

Shree Nisargadatta Samadhi Charitable Trust, Mumbai

श्री निसर्गदत्त समाधी चॅरिटेबल ट्रस्ट, मुंबई द्वारा प्रकाशित त्रैमासिक

NISARGAVANI

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ZERO EVERYTHING IS NOTHING

श्री सद्गुरु रणजित महाराज



दिसणारे जग खरे मानल्यामुळेच मन तुमच्यावर राज्य करते,
जगत म्हणजे जे गेलेले आहे. म्हणजे जे नाहीच ते! तुम्ही काही तरी
होऊनच कर्म करता, स्वतःला काहीच मानले नाही तर!!
तेच अज्ञान अख्ख्या जगाला टेकू आहे... मनाचा!!

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Appeal for Articles

As any journal depends on articles from potential writers, we appeal all of you to send in articles to us. Self-Knowledge is beyond all religions, caste and creed. Remembering this aspect Nisargavaani will contain wide range of topics not only related to the Self-Knowledge expounded by Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj specifically but also Self-Knowledge teachings of various saints, experiences related to the practice of their methods, biographies, teachings, experiences related to the practice of methods taught by other spiritual masters, teachings and stories from religions other than Hinduism, interpretations of sacred texts and verses, spiritual travel and insights, poetry and of course feedback from our worthy readers. We firmly believe that Spirituality is in itself has a wide and diverse covering aspects.

Suggestions

As a guideline, we request that as far as possible articles should be short (say around 750 words), medium (around 1500 words) or in longer format (around 2300 words).

Please send in your contributions through e-mail to
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EDITORIAL

Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Jiddu Krishnamurti

For centuries, the Indian spiritual tradition has largely appeared filled with external rituals, worldly observances, and concepts related to God. Yet, at the very heart of that tradition are a few luminous centres that transcend all religious frameworks and emphasise the *direct experience* of inner truth. In the twentieth century, two such radiant centres shine the brightest: **Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj** and **Shri Jiddu Krishnamurti**. One – a small beedi-shop owner from Mumbai, living in an almost dilapidated neighbourhood, a simple man in appearance; The other – shaped within a global organisation, a world citizen studying philosophy, psychology, education, and human consciousness at an international level. In background, language, context, and external tradition, they could not be more different. Yet the centre of their wisdom is the same – **recognising one's true nature and freeing oneself from the veils of mental imagination.**

The similarity in their teachings is not merely verbal; it is experiential. This experience is that of *ego-free observation* and the *immediate awakening to one's true nature*. Both emphasise that truth is not a matter of doctrine, sect, or philosophical structure – rather, it is something to be directly seen.

If we dive deeply into their teachings, we begin to notice subtle threads of similarity – in their language, orientation, method, and spiritual essence. This similarity is not of external philosophy, but of the *vibration, directness, experiential call*, and the *quest for the Self* at the core of their teachings. The most striking similarity between Krishnamurti and Nisargadatta is that both present truth as *an experience*, not an idea.

Krishnamurti repeatedly says that a mind trapped in the structure of thought can never understand truth.

Nisargadatta says, **“Beyond the experience of your being, what else can you learn? Feel the ‘I Am’, and then know.”**

Both refuse to give the seeker any new beliefs. Both insist: *Drop beliefs. Look directly. Experience. Know yourself.* Krishnamurti does not associate himself with any religious tradition. Nisargadatta calls himself an Advaitin and uses the language of Vedanta. Even though Krishnamurti rejects Vedanta, **the essence of his insights matches the highest Vedantic experience.**

Nisargadatta says: *“You are the Absolute.”*

Krishnamurti says: *“When there is no centre, there is freedom.”*

The language differs, but the experience is one – **the uninterrupted awakening to one’s true nature.**

Both emphasise the same spiritual method – **pure observation.**

Krishnamurti says: *“Observe without the observer.”*

Nisargadatta says: *“Stay with the sense of ‘I Am’ as the pure witness.”*

For both, observation is the axis of liberation. In such observation there is: no judgement, no choice, no effort. It is unconditional – **spontaneous.**

In this seeing, the idea of *“I am the one who sees”* dissolves, leaving only pure awareness. Both warn that knowledge, books, and philosophy belong to the mental realm. Useful, yes – but incapable of touching truth.

Krishnamurti says: *“Knowledge is an accumulation of memory and hence not living.”*

Nisargadatta says: “*Words are not the truth. They are the finger; truth is the moon.*”

Both use words only to take us **beyond** words. Both have offered the same insight into the root cause of suffering.

Krishnamurti explains suffering as arising from: desire, failure, comparison, fear, memory, and self-image.

Nisargadatta points to its root as the ego and the belief that one is separate from the universe.

Different descriptions – but they meet at a single point: **The division between ‘Self’ and ‘world’ is imaginary. When this is seen, suffering ends.**

Krishnamurti speaks of *choiceless awareness*.

Nisargadatta speaks of *unceasing abidance in the Self*.

Both point to the same destination – a steady, peaceful, luminous presence without choice or division.

Krishnamurti calls love *a state of being*. Nisargadatta calls it *all-pervasiveness*.

Both affirm that love contains no ‘I’, no fear, and that it blossoms only in freedom. In their definitions of love, the ego has no place.

Krishnamurti says effort generates tension. Nisargadatta says effort is the movement of ego.

Both emphasise – **awakening is not achieved through effort but through effort-free observation.**

Krishnamurti gives complete independence to the seeker – no obligation, no authority.

Nisargadatta says the disciple must dive into personal experience, not merely the Guru’s words. Yet, both ultimately honour **freedom of inquiry**.

Both lived extremely simple lives – no desire for fame, followers, institutions, or power. Their authenticity was so strong that even a simple word spoken in their presence carried depth. Thus, both secured

a unique place in the history of human consciousness. Their teachings may differ in language or cultural context, but at the centre of their experience shines the same light.

In summary, let us revisit some core principles found in both teachings:

- Truth is direct and immediate.
- Ego is only an idea.
- Observation brings freedom.
- Love is the absence of 'me'.
- Presence is the doorway to truth.
- The Guru is not outside; the Guru is direct experience.
- Freedom comes by seeing through the confusion of thought.
- Fear ends when understood at its root.
- Truth belongs to no doctrine.
- Liberation is not effort-based; it is the grace that blossoms from effortless awareness.

Studying the teachings of these two great sages reveals that **Advaita may speak in different languages, but its experience is one** – to free human consciousness from bondage and reveal its own true nature.

Happy New Year to all of you !!

Front cover Design: Bharatbhai Shimpi, Jalgaon

The birth anniversary of Sadguru Shri Ranjit Maharaj, disciple of Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj of Inchgiri sect and close Gurubandhu of Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj, was celebrated recently on 4th January. Greetings to this great saint from Nisargavani family! To commemorate the occasion, Guru Bhakta dear friend Shri Bharat Shimpi designed a beautiful front cover page as a tribute to Shri Ranjit Maharaj for this 3rd Nisargavani quarterly e-magazine being published in the new year 2026.



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Nisargavaani

निसर्गवाणी

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निसर्गबानी

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“Shrirang”... The Divine Within

Revered saint Shri Ranjit Maharaj

N*ath Sampradya*’ has a centuries long tradition, say since around 12th century, and yet so consistent that it is existing till today through the various branches of Advaita teachings and firm Guru-Shishya tradition of various saints and sages. Very famous out of these is the “*Nimbargi Sampradaya*” established by Sadguru Shri Nimbargi alias Gurulinga Jangam Maharaj. Nimbargi Sampradaya established in 1857 is still flourishing through its various spiritual centres, in India as well as abroad.

True to the prayer of Saint Gyaneshwar...

“आता विश्वात्मके देवो”

... the foundation stone of Natha Sampradaya are rational principles that the God exists in everyone’s heart and may likely that this very universal kind of philosophy attracted many, irrespective of caste, creed, economic status, occupation, gender and age.

After the *mahaNirvana* of Sadguru Shri Nimbargi Maharaj, his close disciple Shri Bhausahab Maharaj of Umde carried further the flame of spirituality through presently popularly known as Inchgeri Sampradaya. Many revered Self-realized saints who were primarily initiated by Sadguru Shri Bhausahab Maharaj have taken the tradition further ahead after the *mahaNirvana* of Shri Bhausahab Maharaj. To name a few, Sadguru Shri Amburao Maharaj, Sadguru Prof. Gurudev Rambhau Ranade, Sadguru Shivalingvakka, Sadguru Shri

Siddharameshwar Maharaj, Sadguru Shri Girimalleshwar Maharaj, Sadguru Shri Chimmad Maharaj, Sadguru Shri Kotnis Maharaj and so on.

Sadguru Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj, through his long penance realized that though there are two ways to Self-realize viz. the bird's way and the ant's way for Self-realization, it would be better to choose Bird's way as the *Mantra* initiation by the master and its regular hours of long chanting may take comparatively a long way for the Self-understanding. Many may find it hard to devote major time out of their busy life daily. It will be worth noticing that as per the discipline of Nimbargi Sampradaya, Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj initiated all his disciples. However, while preaching the *Bhakti Marga*, he emphasized more on *Gyan Marga* i.e. the Path of Knowledge for attaining Self-Realization.

After the *mahaNirvana* of Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj in the year 1936, many of his disciples took ahead the flame of Self-Knowledge teachings. Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj, Shri Kadsiddheshwar Swami, Shri Balkrishna Maharaj, Shri Ranajit Maharaj, Shri Ganapatrao Kannur Maharaj, Shri Vilasanand Maharaj and so many others expounded the Self Knowledge through their discourses to the large masses in and outside the country. On the commemoration of 112th Jayanti of Shri Ranajit Maharaj, I would like to bring briefly his teachings through this article.

In the year 1924, at the tender age of twelve, Shri Ranajit Maharaj met his mentor Sadguru Shri Siddharameshwar Maharaj in Mumbai. Born to a Gujrati family, Shri Ranajit Maharaj was well versed with Gujarati as well as Marathi, Hindi and English languages. He remained a permanent bachelor throughout his life living very simple life of a common Mumbaikar. Almost six decades he remained like a staunch 'Sadhaka' though he attained Self-realization and was capable of spreading the teachings of the Inchgiri Sampradaya as a 'Guru' (Master). I remember clearly that during the special sampradaya festivals celebrated by Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj along with his disciples, Nisargadatta Maharaj used to request, rather affectionately force Shri Ranajit Maharaj present on that occasion, to give a discourse for the audience. Few

such discourses were noted down by me and I always found them at par with the discourses of Sadguru Nisargadatta Maharaj. It was his sheer simplicity and very nature that prevented him to pose himself as a Master. So, the case was with another brother-disciple Shri Bhainath Maharaj. I adore and salute these great Masters for their exemplary simplicity. Shri Ranjit Maharaj in his typical slightly 'Gujarati- mixed-Marathi' pronunciations used to expound Self- knowledge teachings in a very simple way citing day-to-day examples piercing straight through your heart.

