th</sup> *Chaturyuga* in the 7<sup>th</sup> *Manwantara*. No creative action, *srishti karma*, took place from the Almighty during these three *Chaturyugas*.



## The Tradition of Trimurti and the Second Error

According revelation, *Brahmam* started a creative process again in the 7<sup>th</sup> *Chaturyuga*. *Brahmam* wanted to rectify the error that happened in the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Chaturyuga* through a *sristikarma*. Hence, *Brahmam* first created Brahma in the 7<sup>th</sup> *Chaturyuga*. It was followed by creations of Vishnu and Shiva. This creative process ended in the 11<sup>th</sup> *Chaturyuga* of the same *manvantara*. Thus the Trimurti tradition got established. It was aimed at the correction of the Error in Manu Lineage.

Yet the error could not get corrected due to another error in the Trimurti tradition.<sup>79</sup> A great seer in this tradition conceived of a 'time-scale' that goes against the order of 'time-scale' of *Brahmam*. A single 'day-time' of Brahma (the deity of creation that is created by *Brahmam* the supreme<sup>80</sup>) was seen as one *Kalpam*. The *Kalpam* starts from *Sristi* or Creation in the beginning and ends only in the *Pralaya* or Dissolution. One *Kalpam* is composed of 14 *Manvantaras*. Each *Manvantara* has 71 *Chaturyugas*. This is the willed time-scale of *Brahmam*. Brahma cannot have a larger 'time-scale' than the Supreme Creator. Brahma is the created deity of Creation. According to Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru, whatever is of *Brahmanischayam* should never be modified or changed by any means under any circumstances in any case.<sup>81</sup> The calculation of *Brahmam* is the Ultimate truth that should never be supplemented and interpreted.

## The Tradition of Error with Metaphysics

According to the truth revealed to Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru, the error was not traced out in the tradition of Manu. There were revelations to the seers of Vedas and Upanishads regarding the path of *Mukti*. However, these seers could not go beyond the evolutionary level of the Trimurti. Manu, the first Guru and his principles were lost in oblivion.

What we are going through is the time-order of *manvantaras*. That is our perspective or cognition of the world. In the Manu-tradition a great spiritual evolute fell from grace. This has been discussed earlier. As a result the *Brahmam* Itself initiated a corrective in the seventh *chaturyuga* which was brought to a completion in the eleventh *chaturyuga*. Thereafter astral matters related to *mukti* were revealed which got codified as Vedas, Sastras and the Upanishads, without changing the old *manvantara* order (to reaffirm that order).



Since the sages could not see beyond the Trimurti those who received these astral matters did not enquire into the reason why they had received such knowledge. They used their intellect in understanding the path shown by the Almighty and charted their version of the *manvantara* time order—*chaturyugas*, *manvantaras* and *kalpas*—as subservient to Brahma, the Deva of creation in the Trimurti tradition. Thus they could not invoke Manu, the First Guru and grasp the error and correct it. This is a peril that has befallen us. The error was repeated again and again as the evolutes, who were the spiritual authorities of revealed knowledge, could not discover the mystery and unravel it in full before us.<sup>82</sup>

All attempts of these great seers invariably ended in Vedanta and to a great extent in Advaita. By means of this metaphysical system, later interpreters completed each cult such as Saiva, Sakteya and Vaishnava as everything. The completion by metaphysical theories is not actual spiritual accomplishment.<sup>83</sup>

In the process the Sakteya, the man of the Sakti cult made his cult into a complete system. Then Vedanta entered into it. Along with, Vedanta was blended into the system the helplessness of having to invoke 'Matan' as the 'Lord'. That is how the Saiva blended 'Matan' and 'Natesa'.

The Vaishnava introduced more cultural refinements into his system. He also became an exponent of Advaita.

With this development the people had to accept everything that was written by pundits. And if they continued to be in a proto-Dravidian state how could they evolve? The Sakteya and Saiva traditions each took up different viewpoints which suited themselves.

The Sakteya tradition regarded the Goddess as everything. Siva was everything in the Saiva tradition. The Vaishnava tradition considered Vishnu above all. The learned pundits and their ilk had to accept what these three traditions proclaimed. All this has happened by way of expiation for not being able to discover the error in perceiving the Brahmic Will.<sup>84</sup>

Besides this fact of poetic and logical imagination of metaphysical perfection there is a tendency among people to degrade themselves from higher veneration to lower. This can be seen in all existing religions.

The Saivic scriptures present Siva as the perfect one, and the Vaishnavic scriptures do so with Vishnu, and the Sakteya lore is no different. Each of these three



traditions is considered complete. Readers do not realise the role of poetic imagination in these works. Each tradition is thus given a title and a concept of its relation to the world order according to the writers' logic. There is a tendency in all religions; people come down from veneration of the higher to lesser powers. For example from the Trimurti people have come down to lesser deities. The angels in the Christian cosmology and the jinns and aulias of Islam are similar to these lesser deities. There is a time span during which they have power.<sup>85</sup>

### The Correction

It was revealed that, according to Brahmanischayam, 2444 Acharyas or Seers took birth in order to correct this Error in the present Kaliyuga. But somehow or the other the mission was not fully accomplished.

In Navajyothishree Karunakara Guru the first Error gets corrected as he gives up the concept: "Aham Brahmasmi". He corrects: "We are not Brahman, but only a part of Brahman." Obeying the word is the essential means of continuous absolute establishment of Brahmanischayam. His disciple tradition is graced to receive word from Brahman and even to ask and know from Brahman. According to Navajyothishree Karunakara Guru, to hear the word and to convey it to Mankind a Guru is needed. A Guru of experience - as Light - is inevitable and beyond all metaphysical definitions of God to enhance mankind to get experience. He stresses the importance of Guru as Light and as the manifestation of God's Love, especially in Kaliyuga.

Navajyothishree Karunakara Guru corrects the error of Manu Lineage but he does not belong to the Manu tradition. According to Brahmanischayam he establishes his own tradition, 'Guru parampara' by means of direct contact and unified experience of both sabda and pratyaksha because of the Grace accorded to ask and know from the Almighty.

### Conclusion

According to Karunakara Guru, the individual jiva can evolve through karma and prarthana i.e. prayer. Karma makes the jiva efficient in doing higher levels of karma up to the level of *sankalpa karmas* i.e. meditative actions. Prayer is the food of jiva. Prayer is the chanting of *Akhandanamam* that was revealed by the Almighty. Hence, Karunakara Guru emphasizes both '*karma marga*' (path of action) and '*bhakti marga*' (path of devotion). *Karma marga* is also *karma nivarana marga*, in the sense it undoes the past karma. He undermines the traditional *Jnana marga* that is the path of pundits or Brahmins.<sup>86</sup> He defines



*jnana* as the experiential knowledge and not bookish knowledge. Mere intellectual rational exercise won't enable one to realize experiential knowledge. He prioritises *anubhavam* to *anumana* i.e. spiritual experience to inference, though the latter is necessary and has its own practical validity. As far as evolution of *jiva* is concerned spiritual experiences are necessary. Only *anubhavam* provides actual spiritual knowledge. Hence His '*jnanamarga*' is—*anubhavamargam* '*darsana margam*'.

*Darsanam* is available in five stages such as *jagrat*, *swapnam*, *sushupti*, *turiyam* and *turiyatiitam*.<sup>87</sup> Regarding such stages he differs from traditional understanding. For instance, *sushupti* is not deep sleep or an unconscious state. According to the traditional understanding *sushupti* provides no knowledge. It is an experiential void of total rest. At times, he speaks of the five stage, i.e. *jagrat*, *swapnam*, '*darsanam*', *turiyam*, *turiyatiam*.<sup>88</sup> Guru replaces the word '*sushupti*' with its traditional sense by the word '*darsanam*'. It can easily be understood the way when he explains *sushupti* as *tunkamal tunki* in accordance with the Tamil tradition which is different from Sanskrit tradition. It is a state of sleepless sleep in which *darsanam* or vision comes. Hence, for him, all stages are stages of experiences. No stage of experiential void is taken as relevant for spiritual evolution. According to him, there are several levels of spaces beyond the gross space-time.<sup>89</sup> They are the subtle seven spaces. They are created by the *samkalpa* of saptarshis i.e. seven *Rishis*. After the seven spaces the *prakasa loka* i.e. the world of Light starts. They are *Iswara sannidhanam*, *Daiva sannidhanam*, *Brahma sannidhanam* and *Para Brahma sannidhanam*. In these dimensions of reality *jiva* has dissolving nature. *Jiva* reaching these dimensions of reality is known as *Brahmavittu*, *Brahma Varrayan*, *Brahma varishtaan* and *Brahma-variishtaan* respectively. According to Karunakara Guru if any individual evolvee thinks that he has reached the ultimate while reaching any of these spaces before reaching the final stage, the evolution of his *jiva* will get stuck there. Hence, it can't evolve up to the final stage. According to him, a *jiva* can evolve up to 11 stages passing through the spaces and the three *prakasa lokas* or spaces of Light. The fourth and the last is the *Para Brahma sannidhanam*. It is the merging state with the ultimate. In this state, there is no individual existence but it is total blissful dissolution.

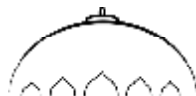
According to Karunakara Guru, linguistic clinging has been our attitude throughout the centuries towards spiritual truths. It worked as a hindrance to spiritual evolution. Instead of practising and realizing the words of great souls, humankind, in effect, rejects the truth realized by great souls like the Prophet, Christ, Sri Ram, Ramathirtha, Vivekananda, Sankara, Sri Narayana Guru, and so on. He distinguishes between a Guru of Semiotics and a Guru of Experience. Accordingly he defines a Guru as the rectifier of spiritual experiences of the Disciple.<sup>90</sup>



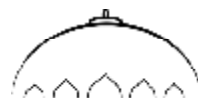


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74. Manvantara is Manu's time, one fourteenth portion of a Kalpam which is the total life span of the whole universe or multiverse. From Creation (srishti) it begins and ends in Dissolution (Pralayam). A Kalpam has 14 Manvantaras. A Manvantara means the time scale of a Manu since a Manvantara belongs to a Manu. Manu is the *Adiguru* or First seer of that Manvantara. A Manvantara has 71 Chaturyugas or Age-quartets.  
A Manu's epoch is considered as over seventy one chatuyugas (yuga- quarters). One chaturyuga consists of 12000 divine years. This is what the scriptures say and this is what we know. One divine year is equal to 365 human years. That divine year is one day for the devas. 365 such days make one year for them. A Chaturyuga has 4 Yugas or Ages such as Satyayuga or Krtayuga, Tretayuga, Dwapurayuga and Kaliyuga. When a yuga changes from one to the next the nature also changes. The changes are caused by disappearance of the light from the gross dimension to subtle dimension. Only the Seers who take birth in accordance with *Brahmanischayam* get direct contact with the ultimate light and receive vak or word from it.
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## HEALTH AND PEACE AS HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Rev. Fr. Dr. V. Clement Joseph\*

### Introduction

The word spirituality at once evokes the approach of a believer in God with an intimate relationship with his/her God. The intensity and extension of spirituality depends on the genuineness of the originator of a particular tradition of spirituality and the authenticity of the followers of that tradition.

In the globalized context of today's world, practically all the major religions of the world and their varied traditions of spirituality are in a process of search and reflection. Traditionally, spirituality laid emphasis on individual sanctity. Today the concern of spirituality is to include the secular arena with its demands of social justice. Is there a way to bring the 'individual' and the 'social' components of spirituality into a balance?

It is imperative that we approach our task by searching for 'holistic spirituality'<sup>1</sup>. Holistic spirituality goes beyond the scope of religions and religionists. It includes the social, cultural and environmental processes. Holistic spirituality involves proper grasp of branches of knowledge, which include cosmology, ecology, anthropology, sociology, ethics, scientific and technological processes, metaphysics and theology. Such an interdisciplinary approach places holistic spirituality away from any form of private and individualistic effort with personal or group faith and practices into the realms of societal and global processes. It even becomes part of the interests of mass movements of peoples across the world. Holistic spirituality, hence, evolves around people's spirituality cutting across barriers of gender, race, language, culture or religion.

The benefits of holistic spirituality must be accessible to individuals in a personal way in the 'here-and-now' situation of life-in-the-world and at the same time accessible to the masses of peoples of the world. The orientation of holistic spirituality must be to animate persons individually and peoples socially into the realms of the Transcendent and the Immortal. The efficacy of holistic spirituality must be phenomenal and transcendental.

In the efforts to initiate thought and reflection on the subject, allow me to take shelter under the lineage of the Tamil Ciththars, a group of enlightened mystics of our land, Sivavaakkiyar in particular, one of the Tamil Ciththars of the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>

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centuries of the Christian era. In the midst of the galaxy of sages and seers of our land, I shall not be presumptuous to propose anything radically new. I do not claim to be any authority in the field of spirituality either.

### **Health, Peace, Justice and Spirituality**

Health and Peace are spiritual values. They are part of human life. One could be healthy in life while suffering from some incurable or terminal disease. Conversely, the body may not have ailments, yet the person may be sick in life. Health is more than the concern of the medical world.

Peace is not absence of violence or war. Peace is not a simplistic human need of absence of aggression to live in convenience and quiet. Conflicts and confrontations do disturb the peace of life and society. Conflict resolution and dissolution of confrontations are not merely social and political processes. Primarily they are intellectual and spiritual processes. Peace is a constitutive component of people's spirituality. Recognition of lack of peace is itself at once an intellectual and spiritual perception. Consequently, searching for and researching into ways and means of attaining authentic peace is both intellectual and spiritual responsibilities of individuals and communities. Without authentic peace, health would not be holistic nor would it be integral.

Spirituality is not simply a matter of theology and religionists. Genuine spirituality would not be realizable without universal peace. Spirituality attends to comprehensive Peace and holistic Health. Thus, health, peace and spirituality are caught within a nucleus of reality called human life. Health, peace and spirituality are universal ethical values.

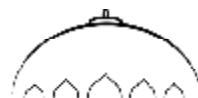
### **Contemplation of Health and Peace as Holistic Spirituality**

My tryst with God and death in 1987 through a major health breakdown was not simply a medical leave and treatment with convalescence. It was an existential awakening of my whole being.<sup>2</sup> I came into a mystical contact with my own body and felt human life. I was aware that my body and my life were distinct, yet not separated. I had to go deeper into this world of phenomenon and mystery. My body and life were torn between existential phenomena and transcendental mystery.

Life needed the body to be phenomenal.

Body needed the life to transcend reality.

Health was a necessity to survive and Peace was a necessity to transcend.



## The Master and the Disciple

“Your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” I desired to hear this blessing from my Master. Today I am proud to proclaim that my Master intended the blessing for me. When I went in Peace and Health, I discovered a whole new world of the *Citthars*\* in my land. We find the Tamil *Citthars* as enlightened souls who promoted, provided and protected holistic health, integral peace and justice as genuine spirituality.

## Tamil Citthars

Popularly the Citthars are known as Medicine Men. People are familiar with the Cittha System of Medicine, known as Cittha Vaithiyam. Only recently much academic interest is being shown towards the other branches of knowledge and science pertaining to the Citthars. There is a world of the Citthars, which is much more than Medicine. This world also deals with physics, metaphysics, cosmology, herbology, alchemy, ecology, anthropology, logic, epistemology, philosophy, ethics and theology. All the original literature of the Tamil Citthars is in the form of verses in Tamil. The Citthars and their literature belong to the subaltern tradition of Tamil society. In the context of dominant religions and oppressive caste structure of society, the insights of the Citthars were iconoclastic and reformatory. An interdisciplinary approach to Medicine and Health according to the Citthars brings us immediately into the realms of peace, justice and spirituality. We try to comprehend the universal ethical values of health, peace, justice and spirituality according to the Citthars. Fundamental elements of the universe are dynamic with energy facilitating the empathy of human life to promote, provide and protect health, peace and justice in society. Thus, health is not only the concern of the medical world. Peace and justice are also not only the concerns of kings, ministers and governance of society. Spirituality, too, is not simply a matter of theology and religionists. Peoples’ health, universal peace and justice are inseparable components of authentic spirituality.

Sivavaakkiyar seems to stand out as a symbolic monument in prophetically uttering what then was undoubtedly revolutionary and today strikingly relevant, and in proclaiming the human values of equality and justice. Equality and justice are the primary characteristics of the social context, which in itself is ‘sacred,’ meant for the human, who is naturally and hence always is honorable with the unbargainable intrinsic worth of self-respect, deserving of reverence.

\*Siddhas. Siddha is a sanskrit word that means a highly evolved sage or adept.



## The Being of the Human

Every human, then, is an *integral whole* capable of self-affirmation and demanding the practice of equality and justice in the social milieu wherein, inescapably, the human finds oneself. 'Demanding the practice of equality and justice in the social' indicates the intentional aspect of the human by which alone the human is distinguished at the social level from all other living beings. The human is related to reality in the natural being of itself, and, concurrently, distinguished from it in the intentional dimension of its specific relationship with the social, while 'demanding the practice of equality and justice.' That which is sacred is this dual dimension of what can be in the natural order of reality and what ought to be as the 'human-in-the-social.' The potential for intentional propensities is the dynamic component of the human which enables the processes of the self towards self-awareness and self-affirmation leading to self-realization. The being of the human, therefore, is a process, or a project, endeavoring to be revered in the social through the intentional practice of equality and justice.

## Human Body and Human Life

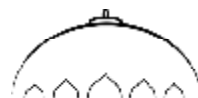
Human body is a combination of diverse systems. Intricately interactive, each system is a complex structure. Modern medical science has made breath-taking contributions in understanding the details of each system and their integral operations. Modern clinical practice has come a long way in taking care of pathological conditions in any one or more of these systems. The surgical methods and achievements, together with processes of sterilization, are overwhelming.

Human life is much more than the body. The body is only the physical dimension of human life. As the body develops and grows into its own maturity, in accordance with the gender and stage of development, there are also the psychological, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of human life. Much can be said and discussed about each of these dimensions.

