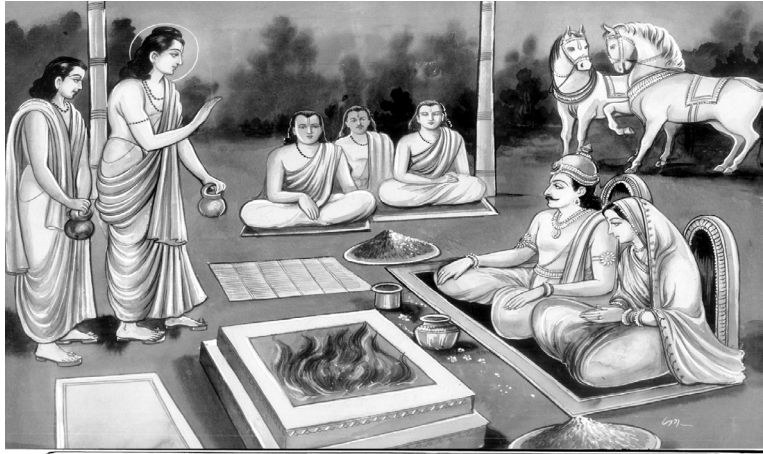


ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥



KALYANA-KALPATARU

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Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu

शान्ताकारं भुजगशयनं पद्मनाभं सुरेशं विश्वाधारं गगनसदृशं मेघवर्णं शुभाङ्गम् ।
लक्ष्मीकान्तं कमलनयनं योगिभिर्ध्यानगम्यं वन्दे विष्णुं भवभयहरं सर्वलोकैकनाथम् ॥

I adore Lord Viṣṇu, the only ruler of all the worlds and dispeller of the fear of worldly existence, who has a tranquil appearance, sleeping on the bed of serpent (Śeṣanāga) and endowed with lotus in His navel, the master of gods, the substratum of entire universe, resembling the sky and having cloud-like hue, who has beautiful limbs, the beloved of Lakṣmī, the lotus eyed one who is known by *Yogīs* in their meditation.

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The Secret of Karmayoga

—*Brahmalina Sri Jayadayal Goyandka*

(A) Action for the sake of God—

To practise worship or service of God through some representation, or to perform actions enjoined in the scriptures according to the commands of God, and as a matter of duty, for the attainment of Divine Love, or for the pleasure or realization of God, simply for the sake of obeying the commands of God, is action for the sake of God. In other words, to perform one's legitimate duties placing all these objects, or anyone of these objects in view is action for the sake of God. (Vide *Gītā* XII. 10)

(B) Action as an offering to God—

It means regarding all legitimate duties enjoined in the scriptures as well as one's very Self, including the mind, speech and body, as possessions of God, and offering the same to Him in that spirit. In other words, it means regarding oneself as wholly dependent on God in the matter of performance of all actions and offering one's whole being to Him in the same way as a puppet places itself completely at the disposal of the showman. The puppet, being a lifeless object, does not voluntarily submit to the control of the showman; it is the showman himself who keeps it under his control. The devotee, however, voluntarily chooses to remain under the control of his Divine Lord and is thus even superior to the puppet in the matter of surrender. Besides this, to feel enraptured at every moment by visualizing His form and mercy at

every step and to perform all actions according to the behests of his Lord and as His instrument, regarding everything as belonging to Him and thus to be freed from all pride and egoism, is the best form of action as an offering to God (Vide *Gītā* IX. 27, 28).

Question—Is the practice of *Karmayoga*, or disinterested action, very difficult to perform?

Answer—Truly speaking, it is not very difficult. Of course, it is difficult for him who recognizes it to be difficult, and easy for him who recognizes it to be easy.

Question—If such be the case, the practicant should certainly recognize it to be easy. But why does it appear so difficult even to those who pursue it turning their back on gold, woman, kinsmen and even bodily comfort?

Answer—Through fickleness of mind, the desire for honour, fame, prestige and so on, weaknesses like partiality and prejudice, egoism, attachment and ignorance, lack of faith and love, and want of knowledge of its secret and glory, the practice of *Karmayoga* may appear difficult to them.

Question—What are the special weaknesses which act as hindrances to the practice?

Answer—Lack of faith and love, the desire for honour and fame, fickleness of mind, carelessness, lethargy, ignorance, attachment and egoism—these are the special weaknesses which act as hindrances to the practice of *Karmayoga*.

Question—What should the practicant do in order to overcome these weaknesses?

Answer—Withdrawing the mind from all worldly enjoyments through dispassion and discrimination, and surrendering himself to God, he should put forth the best of efforts for the practice of *Karmayoga* with reverence

and love till the last breath. Through such efforts it may be possible to get rid of all sufferings and weaknesses and attain supreme Bliss and supreme Peace at no distant date.

Question—What is meant by ‘putting forth the best of efforts, even to the last moment?’

Answer—To regard even honour, fame and prestige, nay, life itself to say nothing of wealth, woman, physical enjoyment and comforts as of no value as compared even to an ounce of practice of *Karmayoga*, and to remain constantly and diligently striving for the same—this is what is meant by ‘putting forth the best of effort even to the last moment.’

Question—What are the reasons for our failure to put forth such diligent effort?

Answer—Lack of true knowledge about the glory and secret of *Karmayoga* is the main reason for this failure.

Question—What should be done to gain this true knowledge about its glory and secret?

Answer—The glory and secret of *Karmayoga* can be truly known through a study of scriptures like the *Gītā* which deal with them, or through the contact of exalted souls who have knowledge of them, and by scrupulously and earnestly following their instructions. He who comes to have a true knowledge of the glory and secret of *Karmayoga* or disinterested action, can never give it up. Through continued practice of *Yoga*, he gradually overcomes weaknesses like egoism, sense of possession and attachment for worldly things etc., and attains in course of time a permanent attitude of equanimity towards the whole world. He who is thus unshakably established in equality is established in God, inasmuch as God Himself is equal or

impartial to all. In this way he is rid of all sins, trials and tribulations and attains supreme Bliss and supreme Peace. He who attains this state even at the last moment of his life overcomes the terrible fear of births and deaths and realizes God, the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss (Vide *Gītā* II. 72).



You must produce goods and services for ensuring social welfare by your actions, and you must also become purer and nobler through your actions, by steadily manifesting the ever-present divine within. You must go one step closer to your own Infinite Self through your actions. If you can do so, *Karma* or action becomes an instrument of spiritual realization. And efficiency in work is the fruit of equanimity of mind, *Samatva*; a fussy mind cannot be efficient. When the divine within manifests even a little, personality energy increases, enabling one to avoid mental tension, while doing work, even hard work. *Samatva* helps one to live a busy life and work hard, with a smiling face and calm mind. This is how the *Gītā* develops its philosophy of life, chapter after chapter, synthesizing the paths of *Jñāna*, *Bhakti*, *Dhyāna*, and *Karma*. The *Yoga* of the *Gītā* is the essence of the philosophy of Practical *Vedānta*. The *Gītā* tells every worker, politician, administrator, industrial executive, be you all *Yogīs*—*tasmāt Yogī bhavārjuna*—be a *Yogī*, O Arjuna. (*Gītā* VI. 46)

—Swami Ranganathananda

Thou and Thou Alone

—*Brahmalina Swami Ramsukhdas*

It is the best principle of the *Gītā* that all is God only and the Lord has declared him the rare great soul who has realized this fact—

वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ।

(*Gītā* VII. 19)

“Such a great soul is very rare who realizes that all is God.”

The Lord has stated in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*—

अयं हि सर्वकल्याणां सद्भीचीनो मतो मम ।
मद्भावः सर्वभूतेषु मनोवाक्कायवृत्तिभिः ॥

(XI . 29.19)

“According to My opinion, the best of all means to attain Me, is that one should have the feeling that all beings and objects which he perceives with his mind, speech and body are My manifestations.”

To explain this, three illustrations of gold, iron and clay have been given in the *Upaniṣads*. There are plenty of ornaments of gold. Though they have various shapes, names, forms, weight, use, price etc., there is only gold in all of them. Similar is the case with weapons of iron and earthen wares of clay. Similarly, in the world created by God, there are many beings and articles etc., yet there is only one God in them.

Gold is distinctly visible in the ornaments of gold, iron is perceptible in the weapons made of iron and clay is perceived clearly in the pots of clay; but God is not

perceptible in the world constituted of God. Hence, there is given an illustration of the wheatfield to explain that everything is God.

The peasants call the green plants of wheat also as 'wheat'. When the cow eats the green plant of wheat, they say, "Your cow ate our wheat", even though the cow has not eaten a single grain of wheat! The farmer has no doubt at all in its being wheat, though not a single grain of wheat is seen! If there is a trader living in a city, he would not consider it as wheat. On the contrary, he would say, "This is grass. How can it be wheat? I have bought and sold a number of wheat-bags. Hence, I know what is wheat." But the farmer would say only that it was not the grass grazed by the cow, but it was wheat. The reason is that it was only wheat in the beginning in the form of seeds and only wheat would come out of it in the end. Therefore, it is wheat in the form of plants in the mid-state also. It is the ascertained truth (i.e., principle) that whatever is in the beginning and at the end, is in the mid-state also—

यस्तु यस्यादिरन्तश्च स वै मध्यं च तस्य सन्
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata XI. 24. 17)

"That which is at the beginning and at the end of a thing, verily is existent during the mid-state also."

The Lord is the seed (origin) of the whole world—

यच्चापि सर्वभूतानां बीजं तदहमर्जुन।
न तदस्ति विना यत्स्यान्मया भूतं चराचरम्॥
(Gītā X. 39)

"Arjuna, I am the seed of all beings, for there is no creature, animate or inanimate, which exists without Me."

Unto Bliss

—*Nityalilalina Sri Hanumanprasad Poddar*

Remember: human life is meant for the achievement of supreme object, and that purpose can be accomplished only in a human birth. That supreme end is final Redemption (*Mukti*) or God-realization. Striving not for this purpose and to remain engrossed in other occupations constitute the perversion of human life. This gross error should be scrupulously eschewed.

Remember: you have been granted the privilege of a human birth only for attaining this Liberation (*Mukti*) or God-realization. Therefore, life is to be built up from the very childhood with this end in view. It is nothing but stupidity to believe that this is a pursuit suitable for the old. Who knows whether one would grow old or not? Who can assert that one shall not die even in one's tender age? Hence the adults of a family and sensible youngsters should from the very beginning create such an atmosphere and conduct themselves in such a manner that the seeds of a holy and spiritual life may be sown even in early infancy and may sprout after years.