Whenever I remember these two masters, a thought comes to my mind that Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj use to speak in fluent Marathi whereas being Gujarati by birth, Shri Ranjit Maharaj used to speak not so fluent Marathi. Occasionally besides a word or two, Nisargadatta Maharaj was not conversant with English language and used to depend on the assistance of an interpreter. Whereas Shri Ranjit Maharaj used to converse in fluent English with his disciples. After publication of the book "I Am That" which created history amongst the westerners, there were many offers and suggestions to Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj to deliver lectures on foreign land, though which could not materialize. But it is a proud moment that Sadguru Shri Ranjit Maharaj visited a few European countries like France, Germany, Spain and delivered discourses. I quote below his words for the benefit of the readers.

Sadguru Shri Ranjit Maharaj:

(Discourse:18/4/2000 – Hanuman Jayanti/Foundation ceremony of Dahisar Math Samadhi Mandir, Mumbai)

It's Nisargadatta Maharaj Samadhi today and his birth (centenary) also is today !! But today!! Birth and Samadhi (*Nirvana*) is illusionary. Illusion should be discarded. *Gurubodha* is a must. "I am not the Body"...what Guru preaches? ..Purity of *Chitta* requires. Do not attempt to purify the Mind. But purify *Chitta*. It is the nature of our Mind... to engage in good or bad thoughts. You acquire knowledge when *Chitta* becomes pure. 'I am Atman'...you realize this

knowledge. Without Guru, you never realize the knowledge. How is Guru? No Ego! First Guru! without Him knowledge cannot be understood. Without Chitta Shuddhi, it is not complete. They (Gurus) are abundant in the world. There are giant names. But Sadguru marries whoa?. Marry means to choose...married with Parmatman !! To recognize Parmatman is the sign of good fortune. (He quotes from the morning prayers...

सद्गुरु भेटले हो..फळले भाग्य माझे !!

(I met Sadguru...my fortune prospered).

Totally surrender to your Sadguru.

You have only worries about welfare of your family. Therefore, think. You will not understand if you do not think. What if you kindle up where there is darkness (ignorance)? Same thing happens when you acquire knowledge. Without bliss of Guru, nothing will happen. Without Sadguru you will understand nothing. It is (the Knowledge) the footing of everything. Get rid of your ego to understand foundation. The son of a King can become a King. Same is with the one who surrenders to the Sadguru. Guru appoints the disciple, then the disciple drives the vehicle. It is like that. You, me, are one only. But not so, as long as the body exists. ..only after we discard the body form. Ego surfaces when Guru is forgotten. Guru is the mother. Concepts are there as long as the body is there. When the body is left, everything is one only ! Only one God in everybody. ..in a thief as also in a swindler. Nisargadatta was the foundation of all. 'I am' pervades in all, everything pervades in me.

The mind rules over you because you believe the visible world to be real. *Jagat*...means what is gone...means what is not! You do karma by becoming something. What if you don't assume of yourself as something!! That ignorance is the pivot of the whole world...of the mind!! The Mind means 'say'.

Everything has happened because of your saying. Just drop saying. Selfness – The night of Self itself is Shivaratri. Birth and death, sin and virtue, happiness and sorrow...all are ideas. They are, because you say so.

You do everything knowingly. One does not seek a guru without knowing. With knowledge only you understand a thought. Without knowledge can anyone think? Knowledge means knowing, understanding. He is close to it but he does not realize it. Hence it is called *Guhya Jnana* (secret knowledge). A mosquito...it also has knowledge...knowledge how to bite!! Knowledge is filled in everyone. There is only one, there is no second!!... The Vedas say. Does knowledge sprout horns? Everything looks the same! One understands, one doesn't!! What is needed to do *Paramartha* (spiritual practice)? The meaning of saints is this... the body is made of five elements. I am the sixth, and in it is the knowledge!! The one who ends that sixth is called a saint. That knowledge is also false, says Samarth. The nature of knowledge is to show something that is nothing! Knowledge is ignorance. One is a brother, and the same one says, "He is my husband." What did the saints say? Secret knowledge manifests in the people. Our benefit, knowing who we are, is the ultimate benefit. Does anyone say, "I am the embodiment of knowledge"? She says, "She is my wife!" Oh! A statue of knowledge! She rules the world!! Saints openly expound knowledge. You are the father of knowledge. Knowledge is originated from you. Knowledge is false.

After his *mahaNirvana* in the year 2000, disciples of Sadguru Shri Ranjit Mahraj have erected his samadhi mandir at Banganga, Walkeshwar. Recently his 25th anniversary was celebrated on a grand scale.

– Anil Chube, Thane
9819214661



The Prologue Narrative (*Pūrvārambha-Gāthā*)

In the previous quarterly issue, we adage a brief biography of **Shri Hansraj Swami**. Beginning with this issue of *Nisargavaani*, we shall now commence a systematic study of the literary works of Shri Hansraj Swami. As the first step, we shall begin with a study of Shri Hansraj Swami's prose exposition on Samarth Ramdas Swami's spiritual treatise *Pūrvārambha*. Hansraj Swami's commentary is in prose, and it offers us a significant example of the prose style prevalent in the Marathwada region during the first half of the nineteenth century.

"*Pūrvārambha*" a chapter composed by Samarth Ramdas Swami, is extremely concise yet profoundly enchanting. Regarding this work, **Shri Shankar Krishna Dev**, a scholar recorded his opinion in the following striking words: "A wise man should, in truth, not read this chapter at all – for it is sure to drive him mad. Whoever wishes to remain sane until the end of his life and to die in that state of sanity, should not tread the path of this chapter."

Shri Hansraj Swami wrote commentaries on two works of Samarth Shri Ramdas: **Sanket Kubadi** which presents the essence of the *Dasbodh* and the **prose commentary on the chapter Pūrvārambha**.

Almost all of Hansraj Swami's writings are composed in verse (*Ovi*). Only two of his works – *Tattvazhada* and *Pūrvārambha-Gāthā* – are in prose. Perhaps because they were in prose, these works remained unpublished for a very long time. Among them, *Pūrvārambha-Gāthā* was eventually published through the initiative of **Dr. G. V. Karandikar**, for which we owe him our sincere gratitude.

The chapter authored by Samartha Ramdas swami is titled “Pūrvārambha.” Hansraj Swami himself did not explicitly give a title to his prose commentary. However, in the biographical work **Hansapaddhati**, written by his disciples, we find the following reference: “*The Purvārambha composed by Samartha – upon that, a Gatha was expanded.*”(Hansapaddhati 7.8.30). On the basis of this reference, the Hansraj Swami tradition adopted the name “Pūrvārambha-Gatha.” Strictly speaking, a *Gatha* is usually a poetic composition, but the word *Gatha* itself is derived from the root meaning “a textual work” or “a compendium.” Therefore, it is quite appropriate even for this prose treatise to bear that name.

This is a very brief chapter by Samartha consisting of only sixty verses, yet it contains a very high order of the philosophical teachings. Samartha Ramdas swami presents teachings in the form of questions-answers format – a dialogue between the guru and the disciple, as is found in most of his works. This method makes it possible to convey the profound truths of Vedanta in a simple and accessible manner. In this work too it is seen that Samartha has followed the same pattern.

Through these dialogues, Samartha explains how a disciple who begins with the inquiry ‘*Ko ‘ham?*’ – ‘Who am I?’ – progresses toward the experiential knowledge of ‘*Soham*’ – ‘I am That.’ In the course of these dialogues, it is shown that in the company of saints (*Satsang*) one is freed from the cycles of worldly existence, and that it is by inner reflection and deep contemplation – rather than by mere external actions one attains communion with the Divine. All this becomes possible only by surrendering oneself to the Sadguru.

Initially explaining the fundamental yet essential questions – who is to be called a Sadguru, who is a true disciple, and who is a qualified seeker – the Sadguru goes further on to describing to the disciple the nature of the Self. He tells him that the Self is the source and controller of all beings, that it lies beyond the entire visible universe, and that it is all-pervading. He explains that the universe exists in the Self as a superimposition (*vivarta*), and yet the Self pervades it completely.

He further expounds that in order to realize this; one must bring the oscillations of the mind to an end and become one with the Self through

complete self-surrender. Finally, the text concludes by affirming that more than scriptural learning, it is the grace of the Sadguru and the seeker's own inner discipline and reflection that truly matter.

Although Hansraj Swami's commentary closely follows the original text, it is not merely a word-by-word exposition. He presents an independent interpretation of the chapter from his own perspective. According to him, verses 1 to 15 form the introductory section, which deals with the fourfold prerequisites (*anubandha-chatuṣṭaya*), the characteristics of the Sadguru, the disciple's possession of the fourfold spiritual qualifications (*sādhana-chatuṣṭaya*), and his faith in and yearning for knowledge. This is followed by the Sadguru's instruction in spiritual wisdom. Hansraj Swami holds that Samarth Ramdas has made provision in this text for seekers of all levels – advanced, intermediate, and all beginners. In the sixteenth verse, by directing the entire assembly to reflect on the question 'Who am I?', the disciple is urged to recognise his own *Brahman*-nature. For a seeker endowed with sharp spiritual insight, this instruction alone is sufficient.

As regards verses seventeen to thirty-seven, they are intended for the moderately advanced seeker endowed with keen intelligence. In these, the disciple's mistaken notions about the nature of the Self are removed, and the essential characteristics of the Self – *sat* (existence), *chit* (consciousness) and *Ananda* (bliss) – are firmly established. The doctrines of *ārambha* (creation by origination), *pariṇāma* (transformation), and *vivarta* (apparent manifestation) in relation to the creation of the universe are then explained, and it is shown how the theory of vivarta alone accords with Advaita Vedanta. Thereafter, guidance is given on how, through complete self-surrender (*ātmanivedana*), one attains non-dual fulfilment.

In the verses forty-three to fifty-six, the nature of the Self is explained through the method of *anvaya-vyatireka* (concomitance and negation), and the corresponding twofold practice to be undertaken is prescribed. On the basis of the final four verses, it is specified that liberation cannot be attained merely through verbal or scriptural knowledge, but the grace of the Sadguru is indispensable. With this, the text concludes.

In this way, Shri Hansraj Swami sets forth his Vedāntic position in this subtle work. As in his other writings, the two divisions of *reflection* and *spiritual practice* are evident here as well. Just as crystals, whether small or large, each possesses the same inner clarity and structure, so too can said about the works of Shri Hansraj Swami.

