

Value Insight

मूल्य समीक्षा

MARCH 2022
VOL: 02 ISSUE: 02

WORDS AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

Rally for Right Speech,
Ye Defenders of Rights!

WORDS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE:

Verbally Yours...



A bi-monthly e-magazine of
Foundation for Restoration of
National Values (FRNV)
Website www.valuefoundation.in

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A new series on
Vivekananda

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Greetings from Value Insights!

One of the secrets for the fact that India has an age old living tradition, they say, is that she has constantly reinvented herself. At every step, she has assimilated the good and reinterpreted the old so as to remain relevant. Interestingly, this month we celebrate a festival that is also said to be on this genre. Holi, scholars say, is a festival built into the Hindu tradition, so as to rejuvenate and cleanse the society and reinvent itself. So this people's festival allows for a few hours of consciously transgressing accepted norms of conduct. Fresh energy and new positive resolutions come centre stage after all the negative and despondent energy is washed out in colours.

Any makeover brings the energy of the new and in this month of Holi, Value Insights has also decided to reinvent itself. A new look, a new

array of articles on a specific subject, a slightly plumper children's section are among the changes that have come about. We welcome aboard our many new writers with the hope that they will be associated with Value Insights for long. We also introduce a new inspiring series on Vivekananda as part of our regular feature.

This month we begin with the word as our subject of introspection and understanding. All actions, all dreams, all thoughts, we find, are first articulated in words. To choose the right words that lead to the right goal which is benefit to the listener, is the challenge.

We look forward to feedback and responses from our readers, even discussions on the ideas thrown up.

With hope and cheer...

Editor

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Neeraja Raghavan is founder director of Thinking Teacher. With a PhD from Princeton, her career spans corporate research to academic positions in higher education. Her passion lies in teaching and its effective methodology.



Sudhamahi Regunathan

Sudhamahi Regunathan is writer-columnist-academic. She is former Vice Chancellor, Jain Vishva Bharati Institute (Deemed University). She has authored ten books on different religions and their philosophies, translated 15 from Hindi and Sanskrit to English and has eight edited works to her credit.



Sujatha Padmanabhan

Sujatha Padmanabhan has twin passions: theatre and teaching. She has three decades of teaching experience besides being a theatre artiste. She has also written and directed short plays.



Rachna Joshi

Rachna Joshi is a poet and reviewer who has lived in North America and India. She has written four collections of poems: Configurations (Rupa & Co., 1993); Crossing the Vaitarani (Writer's Workshop, 2008); Travel Tapestry (Yatra Books, 2013); and Monsoon and Other Poems (Tethys, 2020). She works as Senior Assistant Editor at the India International Centre.



Aruna Srinivasan

Aruna Srinivasan is a bi-lingual writer-columnist-journalist, who writes in both English and Tamil. Widely travelled she has contributed to publications in South east Asia and India. Aruna has woven her wide range of interests and experiences into her debut novel, The Cosmic Dots. She lives in Chennai.

From President's Desk



The objectives of Foundation for Restoration of National Values are grand and noble and much required for the country today. Every time I think of them I am filled with zeal and enthusiasm. I find, whoever I speak to also responds with the same excitement. So I am confident that FRNV is all set to progress. I have often heard a Subhashitani being quoted which says:

**अल्पायां वा महत्यां वा सेनायामिति निश्चयः ।
हर्षो योधगणस्यैको जयलक्षणमुच्यते॥**

‘Whether the army is small or big, the sure sign of victory, it is said, is this one thing – the enthusiasm of the group of soldiers that fight.’

Our core group may yet be small but our influence can be widespread. Our belief in ourselves and the values we stand for are being constantly reinforced in our minds by our own experience and learning. We must never stop marveling at the fact, that there are more people who also believe like us than those who do not.

Work on any project has two aspects: looking inwards and outbound activities. Looking into the first aspect I feel we have to improve our

organizational strength, encourage and motivate active participation by members and bring more youth into our fold.

As for the second aspect, I reach out with a thought to as many of you as read this magazine. Even though we talk of the values upheld by FRNV with relation to our country, they are Universal values, ones which go to build a person of integrity and substance. Specifically, the Indian Diaspora can hugely contribute to the growth of the organization by not only communicating their interests and views on WhatsApp or via e-mail, but also drawing from or expanding the capabilities of FRNV in building pride for the nation and her heritage in the future generation.

As points for action, may we all try to bring in at least five new members each and enroll more subscribers for Value Insights.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my best wishes to all the readers!

S. Regunathan
President/FRNV

Subhashitam

केयूराणि न भूषयन्ति पुरुषं हारा न चन्द्रोज्ज्वलाः
न स्नानं न विलेपनं न कुसुमं नालङ्कृता मूर्धजाः ।
वाण्येका समलङ्करोति पुरुषं या संस्कृता धार्यते
क्षीयन्ते खलु भूषणानि सततं वाग्भूषणं भूषणम् ॥

व्यक्ति को कंगन नहीं आभूषित करते, न ही गले में पहने चन्द्रप्रभा के समान हार, न स्नान, न शरीर में लेपित सुगन्ध, न फूल, न ही सुसज्जित केश। व्यक्ति को तो केवल ऐसी वाणी ही सुशोभित करती है जो सुसंस्कृत हो। सत्य ही है, सभी अलंकार एक दिन विनाश प्राप्त होंगे। परन्तु वाणी का अलंकार सदा ही सच्चा आभूषण है।

Bracelets do not decorate a person, nor do necklaces glittering like the moon, nor bath, nor smearing the body with fragrance, nor flowers, and nor decorated hair. Only that speech embellishes a person, which has been upheld with cultural refinement. Indeed, all ornaments decay. Ornament of speech is always the real ornament.

Verbally Yours....

Sudhamahi Regunathan

Sudhamahi Regunathan writes on the importance of finding the right and pleasant words for peaceful conversation while also cautioning that one should not get stuck in the web of words



Decades ago when I had gone to the United States, I had become good friends with an aged couple who were fascinated by India and Indians. So, one day I decided to cook their favorite, ‘dal’ for them. I was received affectionately and taken to their kitchen. I had taken green lentils with me. I told them, “All I need is a vessel.” The couple looked shocked. They repeated the word several times and conferred in hushed tones. I heard something like, “Her charges...” To make things easier I said, “You know utensil?” It was like a bulb lit up their faces. They both came scurrying to a drawer and opened it to reveal any number of forks and knives. I could not make dal in a fork?!

The dal I made does not remain in memory, but that they thought I needed a sea faring boat when I said vessel and that cutlery was called utensil in the US remains a learning, both for me and inversely for them.

It may perhaps be not so difficult to imagine words having different meanings across the seas, but even within the same country, different words carry different connotations. Once during an official trip I found my Tamil colleague, quite senior in age, speaking with the driver, who was from Andhra Pradesh, in English. The driver was finding it difficult to follow him. “He knows Tamil,” I told my colleague suggesting he speak in Tamil.” Oh

I feel insulted,” said my colleague seriously, “He keeps saying ...di ...to me which is both gender insensitive and age inappropriate...” (Telugu words often have the ending of di... randi meaning move on or yemandi, meaning hey there and so on) In Tamil, di is a suffix used in nonformal, rather familiar communications to hail a girl, younger or of the same age group.

A sound thus becomes a word when it creates a meaning; the right meaning at the right time to the right person. No wonder then that when Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit poet, began his Raghuvamsa, he did so with a prayer which hopes his words and their meanings would so match as Siva and Parvati do each other.

**vāgarthāviva sampr̥ktau
vāgartha pratipattaye |
jagataḥ pitarau vande
pārvatīparamēśvarau ||**

The Sanskrit tradition has tried to understand speech in great detail. The verbal expression that we associate with the word or with speech is a very small part of the total capacity for expression within the human body. Para vak is completely in the consciousness. It is absolutely unmanifest, either as sound or as a difference from the consciousness. This para vak is called Sabda Brahman or OM, but it is unmanifest or a form that is undifferentiated from chit or

consciousness. It does not have the momentum of the mind and so is known only by Yogis in nirvikalpa samadhi. Vak means speech.

When Vak emerges out of the consciousness; its first appearance is in the form of the most subtle expression of the consciousness; its perception and its vision. It is not known even by the speaker and is only experienced by a yogi in savikalp samadhi. It is not manifested in any articulated sound. And yet it is a sound at the mental level.

Madhyama Vak is right in the middle. It is neither the Vak nor expression completely subsumed in the consciousness nor is it the expression that has a sound in the physical world. Madhyama Vak is the expression of sound the individual alone can feel. This Vak is still within the body.

Vaikhari speech is that which we speak out aloud and is heard by others. This is the expression of our thoughts and feelings. This is our medium of communication vocally and happens through an extremely complex process. The expression is produced from the mouth through the vocal chords.

