

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥



# KALYANA-KALPATARU

A MONTHLY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF SPIRITUAL  
IDEAS AND LOVE FOR GOD

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## Śrī Rāma

श्रीरामचंद्र कृपालु भजु मन हरण भवभय दारुणं ।  
नवकंज-लोचन, कंज-मुख, कर-कंज, पद कंजारुणं ॥

(*Vinaya-Patrikā*)

O my heart! you should chant the name of Śrī Rāma who is very kind and destroys the terrible fear of birth and death. His eyes, face, hand and feet are as lovely as a fresh lotus flower.

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## Destiny versus Individual Effort

—*Brahmalina Sri Jayadayal Goyandka*

Many men recognize the predominance of destiny, while others lay stress on individual effort. Let us give serious thought to this question. In fact each is important in its own sphere. Piety, worldly prosperity, gratification of the senses and Liberation are the four *Puruṣārthas* or objects of human pursuit. Of these the first three are mere *Puruṣārthas*, while Liberation is the supreme object of human pursuit. Individual effort is the dominant factor in the pursuit of piety and Liberation. He who relegates them to the sphere of Destiny remains deprived of their benefit. In achieving worldly prosperity and gratification of the senses, however, destiny plays the dominant part; individual effort serves only as an exciting cause.

Generally all men put forth strenuous effort for attaining worldly prosperity and even do not hesitate in committing sin for its sake. Even then they are not able to earn as much money as they would because it cannot be had without the requisite *Prārabdha* or destiny. In the same way those who have no son strive hard for getting a son: but all are not blessed with a son; for destiny is the main factor here as well.

It has been stated above that individual effort is the main factor in the pursuit of Liberation and piety. Now the question is whether past *Karma*, viz, that which has begun to bear fruit and that which is lying dormant, are helpful in their pursuit or not. Our reply is that they are helpful no doubt, but they do not play the dominant part.

As a result of disinterested action and worship of God performed in past lives one secures the company of saints and exalted souls. And if after meeting them one strives on the lines pointed out by them one is sure to attain blessedness, but not by merely hearing their talks. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।  
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

(XIII. 25)

“Not knowing thus, other dull-witted persons, however, do worship even as they have heard from others; and even those who are thus devoted to hearing are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence in the shape of death.”

Therefore, if one’s past *Karma*, viz, that which has begun to bear fruit and that which has lying dormant, is favourable, it gets joined with a striver’s efforts for emancipation in his current life. In other words, if the striver has already covered half the distance, he has only to cover the other half in his current life. But even of his *Prārabdha* and *Sañcita Karmas* the latter counts more than the former inasmuch as the other, viz, *Prārabdha Karma* ceases to function once it has yielded its fruit. But disinterested action and worship done in the past but not yet converted into *Prārabdha* persist in a dormant state and, gradually accumulating, lead to Liberation. The Lord says:—

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।

(First half of *Gītā* II. 40)

“In this path (of disinterested action) there is no loss of effort, nor is there fear of contrary result.”

Generally all men covet wealth and sense-enjoyment; but they cannot be had in spite of one’s keen desire to have them. But even a keen desire to lead a pious life

and realize God is enough to bring the desired result. Fired with an intense longing to cultivate piety he who makes a special effort in this direction attains piety through that effort alone. Therefore, effort is the chief factor in the attainment of piety, which is only another name for doing one's sacred duties. Similarly in the case of a man seized with an intense longing for God-realization loving effort inspired by such intense longing speedily enables him to realize the highest object of human pursuit in the shape of God-realization.

One's meeting with any living being, object, occurrence or death in this world does not follow one's wish. If one wants to die, one cannot do so by merely wishing to die nor can anyone survive by desiring to survive. In the same way, one does not come by worldly riches and objects, living being and agreeable occurrences conducive to the gratification of one's senses for the mere seeking, however keenly we long for it; for they do not follow our will. But intense longing entertained for Liberation in the shape of God-realization is surely realized. Where there is keen longing, effort to realize it is carried on with faith, reverence and love and is also more intense and is therefore crowned with success. Moreover material objects, unconscious as they are, do not reciprocate our desire to secure them; but the Lord does so (*Vide Gītā* IV. 11).

Now let us consider what is destiny and what is individual effort. Past actions which are responsible for our happiness and misery, gain and loss, victory and defeat etc. constitute what goes by the name of fate or destiny. Destiny is worked out in three ways—viz, (1) without our seeking, (2) through another's will and (3) by one's own seeking. Contracting some disease, meeting with an accidental death, a fall in the price of a commodity purchased by us, decay

or destruction of an object—all these are the result of sins committed in the past. A windfall etc., on the other hand, are the rewards of virtuous acts. All these fall under the category of reaping the fruit of one's destiny through nobody's will.

Suppose a robber or thief loots or steals our goods or kills us for the sake of money or another takes our life through malice or a beast or bird injures us or a serpent bites us. All these are instances of our reaping the bitter fruit of our past sins through another's will.

If at the present moment we derive joy through the voluntary gratification of our senses, or make a profit out of some business transaction, this is an instance of our enjoying of our own will the fruit of our meritorious deeds done in the past. On the other hand, suffering, loss, defeat etc., undergone or sustained by us through our own voluntary effort are instances of our reaping the bitter consequences of our own past sins through our own will.

*Prārabdha* (fate) covers all the aforesaid cases of reaping the consequences of our past actions.

All conscious acts being done in one's current life fall under the category of individual effort. It is of three kinds—(1) righteous action, (2) unrighteous action and (3) action of a mixed type (both righteous and unrighteous). Righteous action results in happiness, an unrighteous act leads to suffering, while action of a mixed type yields consequences of a mixed type partaking of joy and sorrow both. Says the *Gītā*:—

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम्।

भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां क्वचित्॥

(XVIII. 12)

“Welcome, unwelcome and of a mixed type—threefold, indeed, is the fruit that follows hereafter from the actions

of the unrenouncing. But there is none ever for those who have renounced.”

If a man performs an action prompted by desire, he gets in return a wife, son, riches etc., in this world and is rewarded with the attainment of heavenly bliss etc., in the other. But even a little effort made by way of one’s duty in a disinterested spirit is rewarded with Liberation in the shape of God-realization—

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

(Latter half of *Gītā* II. 40)

“Even a slight attempt made to tread this path of disinterested action renders one immune from the great fear of birth and death.”

A man mostly enjoys freedom of action, but is altogether helpless in reaping the fruit of his action. The Lord Himself say—

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

(*Gītā* II. 47)

“Your right is to work only, but never to its fruit. Therefore do not be instrumental in making your actions bear fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction.”

Therefore, a man would do well to pursue his allotted duty in a disinterested spirit. He who does his allotted duty without seeking its reward gets his heart purified and thereby attains Liberation in the shape of God-realization.

(*To be continued*)



## **Human Life is for the Service of the Lord**

—*Nityalilalina Sri Hanumanprasad Poddar*

Remember: The life that has been vouchsafed to you, the body and mind which you have been blessed with in life as also the materials that have been supplied to you have been given to you for being utilized in the service of the Lord. The utility of all these lies in devoting them exclusively to the service of the Lord and he alone who devotes them to His service is a truly wise man.

Remember: On your devoting them to the service of the Lord you will be rewarded with uninterrupted, endless, imperishable, transcendent and spiritual divine joy; whereas on devoting them to luxuries you will derive transient joy and will eventually meet with a fall and undergo suffering, meet with ruination and suffer tortures in hell without end or limit. Knowing this to be inevitable and certain, a man should devote every moment of his life and every possession of his exclusively to the service of the Lord.

Remember: Comfort of body and publicity of name—all these are comprised in luxuries alone, although neither the body nor the name constitutes the self, your own being. The body is brought into being in the mother's womb through fertilization of her ovum by the father's generative fluid, and a name of one's fancy is given to the foetus after it is born. The body continues even after death and the name of the body too persists; but you, the spirit, depart from the body. Consciousness enters the body with you and the moment you leave it the body becomes unconscious

and dead. But through infatuation you come to look upon the body and the name given to it as the self—your own being. Hence you remain ever worried, struggling and active for ensuring comfort to the body and perpetuating its name. It is to this end that you make new scientific discoveries, expand your activities, popularize various arts and crafts, extend factories for manufacturing ever new luxuries and put forth endless endeavours of various kinds and grow happy and unhappy day and night on meeting with successes and reverses—can never be rid of dualities and suffering.

Remember: Obsessed as you are with a craving for sense-enjoyment, you remain restless, worried and confused in mind all your life—in the midst of success as well as of failure.

Remember: The craving for sense-gratification is an inexhaustible mine of evil. It is for the satisfaction of this craving that you pursue the objects of the five senses, viz. sound, touch, colour, taste and smell, make a scramble for office or power and continue to put forth unremitting efforts, both justifiable and unjustifiable, for money, and resort to bickering, friction and destruction in launching schemes of individual and collective development, putting forth efforts for the construction of railways and roadways, installation of telegraphs, creation of buildings and manufacturing conveyances. The craving for sense-gratification leads to numberless sins. That is why for the satisfaction of your craving for sensuous enjoyment you perpetrate with your body evil deeds resulting in sin, harbour egotism, self-conceit, the sense of possession, likes and dislikes, concupiscence, anger, greed, animosity, violence etc., in the mind, utter with your tongue untruthful, unpalatable, unkind, indecent, arrogant and useless words and words which are

harmful to yourself as well as to others and indulge in violence, adultery and immoral practices, partake of prohibited foods and drinks, behave arrogantly, practise inequity and perpetrate impious acts with your body. The root of all these evil practices lies in your false identification with the body and its name and your ever-growing desire to ensure comfort of body and publicity of its name.