## Human as Multi-dimensional

Human life is not an isolated life form concerning one individual. Human life is found in *social habitat and natural environment* of the planet earth. Hence cosmological, sociological, historical (cultural) factors influence human life. All these influences correlate with the emotional and intellectual dimensions of human life to evolve theological, philosophical and ethical perspectives in society. Thus the spiritual dimension of human life emerges.





*Health*, therefore, includes all these various dimensions of human life and society. The human person needs to be attended to in all the realms of human life in order to provide holistic and integral health.<sup>3</sup> Peace, Justice and Spirituality come within the purview of scientific inquiry. They are non-quantifiable yet recognizable realities of scientific inquiry.

### **Health as Interdisciplinary**

Holistic health itself has gone beyond the scope of clinical processes. It is social, cultural and environmental. Integral health involves proper grasp of branches of knowledge, which include cosmology, ecology, anthropology, sociology, ethics, metaphysics and theology. Such an interdisciplinary approach to health makes it a spiritual value more than anything else. Health is no longer the concern of a private individual with his or her personal or family physician. Health has to do with societal and global involvement and health has to be part of a priority interest of mass movements of peoples. Health has to do with people's spirituality cutting across barriers of gender, race, language, culture or religion. Thus, *Health demands appropriate consideration of Peace and Justice as correlates.*

### **The Scientific World of the Cittars**

#### **Elements**

All of perceivable reality evolves from the fundamental elements of nature. The fundamental principles of nature are said to be 96 in number.<sup>4</sup> These are reducible to five in number.<sup>5</sup> They, again, are based on three eternal entities: *pati*, *pasu* and *pasam*.<sup>6</sup> The eternal entities are rooted on one Reality, known as *Sivam*.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Energy : Sivasakti as Pati-Pasu-Pasam**

*Sivam* is the Eternal, Implicit One and Absolute Reality. *Sakti* enables *Sivam* to be externalized in various manifestations. We call *Sakti* energy. The primordial form of Energy is *Sivam*. *Sivasakti* is *pati-pasu-pasam*, distinguishable yet inseparable eternal entities.<sup>8</sup> *Sivasakti* as *pati-pasu-pasam* is primordially in the form of *anu*, which means 'atom', the ultimate indivisible form of reality.<sup>9</sup> It has been postulated by the Cittars that the 'atom of the atom' (*anuvinul anu*) is *Sivam* or *pati*; the atom as externalized reality of *pati* is in the form of *pasu*, which is *Sakti*; and the eternal knot binding *pasu* with *pati* is *pasam*, which is *Sivasakti*. The Truth of Unity between the Implicit One, *Sivam* or *Pati* and the Externalized Reality, *Sakti* or *Pasu* is termed as the **Life-Body Integration**, *Uyiraiyum udambaiyum ontruvippathu*.<sup>10</sup>



Assuming the form of Space, *Veli*, *Sakti* evolves into the remaining four metaphysical principles of reality. Emerging as the indwelling energy of the *panjabhoothangal*, *Sakti* is found in every one of the *thonnuttraaru thatthuvangal*, the 96 fundamental principles of reality.<sup>11</sup> In consequence, it can be understood that the human is permeated with *Sakti* and grounded on *Sivam*. The life of the human and so also the human body is not only part of the Eternal Life-Body Integration of *Sivasakti* but also the temple enshrining the Divine.<sup>12</sup>

However, the *pati* and the *pasu* of the human in this mortal life are enslaved by *pasam* of temporal realities, which are non-eternal. The *pasam* of temporal and non-eternal realities drags the *sakti* of *pasu* in the human away from *pati*. It is the responsibility of the Eternal Life-Body Integration of *Sivasakti* in the human to facilitate the liberation of *pasu* from *pasam* and lead the human back to *pati* or *Sivam*. The path of Yoga is the Way or the means, *sadhana*, to attain such liberation.<sup>13</sup>

### **Empathy: Appropriate Integration of Pati-Pasu-Pasam of Sivasakti**

As yogi-mystics, the Citthars perceived the subtle elements of Reality.<sup>14</sup> Identifying the centers of energy both in the universe and also within the human life-body combine through their yogic-lifestyle, the Citthars attained appropriate integration of pati-pasu-pasam of Sivasakti. The yogic-ascetic life of the Citthars enabled them to possess and use extraordinary powers, known as *siddhis*.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Citthar System of Medicine: Holistic and Integrative**

Through rigorous discipline of scientific research (not in the contemporary patterns of science but in the patterns of those days with their means and measures) and investigative knowledge, the Citthars developed a functional and efficient system of medicine and longevity of life. This is a unique contribution of the Citthars to the world of medical science.

The Citthar System of Medicine is holistic in the sense that it attends to all the dimensions of human life, namely the physical, the psychological, the intellectual and the spiritual. The Citthar System of Medicine is also integrative in the sense that it attends to the social, environmental, ecological, universal and cosmological aspects of human life.

Being rigorously scientific, the Citthar System of Medicine is not opposed to any other system of medicine. Nor is it affiliated to any specific religious discipline or



tradition. Hence, it need not be considered heretical to any religion that is genuinely open to scientific inquiry. It can be ascertained that the Tamil Citthars propagated a movement in history for Universal Health Integration. Therefore, a Citthar, who has followed the yoga-asceticism, is one who has attained “a state of peace both within himself and with all and everyone outside himself.”<sup>16</sup>

Common people found in the Citthars, an extraordinary presence of the Divine. Ordinary people were able to receive both medical attention and also spiritual guidance to reorient their lives towards health, which is holistic and integrative. The Citthars offered lasting peace and longevity of life to anyone who approached them. The Citthars, with their grasp of the elements and the energy of the universe, were full of empathy for the liberation of all of reality: the attainment of the ultimate Life-Body Integration. Thus the Citthars were great souls who promoted, provided and protected Health and Life of the people.

### **Body, Mind and Spirit**

#### **Life - Power of God within the Human: Atmashakti**

The word spirituality induces in our minds thoughts of things beyond the natural and visible world. The history of the world of religions and God, from the most elementary to the most developed, “is constituted by a number of important hierophanies, manifestations of sacred realities”.<sup>17</sup> The great mystery is that the sacred or the divine is made manifest within the ‘natural’ or the ‘profane’ world. The wonder of the manifestation or the ‘hierophany’ is that “*the sacred limits and ‘historicizes’ itself.*”<sup>18</sup> Human experiences of the divine have been the motivational force for the development of numerous shrines and temples of prayer and worship all over the world. Traditions of rituals and their foundational beliefs make up the different religions. As the sweet ‘water’ finds its way into the shell of the coconut, so does the divine enter and enshrine itself within ‘me’, the human.

As the sweet juice finds its way into the tender coconut  
The Lord comes, enters and makes a temple within  
Once the Lord has come, entered and made a temple within  
It's not I that opens the mouth  
amidst the people of the world (Siva: 31, 157)

The divine that is within is identified as ‘Light.’ Instead of finding it within oneself, crores of people have gone far and wide in search of it (Siva: 3).

Thus, it may be pointed out that for Sivavaakkiyar, the primary and the core-experience is ‘the divine-within’. Being ‘caught’ by the ‘divine-within’, the Citthar appropriates to himself the life and the power of God. It is this possibility that is proclaimed for everyone.



How foolish the vain are who search  
 Hither and thither for the Dynamic One!  
 Has Mingled With Each Other. (Siva: 400)  
 Search rather within yourself – discover  
 The ‘Not-Able-To-Blend-Together’

The creative power of the Dynamic One within the human is the Atma Sakti.

The Citthars accepted the reality of the Divine and the process of heirophanies, i.e., manifestations of the Divine. But they are against any imposition of doctrine and rituals, which distances people from the Divine and introduces intermediaries. In contrast, Sivavaakkiyar declared that the Divine is within the human. Every human is a manifestation of the Divine. What is the meaning of laying flowers around a stone, and going around it, muttering mantras and prayers? Will the stone hear and answer prayers when the Divine you worship and pray to is within you? (Siva: 496).

### Freedom and Equality

‘The divine-within’ experience is powerful. This experience makes a person an ‘enlightened’ person. *An enlightened person becomes a free person*, a liberated soul. All who experience the ‘Divine-within’ are freed from enslaving traditions, beliefs and customs of the religions and cultures that segregate one person from the other, including women, making some in society the ‘pure’ ones and the others ‘impure’ or ‘untouchable’.

Among women who is untouchable and who is touchable?

Is there a mark of distinction on the flesh, skin and bone?

Is the pleasure with women different between the pure and the untouchable?

Analyze the self and find the pure and the untouchable within. (Siva: 38)

### Oracles against Caste System

Sivavaakkiyar was against the caste system. The people of higher castes always want the system to continue. The ‘untouchables’ have come through a long history of submissiveness and accept the system as divine imposition. According to Sivavaakkiyar this is against the core-experience of the Divine-within everyone. Disrespect for the divine-within the others, especially the untouchables, enslaves humanity individually and collectively and makes it enslaved. This lack of freedom is the curse of society.



When water passes through the mouth it is spittle, you say  
 When the mouth mutters “slokas,” is it to be the “Vedas”?  
 To cleanse the mouth of spittle, you prescribe drinking of water  
 Explain plainly how the spittle is removed from the mouth  
 Reciting Vedas is impure; all invocations are impure;  
 All preaching is impure; all invocations are impure;  
 Sperm in the womb is impure; mind is impure; sound is impure;  
 That which is not impure is not – is not – is not.

How was it before birth?

How will it be after death?

Explain with clarity, ignorant ones

Or else, with five lettered sword I shall sever your ears (Siva: 39, 40, 41)

### **Proclamation of the God of Freedom and Justice**

One needs to be freed from all forms of erroneous thinking and teaching, particularly if they are from religion, culture or rituals.

The Four Vedas believed in and accepted the customs  
 Theories of the elements and all the scriptures  
 Violence of caste anomalies and the rationalizing literature  
 All are full of errors from their very inception (Siva: 461)

The ‘Divine-within’ in its authentic freedom is drawn towards communion with the universe of the Beyond of Beyond, which alone is God; all else are artifacts.

God made of wood – god made of stone  
 God made of bark – god made of saffron  
 God made of cloth – god made of (cow) dung  
 None of them is god except the Beyond (Siva: 510)<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, temples and springs (water spots for ritual cleansing) are within the human person and not in any particular location belonging to any religious traditions.

Which is Temple? Which are (holy) water-fronts  
 Temple is in the mind! Water-fronts are in the mind (Siva: 33: 1,3)

Thus, angered by the enslaving and dehumanizing religious practices, segregations and societal structures, the Citthars were iconoclastic in proposing counter cultural revolution. Their theology was one of ‘Immanence of the Transcendent’ within



the human with the message of '*freedom of the children of the Beyond.*' This is Aalumai.

### **Jan Shakti: Equality and Justice**

The 'divine-within the human' does not make any distinction either among people or even between the male and the female of the human species. By the very fact of their being, men and women are equal as 'divine-within' humans. The 'to-be-born' watery substance in the womb of the mother is neither male nor female until a definitive gender orientation is physiologically taken.

The body becomes pure whether renounced or exalted *Sivayam* is made manifest at the moment of Death (*Samathi*) (Siva: 357).

When such is the propagation of truth and reality regarding equality among the humans, then can one not recognize the dynamic force of fellowship that is being propounded by Sivavaakkiyar? The 'divine displeasure' and legitimate anger of righteousness are against all forms of divisiveness among the sections of society, be it based on caste, creed or even gender. The dimension of 'divine within the human' makes every individual share the Life-Power of God. Empowered with the sacred characteristics, all are equal and obliged to uphold mutual fellowship. The 'divine' enshrined within oneself is defiled when the 'divine' enshrined in the other is not revered. Thus fellowship is intrinsic to being human, rather than some external ethical imperative.

Human fellowship is itself Holy Communion or *Tholamai*.

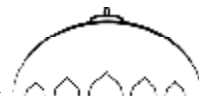
'Human-in-the-social' thus becomes sacred and it is *Jan Sakthi*.

### **Kriya Sakthi: Intentional Action for Peace and Justice in the World**

People labor for everything. The common folks strive and struggle for sustenance; the better off ones struggle for amassing wealth and power. The pressures of daily chores, with a lack of transcendent vision, blur the significance of death and its consequences. Lustful cravings and passionate pursuits are also blindfolds that block the transcendent vision.

While the needed material goods are to be sought after and the phenomenon of sex and its propensities are to be given due attention, arrogant affluence and uncontrolled lustful passions cannot be condoned. Either way the 'Divine within the human' is defiled by the 'human in the social' due to lack of appropriate orientation of the 'human intention'.

People living in arrogant affluence are a symbol of unjust and improper appropriation of limited vital resources meant to be for the benefit of all to live in Peace and



Justice. Uncontrolled lustful passions dehumanize the persons and defile the 'Divine-within' the human.

With appropriate ascetic discipline, i.e., yoga, the Life-Power of the divine within would be enabled to surge and emerge into its own proper orientation. Thus 'human intention' would render the labor of the human fruitful. In other words, freedom and fellowship now enable just ordering of societal structures where individuals would be revered and their legitimate needs would be met. Constructive initiatives for peace would then promote justice in society and this is *Kriya sakthi*.

### Sin

When *Kriya sakthi* is misused or abused, when the 'Divine within' is transgressed, sin is committed. The sinner estranges him/her-self from the Being of the Beyond of the Beyond (if that be possible!), and is regarded as one who is dead already, that is without grace or honor.

Truly, there is no god with sinners who have no morals  
Even when there is woman and wealth, if there is no grace  
Emptiness without God and abysmal hell is the lot.<sup>20</sup>

Sin is very much within the spheres of life and society. Spirituality of Peace and Justice is for all people.

*Karam* and *porul* may refer to life and sustenance; they may also refer to woman and wealth. Accordingly, one may be considered as rich in oneself (ad intra) or rich in relation to others and wealth (ad extra). The unrighteous may possess *karam* and *porul*, ad intra or ad extra, but due to lack of proper orientation, i.e., lack of genuine human intention, they are nobody and nowhere, i.e., they are in the torments of hell. One is reminded of the parables of Jesus on 'Lazarus and the Rich Man' and 'The Rich Fool and the Prodigal Son'.<sup>21</sup>

### Being Holy and Righteous

The transcendent vision of the enlightened one who is genuinely free because of the Divine-within and who recognizes the Holy Communion of human fellowship is empowered to labor intentionally to provide, promote and protect just societal structures for righteous living. Emergence of genuine spirituality for peace with authentic justice is *Neethi*.

Thus the faith in the core-message of the Citthars is found to propagate the basic values of freedom, fellowship and justice. The social-religious-historical context of the Citthars was one of enslaving religious traditions and divisive cultural practices, including dehumanizing caste and gender bias. The authentic 'intentional' human anger of the Citthars was the divine displeasure, which promoted the



alternative transcendent vision of the new human and a new social order, not for the 'hereafter' but for the 'here-and-now'.

### **Immanent Dynamics of the Divine**

The perception of Sivavaakkiyar leads us to recognize the “God-with” and “God within” dimensions of human existence. This incarnational perception of Divine Presence may be regarded as never abandoning Immanent Operation of the accompanying God who not simply intervenes periodically for the sake of solace and comfort in times of suffering and pain but rather is present more dynamically as the Inner Light and Force that empowers the individual. In other words, the Immanent Dynamics of the Divine within the human facilitates the orientation of the Life of the human towards Transcendence. There is no social milieu, which is the ultimate that crushes and dehumanizes the victims of oppression. There is no situation of injustice with no way out at all.

On the contrary, the Immanent Transcendence dimension of the Divine in the human empowers and enables every human individual to take up the here-and-now social situation and to transform it into a social milieu, which befits a Just Social Order with Freedom, Fellowship and Justice. Thus, equality, justice, the Immanent Transcendent Divine, and the empowered orientation towards transcendence in the here-and-now social milieu are vital insights of Sivavaakkiyar theology and anthropology.

Sivavaakkiyar provides us with greater clarity of reality, an ideology to sustain us in the work of promoting Health, Peace, Justice and Spirituality, to carry forward the struggle of the Sick, the Suffering, the Dalits, the Tribes, the Women, the most backward Castes, Minorities and the unorganized Youth, perhaps the misguided wretched of the land, the “abandoned” of society, who “thirst” for genuine freedom, authentic fellowship and attainable justice.

The Formula that emerges from Citthar Science for Universal Health, Peace, Justice and Spirituality is this:

Atma Sakthi + Suya Sakthi [Aalumai]  
Jan Sakthi [Tholamai]  
Kriya Sakthi [Neethi] = Shanthi

### **God**

#### **Cosmological-anthropological Approach**

The awareness of the human-divine continuum is based on the understanding of the processes of coalescence of the basic elements of nature into human life, body, mind and spirit.





*Aralainthu bhuthamay alavidatha yoniyum*

*Paramana thevarum paluthilatha pasamum*

*Oronatha andamum uloga loga logamum*

*Sera venthu poyiruntha thekam yethu seppume* (Siva: 254)

*Thekam*, the body, is the phenomenon that is being sought after by the *Citthar*. But the body that the *Citthar* comprehends is the human body. For the *Citthar*, the human body is composed of all that is celestial and mundane, all that is eternal and temporal, and all that is inscrutable and immeasurable together with the explicable and analyzable basic elements of nature. The human is at once cosmological and anthropological.

While a first level interpretation of this song would itself proffer a metaphysical discourse on the corporeal body of the human, further layers of meaning provide different shades of understanding regarding ‘the-divine-in-the-human’ phenomenon.