Remember: mother Madālasā instructed her children in the knowledge of *Brahma*, the Absolute, through her very lullabies. Similarly, Prahlāda's godlike mother, Kayādhu made it possible for Prahlāda, while he was still in her womb, to receive instruction in the path of Devotion (*Bhakti*) through the celestial Nārada. In order that the air of a home should breathe the presence of God and exert a salutary effect on a child's mind, discourses on the *Purāṇas* were held in every house and parents and grandparents

used to narrate to their children and grandchildren stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. And it was with this end in view that there was a praxis among the people to take, put on paper or utter the Name of God in numerous ways and forms while rising, bathing, taking one's meals, yawning, sneezing, commencing one's studies, undertaking a journey, meeting someone, writing letters, going to bed and even at the time of death and throughout the way while carrying a dead body to the cremation-ground. The sixteen or more *Samskāras* (sacraments), praying to God three times a day and the *Nityakarma* (the daily routine of devotions) were prescribed only to maintain this practice.

Remember: Prahlāda and Dhruva were mere children who in their very infancy attained blessedness by winning the Lord's grace. Even today everyone feels purified by the very utterance of their name, as well as by reading and hearing of the anecdotes of their life full of faith in the Lord.

Remember: in order to turn one's life towards God it is absolutely most essential that one should abjure once and away evil propensities, immoral conduct, vicious thoughts and unholy company and cultivate ideal virtues, an exemplary conduct, noble thoughts and the fellowship of godly people. Reverence, faith, obedience, discipline, well-regulated life, temperance, plain living and sense-control are the main factors helpful to such a course of life. Therefore, start developing these virtues in a reverential spirit even from your childhood.

Remember: bowing at the feet of one's parents, serving them and administering to their comfort in every way, showing respect to and obeying one's teacher, offering daily worship and devotions, saying the *Sandhyā* prayers every morning and evening, practising *Japa* (muttering of

the Divine Name and other sacred formulas) and regular study of the scriptures and holy books according to one's grade in society and service of afflicted men and women, are very healthy practices leading to one's spiritual advancement. Nay, they bring one sound health, happiness, prosperity, fame, learning, power and honour even in this world.

Remember: Devotional practices and aversion towards sense-enjoyments are essential prerequisites for God-realization. Bend all your energies in this direction. Always remain alert and go on striving.

Remember: the utility of wealth, learning, might, manliness, eminence and prudence lies only in their being conducive to God-realization, otherwise, they are all useless and hurl one into the hell-fire.



Well, now I am to tell you who is the enemy appearing in the guise of a friend. My brothers, that is the one who lures you towards worldly, pleasures; and the one who frees you from the world, is your friend. This is very clear.

See, there is a *Sādhu*, full of renunciation and asceticism. For many years he lived in the Himalayas. Gradually, his fame spread, and people began to go for a glimpse of him, and revere him for his renunciation. Then what? The devotees turned him into a householder, enmeshing him in a worldly life. So, the point is that those who appear to be very loving are the ones who trap us in this world. The enemies who abuse us, insult us, and try to bully us, are the ones who free us from worldly attachments. They are our friends.

—Swami Akhandananda Saraswatiji Maharaj

Real Freedom

—Keshoram Aggarwal

Everybody wants to be free. Freedom is loving to all. In the history of the world, great wars and revolutions took place only for the sake of freedom. Crores of people shed their blood only for freedom. Children like freedom. They think if they get holiday, they will be free to enjoy it. Sunday and holiday gives them a little freedom to enjoy themselves. Therefore, they anxiously and impatiently wait for Sundays and holidays. They continue to count the days for a holiday. The teachers are apparently reluctant to give holidays to their wards but their love for holidays is no less. We may say that the whole world is after freedom.

The people drink rum, brandy, beer, whisky etc., only to get freedom from the anxieties but unfortunately they only impression themselves by being addicted to these intoxicants. Everybody thinks that pleasure is only in freedom. There is no real happiness without freedom.

The question arises as to what is that freedom for which people are longing for so much. Does it mean to let loose your senses to do as you like, to marry whomsoever you want, to eat, drink and be merry. To enjoy, drink and dance and to luxuriate in garden house in a lavish way. To dress oneself in the manner one may like or to be a chain smoker, to ride in luxurious cars or to ride on fast moving horses. All these do not constitute freedom. This is giving licence to senses for fall and degradation.

In *Kāthopaniṣad* there is an allegary, the body is compared to a chariot. The owner of the body is *Ātmā*

or the self. The chariot driver is the intellect. Reins are the mind and the senses have been compared to horses. The sense-objects such as form, sound, touch, taste and smell are like roads for the horses to move. The aim is to attain God-realization or self-realization.

Self-realization or God-realization is possible when the mind, senses are under control of the intellect and the intellect is a discriminating one. That means if you want to be really free you should have a discriminating intellect and that intellect should be joined to a mind that is under control and his senses also should be under control then only you can get spiritual progress or real freedom.

Uncontrolled horses or senses are always dangerous. If they are given licence to move in any direction you may have to loose your very life. There will be no hope for you. Your fall and degradation is assured. If you do not want to be doomed in your life, you must control the senses and mind. However if they are let loose they will make the wreck of your life. The conclusion is that if you want real freedom you should not allow freedom to your senses—snakes in your sleeves. That man is really free who can control his mind and senses.

In *Gītā* chapter II. 69 it is said—

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।

“That which is night to all beings in that state of Divine Knowledge and supreme bliss the man of self control is awake?”

It means the man who has control over his mind and senses he alone can enjoy supreme bliss or can be really free.

If we delve deep freedom means that one is not subservient to any sense object or any individual. Really free is one who is self-existent and self sufficient. If we

feel the desire, passion or requirement of any object or individual we are slave to that thing. How we can claim ourselves as really free.

Why we become such slaves because we have identified ourselves with our bodies. We consider the requirements of the body as our own requirements we desire so many things for our body. We are the immortal souls not the body. But we have identified ourselves so much with our own body that we can never think of ourselves as apart from body. We consider ourselves as bodies only, but we must realize that we know the body. We are the knower, the body is the known thing. The knower is always distinct from the known thing. We are never the bodies. We are souls.

The body dies, the soul never dies. The body always changes, the soul never changes. The body is born the soul is eternal. The body is dependent the soul is self-existent. The soul remains same today, tomorrow, and forever. Therefore it requires nothing. It desires nothing. *Gītā* imparts us in verse 20th of the II chapter—

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचि-
 न्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।
 अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
 न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

“The soul is never born nor dies, nor does it become only after being born. For it is unborn eternal, everlasting and primeval; even though body is slain, the soul is not.”

To realize ourselves as soul is self-knowledge or self-realization. If we acquire this knowledge we feel ourselves always free and independent then only we are enjoying freedom in the real sense of the term. Such freedom should be our goal.

To gain this self-knowledge we must possess a good

discriminating intellect which is able to distinguish between right and wrong, and good and evil. Further our mind and our senses should be under control of such intellect. Thus when such a discriminating intellect works in conjunction with a controlled mind and senses you are like an owner of the chariot who has a good charioteer having the services of good, well trained horses. Then your mind and senses can never mislead you and your progress towards self-knowledge is assured. Once you gain self-knowledge you are no longer, a victim of worldly desires and temptations. Then you are the person enjoying the bliss of real freedom which should be the aim of every human being. As to achieve this goal alone one is blessed with this human body—the best creation of God.

If we further think, we will realize that ‘attainment of freedom is our goal,’ ‘we must achieve freedom’, ‘we shall be free,’ all these expressions strictly speaking are erroneous. It is not as to our becoming free, for we are free at this very moment; we are free from the very beginning, we never were in bondage. So to say, we shall be free is strictly speaking wrong. We have created our own bondage by thinking ourselves in bondage. Therefore the bondage is only the result of wrong thought, ignorance and the consumption of the false knowledge. Therefore there is no bondage, we are always free. The acquisition of true knowledge, the realization of the true self or *Ātman* at once sets you free, free through all eternity. That freedom was never lost. So we have not to think of our freedom as to be attained in the future but of freedom which has been ours always, which is our birth right, which is our own nature.

Suppose a man had a necklace round his neck but he forgot everything about it. Now he was searching his

necklace but could not get it. Someone told him that the necklace he was looking for was round his neck, now the necklace was not found in the strict sense of the word for in reality it was there all the time. It was not lost but was forgotten. Similarly we have always been the same yesterday, today and forever but the mind, the intellect is to overcome ignorance when the mind believes that the necklace is got, in this sense we might say that we have regained our freedom otherwise we are always free. Freedom is not to be attained but we are free by nature.



It is possible for the human soul to attain the condition of absolute union with God; and it is then only that a person can feel and say, "He is the same as myself." An old servant of the house, in course of time, may come to be counted as one of the family, and the master of the house, being extremely pleased with his work, may one day seat him in his own seat of honour, saying to all around him that from that day forward there will be no difference between him and the servant. The master may say, "He and I are one; obey his commands as you do mine. Whosoever will not do so will be punished." Though the servant may hesitate through modesty to be thus honoured, the master will by force, raise him to the seat of honour. Such is the condition of those souls who realise the state of oneness with God by serving Him for a long time. He graciously endows them with all His glory and attributes, and raises them to His own seat of universal sovereignty.

—*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*

The Real Satsaṅga Bhavana is in Your Own Heart

—Swami Sivananda

The *Satsaṅga Bhavana*, the place where *Satsaṅga* is held, is *Vaikuṅṭha*, *Kailāśa* or *Paramadhāma*, in reality. The real *Satsaṅga Bhavana* is in your own heart. There dwells the *Sat*, the Supreme Reality, that Existence Absolute or *Brahman*, Control the mind by the practice of *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Āsana* and *Prāṇāyāma*. Make the mind one-pointed by the practice of *Pratyāhāra* and *Dhāraṇa*. Then meditate on the Self, the *Ātmā* dwelling in your heart. You can enter into your own *Satsaṅga Bhavana* daily through self-analysis introspection, enquiry into the nature of the Self. This will lead to Self-realisation, when you will forever be one with that *Sat*, the infinite eternal Existence.

This is your goal. Forget not, *Māyā* is very powerful. With all your good intentions, you will forget this your foremost duty. Therefore, come to the *Satsaṅga Bhavana* and associate with saints and *Yogīs* who will instruct you how to control the mind, how to practise *Prāṇāyāma* and *Brahma-Vicāra*, how to wean the mind from sensual objects, how to fill the mind with *Sattva*.

Identification with the body and the mind is the cause for all sufferings. In reality, you are *Saccidānanda-Svarūpa*; identification with this real *Svarūpa* is the key to perennial peace and supreme bliss. 'अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो' (*Gītā* II. 20): This *Ātmā* is unborn, eternal, everlasting and ancient. Be regular in your meditation, *Japa*, *Kīrtana*, prayer. People do *Kīrtana* for sometime, attend *Satsaṅga* for some-

time; and then they leave off. This is a sad error. Regularity is of paramount importance in *Sādhanā*. Whatever you do, do regularly. Increase the period of meditation gradually. Do not be attracted by the tantalising tinsels of this world. Nobody has been benefited by material possessions. You may have crores of rupees in the bank, you may have a hundred motor-cars and a dozen bungalows: but, peace of mind you cannot have from these. You can have peace of mind only if you are regular in *Japa*, meditation, *Kīrtana* and *Satsaṅga*. Only when you realise the Self, will you enjoy perennial peace. Construct the *Satsaṅga Bhavana* in your own heart through regular and systematic spiritual practice and realise Him, not in the unknown future, but right now this very second. Forget not the goal.