Remember: You breathe your last while engaged in thus making plans and rejecting them—in a woeful plight of mental unrest. Instead of getting an opportunity of being devoted to the service of the Lord, your life is frittered away in useless, nay, evil pursuits. Therefore, waking up this very day, this very instant, fulfil your life and make it fruitful by devoting every moment of it and every activity of your body, speech and mind to the service of the Lord alone.



Those who want to realise God should not give up truth under any circumstances; for them it is better even to suffer, if they have to, a thousand miseries and afflictions than to sacrifice truth. If one is prepared to do so, and faces all these cheerfully, only then can one realise God, Who is Truth itself. To lose Truth is to lose God Himself. The power of truth is unailing: Rāma went to the forest to fulfil the truth of his father's vow; the five *Pāṇḍavas*, the sons of King Pāṇḍu, welcomed banishment along with Draupadī for the sake of truth; and for the same reason King Hariścandra lost everything and became a street beggar. The *Purāṇas* contain hundreds of instances of unfaltering devotion to truth, even at the sacrifice of life.

—Swami Virajananda

## Egoism is the Cause of Doership of All Actions

—*Brahmalina Swami Ramsukhdas*

All actions take place in the material realm. In the sentient realm there is no action at all. He whose mind is beguiled by egoism thinks “I am the doer.” ‘The mind being beguiled by egoism’ means to assume the self’s identity with ego, a fragment of *Aparā* (lower or insentient) *Prakṛti* (nature) viz., to assume ego as the self (I am this). This is known identification.

He who regards himself as the doer is sentient but he regards the insentient ‘ego’ as the ‘self’. It means that he who regards ego as the self, who assumes himself unipresent, is in fact a fragment of God. In that self no sense of doership is possible (*Gītā* XIII. 29). In fact the self can’t be identified with the body—‘शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ॥’ (*Gītā* XIII. 31) but he assumes his identification with the body ‘*Kartāhamitimanyate*’. In fact there is no identification, it is merely an assumption. It means that the self does not become a doer but there is only assumption of doership due to lack of discrimination—‘*Manyate*’. As soon as he thinks himself to be the doer, scriptural sanction-prohibition applies to him and he has to become the enjoyer (experiencer) of the fruit of action.

In the self there is no action. An action takes place where there is some empty space. How can an action take place in the solid self? But when a person assumes himself to be a doer, the action of *Prakṛti*, with which he accepts his relationship, bears fruit for him, which he has to endure.

The reason is that he, who is a doer, is an experiencer.

The self has no relationship at all with any 'Kāraka' (case). Therefore in the self there is not even an iota of doership. The realm of doership is different. By now the actions which have been performed in the species of gods, men, animals, birds, gnomes and devils etc., out of them no action could have an access to the self, nor the body could have an access to the self, because the division of action and object (body) is quite different, from the division of the self. But without attaching importance to this discrimination, a man gets bound by action and its fruit.

He who feels that something is to be done, has affinity with ego because without the sense of doership no action is possible. The sense of doership crops up as one thinks of doing something. With the sense of doership, there is performance of action and by performing an action, the sense of doership is strengthened. Therefore by practising the spiritual discipline being an agent a striver can't be free from egoism. An action done with the sense of egoism, can never lead to salvation, because egoism is the root of all misfortunes, of birth and death. If actions are not performed for one's own self, affinity for egoism does not persist viz., affinity for the entire nature (*Prakṛti*) is renounced. Therefore a striver instead of attaching importance to the performance of action, should attach importance to discrimination. By attaching importance to discrimination, discrimination is naturally revealed clearly and it guides a seeker. Afterwards this discrimination is transformed into Real-knowledge.



## Glory of Gāyatrī

—Swami Sivananda

*Brahma* milked out, as it were, from the three *Vedas*, the letter A, the letter U, and the letter M, formed by their coalition the trilateral monosyllable, together with the three mysterious expressions, *Bhūh*. *Bhuvah* and *Svah*, or earth, sky and heaven.

From the three *Vedas*, again, the Lord of creatures, incomprehensibly exalted, successfully milked out the three measures (feet) of that ineffable text, beginning with the word *Tat*, and entitled *Sāvitrī* or *Gāyatrī*.

And a twice-born man, who being away from the multitude, shall repeat 1000 times those three (i.e., *Om*, the *Vyāhṛtis* and the *Gāyatrī*) shall be released in a month even from a great offence, as a snake from its slough.

The three great immutable words, preceded by the trilateral syllable and followed by the *Gāyatrī* which consists of three measures, must be considered as the mouth or the principal part of the *Veda*.

Whoever shall repeat day by day for three years without negligence, that sacred text, shall hereafter approach the divine essence, move as freely as air and assume an ethereal form.

The trilateral monosyllable is an emblem of the supreme; the suppression of breath with the mind fixed on God is the highest devotion; nothing is more exalted than the *Gāyatrī*; a declaration of truth is more excellent than silence.

All rites ordained in the *Veda*, oblations to fire, and

solemn sacrifices pass away; but that which does not pass away, is declared to be the syllable *Om*, thence called *Akṣara Brahma*. All the words should be repeated slowly without mutilation and with *Akṣara-Śuddhi*. You must not be hasty in the performance of *Japa*. You can make as many *Puraścaraṇas* as you like, but do them slowly and steadily.

The four domestic sacraments which are accompanied with the appointed sacrifice are not equal, though all be united, to a sixteenth part of the sacrifice performed by a repetition of the *Gāyatrī*.

By the sole repetition of the *Gāyatrī* a *Brāhmaṇa* attains beatitude, let him perform or not perform any other religious act.

### **Chāndogya Upaniṣad—**

Verily, all this creation is *Gāyatrī*. Speech is *Gāyatrī*; by speech is all this creation preserved. The *Gāyatrī* is verily composed of four feet, and possesseth six characteristics. The creations constitute the glories of *Gāyatrī*. The Brahman, i.e., the being indicated in the *Gāyatrī*, is verily the space which surroundeth man. This space is the same as the one within man” (Chap. III, Sec. XII).

“Verily, man is *Yajña* (sacrifice). The first twenty-four years of his life constitute the morning ritual, for the *Gāyatrī* includes 24 letters and it is the *Gāyatrī* through which the morning ritual is performed” (Chap. III. Sec. XVI).

### **Gāyatrī-Puraścaraṇa—**

The *Brahma-Gāyatrī Mantra* has twenty-four *Akṣaras*. So, one *Gāyatrī-Puraścaraṇa* constitutes the repetition or *Japa* of *Gāyatrī Mantra* 24 lakh times. There are various rules for *Puraścaraṇa*. If you repeat the *Mantra* 3,000 times daily, you should keep up the number daily all throughout till you finish the full 24 lakhs. Cleanse the mirror of the

*Manas* (mind) of its *Mala* (impurities) and prepare the ground for the sowing of the spiritual seed.

The Maharashtrians are very fond of *Gāyatrī Puraścaraṇa*. There are in Poona and other places persons who have performed *Puraścaraṇa* several times. Śrī Paṇḍita Madana Mohana Mālavīyajī is a votary of *Gāyatrī-Puraścaraṇa*. The success in his life and the establishment of a grand Hindu University at Banaras is all attributable to his *Gāyatrī-Japa* and the benign grace of the Blessed Mother *Gāyatrī*.

Swāmī Vidyāraṇya, the reputed author of the celebrated *Pañcadaśī*, performed *Gāyatrī-Puraścaraṇa*. The Mother gave him *Darśana* and granted him a boon. Swāmī Vidyāraṇya asked: “O Mother! There is great famine in the Deccan. Let there be a shower of gold to relieve the immense distress of the people.” Accordingly, there was a shower of gold. Such is the power or *Śakti* of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*.

Only *Yoga-Bhraṣṭas* and pure-minded persons can have *Darśana* of *Gāyatrī* by doing only one *Puraścaraṇa*. As the minds of the vast majority of persons in this *Kaliyuga* are filled with various sorts of impurities, one has to do more than one *Puraścaraṇa* according to the degree of impurity of the mind. The more the impurities, the greater is the number of *Puraścaraṇas*. The famous Swāmī Madhusūdana Saraswatī did seventeen *Puraścaraṇas* of *Kṛṣṇa-Mantra*. He did not get *Darśana* of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, on account of the sins committed in killing 17 Brahmins in his previous births. But he had *Darśana* of the Lord when he was on the half way of the eighteenth *Puraścaraṇa*. The same rule applies to *Gāyatrī-Puraścaraṇa* also.

# Subhāṣitam

—P. R. Akhileswaran

Gift with a kind word, knowledge without pride, valour with forgiveness and wealth with charity are rare to find.

Money given as charity in this world comes back in the form of *Puṇya* for better life elsewhere after death.

True knowledge of *Ātmā* is unfettered by actions to attain immortality—lack of such knowledge results in further births.

Even in distress, do not practice *Adharma*. *Adharma* destroys soon the life. *Dharma* is eternal and follows one even after death.

It is enough to reflect on yourself because nothing is outside you.

The heart full of compassion is the temple of God.

What we have is a gift from God. What we do to Him with that is our gift to Him.

Food for the body, Prayer for the Soul.

Love in action is Art of religion.



Always be proud that you are a child of God, for first a little while you have been an alien in the kingdom of matter. Develop God's divine love inherent in you, and you will reclaim your citizenship in His kingdom of the omnipresence.

—Sri Paramahansa Yogananda

## Love of God

In the materialistic science-ridden world of to-day, Love of God, is a rare phenomenon, if not the fantastic phantom of an unbalanced and hallucinated brain. There may be a few people, here and there, who have fear of God but a Lover of God, it is not easy to find. One in a hundred millions or one in an age, is the most one could expect to hear about.

