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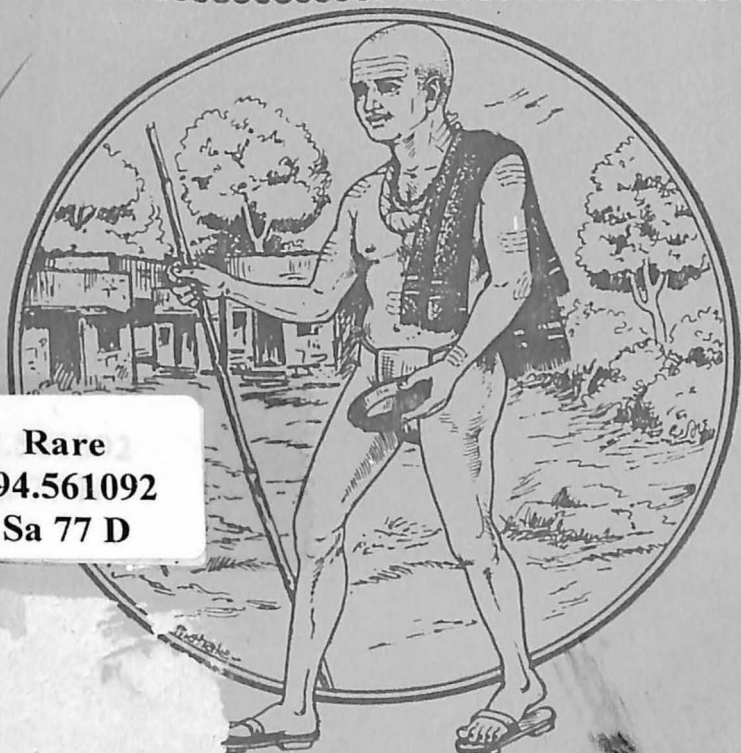
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Bagavaraj Naikar

MUSINGS OF
SARVAJNA



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Musings of Sarvajna

Basavaraj Naikar

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Dr. Basavaraj S. Naikar, M A., Ph. D. Reader in
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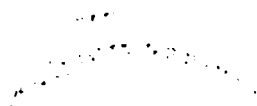


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Unto
The Lotus - Feet
of
My Mother
Srimati Nilaganga
(1930 - 78)

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‘Sivaranjani’
Malapur Road
Dharwad – 8

Basavaraj Naikar

FOREWORD

Sarvajna, the omniscient genius is a rare phenomenon in Kannada literature. It is indeed difficult to find a close parallel to him even in world literature. Quite justifiably he has become the watch-word of every home in Karnataka. He is the hot favourite, the darling bard and minstrel of the learned and the laity. Kannadigas grow up with the vachanas of Sarvajna. Without reading him and learning a few of them by rote, their mental equipment will not be complete.

Sarvajna has a liberating and harmonizing influence. No Kannadiga's education is complete without his or her having had a sufficient dose of Sarvajna's vachanas before he or she leaves the portals of the school, college or university. No equipment or culture of a gentleman in Karnataka will be complete without the study of Sarvajna.

Who was Sarvajna? Where was he born? Though the date of his birth and the exact time when he lived, moved and had his

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being, are not clearly known, his birth, parentage and the place of his birth are fortunately handed down to us in his vachanas.

He was sired by Basavarasa on Mali of the potter community in her house at the village Ambaluru. Apart from this extremely scanty piece of information we know almost next to nothing about his childhood education, upbringing and growth. But such enlightened souls and born poets like Sarvajna do not need any formal education restricted to the four walls of the class room. They are mostly self taught. They are schooled and drilled in the school of adversity and they receive their higher education in the bigger and broader university of the life and this world.

He did not marry and settle down to a house-holder's life. He became a spiritual recluse. The reasons why he chose *sanyasa* and the path of renunciation are not known. How did he live? What did he do for a living? An unforgettable picture in sharp bold lines emerges from his vachana of bare three lines :

x / Musings of Sarvajna

A begging bowl in hand and a large
country to wander forth.
And a God like Hara to depend upon.
Who is there richer than I?

He did not aspire for perishable material wealth but the imperishable knowledge and wisdom and the spiritual wealth. He wandered the length and breadth of the country with a clean, shaven head and a blanket across his shoulder with a begging bowl in hand. He wandered alone like an elephant isolated and estranged from the herd. The figure of Sarvajna comes out breathtakingly alive from his own account and is permanently enshrined in our heart. He was a holy pilgrim and an illustrious wayfarer all his life. He considered life a journey from the beginning to the end. What alms did he beg ? Was it only food to satisfy the hunger of his belly ? He had also the insatiable hunger for knowledge and learning. From house to house, from door to door he went, gleaned golden grains of knowledge and wisdom, accumulating, digesting and assimilating whatever he gathered. He went on gleaned and garnering grains of wisdom with the diligence of a squirrel and the

assiduous industry of an ant. He thus went on extending the frontiers of knowledge, accumulating wealth of a different kind which would never perish. He kept an open mind and threw open the doors and windows of knowledge. He welcomed light wherever it came either from the main door or a crevice. 'Thinkest thou Sarvajna a conceited man?' He asks his readers and auditors. He answers :

Nay ! Learning a word of wisdom from
one and all

Lo, he became the veritable mountain
of wisdom.

Do you consider Sarvajna a windbag, a vain, self conceited, pompous pedagogue ? With all humility of a truly learned and enlightened man, he solves the riddle of knowledge and unravels the mystery of true learning that he gleaned a grain of wisdom from everyone going humbly from door to door like a mendicant with a begging bowl. This is the romantic saga – indeed the epic adventure of learning and wisdom of our Sarvajna Murthy !