In some texts like the Siddha Siddhanta Paddati a fifth form of Vak is mentioned called the Matrika. Matrikas are the Bija Aksharas or the nasal sounds that link words to each other... that assists in the easy flow

of language. They are potent sounds and called Bijas or seeds. This lies at the base of Mantra Sastra. Words are thus closely related to sound...

If words make sound, sounds also convey messages...the father clearing his throat, the mother making some sound as she caresses you when you get hurt...they all have culture specific meanings. A pleasant 'Good Morning', even from a stranger, makes the whole day light up. A harsh word, even from a loved one, makes one despondent. Words and emotions are closely related indeed. Do we ever speak objectively? Is that not why they say the way you speak reflects your perception and who you are? When we are angry the same word seems unreasonable, or sarcastic, which would otherwise seem full of fun!

Our thoughts are in words, our understanding of each other is greatly dependent on words, and our appreciation of the world is also heavily based on words. Words, words, words. Rama is described in the Ramayana as Priyavadinaha or of sweet speech. A famous Sanskrit sloka says we should speak sweetly and speak the truth but in such a manner that it does not upset the listener.

Our facial expression, our body language, our gestures, our silences, they all combine with words to add more meaning to the dictionary meaning of the word. Therefore, it

is that a word can be understood in so many different ways. Most misunderstandings stem from what he said or what she should not have said. Nothing lends itself to so many interpretations as words. Someone writes something and then there are a host of us who start analyzing that written word. So Sankara warned,

**śabdajālaṃ mahāraṇyaṃ
cittabhramaṇakāraṇaṃ |
ataḥ prayatnājjñātavyaṃ
tattvajñāistattvamātmanaḥ ||60||**

The net of words can form a huge complicated maze or jungle which can cause the mind to roam around within them as one would in a labyrinth. We have to learn to use them, not become enslaved to them. Not get entangled within them.

Indeed there is a world beyond words...even if we say so with words.



WORDS

For the best experiences lie beyond words.

Do we not often find ourselves saying, “Words are insufficient” or “I hope you understand what I mean, I am not able to find the right words.” Extreme joy, extreme sorrow even extreme ecstasy cannot be captured in words. So too, they say, Absolute Truth is beyond the scope of words. Describing It in the third stanza of Keno Upanishad it is said:

**na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāggacchati no mano
na vidmo na vijānīmo yathaitadanuśīṣyāt |**

There sight travels not, nor speech, nor the mind. We know It not nor can distinguish how one should teach of It: for It is other than the known...



The Power Of Speech

Neeraja Raghavan

Neeraja Raghavan says powerful speeches transmit energy. They reinforce both personal and national values.



Have you ever met anyone who has heard the speech delivered at midnight, 14th August 1947, by our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru? If you have, it is highly probable that the person will be able to recall every minute detail of that moment: the exact place that they were in, who was with them, what they were wearing, etc. - when they heard this speech!

Take a minute to listen to the speech that he delivered, especially whenever you feel despondent or begin to despair about the future of our country,

At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes, but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

Words have a tremendous power to touch something deep within us: especially if they are delivered with conviction, from the heart. Today, we

can recreate that wonder at the click of a button.

"It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." **Abraham Lincoln, 1863, Gettysburg Address**

Sitting in the passenger seat of a car that was cruising along a US highway, I was listening to the chatter of my friend (who was driving). As we passed a signpost that said "Gettysburg", he spontaneously began quoting Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address of 1863, word for word, and I got goose bumps. Today – forty years after that incident – I can still hear my friend's voice and feel the power of that moment. How must it have been for those who actually heard him speak on that day? I wondered.

As the words alongside seep into you, it is unlikely that you won't begin to feel some deep stirring within.

"On this wonderful day when we are gathered together to celebrate your academic success, I have decided to talk to you about the benefits of failure. And as you stand on the threshold of what is sometimes called 'real life', I want to extol the crucial importance of imagination."
J K Rowling, 2008, Harvard University

When failure visits us – as it does everyone, at some time or the other – listening to J.K. Rowling's 2008 Commencement Address at Harvard University "The Fringe Benefits of Failure" will act like a tonic. Coming from a person who has won such wide international acclaim, her honest admissions (that she faced several failures before reaching where she eventually did) cannot fail to inspire the listener. Being the wordsmith that she is, her speech is riveting. Peppered with lots of humour, it also touches the heart of the listener very deeply.

As I travelled in cyberspace, I came across the speeches that were made by a poet I greatly admire: Sarojini Naidu. At a time when the number of women in public spaces in the West was almost negligible, and hardly any Indians were seen, this brave lady stood clad in a sari, before a crowd of Americans in 1928, and addressed them boldly. "Friends," she began, "I come to you from many thousand miles away, as the Ambassador



of a very ancient country – to the youngest nation in the world.” She captured in that single sentence the immense gap that she was bridging. Not surprisingly, she held the attention of her audience with every subsequent word that emanated from her lips.

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed. We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day out in the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by their character.”
Dr Martin Luther King, 1963

The ability to keep hope alive even amidst great discrimination and suffering is palpable in Dr Martin Luther King’s unforgettable speech “I have a dream”. I can listen to this speech any number of times: it never fails to leave me charged with energy. The complete absence of bitterness speaks louder than even the beautiful words present in the speech. [Interestingly, it is said that his originally planned speech was different: he had intended to describe the sufferings of African Americans, but the gospel singer Mahalia Jackson shouted out to him, “Tell them about your dream, Martin!” and that was how a landmark speech was delivered in 1963! More recently, in 2019, New

Zealand’s Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern spoke with great feeling after a terrorist attack on a Mosque. Like Sarojini Naidu, she jolted everyone right from the start, as she began thus: “Mr Speaker, Al salam Alaikum. Peace be upon you. And peace be upon all of us.” Her opening lines expressed her complete solidarity with the victims of that tragedy as did her subsequent words: “Those loved ones were brothers, daughters, fathers and children. They were New Zealanders. They are us. And because they are us, we, as a nation, we mourn them.”

In an age where rationality rules, and therefore most people demand tangible proof for everything, including the existence of God, Gandhi’s speech in Kingsley Hall in 1931 makes one sit up and think again:

“There is an indescribable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why and how He rules and yet they know that there is a Power that certainly rules.” In his inimitable fashion, Bapu goes on to describe the way some poor villagers that he met in Mysore were clueless about the identity of their ruler. “They

simply said some God ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler, I – who am infinitely lesser in respect to God than they to their ruler – need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God – the King of Kings.”

Accepting the Nobel Prize in 1979, Mother Teresa spoke very movingly: “I never forget when I brought a man from the street. He was covered with maggots; his face was the only place that was clean. And yet that man, when we brought him to our home for the dying, he said just one sentence: I have lived like an animal in the street, but I am going to die like an angel, love and care, and he died beautifully.

He went home to God, for dead or death? is nothing but going home to God. And he having enjoyed that love, that being wanted, that being loved, that being somebody to somebody at the last moment, brought that joy in his life.”

Whenever a speaker draws us into their world: they are indeed us. We are them. The gap between speaker and audience disappears when we can connect intimately to their words, see the vivid pictures that their words evoke and feel almost the very same feelings that are coursing through the speaker’s veins. It is a transfer of pure energy: through words.



Rally For Right Speech, Ye Defenders Of Rights

Sujatha Padmanabhan

Sujatha Padmanabhan quotes a study to say that 64 percent Indians encounter fake news online, the highest reported amongst the 22 countries surveyed and this can be highly detrimental to national interest.



Angutara Nikaya (the fourth of the five Buddhist Nikayas), presents the incomparable notion of ‘Samma Vacca’ or Right Speech, which wisdom has remained with us for aeons and the foresight and vision that the Buddha’s Eight Fold Path propagated is something we have regrettably forgotten and failed to preserve in our daily lives. How else do we explain the terrifying threats which vitiate the space that has become an indispensable part of our lives? As the world struggles to grapple with the deadly pandemic and its associate challenges, we’re

without choice forced to consume any and every bit of news from multiple sources. The ease of availability of resources, public platforms, social media handles like Twitter, Instagram and the like have only increasingly complicated the interaction among netizens. Whether a student, parent, teacher, artist or businessmen, all equal stake holders, aren’t we all boggled by the content that plagues the net? Being the largest democracy on the planet, that boasts of the highest percentage of youth, we have greater cause for concern and

have a dire need to detoxify this environment with Right Speech and Communication, now more than ever!

April 16, 2020 was witness to a terrifying incident in Gandinchale Village in Palghar, Maharashtra where two sadhus and a driver were lynched to death on account of rumours fuelled by WhatsApp about thieves operating in the vicinity—unfortunate victims of misplaced wrath of a misled mob!