Even in this decrepit age of universal godlessness when surging waves of agnosticism are out to engulf the whole world, India could boast of sages like Swāmī Rāmakṛṣṇa, Vivekānanda, Swāmī Rāma Tirtha and such other spiritual luminaries although, she herself could not fully understand them much less follow them in their foot-steps.

Fear of God makes people bow to Him, for protecting them from misfortune or for beseeching Him to bestow upon them wealth, children, etc., etc. The very prosperity they hanker after makes them soon forget Him when once they get it; if they do not get it, they begin to doubt the very existence of God.

But a true Lover of God wants nothing for himself. He pants day and night only for the Lord. He finds immense joy in surrendering his all at the lotus feet of the Lord. Day and night he is ever cheerfully busy in serving the Lord, and therein he finds infinite bliss. He will not beg the Lord of anything for how can he bear the very idea of giving Him any trouble for his own sordid self? For him the Lord alone is all-in-all and having found Him what does there remain to be asked for? A true “Lover of Lord” does not even want the so-called Salvation, for he knows, that once he is in that state, he can no longer

have the good fortune of serving the Lord, who is the heart of his heart, the soul of his soul, the very breath of his life.

It was a feeling like this that made the *Gopīs* dance to the tune of the Kṛṣṇa's lute. When Uddhava enjoined them to concentrate their mind on *Brahma*, with a view to achieve Salvation, they retorted thus:—

“Uddhavajī, one does not possess ten or twenty hearts,  
The one there was is gone with Lord Kṛṣṇa,  
Where is there another to contemplate on your *Brahma*?  
Have done with the Talk of Salvation,  
We have no attachment for your *Brahma*.  
We have given up our hearth and home,  
Panting for the love of our Beloved Kṛṣṇa.”

“Nobody could be more blessed than I in having Lord Kṛṣṇa—the Lord of the Universe—for my charioteer. It was with the Lord's prowess that Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa and other great warrior were disposed off. The Lord who enabled me to kill Jayadratha through the great miracle of shadowed and illusory sunset, the Lord who is the Lord of the whole Universe, that the self-same Lord should serve me as a charioteer is because of my unparallel Love for the Lord. The world must know that I am the truest and the most beloved Lover of the Lord.”

The Omniscient, All-benign Lord, feeling that His *Bhakta* was getting conceited, at once, chalked out a plan for making him shed off his vanity. He cannot let any drawback remain in His devotees.

Arjuna began to feel thirsty but looking all around he could not find water anywhere. He addressed the Lord thus, “Lord, I am feeling awfully thirsty. Pray drive me on to a place where water could be had.”

The Lord reined in the horses and pointing to a thatched

hut told that a poor woman-devotee of His was living there, and that Arjuna should go there to slake his thirst, but on no account, should he reveal his identity.

Arjuna ran towards the hut and was instantly there to find a beautiful hermitage, fragrant with heavenly flowers. He proceeded towards the door. Hearing the footfall, an old woman, seventy years old stepped out. She wore a loving smile on her face and fixing her imperious, bright sparkling eyes on the stately figure before her, she in measured tones, enquired, “Are you Arjuna?”

Simply dumbfounded, reminded as he was of the injunction of the Lord, and trembling with the fear of a culprit Arjuna replied, “Mother, I am a thirsty way-farer and an humble devotee of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

“Good”, rejoined the woman, “Come in, sanctify my hut with the dust of your feet. Excuse me, verily you are a *Bhakta* of my Lord, come, come. May the Lord protect you from all evil.”

Overpowered with love for the *Bhakta* of her Lord, she took him inside, furnished him with a beautiful *Kuśa* seat, washed his feet and then engaged herself in arranging hospitality for him.

Arjuna looked all around in the cottage. Besides articles of worship, he was astonished to find on the walls of the hut, a couple of glittering swords, two extra sharp hatchets and a couple of spears, exquisitely well-arranged and heroically displayed.

The old woman reappeared with a *Kamaṇḍalu* of water and sweet *Kadalī* (plantain) fruits, neatly peeled and prettily arranged on a *Kadalī* leaf.

With the look of one who was in fright, Arjuna, reverently enquired, “Mother, how is it that there are those sharp, deadly weapons in the hermitage of a pious, kind

and saintly lady like you.”

“You take water,” curtly replied the woman, and then mellowing down a bit she added, “Excuse me, these are there for a specific purpose which I am loth to disclose.”

Arjuna, mustering up courage said, “Mother dear, I must know the purpose of their being there and if you do not tell me, I must clear out without taking water. I say this deliberately.”

“Then listen,” retorted the old lady, “I am sick of the vanity of Arjuna, Draupadī and Uttarā. They call themselves *Bhaktas* of my Lord Kṛṣṇa. Would that they came my way. With these weapons, I would tear them off and with the flesh and blood of their bodies I would feed the dogs and vultures. Are you satisfied?”

For a moment, Arjuna trembled with fear and rage, and then collecting himself up, asked, “What wrong have these *Bhaktas* of the Lord done you? Why, you a sister *Bhakta* of theirs are so bent upon taking their life?”

The old woman sobbed and wept and then distressfully said, “Sonny, you call those conceited, selfish people, *Bhaktas* of my Lord. For life, do not disgrace my Lord thus. You call Draupadī a *Bhakta*. She who forced my Lord to run bare-footed from Dwarka, just to save her from being stripped naked by Duḥśāsana? What, if she was rendered naked? Was she not naked when she came into the world? And would she not be naked when she leaves it?. Is she a *Bhakta* who was the source of so much trouble to the Lord.

“And then, behold, it was the noon-day sun of *Āṣāḍha* (June-July). The scorching Sun was raining fire from above, the earth below was emitting flames of fire too. At such a time, you would not stir lest you burnt your skin. Even the birds keep to their nests and do not so much as look out. Ah, it was at such a time that the so-called

*Bhakta* Draupadī made my Lord Kṛṣṇa, with His feet tender like the lotus, run to save her from the curse of Durvāsā,” and flaring up with devotional rage, she asked, “Is that what you call *Bhakti*, Love of the Lord?”

“And as to Uttarā. What if the child in her womb had been burnt to ashes by the fire of *Brahmāstra*? But, no, that apostate of a *Bhakta* cried piteously and the Lord of my heart, Lord Kṛṣṇa had, perforce, to place Himself between Uttarā and the fire of the *Brahmāstra*. Fastening your own sins on the Lord, is that what you call *Bhakti*.”

“And do you still want to know, what sham it is, that hoax of Arjuna’s *Bhakti*. Well, listen. This arch-apostate, Arjuna, placed the darling of Yaśodā, the light of her eyes, the cynosure of the world, my tender Śyāma, the sweet notes of whose flute put stones and beasts into raptures, yes, that archapostate Arjuna placed the Lord, all-unarmed, in the front of his chariot to be the victim of the sharp, deadly arrows of warriors like Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Karna. And for what, all this? For regaining his lost sovereignty; lost by gambling, forsooth. I, Oh, what tortures.....!! My heart has become like a sieve. And the sufferings of my Lord for this cursed brood of *Bhaktas*, Oh, they are too many and too, too varied. Is that the working of the heart of a true *Bhakta*, a true Lover of the Lord? Shall I not have a revenge from these self-styled *Bhaktas*. Those arms over there are thirsting for their blood.” The old lady began once more to shed tears in devotional rage and holy remembrance of the Lord.

Arjuna was stung to the quick, as if bitten by hundreds of scorpions and amid that torrent of invective, with a voice half-stifled in the throat could only utter the words, “Ah mother, my mother.”

As soon as the old lady had finished, Arjuna fell prostrate at her feet and after he had washed them with

tears of love and repentance said, “Hail Mother, you are blessed. You have shown me the real, the true path. Bless me mother, so that I too may have real Love for the Lord and may propitiate Him, even as you have done.”

By way of a blessing, the old lady asked Arjuna to take the water that had been lying there, in spite of the awful thirst of Arjuna. He took it, bowed and left.

Arjuna was cursing himself all the way back to where he had left Lord Kṛṣṇa. He fell at His feet and in the anguish of the soul, said “Pardon me Lord, I am a great sinner. Moulder of my Fate! I have caused Thee endless annoyance for my selfish ends. I know not what repentance I could offer. Save me Lord, out of Thy abounding Mercy, save me, save this humblest of Thy humble slaves.”

The Lord, with a smile took him up into His embrace and said, “O king, O son of Kuntī, why so afflicted? What had happened to you, my darling brother? Warrior-heroes like you do not humble themselves thus.”

Now the Lord and Arjuna got into the chariot. Arjuna repeated all that he had seen and heard and with folded hands said, “O Blessed Lord, O Lord of all Illusion, true, abiding Love of Thee is so difficult of achievement, unless Thy Mercy wills it. O Lord of the humble, let me drink deep into the fountain of your devotion, remove the weeds of sinful conceit and vanity and through Thy Infinite Mercy, sow the seeds of True Love and let them blossom forth with the water of Thy tender regard for the true *Bhakta*. Pray, do this, My Lord, the Supreme Master of the universe. My Lord Kṛṣṇa pray do this.”

The Lord cast a lovely glance with sweet smiles, once more.

# The Supreme Devotion of Pūnthānam

—A. Vijayan

*Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Mukunda Janārdana  
Kṛṣṇa Govinda Nārāyaṇa Hare  
Acyutānanda Govinda Mādhava  
Saccidānanda Nārāyaṇa Hare.*

The above opening verse is from the famous devotional poem *Jñānappānā*, which is played every day early in the morning at the famous Guruvāyūr temple, Kerala. It was written by Pūnthānam, whose story is the subject of this article.

Pūnthānam was a poet who is believed to have lived between AD 1547 and 1640 in Kerala. Pūnthānam is his family name; his personal name is not known. He belonged to a Kerala Brahmin (Nampūtiri) family based in Malappuram district of Kerala.