He was a wandering minstrel singing songs impromptu. His contemplative and

critical mind reeled out song after song when the mood so took him. And he sang as one possessed by a divine frenzy of inspiration. He composed his songs in matchless and inimitable *tripadi* or triplets using the spoken language of the people amongst whom he lived, moved and had his being. How many did he compose? Imagination staggers at the astounding number of triplets he composed. As the translator truly observes "He is said to have composed 70707070 triplets out of which only a few thousand are now available in print." And humanity has become the poorer by the missing triplets. And the loss is indeed irreparable.

On what did he sing? A question like this could be countered by another question by way of answer to the question. On what did he not sing? He sang on anything and everything that met his eye. In the live context of life and nature he sang on a bewildering variety of subjects from "the mundane to the metaphysical; politics to religion; sexology to astrology; agriculture to alchemy; prostitution to mysticism and so on." In fact he adorned everything he touched. True to his name he is Sarvajna –

the all knowing and omniscient one. It is God's own epithet he has snatched. It is really a phenomenal and unique achievement for a mere mortal within the limited span of human life.

Sarvajna mirrors the age of his times. He is a social critic par excellence. He focusses and x-rays the society of his times. He criticises without fear or favour the shortcomings and weaknesses, the failings and frailties of the human beings. He deals with a whip of conscience on the back of the society. But as he deals with the unchanging and unbending forms of human nature everywhere, he has a universal appeal.

Sarvajna was secular in his spirit and his ideal. Though he followed Virasaivism he had a broad, catholic mind. He admires the tenets of other religions like the non-violence of Jaina religion. Such secularism and religious tolerance were a way of life with us. That is why India today is the home of all important religions of the world. We who screech secularism from our housetops should better follow the ideals of Sarvajna and walk in his footsteps. Communal harmony, religious tolerance and secularism were a

way of life with us. They were not only preached but practised as well. The vachanas of Sarvajna, if read, understood and practised will go a long way to pave the way for emotional integration of our country—the crying need of the hour.

Such bards and minstrels like Sarvajna are not of one age, clime, country or community. They belong to all ages, all countries and all mankind. They are citizens of the world. They are not only ‘the uncrowned legislators of mankind’ as Shelley claims but also the unanointed mentors of mankind. They are not only doctors par excellence who diagnose correctly the disease of humanity and point out : ‘here thou aileth’ but also prescribe the right kind of medicine for the ailing humanity. They are deathless, ageless and immortal.

We Kannadigas have committed an unforgivable crime against humanity by foolishly and selfishly claiming for ourselves Sarvajna, the most precious gem in the literary and cultural heritage of Karnataka. Let us give him where he belongs to all mankind. What better service could we do to world literature, culture and community than present

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the priceless and precious gem through the international medium to all mankind ? Not only writings on Sarvajna, his biography, his literature, his assessment and evaluation, his mission and message and the place he holds in the world literature but also the immortal and inimitable vachanas of Sarvajna in *tripadi* verse form should be given in English. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has done both. He has already introduced to the world community this many splendoured omniscient genius by his book *Sarvajna : The Omniscient Poet of Karnataka* which is not only a book on his life and teachings but also an assessment and evaluation of his writings. He is now giving to the world Sarvajna's vachanas themselves in translation. To essay the vachanas of Sarvajna which are in the spoken language of North-Karnataka in a foreign medium like English is an impossible task indeed. It is impossible to transmit the subtle shades and nuances and the inimitable idiom of one language into another language which is nurtured in a different clime and a different culture. A translator has his limitations. That is why it is said that translation is an act of murder.

A good translation is one which preserves the spirit of the original intact without degenerating into a mere verbal translation regardless of the spirit of the original. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has competently done his job. In maintaining the spirit of the original and the original *tripadi* verse form of Sarvajna's vachanas in English triplets, he has eminently succeeded. Translations of this kind are indeed transcreations – new creations in their own right. He has been a true cultural ambassador in carrying the mission and message of Sarvajna and the literary and cultural heritage of Karnataka through him across the frontiers, to mankind throughout the globe. The world will be surely indebted to him for the great service he has done. May God bless him with success and garland him with laurel wreaths for such enterprising endeavour and adventure. I only pray to God that more books like this should come from his facile pen.

Sivam Bhooyat

Ugadi
27-3-1990

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Translator's Introduction

There is no poet in Kannada more popular and interesting than Sarvajna who, true to his name which means the poet-omniscient, has sung about an astonishing range of themes in the form of triplet known as *tripadi*. He was like a mobile encyclopaedia and sang his songs in response to all the contexts in which he was thrown, without any fear or inhibition. His thematic concerns ranged from the mundane to the metaphysical; politics to religion; sexology to astrology; agriculture to alchemy; prostitution to mysticism and so on. Perhaps there is no poet in the world literature who has the same range of interests. Anything that was noticed by Sarvajna could be grist to his mill. That is the reason why he is often compared to a goat. There is indeed a proverb in Karnataka which says that 'there is no leaf untasted by a goat just as there is no theme untouched by Sarvajna.' Though not an inventor of *tripadi* form, he gave great currency to it in the manner in which Dante did to *terza rima*

in Italian. He educated the ignorant; advised the willing listener; shocked the puritanical; interrogated the complacent; exposed the hypocrites and complimented the pious. Who, then, was this phenomenon called Sarvajna ?

Well, Sarvajna was a child born out of wedlock to Basavarasa and Mali a lady of potter community. A pilgrim by nature, he went on travelling from village reciting his songs *impromptu*. The exact dates of his life have not been fixed yet. However, critics like L. Basavaraju place him around 1565, during the regime of Vijayanagar Empire of Sri Krisnadevaraya. Sarvajna was a proud proponent of Virasaivism, although he was not at all blind to the positive aspects of other religions.

The triplets of Sarvajna are so popular in Karnataka that they are on the tip of every body's tongue and quoted by children and the old alike, on most of the occasions because of their epigrammatic pithiness, simplicity and rhyme. He is said to have composed 707070 triplets out of which only a few hundred are now available in print.