Shri Pūrvārambha-Gatha

*A Prose Exposition on Samarth Ramdas Swami's "Pūrvārambha"
by Shri Hansraj Swami*

As mentioned above, the title *Pūrvārambha-Gatha* for this commentary is mentioned in *Hansapaddhati*, the biographical work on Shri Hansraj Swami. The text also records that this work was composed at the Samadhi site of Shri Kalyan Swami at Domgaon, as stated in the verse: 'The *Pūrvārambha* composed by Samarth – upon that, a *Gatha* was expanded' (*Hansapaddhati* 7.830). So far, only a single manuscript of this commentary has been found which is preserved at the **Shri Samarth Vagdevata Temple, Dhule**. Apart from its spiritual value, this work is of linguistic importance as an example of Marathi prose from the Marathwada region dating back over a hundred years.

In the volume titled *Laghukāvyē*, published by the **Satkāryottejak Sabha**, this chapter was included for the first time at the very beginning. As mentioned above that Shri Nanasaheb Dev in his preface alerts in a witty manner that a wise man should truly not read this chapter which may drive him mad and he may remain sane till his death.

On such an extraordinary and mind-intoxicating little chapter, this expansive and incisive commentary is composed by the Brahman-abiding (self-realised) Hansraj Swami, who himself was intoxicated with the quest for Self-realisation. The opportunity to present this commentary in the service of devotees of Shri Samarth, has arisen because the Satkāryottejak Sabha has kindly consented to publish this work from its collection. For this, both the Satkāryottejak Sabha and the Shri Samarth Vagdevata Temple have rendered a valuable service to the readers.

|| Salutations to Shri Ram Samarth ||

जय जय जी सदगुरु गोसावी । मज जें जें आठवेल जीवीं ॥ तें तें पुसेन, फेडावी । आशंका माझी ॥ १ ॥
*(Jai Jai Jai Sadguru Gosavi! Whatever stirs within my heart and mind,
 I lay it all at Your sacred feet – Dissolve, O Master, every doubt of
 mine. ||1||)*

शिष्य बोले लडिवाळपणें । म्या संसार घेतला कोण्या गुणें । मज हें दुःख भोगणें । किंनिमित्त घडलें
 ॥ २ ॥

(The disciple pleads in tender surrender: “By what strange fate did I fall into this world? Why am I made to bear this weight of sorrow? For what hidden cause has this suffering arisen?” ||2||)

विषयलोभें, भगवंता । नेणोनि, जालासी दुश्चिंता । तेणें गुणें मागुता । आलासी जन्मा ॥ ३ ॥

(“Through craving for fleeting pleasures, O Lord, Unaware of the Truth, you strayed into confusion; By the force of these tendencies, You were drawn once more into birth.” ||3||)

तरी हा जन्म कैसा तुटे । मज भगवंत कैसा भेटे । भवसागरू वोहटे । कोण्या गुणें दातारा ॥ ४ ॥

(“Then how shall this birth be brought to an end? How shall I behold the Lord? By what grace, O Giver of all, May I cross this ocean of worldly existence?” ||4||)

Commentary – Keeping in view the disciple’s longing – ‘When will my birth end? When shall I meet the Lord? And when will this ocean of worldly existence come to an end?’ – the Master answers these three questions in three corresponding ways, each in terms of cause and effect.

जन्म तुटे संतसंगें । देव भेटे अंतरंगें । हृद भक्तीचेनि योगें । भवसिंधु आटे ॥ ५ ॥

(“Through the company of saints, birth comes to an end; Through inner devotion, God is found. By the power of steadfast bhakti, the ocean of worldly existence dries up.” ||5||)

Commentary – Just as the disciple’s question is essentially one though expressed in three ways, so too the remedy is one though stated in three forms. Thus, it is said that birth is cut off through the company of

saints. Since birth and death are of one nature, death is not mentioned separately. Therefore, without *Satsang* (holy company), no other means can bring an end to the cycle of birth and death. Hence, one must cultivate the company of the saints.

God is met within the inner being. To 'meet' means direct, immediate realisation (*aparoksha sākshātkāra*) – that is, to become God oneself. It does not mean merely seeing God as an object of vision. That is why earlier it was said that one does not truly know God. For God must be known. If God were merely visible, what would be the purpose of knowing? Therefore, God is not something fit merely for visual perception. One must know Him and become That. This alone is realisation; this alone is true meeting. And the means to this lies within, in the inner being. This is not attained by outward or strenuous effort. It is to be attained only inwardly – that is, through *sravaṇa* (listening), *manana* (reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (deep contemplation). Therefore, one should practise listening and reflection.

Sravaṇa means hearing from the mouth of the Sadguru, without doubt, 'Who am I?' and 'Who is God?', until the firm conviction arises: 'I am Brahman.'

Manana means that when doubts and false reasonings arise, they are to be refuted by enquiry until one remains established in Brahman alone.

Nididhyāsana means single-pointed, continuous abidance in 'That'. This alone is the true inner path."

Through steadfast devotion the ocean of worldly existence dries up. *Bhakti* means oneness. There should not be even the slightest separation between the goal and the seeker, the object of meditation and the meditator, the worshipped and the worshipper. The 'ocean of becoming' is nothing but the sense of difference – 'you', 'I', 'this', and so on. It is steadfast devotion alone that destroys this sense of separateness. Therefore, one must abide in indivisible oneness. Such is the intent.

Understanding all this within himself, the disciple now proceeds to ask about the means of steadfast devotion.

दृढभक्ती करू कैसेी । काय धरावें मानसीं । सांगा स्वामी अज्ञानासी । मार्ग कांहीं ॥ ६ ॥

(How shall I cultivate steadfast devotion? What should I hold within my heart? O Master, show me the way – I who am lost in ignorance.”

||6||)

Commentary – ‘O Master, O Sadguru, show the path to me, the ignorant one – so that I may know how to practise steadfast devotion. What should the inner being hold in order to attain this devotion? Please tell me this out of compassion.’

Having heard this prayer, the question arises: ‘How is steadfast devotion to be practised?’ However, since the true nature of such devotion cannot be fully grasped at this stage, the revered Sadguru instead explains the means – the practical method – by which steadfast devotion is attained.

(...To be continued)

– Dr. Dheeraj Sarvadnya
Beed, Marathwada



Which is as poison in the beginning, but is like nectar
in the end; that is declared to be “good” pleasure,
born from the serenity of one’s own mind.

That which is like nectar in the beginning from the
connection of the sense-object with the senses,
but is as poison in the end, is held to be of “passion”.

– Bhagavad Gita

Inner Reflections

|| *Om Shri Krishnaḥ Sharaṇam Mamah* ||
|| *Shri Tuljāi Prasanna* ||

The mind is a mysterious and unfathomable cave. To enter anyone's mind is extremely difficult – let alone be our own. Very often, we do not even know what lies hidden deep within us, or what may suddenly rise to the surface. Even in ordinary household situations, people casually say, “*I will do it if my mind agrees.*” Such is the nature of the mind. Like a playful, mischievous child, it keeps running here and there. To hold it steady in one place is indeed a great challenge.

Yet, the study of this mind is taking place everywhere. No matter how sharp one's intellect or how vast one's knowledge, the mind often overpowers them all. Once it flares up, nothing and no one can stand before it. Where does this ‘mind’ reside? Where exactly is its place within the body? Has any doctor ever seen it while performing a heart surgery? The answer, of course, is a definite “No.”

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Lord declares, “*Kama eṣa krodha eṣa...*” – it is desire and anger that arise from the mind; the mind is their very seat. “*Indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ*” – the mind is superior to the senses. Therefore, unless we work on the mind, neither spiritual progress nor any meaningful achievement is possible. While this is stated in the Third Chapter, in the Sixth Chapter the Lord says, “*Manasā indriya-grāmaṁ viniyamyā*” – one must restrain the entire group of senses through the mind; “*Ātma-sarīsthaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā*” – fixing the mind in the Self. Thus, when the restless and unstable mind is brought to

stillness, the yogi becomes “*praśānta-manasaḥ*” – one of tranquil mind – and attains supreme happiness. Further in the same chapter, Arjuna asks: “*Chañchalam hi manaḥ Kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavaddṛḍham*” – “O Krishna, the mind is indeed restless, turbulent, strong and stubborn; to control it seems to me as difficult as restraining the wind.”

The Lord immediately replies: “*Māno durnigrahaṁ chalam...*” ... yes, the mind is difficult to control, but it can be mastered through practice (*abhyāsa*) and detachment (*vairāgya*). Again, in the Eighth Verse of the Twelfth Chapter, the Lord instructs: “*Mayyeva mana ādhatsva*” – fix your mind in ‘Me’ – thereby describing the state of the steadfast, enlightened being (*sthita-prajña*).

The importance of working upon the mind has been repeatedly emphasised throughout the entire *Gita*. Likewise, Shri Ādi Shankaracharya, the ancient rishis and sages and many other great predecessors have clearly declared: “*Mana eva manuṣyānām kāraṇam bandha-mokṣayoḥ*” – the mind alone is the cause of both bondage and liberation. In the eighteenth chapter of the *Gita*, the Lord states unambiguously: “*Indriyānām manaś chāsmi*” – among the senses, the mind is My divine manifestation.

From birth till death, it is the mind that presents the panorama of life to a human being. It even makes the intellect dance to its tune. In the world of literature too, much has been said about the mind:

“*The mind cannot understand itself,*” “*If your mind is pure, it is more precious than the earth,*” “*We have recognised the subtle signs of the mind,*” “*O fickle, sinful mind,*” “*The mind is coloured in the hue of Rama,*” and countless other expressions. The emotional poetry of lovers too revolves endlessly around the mind. Yet there is an amusing paradox here. The original word for “mind” is *manas*, and in Sanskrit grammar it is neuter in gender (*napuṁsaka-līṅga*). Isn’t that curious? This restless, never-still, never-peaceful mind – which makes even the greatest of great souls’ chase after it and struggle to master it – is, grammatically speaking, a neuter noun!

Our saints and great spiritual masters worked deeply upon this mind. Saint Eknath, Saint Dnyaneshwar, Saint Tukaram, Saint Namdev and so many others held intimate dialogues with the mind itself.

Samarth Ramdas Swami, in particular, directly instructs the mind in his *Dasbodh*. In his compact yet profound psychological treatise *Manobodh*, consisting of 205 verses, offers powerful guidance for the mind. If each verse is studied properly and the wisdom therein implanted deeply into one's consciousness, human life would be elevated to a far higher level. But who really pays attention? The ordinary person finds contentment in living a merely animal-like existence – eating, drinking, and seeking pleasure. It does not strike him that one gets human birth so that he must strive for his inner growth.