Let me remind you of the last word of the *Upaniṣads*. *Tat tvam asi*: thou art that supreme infinite, immortal *Saccidānanda Brahman*. Have constant *Nāma-Smaraṇa*, even when you are working, mentally repeat *Śrī Rāma, Śrī Rāma*. *Śrī Rāma* is not only the *Avatāra* of Lord Viṣṇu, consort of *Śiva*, but He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent *Parabrahman*. Constantly meditate on *Śrī Rāma*. Be good. Do good. Be noble. Be gentle. Be generous. Attain Self-realisation through *Satsaṅga, Svādhyāya Japa, Kīrtana* and meditation. May Lord bless you all!



Just look about you at the brevity of human love! You see two young people very much in love. Then picture them an old couple sitting together, bored with each other, no communication. A little emotion there may be; but where went that exhilarating love? The one thing that never goes away is the love of God.

—*Paramahansa Yogananda*

Impeach a Bad Habit and Install a Good One

—*Sri Paramahansa Yogananda*

A strong bad habit presiding for a long time over the bodily country brings chaos and misery. Spiritual famine, mental fevers, and a universal poverty of body and mind exist in that misruled land. A strong bad habit should be impeached before a tribunal of daily introspection under the presiding judge of conscience, who should inform the court of reason that the inevitable outcome of persistence in the offending actions will be an impaired nervous system, wasted powers, and vanished happiness. This constantly sounded note of warning may serve gradually to persuade the jury of reason to the decision to put away forever the guilty victimizing habit.

Sometimes it is difficult to convince the court. Many persons who excessively smoke, drink, or indulge in sex experiences do not seek or even wish to be free of these slavish compulsions. They delusively think that there is nothing harmful about what they are doing because they don't immediately suffer disillusioning painful consequences. Childlike, they fail to visualize the ultimate results of their actions. They do not see that they have set into motion laws that work impartially for good or ill, according to the nature of human actions; that, although the shovels of harmful habits dig slowly, they yet dig surely a yawning, untimely grave, a pit of misery toward which the slave of wrong habits proceeds through scorching flames of suffering. Of such entrapped persons the *Gītā* says:

“Harbouring bewildering thoughts, caught in the net of delusion, craving only sensual delights, they sink into a foul hell.”

First convince your mind that you are going to overthrow the tyranny of the undesirable ruling habit; then begin the work of constitutional agitation and actual impeachment. A whining or sorrowing attitude, gentle remonstrance, or even violent but spasmodic rebellion is of little avail. It is through continuous repetition of certain actions that you are the maker of your habits; and you must undo hurtful ones by a similarly regular effort, implemented by conscious exercise of will and the discriminative power of reason.

Relate your actions to new and better habits. Keep them continuously busy, interested, and attentive in serving good habits and in fraternizing with other good actions. If your actions begin to revert to their old dangerous habit-influenced associations, don't become discouraged. Persist in right actions, give them sufficient time and attention, and the voting strength of the new good actions will increase and finally become powerful enough to overthrow the worthless habit and to elect in its place a worthy one.”



If one has ego, what should he do? One should surrender that ego completely. "Is it not exactly the reason that I am engaged in acts of charity" one may ask. If so, as one goes on giving away charity, one's ego should go on decreasing. If on the other hand, if one's ego increases, the charitable acts that one does would be a mere waste.

—*Swami Ganapati Sachchidananda*

The Name of the Lord

—*D. M. Kodsanikar*

He who has read the Name of the Lord, has read everything, even if he has not read anything else. And he who has not read the Name, has not read anything even if he has read everything else.

The Name is better than all the books that have been written and are to be written. For, the Name gives knowledge which books cannot give.

The name is better than rubies. Thieves can steal rubies, but not the Name. If a man has the Name in his heart, he has all the treasures with him. And if he has all the treasures with him, and has not the Name in his heart, he has nothing but tribulations.

He alone is a king, who has the Name in his heart. And all other kings are beggars, being always in want.

He who reads the Name of the Lord, shall not want. He who has the Name in his heart, shall not have the ego. And if a man has the ego, the Name of the Lord is not in his heart.

He who loves the Name of the Lord, loves not the world, or anything that is in the world. And if a man loves the world, or anything that is in the world, the love of the Lord is not in his heart.

He who loves the Name of the Lord, loves every man, beast and bird and even every plant, for the sake of the Lord. And he who loves men to please them for his own sake, loves not the Name.

He who dishonours even dust, dishonours the Name.

For, the Name is in everything, and everything is in the Name. He that honours the Name shall be honoured. He that sings praise unto the Name shall have peace and happiness. But whosoever seeks to glorify his or her own name, shall fall into the jaws of Death.

If a man can read, let him read the Name of the Lord in everything. If he can covet, let him covet the Name. If he can love, let him love the Name. For, the Lord shall come out of the Name in the heart of the one that loves the Name.



Bhakti and Jñāna

A *Bhakta* does self-surrender and dedicates all his actions at the Lotus Feet of the Lord as *Īśwarārpaṇa* unto Him. He says: "I am an instrument in the hands of my Beloved. I have no individual will. I am Thine, my Lord. All is Thine. Let Thy will be done. Thou art everything. Thou doest everything. Even an atom cannot move without Thee. Even a leaf cannot move without Thee. Thou workest through all my organs. Thou speakest through my mouth. I offer to Thee whatever I do or eat. I offer to Thee my *Tapas* and everything. Thou canst do whatever Thou likest. I live for Thee alone. I work for Thee alone. I cannot live without Thee even for a second."

Work cannot bring misery but it is the attachment and identification to work that brings in all sorts of worries, troubles and unhappiness. Understand the secret of *Karmayoga* and work without attachment and identification and you will soon attain God-consciousness. This is *Jñāna*. This is *Jñānāgni* (fire of wisdom) which burns all the fruits of actions.

—Swami Sivananda

Universal Citizenship

—Dr. B. L. Tekriwal

The world—a big globe has become flat as traditional barriers like geographical distances, differences in culture, divergence due to religious beliefs having been reduced, and we have become more interdependent and collaborating together. We now live in a “shared universe” in which global forces are synchronizing for purpose, vision and values to take advantage of each other’s strength leading to greater dependency and greater efficiency to help each other to become prosperous. This convergence has resulted into integration of operations and homogenising various aspects of life including standardization of products and services. In interwoven global trends everything is global—global meltdown, global crunch, global crisis, global recession, global village and global phenomenon—then why not global citizen. Diwālī, Holī, Christmas, Friend’s Day, Valentine’s Day, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day are celebrated universally.

Every living soul is manifestation of God—the unmanifest divine. All are children of the same Almighty Father. The essence of all religions is humanity. All world religions preach supremacy of moral values and welfare of mankind, harmony and co-existence. *Sanātana* (Hindu) *Dharma* preaches ‘*Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*’ (the whole world as a family). Christian religion preaches ‘love thy neighbour’. Mohammed Saheb of Muslim preaches ‘welfare of mankind’. Similar are the messages of both *Bauddha* and *Jaina Dharma*. In the end, all religions point to the same light and uplift of humanity. Followers of all these faiths believe in God, the

highest being—worship the same divinity. No religion preaches hatred. Birds sit on the temple, mosque as well as on the church. There is no nobler endeavour than the aspiration towards divinity. Everybody has the potential to be divine. Self sacrifice, self assertion, is the law of the highest universe. Not one can be happy until all are happy. All that unites with the universal is virtue and all that separates is sin.

The universal law applies to all things. It includes all physical things and it includes all personal or spiritual being.

In the present times of gloom and doom, when values are declining and morals are reclining and the celebrated values like honesty, integrity, nobility, morals, ethics, virtues, justice and righteousness are proving hollow giving way to corruption that has impoverished the whole societal set up, solace lies in spirituality.

Spirituality brings out the divinity in every individual. Spirituality is a love affair with God. It focuses a person's attention to the divine effulgence radiating from one's own heart. God is not something external, he is inside us. The mind is the key instrument in a human being's body, a proper regulation of which, with meditation and spiritual guidance, can help one evolve spiritually to the highest. Only spirituality can initiate the process of inner expansion and eventual freedom from finite existence and supreme self realization. True spirituality could be achieved through selfless service to humanity and leading a life of righteousness.

The core message of the *Vedas*, is for man to strive for liberation from the perpetual cycle of birth and death (*Samsāra*). This is achieved when the *Jiva* (living being) realizes its true self, the *Ātmā* (soul) and re-establish its forgotten relationship with *Paramātmā* (supersoul) or God.

When we liberate ourselves from the limitations of phenomenal existence and obtain oneness with the absolute, we attain infinite freedom, power, peace, joy and perfection. Transformation of our entire inner nature, of our thoughts, emotions, energies is a wonderful way of acquiring tremendous spiritual powers.

Ācārya Mahāprājña has rightly said that spiritualism unites, materialism divides. According to *Sahaja Mārga*, spirituality begins where religions ends. While the basic education of man can be undertaken by religion, his further development when he has reached adulthood, can only be offered by spirituality. One that helps a person achieve inner perfection and inner perfection is equivalent to God-realization which is the final goal of every individual.

Love, mercy, forgiveness, peace, compassion etc., are the essence of the *Sāttvic* Path. It is important to use them to attain the ultimate goal—salvation. The fourfold principles of human existence are the body is for benevolent living, the mind of contemplating on God, discriminative intellect for distinguishing between right and wrong and life itself for acquisition of divine knowledge leading to self-realization.

Being spiritual-minded is practical, as it helps a person develop a proper mental attitude towards the changing circumstances and problems of life. Though Science deals with energy and matter, there is a spiritual science which deals with the ‘beyond mind’ state of a human being. While material science enhances ego, spiritual science annihilates it.

Śrī Sir Raviśaṅkara has explained that a spiritual perspective is essential to understand human values which cannot be preached or inculcated from outside. The values are already inside, waiting to be awakened or nurtured. Only a spiritual perspective can give people the right

identity, first as part of divinity, then as human being and thirdly as belonging to the male or female gender. Only next comes the identity with any religion and lastly as a citizen of a particular nation. Seeing others as one's own reflection is the true spiritual basis of human values.

In a period of upheaval, such as the one we are living in, change is the norm.