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The present collection contains translations of 188 triplets from the Kannada. The songs chosen here are intended to represent the encyclopaedic variety of Sarvajna's themes, though, of course, in brief. The second principle of selection is the translatability of the songs into English. Even here no word to word rendering is attempted. The chief aim has been to represent the structure of thought or imagery as the case may be. The third principle of selection is the possibility of international appeal. Sarvajna has composed countless songs out of which many may be of only regional interest. But the songs selected for this collection are such as may engage the attention of the wider public even outside of Karnataka. The reader who is interested in knowing more about the poet, may refer to the critical work by the present writer, *Sarvajna: The Omniscient Poet of Karnataka*. The beauty of his colloquial language which is redolent of the Lingayat dialect of North-Karnataka, cannot, alas ! be reproduced in the alien language.

—Basavaraj Naikar

Autobiographical

1

I pray to the one who rides the bull
And wears the crescent moon on his
forelocks
Ere I compose my songs.

2

Puspadatta was my name
When I served the snake-decked Lord
and Master of Kailasa
Ere I came into the world of mortals.

3

At the village called Ambaluru
On Mali in the potter's house
By Basavarasa was I sired,

4

A begging bowl in hand and a large
country to wander forth
And a God like Hara to depend upon.
Who is there richer than I?

5

Trust him with a shaven pate and a
blanket across his shoulders,
Wandering all alone like
An elephant isolated from its herd.

6

Thinkest thou Sarvajna a conceited man?
Nay. Learning a word from one and all
Lo! he became the very mountain of
wisdom.

2 / Musings of Sarvajna

Alms and Charity

7

Whatever you give in charity is yours.
What you hoard for yourself is for others.
Think not charity a waste. Lo it has
stored golden fruits for the future.

8

Those who feed the hungry and speak
the truth
And love others as themselves
Are indeed invitees to Kailasa.

9

The one who gives is Mrida; the one who
receives is poor mortal.
Give with a large heart as much as
you can
Before you lose your health and wealth

Basavaraj Naikar / 3

10

When you are rich, invite the mendicants
And be munificent in charity.
Kailasa then will come to your door.

11

Say not 'come tomorrow' or 'the
day after'.
Give alms to the needy today
And that indeed is true religion.

Enlightenment

12

Why should the one who has realised
The light within himself bother about
The business of living ?

13

Though born in the mortal world would
the enlightened one
Be ignorant again ?
As the lotus leaf in slimy water is not
polluted.

14

Enlightened indeed is he who has
realised his own self,
But the one who knows not
Is like a dog of a deserted village.

Basavaraj Naikar / 5

15

The enlightend man laughs at the
benighted one
Like an adulteress laughing at her own
husband
Who thinks the lover's child his own.

16

The enlightened man is supremely silent
Though blamed and criticised by the worldly fools
Like an elephant regally moving along
the path unmindful of the barking dogs.

17

The elephant is not scared by fish or fowl
While carousing in a lake.
The knower of the Principle is undeterred
by the harsh words of the crooked.

18

Worldly happiness and deliverance
are attained
Only through enlightened awareness.
All the wealth will go waste without the
knowledge of the self.

19

A benighted man eats only the husk
And tastes not the core of Truth
Like a sheep nibbling at the leaf but not
tasting juice in the cane.

20

Why learning and disputation;
Myths, proverbs and scriptures
For the pilgrims on the path of the
Absolute ?

Basavaraj Naikar / 7

21

22

23

The face of the learned is pleasing
to watch
And that of the illiterate is detesting
Like a kite of a deserted village.

Language and Epics

25

Words beget friendship and laughter;
words kindle animosity and murder
Words bring peace and plenty in this
world.
Words are indeed veritable gems.

26

It is the degenerate and corrupt
Who consider sacred the story of
adultery
And slaughter of brothers and cousins.

Food

27

Profitable for ye to know agriculture
Better than anything else in the world.
How can mankind survive without
foodgrains?

28

Neither can you sleep
Nor walk nor even talk
Should you miss even a single meal a day.

29

If you feed on rice, you will be light like
a bird and spend money on a physician.
If you feed on jowar, you will be lithe
and strong as a wolf.
If you feed on pulses and jaggery, you
will live long.

30

Pacing a hundred and one step after meal,
Warming the palms over the fire and
 sleeping on the left side
Would indeed make you the grand
 enemy of the doctor.

Guru and Spirituality

31

Friendship with the virtuous is like
tasting honey,
But the company of the vicious
Will bring you the excruciating pain of
breaking your kidney bones.

32

Passing through countless wombs, taking
innumerable births
Unmindful, pray Lord.
Could you not release me from this
mesh of *maya* ?

33

Like a deer caught in the stranglehold
of a tiger
I am struggling to free myself from the
enticing web of *maya*.
O Lord ! Release me from this bondage.

Basavaraj Naikar | 13

34

My mind like a monkey climbs the
body-tree
And eats the sense-fruits.
Pray, Sire. Save my body and mind.

35

A dog in the palanquin jumps at the
sight of excreta on the wayside.
I shall fall prostrate at Thy feet.
Sire, save me from this wavering.

36

Sugar in my tongue and dagger in my
heart.
Lo ! My conscience is pricked.
Pray, Lord, take me into Thy bosom
and desert not.

14 / Musings of Sarvajna

37

Does it matter who shows the way to
the village?
What does it matter whoever the Guru is
Who leads to the Absolute?

38

Be you the bullock for the Guru to ride,
Be you a tree in his backyard,
Be you a pair of sandals under his feet.

39

Guru's grace can transform
A log into a wish tree and a barren
cow into a milch cow
And benighted fools into enlightened
reciters of *pranava*.

Basavaraj Nalkar | 15

40

Your kith and kin will come and dine
with you at home,
But will they release you from the cycle
of birth and death ?
Realize, oh ignorant one ! The Guru
alone can free you from the chain
of *maya*.