At such times one feels compelled to cry out, “O Lord, how wastefully are we squandering the tremendous power of mind that has been bestowed upon us!” Beyond material comforts, worldly life, and possessions, we rarely think of anything superior. We never pause to take account of all that God has already given us – two eyes, ears, the senses of smell, hands and feet, intelligence – indeed, an entire healthy and capable body. Because of which, we live a comfortable and beautiful life. Yet it seldom occurs to us that the true beauty of life lies in using all these gifts to realise ‘You’, to attain You. O Lord, forgive us. Lead us onto the right path.

We only complain. We keep weeping over the difficulties and sufferings that come our way. But instead, why not follow the *Manobodh* composed by Samarth Ramdas? In this article, let us reflect upon just one of its verses:

जनीं सर्वं सुखी असा कोण आहे। विचारें मना तूची शोधुन पाहे ॥
मना त्वांचि रे पूर्व संचित केले। तया सारखे भोगणें प्राप्त जाले ॥ ११ ॥

“Who in this world is always happy? O mind, search and see for yourself. It is you alone who created your past store of actions; accordingly, you now experience their results.”

Generally, we keep lamenting over what we do not have and eventually remain immersed in sorrow. Like the tender compassion of a mother, Samarth gently explains to us: “My child, can you find even one person in this world who is completely happy? Think about it and search for yourself.”

Here we see Samarth's keen observation of society and his deep reflection. He himself provides the answer in the very next line – “*Vichāre manā...*” – only one who is thoughtful, who studies the scriptures and lives accordingly, is truly happy. O mind, reflect, study the sacred teachings, and inquire. You will find that only the discerning are truly content. Because through scriptural understanding, they know what real happiness is – and therefore they remain peaceful and fulfilled.

In the next two lines, Samarth admonishes the mind like a father: “O mind, O human being, according to your accumulated past actions, you now witness their consequences.”

There are three kinds of karma: *prārabdha* (destined karma), *sañchita* (accumulated karma), and *kriyamāṇa* (current actions). Whatever deeds one performs in previous lives or in the earlier phases of this life, he is compelled to experience their consequences. Samarth conveys this truth with a gentle yet firm tap, urging us to look within: examine which of your own actions are standing in your way. Reflect on what you must do in order to attain true happiness, and build the foundation of your life accordingly.

Like a bee or a butterfly, how long will you keep flitting from one flower to another – that is, chasing one sense-object after another? Think! When bees and butterflies move from flower to flower, they fulfil their natural role: pollen sticks to their feet, joins with other pollen and new flowers and fruits are born. But what does a human being gain by running after objects of pleasure? Only self-destruction. All these saints compassionately show us what is truly good for us – but alas, our own destiny obstructs!

So, I conclude with a prayer to the Lord: may we always be blessed with the company of saints.

– Asavari,
Mumbai



The Supreme Duty of Human Life

Shri Samarth Siddharameshwar Maharaj ki Jai

Shri Samarth Nisargadatta Maharaj ki Jai

Shri Samarth Ganpatrao Maharaj ki Jai

The supreme duty of human life is to attain Self-knowledge (*Ātma-jñāna*). In *Shrimad Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Krishna declares: “Without Self-knowledge, O Partha, all actions are ultimately meaningless.” In this world, three things are exceedingly rare: 1) Human birth (*Manushyatvam*) 2) The intense longing for liberation (*Mumukshutvam*) 3) The company and guidance of a realized Master (*MahāPurusha-saṁśrayaḥ*): Even after getting all the three, if one does not strive for Self-realisation and attain liberation in this very life (*Jīvanmukti*), it is akin to committing spiritual suicide – a tragic waste of this precious opportunity. Saint Samarth Ramdas Swami profoundly expounded this very truth in the *Shri Dasbodha*, in the Eighth Section (Vision of the Self) of the Eighth Chapter (The Chapter on Knowledge) where he reveals the path of Self-realisation with great clarity and depth.

The central purpose of the spiritual journey is Self-realisation – the direct vision of one’s own true nature and ultimately, to become established as the Self itself. Self-realisation is not a matter of belief or imagination; it is a direct meeting with the Reality.

Samarth Ramdas Swami explains this truth in great depth: *The Supreme Being is none other than you yourself*. He describes the nature of that Supreme Reality thus: It is without birth and without death. It

neither comes nor goes. Bondage and liberation do not apply to it. It is formless and without attributes, eternal and ever-present, infinite and boundless, beyond the reach of logic and conceptual thought. Samarth Ramdas Swami seeks to awaken this understanding in the seeker's heart – that you yourself are the Supreme Reality. When this truth becomes firmly rooted within, one attains unbroken contentment, perfect peace, and ceaseless joy.

Who, in truth, is the Supreme Reality? That which transcends space, time, and all boundaries – ever whole, non-dual, supporting all yet resting on nothing, untouched, and forever fresh and new. They affirm with quiet certainty: Supreme Reality is none other than you yourself.

Among the five elements, the space is considered the subtlest and most vast. Hence the Self is often compared to the sky. However, even this comparison also falls short. 'Space' suggests emptiness, a void – whereas the Self is not a void, but fullness itself. The Self admits of no comparison, for there is nothing else like it. It is therefore called the incomparable. It is unseen, beyond the senses, unmanifest and hidden. And so, Samarth Ramdas Swami points the seeker inward, saying: "*Reveal what is hidden, achieve what seems impossible, understand the most subtle, with patience and quiet attention.*" Thus, the path is not one of outward seeking, but of gently uncovering what has always been present within.

To attain this, one must take unreserved refuge in a *Shrotriya, Brahmanishtha Sadguru* – a Master who is both rooted in scriptural wisdom and firmly established in Truth – and listen with deep attention to his living guidance. For the one who holds the Guru's teachings in the heart, alone he is truly qualified for liberation. Without surrendering to a Sadguru – the one who reveals the Reality as it is – there is no means of crossing beyond ignorance. Therefore, first and foremost, one must take hold of the Guru's feet, and then practise the path exactly as he directs.

There are two broad approaches to spiritual practice.

(1) Traditional or gradual path, known as the *Pipilikā Mārga* – the "ant's path." Like the slow movement of an ant, this path progresses step

by step and is very gradual. Through this approach, Self-realisation does not come quickly.

(2) Direct path, also called the *Vihangama Mārga* – the “path of the bird,” which rises straight into the sky in a single, powerful flight. The direct path has four stages: *Śravaṇa* (listening to the Truth), *Manana* (reflecting upon it), *Nididhyāsana* (deep contemplative abidance), and *Sākṣātkāra* (direct realisation).

Together these are known as the *Sādhanā-chatuṣṭaya* – the fourfold means. The first three are the practices, while the fourth is the ultimate goal. This path is swift and penetrating; those who walk on it with sincerity and intensity, can attain Self-realisation in the shortest possible time.

In the same spirit, the ancient saying declares: *All salutations to whatever deity they are offered, ultimately flow to the One – Keshava.* This means that since one Brahman alone pervades all, we too are that Brahman – the Self. Therefore, rather than seeking the Supreme in countless outer forms, it is far simpler to seek It within oneself.

And yet, why does this appear so difficult? Because the seeker separates himself from what he seeks and then tries to search for the Self as though it were an object. In doing so, the very search becomes impossible. The Self is free of all duality – it is beyond the triad of knower, knowing, and known. If we try to find it through this divided framework, it can never be realised. As long as the “seeker” remains the sense of being a separate individual, the “I”-notion, ignorance and ego, the truth that *“I myself am the Self”* cannot dawn. The Self is beyond the triple division: there is no seer, no seeing, and nothing seen – *only indivisible Being.* So long as a knower remains, Self-realisation cannot occur.

As Samarth says, *“Few are those who truly surrender themselves.”* And for such devotees, Self-realisation comes swiftly and naturally.

To begin with, one must inquire, “Who am I?” Only through this inquiry can the formless Supreme Reality be truly recognised. God and the devotee are one. That means, a true devotee is one who is not separate from God; for where separation remains, God and the devotee

can never be one. When the very source of both God and the devotee is traced, it becomes evident that God and the devotee are one and the same.

This is called *Ātma-nivedana Bhakti* – the devotion in which the self is completely offered up, leaving nothing apart from the Divine.

Among the nine forms of devotion, *Ātma-nivedana Bhakti...* the devotion of complete self-offering is the highest and the purest, for it is *Nirguna bhakti*, devotion to the formless Absolute. Through this devotion, one attains *Sāyujya Mukti*, the liberation of complete oneness with the Supreme. Of the four kinds of liberation – *Sālokatā* (dwelling in the same realm), *Sāmīpatā* (nearness to God), and *Swārūpatā* (similarity of form) – the first three are transient. Only the fourth, *Sāyujya* (complete oneness), is eternal.

Through this supreme union, the mind dissolves into stillness and the human being is freed from the cycle of birth and death. Abiding thus, one becomes *Sat-Chit-Ananda...* the Supreme Reality.

|| Jai Sadguru ||

– Anant Kalyanrao Kulkarni,
Pune

(Disciple of Shri Samartha Ganpatrao Maharaj,
Shanti Kutir, Kannur)



One should, perform karma with nonchalance
without expecting the benefits
because sooner or later
one shall definitely gets the fruits.

– The Vedas

Sakhya Bhakti in *Shri Dasbodha*

Out of the nine types of devotions (*navavidh bhakti*), the *Sakhya Bhakti* is at the eighth place. Let us take a look as how Shri Samarth Ramdas defines this devotion in the *Shri Dasbodha*. In the very first chapter of it, Samarth says: “This scripture named *Dasbodh* is a dialogue between *Guru* (Master) and a *Shishya* (disciple), in which the path of devotion is elucidated clearly.”

What is devotion? Revered Shri K. V. Belsare has explained it beautifully in his commentary on *Dasbodha*: “*Bhaj* means to serve. To serve the Divine is devotion! For the God whose service is to be done, there must be continuous pure love and faith in the mind. Devotion is inherently of the nature of love. Sage Shri Naradamuni too has said in the *Bhakti Sutras* that supreme love toward the Supreme is *Bhakti* (devotion).”

A special feature of Samarth’s writings is that devotion was dear to him, so were the intellect and strength within it. Discernment and right thinking were the very breath of his life. Therefore, his devotion was clear-sighted. Blind faith, foolishness, naïve emotionality, or gullibility were not acceptable to him. Devotion accompanied by discrimination was dear to him. There are many states of true devotion – melting of the heart for God, becoming restless in separation, the deep yearning of the mind, and when one meets the Divine inwardly, experiencing the bliss of unity. According to Samarth, as is one’s inner feeling, so is

one's experience of God. "God can be attained by one's sincere feelings" is an important principle of Samarth.