Pūnthānam was a great devotee of Guruvāyūrappan, the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa of Guruvāyur temple in Kerala. In an era when Sanskrit was considered as the language of learned people, he wrote in the native tongue Malayalam. His most famous work is *Jñānappānā* meaning ‘song of knowledge’. It is considered a masterpiece in Malayalam language. Written in simple Malayalam, the poem delves deep in spiritual values, where the author advocates the constant remembrance of the Lord as the means to cross the ocean of suffering.

A long time after his marriage, a child was born to Pūnthānam. He arranged the first feeding ceremony of the child in a grand way. But the child died of suffocation

on that very day when the upper garment of some guests, hung above the cradle, fell on its face. Pūnthānam was devastated. In the days followed, he found solace in the Lord and wrote the famous work *Jñānappānā*. He says, “When the little Kṛṣṇa plays in the heart, does one need other little ones as children?”

There is a practice in Kerala to visit the Guruvāyūr temple on the first day of every Malayalam month. Pūnthānam also used to follow this routine. His house was about 60 km from the temple and he covered the distance on foot. One day as he reached near Guruvāyūr, it was nearing dark. Some robbers waylaid him at a deserted spot. At that precise moment, a man on horseback reached the place and thrashed the robbers with the whip he was carrying and chased them away. Pūnthānam profusely thanked the man, who introduced himself as Mangattachan, the minister of King Samūtiri of Kozhikode, and as a token of gratitude offered to him the gold ring he was wearing. Mangattachan refused, but was compelled to accept it on the loving request of Pūnthānam. That night, the head priest of Guruvāyūr temple had a dream in which the Lord said to him, “Tomorrow when you open the shrine, you will find a gold ring near my idol. You should give it to Pūnthānam, who will come to the temple in the morning.” Next day, the gold ring was found there as seen in the dream.

There was a girl by name Mañjulā who used to make the garland for the Lord’s idol. One evening she started for the temple and by the time she reached the banyan tree near the temple, she saw the temple was closed. She started weeping, which was noticed by Pūnthānam. On his advice, she kept the garland under the banyan tree and returned home. Next morning, when the head priest opened

the temple and started removing the previous day's decorations, one garland remained stuck to the idol. He did not understand the reason. Seeing this, Pūnthānam said, "If this garland belongs to Mañjulā, let it come off." Then the priest was able to remove the garland. The tree where Mañjulā kept the garland is known as Mañjulāl, the word *Āl* meaning banyan tree.

Melpathur Bhaṭṭatiri, the contemporary of Pūnthānam, is known for his masterpiece work *Nārāyaṇīyam*, a condensation of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. It is said that Melpathur willingly transferred the arthritis of his *Guru* onto himself. When the pain became unbearable, on the advice of the great poet Thunchat Ezhuthachan, he started the work on *Nārāyaṇīyam* and was cured fully when the work was completed. Pūnthānam approached Melpathur with a request to have his work in Malayalam checked for mistakes. Since Melpathur considered reading a Malayalam work to be beneath his dignity, he refused. That night, Melpathur had his arthritis appearing again. A divine voice said, "I like the *Bhakti* (devotion) of Pūnthānam more than *Vibhakti* (grammar)." Next morning, Melpathur met Pūnthānam and offered to check his work.

One day Pūnthānam was reciting *Viṣṇu Sahasranāmam* inside Guruvāyūr temple. Since he was not a Sanskrit scholar, he pronounced Amaraprabhu as Maraprabhu (Lord of tree). The Sanskrit scholars ridiculed him for his ignorance. Then the divine voice from the shrine said, "I am both Amaraprabhu and Maraprabhu." The scholars were astounded and they apologized to Pūnthānam.

Pūnthānam is believed to have been taken bodily by the Lord to His abode. On his last day of life in this world, Pūnthānam knew the Lord would come to take him. He made all arrangements to receive the Lord, but the villagers

did not believe him. The Lord arrived by his astral vehicle and Pūnthānam rushed to receive him. He then washed the feet of the Lord, dried them with a towel and led Him inside the house. The villagers thought these to be hallucination of Pūnthānam. Then Pūnthānam requested the Lord to have the food, serving every dish again and again. The Lord, out of His immense grace, said that He would take anybody else with Him, if Pūnthānam wished so. Pūnthānam conveyed this divine message to the villagers. None, except the maid serving his ailing wife, believed him. The maid prostrated at his feet and prayed him to take her along. The next moment, the villagers saw that the maid had died and Pūnthānam disappeared. The Lord took him bodily and the soul of the maid to His abode. It is said that the maid did not have the merit to enter the Lord's abode with her body, so it had to be discarded on earth.



This present life as such is meaningless. It is a petty trifle, a nothing, if not understood in terms of its being a take-off runway for catapulting into that great life.

This life is a means to that great, glorious, grand end and aim of human existence which is to enter into a life that is the life of God, that is one with God's life.

That is the whole purpose of human existence. Human life has been given to us as a passageway to Divinity, as a passageway to everlasting life.

—Swami Chidananda

## Tangled Web

—R. P. Dwivedi

Human life is a tangled web and we are its weavers,  
Who weave it with the threads of ideas and emotions,  
Which signify different hues of life's stages and aspects.  
Purple for childhood, crimson for youth and grey for  
age  
And bright for hope, dark for dismay and blue for  
despair,  
But while tops them all for purity, peace and harmony.  
All these are interwoven into the vast fabric of our life.  
Though the rainbow's different colours have their own  
value,  
Yet, when intermingled, they form a single identity.  
Similarly, various human instincts and attitudes  
Constitute a whole, composite and complete texture  
And as garment they feast our eye and delight our mind.  
But as life's craftsmen we are faced with a curious  
dichotomy,  
For we take orthodoxy for religion, living for life and  
knowledge for wisdom,  
Airy abstractions for the living gods, who control and  
direct our actions,  
Bathing for purity, empty words for oratory and rhetoric  
for reform  
And wild hollow speculation for creative modern  
thought,  
Again, as life's weavers, we often tend to easily forget.  
The Supreme Cosmic Weaver, who designed and made.

The magnificent and mysterious texture of the Universe,  
 And made man the central motif of His entire creation  
 And endowed him with the power to perceive the  
 truth—

That 'One is in many and many are in One' and realize  
 That through all form of life runs a fundamental unity,  
 And behind the veil of world's astounding multiplicities  
 Shines its Creator and Controller—'One without a  
 second.'



External renunciation is not of much consequence, so long as the world fills the mind and there is attachment and craving for sense-objects. Wherever you may fly to, renouncing merely outwardly, whether to the forests or to the mountain caves, the world will follow you there also, deceiving you and tempting you under many guises, and will create fresh bondages for you. Householder or *Samnyāsī*, whatever you may be, if you do not constantly keep your eye on the Ideal and have a firm grip on it, a fall is inevitable; and none will be able to save you.

Be always alert. Never believe your mind for a moment. However spiritually high may be the state you have reached, do not be over-confident of having conquered the senses, for a fall is still possible. In subtle ways, evil may try to beguile you by assuming sometimes the form of virtue, sometimes the form of compassion, sometimes the form of friendship, to bring you under its power. In the long run, you may find that unknowingly you have lost yourself. And by the time you come to know it, it may be well-nigh impossible to turn back.

—Swami Virajananda

# Karmayoga in Gītā—Madhva's Views

—R. Sridharan

*Bhagavadgītā* propagates 'Karmayoga' only from the beginning. Madhva upheld that the 'ज्ञानपूर्व कर्म' is the message of the *Gītā* and he never believed in the doctrine that the 'Karma' is only for inferior souls and 'Jñāna' is for superior souls. He never advocated for *Karma Samnyāsa* (renunciation of duty).

In the beginning of the *Gītā* interpretation Madhva says that the greatest *Dharma* is only of doing one's ordained duty with devotion to the God and without craving for any specific desire (स्व विहित वृत्त्या भक्त्या भगवदाराधनमेव परमो धर्मः.).

The second chapter of the *Gītā* teaches *Sāṅkhya Yoga*. *Sāṅkhya* means knowledge and *Yoga* means the ways to attain knowledge. There God teaches *Karmayoga*.

The philosophy of duty as pronounced in the *Gītā* chapter II, *Śloka* 47 is as follows:—"One has to perform one's own duty only and no duty is to be undertaken with the motivation of a particular result. One should not be indifferent towards one's duty on the ground that one should not have any interest in the results". *Gītā* insists that no deed be undertaken with any motivation of a particular result. Performance of one's duty in dedication to God with deep devotion is an end by itself and not a means excepting the knowledge and grace of God. This *Gītā* theory is known as *Niṣkāma Karma* theory against the *Kāmya Karma* theory of *Mīmāṃsakas*. Being unmindful of the presence or absence of results is *Yoga*. This is possible only when one acquires right knowledge. Knowledge

that leads to the surrender at the feet of God is the highest knowledge. Therefore, the wise will give up the interest in results, perform the deeds in dedication to God acquiring the knowledge of His supremacy and developing deep devotion for Him, and ultimately attain the final goal. Please refer *Ślokas* 48 to 51 of chapter II of *Bhagavadgītā* for the above views.

Various aspects of *Karmayoga* are discussed in the III chapter of *Gītā*. *Karmayoga* is not mere *Karma Anuṣṭhāna* (mere observation of one's rituals or duties). *Karmayoga* of *Gītā* states the performance of one's *Karma* or duty with the necessary foundation of *Jñāna* or knowledge (ज्ञान समुच्चय कर्म).

This *Karmayoga* has four aspects known as 'कर्म चतुरङ्गः'. They are— (1) *Karma Anuṣṭhāna* or performance of one's prescribed duties, (2) *Jñāna* or acquiring right knowledge through *Śravaṇa*, *Manana* etc., (3) *Samnyāsa* or motivelessness in one's undertakings, (4) *Tyāga* or offering of the fruits of one's activities at the feet of God.