41

If you fall at the feet of the Guru
Your accumulated sin would dissolve
Like a mountain of camphor touched
by the spark.

Карты

42

The *karma* of your past life will chase you
Be you in the heart of Varanasi or at the bottom of the sea
Or even by the side of Lord Virabhadra.

43

Does a dip in water wash away your sin?
Is your sin a clod of earth
To melt away in water?

44

You cannot escape from the clutches of
death even if you visit
The sacred shrines or hide in the rocky
caves
Or seek shelter with the wise.

45

Thinkest thou the kings and emperors
lived with pomp and glory ?
When the great sons of Kunti were
fated to beg around
What about the poor laymen ?

46

Why had Abhimanyu to die
With Arjuna as his father, Devendra as
his grandfather
And Krisna as his maternal uncle ?

47

Who could inscribe the writing on the
forehead
When Hari became a pig and Hara went
abegging
And sundered the head of Brahma ?

18 / Musings of Sarvajna

48

Who could inscribe the writing on the
forehead ?

Hari became a monkey,
Brahma, a goat and Siva, a fox.

49

Does the tick in the udder taste the
frothing milk ?

Much worse indeed is the lot of the
person

Who does not savour the fruit of his
past merit.

50

When the sin of one's past deeds expires
The bumblebee would become a swan,
The pale gold, a cluster of gems; a
rugged cloth, a silken saree.

Basavaraj Naikar | 19

Holiness and Faith

51

Holy are the words of the truthful,
The acts of the noble and the company
of the pious.
How can the flowing water be holy?

52

Could the water where frogs and fishes
frisk and frolick about be holy ?
Holy indeed is the abode
Where pious people reside.

53

Why you dip and lave into the flowing
waters of the Ganga,
The Godavari, Tungabhadra and
the Krisna
Without realising God deep down in
your own heart ?

54

The abode of God, the bank of the
Ganga,
The words of the pious and the company
of the devout
Richly deserve our attention.

55

A Hell indeed is a village without
mendicants.
Oh. Ye realise that a mendicant
Is true means to salvation for mankind.

56

Poison taken in good faith will indeed
become nectar,
But without faith
Even nectar turns poison.

Basavaraj Naikar / 21



57

Like camphor-consort merging with her
Fire-Lord
The devout fusing with the Absolute
Will attain eternal deliverance.

58

Religions preaching violence and
bloodshed !
Throw them all into the fire.
Lo. I would place on my head Jaina
religion forbidding violence of any kind.

Lord Siva (Linga)

59

Immanent and omnipresent is the *Linga*
in all things conceivable.
Rocks, breasts, measuring cans and even
sheep's droppings !
Do the *nigamas* realise this ?

60

Who could put inebriating aroma in
asfoetida;
Milk in coconut, music in the throats
of the bumblebee and the cuckoo ?
Tell me if ye know.

61

Infinite and without bounds is the
Absolute.
The sky has no ladder and fearless is the
woman in the throes of delivery.
Man, a mere mortal has no permanence
on the earth.

62

Meditate ye upon Bhalalochana before
cockcrow.

Will not our Lord then
Become the servant of your servant ?

63

Lo. A tiny mirror holds the image of
the elephant.

Our Lord Parasiva dwells
In the hearts of the enlightened.

64

Like fragrance in a sandal tree on Mount
Malaya,
In the inner shrine of the hearts of
Saranas
Lord Siva dwells.

24 / Musings of Sarvajna

65

Invisible like ghee in milk,
Like particles of dust in water
Lord Siva dwells in our hearts.

66

Like an elephant brooding and browsing
about the woods
Meditate ye upon Lord Siva.
Think not of dusk or dawn or impurity.

67

Milk in the hedge, honey in the forked
hedge and oil in the sesame !
Who could ever deny
The divine sport of Lord Siva ?

Basavaraj Naikar | 25

68

Decking yourself with beads of
rudraksa and *vibhuti*.
Will not your sins evaporate
Paving the way for Lord Siva ?

69

Shunned by your friends, deserted by
your wife;
Goddess Laxmi too will fly
When you lose the grace of Lord Siva.

70

Without Lord Siva's grace
Will not your learning of countless
books, the beauty of the brawn and
vitality of spirit
Go all a waste ?

26 / *Musings of Sarvajna*

71

At the mere mention of 'Basava'
Lo all your sins will disappear.

72

Like Sivaratri among all nights,
Like Srisaile Fair among all others, like
Srikasi among all holy places
Our Siva-doctrine is the crown and
glory of all doctrines.

73

One and only one is the Lord for the
Universe.
One and only one is the Creator for
the Cosmos.
Know ye fool, there are not two.

Basavaraj Naikar | 27

74

Neither beginning nor end, neither top
nor bottom;
Neither conflict nor chaos the
Absolute has.
Nor has He a temple for Him !

75

Can Indra riding an elephant ever grant
a single wish ?
Lo. Lord Siva will grant all human
wishes
Though he rides a scrawny and bony
bullock !

76

Could ever Sadasiva have a peer ?
He made the earth his chariot; Aja, his
charioteer; Hari, his arrows.
He destroyed Tripura, the celestial city.

77

How could Visnu be a Lord
Who took ten births and tended cattle
And served the Pandavas ?

78

You affirm, oh fool, that Brahma is a
creator.
Know you not that his consort has no
nose at all ?
Why could He not create one for her
then ?

79

Brahma had his head cut off, Daksa wore
the head of a sheep
And Hari went through as many as ten
births.
Could ever these three he equal to
Lord Siva ?

Basavaraj Naikar / 29

Inner Purity etc

80

One who meditates, chants the holy
name, visualises
And sings the paeon of *istalinga*
Becomes one with the Absolute.

81

He who follows the path of the Void
Knows the Absolute and conquers the
corporeal
Will indeed merge with the Absolute.