Manipulated in ways infinitely subtle, we were mute witnesses to another chilling controversy that shook us to the core—The Bulli Bai App case where several women saw themselves auctioned! Examples ad infinitum like the 'Sulli Deals' App of July 2021 that was discovered subsequent to investigations in the Bulli Bai case, can be cited to show how precariously fragile a universe we are in, given the volatility, uncertainty and ambiguity of present times. The Github and Twitter handle exposure alerted us to the dangers that are threatening to engulf us and what causes greater shock and dismay is the involvement of the youth who are yet students or dropouts. What further complicates the issue is the anonymity that the space offers, affording 'safe havens' for these cyber criminals and virtual bullies and their reach now extending beyond physical and geographical boundaries—the irreparable damage they cause

is evident from an inundation of groups and pages, replete with inflammatory and misleading content.

Efforts are on to address the key challenges, trace and punish the accused while we watch with growing concern at the efficacy and success of these dangerous trends and how we are unarmed against the plethora of content masquerading as facts and how it impacts individuals, family lives and the society at large! How do we preserve our sanity amidst all this chaos and keep a cool head when all around us, we stare at extortion, fraud (hacking of bank accounts) identity theft, child porn and exploitation—now that any and every crime prevalent outside has invaded cyber space? How do we hold in check the alarming trends in community forming, hate rhetoric and accompanying aggression or such blatant provocation of violence? We know now, it is imperative that we have collaborative initiatives between government, publishers, social media platforms, civil right groups and academia to put in place laws that govern /modulate/ regulate published content. While one is appreciative of the laudatory efforts of all defenders' / activists' concern to guard the fundamental democratic right of speech, we wish all of us are equally proactive in ensuring that Right Sense prevails. And for Right Sense to prevail, our priority is to eliminate all threats,



not escalate them! Let Right Communication flourish for which we mandatorily use nothing but Right Speech!

What constitutes Right Speech? Going back to Samma Vacca, we realize, the Buddha has mentioned basically four types of abstentions.

Abstaining from

- a. false speech
- b. slanderous speech
- c. harsh or hateful speech
- d. idle chatter

The Buddhist Ethical Canon lays significant emphasis on the third precept of the Eight Fold Path since it's a mindful practice. When we pause and reflect on what we Choose to Say, we lay the foundation for harmonious interaction! As peace-loving, just and responsible users, we must ensure we use extreme caution while we attempt to speak or

intervene. Let us pledge to maintain the safety, security and sovereignty of this space by

- a. making sure we check/verify the reliability and veracity of the content in circulation
- b. speak words that only empower and enrich our lives
- c. weigh the worth of every utterance and only tell a story worthy of being told
- d. speak words which secure not sever communities
- e. strive to dissuade and deter violators with determined resolve and compassionate means

An old Tamil saying comes to my mind, 'Upagaram seiyya iyalaadu poinum, apagaram seiyyathiruttal nalam' meaning even if we are not able to help, it's worthy not to cause harm. India has become a case study for adversarial, harmful networks particularly during the pandemic. Needless to say the lockdowns

have further enabled an alarming spike in Bots or fake accounts and exposed our vulnerabilities. A study by Microsoft found that 64 percent Indians encounter fake news online, which seems to be the highest reported amongst the 22 countries surveyed. A proliferation of edited images, manipulated videos and fake posts have successfully been directed towards the targeted groups and the fallout and implications of such vindictive intent has affected the entire society. Is there any doubt that hateful and abusive speech provokes violent retaliatory action? Don't we have innumerable instances in history where hate speeches have incited such reckless passion and revulsion that have led to obliteration of masses? Do we need a repeat Holocaust or a 9/11 to alert us to shun any kind of language that causes disharmony?

Language, indeed, has evolved in such a dynamic and dramatic manner in the last decade! Not that it has ever remained static but the continuous flux in which it has been has made us aware how representations also change and are continually modified, notwithstanding the fact that each media also has its own semiotics. Naturally language has been progressively adapting itself, absorbing neologisms and many novel ideas, so much so that our own identity is consequent to how we use language. The deeper the understanding of the relationship

between language and the medium, the better does the interaction among users become! While the pluralistic space allows exponential growth in information at such phenomenal speed, it also demands a code of shared ethics mutually beneficial for all to follow; it also requires an understanding coming from a wider humanistic perspective that overrides all sectarianism and inspires love, faith and hope to lead a dignified and peaceful co-existence.

The Bulli Bai App and other cases are a clarion call for urgent and immediate action! Our impulsive reaction could easily be to vociferously condemn outright these deplorable and provocative acts of aggression and violence with yet more abusive and vilifying language! Many of us may even feel righteously justified in doing so! How are we different then, from those who purportedly are the perpetrators? The advocate of peace, Martin Luther King, who fell to an assassin's bullet (read hate, rage, anger) warned - 'Hate begets hate-Violence begets violence. It is all a descending spiral and the end is destruction-for everybody along the way of life, someone must have the sense and morality to cut off the chain of hate'.

Let you and me be that someone to break, hinder any further harm and not repose comfortably with a false sense of assurance that we have

not killed, induced others to kill or incited anyone to be violent. Silence and inaction at this juncture is also collusion and abetment amounting to negligence! The Himalayan task before us is to redefine for Gen Next the significance of Right Speech and to make sure we do not give up ahimsa and tolerance, principles we are historically known to persevere in! Extolling the virtue and power of the spoken word, or Vak Shakthi, Tiruvalluvar observes—

**‘Since gain and loss in life, on speech depend
From careless slip in speech
thyslf defend’**

Each one of us needs to strive to erase these carbon footprints and to sanitize, stabilize, revitalize our

digital universe, we must only speak that which rewrites the nation!

No amount of reiteration is ample to ensure that our youth needs to be cautious, question whatever we read, post or share; let us closely monitor, reflect and be vigilant users of all social media! (FactCheck.org and <https://fullfact.org/about/> are two sites that help us verify the truth). It would do us good to remember that wisdom lies in discerning the truth about the diverse things we come across from diverse sources. The supportive initiatives of all interested and concerned citizens will surely help foster our cultural heritage when we willingly join hands to liberate what is under siege, with Speech that is true and free!



Benediction

The Mind as the Fulcrum

By Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Harih Om Tat Sat, Jai Guru, Jai Guru

Last night during the satsang, somehow the subject of self and self-realization came up. I would like to complement that discussion with a significant clarification. Do not think that the understanding about the self and realizing it, rests solely upon the intelligence of man. We are living as embodied creatures. The word 'embodied' certainly means we are living in a body. This body is a seat for five knowledge senses and five action senses. In other words, the body is a seat for all the senses to be present and to function. But the senses cannot function by themselves. Right from the start to finish, the senses have to be animated and activated by the mind. I can open my eyes only when the mind wishes and wills it. The mind employs the eye organ, sees the objects, takes an impression of the object and it preserves and remembers the impression.

So, every experience, memory and knowledge, all are seated in the mind, sourced in the mind. So our life is primarily and ultimately mental. The role of intelligence is only to collect the information, collate it as collected by the mind and then to derive knowledge and give the necessary direction and guidance to

the mind. Basically and ultimately, mind is the fulcrum point of our life.

There are people who do not have intelligence. Even then they carry on. We, first and last want contentment, peace and fulfillment of the mind. This can be obtained only by self-knowledge is another fact. Why do I say this? Any attempt at self-realization should be a process of purifying the mind, taking away the constrictions of the mind and instilling more and more expansion, purity, refinement and sensitiveness to the mind. This process of mind purification as we call it, is something indispensable. Unfortunately, many people who take to the self and self-realization either are not aware of this fact or they neglect it even if they come to know of it. The seekers are not able to complete their saadhana and get fulfillment only because they are not able to build the necessary purity in the mind.

Whenever the mind has to be purified, it necessarily implies that our sensory activities and interactions will also have to be reformed. We cannot behave like animals, birds and reptiles. We have a mind to think and intelligence to understand. So, all the sensory activities should be subject to the stable dictates and inspirations

of the mind in which the intelligence plays a very important role.

**सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा
सम्यक् ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम् ।
अन्तःशरीरे ज्योतिर्मयो हि शूभ्रो
यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीणदोषाः ॥**

**satyena labhyas-tapasā hyeṣa ātmā
samyak jñānena brahmacaryeṇa
nityam |
anta:śarīre jyotirmayo hi śubhro
yaṁ paśyanti yatayaḥ kṣīṇa-doṣā: ||
(Mundakopaniṣad 3.1.5)**

Satyena labhyas-tapasa hyesaatma.
This atma, this self can be obtained only by adhering to truthfulness, a mental discipline.

Samyak jnanena brahmacaryena nityam: Also by the right guidance from the intelligence in the form of knowledge and direction.

Brahmacaryena: By the practice of celibacy.