'कर्म चतुरङ्गः'— 1. विहित कर्मानुष्ठानं, 2. श्रवणादि द्वारा परमात्मा ज्ञानं, 3. संन्यासः, 4. त्यागः (right action, right knowledge, right motivation and right goal).

Śrī Jaya Tīrtha in his commentary on *Gītā Bhāṣya* namely *Premeya Dīpikā* states as follows—

फल कामना त्यागेन ईश्वरार्पण बुद्ध्या वर्णाश्रम विहितानुष्ठानमेव कर्मयोगः ।

द्वयं शच्चायं कर्मयोगः ।

कामादिवर्जनं ईश्वरार्पण बुद्ध्या कर्मानुष्ठानं चेति ॥

The *Gītā* concept of *Karma* consists of all such activities that are essential for the physical, moral and spiritual progress of an individual and society. Any slackening of one's duty is *Adharma* and transgressing into some one

else's duty is also *Adharma*. Both *Karma* and *Jñāna* are not opposed to each other. Both help the spiritual progress. A close cooperation between *Jñāna* and *Karma* is envisaged in *Gītā*. To introduce the idea of rejection of *Karma* in *Gītā* is to go against the very spirit of *Gītā*. *Samnyāsa* is defined as the abdication of desire while performing *Karma*.

काम्यानां कर्मणां न्यासं सन्न्यासं क्वयो विदुः।

(XVIII. 2)

The prescribed activities should be undertaken without the motivation of results. It is the abdication of motives that is *Samnyāsa*. *Samkalpa Samnyāsa* is part of *Karmayoga*.

*Gītā* is more concerned with the right approach to the performance of *Karma*. The right approach consists of (1) *Samkalpa Samnyāsa* or abdication of motives and (2) *Tyāga* or offering of the results at the feet of God. This way of performing *Karma* is known as *Niṣkāmakarma*. 'निष्कामं ज्ञानपूर्वं तु निवृत्तमिह योच्यते।'

Most people are under the wrong impression that it is only the *Kartā* or the agent who is solely responsible for the activity undertaken. But there are five factors—

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम्।

विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम्॥

(Gītā XVIII. 14)

These are—(1) *Adhiṣṭhāna* or ground or the object with reference to which an activity is initiated, (2) *Kartā* or agent, (3) *Karaṇa* or the instruments like *Indriyas*, (4) *Vividha Ceṣṭā* or various actions of these that are necessary for the production of results and (5) *Daiva* or the supreme god who is behind all these as director and regulator. One who knows these will easily realise his limited role and will be able to undertake *Niṣkāma Karma*.

The philosophy of action propounded by *Gītā* has three important aspects—

1. Do your duty courageously and faithfully,
2. Do not transgress into others duty,
3. Do not withdraw from your duty out of fear of failure in completion or any other extraneous consideration.

The following guidelines laid down in *Gītā's Karmayoga* are universal and very simple to imbibe.

1. Do your duty in dedication to God.
2. Be always aware of the supremacy of God.
3. Do not be entangled into lesser things.
4. Do not entertain any hatred or ill-will to any one.
5. This will enable one to attain God.

This is the *summum bonum* of *Gītā* teaching.

मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।  
निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥

(XI. 55)

□ □

It does no good just to sit and complain, feeling that God is far away, and thinking to yourself, “Oh, He must have forsaken me, because I have all of these problems, I have all of these sorrows and weaknesses.” That kind of thinking does not help; it only allows your mind to cast you down more and more. If you want to really get rid of those problems and sorrows, there is only one way. There is only one consciousness in which there is no sorrow, no problems, no difficulty, no restlessness or pain—and that is the consciousness of communion with the Divine Mother.

—Sri Mrinalini Mata

# Spiritual Life—the Goal of Humanity

—*Swami Ranganathananda*

At no time in the history of humanity has the need to define the goal of human existence been felt so keenly as today. It is not a mere academic question; it wells up in the hearts of men and women of the modern age, common or uncommon, Eastern or Western.

That spirituality is the goal of human life was accepted by humanity all these thousands of years under the guidance of its religious heritage. But the force of that religious heritage has waned in recent centuries due to an intellectual and social revolution initiated by the West European peoples. It has become necessary, therefore, to evaluate critically the nature of that revolution and to restate the goal of human existence in that light.

Humanity the world over has felt the impact of the powerful technological civilization originating in Western Europe in the seventeenth century through the observational and experimental methods of modern science. This impact has reacted on thought and belief as much as on life and practice. The methods and results of rational investigation of nature and human experience came inevitably and increasingly into conflict with the untested dogmas and assumptions of the Western man, which had filled a large part of the thought-background of his religion for over a thousand years. With the discrediting of that old thought-background by modern thought, religion itself became discredited; and the nineteenth century saw the modern Western man shifting his loyalties from religion to mundane

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values. A Technological Revolution initiated by modern science in the 17th century helped to accentuate these mundane values and to sharpen man's worldly appetites during the next two and a half centuries. These impacts were felt with greater or lesser severity in the rest of the world as well, through the worldwide political, commercial and cultural penetration of the modern West. Today the whole world is in the grip of forces—physical, mental and social—initiated by the scientific revolution of the 17th century Europe.

These forces consist of both benevolent and malevolent elements. The former constitute an impressive feature of modern civilization: Annihilation of distance and the physical unification of the World, the theory and practice of democracy based on the dignity and worth of the individual, the plans and measures for all-round social welfare on a worldwide scale, the increase of religious tolerance, and the gradual emergence of an international outlook. All these are the products of the conquest of external nature by science and are achievements unparalleled in human history.

The malevolent elements began to obtrude themselves from the end of the nineteenth century: an increasing tempo of selfishness, violence and war. The seventeenth century Europe had banished religion as the centre of human loyalty as a reaction against the 30 years' Religious Wars of that century and substituted sense values in its place. But in thus banishing religion, the Western man had a keen feeling that he was banishing a thing of deep value from life; but he could not help it, as that value had been presented to him enclosed in elements irrational and anti-social, and alien to his new-found scientific and rational temper, aims and methods.

Indian thought had long ago proclaimed that the sensuous man is the focus of tension, strife and sorrow. Secular knowledge only sharpens his animal appetites and deepens his inner tensions. A civilization that knows man only as a sensuous individual and that sharpens his animal appetites and panders to their satisfaction is an unstable structure built on sand; it is bound to topple over sooner or later from its own inner tensions and contradictions. The West had ignored the warning of Jesus contrasting the wise man who built his house on rock with the foolish man who built his house on sand. Discerning and sympathetic modern thinkers were aware of this disturbing feature of the modern civilization.

The whole of the Western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years". Swāmī Vivekānanda warned in the last decade of the 19th century, "If there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. You will find that the very centres from which such ideas as government by force sprang up are the very first centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces. Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years, if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life."

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनंजय ।  
बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥

(*Gītā*. II. 49)

This teaching of the Religion Eternal of India is expressed in a compressed and comprehensive statement by Swāmī Vivekānanda:

"Each soul is potentially Divine;

The goal is to manifest this Divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, or by worship or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more, or all of these—and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, or rituals, or books or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.”

A study of history reveals that this value of freedom and with it peace and fulfilment are achieved in its purest and fullest form only in the inner life of man. It can find only a limited expression in his external life, in the fields of his economic, political, social and intellectual endeavour, even at their highest and best. A measure of external restraint in these fields is inevitable; no romantic philosophy can spirit it away. It will be at its minimum in a civilization where spiritual values predominate, and maximum, to the point of being oppressive and galling, in a civilization where sensate values predominate. With all the contemporary talk about freedom, true freedom seems to be a vanishing quantity in the modern world.

Indian Philosophy proclaims that the Universe is spiritual through and through. In the heart of its finite and ephemeral manifestations is a reality which is Infinite Existence and Infinite Consciousness and Infinite Bliss. The end and aim of the finite man is the achievement of fullness through the realization of this Infinite Being.

That spirituality is the goal of human life is an eternal truth for Indian philosophy; it is as relevant in this atomic age as it was in the age of the *Upaniṣads*, in which it was expounded in India thousands of years ago. This eternal truth finds a beautiful expression in a memorable verse of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*:

स वै पुंसां परो धर्मो यतो भक्तिरधोक्षजे ।  
अहैतुक्यप्रतिहता ययाऽऽत्मा सुप्रसीदति ॥

“That, verily, is the highest duty of man by which he achieves love of God, a love which is pure and motiveless and steady. By the fulfilment of this duty, man attains fullness and peace.”



This human body is the greatest body in the universe, and a human being the greatest being. Man is higher than all animals, than all angels; none is greater than man. Even the *Devas* (gods) will have to come down again and attain to perfection through a human body. Man alone attains to perfection, not even the *Devas*. According to the Jews and Mohammedans, God created man after creating the angels and everything else, and after creating man He asked the angels to come and salute him, and all did so except Iblis; so God cursed him and he became Satan. Behind the allegory is the great truth that this human birth is the greatest birth we can have.

—*Teachings of Swami Vivekananda*

*Prema*, the ecstatic love of God, is attainable only by a few. They are men with extraordinary powers and entrusted with a Divine commission. Being heirs of Divine power and glory, they form a class by themselves. To this class belong the *Avatāras*, or Incarnations of God such as Caitanya Deva, and their *Bhaktas* of the highest order, who are *Amśas* or parts of God Himself.

—*Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*

# Interplay of Free-will and Fate

—*Surendra Pal*

One of the most debated philosophical subjects concerns the relationship between ‘free-will’ and ‘fate’. Philosophers and thinkers/spiritualists all the world over have been discussing this subject from time immemorial.