82

What does it avail if you wear *rudraksa*
Knowing not the Principle !
You have become a fig tree saddled
with numerous fruits.

83

Casteless is the yogi; limitless, the sky.
The yogi's robe has no border,
Religion has no decline.

84

Clad in a tiger skin and sitting upon a
boulder
Chanting mantras, the yogi
Is still obsessed with the vagina.

85

When one renounces desire one attains
heaven here and now.
When one nurses desire
One suffers hell here and now.

Basavaraj Naïkar / 31

86

Clean, heroic and saintly everyone is in
words,
But the vicinity of gold, arms and
breasts !
Lo. He becomes a degenerate.

87

A donkey rolling in ashes, could it
become a yogi ?
Smearing yourself with holy ash
knowing not the Principle,
You are but a veritable ass !

88

Why rites and rituals, vigils and services,
Shaven head or matted hair
For one who knows not the Truth ?

32 / Musings of Sarvajna

89

Fruitless is worship without *istalinga*
Like a garden without water,
A family without a housewife.

90

Could one realising the Serpant-power
 be still attached to one's wife ?
Could a *Sivayogi* suffused with beatitude
Be still entangled with female flesh ?

91

Sivayogi renouncing the world.
What need has he for pelf or a female;
Pomp or power ?

Basavaraj Naikar / 33

92

Anger is the rockbottom of sinfulness.
Would not the slave of anger hurl
himself
Into the abysmal pit of sin shorn of the
noose round his neck.

93

One could be a recluse in the forest,
forsake the spouse
And meditate all through the night and
day
But lo none could conquer desire !

94

Tethering the five swans to a single pillar
He would indeed become Brahma
Merging himself with the Lotus of Self.

34 / Musings of Sarvajna

95

Will not semen and urine pass out from
the same outlet ?
Checking the one and letting the other
You will indeed become Brahma.

96

He is indeed a *Sivayogi*
Who shuns food and water;
Woman and gossip.

97

Burning himself the *Sivayogi* enlightens
mankind
Like the oil of a lamp burning itself
To illumine the world.

Basavaraj Naikar / 35

98

None could understand the secret of
Brahmarandhra overnight.
Could a *Sivayogi* become Lord Brahma
With his self smothered with the smoke
of egotistic vanity ?

99

What use is anger for a recluse ?
Divine principle for the wicked, sight
of other men for a faithful wife
And scandal mongering for a yogi ?

100

Yogi is he who knows
Five and twenty principles and shuns
karma
And lives in the heart of Brahma

36 / *Musings of Sarvajna*

101

Has the enlightened one pollution;
The poor, support; the sky, beams or
 columns;
The yogi, any caste consciousness ?

102

All would revere the person controlling
his senses,
But one who preserves the semen
Is like a burnt rope.

103

One can braid one's hair, wear saffron
 robes, reside in a temple,
 But most difficult it is
 To control one's senses.

Basavaraj Naikar / 37

104

Yogi is he who leads the swan
From the eight petals
To the focal point of the lotus.

105

Could you vanquish the sixfold enemies
And threefold impurities
You would become Siva Himself.

106

Born in the impure mixture of blood
and semen
The *Sivayogi* purges and purifies
By his very birth.

38 / Musings of Sarvajna

107

The snake called ill-tongue resides in
the snake-hole of human body
When poisoned by anger
Is cured by the eagle of equilibrium.

108

Could a man with the vision of the coiled
Serpent be ever a slave to his wife ?
When he dwells in the Absolute
Could he fall a prey to the wiles and
temptations of the flesh ?

109

Are there guardians for the frog in the
rock-hole
Or caretakers for the wild swan ?
What does it matter where the yogi
resides ?

Basavaraj Naikar / 39

110

The butter melts in the vicinity of fire.
How could the *Sivayogi* remain inviolate
In the company of a woman ?

111

Lo. There is the precious gem of the
 life-breath and the Absolute.
One worshipping it with one's heart—
 blossom would be God oneself.

112

Could one riding an elephant be ever
 frightened by a dog ?
The *Sivayogi* enlightened as he is,
Is not frightened by worldly fools.

40 / *Musings of Sarvajna*

113

Reading countless books, smearing the
body with *vibhuti*,
Donning saffron robes, nay, you will
not be a yogi !
He alone is a yogi who has conquered
his senses.

114

The four Vedas are the udder; their
meaning, the frothing milk.
The *Sivayogi* alone could taste it,
But a mere juggler of words could not.

115

Could you swallow the flying bird and
quaff the frothing milk
You are Lord Harihara,
Lord Aja and mentor of the world.

Basavaraj Naikar | 41

Brahmin

116

The whole mankind is born in the
impurity of menstruation.
Why should a Brahmin fly from the
woman in her period?
Must he not know the secret of his own
birth?

117

Why do you argue the written Veda is
is great ?
What, after all, is Veda
If not an experience of God ?

118

If by dipping in water a Brahmin could
ascend to Heaven
Why not then a frog always in water
Go to Heaven ?

119

If a Brahmin wearing a triple thread
could rise to Heaven
Why not a shepherd swain wearing a
blanket
Of countless threads go too ?

Sex

120

The entire animate world is born
In the fleshy palace of Lord Smara
Located at the meeting of thighs.

121

The slushy hole between the thighs is
the centre of the world.
That is the reason why
Nandivahana, Aja and Hari cling to it.

122

The grimy well is covered with
Dirty grass, slime and slush,
But whoever would hesitate to dip into it ?

When the gods themselves are drowned
Head over heels into the big tank of
the City of Desire
What shall we say of poor mortals ?

Superstitions

124

A single sneeze is a very bad one and a
double one, good;
And a double with a cough and spittle
Is indeed the best of all.

125

Start not the journey for fear of it
being fatal.
If you sneeze or hear others sneeze
Be it even a dog, donkey, monkey or
any other animal.