Anta:sarire jyotirmayo hi subhro:
Within the body in the nature of brilliance and splendor, the self is constantly shining. It is being eclipsed by the impure functioning of the mind and the unbridled activities of the senses. That is why we are not able to get at the splendor of the self within.

Yam pasyanti yatayah ksina-dosa: The striving souls when they become free of the defects or evil, vices, so the process consists in eliminating and eschewing all the vicious traits in you. They can be bodily, sensory, they can be oral,

they can also be mental. So in the mind level, articulation level, sensory level, whatever impurity and evil are there, they have to be discovered and eliminated. That means you have to choose your sensory indulgences, bridle them.

Similarly, you have to be very selective and pure in your talk. Mean or display no harm to the others. The mind has to expand, including all the other people also in it. Don't think that: "I am alone, my family is alone." I am a member of the family, family is a member of the society, society is a member of the nation, the national is a member of the globe, globe itself is a member of the whole universe. As I am concerned about myself, I have to be concerned about the world and the society. Now, this is an expansion – Getting free from the natural and inborn constrictions of the mind and allowing it to grow. This kind of a growth, purity, expansion and refinement of the mind, this is what is going to determine the success of your approach to self-realization. There is a play of intelligence there, but primarily it is to bring about with a note of compulsion and inspiration, the purity and sublimity of the mind. One should remember it.

Harih Om Tat Sat, Jai Guru.

(Excerpted from Saadhana, PR 08 Jan 2015 - Importance of Purity and Sublimity of Mind)

Pay Attention To Your Speech

Thanissaro Bhikkhu

As my teacher once said, “If you can’t control your mouth, there’s no way you can hope to control your mind.” This is why right speech is so important in day-to-day practice.



Right speech, explained in negative terms, means avoiding four types of harmful speech:

- a. lies (words spoken with the intent of misrepresenting the truth);**
- b. divisive speech (spoken with the intent of creating rifts between people);**
- c. harsh speech (spoken with the intent of hurting another person’s feelings);**
- d. idle chatter (spoken with no purposeful intent at all).**

Notice the focus on intent: This is where the practice of right speech intersects with the training

of the mind. Before you speak, you focus on why you want to speak. This helps get you in touch with all the machinations taking place in the committee of voices running your mind. If you see any unskillful motives lurking behind the committee’s decisions, you veto them. As a result, you become more aware of yourself, more honest with yourself, more firm with yourself. You also save yourself from saying things that you’ll later regret. In this way you strengthen qualities of mind that will be helpful

in meditation, at the same time avoiding any potentially painful memories that would get in the way of being attentive to the present moment when the time comes to meditate.

In positive terms, right speech means speaking in ways that are trustworthy, harmonious, comforting and worth taking to heart. When you make a practice of these positive forms of right speech, your words become a gift to others. In response, other people will start listening more to what you say, and will be more likely to respond in kind. This gives you a sense of the power of your actions: the way you act in the present moment does shape the world of your experience. You don't need to be a victim of past events.

For many of us, the most difficult part of practicing right speech lies in how we express our sense of humor. Especially here in America, we're used to getting laughs with exaggeration, sarcasm, group stereotypes, and pure silliness—all classic examples of wrong speech. If people get used to these sorts of careless humor, they stop listening carefully to what we say. In this way, we cheapen our own discourse. Actually, there's enough irony in the state of the world that we don't need to exaggerate or be sarcastic. The greatest humorists are the ones who simply make us look directly at the way things are.

Expressing our humor in ways that are truthful, useful, and wise may require thought and effort, but when we master this sort of wit we find that the effort is well spent. We've sharpened our own minds and have improved our verbal environment. In this way, even our jokes become part of our practice: an opportunity to develop positive qualities of mind and to offer something of intelligent value to the people around us.

So pay close attention to what you say—and to why you say it. When you do, you'll discover that an open mouth doesn't have to be a mistake.

Meditations 10. (published Feb. 13, 2021) Transcribed Dhamma talks on breath meditation and various aspects of the Buddhist Path given by Thānissaro Bhikkhu during the evening meditation sessions at Metta Forest Monastery primarily from 2018–2019.

<https://www.dhammatalks.org/books/NobleStrategy/Section0008.html>



Poetry – The Poetry In Words

Rachna Joshi

Rachna Joshi shows us how poetry takes us to the very core of the ideas of right speech.

Right speech and the use of right words, avoiding untruths and idle talk has been central to the Buddha's Right Speech concept in his Noble Eight Fold Path. The Eightfold Path consists of eight practices: Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Samadhi ('meditative absorption or union'). The Noble Eightfold Path is one of the principal teachings of Buddhism, taught to lead to Arhatship.

Poets from all over have expressed their feelings similarly, through the usage of right words, manifest in the elegance of language used in their poetry. This sensitizes people and builds an atmosphere of camaraderie and appreciation of each other. Great poets, like Tagore, have achieved a balance between creativity and rationality. There are two sides to a coin. Good and bad coexist. There are certain human values common to all.

In India, in the middle ages, the Bhakta poets challenged social norms through their writings. However, it rarely resulted in persecution and martyrdom of the kind that Europe saw for centuries.

The religious establishments in India continued a dialogue with the Bhaktas, and the many streams of thought and practice frequently coexisted, and at times merged with one another. For example, Bhakti and Sufism coexisted in North India. The importance of love was emphasized over bookish knowledge. Sages like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Narsinh Mehta and Guru Nanak have said this also. 'Nanak dukhiya sab sansaar'. The shift of the language of writing from Sanskrit to the language of the common people also brought an opportunity for women's creativity to express itself in devotional religion.

Mystical poets like Meerabai have written songs and bhajans about her devotion to Krishna which are sung even today. M.S. Subbulakshmitoo has sung them with great feeling, 'Main Hari Charananki Dasi, Malin Vishay Ras Tyaage man ke, Antarhoteudaasi, Saawariya, Mohaniya, MeroPiya, Prabhuaavo, aavo, aavo, aavo, aavoaavoji.'. Spirituality is the core of her poems which are epiphanic and represent the emotions of love and transcendence.

As illustrated in the lines below from '*Mira Asks Only to Join with the Elephants & Parrots*' (Mirabai Ecstatic Poems, Versions by Robert Bly and Jane Hirshfield, Afterword by John Stratton Hawley, Aleph Classics, 2017):

**O Beloved, it's promised that all
who speak the Name
Will be saved.
By its power, rocks lose their
hardness,
They melt like ice into water; the
earth itself grows tender,
Wanting to yield...'**

For the English mystical poet, William Blake, the life of the imagination was more real than the material world. This philosophy demanded the identification of ideas with symbols which could be translated into visual images, word and symbol, each reinforcing the other. His belief in the stages of innocence, experience and higher innocence informed his vision. The need to show through images, rather than tell is the key to unlock this mystery.

**'When the voices of children are
heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my
breast
And everything else is still...'
(*Nurse's Song, Songs of Innocence
and Experience*, William Blake,
Oxford University Press, 1970)**

Another Sufi poetry book, 'Conference of the Birds' by Farid-ud-Din Attar talks about the renunciation of Greed, Vanity and Self-Pride on the way to immortality. Birds like the hoopoe, turtle dove, finch, parrot, etc., each representing a human fault, pass through various valleys in their search, to meet the Simorgh, only to realize he is within. Everyone cannot make a leap of Faith, most need a bridge. Even Hindu philosophy has talked of the four ashrams: Brahmachari, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyaas. The Rigveda too talks of the importance of 'Tap' or Tapasya.

The less recognized English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, has written in, '*That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire & of the Comfort of the Resurrection*':

**'Birds build-but not I build: no,
but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed
One work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life
Send my roots rain.'**

Similarly, Emily Dickinson has said:

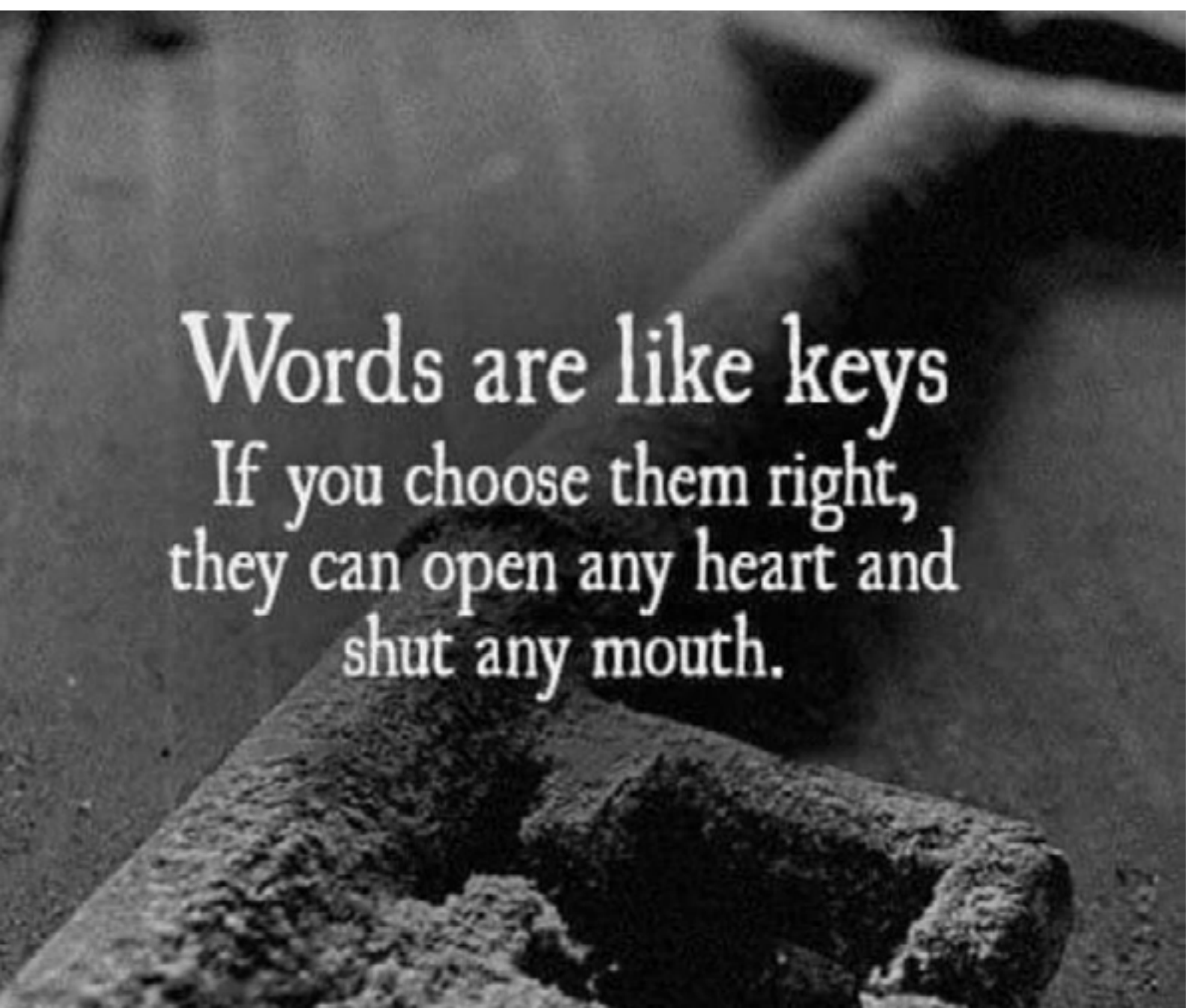
**'After great pain, a formal feeling
comes...
First chill, then stupor, then the
letting go.'**

In conclusion, I feel that life is a series of experiences, and ultimately one has to look within, instead of looking at the other. One has to rely on one's own resources and look

for inspiration in the quotidian. One has to refine and elevate one's mind, and realize that there is something beyond. Ultimately, it is God's grace. Poetry from all over is rich in metaphors and connotations and allusions to this theme. The use of language and diction is central to mystery and expressiveness. The nuances of language can capture the kaleidoscope of human experience—love, heartbreak, and ultimately renunciation. As mentioned in my poem, '*At Night—Alone*', (Travel Tapestry, Yatra Books, 2013)

**The Arjuna question
Is all effort wasted
Scattered like the clouds
Caught in a storm?
The Guru answers,
'There is always a fresh start
From where we left off'
'Should she turn inward to hear:
Faith, devotion, meditation
Release comes not by work, nor
by progeny**

Nor by wealth, but by renunciation'
(Kaivalya Upanishad, shloka 2 & 3)



Words are like keys
If you choose them right,
they can open any heart and
shut any mouth.

Swami Vivekananda

The Universal Man

Shri S Regunathan

A Glimpse of the Swami in young Naren

She was sleeping quite soundly, or so she thought. Bhuvaneshwari was tired. Nowadays she was engaged in severe penance. She busied herself the whole day making offerings and observing several austere measures. The belief was that you had to be in Varanasi to perform this particular practice. But since she was in Kolkatta (then Calcutta) she had requested her aged aunt who was in Varanasi to perform the rites required, while she did it in Calcutta. This way it was taken that she herself was performing the ritual at Varanasi. She was doing all this as a prayer to Lord Siva to bless her with a son.

Bhuvaneshwari was married to Vishwanath Dutta, a very well-known lawyer in Calcutta. In fact he was the third generation of lawyers in the family. Bhuvaneshwari was a very young girl when she bore two children, a boy and a girl, and unfortunately lost both of them. Her loss saddened her till she gave birth to three lovely girls, one after another. She, however, still yearned for a son. That is why she was performing the penance.

That night when she was sleeping she had a vivid dream. She dreamt Lord Siva Himself had got up from his seat of meditation and walked into her womb. Soon enough she conceived and the child born to her was resplendent in beauty and charm. He was born on the day of Makara Sankranti, falling on the 12th of January in the year 1863. The family wanted to name him Durgaprasad after his paternal grandfather. But Bhuvaneshwari was very vociferous in her protest. Durgaprasad had become an ascetic renouncing family and home. She wanted her son to enjoy life. She named him Vireswar. In later years he came to be called Narendranath.

There was something about names and the boy, for in later years too he changed his name several times. The name by which he is most well-known today is Swami Vivekananda.

Naren, as he was called at home was not just delightful to look at but was also a bundle of mischief. While most others enjoyed his pranks and of course, they make good stories to narrate now, they quite exasperated

his mother. It is mentioned in one of the books about him that she would dunk the little son of hers in cold water saying "Siva Siva," to calm him down. It is said that it did have effect. But for how long is a debatable question! The mother was very proud of her son and yet there would be times when she would wring her hands in exasperation, saying, "Oh Siva I asked for you, not the demon beside you!" You can imagine the bright eyed boy smiling at his mother's helplessness!

He was naturally highly pampered by his sisters but he teased them so much, sometimes to tears. When he was very young two maids had been employed to keep an eye on him. Naren grew up in a full house. A prosperous father had many relatives living on his income. Bhuvanewari was an accepting hostess and so if the young boy had much scope for mischief, he also had many people to watch over him. And yet, two maids were required.

You may remember that Bhuvanewari's reluctance to name Naren after his paternal grandfather stemmed from the fact that the grandfather had become a sanyasi. He had left home in search of truth. Young Naren showed a distinct fondness for wandering monks. It was customary in Bengal to make the boy wear a dhoti when he was just past infancy. So maybe he was about five or six years old. The first ever dhoti bought for Naren was a

highly ornate embroidered one. He barely wore it when he saw a monk and gave it away to the monk. When Bhuvanewari asked him what had happened, she heard he had given it away to the monk. That sent a warning signal to Bhuvanewari. She gave strict instructions that Naren was to be led away from the place where monks could be seen visiting. Often if they were going past the house, young Naren would be locked up inside his room to prevent any possible interaction. But did that deter Naren? No. That naughty boy found ways of calling the monks to his window and carried on conversations with them, often donating anything he could lay his hands on. That seemed to delight the young child.

Naren's maternal grandmother was a great story teller. A Vaishnavite by faith, she used to regale Naren with stories after stories from the Bhagvatam, of Gods and Goddesses, of the Ramayana and Mahabharata and even of the evolved sages of those and ancient times.