#### **Phenomenological Locus of the Divine**

At another level, if the terms are taken to denote differently, Sivavaakkiyar exuberantly extols the human body as the *thekam* unparalleled. *Aralainthu* would be the fiery<sup>22</sup> five fundamental elements of nature. *Uloga loga logam* would be the minerals of nature, or simply matter that is required for the composition of the body.<sup>22</sup> *Bhutam* itself denotes ‘body’ of any living creature, besides meaning the five elements of nature.<sup>24</sup> *Param* and *pasam* could be taken to mean the ‘coat of mail’<sup>25</sup> or the armor of protection that is required by the body. When the *yonī*<sup>26</sup> has not been entered and the *andam*<sup>27</sup> has not been made to fructify, explain, then, asks the *Citthar*, how the body came to be the fusion into one whole. In other words, Sivavaakkiyar describes the natural processes of the mingling of the basic elements of nature and the natural mingling of the *yonī* and the *andam* as the essential and adequate way for the body to become. Without the need to enter into any specific traditions of theology, the *Citthar* is confident to declare in exclamatory exhilaration, that which is apparently ordinary is itself extraordinary in enabling the body to become.

In song 253, and its duplicate in song 366, Sivavaakkiyar declares that there is harmony and symphony when the ‘within’ and the ‘without’ synchronize with each other. This can be realized by endeavoring to open the *kalla vasal*, i.e., the secret, or the sly, doorway. The human body itself is referred to in this song as the *kalla vasal*, where God exists.<sup>28</sup> According to the *Citthar*, the ordinary and the



simple corporeal entity, the body of the human, is the locus for the appearance of the divine and it is the medium for the manifestation of the divine. It is the threshold for the human–divine continuum.

### The Extraordinary of the Ordinary

In the light of songs 255 and 6, and in the perspective of the body itself being regarded as the *vasal*, the *Citthar* has obtained the awareness that even though all that is human is essential for the self to be, the human is itself the necessary ‘way’ by or through which the human is capable of reaching all that is, both human and non-human, namely, the divine or the Being of the Beyond of the Beyond. The postulation here, then, is that the human is perceived as the way or the threshold through which the divine is ‘caught’.

The *Citthar* perspective of the divine-human continuum is initiated according to Sivavaakkiyar when life emerges from the Divine, causing the human to become and be. Song 172 is a typical *Citthar* song.<sup>27</sup> This song strengthens our understanding of Sivavaakkiyar perspective of the Divine.

*Uvamaiyila perolikkul uruvamanathu evidam*

*Uvamaiyaki andatthil uruvi nintrathu evidam*

*Thavamathana paramanar thariththu nintrathu evidam*

*Tharparaththil salam pirandhu thangi nintrathu evidam*

*Sukamathaka yeruthu muntru kandrai intrathu evidam*

*Sollukil ulokam elum nintravarathu evidam*

*Avalathana meruvum ammaithanathu evidam*

*Avanum avalum adalam aruncivan piranthathe* (Siva: 172)

The last line is taken to be the key to interpret the song. It says that ‘he and she may dance (with joy) at the birth of dear life’! The song is a series of either questions or exclamations by which the *Citthar* leads one towards an understanding that the ordinary birth of human life is an extraordinary event to be celebrated. *Aruncivan* could be taken to mean ‘dear life’ of the human. The song is seemingly a discourse that gradually enables a listener to progress towards an understanding of human life as emerging from the Divine.

It is obvious that *human life is natural and ordinary*. The *Citthar* teaches that the ordinary human life is itself extraordinary. All traditions consider human life as extraordinary on the basis of each one’s religious concept to support and sustain such an understanding. What is strange in Sivavaakkiyar is that the very act of



coition, *adal*, between him and her, indeed, is the birth of life. For Sivavaakkiyar, there is no need to have evidence from without, including religious traditions.

### **Cosmological Locus of the Human**

At the next level of interpretation, we consider the terms in their symbolic usage. The incomparable brilliance of light is none other than the sun. The sun, which is red hot and brilliant in light, is likened to the woman. Just as one cannot see forms in the great blinding brilliance of the sun, so also one would not be able to see the evolution of form within the womb of the woman. Likewise, having taken its form, none has witnessed and none is capable of explaining how the earth is tethered to the universe. In the same way, none is capable of explaining how human life is tethered to the universe.<sup>30</sup>

The clue to all reality and understanding is in the 'dance', the *adal* (or is it 'coition'?), between 'him and her'. Does the dance cause the birth of life? Or is the dance the celebration in honor of the being of life even before it is given a form?<sup>31</sup>

As regards human life, all that can be said is that 'he and she' played together and 'human life' was born! The 'he and she' could be simply the man and the woman who are direct physiological parents of any particular human individual. The 'he and she' could be the symbolic cosmic male-female polarities which enable the coming to be of precious life, that we call the human. In the former, all listeners would be able to understand the *Citthar*. In the latter symbolism, only the disciples or the initiated would be able to grasp the significance of the song. The *Citthar* thereby teaches that the ordinary birth of the human is itself an extraordinary phenomenon. The human is further made reverential by considering the very human as the divine in the use of the term *aruncivan*.<sup>32</sup>

According to Sivavaakkiyar, *human life is itself the manifestation and the presence of the divine*. Obviously, the *Citthar* does not imply that the Divine is capsuled or fenced in by the human. The *Citthar* does not speak of the Divine from the side of the Divine, as it were. He seems to speak of the divine from the side of the human. The awareness is that the non-human within the human is regarded as that which is beyond the being of the human. That which is beyond the being of the human and yet is discovered to be within the human being is identified with the immortal or the eternal being, called the *isan*, or *yembiran*. This 'non-human' within the human is 'the divine'. And hence we find that for the *Citthar*, the human itself is *aruncivan*, i.e., Divine.



The *Citthar* distinguishes within the being of the human, the components of the Divine in the human, i.e., Being as such in the being of the self of the human. There is, as it were, 'Being - in - being,' in one consciousness. In a process of reflective self-consciousness an awareness of the self is apprehended and an awareness of a consciousness which transcends the being of the self is taken cognizance of. While all that is human is to be regarded as part of the self, the individual personal self, the being of the human is not exhausted yet. There is more within the self of the human than only what is human. There is Being as such that is 'non-human', 'beyond human', which the *Citthar* identifies as being part of the being of the human. This 'non-human' within the self of the human is regarded as the Divine by Sivavaakkiyar. The process of recognition of such a double-sided awareness is taken up for consideration here.

### **Emergence of the Divine in the Life of the Human**

We saw that life is the beginning of the human. For each and every one of the individuals of the humankind, life is obtained from the progenitors. The reality of mortality of the progenitors and the limitedness of the human being provoke a search for the ultimate and the fundamental source of life itself, that which enables the human to become and to be.

Sivavaakkiyar speaks of searching for the self within oneself in song 255. Having discovered the self within oneself, he declares that there is none and nothing besides the self within oneself. Awareness such as this is reached by the *Citthar* through a process of self-reflective discernment. In the succeeding song No. 256, Sivavaakkiyar opines that as the lightning emerges and subsides in the sky, the Divine too emerges and abides within the self. Just as the eye which sees all other objects except itself, in the same way, the divine 'I' of the human is always the subject and never the object of knowledge. The divine 'I' is felt-experience of the human, even though not a logical necessity.

There are two other songs that use the same metaphor of the lightning (Siva: 90, 121). In song 121, the meaning is actually the same as in song 256. These two may be considered as duplicates. But song 90 using the same metaphor states something slightly different. The difference in the meaning of song 90 provides a clue for the understanding of the *Citthar*'s perspective of 'the divine-human'. In song 90, Sivavaakkiyar proposes a new metaphor asking: 'What shall I say about that which has no grammar, *ilakkanam illathathai*? What is the quality of the language, *sentamil*, when its bounds are exceeded, by that which transcends all



grammar? Then, the metaphor of the lightning is used to assert that “there is none and nothing besides the ‘divine’ and the ‘human’ within me.”

Just as lightning changes the quality of the sky so also the divine is experienced as changing the quality of the human. The *Citthar* may be elucidating a doctrine that the recognition and the awareness of the Divine within the self, affects not only qualitatively the human of the self, but radically transforms existentially the total self of the human. The transformation is such that there is none and nothing besides the divine-human with the self:

*ennakatul isanum yanum allatuy illaye* (Siva: 90:4)

The metaphysical discourse on the divine-human perspective should not estrange one from the realm of the corporeal human which is the medium. While songs 255 and 256 speak of that which is within the self, song 254 speaks of the corporeal interaction between the elements of nature, i.e., the universe and the human. In other words, the universe and the human are in the process of dynamic fusion which is the medium of the divine-human continuum. That is to say, it is not some abstract metaphysical notion or a logical universal concept called the human which is apprehended with a different perspective; rather, it is the ‘cosmological – anthropological – corporeality’ which is the Divine, which is ‘Being – that – is’ substantially and existentially.

### **The ‘Mysterious’ in terms of the ‘Beyond- Being ’**

Sivavaakkiyar parabolically applies the wonder of the sweet and fresh juice that is contained within the tender coconut to the presence of the Divine within the human (Siva: 31, 157). Realization of such wonder and the recognition of such presence make the *Citthar* awestruck and lead him into an ecstatic stupor. In such disposition, the *Citthar* is tongue-tied, unable to utter anything in front of any mortal in the world. He is dumbfounded and silent. Instead of giving expression to the indescribable and entangling oneself into all the implications of connotations and denotations regarding the terms referring to the gods of religion, it is better, the *Citthar* suggests, to remain silent, *summa irupathe sukam*.

*Aiyan vanthu ennulam pukunthu koyil kondapin*

*Vaiyakkatthil mantharmun vaithirappathu illaye* (Siva: 31: 3-4; 157: 3-4)

Being overpowered by the indefinable, the *Citthar* finds himself in a disposition that is perhaps the same as that of *Sivam* itself. Perhaps, that is the way the *Citthar* would like to describe his ecstatic, mystical experience of the human-divine continuum.



There is much that needs to be given due consideration in the world of phenomena. If only the human being who is intelligent, would give due importance to one's own self in the context of and with reference to all else, the disposition of the 'divine' could be realized. The *siddhic (kundalini)* awakening and realization is very succinctly articulated as

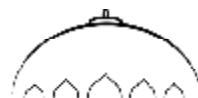
*Verai unni vitthai unni vitthile mulaitheluntha*  
*Sirai unna vallirel civapathangal seralam* (Siva: 162: 3-4) or  
*Sirai unnal vallirel civapatham adaivire* (Siva: 277:4)

In yet another double-song (Siva: 161, 163), Sivavaakkiyar adopts the symbols of the lamp or light, *oli*, and the indwelling light, *ullirunta oli* or  *jyoti* in order to propose the way or the means of attaining *Sivam*.

### **Innovative Search to describe the Beyond Being as Human-Divine Continuum**

The term *Sivam* is a very special term for Sivavaakkiyar. The term is used to propound an alternative word-project to articulate the human-divine continuum. The 'beyond of the beyond' and the 'utterly distant' has been brought to be 'simply within or immanent'. The integration of the transcendent and the immanent of the divine and the human are mysterious. It is ecstatic experience that is indefinably intelligible. The experience is existential and the comprehension is transcendental, beyond all categories of phenomenological description. Surging from within the being of the human, the experience is instantaneous and immanently blissful. The intelligibility is felt rather than thought: the mysterious nature of the transcendent-immanent polarity in the integration of the divine-human continuum.

The mysterious is not strange for those who concede to doctrines of belief and faith. However, Sivavaakkiyar stands defiant as a 'pious rebel' against all accepted traditions of belief and rituals where the reality of the Divine is propounded as the only reality with that of the human as illusory or transitory only. Sivavaakkiyar concedes to the doctrine of the mystery of being that is integral of the Divine and the human and integral of the transcendent and the immanent. This is termed as that which is 'without any grammar', *illakanam ilathathai* (Siva: 90: 1). Not only is the perception of the *Citthar* 'without any grammar', but it has gone beyond the principles of terminology in his own language, Tamil. Sivavaakkiyar says that his perception of the integral being that brings together the divine in the human is indescribable, *pannukintra senthamilp patham kadantha panpena* (90: 2).



### Choice of the Sacred Letters: Na-ma-ci-va-ya

The *Citthar* adapts the strategy of giving expression to his ecstasy by appropriating the five symbolic and the sacred letters of the mystics and the sages, *na – ma – ci – va – ya*. Besides the pietistic and the doctrinal significance that may be induced by the use of this sacred utterance, this symbolic formula implies the indefinable comprehension of the divine-human continuum that Sivavaakkiyar wanted to establish as the fundamental predicament of the human being. The conventional formula becomes a defiant utterance in the songs of the *Citthar* against all that he would like to put an end to, especially the superstitious religious practices and their supportive doctrinal beliefs.

In expressing his mystical ecstatic intuition of the divine-human continuum as the fundamental predicament of the human being through the five letter term *na – ma – ci – va – ya*, Sivavaakkiyar endeavored to refer to Being itself. Sivavaakkiyar made use of the conventional and endearing terminology but impregnated it with innovative implications. It is our task at this stage to recognize the significance of the symbolic five letter term *na – ma – ci – va – ya* for Sivavaakkiyar.

### The Sacred Letters

The divine-human continuum is like a ‘vessel-with-water-in-water’. The divine is portrayed as the water that is both inside and outside the vessel, while the ‘vessel- with-water’ is the human. Water is also the symbol of the Being-in-Eternity which is constant and all-pervading, while the ‘vessel-with-water’ is the human being affected by water but not affecting it. That is, whether the vessel is in water or not, water would be the same. On the contrary, the vessel removed out of water and without water is useless as a ‘water-vessel’. To the *Citthars*, the human form is itself a vessel,<sup>31</sup> and the human being is such only as immersed in the divine. ‘Water’ within and without is divine, the ‘vessel-with-water, is the human, and the ‘vessel- with-water-in-water’ is the divine-human continuum.

*Akkudam salatthai mondu amarnthiruntha varupol*

*Icchadam sivatthai mondu ukanthu amarnthu iruppathe* (Siva: 198: 3-4)

The song we have referred to above, song 198, permits another approach for its explanation that is worth taking into consideration. Perhaps, this approach would complement the above explanation by bringing the discourse into the phenomenological plane.



*Poikudatthilainthothi pokam visumarupol*  
*icchadamum indhiriyamum nirumel alainthathe*  
*Akkudam salatthai mondu amarnthiruntha varupol*  
*icchadam sivatthai mondu ukanthu amarnthu iruppathe* (Siva: 198)

The corporeal human is composed of the five basic material elements of nature which enable the human to become and to be. However, the conception of the corporeal human without the necessary component of the Divine integrated into the very being of the human is like a vessel of illusion, *poikudam*. Actually, Sivavaakkiyar is of the view that the appropriate integration of the five basic elements of nature into the becoming of the human is itself caused by the Sivam. That which renders the being of the human complete is the grounding of the human in Sivam, the being of the Divine, or the Being-in-Eternity. This is articulated by Sivavaakkiyar as Sivam that is all pervading, one and eternal, which surges and emerges in the being of the human (Siva: 377).

The word-project that Sivavaakkiyar propounds is a *mantiram*. But the term is polyvalent; and as such is used by the *Citthar* in his song 89:

*Manthirankal undu nir mayangukintra manithar*  
*Manthiranthai undavarkku manam ehtum illaye* (Siva: 89: 1, 4)

By the choice of this term, Sivavaakkiyar at one level is addressing the commonplace populace that gets drunk with toddy, referred to as *mantiram*;<sup>34</sup> and at another level, he could be addressing even the well disciplined religionists who rigorously pursue the path of ritual invocations through sacred formula, as though drunk with piety.<sup>35</sup> However, using the term in the singular in the fourth verse, Sivavaakkiyar declares that for the one who has consumed what he refers to as *mantiram*, there is no measure of any kind, *manam etum illaye*.<sup>36</sup> The authentic *mantiram* that Sivavaakkiyar refers to is the one that is founded on light, *oli*. This *mantiram* yields itself to becoming visible in form. As such, the assumed form would be tender and simple, capable of maturing and growing into *sivayam* (Siva: 486).

It is to be pointed out here that when letters are treated as sacred, it is not the written letters of any specific language that are in themselves regarded as sacred. The written letters as such have nothing sacred about them, since they are subject to deterioration, mutation and even destruction. It is the reality that is symbolized by the letter, irrespective of the language, that is treated with reverence and





declared as sacred. The reality that is signified by the letter is one and believed to be indestructible. It is such letters which are termed as *akaram* (in Sanskrit, as *akshara*).<sup>37</sup>

The five sacred letters are *na – ma – ci – va – ya* or *ci – va – ya – na – ma*, *Sivayanama*, in Sanskrit means ‘Praise to Siva’. It is opined that there is significance even in the sequence in which the five sacred letters are written. It seems that *namacivaya* is used and communicated only among the uninitiated devotees of Siva and the common populace. On the contrary, *civayanama* is the mantiram that is imparted by a guru to his disciple after disciplined initiation. *Sivayanama* is said to be part of guru-instruction, *dhitchai*.<sup>38</sup> In Sivavaakkiyar, one finds the five sacred letters only in the sequence of *namacivaya*. The very second word in the corpus of the songs of Sivavaakkiyar contains these five sacred letters as *namacivaya* (Siva: 1).

These five sacred letters are reducible into the three sacred letters *ci – va – ya* as follows: *na* is subsumed into *va* and *ma* is subsumed into *ya*. The economy of letters does not change the doctrine since the realities represented by *va* and *na* can be merged and those symbolized by *ya* and *ma* can go together.<sup>39</sup>

In songs 20 and 21, Sivavaakkiyar makes a direct attack against the Saivite tradition, denouncing their ignorance, *anjelutthai othukintra panjabhutha pavikal* (Siva: 20:2), and *pittarkal pitattrurir* (Siva: 21:2).<sup>40</sup>

The mystic intuition of Sivavaakkiyar is daringly articulated only by means of the five sacred letters, known and revered by the Tamils of all traditions. Sivavaakkiyar sings even the mystic syllable, AUM (pronounced popularly as Om) considered by all to be the origin of everything, as being founded on and only on *sivayam*. In songs 221 and 402, the mystic syllable, *aum* is detailed.