Alchemy

126

You can produce gold
By mixing sulphuric acid
With browned *tare*.

127

Whe whole world will gravitate towards
you
Should you put on your forehead a dot
Of *kattegivi*, *uttarane* and *ettunalige*
pounded into a paste.

Riddles

128

Saw I a tree sprout on a grinding stone
And two hands on the tree
Smelt too a fragrance emanating from
the hands.

129

Three hundred and sixty nuts are there
and twelve fruits;
Three bunches and a stalk.
Let the learned then elucidate the
meaning.

130

Horn has it but no legs, a tail too and
flies in the sky
But bird it is not.
Let the poets tell us what it is.

First, it resembles a tiger;
Second, it is also like a rat; and third,
like an apple too.
Let the poets now interpret it.

Astrology

132

The moment the Jupiter enters the
House of Taurus
Countless clashes, famines and
homicides
Will be the consequence in the world.

133

When the Jupiter enters the House of
Virgin
Plenty of showers and abundant
happiness
Will follow for men, brides and beasts.

134

The Jupiter entering the House of
Scorpion
Will bring in its train bloody wars and
crops
Being ruined by torrential rains.

135

When the Jupiter enters the House of
Acquarius
Wells and tanks will overflow,
A rich harvest and the joy and jubilation.

Caste

136

Has the yogi any caste; the enlightened,
obduracy;
The sky, beams and columns ?
But Heaven has no castaway
untouchables.

137

Common are hunger and thirst;
sleep and sex
To man, bird and beast.
Where, then, did caste originate ?

138

The earth we tread, the water we drink,
the fire we use,
Are they not one and the same ?
Why then caste and subcaste ?

139

Search for caste in the human body :
A mere sack of flesh, marrow and
skeleton !
Is it wise ?

140

What is in a name ? Does it not suffice
if a flower smells sweet ?
Phoo a man's caste ! A mere bother !
When he enjoys Lord Siva's grace.

141

Is the light of the lamp at the house of
the lowcaste damnable ?
Discriminate not among castes.
Only he dear to the Almighty is indeed
highborn.

Basavaraj Naikar | 53

Woman

142

The God of Love was killed by Hara,
What a lie !
How could Smara then still reside
In the glances of moon-faced maids ?

143

A cozy house, gold for expenses,
An understanding wife responding to
the will and wish of her lord.
Set fire, then, to Heaven.

144

Love of a woman, acquisition of gold
and victory in war
Are granted only
By the grace of God.

145

Woman and gold and a tree with
juicy fruits.
Is there anyone who desires not
When he sights them ?

146

A thin string bending a strong bow of
bamboo.
Woman though helpless and weak
Bends the powerful man, nonetheless.

147

Harmony here, happiness hereafter
All wealth and prosperity are possible
only through woman.
Is there anyone who wants not a woman ?

Basavaraj Naikar | 55

148

When ginger and neem become sweet
And statues begin to dance
Then dost thou trust woman.

149

When woman is pleased
She would help and pave the way
for Heaven
But rue the day she frowns, she will
bring ruin to all.

150

The music of the ocean, the mystery of
clouds and the sublime grandeur of
Sambhu
And the heart of woman.
Is there anyone who has understood
them?

151

None there is comparable to Sita
Who treated Ravana, the great
conquerer
As a mere blade of grass.

152

Better caress the hips of the
elephant-woman,
The ankles of the art-woman, the hands
of the conch-woman
And the head of the lotus-woman.

Adultery and Prostitution

153

Secret adultery is sweet as sugar,
But when even one knows
It will be bitter like neem.

154

A boat and a whore are of the same
stuff.
The moment a passenger disembarks
Another boards.

155

A woman wearing immaculate pearls
and big ear-rings
Letting loose the hem of her saree
Is willing for amours.

156

A woman doffing and donning her
saree on and off
And scratches her teeth
Is an easy and willing lay.

157

Smiling and giggling, showing the teeth,
leaning against a pillar
With style and display
Is an open invitation to meet and mate.

Miscellaneous

158

If only you could have your hands,
Tongue and loins under perfect control
You will be immortal.

159

Higher than Mount Meru, greater than
the earth
There is none.
Sublimar than the ocean is the frindship
with the pious.

160

Gold could bring friends together.
Gold could drive a wedge between
cronies
Gold again would make friends
bitter foes.

161

You are resplendent like the Sun with
gold and money.
You will be a dog of the deserted village
The moment you lose your wealth.

162

Borrowing money from others is
delectable like rice and curds,
But when repaying the loan
You smart under the scorpion sting on
your buttock.

163

A king unable to ride a horse,
Win battles or hearts of bewitching
belles
Is no better than a corpse propped
on a hearse.

Basavaraj Naikar / 61

164

Shameless indeed are a house without a
granny,
A meal without buttermilk
And a place without eunuchs.

165

A mind with evil thoughts, a soldier
not killing the enemy
And a wife who is frigid in bed.
Shun them all forever.

166

Detestable indeed like a cot with
tattered strings,
A monastery without a Guru; a family
without elders
And a capital without a king.

62 / *Musings of Sarvajna*

167

A meal without savoury dishes, sex
without love;
A king not loving his own subjects
Are as detestable as camping in a cave
with a tiger.

168

Lusting for an unresponsive woman
Is fruitless like a jackal
Trying for the far away corpse.

169

A king is an ornament for a kingdom
and chastity for a wife.
Cooing adorns the cuckoo
And violence is adornment indeed
for a king.

Basavaraj Naikar / 63

170

Could you live in a kingdom
Where the king is a demon, his
 minister a country fox
And his retinue like a see-saw ?

171

Should a coward become the leader; a
 fool, the Guru
And a tyrant, the king
Would not the state go to dogs ?

172

Blood supports health; pledge, the
 prostitute;
Darkness helps the thief
And truth helps the king.