Free-will means that you are in control of your life and destiny and have the freedom to make choices, good or bad, at a given moment or situation. Fate means that you are not in control of what happens to you. Some people even believe that there is some force guiding us, call it God, destiny, luck or fate. This power is believed to control everything that happens and that cannot be stopped or changed.

In real life, both free-will and fate exist simultaneously. However, the most difficult question to be answered is ‘how much of free-will we have?’ It is impossible to determine a specific number or percentage that pertains to our free-will. The issue gets further complicated because while making choices in life, we are very much conditioned by our genes, culture, family and past in general. Also, there is a universal framework of limits, mainly based on natural laws, placed on us.

Life is like a game of cards where ‘fate’ is the set of cards we are dealt with and ‘free-will’ is our ability how best we play it. According to Jim Butcher, “God is not about making good things or bad things happen to you. He is all about making choices—exercising the gift of free-will. We want you to have good things and a good

life but he will not gift wrap them for you. You have to choose the actions that lead you to that life.”

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, the quintessence of all *Śāstras*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, “One should lift oneself by one’s own efforts and should not degrade oneself; for one’s own self is one’s friend and one’s own self is also one’s own enemy.” In ‘*Sāṃkhya*’ philosophy, five factors have been mentioned for accomplishment of all actions and result thereof namely the body, the doer, the organs or instruments of different kinds, methods of execution and ‘*Daiva*’ or destiny that is natural forces not under our control. Thus, destiny or fate plays an important role in the outcome of our endeavour.

Therefore, in whatever circumstances, one has been put by ‘fate’ he/she should focus on making the best use of given opportunity. Without worrying about what you can or cannot control in any given moment or situation, concentrate on making the best use of your time and abilities. The universe is infinite and there are so many undiscovered frontiers to choose from. Our choices are only constrained by our knowledge, imagination, creativity and capacity to work hard enough. As Vera Nazarian in ‘The Perpetual Calender of Inspirations’ says, “The world is such a huge playground sandbox that we will never run out of sand or reach the far away safety fence of destiny, so, go out there and play.”

A metaphor is often quoted, “Life is but a stage on which we play our role”; It may be true that we have been given a particular role (by fate) to play in the world but our goal should be to enact it to the best of our abilities. Free-will is a sublime gift from God to human beings, it is upto us how to make the best use of it. Some people still think that free-will is only an illusion and much of the

time we are susceptible to outside influences which dictate our thoughts and actions. But the fact remains that we gallop through our lives on 'fate' and 'free-will'. So, let us stop worrying about 'fate' over which we have no control and instead steer our 'free-will' with concentrated effort towards achieving our goals which may differ from person to person.



Throughout the history of the world you find great men make great sacrifices and the mass of mankind enjoy the benefit. If you want to give up everything for your own salvation, it is nothing. Do you want to forgo even your own salvation for the good of the world? You are God, think of that. My advice to you is to live the life of a *Brahmacārī* i.e. giving up all sexual enjoyments for a certain time live in the house of your father; this is the "*Kuṭīcaka*" stage. Try to bring your wife to consent to your great sacrifice for the good of the world. And if you have burning faith and all-conquering love and almighty purity, I do not doubt that you will shortly succeed. Give yourself body and soul to the work of spreading the teachings of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa, for work (*Karma*) is first stage. Study Sanskrit diligently as well as practise devotion. For you are to be a great teacher of mankind, and my *Guru* Maharaja used to say, "A penknife is sufficient to commit suicide with, but to kill others one requires guns and swords." And in the fullness of time it will be given unto you when to go forth out of the world and preach His sacred name. Your determination is holy and good. Godspeed to you, but do not take any hasty step. First purify yourself by work and devotion.

—*Swami Vivekananda*

## Read and Digest

We must learn to work in this world with interest but keep relaxed and unattached.

\* \* \*

Never be mean. Have resentment towards none. Never deceive or be treacherous. Be a friend to all.

\* \* \*

Friendship should be unconditional. If you give that kind of friendship to others and are never in speech or action disloyal to them; you will be surprised to see how God comes to you through true friends.

\* \* \*

If you have an angry temper rid yourself of it now. If you are peevish or moody overcome it now.

\* \* \*

Remember you are a child of God. Your Divine nature is what you must cultivate. Do not allow your happiness to be conditioned by anything material.

\* \* \*

God made you His son You have made yourself a beggar.

\* \* \*

Worrying wastes time and energy, so, never worry. Worry is a brake on the wheels of efforts.

\* \* \*

No matter how you have sinned in the past, never call yourself a sinner, because that is the greatest sin against the image of God within you.

# Ahaṁ Vedmi—Essence of Divine Incarnation

—R. Subramanyan

The *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki is one of the greatest epics of the world. It is the first long poems in Sanskrit and is therefore praised as the *Ādikāvya*. This epic is a story of perennial interest that has influenced the hearts and souls of millions of devotees for ages together. It has inspired and infused in them exalted thinking, noble efforts and righteous conduct. Not only the unlettered but the highly educated have been equally inspired and influenced by this story. Turning the pages of this great epic, one finds gems of worldly wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. The story contains valuable lessons that are relevant for all ages. Hence the holy *Rāmāyaṇa* shall never become stale and unprofitable however much we repeatedly study or listen to. Lord Brahmā pronounced a benediction on this book and assured that *Rāmāyaṇa* shall be in vogue on the earth as long as the mountains and rivers last. Devout Hindus worship this book and *Rāma-Nāma* is the *Tāraka Mantra* or protective charm with them. Vālmīki states in several places that those who read this epic shall enjoy abundant blessings of the Lord. But Rāma says in the epic that he considers himself as a man, born as son to Daśaratha. But Vālmīki makes it clear that Rāma was regarded as an incarnation and worshipped by sages. In the initial *Ślokas* it is stated that God who can be understood and realised by the *Vedas*, was born as the son of Daśaratha, while the *Vedas* themselves took the shape of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Vālmīki approaches the celestial Nārada to enquire into the

qualities that go to make up a full man—the wholesome personality. Nārada suggests to point out Rāma the complete man in whom goodness and greatness were equally blended. It is the infinite excellence of Rāma that explains the great fascination of the *Avatāra*.

As King Daśaratha was engaged in discussion with his ministers and preceptors there enters the famous *Ṛṣi* Viśvāmitra. The king seems to have had a fatal defect of promising in haste and then repenting at leisure and he did that in this case. When Viśvāmitra entered the scene the king greeted him and offered to do any thing he wanted. Viśvāmitra said that he was performing a *Yajña* which was threatened by the *Rākṣasas*, Mārīca and Subāhu and their followers. He said that his troubles would end if the king sends Rāma his eldest son and he would surely defeat them and his name would gather lustre and splendour. Daśaratha trembled for a few moments stood speechless, for he was stunned and bewildered. He said that Rāma was not yet fifteen and how could he fight the *Rākṣasas*. It was not right to send a mere lad to fight them. The king also said that he was ready with a huge army to fight the *Rākṣasas*. It was not fitting to send a lad to fight them. Viśvāmitra declared that he knew Rāma fully well. He was fully conscious of the supreme excellence of virtue and prowess of Rāma. The sage Vasiṣṭha and other ascetics noted for their austerities knew that fully well—“अहं वेदिम महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम्।” This is how Viśvāmitra reacted to the king that he knew Rāma well.

The noted commentator of the 13th century Periya Vachan Pillai has testified to different kinds of explanation to—“*Ahaṁ Vedmi*”—The Supreme *Puruṣa* Viṣṇu manifested as Rāma. The *Vedas* has also incarnated as the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Then there are reasons put forth as to how Daśaratha was unable to discern the divinity of Rāma and how Viśvāmitra

was able to know the supremacy of Rāma.

King Daśaratha sees Rāma only with the help of his normal physical eyes. Viśvāmitra sees Rāma with his internal eye, and so he is able to perceive the nature of divinity in Rāma.

Daśaratha wielding the bow and arrow was a dexterous charioteer. So he was unable to understand Rāma. But Viśvāmitra ever accustomed to spiritual and ceremonial rites was able to locate Rāma's divinity.

An *Ācārya* can easily show the God to the disciple. Viśvāmitra has served and worshipped many *Ācāryas* and hence he is able to locate the holiness of Rāma. But Daśaratha who was often adored and exalted by the subject people could not understand Rāma fully.

Adhering strictly to spirituality and supreme austerity, Viśvāmitra with his matted locks and hermit weeds was able to observe shrewdly the divine dispensations of Rāma. But Daśaratha with his throne, sceptre and crown could not be ushered into the supremacy of Rāma.

Daśaratha was *Rājasa Prakṛti* where as Viśvāmitra was *Sāttvika Prakṛti*. *Rājasa* is mundane and denied to spirituality where as *Sāttvika* nature of goodness, purity, assists Viśvāmitra to see Rāma and his divinity.

Humility is the hallmark of a successful spiritual career. It is often acquired by lower seatings, couch or place for rest and sleep. Daśaratha ever seated higher on couch or throne could not be an equal to Viśvāmitra and hence he could not know Rāma's greatness.

Daśaratha was submerged in worldly pleasures in the company of queens and courtiers. Viśvāmitra was also a king having indulged all pleasures revived his way of life by strenuous dispassion and adhered to path of virtue and austerity to reach the zenith of glory of *Brahma Ṛṣi*. So

he can say—*Ahaṁ Vedmi*—but the world oriented Daśaratha could not.

Daśaratha performed ‘*Putrakāmeṣṭi Yāga*’ to beget a son so as to ensure the continuity of Ikṣvāku race as also to acquire a huge wealth and kingdom. Viśvāmitra performed *Mokṣa Kāmeṣṭi Yāga* to attain liberation or birthlessness.

Daśaratha lived for wealth and pleasure where as Viśvāmitra ever sustained virtue and emancipation and so he was able to perceive the divinity of Rāma.