The fourth *dashaka* of *Dasbodh* deals exclusively with the nine forms of devotion:

श्रवणं (*Śravaṇam*), किर्तनम् (*Kīrtanam*), विष्णोस्मरणं (*Viṣṇusmraṇam*),
पादसेवनं (*Pādasevanam*), अर्चनं (*Archanam*), वंदनं (*Vandanam*), दास्यं
(*Dāsyam*), सख्यम् (*Sakhyam*), आत्मनिवेदनं (*Ātmanivedanam*)

Samarth gave precise definitions of each *bhakti* in the *Dasbodh*. Each type forms a complete discourse in itself! Such extensive exposition of devotion is truly astonishing. Another unique aspect is that while most saints speak of devotion purely at the spiritual level, Samarth's exposition is somewhat different.

While practising the yoga of devotion, everyone has to rise from the practical plane to the spiritual plane. This journey is extremely difficult, but Samarth has unfolded its subtle layers very beautifully.

In *dashaka 4, Samas 8*, Sakhya Bhakti features are described in thirty-two verses. Samarth says: "One should form supreme friendship with God and bind Him with love and affection. Know this as the characteristic of the eighth form of devotion."

'Sakhya' means love. 'Sakha' means a friend – one who stays extremely close to one's very heart. Such an intimate friend is called a Sakha. Just as every person has a very close and special friend to whom one freely shares the deepest and most personal secrets of the heart – in whom we have complete trust, with whom we confide which otherwise would not be told to anyone else – this place of absolute trust is the friend, the *Sakha*. As this is true in worldly life, so it is in spiritual life as well. The feeling of friendship and love between the devotee and the Divine is indescribable. Not even a trace of duality remains there. To offer one's entire life to God, to accept complete surrender, and to firmly hold the feeling, "Whatever is mine is entirely Yours" – this is *Sakhya*.

Just as a river, after meeting the ocean, loses its separate identity, so does the devotee dissolve in God. The Divine Friend too becomes bound by the devotee's love; otherwise, He cannot be bound by anything.

The relationship between God and a devotee in Sakhya Bhakti, which is unique. God is an ocean of grace and compassion. Therefore, the devotee too must open his heart before Him. The Divine's auspicious friendliness and sweet companionship are experienced in *Sakhya Bhakti*.

A very important point is that whatever is God's will become one's religion, one's scripture, one's duty, and one's conduct. Such a devotee never harbours greed, hatred or jealousy. There is natural detachment toward bodily pleasures. There is immense compassion toward all living beings and unbroken love towards God – these are the primary qualities of *Sakhya Bhakti*.

While explaining how a devotee should preserve this friendship, Samartha says:

Devotional feeling and singing of God's name, discourses, stories, and *Kirtana* – the loving songs of a devotee, all these please the Lord. One must live accordingly, and let such devotion be one's joy; when one's nature becomes attuned to this, true friendship with God is firmly established.

The devotees whose friend is God must, at all times, sing His praises with devotion. They should keep the company of the wise, practise under enlightened saints, and study regularly. Wherever they go, they should spread the virtues of God among people through discourses, stories, *Kirtana* and music. This becomes possible only when we belong to God completely – in body, mind, and wealth. When our singing, contemplation and deep meditation revolve solely around His qualities, form, and divine play, only then does this divine friendship arise.

Samartha also says: “For the sake of friendship with God, one must give up one's personal comforts. With love and devotion, he must offer very life-breath and even dedicate the body in service to Him.”

In worldly life, ordinary devotees are deeply immersed in the afflictions of desires and passions. We are covered by selfishness, ego, attachment, and envy. We believe that living according to bodily identity is our duty. But if one desires God's friendship, it is not easy. It requires sacrifice, exclusive love for God, surrender, giving up selfish

love and ego in worldly dealings, and, if needed, be ready to give up one's life for God. Only when all this becomes possible does one attain Sakhya Bhakti. Samarth says: "For the sake of friendship with God, one must sever ties even with one's dearest attachments; one must offer everything in the end – even one's very life-breath.

Everything must be given up, yet one must remain in friendship with God; such love, born from the depths of the soul, must be offered to the Divine. God is our very life; one must not withdraw the life-force from Him. This, indeed, is the mark of supreme love."

To attain God as a friend, one must part ways with the so-called close companions – desire, anger, pride, sorrow, ego. One must give up personal comforts such as rest, laziness, ease, and sleep. One must exert the body without worrying about oneself and be ready to offer even one's breath to God making the breath increasingly subtle and refined. God is one's very life-breath and to practise devotion with this understanding is the true mark of supreme love for the Divine.

Samarth further says that when a devotee's friendship with God is established, God Himself becomes concerned for the devotee. Such is His compassion – if the devotee takes one step, God takes two. He appears instantly. Many examples testify to this. Friendship, parental love, devotional love, and the spirit of *Sakhya* that arises out of servitude – all these many moods of devotion are beautifully expressed in bhakti. Sakhya naturally blossoms.

***Mitra-bhava* (Friendship):**

In the *RaMayana*, the friendship between **Sugriva and Shri Rama**, between Kevat and Shri Rama, is delightful. Shri Rama approached Sugriva in search of Sita, and a bond of friendship was established between the two. First, Shri Rama slew Vali and placed him on the throne, establishing a righteous kingdom for him. Thereafter, Sugriva never abandoned Shri Rama. In the battle between Rama and Ravana, Sugriva fought valiantly for Rama, risking his life. Not only this, he stood shoulder to shoulder with Shri Rama during the coronation at Ayodhya. Such is Sakhya Bhakti!

Kevat was a simple boatman. To help Shri Rama, Sita, and

Lakshmana go into exile, he ferried them across the Ganga River in his boat. His love and affection for Shri Rama was so profound that he accepted no payment whatsoever. He said, “We are friends. I carry you across the river to the far shore; you carry people across the ocean of worldly existence and grant them liberation. Should a friend take anything from a friend?” A simple, ordinary boatman and the divine incarnation Shri Rama – yet their bond of friendship was so strong that Kevat felt, “You and I are not separate at all.” Such an extraordinary Sakhya Bhakti!

In the *Mahabharata*, the devotional friendship between Shri Krishna and Arjuna is universally cited as a classic example. Arjuna would address Krishna as his friend. During the time of war, Duryodhana asked the Lord for his army, while Arjuna was overjoyed to receive Shri Krishna Himself. Arjuna’s faith, devotion, and trust in Shri Krishna were indescribable. Witnessing such a true love, Shri Krishna became the charioteer of Arjuna. Throughout his life, Shri Krishna stood firmly behind the Pandavas, ensuring their welfare and happiness.

Shri Krishna and Sudama: it’s also a profound example of friendship and Sakhya bhakti. When Sudama came to visit him, Shri Krishna, though a king, ran eagerly to the door to receive him. He served Sudama with great affection for eight days and joyfully ate the flattened rice Sudama brought in his humble bundle. Even before Sudama reached home, his dwelling was transformed into a prosperous city. How extreme and boundless was this feeling of friendship – this spirit of Sakhya!

Vaatsalya (Motherly Love): Krishna and Yashoda – Yashoda lovingly raised Shri Krishna, the Supreme Absolute, in her innocent ignorance, with tender affection. Shri Krishna, the Supreme Self rejoiced in the pure, unconditional, selfless love of Yashoda. How sweet and ever-fresh is this emotion of Sakhya Bhakti!

Madhura Bhava: Saint Meera Bai and Shri Krishna – When she was a child, Meera saw her friend being married and asked her mother innocently, “Where is my husband?” At that moment, a wandering ascetic came and gave Meera a small idol of Shri Krishna. She felt,

“This is my husband.” From that time onward, Mirabai accepted Shri Krishna as her everything. Her mother and mother-in-law tried to dissuade her. Her in-laws and society even offered her a cup of poison. Mirabai endured everything, yet she remained firm throughout her life in her devotion – “*Mere to Giridhar Gopal, doosra na koi.*” This is the spirit of Sakhya!

Devotional Friendship:

Samarth Ramdas and Kalyan swami – Kalyan swami was his supreme disciple. At the utterance of Samarth, before the words “Kalyan, jump!” were even fully spoken, he leapt in the valley from the fort. Of course, Samarth gently caught him. But through this, Samarth showed the other disciples present on the fort that what true Sakhya – such love and such complete trust – should be like.

Samarth and Venna swami – Venna swami was poisoned by the society, but Samarth took her in as his own, like a father. Venna swami’s devotion to Samarth was so unwavering that, in the end, while performing *kirtan*, she fell at Samarth’s feet and gave up her life. Such unshakable Sakhya Bhava!

Janabai and Vitthala – Known as a maidservant in Saint Shri Namdev’s household, Janabai found her true support in Panduranga. Even while doing the laborious household work, she remained absorbed in Vitthala. Seeing her boundless devotion, Lord Panduranga himself became her refuge and protector. Vitthala and Janabai became one only.

Gopas, Gopis, and Krishna – The Supreme Lord himself became immersed in the love of the *gopas* and *gopis*. Their love was extraordinary. Shri Krishna left Vrindavan for Mathura at the age of eight and never returned there again. Yet, not for a single moment did the *gopis* forget Krishna, nor did even the slightest trace of their love for Him ever swayed. Lord Krishna became the king of Dwarka, yet the *gopas* and *gopis* continued to receive his unbroken love. Such a mark of Sakhya Bhakti is found nowhere else.

Uddhava and Shri Krishna – Uddhava, too, was a beloved and wise devotee of Shri Krishna. Yet his feeling of exclusive surrender and

deep devotion toward Shri Krishna always remained steadfast.

Hanuman and Lord Shri Rama – The highest form of love is when servitude devotion (Daasya Bhakti) ripens into Sakhya Bhakti – and this is seen in Shri Rama and Maruti (Hanuman). His entire life was filled with Rama. His living, speaking, walking, and conduct were solely for Shri Rama. In one verse, Maruti says to Shri Rama: “O Rama, first I am Your devotee, I am Your servant. But now I feel that, in the vision of the Self, You and I are one.” Shri Rama is his very breath, his very life – such is the depth of this Sakhya Bhava.

Samarth Ramdas and Shri Rama – The same relationship existed between Shri Samarth and Shri Rama. Leaving home, family, and all worldly ties at the age of eight, young Samarth ran after Shri Rama, and throughout his life he proclaimed only the name of Rama, becoming completely absorbed in Him. Samarth Ramdas Swami stands as one of the highest examples of Sakhya Bhakti.