Now is the time to consider the concept of One World—One Citizen in which the man will be the citizen of the world—no nation; He will be spiritual—no religion; He will be scientific but creative. He will be pious, compassionate and loving but no celibate. This concept will obviate deficits, shortages, wars, poverty, exploitation, inequality, deprivation, pollution, global warming and uneven distribution of wealth and will result in better use of resources, peace and create a better world i.e., peaceful, loving and blissful. If only people loved each other, this world would be a Heaven.

Let us all strive to create a Heaven and a better global tomorrow with divine harmony sans visas, tariffs and nuclear weapon to promote universal brotherhood and peace.



Carefully avoid talks of women, wealth and honour. Speak little, speak the truth, speak politely, speak only what is beneficial to others. Never do anything, nor utter any word, which may make it necessary for you to tell a lie in future to maintain your position. Never allow any word to escape your lips unthinkingly for which your position may be lowered in the estimation of others. Remember, he who desires to lower another in the estimation of others is bound some day to be lowered himself.

—*Hanumanprasad Poddar*

Never Disregard any Religion or Religious Book

—V. N. Sharma

You bow in the East.
They bow in the west.
They, in the south.
And they in the rest.

You say they are wrong.
They say they are right.
The ultimate truth is one
But all begin to fight.

An ethereal voice says,
“My Existence is only one.
All worship Me alone
Except Me there is none.”

Still they fight on ways of worship
And say, “We are right you are wrong.
Silent worship is the right way.
And wrong is worship with a gong.”

We say, “Better is the worship with form.”
While they say, “Better is the way of without form.”
On these trifling things sometimes
There is a colossal storm.

We have forgotten all learning and knowledge.
 And we have also forgotten Him.
 We have yet not realised the Reality.
 We are all groping under a whim.

Says our Lord in the holy books
 All the ways of worship even out of ignorance
 I accept them all with a happy heart
 Because devotion to Me alone is of importance.

Never disregard an incarnation or messenger of God.
 Nor ever dishonour any religious book.
 Respect all religions and faiths equally.
 In this respect broad should be your out look.



यदाऽकिञ्चिज्ज्ञोऽहं द्विप इव मदान्धः समभवं
 तदा सर्वज्ञोऽस्मीत्यभवदवलिप्तं मम मनः ।
 यदा किञ्चित्किञ्चिद्बुधजनसकाशादवगतं
 तदा मूर्खोऽस्मीति ज्वर इव मदो मे व्यपगतः ॥

(Nīśataka 8)

When I knew nothing, I behaved like a furious elephant in ruts, considering myself an omniscient being; but now when I have come to learn something from the wise, I have discovered my own ignorance, and having shaken off the fever of vain conceit I acknowledge myself to be a blockhead.

—Bhartrihari

The Universal Presence

God speaks to us in countless ways, by day and by night, in silence or in sound. Over the whole earth are His mighty forces employed, and over the oceans are His ways observed.

The snow that has no voice may drown the harsh voices of men; even the specks of dust reveal the sun.

The birds in their singing call us to joy that is Eternal; the bees in their work tell us of service that is peace.

The colours of the Lord flame forth in the fields; in the lowly hedgerow there are signs of His greatness.

Through the long day the earth pours out her benisons; the winds are filled with the fragrance of fruits and spices.

Louder than the surge of the stars through their seas of space doth the voice of the Lord ring forth in the night; louder than the clamour and tumult of men is He heard in the morning.

His Presence is universal; the streets of the city cannot hide Him. Though they stretch through heaven and hell, He encompasses them all.

His is the voice that speaks to them that are alone; the weary take heart when they hear Him and the heavy-laden drop their burdens to grasp His love.

In all ways doth the Lord make Himself manifest to them that love Him; His voice ceases never and the multitude of His witnesses increases from generation to generation.

(From—*The Science of Thought*)

The Story of Skanda

—P. R. Kannan

(Continued from 711)

Skanda's Childhood—

The boy's *Līlās* displayed his enormous power and valour. Once he even killed all *Devas* including Indra in jest. At the intervention of Bṛhaspati they were brought back to life. Skanda graced the *Devas* by showing his stunning *Viśwarūpa*. Indra then explained the torture the *Devas* were experiencing at the hands of Surapadma and the other *Daityas*. The demon once cut the hands and feet of *Devas*, but found to his utter dismay that they grew again because of the *Amṛta* they had imbibed. He even defeated Viṣṇu in a battle. Indra prayed to Skanda to take over the leadership of *Devas* and guide them as Indra. Skanda asked Indra to continue in his position and offered to lead the *Devas'* army to victory as their general. He was anointed as *Devasenāpati*. He subdued a goat that emerged during a *Yajña* from out of the sacrificial animal and terrified the whole world by its growing size and strength. The goat became his first vehicle, *Vāhana*. On another occasion, Skanda questioned Brahmā on the meaning of *Om̐kāra*, when the latter ignored him as a boy. Brahmā replied : अहमेव अस्य अर्थः— I am indeed the meaning of *Om̐kāra'*. Skanda hit the arrogant Brahmā on the head with his fist and jailed him in *Skandagiri*. He started performing with ease the creative function of Brahmā. This unnatural occurrence led to Śiva intervening personally. He went to *Skandagiri* and asked Skanda to release Brahmā. During the discussion, Śiva

casually asked Skanda if he knew the meaning of *Praṇava*. Skanda offered to explain the esoteric meaning provided Śiva requested deferentially like a disciple. Śiva accepted and Skanda did his part like a *Guru*. He thus became Swāmīnātha. The temple of Swāmīnātha at Swamimalai in Tamil Nadu is one of the six most important shrines dedicated to Skanda. An overjoyed Śiva returned to Kailāśa and explained to Pārvatī the various names of Skanda together with their import. The names mentioned in the *Purāṇa* in this context include Skanda, Subrahmaṇya Ṣaṅmukha, Kārtikeya, Senānī, Mahāsenā, Guha, Gaṅgeya and Śaravaṇabhava. Skanda is explained to mean a great warrior who can vanquish the entire world with his valour.

Battles with Asuras—

Śiva acceded to the repeated prayers of the *Devas* and asked Skanda to proceed for war with the *Daityas*. He blessed him and handed him *Ekādaśa Rudras* as eleven weapons in his eleven hands. Pārvatī gave in his twelfth hand the powerful ‘*Śakti*’ weapon (known as ‘Vel’ in Tamil). The first battle Skanda waged was in the north of the country with Tārakāsura. His ‘*Śakti*’ weapon finally destroyed Tārakāsura along with his lieutenant Krauñca, who had taken the form of a mountain and their large army. Offering worship at various Śiva temples en route, Skanda marched southwards and reached Tiruchendur on the sea-shore near Rāmeśwaram. He sent his brother Vīrabāhu to Vīramahendrapuram, the capital of the demon Surapadma, an island to the south of Lanka. Vīrabāhu, the messenger of peace, who was not offered a seat in the royal court, saw a throne materialise in front of Surapadma by the grace of Skanda. On peace overtures not yielding positive results, Skanda started on the great battle. Surapadma rejected the advice of his brother Siṃhamukha to accept peace with

Skanda, release the incarcerated *Devas* and return the kingdom of *Swarga* to them. He was sure that as he had vanquished even Viṣṇu in battle, the small boy was no match in valour and power to him. This is similar to Rāvaṇa not listening to his powerful brother Kumbhakarna.

The great battle with Surapadma lasted six days. During the second day, Surapadma lost all his weapons, chariot and charioteer and stood all alone in the battlefield. Skanda spared his life and permitted him to return the next day with due preparations, like Rāma did with Rāvaṇa. In the first five days of the battle, all great warriors including Simhamukha and the two sons of Surapadma, Agnimukha and Bhānukopa perished. On the sixth day, a great army of *Asuras* from all *Brahmāṇḍas* descended on the battlefield. *Devas* became very insecure. Viṣṇu repeatedly assured them: “This six-faced Skanda is none other than Śiva, who carries out the five great tasks of creation, protection, annihilation, concealment and grace. Where is the difficulty for him in killing these ordinary *Asuras*?” The fierce battle was fought in various *Brahmāṇḍas*. Skanda destroyed all of Surapadma’s army and brought his own entire army back to life. The lonely Surapadma was advised by his mother Māyā to get the Sudhamandara hill from across the ocean. Once the hill was brought, by the very contact of its breeze, all the dead warriors including Simhamukha, Agnimukha and Bhānukopa came back to life as if from sleep. The battle fought fiercely for five days came to nought. *Devas* were nonplussed. Skanda then used *Pāśupatāstra* and destroyed all the warriors in one stroke. Surapadma adopted different forms through his great powers of Māyā—forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, *Asura*, terrible animals like bull and lion, birds like *Cakravāka*, wind, fire, darkness, ocean. Skanda extinguished all those forms. He then graced *Devas*

by showing his own *Viśwarūpa*, which included *Devas*, *Vedas*, *Asuras*, humans etc. *Brahmāṇḍas* were seen hanging at the ends of hairs on his body. Surapadma, who also had this unique *Darśana*, temporarily developed intense devotion towards Skanda, the son of Śiva at that time. Once Skanda changed from *Viśwarūpa* to his normal boyish appearance, Surapadma became his former demonist self and restarted his fight ferociously, assuming different forms again. Finally he took the form of a huge mango tree. Skanda's 'Śakti' cleaved the tree into two. The *Asura* came back to his normal form and rushed at Skanda with a sword. Skanda's 'Śakti' again split the *Asura* into two. The two parts turned into a fierce peacock and cock, both pouncing at Skanda. At that very instant, in an unexpected development, by a mere glance of supreme grace, Skanda pacified the two animals and blessed them with *Vijñāna* (Supreme self-experience) and took them as his vehicle and flag. Such was Skanda's mercy even to his sworn enemies. Surapadma in his previous life had been Sura and Padma, two *Bhūtas*, who had prayed to Subrahmaṇya to become his flag and *Vāhana*, the cock and peacock. Their prayer was now answered.

Skanda's Marriage—

Amṛtāvallī and Saundaravallī were two daughters of Viṣṇu born from his eyes. They developed undying love for Skanda and performed severe austerities to obtain him as husband. At Skanda's instructions, Amṛtāvallī incarnated as Devasenā, a young girl under the guardianship of Indra in *Swarga*. Saundaravallī took the form of Vallī, a lass under the protection of Nambiraja, a hunter near Kanchipuram. 'Vallī' is a Tamil term for the Sanskrit 'लवली'—Lavalī, a kind of creeper. As she was found among the creepers as a baby, the hunter called her 'Vallī'. After the war with Surapadma

was over, the *Devas* were overjoyed. Skanda acceded to Indra's prayer to accept Devasenā as his consort. The divine wedding was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Tirupparankundram near Madurai in the presence of Pārvatī and Śiva. Indra's recoronation in *Amarāvati* in *Swarga* followed. *Devas* regained their power and positions. Skanda took his home in Skandagiri. He then proceeded to Tiruttani near Chennai, where Vallī was looking after barley fields. After a series of sportive love-pranks, in which his brother Viḡneśwara also lent a helping hand, he married her.