Daśaratha did not serve any *Ācārya* and listen to him in humility. *Bhagavān* is the *Ātman* of all the *Ātmans* of the universe and he is the supreme conscious entity of all. Viśvāmitra adds that *Paramātmān* himself has incarnated as Rāma. Vasiṣṭha and other ascetics know this fully well. This is how the great commentator Periyavachan Pillai has explained in detail how Viśvāmitra was duly conscious that Rāma is divine in his origin and how Daśaratha was unable to know it.

Another commentator, Parithiyur Kṛṣṇa Śāstrīgal who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century expatiates on the point as to how Daśaratha and Viśvāmitra came to assess the supremacy of Rāma from their own respective status of attainment. Viśvāmitra begins the explanation saying O Daśaratha!

God is the instrumental cause of all the worlds. You consider Rāma as your son but I consider him as the father of the world. You consider him as a child whereas I am decided in my opinion that he is more elderly than all of us.

You consider him to have been born as a result of your penance and austerities, but on the other hand I am sure that he came into being with the accumulated righteousness of the learned and the virtuous in addition to the merits of Daśaratha—‘संभवामि युगे युगे।’ You consider him to have

learnt the four *Vedas* at Vasiṣṭha's *Āśrama* but I firmly understand that even the four *Vedas* find it difficult to understand him.

You consider him to be desirous of wealth like ourselves but I know that the deity of wealth *Śrī* loves him. I know Rāma is the Lord of *Śrī* of all wealth.

You want to infuse knowledge to Rāma with the help of Vasiṣṭha but I know Rāma is the very manifestation of knowledge. Learning the one who learns and the thing that is being learnt are one and the same clubbed together in *Bhagavān*. So Rāma is the incarnation of *Jñāna*.

You consider him bound to duty whereas I deem him to be self-dependent, independent and uncontrolled and the one who transcends all these is 'Svatantra' in the real sense.

You consider him as the blend of five elements but I know him as '*Divya Maṅgala Rūpavāna*.' *Bhagavān* who created the five elements ever transcends the same to incarnate as being according to his '*Yoga Māyā*'.

You know that he will conquer the external enemies but I understand that is skilful in destroying the internal enemies like *Kāma*, *Krodha*, *Lobha* etc. He is also capable of conferring the skill of destroying internal enemies to the devotees.

You consider that *Bhagavān* bestows merits of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma* but I am certain that he is skilful in extending *Mokṣa* too, for *Bhagavān* has come down as Rāma.

You consider Rāma having two feet to walk about. But I consider Rāma as '*Sahasrapāda*' and apart from that he can walk sans feet. He also knows that the deity who measured the three worlds with his two paces, has come down as Rāma.

You consider that Rāma illumines with the help of the

sun and the moon but I know for certain that the sun and the moon gain their lustre from the effulgence of *Rāma*—*Paramajyoti*, *Svayaṁprakāśa*, *Jyotisvarūpa*.

You consider that *Rāma* shall protect the *Ikṣvāku* clan and the Kosala country. I believe that he is *Jagadoddhāraṇa*. Only the *Jñānīs* understand the mystic, divine manifestations.

You ever strive to make *Rāma* happy and joyful where as I know all lives of the worlds are happy because of him. I know he is ‘*Jagadānanda Kāraka*.’

You consider that *Rāma* has been purified already in holy rivers. More so when he accompanies me to the forest, you may think that he faces any mishap in any of the water ways like Gaṅgā. But I know that some of the rivers like Gaṅgā originating from his lotus feet render the entire world more meritorious.

You consider that *Rāma* shall be healthy only when the food he takes in, is duly digested. On the other hand I know that he has been the wonderful agency of potency namely ‘*Jatharāgni*’ with all the beings of the world to facilitate easy digestion of their intakes.

You consider *Rāma* learnt as a disciple under various preceptors. But *Viśvāmitra* knows that *Agastya* learnt *Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma* and other *Mantra Śāstras* under *Hayagrīva* who was none other than *Viṣṇu* and in turn *Rāma*. *Viśvāmitra* also knows that in the next incarnation *Rāma* shall appear as *Kṛṣṇa* to deliver the discourse—*The Bhagavadgītā*.

You consider *Rāma* as *Daśaratha-Putra*. *Viśvāmitra* says that the *Bhagavān* as attributed to by the *Mahāvākyas* like—“*Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi—Tattvamasi—Śivo’ham*” are none other than *Rāma*.

You know *Rāma* blue in colour while I know him molten gold in hue.

You consider Rāma going to sleep fairly early at night—“*Rāma Rājīva locana*” having the lotus eyes. Viśvāmitra says that Rāma has ever in the habit of ‘*Yoganidrā*’ being awake or vigilant.

You consider that the welfare of Rāma is taken care of by you. But I know that the welfare of all people of the worlds has been taken care of by him. The Lord says in the *Gītā*—“Abandoning all duties, come to me for shelter; I shall release thee from all evils.”

You consider Rāma as the boundary or custodian of justice. But I know him not only as a boundary to *Samsāra*, but also rescue all from perils of *Samsāra* and guide them over to liberation.

You believe that Rāma abides by your palatial building, but I emphatically assert that he sustains by the core of the hearts of the beings of the three worlds.

You consider Rāma as the medium-sized volumetric measurement. But I believe that he is subtler than the subtlest and greater than the greatest—*Aṇu* and *Mahat*—the two extreme type of measurements apply only to *Bhagavān*. ‘अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान्।’—the Supreme Reality.

You think that Rāma shall not disregard your world, but, I think he will go against your dictates and follow me to forest. For the protection of the pious, the destruction of the evil doers and the establishment of order and virtue, he will not hesitate to disobey Daśaratha and follow Viśvāmitra to forest. For the safeguarding and upholding of the ‘*Viśeṣa Dharma*’ he will transgress the ‘*Sāmānya Dharma*.’

You think that I am asking for the assistance of Rāma for the successful fulfilment of the ceremonial observances of the *Yoga*-sacrifice. Viśvāmitra knows not only the protection of the sacrifice but also the series of events like

*Tāḍakā-Vadha*, Ahalyā emancipation, breaking of the ceremonial *Śiva Dhanuṣa* of King Janaka and the wedding of Śrī Sītā and Śrī Rāma.

We have been listening to the exceedingly exceptional interpretations of the phrase 'अहं वेद्मि' by the two eminent commentators. We shall be astounded by the bewildering and convincingly intelligible interpretations of this phrase when the book by Śrī Śāstrīgal is released and we shall know about the hundred ways of interpretation of this phrase.



Your real nature is calmness. You have put on a mask of restlessness. The agitated state of your consciousness resulting from the stimuli of feelings. You are not that mask you are pure, calm spirit. It is time you remember who you are, the blessed soul, a reflection of spirit. Take off, the mask of feelings. Face your self.

Sin lies in the thought, in the motive. The worldly man eats to satisfy his greed, and the *Yogī* eats to keep his body well. There is a lot of difference. Similarly, one man commits murder and is hanged for it; an other man kills many human beings on the battlefield in defence of his country and is given a medal. It is the motive that makes the difference.

Perform all duties to please God. The beauty of the *Bhagavadgītā* is that it is applicable to all human life. The *Gītā* counsels simply and repeatedly that he who performs dutiful actions, not for himself but for God is saved.

## He is Your Guide, Friend and Philosopher

—*Swami Chidananda*

Worshipful homage to the supreme, eternal, cosmic Divine Spirit, who is our goal ultimate, who is the inner, silent, invisible director of all things—including our own life. May we recognise that this silent inner director is not only our eternal companion in life, but He is also an ever-present silent witness, who knows all things, who fathoms the innermost hidden recesses of our being—our mind, our intellect and the thoughts, memories, sentiments, emotions, fears, anxieties, uncertainties, inner motivations and the pride and prejudices that lurk within.

He is a silent witness to our entire psyche. Nothing is left out. Nothing is hidden from Him. Therefore, we should acquit ourselves in a worthy manner before His all-seeing gaze and His all-knowing cosmic divine intelligence. However, this does not mean that He is an entity to be feared and that we should always live in constant distress: “Oh, I have done this, I have thought that, and He already knows it.” Because, at the same time, He is also your guide, friend and philosopher, ever ready to give you advice, ever ready to help you find the right direction, ever ready to pull you up when you are going in the wrong direction, and persuade, induce and inspire you to go in the direction that leads to your own highest good and welfare.

Sometimes, not realising this, we can develop a guilty conscience and find it difficult to go towards a temple and stand before the Deity. Somewhere else we may boldly

utter some prayers before mankind, because we know that man does not know what is going on inside. But when we stand before a temple—unless our conscience is entirely blunted—we become aware of all our deficiencies, shortcomings, drawbacks and all that is within us that may not be very embellishing. And we know that the altar before which we stand holds a Being before whom nothing is hidden.

We are in a strange—extraordinary—position. We know what we are, and we know that He knows what we are, and, therefore, the situation becomes awkward. Sometimes we may gradually stop going to the church or synagogue or mosque or temple because whenever we go there we feel uncomfortable, just as a person who is breaking the law of the land feels uncomfortable near a police station.

So, gradually we can start drifting away from all religion because we find that in the light of our knowledge of our own interior and knowing that God knows everything, we feel a strange reluctance, an awkwardness in presenting ourselves before God. This is not a happy situation, for everything we have to obtain, we have to obtain from only one source and that is God.

And, therefore, here it is that the third dimension of God's extraordinary relationship with and disposition towards us becomes important. For, as we said, God is not only our lifelong companion and indwelling, all-knowing witness, He is also our guide, friend and philosopher. More than that, personal religion goes much further and says that He is our father, mother, friend, relative and our greatest well-wisher. He is the helper of the helpless, the rescuer of those who are in danger, the uplifter of the fallen and a friend in need. When one has no one to help, He is the one there.