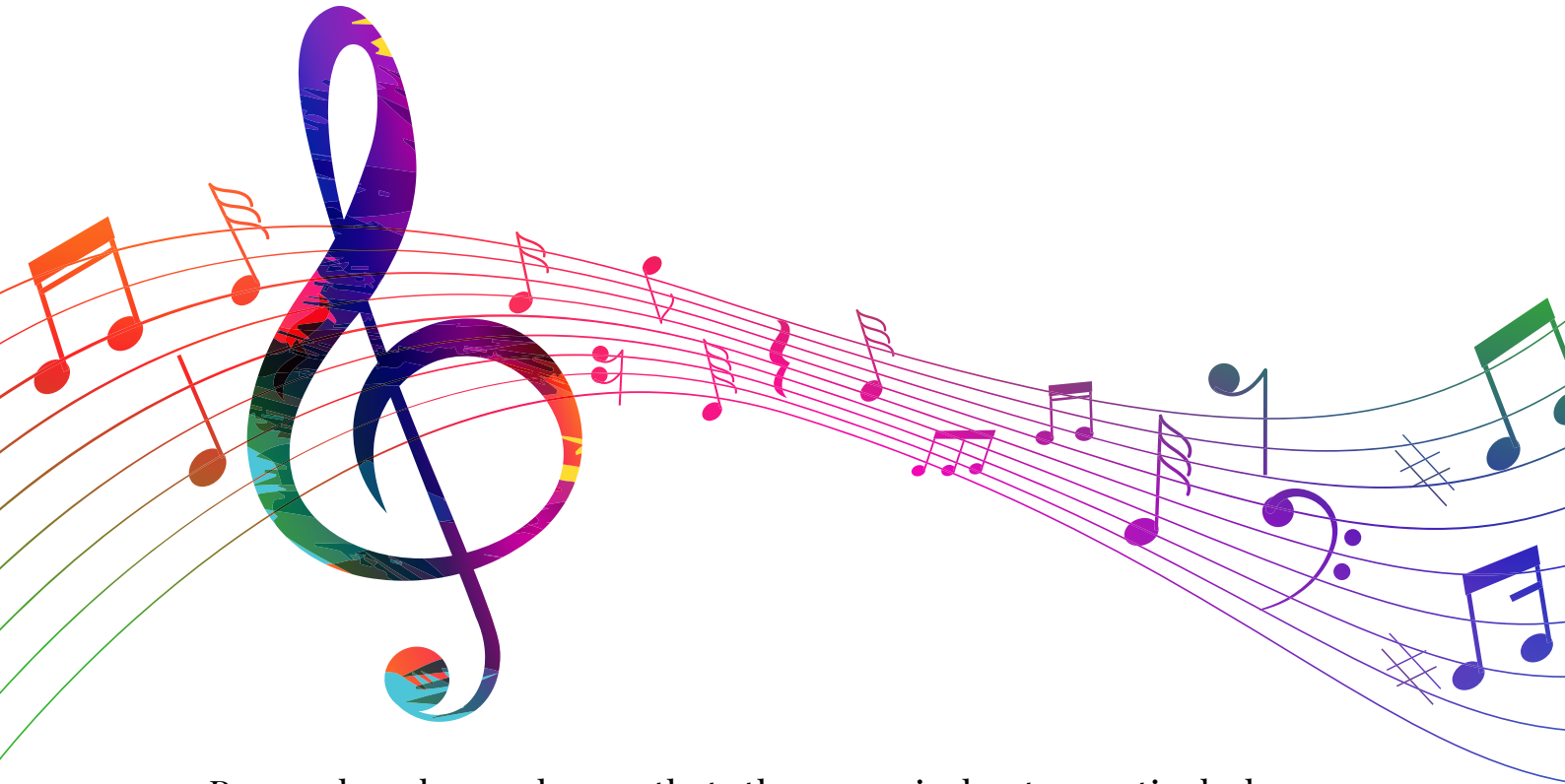
In fact, it is said that Swami Vivekananda became fond of Krishna in his later years because of these stories.

(...to be continued...)

Speaking Stones

Aruna Srinivasan

Aruna Srinivasan tells us bits of history as she hears it from many pillars across temples of South India.



Researches have shown that the ancient communities across the world, particularly in Africa, used drum beats to communicate the tribal news far and wide. The sounds of the drums would reach even up to 20 miles.

Did the ancient communities use stones too for communication? Maybe, especially when we consider all the musical stones that we hear about in various world heritage sites and temples. Whether or not stones were used for wider communication, certainly they were used as outlets for expression – expression in

musical notes particularly.

Take the musical pillars of Hampi, in Karnataka, for instance. The temple, dedicated to Vishnu's incarnation Vitthala, was built by Devaraya II, one of the rulers of the Vijayanagar Empire. The musical pillars are located here in the ruins of Ranga Mantapa. There are huge main pillars which support the ceiling and each main pillar has a circle of seven smaller pillars surrounding them. These smaller pillars give out musical notes of Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, when you stroke them with your fingers or a stick.

While the musical aspect of these pillars is a huge tourist attraction, the fact that gentler music springs from hard stone remains a mystery. Well, is it indeed a mystery? Or, was King Devaraya II aware of the music emitting properties of these stones when he ordered to erect them? Or was it just accidental that these stones make such soft sounds?

National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) led by Dr. Sharada Srinivasan, conducted research on the Hampi rock samples. Located on the Deccan Plateau, one of the oldest geographical formations in the world, Hampi is peppered with a lot of rocks that are millions of years old.

Huge monolithic hills were formed initially in the region and over a period they disintegrated into huge boulders and rocks with different shapes. These were originally gneiss rocks, a kind of metamorphic rock that are identified with their bands. Some of these bands have deposits of granular minerals that are bound together with interlocking texture. Due to their mineral composition, the rocks in Hampi are called Pink Porphyritic Granite. And the same mineral deposits give the rocks their resonant properties too.

Ancient civilizations used rock gongs to produce musical sounds as well as to convey messages through signals by raising sounds on the rocks. Due to the presence of minerals, these

rocks give out hollow and metallic sounds when struck.

Later, the old rock gongs morphed into lithophones – a string of musical stones lined up to produce music by striking them. The Hornfels rocks found in the Skiddaw Mountain near the northern England town of Keswick, are said to have a distinct tone and longer ring compared to slate, another rock formation that gives out resonance. Today, Keswick has many lithophones. The first was built in 1785, by Peter Crosthwaite, an inventor, who was interested in the musical properties of the Skiddaw stones. Decades later Joseph Richardson, a local stone mason, built a larger eight – octave lithophone. His lithophone was built with 61 Hornfels stones. Later more steel bars, Swiss bells and other percussion instruments were added and the lithophone is now kept in the Keswick Museum and Art Gallery.

Apparently, King Devaraya II knew about the musical properties of the rocks there. And so did the people in the region. There are rock gongs in the Vanibhadreshwara Temple in Mallapur, a town near Hampi. In Hire Benakal, another neighborhood town, there are tombs which have musical properties. So, it is quite evident that the people here were very well aware of the sounds of the rocks in their region.

Lithophones were common in

Confucian rituals in China. In fact, the culture of using tuned stones for music has been common in the region - in countries like Japan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Korea. Stone chimes are common even today in many of the temples in these countries. One of the oldest Lithophones was found in Thailand in 1949 and is still in use. A research paper by Roger Blench on tuned percussions in Indo-Pacific region, published by University of Washington Libraries, elaborately speaks of the tuned stones used in these places. The paper presents evidence from excavations and historical documents.

Indian sculptors of ancient temples were well versed in the knowledge of different types of rocks. The properties of the various rocks along with the architectural knowledge are well documented in many ancient literatures like Vayu Purana, a Sanskrit text, and one of the major ancient Puranas of Hinduism. Vishwakshena Samhita and Narada Samhita are some more instances of such literature. These texts elaborately detail the ways to identify the different properties of the rocks, methods to test their strength, sound quality and how to choose them appropriately for erecting major constructions as per an architectural plan.

The musical pillars in the Ranga Mandapa of the Vittahala Temple in Hampi, there are certain remarkable

aspects. The Saptaswara pillars emit sounds similar to the seven musical notes of classical music. One of the pillars depicts a Tabla player. The sculpture is partly damaged. But one can hear the sounds similar to the Tabla when one taps on the adjoining thin pillar. Another pillar close by presents a sculpture of a cymbal (Tala) player. The thin pillar adjoining emits a distinct high-pitched sound just as the sounds of the cymbals used for Nattuvangam in Bharatnatyam. And the pillar near a sculpture of a Mridangam player emits a deeper sound, resembling Mridangam. Interestingly the sound from this pillar is different from the sound emitting from the pillar with the sculpture of Damaru player.

The musical pillars seem to be a constant factor in many of the temples in the southern part of India. Be it the Nellaippar temple in Tirunelveli, Meenakshi temple in Madhurior the temples in Suchindram near Nagarkovil, most of the temples in the region sport musical pillars. In Nellaippar temple in Tirunelveli, when you tap one pillar the adjoining pillar also emits a sound in vibration. One can observe that these pillars are erected in various sizes of thickness, probably to ensure the exact musical resonant. Although most of the pillars are embellished with one or the other exquisitely carved sculpture, the pillars that emit sounds are plain. The central

pillar could vary in height. But the musical pillars are of same height with various girth and shape.

The samples of rocks from the musical pillars at Suchindram were observed in the research conducted by the Department of Geology, Presidency College, Chennai. Dr Subramaniam, geologist observed that these rocks contained significant amounts of silica, which is common in the rocks of Hampi too. Apparently rocks for the erection of the musical pillars in the region were sourced from several places and lugged into the venues.

The list of temples that sport musical pillars in the region is long. The temples in the towns like Algarkovil, Alwarthirunagari, Kalakadu, Kuttralam, Thirupathi, Thiruvananthapuram, and Thenkasi are a few names in the list.

Since the Deccan Plateau is one of the earth's oldest formation the rocks here are distinct and have special properties, particularly the sound resonating properties. That probably explains the abundance of musical pillars in the region.

So, the phenomenon of musical pillars is more scientific than a mystery.