Jayanta, son of Indra later curiously asked Bṛhaspati as to why *Devas* had to suffer so much for so long. The *Devaguru* replied. "कर्मणः कुटिला गतिः"—Inscrutable are the ways of *Karma*. He explained that *Devas* had committed a grievous sin by participating in the *Yajña* conducted by Dakṣa in which offering of *Havirbhāga* to Śiva was ignored. On the spot they suffered torture at the hands of Vīrabhadra and Bhadrakālī, who destroyed the *Yajña*. The balance of *Karma* bore fruit in the form of untold suffering over a long period.

Skanda-Purāṇam contains a number of soul-stirring prayers including *Śiva-Sahasranāmam*. *Śrī Rudram* is explained in an entire chapter in beautiful verses. The greatness of *Vibhūti* and *Rudrākṣam* is brought out through many stories. A number of passages teach *Bhakti* and other values of life. When Vīrabāhu destroys the invincible Bhānukopa, Skanda offers him boon. Vīrabāhu says: "Please do not give me the position of great *Devas* like Brahmā and Viṣṇu. Please grant me unflinching and eternal *Bhakti* at your lotus feet." At Tirupparankundram, Skanda taught *Śivajñāna* to six sons of sage Parāśara, the elder brothers of *Bhagavān* Vyāsa. Skanda's consort Devasenā represents *lcchāśakti*, whereas Vallī stands for *Kriyāśakti*. The '*Śakti*'

weapon in the hand of Skanda is *Jñānaśakti*. In the south, where Skanda is worshipped with special devotion, *Bhaktas* observe *Vrata*, *Upavāsa* etc., regularly on days of *Śukla Pakṣa Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Kṛttikā* star and Fridays. In addition, special worship is offered on days of *Vaiśākha Viśākhā* (celebrated as the birthday of Skanda), *Āṣāḍha Kṛttikā*, *Āświna Ṣaṣṭhī* (which is known as *Skanda Ṣaṣṭhī*, the day on which Surapadma was killed), *Pauṣa Kṛttikā* and *Phālgunī—Uttarāphālgunī* (when the marriages with Devasenā and Vallī are celebrated). Many devotees carry on their shoulder the ceremonial ‘*Kavati*’ containing milk, perfume water etc., to the temple. They recite devotional songs like *Tiruppugazh* and *Ṣaṣṭhī Kavacam* and offer congregational prayers. Many *Homas* and *Pūjās* offering prayers to Skanda, Devasenā and Vallī amid chanting of the *Vedic Śrī Rudram*, *Chamakam* and *Durgāsūktam* are conducted. Religious discourses on *Skanda-Purāṇam* are held.

As per our tradition the differences in detail in regard to Skanda’s story among the various ancient texts do not detract from their veracity or purpose. We regard all versions as true, enjoy the various *Līlās* of *Bhagavān* and derive spiritual benefit from them. This is similar to the accounts of fate met by Parīkṣit, Vṛtra’s story etc., as described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and *Devī Bhāgavatam*. God’s ways are inscrutable for the ordinary mortal. The events depicted in various *Purāṇas* might have happened in different *Kalpas*. The *Rṣis* of yore have visualised them with their mental eye and recorded them for the benefit of posterity. May Skanda’s blessings be always with us.

Meditation

—*S. R. Krishnamurthi*

Meditation is a manner of training the mind, a process that is capable of producing remarkable effects on consciousness. In our day-to-day life the mind is always active with various thought forms occupying itself with different objects and ideas and reacting to diverse forces, internal and external. There is no apparent attempt to concentrate on any particular problem or issue and generally the mind resolves such issues as and when they arise without any conscious effort. Largely it settles cases without waiting for the inner reaction and the inner self stays dormant or at best only a small portion of it awakens to the problem posed before it. Meditation is the state when this inner self is fully awakened and radiates light over the issue before it, focuses its concentrated attention on it and gives full scope for clear thinking meditation is thus concentrated effort.

According to Patañjali meditation, which is a method of training human consciousness, enables that consciousness to function at levels other than ordinary and, besides being an exercise of the spiritual faculty of man, helps in the expansion of his capacity to deal with reality in any form. It is primarily the calling up of latent energy.

Quite apart from the clarity of thought resulting from meditation, it gives a serenity of mind and body. There can obviously be no power emerging out of ignorance and such ignorance, egotism and mental laziness are obstacles to meditation. Meditation provides an one-pointed approach to

ideals, the establishment of a goal for oneself and striving ceaselessly towards it. One gains in balance and poise while the higher and lower mental faculties become consciously co-ordinated. The disturbances of the countless ripples of everyday distractions disturb the vision and the busy brain fails to register impressions correctly; but when the mind is calm in meditation, creative and correlated ideas get clearly reflected in it without distortion. In the eloquent words of Dr. Rādhākṛṣṇan, the greatest discoveries of art and science, of philosophy and religion have been the results of solitary, independent reflection of Great Spirits who raise themselves to an exalted state, grasp a vision of truth and beauty and then bring it down into music, into a sculptured form, into great words. All great things have, indeed, been achieved by meditation.



God-realization is the fruit of one's longing. God comes face to face with us the moment our longing acquires the required degree of intensity and exclusiveness. Excepting God no other object is responsive to our seeking for it. All living beings in the world seek happiness and not misery. But a large majority of them suffer misery. Therefore, it is sheer folly to crave for material objects; they cannot be had by merely seeking them. They can be procured only by a propitious destiny, which is the fruit of our past good actions and which is no more in our hands. God, however, can surely be realized through mere seeking. Therefore, one should seek to realize God and should endeavour to make that longing ardent and exclusive to the requisite degree.

—Jayadayal Goyandka

Read and Digest

Each day, accept everything as coming to us from God.

* * *

See nothing, look at nothing but your goal—God, ever shining before you.

* * *

There is no spirituality without heroism.

* * *

Cry to God: “The stars may fall, the heavens be shattered, but never will I cease to cry until Thou revealest Thyself to me!”

* * *

A father has his sons and others to free him from his debts, but he has got none but himself to remove his bondage.

* * *

Who, but one’s own self can get rid of the bondage, caused by the fetters of ignorance, desire, action and the like, aye, even in a hundred crore of cycles.

* * *

God has not be earned like money. By His grace, He is already earned and deposited in every soul. But owing to human forgetfulness, He has to be rediscovered.

* * *

Neither money pays, nor name, nor fame, nor learning; it is character that can cleave through adamant walls of difficulties. Bear this in mind.

Satsaṅga

Satsaṅga is glorified in all scriptures. *Sat* means good, noble and eternal. *Saṅga* means association or attachment. *Satsaṅga* means association with those men, books or environments etc., who are connected with *Sat*, the Truth. *Satsaṅga* is the accessible and effective tool to change bad *Vāsanās* into good ones. Good activities counter evil activities and in course of time doing good actions becomes the man's habit or nature. *Satsaṅga* thus helps one reverse that process which has brought us to what we are today—men of impure thoughts and wicked actions. Spiritual study should create need for self improvement.

The medium which allows Truth to manifest with all its glories, is called as *Sattva*. The characteristics of *Sattva-Guṇa* are cheerfulness, supreme peace, contentment and devotion and knowledge of God. (*Viveka Cūḍāmaṇi*)

Viveka is to understand what is right and wrong and also to use the right understanding to implement in life. Purpose of life is not comfortable life but to realize God. Life long occupation is God-realization. Profession is only a hobby in life.

Śabarī got the vision of Lord Śrī Rāma, through the easy means of devotion. Dhruva and Prahlāda attained the supreme state of devotion to God through *Satsaṅga* with Sage Nārada. Our devotion to God is affected by conflicts within, between love for God and attachment to worldly objects. Attachments result in agitations and sinful actions.

In the company of great people, all infatuations gradually melt and consequently pure love for God manifests itself

in the form of peace of mind. The meeting with pious souls is very useful as it is an opportunity for worthy questions and getting correct answers to strive for our goodness. Hearing the praises of the Lord, cleans the impurity of the mind in the form of desires. Great agony is felt in crossing *Samsāra* unless we travel in the boat of *Bhakti* to God. (*Bhāgavatam*)

The qualities of good people are kindness, patience, friendship, nobility, abidance by scriptural injunctions (*Bhāgavatam*). There are peaceful and magnanimous saints who live like *Vasanta-Ṛtu* for the good of humanity. They have crossed the ocean of *Samsāra* through their self-effort. They however want to help suffering people to cross the ocean without any selfish motive. (*Viveka Cūḍāmaṇi*)

Good people have given up attachments to all external objects. Company of such people is to be sought in order to destroy the evils of bad company which exist in us. (*Bhāgavatam*)

Be in the company of the good the wise devotees find the Lord as being installed within their's hearts though veiled by his potencies just like the sacrificial fire is produced out of wood. (*Bhāgavatam*)

A wicked person is like a charcoal which burns the hands even just by an accidental touch. Evil company is to be shunned by all means as it is the cause of lust, anger, delusion, loss of discrimination and ultimately utter ruin. A ripple in the beginning can become an ocean. (*Subhāṣitam*)

Bhakti means wholehearted devotion and supreme love for God in order to be in eternal unalloyed bliss. It is the state of mind when the mind and sense-organs are exclusively directed to the Supreme being spontaneously. A vision of oneness develops love, readiness to serve all and attitude of forgiveness.

A tiny peace of thread when associated with fragrant flowers for tying a knot finds a respected place in the head of a beautiful woman (*Subhāṣitam*). *Sādhus* clean their minds by undergoing rigorous discipline just like gold is cleaned by rubbing. God is pleased with their devotion to him as they want him alone and not even heaven. *Māyā* can be won over by *Satsaṅga* by visualizing God in everything (*Bhāgavatam*). Association with the good removes dullness of mind, infuses truthfulness in speech and earns respect, purity and fame (*Nītisāram*). *Satsaṅga* is obtained on the strength of merits earned in the course of many precious births. We surrender to these great people whose *Darśana* destroys inauspicious things and promotes welfare (*Bhāgavatam*).

