

SANGAMA

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Heavy rains in Southern India

At least 300 people have been killed and more than 1 million displaced in the flooding triggered by torrential rains in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Out of which at least 199 people have died in the southern state of Karnataka and more than 650,000 people have been rendered homeless as per disaster-management secretary H.V. Parshwanath .

Central Government has declared the help of 1000 crore Rupees to flood hit areas. Corporate bodies and general public have donated about 700 crore Rupees to the Karnataka State Government. But the Government's estimate of total loss is at 17,000 crore Rupees and Karnataka Government says that it needs at least 2,000 crores to meet the immediate requirements.

Military officials have wrapped up most of the rescue efforts in Karnataka and neighboring Andhra Pradesh state, because flood waters were receding.

VSNA – Chicago Convention

Chicago convention CDs are available for purchase. Edited versions are sold for \$20.00 and unedited versions for \$50.00.

Next convention (year 2010) will be held in Toronto, Canada.

Shunya to Shunya a book written by Dr. Guru Bale is available for purchase. The cost of the book is \$50.00. The proceeds of sale will go to charity.

SIVADVAITAS' SIVAYOGA - Part I

Linga Raju

Veerasaivas (VS) believe that the Individual Self and the Universal Self are one and the same. The Universal Self is referred to as Sunya, Linga, Mahalinga, Siva, Parasiva, and in Upanishadic terms Brahman, Parabrahman and Paramatman. The Individual Self is referred to as Linga, Atmalinga, Atman and Jeevatman. The literal meaning of Sunya is void or emptiness. Sunya is permanent, eternal and real.

The universe and worldly existence are also real and evolved in an orderly process. God being real, and everything else being real and within God, is the Absolute Reality of the VS. Advaita Vedanta of Sankaracharya followers (advaitas) agree with the VS in believing in oneness (non-duality) and that God is real, but they fundamentally disagree and say everything else is an illusion. They maintain that God is tranquil – static not dynamic. They consider that all consciousness is activity and therefore not consistent with the Absolute. But the Absolute to Sivadvaitas is at once static and dynamic and that existence without self-consciousness would be null. The VS' belief that the Absolute is not only self-luminous but also self-conscious distinguishes the sivadvaitas from the advaitas. Buddhists also use the term Sunya for the Absolute and Ultimate Principle. They disagree with both the VS and advaitas in believing that Sunya is impermanent. But they agree with the advaitas and assert that this universe is unreal, imaginary and false; that existence itself is an illusion; and that the Soul is not real. Dvaita is a person who believes in duality – the individual and God are two separate entities. Although some Hindus appear to be dvaitas, the ultimate goal of all Hindus is to become one with God. The concept of duality appears to be followed by Jews, Christians and Muslims. Please note that any comparison to others is to better understand the Veerasaiva Philosophy, and not in any way to state which belief is superior. Also note that most of what is written in this article is taken, in parts word for word, from SUNYASAMPADANE volumes I through V, published by Karnatak University, Dharwar, India.

In the beginning the Absolute Divine 'Sunya' existed in a state of complete void. It is an eternal state where there is no linear time line. Sunya is said to be beyond comprehension and description, and said to be – only one, eternal, permanent, beyond the pairs of opposites, always a witness of all actions, infinite, indivisible, perfect and complete in all respects. In this state Sunya is Siva (male component) and His conscious force Sakti (female component). Siva's consciousness is known as the power indicated by the syllable OM of three letters a, ou, ma (hence OM NAMAH SIVAYA). In the beginning Siva was alone and without support, but wished to be the Many. Then arose a commotion in the Conscious Force that produced a reverberating **nada** (sound, vibration), a seed of creation **bindu** (point, a ray of light, drop, subtle matter), and amplification and radiance of the above two **kala** (art in evolving objects) - the three corresponding to a, ou and ma. Earth, water, wind/air, fire/light, and ether/cosmos (rest of the universe) evolved, so also the sun, the moon and **Atman**. Infinity of macrocosms and myriads of microcosms were created within Siva's Self. The scientific minded may refer to this as the Big Bang and evolution.