Patriotism – Just as there is Sakhya Bhakti towards God, there are also countless examples of patriotism in which people laid down their lives for the nation – Freedom fighters like Lokmanya Tilak, Agarkar, Swatantryaveer Savarkar and countless young revolutionaries of pre-independence era sacrificed their precious lives for the country’s freedom. All of them are, in a sense, architects of Sakhya Bhakti. Shri Golwalkar Guruji, too, once expressed the essence of his life in a weekly journal in the fewest possible words: “Not I, but Thou” – a spirit of complete surrender and dedication to the Divine.

In the section on Sakhya Bhakti, Samarth further says: The Supreme Lord is the protector of devotees, the Lord of the helpless, the purifier of the fallen, the helper of devotees, the inner witness of worshippers, an ocean of grace, and a vast cloud of compassion. He always grants refuge and fearlessness to those who surrender to Him. Therefore, exclusive devotion to God, complete surrender, and self-offering are the distinguishing features of Sakhya Bhakti.

Although all this is true, at times a devotee’s faith may waver. Therefore, Samarth says: when something does not happen according to our wishes, we begin to think, ‘Why did God do this?’ This doubt makes one’s faith begin to waver. To prevent this, Samarth gives the

devotee an example of unwavering faith. If at times the clouds do not bring rain, the *chatak* bird remains thirsty – but never stops loving the clouds. The *Chakora* bird lives only on moonlight and prefer remaining hungry if the moon does not rise on time, never giving up its devotion to the moon. A devotee's faith should be as unwavering as that of the *chatak* and the *Chakora*. Samarth says that devotees must strengthen their friendship with the God through discrimination and inner strength.

In the *Sakhya Bhakti* section, Samarth further says: Just as one must have devotion, faith, and trust in God, the same must be placed in the Sadguru. God and Guru are one.

In the eighth section of *Dasbodh*, while explaining the greatness of Sakhya Bhakti through various examples, Samarth says that in this world only God or the Sadguru is worthy of such divine friendship. One should merge with them in mind and body and confide in them all that is in one's heart. They alone are the true friends, not selfish companions like ordinary people. They never turn away anyone who has surrendered. Knowing this, devotees should always accept only God and the Sadguru as their eternal friends. The sweet fruit of such worship is surely granted to the devotee. This is the very essence of *Sakhya Bhakti*.

|| Jai Jai Raghuvira Samarth! ||

– Dr. Mrs. Rasika Vilas Tamhankar
Vashi, Navi Mumbai



Why shall he perform bad Karma who has been properly
nurtured for many a thousand months and years?

– The Vedas

“Shrirang” ... The Divine Within

In today's age, although the word “*spirituality*” is not used very often, we see that Marathi speakers as well as those who write in English, under the influence of social media, freely and casually use the words “*soul*” or “*atman*.” Whenever someone in a WhatsApp group passes away, a ready-made “namaskar” meant for offering emotional tribute to that deceased person is promptly forwarded, offering heartfelt tributes and saying, “*May his soul rest in peace.*” At least this much is acknowledged through it – that as long as the person was alive, there was something called the *soul* within the body, and that it left the body the moment death occurred. But this awareness lasts only for that occasion alone – much like the fleeting detachment one feels at a cremation ground.

Those who study spiritual science, however, look upon the *atman* (the Self) as an independent subject of inquiry. The very word “*Adhyaatm*” contains the meaning “*first the Self.*” In other words, spiritual science teaches us to first inquire into who we truly are as the Self. This is the central foundation of Indian philosophy. The Vedas and Vedanta, the Upanishads, various religious texts, different sastras, the Puranas, saint literature, and philosophical works have all examined this in great depth. Yet, despite all this, most of us go through life without seriously engaging in the question, “Who am I really?” It is

not that we are incapable of understanding it – but even when we do understand, we do not turn towards it. That much is certainly true.

In the *Shiva Gita*, the Lord says:

*“One may study many scriptures and worship many deities,
but without Self-knowledge, O Arjuna, all actions are meaningless.”*

Through Arjuna, Lord Krishna conveys that unless one has knowledge of one’s own true nature – *swarūpa-jñāna*, or in other words *ātma-jñāna* (Self-knowledge) – mere reading of scriptures and the worship of gods and goddesses are of no real use.

Samarth Ramdas Swami, who studied the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Shastras and the Puranas in depth and composed the profound work *Dasbodh*, takes this idea even further. In support of this teaching, he adds in the following *ovi* (verse) from the *Dasbodh*:

Meditation, concentration, postures and mudras, devotion, feelings of bhakti and chanting – all these are hollow without the knowledge of Brahman, unless Self-realisation is attained. (5/1/36)

The intention of this verse is not merely to insist that without Self-knowledge everything else is futile. Rather, it seeks to underline how vitally important it is to first become acquainted with Self-knowledge in one’s life. Indeed, this is why it is called *Adhyaatm* – “first, the Self.”

The very first *Ovi* of the first chapter of the sacred *Sarth Dnyaneshwari* proclaims the glory of the Self:

“Om, salutations to the Primal One, expounded by the Vedas – victory, victory to the Self-revealing, the very form of the Self.” (1.1)

This verse declares the greatness of the *Ātmarūpa* – the form of the Self. With the direct realisation that *Om* itself is the Supreme Reality, Shri Dnyaneshwar begins his great work. To that Self in the form of *Om* – the source of all, the subject of the Vedas, and self-luminous – Jnanoba Mauli offers his salutations and sings its praise.

You are already the Reality itself; do not imagine yourself to be the mind.

The saints show the means, you yourself are the Self.

(Dasbodh 8/10/75)

While describing the greatness of *Atmaram*, a work composed by Shri Samarth Ramdas Swami, Brahma Chaitanya Shri Gondavalekar

Maharaj said:

“In *Sarth Dasbodha*, the old *Dasbodha*, *Karunashtake*, *Manache Shlok* and all of Samarth’s other writings, he poured out his mind. But in *Atmaram*, his heart is found. Not only the bound soul but even the liberated one should learn the path of spiritual realization from *Atmaram*.”

After his *Maha Samadhi*, his foremost disciple, Kalyan swami overcame with grief. Shri Ramdas Swami gave him a living vision from his samadhi for the disciple’s welfare. Through this, he assured not only him but the whole world:

“*You may say that my body and speech are gone, but within the hearts of beings I am ever present. Atmaram and Dasbodha are my true form, self-established. Let not my devotees grieve.*”

From this, the unique spiritual greatness of the text *Atmaram* becomes abundantly clear.

Through this article, drawing upon Samarth Ramdas Swami’s *Atmaram*, this is a humble attempt to explore the *Atmaram* – the Self in the form of pure consciousness – within each one of us, and to show how this inner *Shrirang* becomes ever clearer through the discourses of the Self-realised saint, Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj.

As mentioned earlier, Sadguru Shri Gondavalekar Maharaj used two different expressions in his observation: the first was *antahkarana* (the inner instrument) and the second was *Hridaya* (the heart). It naturally makes one wonder why he chose these two distinct terms. When something merely registers in the *antahkarana*, it is one thing; but when it pierces the heart like an arrow, its intensity and impact are far greater. Samarth was deeply aware of this difference between mere impression and profound, transformative effect. In the 20th verse of the first samas of *Atmaram*, Shri Samarth explains why he felt compelled to write this work.

He says: “*In the chapters of the Dasbodh, I uprooted the sense of ‘I’. Yet even through that exposition, the mind did not seem to be transformed.*”

In the *Dasbodh*, the greatness and importance of *Shravan* – listening to spiritual truth – is repeatedly emphasised in many places. From as early as the fourth *dashaka*, seekers are given extensive

guidance on *Shravan*, *manan* (reflection), and *nididhyasan* (deep contemplation). Even when there is a natural inclination towards devotion and an interest in spirituality has arisen, Samartha was well aware of our common human tendency: no matter how much we listen or read, the mind still remains in its old patterns, unwilling to truly follow. This is because until Self-awareness penetrates the heart, no real transformation occurs in our tendencies. And until that transformation happens, all our reading remains merely superficial. When no inner transformation has occurred, when no change in one's tendencies is felt, it means that the effect of reading has not penetrated deeply within. What kind of change is meant here? A change in one's conduct and behaviour. The first sign that one may actually experience is a gradual shift in one's inner tendencies. The sense of "mine and yours," "me and you," slowly begins to dissolve. As Sant Eknath Maharaj says, "*Within is Rama, outside is Rama – wherever I look, there is only Rama.*" To reach such a state is to attain the true stature of a saint. That level is reached only through prolonged spiritual practice, worship, non-dual devotion to the Sadguru, and above all, through the grace of the Sadguru.

In the teachings of Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj, there is a detailed exposition of what *vritti* (mental tendency or disposition) is and how it can be transformed. Let us first take a brief look at this, and then turn to understand the necessity and greatness of the text *Atmaram*.

Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj:

There are three terms: *vritta*, *vritti*, and *nivritta*. *Vritta* is Brahman. *Vritti* is *Maya*. *Nivritta* is the Absolute Reality (*Parabrahman*). *Vritta* means awareness, *vritti* means the mind, and *nivritta* means the state of being the witness of nothing at all. Spiritual practice is, in fact, a discipline given to the *vritti*. *Vritta-jñāna* – the knowledge of pure awareness – is the same for everyone, but *vritti-jñāna* is not the same for all. Is the dream one sees in sleep the same for everyone? In the same way, knowledge is not identical for all.

You experience yourself as "I am," and that Self-awareness, conditioned by time, functions in worldly life. The *vritti*

that flows from it is the mind. *Vritti* is your entire world. In practical life, *vritti* itself is called the mind. As long as the *vritti* keeps dancing – running here and there – you are not ready for true knowledge. The mind is *Maya*. The mind is *vritti*. Remember this clearly: do not keep company with the *vritti*. As the *vritti*, so the behaviour. It is the *vritti* that conducts all worldly dealings. One's likes of the *vritti* bind one to one's own imagination.

It is the nature, meaning, and consequences of this *vritti* that give rise to fear. But what fear can there be for *vritta*, pure awareness?

When *vritti-jñāna* comes to an end, only *vritta-jñāna* remains. In that state there is a calm, luminous stillness, like the steady flame of a lamp. At that time there is no mind, no thoughts – there is only the simple awareness, “I am.”

A very distinctive feature of Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj's language is that he breaks down ordinary, everyday words in his own natural style and reveals their deeper meaning. For instance, the word ‘*vritta*.’ From words like *vrittapatra* (newspaper) or *vritta-nivedika* (newsreader), everyone is familiar with *vritta* meaning “news.” While using this common word from daily life, he interprets *vritta* as something heard, read, or received – “news” – and further splits it as “*bāt-mi*”, a “news of ‘me.’” In this way, he invites us to reflect that it is a piece of news in which the “me” is present. When a child is born, it means the child has arrived carrying the news, “I am.” That birth-news – this *bāt-mi* – is what he sometimes calls *ātma-vritta*, the news of the Self. If this news did not arise, there could be no one who is born, who speaks, or who hears.