Sages do not ask God anything during prayer. They pray in expression of bliss. The holy rivers purify devotees in course of time. The very *Darśana* of *Sādhus* purify the devotees immediately. By mere remembrance of great people, houses became purified. What to say of the gains of seeing and serving them (*Bhāgavatam*). Their advice is nectar—like remedy for sufferings. Attachment to the body is a fetter for the soul. The same attachment towards saints is a door to liberation (*Bhāgavatam*). Prayer uplifts man to higher realms. Wrong tendencies fall off. Mind becomes pure. God is the unknown friend. He is always with us. He is our conscience. He will manifest when all infatuations melt. Pure love then manifests. We have to pray for *Satsaṅga* in order to kill evil effects of bad company as was done by devotees in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

May I enjoy the company of exalted souls of pure heart in order to cross *Samsāra* (*Dhruva*). May I be born as a servant of devotees of God. Let there be friendship with devotees of Lord when I revolve in the wheels of *Samsāra*

(Vṛtrāsura). May we enjoy the company of those whose sins have been washed away and who are endowed with virtues (*Rudra-Gītā*). Oh Lord, you stand, conquered by the righteous people who have subdued their self (Citraketu). I crave not for *Mokṣa* as nectar of your lotus feet is not found there. The nectar is oozing from the words of *Bhaktas*. *Satsaṅga* gives knowledge. Pious people worship you to dispel delusion (Pṛthu). When I am born again and again let me have devotion in Lord. Let me also have association with great *Bhāgavatas*. Let me have friendship with all beings in the world. I bow to the great God-realized souls (Parīkṣit).

It is best to surrender to Lord as we can get support for all problems as he is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. Prayer is tuning our mind to a greater source of power, knowledge and wisdom. Be with Him. Be His.

—Compiled by *P. R. A. Ishwaran*



By closing the eyes and not doing anything physically one gets detached from the gross physical body and the visible world. Similarly, by not thinking about anything, one's association with the subtle body and subtle world is detached and one experiences the peaceful state of existence in the causal body. With further deepening of peace in this state, the association with the causal body is also detached and one then experiences the bliss of existence of one's real bodiless self which is immortal and divine. This is attainment of one's real life or Self-realization and God-realisation.

—*Revelation of the Spiritual Path*

Upaniṣads: A Summation

—S.K. Balasubramanian

The *Upaniṣads* present an entirely refreshing manner of discussing supra-human reality. They affirm that such an entity is a Reality, known as *Brahman* and that humans are a part of it. The Gods, not merely the Hindu ones, are no more than imaginary cult heads. Evolution, not vested interests, political compulsions or delusions, controls and guides human development.

The Hindu paradigm is set by the axiom given in the *Munḍaka Upaniṣad*—‘*Satyameva jayate nānṛtam*,’ which means, “Reality prevails over delusions.” Only the ones without delusions may ‘see’ the reality. The *Abhyāroha Mantra* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is based on this conviction. It says,

Lead thou me
From the unreal to the Real
From ignorance to Enlightenment
From the ephemeral to the Eternal.

The same *Upaniṣad* looks upon *Brahman* as infinity, completely self-contained. It cannot be added to or subtracted from.

Delusions are of several types. The most common ones relate to God. *Kena Upaniṣad* denies any comfort to those who assert that God is in their pocket. It says that it (God) is unknown to the ‘knower’. The ones who claim to know God do not know it. *Tejobindu Upaniṣad* says that *Brahman* is beyond ideation. That God is unknowable by the human mind, is affirmed by the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It defines

the Reality as indefinable. It asserts ‘*Neti, Neti*’ ‘not this, not this’. *Brahman* is not to be limited by definitions.

Brahman is not to be confined to books. *Amṛta-Bindu Upaniṣad* says, “Master all the texts but (in the search for *Brahman*) give up all of them completely like the one gleaning for grains rejects the chaff.” I take it to mean that information is not ‘knowledge’. What is contained in books, is information. Knowledge has a certain ageless pristine quality that is more to be comprehended than learnt.

But information, looked upon as ‘lower knowledge’, has its value, *Īṣa Upaniṣad* accepts its importance in worldly life. It says, “Live according to the ‘lower knowledge’ and transcend it to acquire higher knowledge that alone gives insight into the Eternal.”

Worldly knowledge is an essential stepping-stone to the higher one. It is implied that the worldly knowledge should not be ignored. Spirituality does not stand alone. It has relevance only in the context of worldly life. One should be a whole or complete human being in the world before he aspires for the next world. *Mokṣa* is an evolutionary end product not the first or any other stage in life.

The *Gītā* goes further. It recommends that ‘attachment’ should be given up as the first step. ‘Attachment’ is an emotional or ideological locus. The spiritual aspirant should renounce intuitively the limiting loci and the concurrent existential constraints by remaining objective. One could say, “Objectivity is the operative word of *Vedānta*.” Even this statement is a simplification.

Evolution is the heart of the Hindu approach. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* details primordial evolution and postulates another stage not known so far. The *Upaniṣad* calls that stage, “Bliss.” That is perhaps for individuals like Bhṛgu, the son of Varuṇa, to attain. There is no collective salvation. Sophistry

does not lead there. Emphatically the *Upaniṣad* says, “Words are echoed back without any impact. So also is intelligence ineffective.” Bliss is an intuitive level. Intelligence is but a mere reflection of the ego.

Brahman is seamless continuity. It is intuitive Reality. It is pristine. It is pure.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad asserts *Brahman* is ‘*Satyam, Jñānam, Anantam*’ (Reality, Consciousness and Infinity). This aspect of *Brahman* is attested to in other *Upaniṣads*.

The same *Upaniṣad* gives the logo of Hinduism, *Om*. “*Om* is *Brahman*”, it declares. “*Om* is everything.” *Om* has five limbs.

Cosmic consciousness is postulated in *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, as a fourth state of consciousness extending beyond the wakeful and the two dream states. It is known as *Turīya*.

Cosmic consciousness is again the subject of the *Aitareya Upaniṣad* that says, “*Brahman* is cosmic consciousness”.

Energy is another constituent of *Brahman*. It is called *Vāyu*. *Praśna Upaniṣad* and the *Śānti Pāṭha* of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* assert this fact. The latter addresses *Vāyu*, “You are the Real *Brahman*. I accept this (as fact).” *Brahmopaniṣad* acknowledges this. It equates *Prāṇa*, energy in the context of the human body, as *Brahman*.

Light or *Jyoti* is another form of energy. It is the universal vector that determines Time. Both are irreversible.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad speaks of yet another component of *Brahman*: the *Ākāśa* or Space. It is on Space that everything rests.

Brahman is a five-component (*Pañcakam*) composite of three-dimensional Space, Energy and Light or Time.

Kāthopaniṣad is more mundane. It presents death not as a terminus but as another transit point on the road to

Brahman. It takes us for a ride in a chariot that is the human body. The charioteer is the mind. The horses are the sense-organs. If the horses are under control one reaches the destination. Otherwise it is a disastrous journey. “The path to Realization is like the razor’s edge.”

All this is not empty rhetoric. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* gives the advice, “When in doubt consult qualified Brahmins of great learning and a high degree of objectivity. They should be practical and interested in social consolidation and advance. They should have a stake in *Dharma* with no personal agenda.” Hindu society had produced many such individuals. I mention two: Vidyāraṇya who inspired the *Vijayanagar* empire and Samartha Rāmadāsa, the *Guru* of Śivājī.



See how God is manifest in everything! Look at the beautiful earth, and how nature keeps it in balance—how there is a plan, an intelligence behind everything in creation. After the patterns of nature had been created, God created man to appreciate this earth. But see how poorly we have taken care of it. We have failed miserably. God made all men as brothers, but they have become blinded by narrow social and national self-interest. Loyalty to one's heritage and country is noble, but the wrong kind of fealty and patriotism creates prejudicial mental ruts that lead to brother fighting brother. War comes; thousands are killed; and then peace is established and men become brothers again for a little while. Then humanity again falls into the rut of greed, of selfishness, of intolerance: and more war is the result.

—*Paramahansa Yogananda*

Premā-Bhakti

—Y. Jagannatham

Premā-Bhakti—

We have already said that in God-vision state, a devotee is frequently thrown into fits of ecstasy in spite of himself, and that they increase in frequency and duration in proportion to the progress achieved in the realm of *Premā-Bhakti*. When in this way his *Jñāna-Bhakti*, dissolves yielding place to *Premā-Bhakti*, when Love fills his heart and permeates his whole being, he attains the next higher stage in his realization, namely, that of God-consciousness. The devotee now becomes almost like a baby. As in God-vision, here too two distinct stages are discernible. The first and lower one is that of a baby of six months to two years. It is only at this stage that it can be asserted as literally true that he is in the world but not of it. He has gone behind the veil of *Māyā* which enwraps the whole creation and so, the worldly aspect of things, is to him entirely a thing of the past, dead and buried forever. The scales have fallen from his eyes, and with his enlightened inner eye, he sees nothing but the Spiritual Form of the Lord in the objects around him. He has absolutely no ego; knows no fear, and even the instinct of self-preservation ceases to operate in him. Although in the initial stage God-vision has its origin in sense-feeling and is accompanied by some self-consciousness, God-vision at this stage becomes a spontaneous and causeless gift of the Lord and this *Ahetuka* Vision comes unasked and unawares. This spontaneous God-vision is the marked feature of this stage. At times, indeed, the

Lord whose Love-form he has been enjoying in his Vision Divine reveals himself to Him in all His Glory. Throughout this stage his whole being enjoys thrills after thrills which result from some unbounded and unspeakable joy because in his eyes all distinctions of objects have been wiped out, and he enjoys only the *Prema-Rasa* in all things and beings. As such, a *Bhakta* sees only the *Prema-Swarūpa* in the objects around him, and it is ridiculous to suggest that he should have even the faintest memory of their mundane significance. He does not seek them of his own accord. Drunk with the nectar of love, he is very cheerful and happy at all times, and no kind of worldly thought or anxiety, not even the instinctive cravings for the satisfaction of the natural needs of his person, can bring him down from this highly ecstatic stage. As a result of his intense Love for the Lord whom he sees now even in stocks and stones, all his thoughts, all his feelings, and all his aspirations, nay, his very self gets merged in the Divine Music and Harmony that permeates all space, and he forever and ever drinks to satiety the sweet melody of the Flute of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

This is a very high stage of *Premā-Bhakti*. The *Bhakta* will have reached the end of all his desires when thus he has begun to love the Lord for Love's sake. He does not long for *Mokṣa*, does not want to become one with the Infinite, but desires to retain as much of his ego as would enable him to taste the Love of the Lord.

Premā-Bhakti in its highest stage— The next and the highest stage of all is that of a child from its birth to six months. Like an infant, the *Bhakta* possesses absolutely no knowledge of himself or of his surroundings. He is deeply immersed in Bliss everlasting; lost in the Joy that knows no bounds. He goes back to the Primeval Being from whom he

had sprung and his personality gets lost in His Personality.

At this stage, he sees in perfect profound silence a single effulgent spark from the Supreme Being and in it he beholds countless Universes—the trees of the illustration whirling in a never-ending dance and beating time to the Absolute and Harmonious Music that is co-existent with the Eternal. It is only at this stage that the *Bhakta* develops the state of a insentient being—the condition of an inert, senseless or Vacant-looking entity. He does not care for his body, and like an infant he has to be entirely looked after by others. This is pure God-consciousness, *Brahmakara Sthiti* or the highest *Samādhi*.