*Cikara karanatthile thelinthathe sivayame* (221:4)

*Cikaramanathu ambalam thelinthathe sivayame* (402:4)

Hence, for Sivavaakkiyar, the single letter mystic syllable is not *om*, but *si*. Even then, for the *Citthar*, *si* does not refer to *sivan*, rather, it is *sivam*. It is in this light, that Sivavaakkiyar adopts the conventional five sacred letters reducible into three and ultimately into one. That is, *namacivaya* can become *sivayam* and may be simply *si*.<sup>41</sup> *Na – ma – ci – va – ya*, for Sivavaakkiyar, is the beginning and the end of all:



*Ariyathor namasivayam athiyantham anathum* (Siva: 1:1)

The entire corpus of the *Citthar*'s songs begins with this declaration. And in the same first song, the *Citthar* proposes to elaborate with great care this dear and sacred word: *civavakkiyam, curiyator yeluttai unni solluven civavakkiyam* (Siva: 1: 3). Precisely because of this primary preoccupation of the *Citthar* with *civavakkiyam* that he is called and known as *Sivavaakkiyar*. The creed or the profession of faith that *Sivavaakkiyar* declares is in song 2 itself. Very similar sentiments are expressed in song 523. From these songs one may infer that according to the *Citthar* everything that is conceivable in reality and / or thought of is reality and logically contained in the five sacred letters.

*Sivavaakkiyar* would like to become the proclaimer of the truth of the five sacred letters: *namacivaya* (Siva: 101). The *Citthar* is categorical about the certainty of the authenticity of his mystic intuition and the ontological comprehension of all reality. His exuberance is unbounded (Siva: 106, 197).

### **A+u+m or Si+va+ya?**

According to *Sivavaakkiyar*, *si + va + ya* is an integrated unity of the divine-human continuum. There is no existential necessity for *ya*, the self, to strive towards liberation via *u* to *a*. In the *akshara* conjecture of *Sivavaakkiyar*, there is no need for mystic syllable *aum* as it is doctrinally held by the Saivites. There is an ontological oneness between the *si* and the *ya* in the *va*. *Siva (si)* and the self (*ya*) are united in *Sakti (va)*.

### **Na+ma+ci+va+ya : Represented in the Human Body**

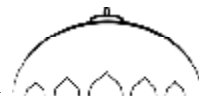
*Sivavaakkiyar* applied the *mantiram*, *na – ma – ci – va – ya*, to the human body from below making the five sacred letters stand as : *Na* for the legs, *Ma* for the stomach, *Si* for the shoulders, *Va* for the mouth and *Ya* for the eyes (Siva: 93).

### **Na+ma+ci+va+ya : Represented in the Five Elements**

The five sacred letters are applied to the five fundamental elements of nature: *Na* stands for earth, *ma* stands for water, *ci* stands for fire, *va* stands for air and *ya* stands for the secret, open and empty space (Siva: 303).

### **The Ascending and the Descending Orders**

The elements of nature are sources of energy. Their presence in the human body is the result of an appropriate integration of all the five elements. However, the



*Citthars* and the yoga tradition of India recognize specific centers of physical energy wherein one particular element of nature is said to dominate. The intuition of the five sacred letters at their corresponding centers of energy with respective identification of specific elements of nature enables the comprehension of the immanence of the cosmic and the divine in the human as *namacivaya*, in the ascending order (Siva: 93 and 303).

In the descending order, the cosmic sources of energy are also identified as one, integrated Divine in the universe comprehensible with reference to the same five sacred letters in the descending order: *ya* is the eternal space, *va* is the wind or the vital airs of the universe, *si* is fire and heat, *ma* is the great waters of the world and *na* is the earth of the world (Siva: 304).

Since the realm of integration between the human and the divine is one of mystic continuum and intellectual perception, the vivifying and the unifying centers of energy and the consequent economy of the sacred letters required to articulate this intuition are *civaya* (Siva: 401, 402, 409, 410, 413).

*Namacivaya* = Human  $\rightleftharpoons$  *yavacimana*;  $\rightleftharpoons$  *yavacimana* = Divine  $\rightarrow$  *Namacivaya*:

The human that endeavors to ascend towards the divine, recognizes that which is immanent within, *namacivaya* in the ascending order and arises towards the summit of oneself. Moving beyond the summit of oneself, *ucciyuduruviye*, the divine is encountered as the cosmic reality.

The Divine is found to be that which is endeavoring to descend towards the human, enabling the recognition of that which is transcendent in eternity, *yavacimana*, and the same five sacred letters in the descending order.

### **Namacivaya? Or Civayanama?**

Approached differently, Sivavaakkiyar has applied a peculiar strategy to veil his mystic intuition and his ecstatic comprehension of the divine-human continuum. Sivavaakkiyar made the choice of the conventional five sacred letters, *Sivayanama*. He preferred to maintain the sequence of these sacred letters as common people chant them, *namacivaya*.

With categorical audacity, the *Citthar* confronted the conventional interpretation of maintaining the mystic syllable, *aum* as primordial. On the contrary, with daring perceptual intuition, Sivavaakkiyar pushed the accepted mystic syllable to the



background and raised to supremacy the economy of the three sacred letters, *Sivayam*.

### Sacred Letters: Si-va-ya-va-si

Applying the yogic centers of energy, Sivavaakkiyar identified the five sacred letters on the human body. Accepting the conventional cosmological conceptualization, the *Citthar* described the cosmic reality also in terms of the same five sacred letters. Through the intuitive perception of the ascending and the descending processes of the human and the Divine, Sivavaakkiyar established the common realm of the human-Divine continuum as *civayam*. The strategy adopted by the *Citthar* is detectable only here: *namacivaya* is reversed into *yavacimana*, and *civaya* is reversed into *yavaci*. We find this in the concluding song of the corpus of the songs of Sivavaakkiyar,

*Sivayavasi ennavum sebikka icchakam yelam*

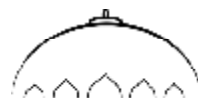
*Sivayavasi ennavum sebikka yavum sittiya*

*Sivayavasi ennavum sebikka vanam alalam*

*Sivayavasi enpathe iruthalaitthi akume* (Siva: 526)

*Sivayam* is the economy of the sacred letters Sivavaakkiyar had derived from the five sacred letters. However, *yavasi* is the teaching of the *Citthar* to express the indefinable comprehension of his ecstatic intuition of the Divine-human continuum. It is in this mystic realization, the *Citthar* claims to achieve everything. It is thus he claims it to be the brand burning at both ends, *iruthalaitthi*.<sup>42</sup> *Iruthalaimanickam* is the term used to refer to the *Saiva Mantra*, *Sivayavasi*, which reads the same whether uttered from the beginning or from the end.<sup>43</sup> For Sivavaakkiyar, it is not a mere *mantra*. It is everything. *Sivaya* is the human; *yavaci* is the divine.

*Sivayavasi* is the expression used to refer to the *Citthar* himself as the *iruthalaitthi*. *Sivaya* is the human *Citthar* ascending towards the divine; *yavaci* is the divine descending to commune with the *Citthar*. Hence, *sivayavasi* is the bond that is existential and transcendental at the same time realized in the *Citthar*. The five sacred letters for Sivavaakkiyar is *si - va - ya - va - si*. While the *Citthar* does not discard the conventional five sacred letters of *na - ma - ci - va - ya* nor the classic mystic syllable, *aum*, he certainly restructured them and strategically applied them according to his own economy of the three sacred letters in [ *si -> va -> ><ya>< < - va<-si*] *si, va, ya*, rendered into a Tamil word as *Sivayam*.



## CONCLUSION

Health, Peace, Justice and Spirituality may be distinguishable for academic purposes. They could also be approached separately for specific purposes. But all three are inseparable in human life and experience. The Body-Life combine in the Human of the Social manifests the Immanent Divine orienting the Human Intentional into the Transcendent Divine of the Ethical, Environmental, Historical and Cosmic. The Creative, Redemptive and the Eschatological dimensions of the Divine are experienced in the historical and social moments of the Human. Personally and locally every individual needs to feel and enjoy Health, Peace and Justice. This is the only test of authentic, holistic spirituality.

## Notes

- 1 This paper is based on a lecture delivered by the author on 'God, Mind, Body, Spirit: New Directions in Holistic Spirituality in Tamil Cittars' at a seminar on "New Horizons in Christian Spirituality" on 12 November, 2006 at Dhyana Vana, Mysore. The lecture was published in *Dhyana: Journal of Religion and Spirituality*, Vol.7, No.1, April 2007, pp 26-50.

This paper is being published now with notes and transliteration of the original Tamil songs of the *Citthars* (Siddhas) in English primarily and solely for the benefit of students and scholars concerned with the thought, philosophy and theology of the Tamil *Citthars*.

- 2 I had a tryst with God and death in 1987. I survived a major health breakdown. Along with my medical treatment according to *Cittha Vaithyam*, the Tamil System of Medicine, I entered into the world of the *Citthars* of Tamil Nadu. I began to practise yoga, meditation and undertook rigorous study of Siddha literature. I was fortunate to travel through India, into the land of the ascetics and yogis in the Himalayas, into the land of the poets in Bengal and into the land of the tribal people of Bihar, the Sambal Valley and Wayanad in Kerala. My vision of life and reality with God was getting sharper and more intense.

This process was intensified from 1991 with the Doctoral Research Program culminating with the Dissertation titled: *Human-Divine Continuum: Anthropology according to Sivavaakkiyar* with which I earned my Ph. D. from the Department of Christian Studies in the University of Madras in 1999.

While I was involved in the Doctoral Research, in order to make my *Citthar* Experience practical and fruitful, it was possible for me to join a team of persons to initiate a **Movement for Universal Health Integration and Liberation** in 1993, popularly known today as **MUHIL**.



- 3 Holistic health refers to health in all the dimensions of human life. Integral health refers to all the systems of life and reality that influence human life.
- 4 Dr. Ka. Su. Uthamarayan, *Thotra Kirama Araichiyum Siddha Maruthuva Varalarum*, Tamil Nadu Arasu, 1978, pp. 122-25.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-44.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 101-21.
- 7 For an elaboration on the term *sivam*, see *Ibid.*, pp. 66-72.
- 8 *Thirumanthiram*, 2373, 2384
- 9 *Ibid.*, 1971, 1973.
- 10 Sivavaakkiyar, 215.
- 11 *Thirumanthiram*, 1336, 1337.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 704, 705.
- 13 Dr. Ka. Su. Uthamarayan, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-22.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 100f, 307f. For an elaboration on the eightfold path of Yoga (*astangayoga*), see *ibid.*, pp. 300-02.
- 15 “They had investigated that the body, though transient was the one and only instrument for attaining success in the Spiritual development and growth; and so worked out to attain the eight supernatural powers, ... essential for their goal...” *Ibid.*, p. 309. We regard them as Eight Extraordinary Powers: *Anima, Magima, Lagima, Karima, Prapthi, Pragamiyam, Vasithuvam* and *Isathuvam*. For an elaboration see Dr. Ka. Su. Uthamarayan, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-300.
- 16 V. Clement Joseph, ‘Siddhas: The Defiant Saints of Folk Culture’, *Jeevadharma*, Vol. XXIV, No. 139, 1994, p. 45.
- 17 Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries - The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality*, (Tr.) Philip Mairet, Glasgow: Harvill Press, 1960, p. 124. In this section Mircea Eliade analyses the concept of ‘The Holy’ as propounded by Rudolf Otto in 1917 through Otto’s little book entitled *Das Heilige*.
- 18 Mircea Eliade, *Ibid*, p. 125. (Emphasis mine.)
- 19 Sivavaakkiyar, 510. See also Sivavaakkiyar, 35: ‘Civan’ is recognized not in images made of bricks, granite or of any metals. Rather, the ‘Lord of the Universe would dance and sing within’ when self-discipline (yoga) leads to self-realization (enlightenment, liberation, or freedom in authentic self-affirmation).
- 20 Sivavaakkiyar, 504, 2-4.
- 21 Gospel of Luke, 12: 16-21; 15: 11-24; 16:19-31.



- 22 *Aral* = fire: Pingalamunivar, *Pingala Nikandu*, Madras: Rippon Acchiyandhira Salai, 1917. See *Tamil Lexicon*, (Ed.) S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, Madras: University of Madras, 1982, p.242, col. 2.
- 23 *Ulogam* = metal, *Tamil Lexicon*, p.461, col.1.
- 24 *Tamil Lexicon*, p.2833, col.2.
- 25 *Ibid*, p.2621, col. 1 and p.2584, col. 2.
- 26 *Yoni* = womb, *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 3416, col. 1.
- 27 *Andam* = seed, nut, *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 58, col. 2.
- 28 “Sivavaakkiiyar is fond of using the expression ‘*vasal*’, i.e., ‘threshold’, and he calls the human body as a threshold where God exists (verse 17).” T. N. Ganapathy, *The Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas*, New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1993, p.137, note 53. Prof. Ganapathy refers to the songs as verses. Hence, what is verse 17 for him is song 17 for us.
- 29 This song has eight verses. It is to be regarded as one of the strange songs in the collection with possible interpolation. The song retains its meaning and force without the middle four verses. It may be conjectured that the original song may have consisted only of the first two verses and the last two verses.
- 30 *Andam* = the universe in the shape of an egg. *Tamil Lexicon*, p.58, col. 2.
- 31 The term *adal* is significant in that it refers to the mystery of creation and may mean the concept of *lila*.
- 32 *Meru* also means ‘pudendum muliebre’, *Tamil Lexicon*, p.3354, col. 1. The *Siddha* has with purpose chosen to use this term to progressively draw the attention of the listener towards the birth of human life which is itself the birth of the life of the divine, in the human, in every human.
- 33 Kaduvelicittar, 4:  
*nanda vanaththi lorandi – avan*  
*nalaru mathamayk kuyanvanai vendik*  
*konduvandanoru thondi; meththak*  
*kuththadi kkuththadippottudaiththandi.*
- 34 *Tamil Lexicon*, p.3068, col.2.
- 35 Ilampuranar, *Tholkappiya Porulathikaram Ilampuranarurai*, Madras: Vavilla Press, 490; *Tamil Lexicon*, p.3068, cols. 1-2.
- 36 *Tamil Lexicon*, pp. 3188-89, cols. 2-1.
- 37 Joseph Jaswant Raj, *Grace in Saiva Siddhantham and in St. Paul- A Contribution in Inter-Faith Cross-Cultural Understanding*, Madras: South Indian Salesian Society, 1988, p. 542, note 174.



- 38 Joseph Jaswant Raj, *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55, and p. 543, note 175. See also S. Arulsamy, *Saivism- A Perspective of Grace*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987, p.125, note 3 for the sequence of the five sacred letters as “Sivayanama”.
- 39 Arulsamy, *op .cit.*, p. 125, note 3.
- 40 See also Siva: 8, 222 and 390.
- 41 Thirumular calls this letter *ci* as the ‘nayottumantiram’, *Thirumanthiram*, 3051.
- 42 “*Irutalaikkolli* is a ‘brand burning at both ends’.” *Muthollayiram*, Madurai: Tamil Sanga Muthirai Salai, 1905; *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 328, col. 2.
- 43 *Tamil Lexicon*, p.329, col.1.



# DISEASES AND THEIR SPIRITUAL BASIS

Dr. Swami Gurudharma Jnana Thapaswi\*

## Introduction

Every system grows and sustains itself so long as the source of its dynamism is alive. It is true of medical systems also. Modern medical system for example, draws its sustenance from modern science and technology. Other medical systems that had developed in different human societies must have had other sustaining factors. But different from all this, the genesis, growth and development of Ayurveda had its origin in the *atmajnana* marga - the path of self realization - of ancient India. This system was born out of the compassion of great *rishis* in India for the people who had been suffering from various ailments. *Rishis* were great seers who could internally see and know through spiritual vision the cause - effect nexus of unforeseen developments in human life and physical nature. They guided human beings materially and spiritually helping them to move towards the ultimate goal of human life.

Ayurveda thus evolved as part of the efforts of seers to guide and liberate human beings from the effects of wrong deeds in past lives that exist in *jiva* or soul and reflect themselves as incurable diseases in the human body. These great seers exhorted and sought to guide people to choose a righteous way of life for leading a healthy and meaningful life. Therefore, Ayurveda should not be considered exclusively as a system of treating disease. Of course, treatment of illness forms major part of the system. More than that Ayurveda is a life vision and life style that guides human beings to be materially and spiritually healthy. It prescribes a way of life, behavioral pattern, in short, the dharmic or ethical principles that are to be observed in life so as to lead a healthy and peaceful life.

*Himsa-asteyanyatha-kamam paisunyam*  
*Parushanrte sambhinnalapam*  
*Vyapaadam-abhidya drig-viparyayam*  
*Papam karmeti dasadha*  
*Kaya-vang-manasa-styajet* <sup>1</sup>

(Violence, stealing, unlawful sex, abusiveness, harshness, falsehood, hurtful speech causing dissension or separation, quarrel and conflicts, jealousy and faultfinding are ten sinful acts pertaining to body, speech and mind, to be avoided at all costs.)

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At the same time the seers classified the causations of diseases into three and formulated and prescribed medicines for providing relief and cure. The virtues that derive from a *dharmic* life, they said, will slowly remove the negativity in *jiva*, which is the root cause of the illness in the human body. Further, diseases have been classified, considering their nature:

*Sadhyo-asadhyam- iti vyadhir-dwidha, tau tu punar-dwidha*  
*Susadhyah- krichhrasadhya-scha yapyo yaschanupakramah*<sup>2</sup>

(Disease is of two kinds – *sadhya*, curable and *asadhya* incurable. The *sadhya* diseases are again seen in two categories: *susadhya* - easily curable and *kricchrasadhya* – curable with difficulty. *Yapya* is controllable and *anupakramah* – fatal.)