The awareness “I am” that everyone has is itself the news of one's own existence. It is the knowledge that one is – that is *vritta-jñāna*, the knowledge of pure being. This *vritta-jñāna* is the same in everyone. As long as it is present, all activity continues. But because it functions at the level of body and mind, behaviour takes place accordingly. This behaviour is each person's *vritti*. Yet its only foundation is the *vritta*

– the simple awareness “I am.” Through the guidance of the Sadguru, when the seeker reaches the understanding “I am not the body-mind,” a transformation begins to take place in the *vritti*. One then abides only in the knowledge-form, in this *vritta-jñāna*. The practice of remaining detached from the body and mind begins. In that state, one starts experiencing a quiet, luminous stillness, like the steady flame of a lamp. The mind becomes focused, thoughts begin to fade, and the seeker experiences only this much: “I am.”

Owing to limitations of space, it is not possible to present further details of Nisargadatta Maharaj’s teachings here. However, many books and scriptures based on his teachings are available, which sincere seekers may study in depth.

Each devotee worships God according to his or her own temperament, availability, capacity, and inclination. As the saying goes, “The devotion one loves is the greatest for that person.” There are many devotees who regularly read the *Dasbodh* and have been reciting it in full for years. There are Innumerable worldly beings who sincerely long to be freed from the bondage of *Maya*. There are seekers who follow the path of devotion in order to enrich their spiritual lives. Samarth was constantly concerned for the welfare of all of them. ‘कल्याण करी रामराया, जन हित विवरी.’ “*May Ram Raya bring about the welfare of all and reveal what is for the good of people*” – this was the prayer he ceaselessly offered to his chosen deity, Lord Rama. How to live wisely in worldly life, the meaning of the nine forms of devotion, the true nature of the Sadguru, the qualities of an ideal disciple – the *Dasbodh* offers deep and profound, comprehensive guidance on many more such vital themes.

Even when the two hundred *samasas* of the *Dasbodh*, spoken as a dialogue between Guru and disciple, had been read and heard and all doubts appeared to have vanished, Samarth perceived that in many seekers the deep-rooted sense of being the body still remained. They had not fully realised how to move from “body-consciousness” to “Self-consciousness.” Their sense of “I” had not disappeared, they had not yet grasped the essence of self-surrendering devotion, nor had they understood the mystery of *Maya*’s enchantment. Therefore, moved by compassion, Samarth placed in their hands a much smaller book –

Atmaram, consisting of only 183 verses compared to the thousands in the *Dasbodh* – and said, in effect: Now at least read this little book, reflect upon it, and become free of doubt. Deeply concerned about how people might come to recognise the Shrirang within, Samarth says at the very opening of *Atmaram*:

“You have not raised any doubts, yet I am deeply concerned for you,
for your delusion has still not been dispelled.”

(*Atmaram* 1.19)

“Therefore, without your asking, I speak for your sake, O disciple.
Now at least, take to the path of listening and deep reflection.”

(*Atmaram* 1.21)

Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj:

“We have been listening all our lives – heaps of it! We have heard so much. But which word has actually had an effect? On whom? Until a word truly affects you, how can it be called knowledge? You have been listening all your life – tell me, which word has really touched you? If the words and their meaning have not made any impact on you, what have you really understood – good or bad? Even if you take another birth, you will go on listening – just for entertainment, as a kind of pastime. But what lies beyond that? Ruminant (Contemplate again and again) over what you have heard. You only have to listen; there is no need for forced effort. Without *Shravan*, *manan*, and *nididhyasan* – listening, reflection, and deep contemplation – your puzzle will not be solved. Memorising volumes of scriptures will not take you anywhere.”

One must listen to the words that fall upon the ears from the mouth of the Sadguru in such a way that they pierce straight into the heart. In the second *samas* of *Atmaram*, Samarth reveals this very essence:

“O disciple, you indulge the mind too much; frivolity still remains. When the mind is made restless here, you will be drowned in an ocean of doubt.” (2/6)

Mere listening is not enough. The restless tendencies of the mind

must be restrained through conscious effort; otherwise, even after a lifetime of spiritual listening, doubts do not disappear. Doubt itself is the bondage that obstructs the attainment of true knowledge. In the path of spiritual realisation, though many disciplines are prescribed, Samarth makes it clear in *Atmaram* that the essence of all of them is *Shravan* (listening) and *manan* (reflection). Through listening to spiritual truth and reflecting upon it, a seeker can reach the state of realisation – such is the power of *Shravan-bhakti*.

In the fourth *samas* of *Atmaram*, Samarth declares:

“That which is the essence of all spiritual disciplines – know this to be listening.” (4/2)

Is listening alone enough? In this text, Samarth affirms this without hesitation – there is no alternative to it:

“There is no spiritual discipline like listening and reflection.” (4/5)

He assures that if one listens with focussed attention, no other practice will ever be required. This is his solemn promise – his guarantee, in today’s language.

In spiritual discourse we come across many expressions such as the mind, its restlessness, the waves of imagination within it, its instability, its wavering state, its concentration, and its thought-free stillness. Even when we sit for meditation or try to concentrate during the repetition of the Divine Name, we often get so carried away by thoughts that meditation itself is left behind, and in the end no real peace is gained. How difficult it is to steady such a restless mind! And when it does become steady, even then listening to spiritual teachings can appear even more difficult. This is the real challenge. How is it to be done? In the *Dasbodh*, Samarth shows us a direct path:

*“You are already the Reality itself;
do not imagine yourself to be the mind.
The saints show the way, you yourself are the Self.”*
(8/10/75)

While guiding seekers, **Nisargadatta Maharaj** says:

The word ‘mind’ – just two letters – keeps all beings running in circles. The mind itself is imagination, and imagination is the

mind. Whatever imagination desires, it manifests. This entire empire of the mind belongs to the mind alone. It is the mind that creates all objects.

Even when you are lying alone in an armchair, one thought after another arises – and real rest slips away. You become absorbed in whatever appears: perhaps an argument, this or that, and so on. Someone may say, “He is resting.” But what kind of rest is that? The person is merely absorbed in whatever the mind is saying. Haven’t we all experienced this?

Unless the mind goes to rest, there is no sleep and no real rest. In deep sleep there is no mind – only the vital life-force remains. When the mind arises again, a scene called “mind” appears; and you call that a dream.

A dream is an incarnation of the mind. When you are dreaming, it is your own mind that appears in the form of a world. In the same way, this waking world is also an incarnation of the mind. And yet you depend on the mind and then complain that you cannot control it!

Because of the life-breath (*prana*), there is the body; and because of *prana*, there is also the mind. The meaning that arises with the movement of the breath is called the mind. As long as there is breathing, some kind of inner chatter will keep flowing – that is what is called the mind. All perceptions exist only in the mind. For one who has no mind, what perceptions can there be? Perceptions mean: this was remembered, that was remembered; this is wanted, that is wanted. These murmurings of the mind are what are called the many perceptions.

The mind is felt through the qualities of the essence of food. The mind is another name for *prana*, the life-force. The sense of “I” and ego are also names of *prana*. The movement of *prana* itself is the mind. Can there be a mind when there is no *prana*? No. When the body breaks down and illness comes, *prana* departs – and when *prana* departs, the mind also goes. Where there is mind, there is *prana*; where there is *prana*, there are qualities. When the mind is truly understood, *prana*

dissolves.

When you came into bodily existence, the feeling “I am” arose, and from that arose the inner murmur – the mind. At the centre of food, *prana*, the body, and the mind stands the Self – the knowledge of one’s own being.

Only when the mind gradually comes to realise that you are formless will it come under control. Drop your fascination with the mind and take up fascination with the Self. The mind will never disappear – so simply watch what you truly are. Do not take the mind’s advice. Let it go on. Be firmly established in the knowledge that you are not the mind. You say you are swept away by the mind – but have you ever seen the knowledge “I am” being swept away? You feel overpowered, but it is the mind that overpowers the mind. What are you, and by what could you ever be overpowered? What is your connection with it? Is it you who worries about children and family, or is it the mind? Does the mind know you, or do you know the mind? When the mind talks about past and future, why do you take it to be *yours*? As long as the body exists, what are you as an identity? Only when you accept the play of words and images that appears to you does the mind seem to exist.

There are many common complaints: “*My mind does not become concentrated in meditation; thoughts simply do not stop; I am unable to repeat the Divine Name properly.*” Nisargadatta Maharaj shows a simple but profound way: “Remain watching what you truly are. Do not take the mind’s advice. Let the mind go on. Be firmly established in the knowledge that you are not the mind.”

The very same teaching is given by Samarth in *Atmaram*:

“O seeker, who are you? Whose are you?

From where have you come, and why?

Take up this inquiry first.”

(Atmaram 1/25)

Through this guidance, the seeker begins to set aside the other thoughts that arise in the mind and gradually becomes steady in the

inquiry, “*Who am I?*” In the very next *samas*, Samarth leads the seeker one step further and reveals the true nature of *Maya* and the illusory forms it projects.

Throughout our lives, each of us refers to oneself as “I” while speaking and acting. This “I” is the natural sense of ego that everyone experiences and therefore uses. But Samarth makes it clear that this very sense of “I” is itself born of *Maya*. He says:

“*The very vibration that says ‘I’ is the mark of Maya. From that Maya arise the three qualities, and from the qualities arise the elements.*”
(*Atmaram* 2/11)

Not only this – of all the verses in *Atmaram*, the greatest number (forty-three) are devoted to explaining *Maya*. This itself shows how vast and powerful the influence of *Maya* truly is.

From many of his discourses, **Nisargadatta Maharaj** explains the nature of *Maya*. Let us look at it briefly.

“*Maya* is that which has not actually happened. It is the conviction of “I have acted” in one who has not truly acted. All this is a story of the mind. Imagination itself is *Maya*. It appears, it is seen, it is experienced, it is known – but it does not remain. That is *Maya*. The word “*Maya*” means “that which is not.” It is delusion, or forgetfulness. We take what is not to be real, and we do not even look towards what truly is. It appears and seems to exist, yet it does not endure – that is *Maya*. Appearances arise and disappear. Nothing is permanent – therefore it is called *Maya*. In truth, *Maya* is nothing at all. It makes the individual take pride in the body and conduct life through that identification. Do you truly have knowledge of your birth, or only information that you were born into this world? There is no direct knowledge of birth. Yet you are unconsciously compelled to say, “This body is my form.” This is called delusion – *Maya*.”