64 / Musings of Sarvajna

173

The banyan tree has no flowers;
integrity, no equal;
The tongue has no bone
And girls, no constant mind.

174

The banyan tree has no flowers and
the monkey, no curls;
Death has no medicine to conquer
And the whore has no mercy.

175

Flee from the house that leaks,
The whore that has no teeth
And the king who lies.

Basavaraj Naikar / 65

176

Undesirable indeed are blemishes on
 one's reputation;
Sagging women's breasts and loose
 beams in a house
And surely parting from the virtuous.

177

A healthy horse and a hefty bullock;
A woman estranged from her husband.
Will they ever remain unridden by men?

178

Blackmailed by people and cheated
of peaceful slumber,
Scoffed at by your own people and
children
You will surely experience death.

179

A son with filial piety, a wife humble
and courteous;
A Brahmin who is the embodiment of
virtue
Are indeed the lights of the world.

180

The fangs of a snake, the tip of a sword;
The words of the ruthless and the life
of the vicious.
Are surely all poisonous.

181

Fly away from the ceiling about to
give way,
The whore who has no teeth
And the king who lies.

Basavaraj Naikar / 67

182

Not a single fly hovers around where
sandal is pasted,
But a swarm of bees buzzes around
The anus where excreta flushes out.

183

Man will be a handful of dust
The moment he pays his debt for
oil and ghee,
Food and dress; gold and woman.

184

There is no metal more precious than
gold, nothing brighter than the Sun
There is no deity greater than Benaka.
There is no God greater than the
Three-eyed Siva.

185

The oil-maker knows the sesame; the
tailor, the art of lying;
The watchman knows the thieves,
But the merchant knows all these three.

186

The humming of a bee is good to hear;
the jay, pleasant to watch;
Heart-warming words are good to hear;
The company of the noble is indeed
good for the soul.

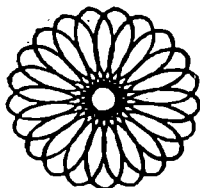
187

Delude not yourself that riches
will last long.
Life is but a big fair lasting for a while
And vanishes thereafter.

Basavaraj Naikar / 69

188

Trust not the bubble of life
Fool, try to know the Truth
And have compassion on one and all.



Notes

- 5-6) Sarvajna describes himself. The use of the third person singular is a popular convention in Kannada language.
- 7) The poet emphasizes the importance of gifts or alms and the danger of hoarding things or wealth. He indirectly suggests the religious virtue of non-possessiveness.
- 9) Lord Mrida refers to Lord Siva.
- 10) The poet shows the immanence of God.
- 13) Irreversibility of spiritual progress. Lotus and water are very popular images in Indian spiritual literature symbolising 'detachment'.
- 14) Dog, in Kannada literature, is a very insignificant and contemptible animal. It rarely suggests loyalty in the Wordsworthian sense.
- 15) Elephant in Kannada literature, is a symbol of dignity and high stature.
- 18) The importance of self-knowledge is stressed here. It easily corresponds to the Upanisadic and Aristotelian concepts of self-knowledge.

- 19) The contrast between external/formal knowledge and internal / essential knowledge is highlighted.
- 20) The contrast between reading and experience is suggested.
- 21) The contrast between pretension and real ability is shown.
- 24) Refers to spiritual education.
- 26) This is typical of Sarvajna's ruthless frankness. He refers to the famous epics of India : the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.
- 29) The staple food of North-Karnataka consists of jowar and pulses. Sarvajna shows his partiality for jowar and prejudice against rice.
- 30) The poet offers medical advice.
- 32) According to Hindu belief, man has taken several births before coming to human life. Countless wombs therefore, suggest innumerable lives in the past.
- 33) *Maya* suggests illusion. Hindus, especially the Monists believe that the world

of appearance is only an illusion into which man gets himself entangled until spiritual awareness dawns upon him. *Maya* and bondage usually go together.

- 34) In Kannada spiritual literature, mind is usually compared to a monkey to suggest its fickleness.
- 35) Palanquin is a sort of wooden cradle in which holy men or idols are carried by servants on holy occasions. Dog, as usual, stands for instinctive indulgence. Sarvajna has borrowed the image of a dog in the palanquin from the religious lyrics of Basaveswara, a great Virasaiva mystic of twelfth century Karnataka.
- 38) In Virasaivism, Guru is believed to be a living embodiment of God and therefore greater than God himself.
- 39) The Wish Tree (Kalpa Vriksha) in Hindu mythology is supposed to grant all the wishes of human beings. *Pranava* is the holy word *Om*. He who recites it is said to have transcendental awareness.

- 41) Camphor is burnt in Hindu temples as it does not leave any residue of ash after being burnt. Man should be like camphor so that he will not be subject to the law of *karma* any more.
- 42) *Karma* is an important feature of Hindu faith. It is a law of causes and consequences of human action. *Karma* is of three kinds : 1. past (*sanchita*), 2. present (*prarabdha*) and 3. future (*agami*).
- 43-45) The ruthlessness of the law of *karma* is hinted at.
- 46) Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, enters into the labyrinth (*chakravyuha*) constructed by the enemies i. e. Kauravas and dies there as he does not know the secret of coming out of it. His helpless death was due to his *karma*.
- 47) The writing on the forehead suggests man's destiny which is decided by his *karma*. It is said to be carved on the front portion of the skull i. e. forehead. Literally it is known as Forehead-Script in Kannada.

Lord Brahma, Lord Visnu and Lord Siva form the trinity in the Hindu pantheon.

- 51-52) The poet ridicules the meaninglessness of rituals especially bathing which is part of purity mania so common with Hindus.
- 54) River Ganga or any other river for that matter is supposed to be holy as water has the power of cleansing.
- 55) Mendicants are the pious people who are known for non-possessiveness and detachment.
- 56) The supreme importance of faith is affirmed.
- 57) Mystic union is always compared to sexual union.
- 58) Sarvajna pays high tribute to Jainism which gives supreme importance to non-violence.
- 59) The *Linga* in Virasaivism means the Absolute, The *nigamas* are part of Hindu scriptures.