No one will ever know completeness, no one will ever know satisfaction, until he has entered that interior world and discovered his true soul nature. Not all the gold in the world, not all the pleasures the senses can offer, not all the love of any human being, will ever be able to satisfy your true Self. Your soul is just using this mortal form for a little while—and oftentimes not too comfortably. One day the indomitable, immortal, all-blissful, imperishable soul will leave behind its physical home to return to its home in Spirit. So why give so much of our life and attention to the passing drama of external circumstances and events? How blinded people are by this earthly show that they are so willing to forsake their Divine Abode! While living and functioning on this finite earth, we are meant to use wisely a part of our time to discover that infinite realm whence we have come.

—*Sri Daya Mata*

My Beloved

—*Makhan Prasad Dowera*

My Friend, my Beloved,
Dear to me in life and death,
What's the world to me
Bereft of Thee?
Void, darkness, all dead.

The wind whispers Thy praise to me,
The brook “babbles over the pebbles”—
Glory unto Thee
In the autumn distance I see
The blue of Thy eyes.
The sun reminds me Thy greatness
As it does.

Peace? Happiness ?
I want them not;
And Heaven without Thee
I loath.
Shelter in Thy lotus feet
That's all I want, Beloved, all I seek.



Inner Transformation

—Lt. Col. R. K. Langar

What is inner transformation?

Inner transformation means changing ourselves from present state of existence to a higher state. It is based on the assumption that all men are not perfect at birth but can become so with self-effort. Inner transformation presupposes that there is something in a person, which needs to be changed for the better. *Bhagavadgītā* says that all undertakings have some defect like smoke in fire. Similarly all human beings have some negative traits, which need to be transformed. It is a different matter that some people realize it while other don't. In larger sense, inner transformation would mean turning negative emotions like anger, lust, ego, deceit and falsehood into positive emotions like truth, compassion, peace, forgiveness, humility, simplicity and the like. Inner transformation aims at converting vices into virtues and demerits into merits. It is like going from darkness into light leading one to live purposefully. Inner transformation means working on one's own self for self-upliftment.

Change of Heart—

In spiritual language transformation implies change of heart, not the physical heart but conceptual centre in our being. Heart typifies a positive centre in a man from where positive emotions like love, compassion, sympathy, forgiveness, truthfulness, and non-violence are radiated. The innermost part of human personality, the core of human being, the self or the consciousness is ever pure. But at our ordinary state of existence the pure consciousness within is covered with psychological distortions, which mostly constitute our negative

instincts. So change of heart will mean change of our negativity into positivity leading to a behavioural pattern of the individual corresponding to higher values of life.

Transformation is fighting inner battle of life—

Generally we are concerned with fighting the outer battle of life where one has to tackle day-to-day problems of worldly existence. But the main battle of life is not outer, it is the inner battle where one has to identify inner weaknesses and eliminate them through the process of discrimination. This requires each one of us to set aside sometime from our daily routine to look within to find out where we stand in terms of our merits and demerits. This process is called self-examination. One of the Greek philosophers tells us that an unexamined life is not worth living. Having found our strengths and weaknesses, we should enlarge our strengths to weaken our demerits. This is what inner transformation means. With constant vigil, concentration and practice we get into the process of removing evil bad habits and undesirable tendencies which automatically strengthens our positive traits. While we are engaged in the inner battle of life we have to keep check over our thoughts and sentiments so that our outer action do not cause any impurity within. This is how we develop self-awareness, which gives us the ability to undergo inner transformation without much difficulty.

Aids for inner transformation—

Our scriptures and perfect guide, which can elevate our level of existence. Then we can study lives of great men and our sages and draw lessons out of them. We can choose our role model, which could be a scripture or a human being, and follow the role model in thoughts, words and deeds. We need an open mind to accept what our role model tells us. Open mind means that we are not coloured by our own views. *Bhagavadgītā*, which by itself is a perfect role model for self evolution, says that let the

scriptures be your authority in ascertaining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what has been prescribed by the scriptures, you should act in this matter. According to Christianity God has already planned the process of human transformation and for this purpose God sent His son Jesus Christ to show us the way to God. Jesus had said, 'Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect'. Islam says, God has given man a code of conduct, the right path that frees mankind from all ills and makes life worth living. Koran declares about itself, 'Here is the book where there is no trace of doubt'.

Our goal and aim—

Aim of each and every religion is to make us a spiritual person anchored fully on a sound moral base. Indian spiritual tradition says that self-realization is the goal of human life. When understood correctly religion is the highest motive power, which injects love, and spiritual power into humanity. Sri Aurobindo says that those who chose God, are chosen by God and therefore, we should not miss any opportunity to seek God through religion. With God on our side inner transformation becomes a Reality.



On account of the sins of previous births, a person does not relish good company (*Satsaṅga*), he will either doze off during the course of sermon or leave the '*Satsaṅga*' or start talking of something else. But if he remains in the good company for a few days, he will surely come under the holy influence and start singing the prayers of God. After that he will never leave the holy company.

—*Swami Ramsukhdas*

Śiva Aṣṭamūrti

—Kumble Vittal Rao

Śiva is being worshipped all over India, from Kedarnath to Rameshwaram, with great piety, on *Mahā Śivarātri* day, mostly in *Liṅga* form, which is symbolic of the miniature cosmos. *Skandapurāṇa* says that *Liṅga* represents the infinite sky, the earth is its base and all the creation exists and dissolves in it. Śiva as *Ādideva* or *Parabrahma* represents trinity i.e., process of creation, preservation and destruction. *Liṅga* is also symbol of the mountain Kailash the abode of Śiva.

Śiva is also known as ‘*Aṣṭamūrti*’, representing the primordial elements i.e., Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Sky, Sun, Moon and as its *Yajamāna*, the supreme master controlling all. The primordial elements also exist in mini form in our *Pañcabhūta Śarīra* i.e., earth as our flesh, water as blood, fire as heat, air as breath, sky as space, sun as light and moon as mind and Śiva as consciousness or soul controlling all these. Hence Śiva has to be worshipped as our *Antaryāmī*, as well as *Sarvāntaryāmī*.

Śiva in physical form, is being worshipped with Pārvatī as “*Jagataḥ pitarau vande*” i.e., Universal Mother and Father. They are known as the eternal couple. Their *Sibliṅgas* are Gaṇeśa and Subrahmaṇya. Śrī Gaṇeśa is being worshipped all over India, as the first deity, to ward off all obstacles. Śrī Subrahmaṇya is known as ‘*Guru Guha*’ and is being worshipped widely in Tamilnadu and in Karnataka. Śiva Temples compulsorily have ‘*Nandī*’ in front of the *Śivaliṅga*. *Nandī* represents ‘*Dharma*’ on which Śiva rides. This

means that we have to be *Dhārmic*, to get vision of Śiva.

Śiva is considered as ‘*Ādi Guru*’ in *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* form. Strangely it is said that Śiva sits under *Aśwattha* tree, in ever youthful form with four hands holding *Amṛta Bhāṇḍa* in one, *Abhaya Chinmudra* in one, *Vedas* in one and *Japa-Mālā* in the other. He is surrounded by aged *Ṛṣis*, seeking ‘*Ātma Jñāna*’ which Śiva graces through his ‘*Mauna*’ i.e., silence.

Śiva is easily accessible to both learned and illiterate, to *Devas* and *Asuras* and even to others like elephant, snake and spider. Śiva is worshipped by the learned with all the rituals particularly ‘*Rudram*’, whereas ordinary people irrespective of caste, creed and gender individually can do *Abhiṣeka* with water, along with *Bilva* leaves, to beget grace of Śiva. Śiva means auspiciousness and His worship confers all *Śubham*, *Śāntam* and *Kalyāṇam*.

“Śiva is formless, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient and also has varied forms. He manifested Himself first as ‘*Jyotirlinga*’ as eternal effulgence, on the midnight of *Mahā Śivarātri* day. This reflects that Śiva is *Jñāna-Swarūpa*, to dispel our *Avidyā* or Darkness. People observe fasting and all night vigil on this day, chanting among others, the holy *Pañcākṣarī* “*Om namaḥ śivāya*”. This makes people to be aware to the eternal, infinite, luminous Śiva on the *Śivarātri* day. May this enable us to elevate ourselves to worship Śiva as the one infinite ‘*Ekameva advitīyam*’ to usher in, universal brotherhood and peace in the universe.



This human form, which gods and angels aspire for, you have been privileged to get, so that you may attain God. Waste it not, life is so precious.

Direction for Life as Pronounced in Our Classics

—P. S. Ramanathan

Poet Bhāratī, in his work on *Gītā* has underscored that even though there are classics in Tamil of a higher order like those of Kamban, Tiruvalluvar and Elango, akin to the *Brahmasūtras*, *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā* in Sanskrit (known as *Prasthāna Traya*), one should not fail to study the *Gītā*. The teachings of the *Gītā* cannot be understood by intellect but with awareness (insight). It is different from others, from other texts as one taught by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. The crux of His teaching is *Swadharma*, which is the observance of the duties prescribed in the scriptures.

The two popular texts, *Bhagavadgītā* and *Tirukkural* fulfil the need for guidance in both the material and spiritual facets of our life, in the world. The thrust of the *Gītā* is spiritual knowledge while *Tirukkural* is an ethical work offering wisdom about the different aspects of life. *Tirukkural* offers us solace by way of inspiration and direction when we are faced with odd situations, sometimes even pretty hard, owing to exhaustion in life.

There is a misconception that the *Gītā* impels one to fight. Contrary to it, it awakens one's conscience to the necessity of discharge one's duty. The *Gītā* brings solace in moments of sorrow and tragedy as the mind is receptive on such occasions to its teachings.

There are several parallels between the *Gītā* and *Tirukkural*. One such instance is Arjuna's dejection in the battlefield at Kurukshetra and the Lord's counsel in explaining him the inevitability of death and true nature of soul. This is the

occasion when the Lord describes to him the *Yoga* of action (*Karmayoga*) and tells him of the nature of the man of stable mind and his glories (*Bhagavadgītā* II. 39—72). On the same lines, the *Tirukkural* of Tiruvalluvar says, death is like sleep, birth is like awakening from sleep (*Tirukkural* XXXIV.9). The same idea of inevitability of death and nature of soul is expressed by *Ādi Śaṅkara*, thus, in his *Bhaja Govindam*, 'पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं'. There is no great folly than infatuation that looks upon the transient as if it were everlasting, says Tiruvalluvar in *Tirukkural*). We can get ourselves enlightened and show better wisdom, if we are to take to such classics as the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Tirukkural* for leading a fruitful life.