Reflections



In Word and Thought

Our editorial team discovers that from a society which placed great emphasis on the sound of a word, we grew into one which collected words from different languages, if necessary, so as to be able to have a word for every thought and have now reached a society which communicates, no matter what the word...

If there is anything as old as the human being it is the desire to communicate. Whether they be hieroglyphics or the yet-to-be deciphered Mohenjo-Daro script, the urge to communicate has always been there. Words have changed in

meaning, usage, formation, even sound. Looking deeper into the issue, we found we are perhaps the most verbose generation. The text of the Vedas are known for their brevity and a very telling excerpt from Sri Aurobindo's works gives us a glimpse of the Why and How of it. In sharp contrast, is the contemporary times where words are shrinking but in a different manner and the whole emphasis seems to be shifting from language to effective communication. If, in the Vedic ages the emphasis was on the effect of the sound a word produced, that aspect is absent in the language used by the modern generation. Shakespeare and Cervantes wrote so much. We fill our pages with words looking

for hidden nuances. We have added so many words to language that immortalize some experience or incident. Read on to find out more...

Resonance of Words...

From the past history of language certain consequences derive which are of considerable importance in Vedic interpretation. In the first place by a knowledge of the laws under which the relations of Sound and Sense formed themselves in the Sanskrit tongue and by a careful and minute study of its word families it is possible, to a great extent, to restore that past history of words. It is possible to account for the meanings actually possessed by them, to show how they were worked out through the various stages of language development, to establish the mutual relations of different significances and to explain how they came to be attached to the same word, in spite of the wide difference, and sometimes, even the

direct contrariety of their sense-values. It is possible to restore lost sense of words on a sure and scientific basis and to justify them by an appeal to the observed laws of association which governed the development of Aryan tongues, to the secret evidence of the word itself and to the corroborative evidence of its immediate kindred. Thus, instead of having a purely floating and conjectural basis for our dealings with the vocables of the Vedic language, we can work with confidence upon a solid and reliable foundation.

Naturally it does not follow that because a Vedic word may have or must have had at one time a particular significance, that significance can be safely applied to the actual text of the Veda. But we do establish a sound sense and a clear possibility of its being the right sense for the Veda. Secondly, one remarkable feature of language in its inception is the enormous number of different meanings of which a single word was capable and also the enormous number of words which could be used to express a single idea. Afterwards this tropical luxuriance came to be cut down. The intellect intervened with its growing need of precision, its growing sense of economy. The bearing capacity of words progressively diminished; and it became less and less tolerable to be burdened with a superfluous number of words for the same idea,





a redundant variety of ideas for the same word.

The Rishis' use of language was governed by this ancient psychology of the Word. When in English we use the word "wolf or 'cow', we mean simply the animal designated; we are not conscious of any reason why we should use that particular sound for the idea except the immemorial custom of the language; and we cannot use it for any other sense or purpose except by an artificial device of style. But for the Vedic Rishi, 'vrika' meant the tearer and therefore, among other applications of the sense, a wolf; 'dhenu' meant the fosterer, the nourisher and therefore a cow. But, the original and general sense predominates, the derived and particular is secondary. Therefore, it was possible for the fashioner of

a hymn to use these common words with a great pliability, sometimes putting forward the image of the wolf or the cow, sometimes using it to colour the more general sense, sometimes keeping it merely as a conventional figure for the psychological conception on which his mind was dwelling... It is so that words like 'ghritam', the clarified butter, 'soma' the sacred wine, and a host of others are used.

(Excerpted from The Secret of the Veda by Sri Aurobindo)

A Philomath

"We're all surrounded by words like air, and we all need them even though they are often invisible, just like air."...Anu Garg

Does your back itch in that place where the hands cannot reach from



the bottom nor can they reach from the top, above your shoulder...you are frantically looking for even a pencil to scratch yourself? Well, that place in your body, which you cannot reach to scratch, is called acnestis. It comes from the Greek word aknestis, which means spine.

Do you find yourself wildly gesticulating to explain to your son or daughter far away, how loud the neighbour's birthday bash was? Just say it was a calliopean noise...that means it was a piercingly loud noise.

Of course, if you say this is dryadust, I will stop writing any further. Even though Sir Walter Scott dedicated his famous work, *The Ivanhoe*, to Dr. Dryadust, F.A.S, no such person ever existed. He was Sir Walter Scott's fictional creation. He dedicated all the dry historical facts that he had learnt to Dr. Dryadust.

One can go on endlessly and that is what Anu Garg does. In 1994, a young man from Uttar Pradesh, now working as a techie in the West Coast of the United States, decided to send out regular emails

to friends. Well, by itself that is not news. But, what makes it news is that his email was about the word he had discovered that day. As he was trying to learn the English language better, he discovered words which had interesting "biographies", as he calls them.

"I learned that each word has a biography, we call it etymology. Once you get to know a word, even the most plain-looking word has fascinating stories to tell. The word "windows" is "wind's eye" etymologically speaking. How much more poetic can you get? It's easy to fall in love with words, "Anu Garg is quoted to have said.

He started sharing his discoveries with people who were interested. The first word was zephyr meaning a breeze from the west...the word just happened like all his words happen for the Philomath as he likes to be called, says words rush to him asking to be selected for the day. Much like school children racing to be the first in line. Today he sends out free mails to about half a million people in 170 different countries. You can register for an email too at his website Wordsmith.org. He has also co-authored a book with his wife, Stuti titled, *A Word a Day: A Romp Through Some of the Most Unusual and Intriguing Words in English*. The book has run into several editions.

He not only gives you the

"biographies" of the words, he also discovers, for example, that Facetious is a word with all five vowels, once and only once, and in order. Anu Garg says in one interview, "Words are like colours on a palette, "You don't have to use all those colours in a painting, but it helps to be able to find just the right shade when you need it."

IMO (In My Opinion)

In the future those who write full words may be 1NAM (one in a million). The Q4U is JOOC. As long as you are AAK, that is EOS. CYO my BFF. Can you see my BEG? Just to say TIA...

No, the above are not typos. It just shows you are not active in forums like WhatsApp and other social media. Our literature of the future will more likely read like the above, say futurists. Q4U means question for you. AAK means Alive and Kicking, EOS means End of story, CYO means See you online, BFF means best friend forever and BEG means Big evil grin. TIA is thanks in advance.

Futurists say that as texts become shorter, more fragmentary, and multimodal (using pictures, color, sound, ki-netics as well as words), the strategies of interpretation and ways of reading will also undergo change. Of course, predictably those worried about content are wringing their hands in desperation

lamenting on the loss of nuances and 'feel' of language. Designers are however fashioning themselves as ace communicators and thinking of newer and newer ways to spruce the communication with symbols other than words too so much, so that, even now many of the dimensions are emerging—political, economic, social, technological, typical of post modernity.

There is a prediction that just as we are not able to understand our Vedic Sanskrit, we will be unable to understand a text from the 22nd century too... "a linguist faced now with a typical text from the 22nd century, he or she would be unlikely to conclude that the language has radically changed in its core vocabulary or grammar. But we might not be able to make much sense of it."



Childrens Corner

Your Words Describe You

You know in olden times, you could not shop online. If you needed something either you would have to go out to a shop and get it or someone would come to your doorstep selling it. There used to be many people who would carry different kinds of products on their back, on a horseback or on the back of a donkey and move from village to village selling them. They would sell anything. Some sold salt, some sold pots, some sold vegetables and some even sold jewellery.

There was a tradesman who was selling lovely pots and pans. He even had some jewellery. People used to love to buy from him and he made lots of money. He had a clever strategy to feed his donkey. He had a lion's skin with him. He would drape the donkey with that skin. Then from far away the donkey looked like a lion and people were scared of him. After all no one comes so close to a lion to check out how exactly he looks.

The tradesman would then lead the donkey-dressed-as-a-lion to a green field full of ripe grains and let him loose. The donkey would have his feast while the tradesman did his job, found his food and relaxed.

The donkey-turned-lion would sometimes stray into a forest,



sometimes into a farmer's field. Generally he was never disturbed. But, in one village, he strayed into a farmland and stayed there for too long, eating too much. The farmers of the village felt the lion would eat all their crop. So they ran and got some spikes, some arrows, some iron rods etc. and started throwing them at the lion. The animal got scared. What did he do? He started braying!

Instantly the farmers got to know it was a donkey and not a lion. They rushed forth and drove the donkey away. The donkey's voice gave him away!

"Similarly" say the wise, "your words give you away. Speak gently. Speak wisely. Speak after thinking and reflection."

(Based on Jataka tales number 189)

Childrens Corner

The Story of Chitragriva

There was once a pigeon called Chitragriva. He was actually the king of pigeons. He had many pigeons with him and they all loved him as he was a kind king. One day as they were flying through a forest, they saw a lot of grains scattered beneath a banyan tree.