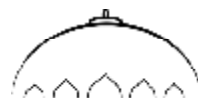
The classification is chiefly as follows:

- i Immediately curable (*susadhyam*)
- ii Curable with aggressive treatment with *pathyam* (*kricchrasadhyam*)
- iii Curable in course of time (*yapyam*)
- iv Non-curable (*asadhyam*)<sup>2</sup>

Ayurveda treatises, while dealing with different dimensions of human illness, observe that incurable diseases occur consequent on the evil effects of human actions in previous births. The mention in *Charakasamhita* that mental diseases arise from past karma is an example:

*Purvakritam karmah prasasthamicchanthi thasya nimitham ...*<sup>3</sup>

Even before an individual is physically afflicted by an illness, it manifests in his magnetic body. It could be seen by those with awakened perception as changes in the proportion of one's aura. Thus an intuitive doctor can see in advance the changes in the magnetic body, which is the reflection of the *karmadosha* (bad effects of previous human actions) in one's *jiva*. *Karmadosha* appears in one's aura or magnetic body at particular periods of time in one's life. This gradually leads to the disequilibria of the basic three qualities in body i.e., *Vatham*, *Pitham* and *Kapham*. It is the equilibrium of these three ingredients in human body that keeps human body in its normal state of health. An individual is affected by a serious illness due to the abnormal change in the proportions of these qualities or vital forces. An intuitive doctor sees the root cause behind the physical appearance of one's illness, which even goes to the *karmadosha* of some deeds in past



births. However, medicine is administered so as to restore the equilibrium of the three basic qualities. The cure of the disease depends on the gravity of the negative energy in the *jiva* or magnetic body. Sometimes repeated treatment depending on the condition of the illness is prescribed. Medicine comprises not only therapeutic medicine, it also includes strict dieting called *pathyam* in Ayurveda. *Pathyam* occupies a prominent place in Ayurveda. The administering of food, like medicine, has an important role in the curing of diseases. The nature and gravity of medicine is fine tuned with the nature of the body and the time-space dimension.

Therefore one finds that the basis and essence of Ayurveda system is grounded in spiritual wisdom. The low profile of Ayurveda in the past several decades can be traced back to the absence of *Jnanis*, seers of spiritual stature and evolved followers who could sustain the wisdom of *jnanis* so as to restore to Ayurveda its lost dynamism. Ayurveda evolved with a different life vision and life style. Modern life vision and life style are antithetical to the life vision and life style in which Ayurveda developed and sustained itself. In Santhigiri, Ayurveda has been revived and propagated as a part of the life mission of Guru. Through Guru humanity has received a new life vision and life pattern. The fountain of pure *jnana* has become active and a new *parampara* is emerging under the guidance of Guru.

### **Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham (the New Health Dharma Doctrine)**

All religions and spiritual doctrines wish well being to every living and non-living being in this universe. How to achieve well being has always been a puzzle in spite of the advancement of various methods. The scriptures say that well being can be achieved by living a life according to the *dharma* of the Age. *Dharma* is the complex of principles relevant to each Age, which are to guide human life. The inability of man to follow *dharma* in his thinking and deeds has been the basic reason for human misery and sorrow. The mission of Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru seeks to liberate humanity from its fallen state by guiding people in their material and spiritual life. Guru has opened up a spiritual path to break the *karmadoshas* of past birth from *jiva*, which create insurmountable hurdles on man's stride towards truth and goodness. Guru shows the way to all to accomplish a righteous living by observing *dharma* according to the capability of one's soul. *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham* put forward by Guru is a part of Guru's mission for this human liberation.



## Guru's Classification of Diseases

When we try to understand *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantam*, Guru's classification of diseases and their reasons assume supreme importance. They are:

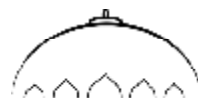
- i Diseases caused by one's own *karmas* in previous births (*karmagathi*)
- ii Diseases transmitted from the ancestral lineage (hereditary)
- iii Diseases caused by the influence of distortions in worship (deviating from *Yugadharma*)

Of the three, those resulting from ancestral influences and distorted forms of worship can be cured by treatment following the words of Guru. Diseases arising out of one's own bad deeds in previous births are difficult to be treated and cured.<sup>4</sup>

Let me note here that religious and spiritual scriptures have taught people about the consequences of bad *karmas* in life. Scriptures caution that incurable diseases and miseries originate from *karmadoshas*. However, there has not been any effective means to get out of the vicious circle of bad effects of karma. Religious observances and rituals have been prescribed as solutions of *karmadoshas*. But it is my experience that none of these remedial measures can eradicate from human soul or *jiva* the bad effects of actions or *karmadoshas*.

It is in this context *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham*<sup>5</sup> enunciated by Guru assumes importance. A unique aspect of *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham* is its focus on the removal of the bad effects of past *karma* in *jiva*, which cause diseases and sufferings in one's life, despite the administering of medicines. On the completion of Guru's spiritual attainment in 1973, Guru got permission from Brahma Prakasam for the spiritual purification, and appeasing of manes (ancestral spirits) and other astral powers. This cleansing process (*pithru suddhi*) has no parallel in spirituality and is called Gurupooja in Santhigiri. Gurupooja is central to Guru's mission as well as the *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham*.

Guru has, thus, brought back the purity and majesty of Ayurveda through the *jnana marga* in accordance with *yugadharma*. When Guru formally inaugurated Ayurveda production in Santhigiri Ashram, He had said that Ayurveda would draw global attention in the coming years and become a significant treatment method in the world. According to Ayurveda there are four means for arriving at conclusions.



They are:

- i. The advice of the seers, (*aptopadesah*)
- ii. Appearance (*pratyaksham*)
- iii. Inference (*anumaanam*) and
- iv. Comparison /Logic(*yukti*)

*Dwividhameva khalu sarvam sachasacha  
Tasya chaturvidha pariksha  
Aptopadesah pratyaksham  
Anumanam yuktischeti* <sup>6</sup>

Of this four, as we have seen above, the advice and guidance of the *jnani* keeps the system dynamic and provides for its growth. Since there is limitation in the first three means - of appearance, inference and logic - in making accurate diagnosis of an illness, the words of the *atma jnani* are most valid. But in course of time this aspect to Ayurveda faded away and the other three aspects found prominence in the system. This lacuna is responsible for the loss of confidence in, Ayurveda among the people.

In Santhigiri Ashram, Ayurveda and Siddha systems have acquired new dimensions. They are being rejuvenated, regenerated and perfected in accordance with the directions and guidance of a *Kalanthara Guru*. The *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham* of Santhigiri visualizes life in the totality of its material and spiritual dimensions and treatment is only part of an individual's health. Equally significant is the creation of an awareness of the importance of a way of life which keeps a human being physically, mentally and spiritually healthy and peaceful. Therefore, along with treatment, a new life vision, life culture and a new life pattern is disseminated through Santhigiri. This is the essence of Santhigiri's *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham*.

### **My Own Experience**

I have, on many occasions, realized the truth of what has been stated above. I have experienced it professionally and spiritually. Let me narrate here one of my professional experiences, which substantiates the efficacy of *Nava Arogya Dharma Siddhantham* enunciated by Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru. The case also highlights the vital link treatment has spirituality. During my consultation in Santhigiri Siddha Vaidyasala at Uzhavoor where Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru Research Centre on Ayurveda & Siddha is located, a girl about 18 years approached



me regarding her mother's illness. Her mother was suffering from Inter Vertebral Disc Prolapse (IVDP) and was undergoing treatment in Medical College, Kottayam. She was completely bedridden with weakness of lower limb, sensory impairment below the hip region, constipation and urinary retention. She underwent various kinds of treatment including bed rest. Analgesics and relaxants were administered. Traction was tried and enemas were given to relieve constipation and catheterization to empty the bladder. Since there was no improvement, the doctors advised her to undergo surgery as the last resort.

Now coming to the spiritual aspect, her family was just getting acquainted with Santhigiri Ashram. During one of the visits, her mother's problems were presented before Guru for His mercy and directions. Guru said, "Operation should not be done. Go and consult Swami at Uzhavoor. He will do the needful".

As per the directions of Guru, her mother was discharged from the hospital and brought to their house. Then the girl approached me at Uzhavoor with all the clinical details.

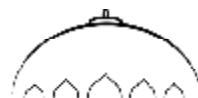
The MRI Scan of lumbar spine of the patient revealed:

- i. Primary lumbar canal stenosis from L2 to L5 levels.
- ii. L4-L5 annular disc bulge with large posterior disc protrusion/extrusion compressing the area and nerve roots anteriorly on both sides.
- iii. L5-S1 diffuse posterior and right posterolateral disc bulge.
- iv. L3 – L4 mild posterior disc bulge.

After going through the clinical records, I just closed my eyes and prayed to Guru. I could recollect this patient, since I had met her once or twice in the Ashram, before she became sick. She was 54 years old, and was on the verge of the completion of *youvanam* and moving on to the next stage, old age or '*vardhakyam*', when *Vatha* would be predominant. The conclusions I could draw by analysing the reports and remembering the figure of the patient were:

- i. Her body was of *rooksha* and rough nature.
- ii. She was a known hypertensive for several years with frequent headaches.
- iii. She used to have chest discomfort.
- iv. She used to have occasional generalized itching.
- v. She underwent hysterectomy for menorrhagia.
- vi. She had backache resulting from disc prolapse.

I enquired their family details. She had lost her husband 10 months earlier due to heart attack and one of her children was mentally and physically retarded. Keeping



all these things in mind, I could infer she had a constitution of *Vatha- kapha* by birth. Because of obstruction of *srothus* (channels) due to increased *kapha*, the *vayu* is distorted leading to the above-mentioned complaints.

Finally this led to the conclusion that this distorted *vayu* having its effect in the *asthi* (bone) is thereby deforming it. That is, coming to the treatment aspect, there was no doubt that the line of treatment would be to bring the distorted *vayu* to its normal.

Again I prayed to Guru to simplify the treatment within the reach of the individual. Due to financial reasons I was forced to give treatment as outpatient. Considering all aspects, and with the words of blessing from my Guru, I decided to give a three course treatment for 21 days, first seven days primarily for purgative therapy, next seven days for Siddha medicines and last seven days for Ayurveda medicines. After prescribing the appropriate medicines and with the courage gained from Guru's words, I told the girl "you can bring your mother when she starts walking".

Actually the interest to present this case in this paper stems from a casual conversation I had with this patient. As we were discussing she revealed her *anubhavam* (spiritual experience) which she had hidden from everyone. Her experience reflected the linkage between medicine and spirituality.

This is how it goes as I heard from the patient: During the beginning of the second course of treatment, the daughter happened to visit Guru's 'Janmagriham' i.e. the birthplace of my Guru, from where she received prasadam in the form of three bananas to be handed over to her mother from one of the Swamis, which she promptly did.

Since it was Guru's prasadam, the mother had two of them. Usually consumption of bananas brings about respiratory complaints in her and thus she avoids it. So keeping this in mind, she just had two of them. But an inner voice persuaded to have the remaining banana also as it was Guru's prasadam. Giving no second thought about the consequences she prayed to Guru and had the third banana too.

As she finished eating she could feel an energy/heat coursing from hip region downwards through her legs till the tip of the toes with a slight sensation of movement. Initially she could not believe it. She called her daughter immediately. The daughter was astonished to see her mother move her legs slightly. Sensation below the hip region was regained completely. No words could express their joy.



Gradually constipation was relieved and catheter too was removed as the treatment progressed. After two more courses of treatment, the patient came to me walking. With this experience, my understanding about medicine and spirituality became deeper and more meaningful. It is clear that those who follow and believe the words of Guru get the experience of truth and, in turn, of the Divine.

With this, I bow and dedicate my words to the lotus feet of my Guru.

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1. *Ashtangahridayam*, Sutrasthana, ch2:21,22.
2. *Ashtangahridayam*, Sutrasthana, 30.
3. *Charakasamhita*, Nidanasthanam, ch7:11.
4. Santhigiri archives.
5. Santhigiri archives.
6. *Charakasutram*, sutra 11:17.



# SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

O.V. Usha\*

‘Women’s freedom is not in aping men’s self-indulgences.  
It is in recognizing the great quality of being a woman’.

Navajyotisree Karunakara Guru

Navajyotisree Karunakara Guru, the Founder of Santhigiri Ashram devoted a great deal of time, attention and energy towards the empowerment of women. He allowed women into his fold just as he allowed men, and there was no gender discrimination at all. In this he was unlike most of the traditional spiritual leaders of India (practically all of them males) who kept women away, to safe-guard their own spiritual pursuit and that of their male disciples. The women of India had no time for themselves either. They were married off very early as children. There was hardly any opportunity for getting educated or making decisions. Their spiritual self was eclipsed as it were. Rare souls like Akkamahadevi<sup>1</sup> of Karnataka could rebel with the system, which did not accord any freedom for women.

However we have reason to believe that women enjoyed a better position in earlier times as there are textual pointers revealing spiritual evolution in women who discoursed on the mysteries of life and death. They were often recipients of revelatory knowledge and for that reason had the status of rishis who perceived life’s truths. Some scholars believe that in ancient India, the women enjoyed equal status with men in all fields of life. However some others hold contrasting views. Works by ancient Indian sages like Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rig Vedic verses suggest that the women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their husband. Scriptures such as Rig Veda and Upanishads mention women sages and seers, like Gargi and Maitreyi.<sup>2</sup> Maitreyi was an evolute whose request to her sage - husband Yajnavalkya has been to be a prayer for all seekers of truth from upanishadic times.

*Asato ma sat gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya,  
mrityor ma amritam gamaya.*<sup>3</sup>

(Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.)

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\*Poet, Columnist and Book Editor



Women were reduced to a state in which drudgery was their lot in raising families and taking care of homes. The images created of women, by men were that of the mother-*devi* on the one hand and the temptress-*devadasi* on the other. The tradition of Devadasi was supposed to be a religious practice of southern India, in which women were “married” to a deity of a temple. The practice was well established by the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In the later period, sexual exploitation of *devadasis* became a norm in some parts of India.<sup>4</sup> For centuries, or even millennia, the suppression and abuse of women have continued. In our times there have been on-going social, democratic and feminist processes to counter this and various measures are being taken at various levels to rectify the situation. Mahatma Gandhi’s views are to be remembered in this context. “To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man’s injustice to women,” Gandhi said .<sup>5</sup> He also said: “The wife is not the husband’s slave but his companion and his help-mate and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows and as free as the husband to choose her own path.”<sup>6</sup>

Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru attributes much of the misery and degradation women undergo to the spiritual denial and deprivation they have been subjected to. Women’s condition in turn has undermined the well-being of the society as they are not able to lay the foundation of a value -based life for their children. In this context GURU points out to the pressing need for spiritually evolved motherhood. Modern education and the venues it has opened up have made a large number of women economically independent and many have become achievers in various fields. But there is not much awareness about the importance of being an enlightened mother who can inculcate a sense of values in her children.

Guru has indicated that the initiative of an enlightened mother brings well-being-- both material and spiritual-- for a family. The progress of the family in fact is very much dependent on the women of the house.

### **Darshanam: Direct (Astral) Perception**

Darshanam (sight/vision) is the door to transcendental and direct perception. This faculty once awakened in an individual and guided properly leads to knowledge of the phenomenal world as well as of the subtle, astral dimensions. By the grace of Guru this door to perception has been opened in many individuals who came in contact with Guru. This marks an inner spiritual change. Of these who nourished their relationship with Guru further, through faith and surrender, have been able to perceive the truth of astral planes up to the level of gods and goddesses and other powers traditionally worshipped. For such heightened sensitivity these men and women were not advised to practise yoga or meditation techniques. They were



not asked to renounce the world either. Individuals belonging to some 500 odd families have developed the faculty of darshanam. Some of the disciples, especially those who joined Guru as little girls and concentrated entirely on serving Guru, have evolved spiritually and have scaled great heights in their faculty of darshanam. One among them- Janani Amritha Jnana Thapaswini, through her determination and dedicated work, has excelled without a parallel. She has become the guiding light and has got the title Sishyapoojitha (the venerated among disciples). Guru's intent of empowering women is evident in His choice of a woman to be His successor.

Sishyapoojitha Janani is the perfect disciple of the complete Guru-Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru. She has evolved as the perfect vehicle for Guru's light to guide the world and carry out the Will of Brahman. Guru himself, it has been revealed, is a soul guarded by the Absolute Brahman. Guru has said that the deities worshipped are nought before a disciple with heightened perception. The Sishyapoojitha is a wonderful illustration of this fact. Sishyapoojitha Janani was chosen as a little girl of 9 to be chiseled and perfected for this task. In His choice Guru has removed an age-old spiritual block for the world that of women's inability to carry their inner spiritual evolution to perfection. This unique achievement is of far-reaching consequences to human society as a whole.

### **Guru Pooja: Removal of Genetic, Psychological and Spiritual Debilities**

The word Gurupooja literally means 'worship offered to Guru'.<sup>7</sup> In Santhigiri Ashram also it is a worship offered to Guru-the internal surrender an individual makes to Guru. In acceptance Guru releases his redemptive energy which acts in ways far beyond our comprehension. Gurupooja thus has come to represent a complex spiritual process, of cleansing, purification and redemption unknown to the world. This is initiated through the spiritual intercession of Sishyapoojitha Janani Amritha Jnana Thapaswini.

Janani Rishirathna Jnana Thapaswini, a renunciate now in her early twenties, is born after her family performed Gurupooja. The family became devoted to Guru after Rishirathna Janani's father, Sri. Anantram (who comes from a Telugu business family settled in Bangalore), was treated under Guru's guidance for cancer and was cured. The young renunciate is a highly evolved soul with a developed faculty of darshanam.



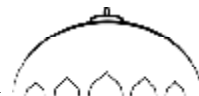
## The Spirit Nature of Human Beings

All spiritual traditions affirm the survival of the spirit after death. Through darshanam awakened by Guru, the disciples in Santhigiri affirm this insight. Guru has confirmed this and other insights derived in *darshanam* in his conversations and speeches.

- a) The spirit survives after death.
- b) The spirit goes through successive re-incarnations.
- c) The deities and powers people worship are spirits who have reached various states of evolution.
- d) Sometimes the spirits worshipped are involuted or low beings.
- e) The worshipper's spirit after death moves to the energy field of the deity worshipped.
- f) For a very long time the spirit world has been full of negativities.
- g) Ancestral spirits in the astral planes and the deities they are attached to, influence the family lines related to them on the earth plane. The living is mostly totally unaware of this reality.
- h) These ancestral spirits, if they stagnate due to karmic complexities release negative energy to which the descendants are susceptible, ending up with problems and / or ailments in the family.