The aim of the VS is the attainment (sampadane) of this Supreme State (Sunya). It is not a monopoly of a chosen few; it is within reach of anyone whether it is a man or a woman, or of any caste or creed. The VS have formulated a practical way for doing so - Siva yoga. Yoga is control/harmony of mind, breath and body, that results in the union of the Individual Self and the Universal Self. Sivayoga is similar to Patalanjali's astanga (eight limbs) yoga consisting of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Asanas (physical practices of sustained postures/exercises) are not stressed in sivayoga. Padmasana (lotus position) is mainly used during meditation. By recognizing a wide diversity among individuals – love and affection predominating in some, action and will in some, and

logic and reason in some others – VS have given equal importance to devotion, action and knowledge. To attain Sunya, first, in the **preparatory steps**, the person has to realize the Divine presence within self by freeing self from all evil desires and inclinations, and by attaining serenity of mind so as to be a fit vehicle for the Divine. Then, in six stages (**satsthala**), the Soul must ascend from the initial but dim awareness of God to the final and complete identification with Sunya. It is to be noted that the Divine experience is not liberation to be had after death, but to be attained during life.

Initial step: The phenomenal world comprising of multitude of souls was inherent in the Divine consciousness before its manifestation. When an individual soul assumes the body, it plunges into Maya (illusive glamour), and identifies with the body. As the round of life in this world begins, it errs into the belief that the passage from birth to death is all there is to life and existence. It is driven by a compelling passion for worldly pleasures. This thirst is not satisfied by enjoyment. The more one tries to appease the sense organs and senses (nose/smell, mouth/taste, eye/vision, ear/hearing, and skin/touch) the more disillusioned one becomes. This causes distress and misery. Such an individual, fond of the body, is not in a position to realize the Absolute. One has to understand that the body and soul are not identical. One has to get rid of the six evil desires and inclinations – lust, anger, greed, infatuation, ego and jealousy. There is no room for hatred, enmity or violence of any kind. Money itself is neither holy nor unholy. It depends upon how it is earned. Money earned by **kayaka** (dedicated labor) is taken as something holy. That earned with avarice is unholy. In the path of spirituality, it is sheer ignorance and arrogance to require commendation for performance; it is ego. One who has purged all passions and pleasures, attained contentment, and realized the difference between body and soul, advances further in one's path toward God.

Next step is for the soul to realize its identity with God. The earthbound soul identifies itself with the phenomenal world which is constituted of three Gunas (Qualities): Sattva being stainless and luminous binds the embodied one by creating attachment to happiness and knowledge; this corresponds to the waking state of consciousness and it is said that Brahma is the presiding deity. Rajas being of the nature of motion or passion, binds by attachment to action; this corresponds to the dream state of consciousness presided over by the deity Vishnu. And Tamas of the nature of inertia or lethargy born of ignorance, binds by attachment to indolence and sleep; this corresponds to deep sleep consciousness presided over by the deity Rudra. As a consequence the soul forgets the sense of unity and begins to feed on multiplicity. The embodied one has to transcend the three Gunas. The real Self-consciousness transcends these three states of consciousness and abides in its native glory. It is suggested that one acquire knowledge and practice meditation. As one frees from self imposed ignorance and acquires the right knowledge, and realizes that the phenomenal world itself is nothing but the manifestation of Self, the phenomenal play ceases and the sense of duality is obliterated.

Next step is to control the restlessness of the mind which is a great hindrance in the way of discipline. Life, mind and intellect remain impure and agitated if the stillness of the soul is not realized. In order to attain calm the seeker should continue to acquire knowledge and meditate. It is not through force but through persuasion that the restless activities of the mind are brought to a standstill. Undesirable impulses and primordial instincts are the raw material of thought. Not by suppression but by directing the expression of these toward more socially or culturally acceptable way is how to acquire richness of the mind. Spirit and matter, Self and non-self, which are two extremes of life, are concepts that originate in consciousness. They act and react upon each other and enrich the mind. When one detaches from the persistent siege of phenomenal association, the restlessness of the mind disappears and mind itself merges into Self. (To be continued in the next News Letter)

CONGRATULATIONS:

Samaj extends hearty congratulations to Kris Guru for winning Presidential Award in the school and to Shaun Guru for getting highest scores in Continental Math test.

Dr. Sujata Kumbar gave birth to a baby boy. Samaja extends congratulations to both the parents.

Siddesh Bale married Keri Ann Johnson on October 10, 2009. Congratulations to the newlyweds.