“Look, look, O king!” said one of the pigeons in his group, “There is food down there and I am so hungry!”

All the pigeons looked down and they all got excited.

“Hold on guys,” said Chitragriva. “Is it not surprising that in the middle of such a dense and lonely forest, we are finding fresh grains? Seems like a trap to me.”

“Oh!” said another pigeon. “Who would come to a forest to strew grains? Come on, we are hungry.”

Chitragriva told all the pigeons to perch on a tree there and told them a story:

“Once upon a time, there was an old tiger. He found it hard to hunt. Then an idea struck him. He walked into his cave and searched out a shining bright golden bracelet that he had taken off the arm of a prince he had once killed. Carrying the bracelet he came and sat outside his den waiting in a disinterested fashion.

Next to his den was a pond which was actually quicksand. Anyone who entered that could never come out.

Soon a traveller was walking past the forest. The tiger spied him and roared. The traveller got very scared and started to run when the tiger said, “Stop, stop, young man. I am not going to kill you. See I am an old lion, I will be dying soon. I have a golden bracelet with me, I want to give it away before I die.”

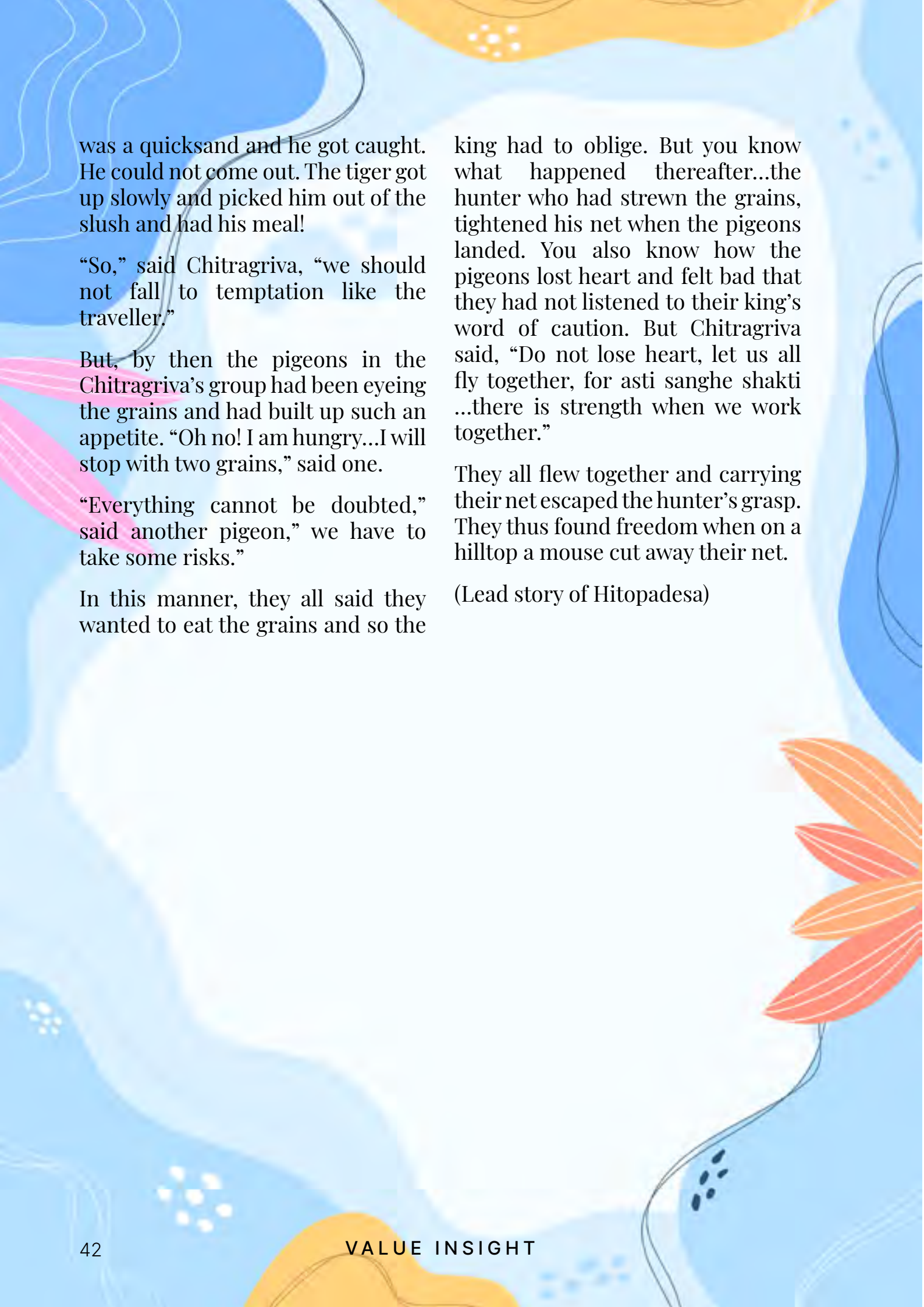
The traveller did not stop he was still running. The tiger roared louder and send, “Stop, or else I will catch up with you in a minute.”

The traveller stopped dead.

“I cannot trust you,” said the traveller. “After all you are the most dreaded creature of the forest. I do not want the bracelet, bye.”

“No, no stop. Here is a God given chance for you to make your life. See, my nails have become blunt and my teeth have fallen. I cannot kill. I want to give away all that I have and die peacefully. Come take this... have a bath in the pond nearby and come take this bracelet and make your life.”

The traveller was tempted. He thought hard. He decided to take the bracelet. He entered the pond but it



was a quicksand and he got caught. He could not come out. The tiger got up slowly and picked him out of the slush and had his meal!

“So,” said Chitragriva, “we should not fall to temptation like the traveller.”

But, by then the pigeons in the Chitragriva’s group had been eyeing the grains and had built up such an appetite. “Oh no! I am hungry...I will stop with two grains,” said one.

“Everything cannot be doubted,” said another pigeon, “we have to take some risks.”

In this manner, they all said they wanted to eat the grains and so the

king had to oblige. But you know what happened thereafter...the hunter who had strewn the grains, tightened his net when the pigeons landed. You also know how the pigeons lost heart and felt bad that they had not listened to their king’s word of caution. But Chitragriva said, “Do not lose heart, let us all fly together, for *asti sanghe shakti* ...there is strength when we work together.”

They all flew together and carrying their net escaped the hunter’s grasp. They thus found freedom when on a hilltop a mouse cut away their net.

(Lead story of Hitopadesa)

Childrens Corner

Words made the Difference

Once upon a time, in a kingdom in Arunachal Pradesh, there lived a King and a Queen. They were very happy and they were also very rich. In their kingdom everyone was happy and rich. They spoke sweetly to each other. They sang and danced and worked very hard.

The Queen had a special necklace. It could speak. Everyday the necklace would advise the Queen on different matters, tell her a joke and ask her riddles. The talking necklace and the Queen were great friends. One day the Queen saw a man suffering from some problems. She asked the necklace, "Why is that man suffering?"

The necklace replied, "Those who are friendly to everyone do not suffer. Those who are angry with others suffer."

"But, necklace, his stomach is hurting," said the Queen. "What has that got to do with being friendly or not."

"If he had been friendly someone would have given him medicine," replied the necklace. "Someone would have taken care of him."

"Oh how can that be possible. I want to see how it works," said the Queen.

"Oh no! Don't even try. It is not nice

to suffer, it is nice to be friendly with people. It is not nice to be angry," said the necklace to the Queen.

But the Queen was insistent. So the necklace said, "Go to the King and say he looks ugly and is a fool."

The Queen did that.

The King got angry. He was rude to the Queen. They now started fighting. Every day they fought, more and more.

The King fought so much with his wife that he even forgot to go to his court. He did not manage his state well. People in his kingdom started becoming unhappy too. Everyone started fighting. Soon there was no food in the homes.

One day when the Queen was lying on her bed and crying she realized she had brought this on herself. She quickly took out her necklace and said, "You are right. It is no fun to be unhappy. Please tell me how to become happy again."

The necklace smiled. "Go to your husband, the King, who is so unhappy and sad. Tell him all that happened and tell him you love him. You are sorry."

The Queen did as she was told. The King was amazed to hear everything.

When the Queen said, “Sorry,” the King hugged her and said, “I am sorry too. Let us be happy again.”

The King and Queen now started looking after the people of their kingdom and soon everyone was happy again.

(Adapted from a Singpho tale)

Some fun!

Anagrams

Do You know what an Anagram is?

It is a word, phrase, or name formed by rearranging the letters of another, such as flow, formed from wolf.

What are the anagrams of :

TEA

EAST

NAME

BRUSH

GOD

FREE

SECURE

Answer: Eat, Seal, Dog, Reel, Mane, Shrub, Rescue

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Dr. E Sreedharan
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