Most of the families consult astrologers when confronted with inextricable problems in their lives. The astrologers do attribute these sufferings to the frustrations of the ancestral spirits and the deities they had worshipped. In most cases these deities would be worshipped as protectors of the family. The astrologers would suggest that the ancestral spirits should be removed through *tantric* exorcism. For the deities who are found unhappy, better temples would be recommended with more elaborate rituals of worship.

Even after Guru dropped his body (merged in *Aadi Sankalpam*) Sishyapoojitha Janani Amritha Jnana Thapaswini continues to effect spiritual cleansing by doing Sankalpam (as she did while Guru was in his body)- a process in spiritual knowing and concentration, and acts in accordance with the words received from Guru's light. Stagnant ancestral souls find release from karmic deadlocks and their suffering



ends by the Grace of Guru. The living also find relief as these astral connections come to an end.

### **An Illustration of the above**

Mr. Herman Nenning (b.1952) a native of West Germany had spiritual leanings from childhood. As a young man he came to be influenced by the Hare Krishna Movement and the Kriya Yoga of Paramahansa Yogananda. He first visited India in 1988 and got further initiated in Kriya Yoga. He used to get experiences of sound, colour and forms of light during meditations. He visited Santhigiri Ashram in 1989. He also visited a few other Ashrams like Sathyasai's, Amrithanandamayi's, Balasai's and Aurobindo's. However, Mr. Nenning returned to Santhigiri later the same year. This time he sought an audience with Guru to ask if Guru could render help in a family matter.

Herman's younger brother Gerhart had taken to drinks. Herman had, after much coaxing, found out why his brother had become an alcoholic. Gerhart was experiencing visitations of an evil kind. It was an experience usually just as he would go to sleep. Then he would be wide awake seeing apparitions and sometimes experiencing them enter his body. He would have the feeling of being thrown out of his body. Sometimes he saw their dead maternal grandfather as well. He was trying to drown these experiences in alcohol.

Guru offered the solution of GURUPOOJA. Guru also warned that it would not be easy as there is a lot to understand. It involved great responsibility. Guru directed Swami Jyothirmaya Jnana Thapaswi, the late organisational head (Gurukulabrahmaniveditan), to talk to Herman and explain the situation. Thereafter Guru asked Herman to think over whether he would be able to follow the instructions. It was a positive yes from Herman and Guru got the necessary Sankalpam for Gurupooja done.

Neither Herman's brother Gerhart nor the other members of their family knew about this Gurupooja. Nevertheless a surprise was waiting for Herman when he reached home after two weeks. Gerhart's evil visitations had stopped all of a sudden, coinciding with the night of the Gurupooja. Nor did he see the grandfather's spirit any more. The uncontrollable craving for drinks also had disappeared.

The change in the lives of people after a Gurupooja is not necessarily a dramatic one like this. It could be a gradual change for the better. After Gurupooja the marriages of young men and women of the family are made in consultation with Guru. Cleansed souls are attracted to the same fold, to be born. The children born this way are free from deficiencies of the elders, marking the advent of a more spiritually vibrant new generation.



After the strife gone through for his spiritual realizations Guru tirelessly worked for the world around him. He allowed women to be close to him just as he allowed men. This was obviously for the women to benefit spiritually. Women, young and old took refuge at Guru's feet to be corrected, guided and helped. In spite of the vicious scandals he had to face, Guru showered his grace on women especially on those at the grassroots level. The special emphasis Guru has placed on women's issues is evident from the fact that He gave equal opportunity to women in all the Ashram activities. He made ordinary women, simple housewives and daughters of the soil understand the importance of spirituality in shaping up a life of dignity for themselves. Guru has made them realize the importance of values and character in human life. It is a wealth he has bequeathed to them for also raising new generations of greater vitality.

His will to empower women spiritually is, as pointed out earlier, distinctively expressed in his grooming a lady disciple to be his successor.

#### Notes and References

1. Akka Mahadevi was born about 1150 A.D. at Udutadi, Shivamogga District of Karnataka state. She was beautiful and her *vachanas* or sayings are a poetic testament of response to the mystery of existence. She started from Udutadi in her youth, arrived at Kalyana and proceeded to the place of her last destination where she was united with Lord Mallikarjuna (Siva).
2. *Vedic Women: Loving, Learned, Lucky!* (Retrieved on 2006), 12-24.
3. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Ch. 1, Section 3, 28.
4. K.L. Kamat, *The Yellamma Cult*, Retrieved on 2006-12- 25.
5. Shail Sinha, "Mahatma Gandhi, a Crusader of Women's Equality," [www.ssinha.com/crusader.htm-7k](http://www.ssinha.com/crusader.htm-7k), 8 September 2006.
6. *Ibid.*

# DEVELOPMENT OF A HUMAN RIGHTS CONSCIOUSNESS

Jan Jarab\*

How do societies grow towards respecting human rights of all their members, and *do* they indeed? How do individuals grow towards respecting human rights of the other? And *do* they? And what are the interactions between societal and individual levels when it comes to human rights consciousness or awareness? I might not be in a position to provide any definitive answers to these questions, but I will at least try to tackle them as best I can.

Starting from the societal perspective, it might be argued that there are sufficient grounds for claiming that a narrative of *progress* has been taking place over the last few centuries and even over the last decades. Furthermore, I would argue that we can apply *an inter-group or even inter-individual approach* to this progress rather than one which follows merely the development of legal concepts and of different types of rights. Using that approach, I believe we can identify several key points on the aforementioned progressive journey:

- ***The abolition of slavery***, from the British abolitionist movement, started by the Quakers in the late 18th century, through the (short-lived) abolition of slavery by the French Revolution to the liberation from slavery of Afro-Americans in the USA and in Brazil. In his recent book *Bury the Chains*, Adam Hochschild identifies the British abolitionist movement of the 18th century as the first non-violent struggle by a group of people not for their own rights but for the rights of someone else - something that Gandhi would later do, as a matter of principle, for the 'untouchables', and as we now take for granted in all human rights activism. Until then, there had been protests, revolutions and rebellions, but virtually always for the freedom or rights of an entity identified by the protesters as 'us', against the one identified as 'them'. Indeed, as the Afro-American author Orlando Paterson points out in his book *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*, freedom and enjoyment of rights had for centuries required the existence of the non-free as a polar opposite. That was the case already in the old democracies of Athens and Rome where the freedom and rights were the privilege of male citizens as opposed to women and slaves.
- The second key development, in my view, is the society-wide recognition of the ***formal equality of women***, including their political rights - a process which stretches in general from the late 19th century to the mid-20th

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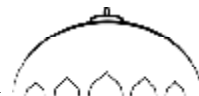
century, though in some places it has not been fully accomplished until now.

- The third stage in the progress of human rights awareness or consciousness is that which is *no longer content with formal equality but aims at effective equality of people who are demanding it* - equality in access to rights of whichever kind (civil, political, social etc.). This process can be linked to the development after World War II - to the General Declaration of Human Rights, to the process of de-colonisation (pioneered famously by India), and the challenging of everyday racial discrimination in the USA (where it was still in some aspects an issue of formal equality, but above all of effective access to rights formally granted) and in post-colonial states such as the United Kingdom (the Race Relations Act of 1967). This struggle for not merely formal but effective equality, against all discrimination based on otherness, is far from over.
- In the fourth stage, the rights of the *silent minorities* come to the fore, those of people who often lack a voice to demand their rights at all and who are indeed different from the rest either in terms of their legal status (prisoners, asylum seekers, irregular migrants - people whose rights are in various ways legitimately restricted), or else they are different de facto (children, the frail elderly or disabled, and finally the persons suffering from cognitive disorders and deficits such as dementia or mental illness or disability). Human rights of these vulnerable categories of people only become part of the general awareness once the more obviously political human rights problems which involve politically active classes of citizens are dealt with adequately. In this fourth stage, the emphasis is on *human dignity*, on respect for the individual as a fully human subject, not just an object of mechanical care. We can quote the reforms of care in residential institutions in many Western countries as an example of this development. This seems to be the pattern in societal development.

The progressive narrative could thus be read as one of increasing societal awareness, one during which societies and individuals become conscious

- first, that “others” have formally the same rights as we do;
- then, that those “others” who are in most respects like us need the same effective access to rights as we have;





- then, that those who are not like us in some respects deserve this effective access as well;
- and finally, that those who are in a particularly vulnerable position (and not like the decision-makers at all) require and deserve a higher level of protection precisely because of their vulnerability.

Is all this positive development a kind of an inexorable force of history, tied to political democracy and economic prosperity which eventually allows societies the luxury of devoting time and energy to the fates of the most vulnerable, most easily overlooked and stigmatised groups...?

Partly, perhaps. But we should be careful about stating that there is something inevitable about it. There is **resistance** to such a development, as exemplified by the unwillingness of China to grant equal rights to Tibetans, despite the considerable socio-economic progress which China had made over the last decades.

There are also **reversals** of what has already been achieved. Without mentioning the extreme example of Nazi Germany, coming after the liberal and democratic regime of the Weimar Republic, we can look at contemporary, less dramatic cases. Take for example Russia, where human rights questions are being interpreted as enemy propaganda and human rights NGOs 'subversive' or 'unpatriotic elements'. etc. We can also look, in this context, at the many repressive actions launched by democratic governments under the pretext of fighting against terrorism.

Finally, there is also the **individual dimension** of all these developments. Maintaining and developing a human rights awareness requires committed individuals who will not succumb to the temptation to violate human rights of others if there is a reversal on the part of the authorities.

In this context, psychologists often speculate on what makes individuals who are clearly cruel and sadistic, such as Stalin or Hitler, develop in the way they do. While no doubt fascinating from a psychopathological perspective, it is perhaps the less important issue at stake; such individuals have always existed and will always exist. What seems vital, however, is what makes completely normal average individuals respond to such aberrant leaders and tolerate their actions or even commit human rights violations under the influence of these leaders. They themselves would never have been motivated to resort to such actions in the first



place. Stanley Milgram demonstrated that normal freedom-loving Americans could be made to administer painful electric shocks to their fellow citizens when told so by a figure of authority, a scientist. The common denominator, he said, was eagerness to conform.

But is conformity always a bad thing? Few of us would disagree that if contemporary rules increasingly outlaw torture, racism and discrimination, conformity to such rules is desirable. Thus, ultimately, it is not so much the choice of 'being a conformist or not' but rather one of *what the individual chooses to conform to*. To an overriding imperative of human conscience, or to an ideology which tempts him to commit acts which he knows to be unethical? Or simply conforming to whatever seems to bring an immediate advantage...? We can personify these archetypes. Shall we conform to the ideals of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama, of Erasmus of Rotterdam who wanted (in the 16th century) to "be useful to the Frenchman and the German, the Czech, even the Turk"? Or shall we conform to the archetype of the dictators, the conquerors, the opportunists...?

The choice is ours and I believe there few of us who will never face it.

Ultimately, I would argue that the two processes are complementary, though different. The *positive-law build-up at the societal level, which is heavily dependent on the times, culture and context*, needs to be paralleled at an *individual level by a quest which is eternal and universal in nature*. Regardless of which continent, culture or century we are living in, and regardless of whether and how human rights are codified in law, **this is quest at once spiritual and thoroughly practical in its focus in the real life of human beings.**

# MEDICINAL PLANTS OF KERALA: RARITY AND CONSERVATION

Dr. Anil Kumar M. and Dr. Anish N.P.\*\*

## Abstract

*\*Dept. of Biotechnology, Navajyothisree Karunakara Guru Research Centre for Ayurveda and Siddha, Uzhavoor, Kottayam* gene banks, seed banks, *in vitro* gene banks and Cryo-banks are *ex situ* conservation centres. There are many centres for medicinal plant conservation in Kerala. Each one of us should consider the conservation of nature and natural resources as a 'life insurance' for future generations.

## Introduction

Biodiversity refers to the variability of life forms found on earth. It covers genetic variations among and within them and their complex ecological interactions. Biodiversity confers stability of the biosphere and overall health of the planet. It is an important biological resource and strength of a nation. Generally, this diversity is identified at three levels such as ecosystem, species and genetic biodiversity. India, one of the twelve megacentres of biodiversity is endowed with all the three types of diversities. Out of the eighteen globally identified "hot spots", two occur in India - the Western Ghats and the Northeastern Himalayas.

Kerala, because of its proximity to Western Ghats harbours an array of rare / endemic plants. The reasons for the high percentage of endemism in Western Ghats have been reported to be due to a multiple of physical, climatological and geological changes that have occurred during the evolution of the flora as well as the peninsular Indian region (Sastry and Sharma, 1991). Kerala lies along the southwest coast of India in an area of 38,864 sq. km. (1.8% of India). The total forest cover of the State is 10,336 sq. km, which forms 26.6% of the land area. Medicinal plants, an important biological resource of the State, offer a rich and diverse tradition to the people of Kerala in terms of health care practices. In addition to the species diversity of medicinal plants, significant intraspecific variabilities are also noticed which enhance the genotype as well as chemo type within the species. Hence, the flora of Kerala is an outstanding source of bioactive compounds. However, indiscriminate exploitation and various anthropogenic pressures lead to the depletion of this valuable gift of nature.

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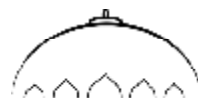
## Medicinal Plant Wealth of Kerala

Kerala, the land blessed with diverse agro-ecological conditions and undulating topography, favors the growth of diverse medicinal plants. The State has a rich tradition in health care systems that mainly depend on plants. Kerala's medicinal plant wealth has been extensively studied by several scholars and healers. One of the classical works in this respect was *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus* by Hendrik Adriaan Van Rheede (1678 - 1703). The content of the book is mainly taken from *Kerala Aramom* written by Itty Achuthan, a famous traditional physician of Kerala. The book contains illustrations of 742 medicinal plants used by the natives of Cochin, in the 17th century. The tradition of utilization of plants for curing diseases has been deeply rooted in the culture of Keralites. In addition to the enormous wealth of medicinal plants, the State has gained a vast indigenous knowledge of healing various ailments.

The total number of flowering plants of the State is reported to be as 4,679 taxa including intra-specific taxa, cultivated and exotic ones (Sasidharan, 2004). A state level checklist of medicinal plants was prepared by the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Tradition (FRLHT) and recorded 1864 wild medicinal species in Kerala. The habit-wise analysis of the medicinal plants of the State shows a majority of herbs (863 species), followed by trees (458), climbers (274) and shrubs (269) (Ravindran and Balachandran, 2005). Presence of many endemic medicinal species in the forests of Kerala has raised the importance of the plant wealth of the State. Several medicinal plants, critically endangered at the global level, are also met within the State. These include *Eulophia cullenii* (Wight) Blume, *Janakia arayalpathra* J. Joseph and V. Chandras, *Trichopus zeylanicus* Gaertn. ssp. *travancoricus* (Bedd) Brukill ex Narayanan, *Trichosanthes anaimalaiensis* Bedd., *Uleria salcifolia* Bedd. etc.

## Scope and Importance of Medicinal Plants

The value of medicinal plants to human livelihood is essentially innumerable. They make fundamental contributions to human health. A recent report of World Health Organization showed that 80 percent of the populations of developing countries rely on traditional medicines, mostly plant drugs, for their primary health care. Now-a-days, the herbal drug industry is developing at an alarming rate. This sudden growth in the commercial production of herbal drugs is due to the growing faith of the people in traditional medicine over modern medicine, especially due to lesser incidence of side effects as also to the realization of the necessity of adopting a 'greener' life style for a healthy living (Rajasekharan et al., 2005). Herbal



products are increasingly inspiring confidence in people who depend on them for curative drugs, health tonics and for food supplements.

Medicinal plants play an important role in the traditional health care activities of Kerala from time immemorial and so the state has a rich tradition of herbal drug remedies. Local health tradition of Kerala has been categorized into two: the Classical traditions (Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani), and the Oral traditions (Folk / Tribal medicines). Ayurveda is well developed and widely accepted in Kerala and the State is known as 'the land of Ayurveda'. The important components effectively utilized by the physicians of Ayurveda are drawn from medicinal plants. There are about 8000 herbal recipes codified in Ayurveda.

Plants synthesize a variety of biochemicals and can be used as chemical feed stocks or raw materials for various scientific investigations. Because of this quality, the use of medicinal plants is extended to modern medicine also. A number of plant- derived drugs or chemical intermediates for manufacturing modern drugs are obtained from plants. Being a cost-effective and easily available form of drugs, most of the therapeutic industries largely exploit plant wealth for sustaining the growing demand of natural drugs. Some of the useful plant-derived drugs include Vinblastin, Vincristine, Taxol, Camptothecin, Reserpine, Quinine, Nimbidine, Curcumin etc.

Everyone on the earth attains benefits from medicinal plants. Those who are financially most backward are typically most closely dependent on medicinal plants – for their use as medicine and as a source of income. Medicinal plants can provide a significant source of income for rural people, through the sale of raw drugs collected from the wild.

### **Threat to Medicinal Plants of Kerala**

Medicinal plants are living resources, exhaustible if overused and sustainable if used with care and wisdom. While, the demand for herbal drugs is growing globally, many of the herbs are increasingly being threatened in their natural habitat. About 95 percent of the raw materials for large-scale herbal preparation in pharmaceutical industries are collected from the wild and the rest through cultivation (Nambiar, 2002). Some of the medicinal plants over-exploited from the forests of Kerala are *Coscinium fenestratum*, *Centella asiatica* and *Garcinia gummi-gutta*. About 70 percent of the plant collections involve destructive harvesting because of the use of parts like roots (*Rauvolfia serpentina*), bark (*Holoptelia integrifolia*), stem (*Coscinium fenestratum*), and whole plant (*Trichosanthes cucumerina*). Ruthless and money-minded harvesting of medicinal plants has resulted in the rapid depletion of plant populations and there have been many studies highlighting this depletion of valuable genetic stocks from natural populations.