You will find various classes of men in this world. First, there are the God-men, whose self-abnegation is complete, and who do only good to others even at the sacrifice of their own lives. These are the highest of men. If there are a hundred of such in any country, that country need never despair. But they are unfortunately too few. Then there are the good men who do good to others so long as it does not injure themselves. And there is a third class who, to do good to themselves, injure others. It is said by a Sanskrit poet that there is a fourth unnamable class of people who injure others merely for injury's sake. Just as there are at one pole of existence the highest good men, who do good for the sake of doing good, so, at the other pole, there are others who injure others just for the sake of the injury. They do not gain anything thereby, but it is their nature to do evil.

—Swami Vivekananda

Yoga, Bhakti and Brahmajñāna

—Swami Akhandanand Saraswatiji Maharaj

The mind moves in five directions.

1. That, which is observed directly, or through its logical conclusion; like a pot, or smoke—smoke, indicating a fire.

2. Mistaken assumptions, like seeing the silvery sheen on a seashell, and mistaking it for silver.

3. Barren imagery, like the child of a barren woman.

4. Drifting into a haze of sleepiness.

5. Remembering things seen, heard or dreamt.

These five movements can increase or reduce mental agitations. Those, which add to increased worldliness, increase agitation, whereas those, which bring detachment, reduce it.

The practice of *Yoga* (meditation and other exercises) can still the mind. The one who practices *Yoga* can become established in his Self. This state is called '*Nirodha Samādhi*'. It shuts out the world from the conscious awareness.

In this state, however, there is no feeling of devotion. Nor can it attain *Brahmajñāna* (Knowledge of the *Brahman*, the all-pervading essence of creation), which is what dispels ignorance. The path of *Bhakti* (devotion) and *Brahmajñāna* are therefore, separate from the path of *Yoga*.

In the path of *Bhakti*, our *Guru* (or the Scriptures, which act as our *Guru*) establishes in our heart, a particular form of the Lord, for us to love with faith and devotion. The movements of the mind dissolve into that form, whether they are melted by the burning desire to unite with the Lord, or through tears of Bliss, imagining that we have been united.

Melting of the mind destroys all previous forms, and the love/hate emotions attached to them. The form of the Lord is stamped firmly on the mind, and a great love for Him is developed.

The *Yogic* processes of *Sama* and *Dama* (curbing the emotional reactions of the mind) do succeed in freeing the mind of worldly attachments and aversions, but it does not bring the blissful tears and the thrilling experience of *Bhakti*.

The scriptures, which guard us like a *Guru*, also implant in a malleable mind, the knowledge of the all-pervading, formless *Brahman*. Hence, we obtain either devotion to a particular form of the Lord, or perceive His essence everywhere. We obtain *Brahmajñāna*.

What is the difference between *Bhakti* and *Brahmajñāna*. The difference is, that devotion lasts all through one's life, but *Brahmajñāna* once it has destroyed our ignorance, becomes redundant. We are at total peace, whether it remains, or not.

Both the form of the Lord, and the formless *Brahman*, can be established in the mind only through the proof provided by the scriptures. Faith and feelings are paramount in the path of *Bhakti*, where the mind is directed towards the experience of the Lord in a particular form. Overwhelming love dominates. This can be altered, continued, or abandoned, according to our will and effort. However, true devotees claim that *Bhakti* is derived, not by any effort of theirs, but by the Grace of the Lord.

The proof of *Brahmajñāna*, is the word of the *Vedas*. It establishes firmly in our mind, that our *Ātman* is the *Brahman*. It helps us to experience that, which already is, without creating anything new.

The objective of *Bhakti*, it's proof, purpose, and result, is faith, and total immersion of our self into the experience of a particular form of the Lord.

The objective of *Brahmajñāna*, its proof and experience, is the establishing ourself as the *Brahman*.

Devotion is for the tenderhearted, affectionate temperament. *Brahmajñāna* is for those, who are naturally detached, and aloof from, the world.

An immersion of all mental movements into the Lord, is needed for *Bhakti*, but no such immersion is needed for *Brahmajñāna*.

Devotion is required to experience the Lord with a Form, and *Brahmajñāna* is required to experience the formless Godhead, which is all pervading.

Hence, there is no cause of debate between the two. Both paths are right, depending upon the nature and desire of the different types of seekers.



There is no difference in work. Do not think that this work will lead to God and that will not.

Everything depends upon His grace. To have His grace, whatever work you perform, do it with sincerity and earnest longing for Him. Through His grace the environment will become favourable and the conditions of realisation will become perfect. If you want to renounce the world, and if your family depends upon you, perhaps your brother will assume its responsibility for you. Perhaps your wife will not hinder you in your spiritual life, but will rather help you; or perhaps you will not marry at all and will not be attached to the world in any way.

—Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna

The Wonder of Wonders— Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa

—Dr. Mukunda Pati Tripathi ‘Ratnamaliya’

The open session of *Sudharmā Sabhā* of Dwaraka was going on in full swing. Various kings, princes, regents, representatives, Brahmins and sages were seated majestically. There was a festive mood everywhere. Proposals for the betterment of the lot of the citizens of Dwaraka and its constituent regions were being put up, pondered upon and okayed. The affluence of Dwaraka was worth emulating even for Indra, the lord of ‘Amarāvātī’.

All of a sudden, a strong whirlwind covered the whole of the sky. There was a blazing flash of light and the melodious tune of ‘*Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa*’ spread in every direction. Then loomed up the figure of the lute-player sage Nārada. He came straight to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa after landing on the Earth. Unlike his usual gay gesture, he was in a very thoughtful mood today. Everybody greeted him and was glad at his welcome arrival. The moment the formalities of welcome were over, he made a remark to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa— “O Lord of lords, Śrī Kṛṣṇa! You are the supreme deity, the perennial source of creation. You are really the wonder of wonders, the most miraculous and powerful one.”

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa nodding his head in consent said authentically, “O yes! I’m the supreme deity, I’m the wonder of wonders, I’m in all and all-in-all accompanied with ‘*Dakṣiṇā*’. This satiated ‘Nāradaḥ’ and he got up from his seat and left the place reciting the name of *Nārāyaṇa*.

All the people sitting there couldn't make any head or tail of this short conversation. They were eager enough to know the purport of their talk. So, they gave vent to their curiosity. They said, "O enigmatic Lord! we are quite eager to know the gist of the talk between you and *Devarṣi Nārada*." Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the wielder of supreme illusion and the exponent of perfect '*Jñānayoga*' smiled and said, "Better it is to satisfy your curiosity through the *Rṣis*' own mouth." He invoked him and the sage reappeared. He narrated the following story:—

One day, I was travelling on the bank of the Ganges in a happy mood. I was looking at the graceful movement of the gurgling river. I came across a big tortoise. I had never seen so big a tortoise in my pretty long life. I approached him, touched and patted him. In the fulness of my heart, I began to extol him, 'O Mighty and majestic one! You are really wonderful. I've never seen any aqueous creature like you. You look more formidable than the biggest of the crocodiles.'

The tortoise modestly refuted my eulogy. He said, "O sage of the sages! I'm very thankful to you for having so high an opinion for me but it's not a right appraisal. For more wonderful is mother Ganges, who is the abode of many a creature like me." I went straight to mother Ganges, saluted her with folded hands and began to sing her glory— "O mother Ganges! You are glorious indeed among all the creations of the universe. You sanctify the '*Āśramas*' of *Rṣis*, irrigate crops, quench the thirst of thirsty creatures and hatch many wonderful animate and inanimate creatures in your womb." Mother Ganges refused my remark and said, "Listen to me, O divine sage! your statement contains some grains of truth only. It's not totally true. Greater far than me, is the ocean which is the mainstay of so many rivers like

me.” Then I went to the ocean and praised him, “O Mighty ocean! You are really great in the whole creation for possessing so many gems and rare species. Your vast treasure of water causes panic in the hearts of men. So you are matchless and praiseworthy.” The ocean politely refuted my argument, saying that, it is the Earth alone which is the basis of so many oceans. So all the credit goes to the Earth.” Then, I marched ahead and invoked goddess Earth. I saluted her and said, “O goddess! You are really marvellous and great one. You are the main resort of varieties of flora and fauna. Men, birds, beasts, insects, trees, creepers, rivers, fountains, mountains all the animate and inanimate species find their existence on you. You are the very synonym of life. You are the centre of all activities.”

The polite Earth rejected my views outright on the ground that Mountains are called ‘*Bhūddharas*’. They maintain the balance of the earth. They hold their heads high up in the sky. They are the birthplace of various life—saving herbs and shrubs, animal species and rare trees. Being snow-clad they look very beautiful. I bowed down to the Earth and set out for meeting the mountains. Meeting them I paid my obeisance and said, “O ye miraculous mountains! you are the greatest and most majestic ones in this vast universe. Being snow-clad you look very majestic. You are the abode of gods and *Rṣis*, gems and joys.” The mountains refuted my proposition saying that *Prajāpati* Brahmā alone deserves to be praised because he is the progenitor of the entire creation. He is adorable for all. Without delaying even for a second, I approached Lord Brahmā, offered my obeisance to Him and said, “O Lord of lords! None is equal to you in the universe. You are the Supreme Source of cosmic life.” Lord Brahmā smiled looked at me affectionately and said, “My dear son! the creation is really indebted to *Vedas* and

Yajñas. *Mantras* and *Āhūtis* provide vitality to ‘*Devas*’. So, all credit goes to *Vedas* and *Yajñas*. I approached *Yajñas*, offered my reverence to them and made them aware of my high esteem for them. They, too, disapproved my opinion saying, that Lord Viṣṇu is the perennial source of all the *Vedas* and *Yajñas*. He is the ‘*Yajñapurūṣa*’. He is the very embodiment of *Yajñas*. The *Vedas* are the ‘*Niśwāsa*’ (the air exhaled from His lungs) of Him. I was going in a hurry to see Him in *Vaikunṭha*. I saw Him seated here in the form of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I greeted Him. He confirmed and welcomed my viewpoint. So, I departed at once overwhelmed with joy. Everybody present in the assembly felt amazed. The out roar of *Jaya Śrī Kṛṣṇa* and *Jaya Devarṣi* reached the sky.



On any pathway in mortal life one can get mired in ruts; they are present everywhere to catch man's consciousness. Some channel your feelings into compulsive anger; some keep you stuck in a mindset of pessimism or despondency; other ruts may hold you in fixed habits of avarice or jealousy or being overly critical, and so forth. And the tragedy is that throughout one's life, a person may think he is progressing when in fact he is firmly stuck in a rut. Just as when a car gets bogged down in mud or sand, and the driver steps on the accelerator, making the wheels spin rapidly, but the car remains in the same place—that is the condition of many persons. Even though their engine of life is running, their wheels are spinning uselessly. The progress and growth of such persons is negligible. They think they have grown up because their body has matured, but their brain, their mind, their attitudes remain stationary—psychologically and spiritually immature.

—*Paramahansa Yogananda*