- 60) The poet affirms the divine design in the universe.
- 61) All the four lines refer to four items which are brought together by the rhythmic structure of a tripadi in Kannada. In English translation they may look arbitrary in their combination.
- 62) Lord Bhalalochana refers to Lord Siva who has the third eye in his forehead.
- 63) The immanence of God is suggested.
- 64) *Saranas* are the Virasaiva supermen who have surrendered themselves to the Absolute.
- 67) *Lila* is frolic play or sport. According to Hindu (especially Saiva branch) faith the whole world is born as a result of Lord Siva's *lila* or frolic play. Hedge is a shrub called *Kalli*.
- 68) *Rudraksi* literally means Lord Rudra's eye. It is a bead used by all the Hindus for making the rosary to help them in transcendental meditation. Vibhuti is holy ash which is one of the eight covers

(*astavaranas*) in Virasaivism. Every Virasaiva (as also Hindu) is supposed to smear his limbs with marks of holy ash.

- 69) Goddess Laxmi is a symbol of wealth.
- 71) Basava (also known as Basavaraja, Basavanna or Basaveswara) was a reviver of Virasaivism in the twelfth century Karnataka, with a few modifications. He is deified by all the later Virasaiva poets and philosophers.
- 72) *Sivaratri* means Lord Siva's Night or Auspicious Night which is celebrated one day prior to *Sivaratri Amavasya*. All the Virasaivas fast on that day and spend the entire night in prayer, meditation and listening to holymen's explication of Saiva doctrines and myths. Srisaila is known for the holy mountain on which the temple of Lord Mallikarjuna is situated.
- 75) Visnu, according to Hindu mythology, had to undergo ten incarnations. He was born as Krisna and served as a

charioteer to Arjuna and advisor to the Five Pandavas, protagonists of the Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*.

- 78) Goddess Saraswati is the consort of Lord Brahma.
- 79) *Istalinga* is like a black berry in shape and size and made from the suit of ghee. It is a symbol of the union of microcosm and macrocosm. It is kept on the left palm and worshipped. The worship consists in the washing of the tiny *istalinga* in holy water, decking it with holy ash, rice, saffron and flowers and fumigating it with joss sticks, followed by the most important process of staring at it (i. e. concentrating one's attention on it) for transcendental meditation, usually accompanied by the recitation of the pentagram *Namah Sivaya*. The tiny idol is generally worn by a Virasaiva on his person either in a silver box or saffron cloth.
- 81) Void in Virasaivism means *Sunya* or perfection.

- 86) Arms refer to weapons. Breasts refer to female body.
- 87) A yogi or religious person is required to wear holy ash marks on his limbs which act as an external means to attain purification.
- 90) Serpent in the Tantra school of philosophy stands for the hidden energy in man. He who has seen or realized the Serpent power (*Kundalini*) is the enlightened one.
- 95) According to yoga, semen which moves downward has to be directed upwards for spiritual illumination.
- 98) According to yoga, *brahmarandhra* is said to be the cosmic hole which helps man to experience ecstasy or God-intoxication. It corresponds to the pineal gland of modern psychology. The yogi who fixes his attention on the cosmic hole is supposed to be in mystic trance.
- 99) Yati is a synonym for saint or yogi.
- 100) According to Saivism and Virasaivism, the universe is made of twentyfive elements or principles.

- 102) In Virasaiva spiritual literature, a burnt rope is a common symbol for the man who has burnt his *karma* with spiritual enlightenment. A burnt rope looks like a real rope in shape and size, but is not identical with it. A man who has burnt his karma is detached from life though he is right in the midst of it.
- 104) The swan and the lotus represent the human soul and God respectively.
- 107) The eagle of equilibrium represents the yogic principle of balance between opposites.
- 108) Coiled Serpent (*Kundalini*) is the latent energy in man.
- 110) Woman or attraction for woman is a great hindrance in the spiritual path of a *Sivayogi*.
Sivayogi is a yogi who follows the Virasaiva school of yoga.
- 115) The flying bird symbolizes the fickle mind and the frothing milk stands for spiritual bliss.

- 116) The poet attacks the purity mania of Brahmins.
- 120-3) Lord Smara is Lord Kama. Lord Nandivahana which means the rider of a bull refers to Lord Siva. The palace of Lord Smara, the slushy hole, the well and the tank symbolize vagina.
- 124) Sarvajna expresses the superstitions of Kannada people who believe that sneezes forecast the results of their thoughts at the moment. If you hear a single sneeze when you are thinking of selecting a bride, you will not get her. But a double sneeze is always auspicious.
- 126-7) *Tare, kattegivi, uttarane* and *ettunalige* are all Kannada names of herbs used in alchemy and magic.
- 128-31) All the four songs are riddle songs. Sarvajna was inspired by the metaphysical riddles of the great mystic poet of the 12th century Karnataka : Allamaprabhu.
- 132-5) All the four songs show Sarvajna's knowledge of astrology.

- 142) God of Love and Lord Smara refer to Lord Kama.
- 150) Lord Sambhu is Lord Siva.
- 152) The song shows Sarvajna's knowledge of sexology, borrowed perhaps, from Vatsayana's *Kama Sutra*. He offers sexological prescription here. According to Hindu sexology women are divided into four categories : 1) elephant (*hastini*), 2) art (*chittini*), 3) conch (*sankhini*), and 4) lotus (*padmini*). The poet highlights the erotozones of different types of women.
- 182) The song shows the poet's uninhibited frankness.
- 184) Benaka refers to Lord Ganapati, the head of celestial beings and son of Lord Siva.
- 187) Life conceived as a big fair shows the temporality of worldly life.
- 188) Life conceived as a bubble shows the ephemerality of ~~earthly~~ life.