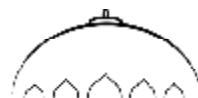


Generally, the reasons for threats to medicinal plants are similar to those causing depletion of plant diversity. Major factors for threat to the forests of Kerala are forest fire, cattle grazing, illicit felling, encroachments, unscientific collection of non-timber forest produce (NTFP), tourism and pilgrimage. The forests of Kerala are very rich in NTFP including medicinal plants and its collection is one of the major means of livelihood for local people. *Acorus calamus* L., *Alpina calcarata*, *Boerhavia diffusa*, *Callophyllum inophyllum*, *Helicteres isora*, *Mucuna pruriens*, *Piper longum* etc. are some of the medicinal plants included in the list of NTFP. In the case of most of the NTFP, the harvesting practices followed today are unfavorable to regeneration of the species and even cause destruction to the source plants (Muraleedharan et al., 1997). Another reason for over-exploitation of medicinal plants is the weakening of customary laws. Further, a vast, enigmatic and largely unregulated trade in medicinal plants continues to grow dramatically in the absence of serious policy attention with environmental planning.

Out of the 540 medicinal flowering plants in the forests of Kerala, 56 species come under 'rare and endangered' and 35 species under 'threatened' categories respectively (Ravindran and Balachandran, 2005). A Red List of medicinal plants of Kerala was tabulated based on the Red Data List of plants of South India prepared by FRLHT (Table 1).

**Table 1. Red List of Medicinal Plants of Kerala (FRLHT modified)**

| Sl. No. | Botanical Name (Family)  | Local Name          | Status |
|---------|--|---------------------|--------|
| 1       | <i>Acorus calamus</i> L. (Araceae)                                 | Vayambu             | VU/R   |
| 2       | <i>Adenia hondala</i> (Gaertn.) Wilde.<br>(Passifloraceae)         |                     | VU/R   |
| 3       | <i>Adatoda beddomei</i> C.B. Clarke<br>(Acanthaceae)               | Chittadalotakam     | CR/G   |
| 4       | <i>Aegle marmelos</i> (L.) Corr. (Rutaceae)                        | Kuvalam             | VU/R   |
| 5       | <i>Amorphophallus paeoniifolius</i> (Dennst.)<br>Nicols. (Araceae) | Kattuchena          | VU/R   |
| 6       | <i>Aristolochia tagala</i> Cham. (Aristolocaceae)                  | Valiyarayan         | VU/R   |
| 7       | <i>Artocarpus hirsutus</i> Lam. (Moraceae)                         | Angili              | VU/R   |
| 8       | <i>Baliospermum montanum</i> (Willd) Mull. Arg.<br>(Euphorbiaceae) | Danthi              | VU/R   |
| 9       | <i>Callophyllum apetalum</i> Willd. (Clusiaceae)                   | Cherupunna          | VU/G   |
| 10      | <i>Canarium strictum</i> Roxb. (Burseraceae)                       | Karuthakunthirikkam | VU/R   |

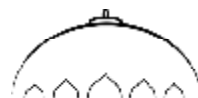


|    |   |                         |         |
|----|---|-------------------------|---------|
| 11 | <i>Cayratia pedata</i> (Lam.) Juss ex. Gagnepain<br>(Vitaceae)    |                         | CR/G    |
| 12 | <i>Celastrus paniculatus</i> Willd. (Celastraceae)                | Kilitheenipanji         | VU/R    |
| 13 | <i>Chonemorpha fragrans</i> (Moon) Alston.<br>(Apocynaceae)       | Perumkuruma             | EN/R    |
| 14 | <i>Cinnamomum macrocarpum</i> Hook. F<br>(Lauraceae)              | Yedana                  | VU/G    |
| 15 | <i>Cinnamomum sulphuratum</i> Nees.<br>(Lauraceae)                |                         | VU/R    |
| 16 | <i>Commiphora wightii</i> (Arn.) Bhandari.<br>(Burseraceae)       |                         | VU/R    |
| 17 | <i>Coscinium fenestratum</i> (Gaertn.) Coleb.<br>(Menispermaceae) | Maramanjai              | CR/G    |
| 18 | <i>Curcuma pseudomontana</i> Graham<br>(Zingiberaceae)            | Kuva                    | VU/G    |
| 19 | <i>Cycus circinalis</i> L. (Cycadaceae)                           | Kana/ Eenthu            | CR/R    |
| 20 | <i>Decalepis hamiltonii</i> Wight & Arn.<br>(Periplocaceae)       |                         | EN/G    |
| 21 | <i>Dipterocarpus indicus</i> Bedd. (Dipterocarpaceae)             |                         | EN/G    |
| 22 | <i>Drosera indica</i> L. (Droseraceae)                            |                         | LR-NT/G |
| 23 | <i>Drosera peltata</i> J. E. Sm.ex. Willd. (Droseraceae)          |                         | VU/R    |
| 24 | <i>Dysoxylum malabaricum</i> Bedd. ex. Hiem.<br>(Meliaceae)       | Vella akil              | EN/G    |
| 25 | <i>Embelia ribes</i> Burn. f. (Myrsinaceae)                       | Vizhal                  | LR-NT/G |
| 26 | <i>Eulophia cullenii</i> (Wight) Blume (Orchidaceae)              | Chilanthikee<br>zhangu  | CR/G    |
| 27 | <i>Garcinia gummi-gutta</i> (L.) Robson (Clusiaceae)              | Kudampuli               | VU/G    |
| 28 | <i>Garcinia morella</i> (GAERTN.) DESR. (Clusiaceae)              |                         | VU/R    |
| 29 | <i>Garcinia travancorica</i> Bedd. (Clusiaceae)                   |                         | CR/G    |
| 30 | <i>Gardenia gummifera</i> L.F. (Rubiaceae)                        |                         | LR-NT/G |
| 31 | <i>Gloriosa superba</i> L. (Liliaceae)                            | Menthonii               | LR-NT/R |
| 32 | <i>Glycosmis macrocarpa</i> Wight (Rutaceae)                      |                         | LR-NT/G |
| 33 | <i>Hedychium coronarium</i> J. Koenig.<br>(Zingiberaceae)         | Kalyanasauga<br>ndhikam | LR-NT/R |
| 34 | <i>Heliotropium keralense</i> Sivar. & Manilal<br>(Boraginaceae)  |                         | EN/G    |



- |   |                 |         |
|---|-----------------|---------|
| 35 <i>Helminthostachys zeylanicus</i> (L.) Hook.<br>(Helminthostachyaecae)  | Pazhutharakkali | EN/R    |
| 36 <i>Heracleum candolleanum</i> Gamble<br>(Apiaceae)                       | Chittelam       | VU/G    |
| 37 <i>Holostemma ada-kodien</i> Schult<br>(Asclepiadaceae)                  | Adapathiyan     | VU/G    |
| 38 <i>Hydnocarpus pentandra</i> (Buch.-Ham.) Oken.<br>(Flacourtiaceae)      | Marotti         | VU/G    |
| 39 <i>Janakia arayalpathra</i> J. Joseph and<br>V. Chandras (Periplocaceae) | Amruthpala      | CR/G    |
| 40 <i>Kaempferia galanga</i> L. (Zingiberaceae)                             | Kacholam        | CR/R    |
| 41 <i>Knema attenuata</i> (Hook.f. & Thoms.) Warb.<br>(Myristicaceae)       | Chorapine       | LR-NT/G |
| 42 <i>Madhuca longifolia</i> (Koenig.) Macbr.<br>(Sapotaceae)               | Elippa          | EN/R    |
| 43 <i>Mappia foetida</i> Miers. (Icacinaceae)                               | Pinari          | VU/R    |
| 44 <i>Michelia champaca</i> L. (Magnoliaceae)                               | Chempakam       | VU/R    |
| 45 <i>Myristica dactyloides</i> Gaertn. (Myristicaceae)                     |                 | VU/R    |
| 46 <i>Myristica malabarica</i> Lam. (Myristicaceae)                         | Ponnampoo       | VU/R    |
| 47 <i>Nervilia aragoana</i> Gaud. (Orchidaceae)                             | Orilathamara    | EN/R    |
| 48 <i>Nilgirianthus ciliatus</i> (Nees) Bremek.<br>(Acanthaceae)            |                 | EN/G    |
| 49 <i>Operculina turpethum</i> (L.) Silva Manso.<br>(Convolvulaceae)        | Thrikolpakonna  | LR-NT/R |
| 50 <i>Oroxylum indicum</i> (L.) Benth. ex. Kurz.<br>(Bignoniaceae)          | Payyazhantha    | VU/R    |
| 51 <i>Paphiopedilum druryi</i> (Bedd.) Pfitz.<br>(Orchidaceae)              |                 | CR/G    |
| 52 <i>Persea macrantha</i> (Nees.) Kosterm.<br>(Lauraceae)                  | Ooravu          | EN/R    |
| 53 <i>Piper barberi</i> Gamble (Piperaceae)                                 |                 | CR/G    |
| 54 <i>Piper longum</i> L. (Piperaceae)                                      | Thippalli       | LR-NT/R |
| 55 <i>Piper mullesua</i> Buch. –Ham. ex. D.Don.<br>(Piperaceae)             |                 | VU/R    |
| 56 <i>Piper hapnium</i> Buch. –Ham. ex. Hook. f.<br>(Piperaceae)            |                 | CR      |





|    |  |                     |         |
|----|--|---------------------|---------|
| 57 | <i>Piper silentvalleyensis</i> Ravindran et al.<br>(Piperaceae)  |                     | CR/EX   |
| 58 | <i>Piper wightii</i> Miq. (Piperaceae)   |                     | CR      |
| 59 | <i>Piper schmidtii</i> Hook. f. (Piperaceae)   |                     | CR      |
| 60 | <i>Piper nigrum</i> L. (Piperaceae)  | Kurumulaku          | VU/G    |
| 61 | <i>Plectranthus nilgherricuss</i> Benth.<br>(Lamiaceae)  | VU/G                |         |
| 62 | <i>Pseudarthria viscida</i> (L.) Wight and Arn.<br>(Fabaceae)  | Moovila             | LR-NT/R |
| 63 | <i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> L. f. (Fabaceae)   | Rakthacha<br>ndanam | EN/G    |
| 64 | <i>Rauvolfia serpentina</i> (L.) Benth. ex. Kurz.<br>(Apocynaceae)                                       | Sarpagandhi         | EN/R    |
| 65 | <i>Rhaphidophora pertusa</i> (Roxb.) Schott.<br>(Araceae)  | Elithandan          | VU/R    |
| 66 | <i>Salacia reticulata</i> Wight (Hippocrateaceae)  |                     | CR/EX   |
| 67 | <i>Santalum album</i> L. (Santalaceae)   | Chandanam           | EN/R    |
| 68 | <i>Saraca asoca</i> (Roxb.) de Wild. (Fabaceae)  | Asokam              | EN/R    |
| 69 | <i>Semecarpus travancorica</i> Bedd. (Anacardiaceae)<br>EN/G   |                     |         |
| 70 | <i>Smilax zeylanica</i> L. (Smilacaceae)   | Karyilanchi         | VU/R    |
| 71 | <i>Symplocos cochinchinensis</i> (Lour.) Moore.<br>(Symplocaceae)  | Pachotti            | LR-NT/R |
| 72 | <i>Terminalia arjuna</i> (Roxb. ex. DC.) Wight & Arn.<br>(Combretaceae)                                  | Arjuna              | LR-NT/R |
| 73 | <i>Trichopus zeylanicus</i> Gaertn. ssp. travancoricus<br>(Bedd.) Brukill ex Narayanan (Trichopodiaceae) | Arogyappacha        | CR/G    |
| 74 | <i>Trichosanthes anaimalaiensis</i> Bedd.<br>(Cucurbitaceae)   |                     | CR/G    |
| 75 | <i>Uleria salcifolia</i> Bedd. (Periplocaceae)   | Mahalikizhangu      | CR/G    |
| 76 | <i>Vateria indica</i> L. (Dipterocarpaceae)  | Vellapine           | LR-NT/G |

(CR – Critically Endangered. EX – Extinct. EN – Endangered. LR – Low Risk.  
NT – Near Threatened. G – Globally. R – Regionally. VU - Vulnerable.)



### **Conservation Approaches**

As per the definition of world conservation strategy, conservation is “the management of human use of biodiversity so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to the present generation while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations”. The special significance of medicinal plant conservation is due to its very valuable contribution to health care, income generation and all other benefits to human life. In the present scenario, conservation and sustainable utilization of medicinal plants is a matter of serious discussion all over the world. The two widely accepted scientific approaches for conservation of biodiversity are the *in situ* and *ex situ* methods.

### ***In situ* Conservation**

*In situ* conservation constitutes the best way of biodiversity conservation. According to de Vicente et al (2006), *in situ* (=on site) conservation is the maintenance of plant population in the habitats where they naturally occur and evolved. National parks, wild life sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, sacred groves and other protected areas are the centres of *in situ* conservation. In Kerala, the *in situ* conservation is achieved through 3 national parks, 11 wild life sanctuaries, and a part of a biosphere reserve – the Nilgiri. Besides these conservation areas, the FRLHT, Bangalore, in association with the Department of Forest, Kerala, launched nine Medicinal Plant Conservation Areas (MPCAs) in the State during 1994-2000. These MPCAs cover an area of 2208 ha. at different localities having species richness, variety of forest types, altitude range, soil type, rainfall regimes etc. Out of the 1864 medicinal plants recorded from Kerala, 832 have been recorded in the network of 9 MPCAs (Ravikumar et al., 2005).

Kerala has a tradition of planting and protecting plants like banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis*), peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) and bel (*Aegle marmelos*) considered as sacred. As part of religious belief, the premises of the temples are kept undisturbed and considered as sacred groves. More than 1500 sacred groves have been identified in the State and they serve as ‘micro conservation’ areas. The size of the groves ranges from small patches of one cent to 20 ha. A new species of Leguminosae, *Kunstleria keralensis* has been reported from one of the sacred groves of Kerala. Moreover, four rare species *Blepharistemma membranifolia*, *Buchanania lanceolata*, *Pterospermum reticulatum* and *Syzygium travancoricum* have been discovered surviving in the sacred groves of Kerala.



### ***Ex situ* Conservation**

Conservation of biological diversity away from the natural habitat is in man-made structures. Field gene banks, seed banks, *in vitro* gene banks and cryo banks are instances for *ex situ* conservation centers. The storage of plant genetic resources as seed in seed banks is the most widely applied method. Other methods include maintenance of plants in the field, in-field gene banks, as *in vitro* culture in *in vitro* gene banks and immersion of tissues, embryos, or seeds in liquid nitrogen (cryo banks). A well- established gene bank of medicinal and aromatic plants in Kerala is developed by Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Thiruvananthapuram. Here the *ex situ* conservation is achieved through field gene bank, seed bank, *in vitro* and cryo bank. Another notable gene bank exclusively for the conservation of Ayurvedic medicinal plants is the Centre for Medicinal Plant Research (CMPR), Kottakkal. In addition, Indian Institute of Spice Research (IISR), Calicut, Kerala Agriculture University, Botanic Gardens of Universities, NGOs and private organizations are some of the medicinal plant germplasm conservatories of the State.

### **Social Relevance**

Conservation of plant wealth was practised in Kerala even in the ancient times. As a part of Hindu worship sacred groves have been maintained in many families unknowingly paving the way for the conservation of medicinally important plants. Many endangered and vulnerable species of plants have been found in these protected areas. Mighty trees growing in those areas had stayed on and had been even worshipped. Many temples have such groves, maintained as a part of 'Sarpakkavu' (snake shrine). In short the plants of medicinal value were being protected by associating them with worship or myth. As we know, many villagers and all tribals in Kerala depend on herbs even now for the immediate cure of ailments. These people utilize such plants for the cure of headache, stomach problems, bleeding, snake bite, wounds etc. But unfortunately the availability of such plants in our rural areas as well as in the forest areas has decreased due to urbanization and unplanned development. It is advisable to conserve at least such medicinally important plants in the homestead gardens.

### **Conclusion**

Medicinal plants play an important role in our day- to- day life and the demand on natural drugs is progressing in the global arena. Nature provides us a natural pharmacy for curing and preventing ailments with medicinal plants. But due to indiscriminate exploitation and lack of awareness on the part of humans, the valuable plant wealth is getting depleted fast. The loss of genotypes of medicinal plants



and the non-availability of raw drugs would detrimentally affect the quality and efficacy of medicines of traditional health care systems and accordingly their credibility. Very urgent and crucial steps need to be taken for conserving the precious gifts of nature. Everyone in the world should consider the conservation of natural resources as a 'life insurance' for future generations.

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## SOME OF THE PROBLEMS IN CONTROLLING AIDS

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Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Tuberculosis and Malaria account for about 5 million deaths a year and this is roughly half of all deaths due to infectious diseases. An estimated 40 million people are today living with AIDS and over 20 million people have died since the first report of the disease in 1981. It is estimated that every day about 15000 people, mainly young adults become infected with AIDS.

This disease is considered to be of recent origin and was first reported in USA in 1981 in Los Angeles, New York and San Fransisco among homosexuals. AIDS results from infection with the Human Immuno Deficiency Virus –I (HIV-I). In fact AIDS in humans is best written as HIV/AIDS. As is now well known, the virus got the name because it causes immunodeficiency in the affected persons.<sup>1</sup>

Though of recent origin, already quite a lot of information is available about the virus and the disease caused by it. HIV–I is a retro virus and it is known to cause infection only in humans. The only animal in which the virus is known to replicate is the chimpanzee. The absence of a good laboratory model which can be used for the multiplication of HIV-I is one among the major limitations in the slow progress in the development of drugs and vaccines to combat HIV/AIDS.