No one can deceive another unless he first creates delusion. Whether it is a woman or a man, a thief, a robber, or a magician – whoever it may be – what do they do first? They first bewitch, and only then do they deceive. Today, millions of

people are being deceived in the world and ruining their lives because they are deluded. This ignorance – that is *Maya* – first enchants, and after enchanting, it deceives.”

All this has arisen from *Maya*. No one is separate from *Maya*; everything is pervaded by it. In *Atmaram*, Samartha once again gives a concise explanation of *Maya*. *Maya* is that which is, by its very nature, perishable – it can never endure and must inevitably dissolve. The panchbhute (five elements), the entire creation – everything disappears. Such is the nature of *Maya*. It is the same that operates as *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. It alone is the knower, the knowledge, and the known. It alone is meditation, the object of meditation, and the meditator. It alone is true awareness. It alone is the Self, it alone is Brahman, it alone is our true nature. Pervading the entire universe, that very *Maya* is the individual soul, the Divine, and God; through it alone the whole world appears, and through it the five great elements are perceived.

When one hears that *Maya* is illusion, impermanent, that nothing endures and everything is imaginary – and at the same time hears that everything is pervaded by *Maya* – anyone is bound to feel a little confused. In *Atmaram*, the disciples express this very state of perplexity to Samartha.

The disciples say:

“You say that everything is Maya, and yet you also say that it has never truly come into being. Then what am I to do now? Please tell me, O Master.” (*Atmaram* 2/26)

Reassuring their confused minds, Samartha replies:

“O seeker, whatever the mind experiences is all illusory. You must give it all up through your own direct experience.” (2/28)

He also explains the method the disciple should adopt:

“Therefore, listen to what I say, understand it in the light of Maya, and now reflect upon it with alertness.” (2/29)

Samartha then gives an example:

“Just as the threads of a cocoon are tangled yet the moth emerges from within, so too should you understand Maya – one must pass through entanglement to be free.” (3/30)

In essence, to become free from *Maya*, one must work through *Maya* itself. For this, Samarth says, the key of *Viveka* – discrimination – must be used:

“The very essence of Maya is the illusory. Discriminate it with wisdom; when discrimination is applied again and again, the many are resolved into the One.” (3/33)

Nisargadatta Maharaj:

Self-remembrance is the spark of awareness, the spark of consciousness – the sense of being one’s own. The memory by which you exist today will not remain forever; when the body falls, it too will go. The awareness “I am” is God itself, and it is also *Maya*. *Maya* is the power of God. All the many names of God are nothing but names for this awareness “I am.” *Maya* is quality, the awareness felt by all living beings. *Maya* is love for the Self. It has countless names, and to it alone the status of God has been given. In the state of pure, thought-free awareness, the moment a thought arises – that itself is *Maya*. In the visible, there is the awareness that “I am this.” In the invisible too, there is the awareness that “I am that.”

To say “I am the body” is spoken only out of ignorance. Ignorance means delusion; delusion means the mistaken feeling that the body itself is one’s true form – that is *Maya*. Everybody eventually grows weak and disappears; therefore it is called “*Mayavi*,” illusory – meaning it does not endure.

The knowledge must arise that the five elements and the three qualities are all born from awareness. Awareness itself is the boundless universe. Where there is food, there is *prana*; where there is *prana*, there are qualities. These qualities are what are called *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. The world, the experiences of the world, and the sense of “I” that claims them – all belong to *Prakriti*. *Purusha*, on the other hand, is only the witness; it takes no part in action. The remembrance “I am” functions in two ways – as *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. Without this dual functioning, the awareness of being would not be

available. Earlier, the awareness “I am” was not present; now it is. Beyond this, what else do you really have? Remembrance itself is knowledge; knowledge is meditation; meditation is what you are. And what you are is rest. First the tendencies (*vriddhis*) must subside – then Self-realisation dawns.

While concluding *Atmaram*, Samarth explains the supreme importance of attaining knowledge of one’s true nature:

“At the end of countless births, one attains union with one’s true Self. For the sake of this single realisation, the Supreme Reality is attained.” (*Atmaram* 5/11)

The essence of the Vedas and Vedanta is this: one’s own self-born nature is the Supreme Self. Those who realise this are truly blessed. Their destiny awakens, and the bondage of ignorance is shattered. Through the grace of the Sadguru, the seeker attains the state of pure awareness beyond even the witnessing *turiya* – the state of supreme knowledge – and becomes free of the body-identification.

“...In the inner Self, all doubt has vanished, at the feet of the Sadguru.” (*Atmaram* 5/28)

In the final, fifth chapter of *Atmaram*, the disciple, freed from *Maya* and rendered free of doubt, directly realises the essential truth – “You yourself are the Supreme Reality.” He becomes fulfilled and declares his life to be accomplished. Deluded by *Maya*, he had taken himself to be a mortal, ordinary human being; but through the instruction of the Sadguru, awareness of his true nature dawns, and he immediately knows with certainty that he himself is the all-pervading universe, the formless, attributeless Supreme Being. He experiences that he is actionless even while all action appears to happen, beyond all beyondness, pervading all beings. With the knowledge of his true nature, even the distinction between Guru and disciple dissolves.

Describing this state, the Self-realised saint **Shri Nisargadatta Maharaj** says:

Because of identification with the body, one is bound every moment by experiences of sound, touch, form, taste, and smell – the fivefold field of sensation and activity. How long does this

continue? As long as the body is taken to be one's identity. But the moment it is realised that the body is not one's true form, not one's real nature, all these bonds break instantly – like glass shattering at a single blow.

One who recognises that this present mode of being is only a season will not remain seasonal. Joy is a quality, and every quality is, by nature, without qualities. One may freely engage in the affairs of the world, but what is one's true nature? It is without attributes – *Nirguna*. The Self exists first; the universe is only its expression. The attributeless is what truly belongs to everyone – it is the nature of the supreme sovereign.

The qualities appearing in your embodied existence – the “*Saguna* Brahman” – the awareness “I am,” that itself is Hari, that itself is God. One who gradually absorbs this faith becomes, even while in the body, bodiless; while appearing to have qualities, becomes without qualities; and even while being a person, abides in *Nirvana*.

Though the knower is made of knowledge, of body, and of the world, he is in truth without attributes. Whether described as with attributes (*saguna*) or without attributes (*Nirguna*), it is only a matter of form. When knowledge knows itself, it immediately becomes *vijnana* – direct realisation – meaning even knowledge dissolves. What had qualities becomes without qualities. The knower sees clearly how the very quality of qualities falls away and merges into the attributeless. How does this happen? Just as you know you are sitting with your eyes closed – through Self-knowledge. When, even while the body remains, knowledge turns into realisation, it is seen that not only is the body not who you are, but even knowledge is not who you are.

Qualities are very active in worldly life, but when Self-knowledge arises, they become attribute-less. The quality that has been purified and sanctified through the Guru becomes *Nirguna*. Krishna engaged in countless actions, yet not a trace of quality touched him. Who would say that one is without attributes while still living and acting in the world? That is *Nirvana* – a state that leaves no trace. When qualities

disappear, that is *Nirvana*.

Your actions may touch the sky, but they do not touch the attributeless. In pure being without qualities, there is not even the knowledge “I am.” One who has known the arising, the continuance, and the dissolution of qualities falls silent. Where knowing itself comes to rest – that is the Supreme Reality. It is beyond time. When one has seen one’s true nature, not even a trace of ego remains.

For one who has realised the Self, the world no longer appears as a collection of separate things; it is experienced as one’s own nature, perfectly and completely filling everything. This is the science of the Self – *Swa-vijnana*. All duality has dissolved. What once appeared as division becomes divisionless. One knows, “This very form is me.” In this state there is no triad of seer, seeing, and seen – there is only the Seer. For every living being, the spark of awareness “I am” is the very glory of God. It is the luminous principle that reveals one’s own existence. It is not merely light, but the light of knowing – *chit-prakasha*. It is pure Self-awareness. That which moves the body, makes it walk and run – that is your true form. For the sake of worldly dealings, a name is given to it – “Paramatma.” But who is the Paramatma? It is that by which you know that you exist. It functions everywhere, yet it is untouched by any action – no pride, no ego, no sense of doership. It knows everything, yet it is bound by nothing. Then whom will you condemn? Only until Self-knowledge dawns does condemnation exist. Where knowledge becomes dense and complete, compassion alone operates. In a knower, only compassion remains. A realised being does not compete with anyone; therefore, there is no blame, hatred, or jealousy. Without knowing one’s own true nature, even service to saints bears no real fruit.

When devotion to the Sadguru is one-pointed, the inner being becomes completely fulfilled. One’s own being becomes the very form of the Sadguru. Here, what matters is firm Self-conviction. The Supreme Reality is realised only through knowledge of one’s true nature. When it is understood that the ego is merely an imagined person, there is no bondage – and therefore no need of liberation either. One then directly experiences within oneself that everything that exists is nothing but

the form of the Supreme. That which sees the sky is prior to the sky itself. How, then, can it be bound? How can it be tainted? That which exists effortlessly, without performing any action, as the natural state – that is the true Self. There is no intellectual construction there. When Self-knowledge dawns, this spontaneous, effortless state prevails.

– Anil Chube,
Thane (9819214661)



The wise who knows the Self as bodiless within the bodies, as unchanging among changing things, as great and omnipresent, does never grieve... That Self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, by him the Self can be gained. The Self chooses him (his body) as his own... But he who has not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not tranquil, and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self (even) by knowledge.

– Katha Upanishad (1.2.22-24)



“सद्गुरू वचनावर अचळ, अढळ विश्वास ठेवा. त्याच्याचे सर्व उघड होईल.

गुरू किंवा देव व्यक्ती नव्हे, हे एक अगोदर लक्षात ठेवा.

गुरू व्यक्तीसारखा दिसतो, पण तो व्यक्ती नव्हे, गुरू किंवा देव व्यक्तीरूप मानतात त्यांना पूर्ण समाधान मिळणार नाही.

गुरूवचनापेक्षा काहीही झालं तरी ते फार हीन दर्जाचं आहे.

मग साक्षात श्रीविष्णू, मी त्रैलोक्यनायक विष्णू आहे म्हणून जरी उभे राहिलेत तरी कस्पटास्पद आहेत. ज्याने गुरूवचन पाळले तोच संत,

तोच स्वयं आत बाहेर राबतो, गुरूवचन, संतवचन श्रेष्ठ आहे.

ज्यांनी संत वचन पाळलं, तेच संत झाले.”

-सद्गुरू श्रीनिसर्गदत्त महाराज