On 24 June 2001 the United Nations General Assembly declared HIV/AIDS to be a global emergency. Member States agreed to meet new targets for HIV prevention and cure. These included a 25 per cent reduction in infection rates among 15-24 year olds and the most affected countries by 2005 and globally by 2010 and 20 percent reduction in the number of infants infected with HIV by 2005. This remained a dream, but surely some progress has been achieved;<sup>2</sup> there is an observed fall in the rate of infection.<sup>3</sup>

Diagnosis of AIDS includes evidence for infection with HIV-I (presence of antibodies or virus in blood), diminished number of CD4T cells (<200 cells/cmm), impaired hypersensitivity reactions and the occurrence of opportunistic infections. Generally HIV infected individuals lose the ability to mount T cell responses in a predictable sequence. This aspect needs detailed investigation in countries like India which are known to have many tropical diseases at endemic levels. It is a well established fact that many tropical pathogens remain active in the host by

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suppressing their immune response by lowering the T cell population. The influence of these facts in HIV/AIDS infection remains to be clearly understood.<sup>4</sup>

An effective drug against HIV/AIDS is also something that remains to be achieved. Anti retroviral therapy is common and there are reports about its misuse, a common complaint heard in HIV /AIDS meetings. The drug known so far cannot cure AIDS but can prolong the life of patients through the twin approach of anti- retroviral therapy and treatment for opportunistic infections. It is reported that several Ayurvedic and Siddha formulations prepared on the traditional basis in India can prolong the life of viral infections such as HIV/AIDS. This is true in the case of vaccine development also. Many attempts have been made and only promising preparations are available. Even now we read about preparations which are on trial. The lack of expected progress in the development of specific drugs and vaccines is mainly due to the variation that is observed in virus causing HIV/AIDS.<sup>5</sup>

A large number of different patterns of HIV-I infection have been identified. These patterns reflect particular geographical and genetic profiles of viral spread. For example HIV-I sub type B is the common form of virus in North America and Western Europe. India in contrast is under threat from HIV-I sub type C. In Africa where nearly two-third of all those with HIV infection now live, the situation is more diverse. There are also a dozen virus variants called circulating recombinant forms whose genome lie in between those of known subtypes; worse still, a given subtype of the virus does not stay the same. This means the possibility for mutation is always there<sup>6</sup> and the condition causing such mutations have to be understood.<sup>7</sup>

It is not clear whether each subtype and every variant will need its own specific vaccine or not. Even the transcriptase (reverse transcriptase enzyme is associated with the intact virus particle causing AIDS) against which the modern drugs are claimed to act, is changing, causing a difference in the primary structure of the enzyme. The difference among the different virus samples became known simply because of the fact that the genome sequence of AIDS causing virus is completely understood.<sup>8</sup>

Until a clear breakthrough is achieved in the nature of variations observed in the AIDS- causing virus the only reliable method of protection is to stay away from this pandemic problem by following scrupulously the well- known preventive measures. Both governmental and non-governmental agencies are vying with one another in spreading the preventive measures to control the AIDS infection.



Prevention is said to be very effective when based on the magic formula of A B C which is actually Abstinence from sex, Being faithful and using Condoms. Use of microbicides provides added protection because HIV/AIDS can also be considered a sexually transmitted disorder. This sounds very easy, but in practice there are lots of problems in its implementation. An effective drug means one which is capable of targeting a site in the virus which is not subject to mutation. Similarly an effective vaccine is one that is capable of eliciting immune response capable of blocking infection by sexual transmission and also from mother to child transmission.<sup>9</sup>

It may also be necessary to be capable of stimulating humoral immune response for effective neutralization of free virus particles as well as cellular immune responses which destroy virus-infected cells.

Latest reports indicate that AIDS is on the decline in USA and in Western Europe where the disease was reported earlier. However it is on the rise in many developing and under-developed countries including India. As indicated earlier the role of tropical diseases prevalent in the later countries in the rapid rise of AIDS infection remains to be understood.

HIV/AIDS is certainly a dangerous problem and the fear appears to be due to the lack of an effective drug or vaccine and the information that once infected, death is certain. However basic research is being continued even now in many laboratories, though the current emphasis is on preventive measures. Already there is encouraging news from a small but growing number of people who have been reportedly exposed to HIV but have remained uninfected. They have even elicited anti- HIV immune response that could explain natural resistance against HIV. Secondly there are now several candidate vaccines that have protected monkeys from infection caused by the Simian immuno deficiency virus (SIV) which causes AIDS-like infection in monkeys. Lastly vaccines have been successfully developed over the years against several viral infections such as mumps, rubella, polio, hepatitis and rota virus and hence one can look forward to a brighter future, getting rid of the fear psychosis spread around.

Let us look forward to develop methods in such a manner that the virus which causes AIDS is clearly understood. Let us, then, use the present day knowledge of virus control as also the relatively untapped indigenous systems of medical practice meaningfully, so that this pandemic problem of HIV/AIDS infection is contained and ultimately eradicated.



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## BOOK REVIEW

Dr. N.A. Mujumdar\*

***Gandhian Way: Peace, Non-violence and Empowerment, Edited by Anand Sharma, Indian National Congress, Academic Foundation, New Delhi, 2007, 320pp.***

Mahatma Gandhi started the Satyagraha movement – “the firmness of the force of truth”- on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1906 and to commemorate the centenary of the movement, the Indian National Congress convened an International Conference on “Peace, Non-violence and Empowerment Gandhian Philosophy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, in New Delhi on 29-30 January 2007. That the appeal of the Mahatma is universal is reflected in the fact that delegates from 91 countries and 129 organizations participated in the Conference. Countries included, small and big, developed and developing and countries from the former communist block. The list of participants is an admirable mix: political leaders of all hues, philosophers, leaders of civil society organizations, and Nobel Laureates. The proceedings of the Conference have been now published in a beautifully printed Volume of 320 pages. The volume has been interspersed with historical photographs of the Mahatma. It is indeed an intellectual treat to browse through this carefully edited Volume and no social scientist can afford to miss this book. It transports us to an altogether different world from the usual dry and doctrinaire discourses on development.

The volume is divided into five sections: Section I - Gandhian Philosophy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; Section II- A Nonviolent Approach to Conflict Resolution and Peace Building; Section III – Gandhian Philosophy for Poverty Eradication, Education and People’s Empowerment; Section IV – Dialogue among People and Cultures; and Section V – Towards a Nuclear Weapons-free and Non-Violent World Order. The theme of the Volume is so eclectic that, obviously it would not be possible to do justice to it if we attempt to cover the whole subject in this brief review. Instead, the review seeks to focus on Section III on poverty and related economic issues. A distinguished participant in the Conference emphasises: “I am struck by the enormous range of relevance that Gandhi’s life as well as his writings have for us in the political world today” (p. 105); and one would like to add ‘economic world’. In a way the whole attempt of the Conference was, as C.K. Prahalad puts it appropriately to “re-contextualise Gandhi for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (p. 155).

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The uniqueness of the Mahatma was that not only was he obsessed with the objective of eradicating poverty but also that he opted voluntarily to live poverty, as it were. To quote Rabindranath Tagore: "He stopped at the threshold of huts of the thousands of dispossessed, dressed like one of their own. He spoke to them in their own language. Here was living truth at last, and not only quotation from books. For this reason the Mahatma, the name given to him by the people of India, is his real name" (p. 185). Perhaps this experience enabled him to view poverty in a macro socio-economic perspective, instead of treating it as merely statistics of assessing the number of people below the poverty line (BPL), as we are now accustomed. Bhikhu Parekh has admirably encapsulated the poverty profile, as sketched by the Mahatma in the following paragraph.

"Secondly poverty dehumanises human beings, wastes the potential and deprives their lives of all sense of meaning and purpose. It is one of the worst forms of violence that human beings can commit against other human beings. It is as bad as killing, and even worse for the fact that it is silent, slow and invisible, arouses no anger, and is outside the purview of anyone's direct responsibility. As long as even one person is starved, is malnourished or lacks decent housing, the social order stands indicted and lacking. Basic human needs have the first claim on Society's resources, and it has an obligation to arrange its economic affairs in a manner that the needs of all its members are met" (p. 140).

The guidelines for development policy formulation were given by the Mahatma himself: "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore to him a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away." (Statement made in August 1947, quoted on p. 141).

Judged by these twin criteria, how does our performance in the area of development fare? Far from satisfactory. To quote Prahalad again: "Actually, today, in India, there are more poor people than the entire population of India in 1930. That is a reality that we have to confront" (P. 156). This is the situation after we have completed ten Five Year Development Plans! The policy environment seems to have particularly worsened since the 1990s, after the liberalisation of the Indian economy and the introduction of concomitant economic reforms. The policy makers seem to have shown neither the passion for reducing poverty nor the compassion



to the poor. This is because one of the by-products of reforms has been the intoxication of the Indian policy makers with the undiluted market theology of the IMF and the World Bank. One hopes that the present Volume will have a detoxifying effect on such policy makers.

Two examples can be cited in support of the above statement. first, in respect of foodgrains management policy, what is disturbing is that India which is the abode of the largest number of chronically underfed and undernourished persons in the world, exported a huge quantity of 27 million tonnes of foodgrains during the three consecutive years, 2001-02 to 2003-04.<sup>1</sup> This was the result of two regressive measures taken earlier: first, the Government introduced in 1997, targeting the public distribution system (PDS) in the form of Targeted PDS or TPDS. "Thus, the narrow targeting of the PDS based on absolute income poverty, is likely to have excluded a large part of the nutritionally vulnerable population from the PDS".<sup>2</sup> Second, due to the continuous raising of the issue prices of foodgrains the concessionally priced foodgrains became increasingly inaccessible to the poor. Cereal prices, in real terms, rose by 33.2 per cent between 1996-91 and 1999-2000. The inevitable consequence was the mounting foodgrains stocks with the Food Corporation of India (FCI). No wonder our policy makers saw a soft option in exports for tackling the issue of the so-called 'surplus foodgrains'. This was nothing short of development atrocity. The irony was further compounded: while our objective in taking the two regressive measures mentioned above was to reduce subsidies for domestic consumption of foodgrains, the same policy makers did not have any qualms about subsidising exports of our foodgrains!<sup>3</sup> If the Mahatma were alive, perhaps, one could speculate, there would have been a satyagraha against such mindless pursuit of flawed foodgrains management policy.

The second example pertains to the current controversy surrounding Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The insensitiveness with which farmers are being alienated from the lands they are cultivating, for establishing SEZs, is, at least in some cases, appalling. The Nandigram episode leaves a bitter taste in the mouth. Contrast this with the Mahatma's approach. When Birla set up a mill in the princely state of Gwalior, the Government obtained the land for him without paying adequate compensation to its poor owners. Gandhi pursued the matter with him in a series of letters and told him to drop the project rather than harm the just and legitimate interests of the poor (p. 143). The present day policy makers would do well to carefully read this Volume.

In the name of economic reforms, there were other policy mistakes committed: the flow of credit to agriculture declined sharply and a large number of small



farmers were thrown out of the banking system and an inequitable interest rate structure biased against the small borrowers and in favour of the private corporate sector emerged.<sup>3</sup> The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently conceded in its Report that “to compensate for sub-BPLR lending other segments are charged higher rates of interest, thus leading to cross subsidisation of the economically well-off borrowers by economically poor borrowers”.<sup>4</sup>

While the record in the areas of food security, employment and financial engineering is quite disappointing, there is much to celebrate in terms of empowerment of the poor. Edward Samuel Miliband of Britain pays compliments to India for her progress in education and decentralisation of political power: “We strongly admire the lead shown by India with Primary Education for All Programme – *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*” (p. 170). He also makes a reference to programmes of educating of street children in metropolitan centers. But Marianne Mikko exhorts India to go a step forward: “Finland has been emphasizing technical education for some decades now. As a result, the majority of us present here today probably have Nokia cell phones in our pockets. Thinking ahead, even before the goals of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* are achieved, new goals must be set. In most of Europe, only primary education is compulsory. But, most countries regard secondary education as a norm. I am sure India will also set this goal for itself. India should set itself a goal of getting the local talent to flourish so that they can rival any talent in the world” (p. 188).

Reverting to Miliband: “I think what Gandhi taught us was that extraordinary things could be achieved if the power is in the right hands. That is why India, I think, is to be congratulated on the integration of the *panchayat raj* system of local government in which there are now three million elected members and one million of them are women. I think this is the largest representation of women at elected level in the world” (p. 170).

Muhammad Yunus asserts that “Mahatma Gandhi’s life and example have influenced not just the history of our subcontinent but indeed of the values of modern civilisation. At the United Nations, the world had united in the year 2000 to adopt the Millennium Development Goals which aimed to reduce extreme poverty by half before 2015” (p. 35). Yunus’ main contribution is in the sphere of finance. He argues that the existing financial institutions have systematically excluded the poor from financial services and this amounts to financial apartheid. “What the Grameen Bank has sought to do over the 30 years since its inception is to provide financial services to the very poor on terms that are suited to them” (p. 36). Micro credit has thus emerged as an important institution which contributes



in a significant way to poverty reduction. Globally, nearly, 100 million of the world's poorest have now been reached with microcredit. The recent emphasis that Indian policy makers have placed on expansion of microcredit institutions perhaps reflects a response to this movement.

Market phobia does not disappear so easily, however. Once of the methods recommended by C.K. Prahalad for implementing Gandhi's message in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is: "Allow the market to allocate resources in a transparent fashion such that resource-use is constrained. Eliminating energy subsidies, pricing water appropriately ...." (p. 159). Let me take up the pricing of water issue. Traditionally, World Bank has been advocating privatisation and pricing of water as a solution to water scarcity. It had to retreat from this position because empirical experience has shown that water pricing "operates on the perverse principle that the poorer you are the more it costs".<sup>5</sup> The Human Development Report 2006, affirms that access to safe and affordable water supply should be considered as a basic human right. Government should therefore ensure that all citizens have access to a minimum of 20 liters of clean water per day and those who cannot afford to pay get it free. In India we should treat water security on par with food security. We need not be shy of subsidies because after all subsidization is a characteristic of a civilized society.<sup>6</sup>

Happily, on the eve of the Eleventh Plan all this is changing. Indian policy makers seem to have gone through a process of intellectual transformation to realise that moving away from undiluted market theology is essential to ensure that the development content of growth does not wither away. The Eleventh Plan itself is based on a strategy of inclusive growth in the real sector. Rural Employment Guarantee scheme is the best that could have happened to the rural poor. On its part, Reserve Bank of India is pursuing the policy of financial inclusion. Already, 100 percent financial inclusion is achieved in 28 districts and in Puducherry microcredit institutions are being actively promoted. The quantum of credit flow to agriculture doubled during the three year period 2004-07. While the change in the approach to development - administrators at the Centre, States and the Panchayat Raj institutions, leaders of the co-operative movement, educationalists, health care experts, NGOs - would greatly benefit from going through this Volume. In fact Indian social scientists should address the task of evolving a native development discourse, as contra-distinguished from imported growth models; and the present Volume provides ample material on which to build such a discourse.



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### NAVA JYOTHISRI KARUNAKARA GURU

Nava Jyothi Sri Karunakara Guru was born in a humble family “Chittekkad House” at Chandiroor Village, Cherthala in Alappuzha district of Kerala, India on the 1st September 1927. He spent his childhood in his maternal home because his father died when he was a tiny baby. As the *Guru* did not have normal speech, he was not sent to school. From the age of nine, the boy began to play and talk like a normal child and joined a country school. The mother got remarried around this time and *Guru* had to go and stay in her new house. The stepfather was a drunkard and the child found it unbearable. At the age of 14, he left home and joined Advaita Ashram, Aluva, a branch of Sivagiri Mutt founded by Sri Narayana Guru. He spent 17 years with Sivagiri.

Around the age of 25, he met a Muslim Fakir Khureishi, who became his spiritual preceptor. Many secret doors of spirituality were thrown open to the young disciple and he had spiritual experiences in abundance. In the year 1957, the *Guru* bade farewell to Sivagiri and shifted to a hut on a piece of land donated by a well wisher near Sivagiri itself. While at Sivagiri people used to call the *Guru* as Karunakaran *Santhi*. The word *Santhi* means peace as it also stands for the one who performs *pooja* -worship. The word *giri* stands for mountain. Thus, the *giri* -mountain- to where Karunakaran *Santhi* had shifted, became Santhigiri. Now *Guru*’s abode truly signifies ‘the mountain of peace,’ place where people come, seeking directions to solve their material, emotional and spiritual problems.

Gradually, people thronged at the new abode of *Guru* in Varkala. Some of them who got close to *Guru* started receiving visions of deities -saints, *devas*, etc., These manifestations revealed the cause of, and remedies for, the ills of people coming to *Guru* for solutions. The predictions proved right, but for a brief period. Subsequently they started going wrong. There were protracted protests from some evil minded people. They had even contemplated to initiate criminal proceedings against the *Guru*, who, till then, a worshipper of deities of the pantheon -Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva’s stage- was full of anguish. He went on a fast and meditated, seeking the truth of the situation. The Light made contact with the disciples and gave direction to *Guru* to move away and to stay out of people’s sight. The disciples were reminded of the directions to chant the sacred words revealed earlier apparently eulogizing the *Guru* by name. Since he had promptly proscribed this as his name was in it, they had no other way but to recite it in privacy.

The *Guru* was thereafter guided by the Light to overcome great obstacles with a strong will and great perseverance. Many rigorous austerities had to be performed for the final stage of *Guru*’s realization, *Poortheekaranam* in 1973. In his lifetime, the *Guru* spent long hours talking to individuals and groups of people trying to make them understand the direct spiritual path. To the last moment of his life on earth plane, he expressed his compassion like this and merged with the Supreme on Thursday, May 6th 1999. The physical body of the *Guru* is laid to rest in the *Parnasala* -abode of the *Guru*. This day is celebrated as *Nava Oli Jyothir Dinam* -the day of the emergence of the New Light. As received by revelations by some of the *Guru*’s disciples, his name changed from *Brahmasri Karunakara Guru*, to *Nava Jyothi Sri Karunakara Guru* -Karunakara, the Spiritual Master of the Supreme New Light.



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