So, He is everything that an individual in this mortal world may need at any time, in any circumstance, in any situation. You only have to call; immediately He responds. For He is immediate and proximate. He can respond instantaneously. All other things may delay a little, but God does not delay. It is this third dimension which is so overwhelming that it overshadows all and can induce us to present ourselves before Him in spite of all drawbacks.

*Jagat Guru Ādi Śaṅkarācārya* put this truth in a very touching way in one of his compositions when he appeals to the Divine Mother for Her grace by concluding the ending line of each verse saying: “In this word, unworthy and bad sons there may be, but never a bad mother.” That is the hope aspect of man’s relationship with God. That is the positive, assuring and uplifting aspect of man’s relationship to God. He is your constant companion. He is also your all-knowing, inner, indwelling witness. But, nevertheless, He is also your guide, friend and philosopher.

Therefore, no matter what you may be, with sincerity and earnestness, with a childlike simplicity of heart, turn towards Him and lay all your inner situation before Him, without withholding anything, concealing anything. Be frank as a child. And by His grace and the benedictions of the holy ones He keeps sending, you will overcome all things, attain supreme blessedness, make this life fruitful, and fulfil the mission for which you have been sent here on earth.



## A Quiet Debate

—*Dr. Suresh Chandra Pande*

He who creates-  
Birds and beasts  
Bees and butterflies  
Buds and blossoms  
Creates harmony  
In a body  
Then lets it grow  
So it grows and grows  
Till the goal is reached  
And joy attained  
Still an unanswered quiz  
A pertinent proposition  
On life and living  
Rests perspicuously persistent-  
Who am I?  
A frame pruned  
Chiseled and nourished  
Out of material stuff  
In diverse forms  
Ugly or beautiful  
Who art thou?  
A tiny spark  
Plus the residue

In totality-  
The one in many  
Am I an empty vessel?  
No you are filled  
With My form  
Being tangible  
Subject to decay  
Are you its' sure  
In intangible form  
I am truly untouched  
Beyond the curtain  
Of material veils  
An eternal truth  
In cyclical dynamics  
Appear to disappear  
Time after time  
In the firmament  
Tucked in timelessness  
The one Absolute  
Behind apparent multiplicity  
In blissful repose.



## See the Giver not the Gift

—Swami Akhandananda

तत्तेऽनुकम्पां सुसमीक्षमाणो भुञ्जान एवात्मकृतं विपाकम्।  
हृद्वाग्वपुर्भिर्विदधन्नमस्ते जीवेत यो मुक्तिपदे स दायभाक् ॥

(*Bhāgavata* X. 14. 8)

“The man who lives on in this world looking only at Your Grace, simply enjoying the fruits of his action in a detached manner and bowing to You with his heart becomes eligible for salvation just as a son is eligible to inherit his paternal property!”

That which is obtained through tricks can never last. No matter how clever your tricks may be, they will last only unto a point. Our faith should, therefore, be placed upon the Grace of God, upon His blessings. And we should not ask for continuous joy, because what we perceive as sorrow is also given by God. When you look at life this way, then you will find happiness even in sorrow.

Don't look to see whether wealth has come into your house, whether disease has left it, whether you got a son or not. See instead, who is the one doing all this? He is the one who gives wealth, and He is the one who takes it away. He who pinches us, and He who kisses us. He is the one to give us a slap, and He is the one to give us a caress, too.

So, do not look at your wealth or lack of it, do not look at the blows, or the love you get, do not look at your good health and sickness. Look at that one Giver, whose hand is everywhere, at all times, doing everything. And,

when you have stopped watching the things, the actions and your preferences; when you begin to look at the one who gives all these, then your joy will be an enduring joy.

That giver is called God. It is called the supreme godhead, *Parameśwara*. If you focus on Him, you will experience continuous joy.



You will never be able to withstand animal passions unless you do away with all this splendour and glory that bewitches you, do away with all that attracts you. When you realize that, you stand above all the passions, and at the same time be perfectly free, be perfectly free, be perfectly full of bliss, and that is Heaven.

—*Swami Rama Tirtha*

There are two characteristics of love. First, the world is forgotten. Such love for God as makes one unconscious of external things! Caitanya Deva “on seeing the forest thought always of Vrindaban and on seeing the sea thought always of the Yamunā.” The second sign is that there is no care even for one’s own body otherwise so dear; identity with the physical body leaves him altogether. Such love does not come without seeing God.

—*Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*

Your duty is your sole support and the highest service you can render to the supreme is to carry it out wholeheartedly without expectation of fruits, with the attitude of dedication to the Lord. This will surely lead you to the supreme.

—*Swami Sivananda*

# Prāṇa Vidyā

—Dr. M. S. Manhas

## Knowledge of Prāṇa—

Once upon a time six students with faggots in hand approached Ṛṣi Pippalāda, a realized sage, to learn about Supreme Brahman. Each of these students asked different questions in connection with Self-realization. The questions and Ṛṣi's answers form the subject matter of *Praśna Upaniṣad*. Kausalyā was one of the students who approached the Ṛṣi. He asked a fivefold question about *Prāṇa* (vital force); What is the source of *Prāṇa*? How does it enter the body? How does it live after dividing itself into five parts? How does it leave the body at the time of death? How does it support the external things and all that is within the body? Details of this dialogue are given in the third chapter of the *Praśna Upaniṣad*. Only relevant portions of Ṛṣi Pippalāda's answer are summarized below:

**Ṛṣi Pippalāda:** *Prāṇa* is born of the Self. It enters the body along with the Self to fulfil the desires of the mind. It divides (manifests) itself into five forms. Each of them performs specific functions in the body. The five manifested forms of *Prāṇa* are: *Prāṇa*, *Apāna*, *Samāna*, *Vyāna*, and *Udāna*. Note: The principal *Prāṇa* and one of its manifested forms have the same name.

**Prāṇa:** It occupies the sovereign status and oversees the function of the other four *Prāṇas*. It resides in the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose. Incoming breath is also called *Prāṇa*.

**Apāna:** It is the downward force and dwells in the

organs of generation and evacuation. Outgoing breath is also called *Apāna*.

**Samāna:** It is the equalizing force, resides in the middle (navel), digests food that is eaten or drunk, and kindles the seven fires. The seven fires may be the seven orifices in the upper part of the body: mouth, 2 ears, 2 eyes and 2 nostrils, or seven functions, such as, digestion of food, distribution of energy in various parts of the body, etc.

**Vyāna:** This is responsible for the distribution of energy to different parts of the body through various channels, such as, nerves, blood vessels. These channels branch out from the heart where the Self resides.

**Udāna:** This is the fifth *Prāṇa*. At the time of death, *Udāna* moves upwards through *Suṣumnā* nerve which passes through the spinal channel. It leads the departed soul of virtuous individuals towards the world of gods, sinful persons are directed to the world of birds and animals, and those who performed mixed deeds (virtuous and sinful) in their lifetime come back to earth and again go through the human life-cycle.

At the end of his discourse, the *Ṛṣi* makes a bold statement (*Ibid.*, 3. 12) by saying ‘विज्ञायामृतमश्नुते’—Having known (*Prāṇa*, its origin, functions, etc.) one achieves immortality.’ This ‘knowing’ is not merely an acquisition of academic information of the subject but its personal realization through deep meditation.

*Ṛgveda* hymn 1.164, consisting of 52 *Mantras* (verses), is highly symbolic. Different scholars have explained these *Mantras* according to their own perception, which are at variance with one another. Each author claims his own version as authentic. We were particularly interested in the

first two lines of *Mantra* 1. 164.15. The literal translation of these two lines is ‘Among those born together, they call the seventh as born alone. The six are twins and are god-born seers.’

Wendy O’ Glahety in her book ‘The *Ṛgveda*’ explains it by saying that Aditi gave birth to god Ādityas in pairs and rejected Vivasvān (sun), who was born alone. In the ritual there are 12 paired months, and an odd one, the intercalary month which interrupts the sequence.

R. I. Kaśyapa has an ingenious interpretation which seems more plausible. He says that the entire manifestation of God has seven planes usually divided into the lower three (matter-*Anna*, life-*Prāṇa*, mind-*Manas*), the upper three (*Sat*-existence, *Cit*-consciousness, *Ānanda*-bliss), and in between these two lies the seventh (also called the fourth) namely *Svara* plane. Each power in the lower triplet is associated with one in the upper triplet to form a twin, as *Anna* with *Sat*, *Prāṇa* with *Cit* and *Manas* with *Ānanda*. The *Prāṇa Vidyā*, explained in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (V. 1 and V. 2) deals with meditation to connect *Prāṇa* (vital force) with *Cit* (consciousness), alluded to in the *Ṛgveda Mantra* (*loc. cit*). So that an aspirant can achieve blessedness.

### **Prāṇa Vidyā (Meditation on Prāṇa)—**

To the ancient Aryan seers, no philosophy however profound, has any value unless it relates to human life. *Jñānayoga*, *Karmayoga*, *Dhyānayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga*, six *Śāstras*, even the *Vedas* took time for general acceptance. *Prāṇa Vidyā* is an important meditation technique elaborated in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (*loc. cit*). Its relevance to mankind is based upon the fact that it directly relates to the human existence, because *Prāṇa* and life are inexorably

linked to one another. Life ends when *Prāṇa* leaves the body. Practice of *Prāṇa Vidyā* according to the prescribed technique, with pure mind and body leads to the spiritual uplift of the practitioner.

### **General Characteristics of Prāṇa and Related Faculties—**

The following discussion reflects the perception of the *Rṣi* that has been used in the form of a legend concerning the qualities of the various body faculties, their subsequent meeting with *Prajāpati* Brahmā, the dialogue of the sense faculties amongst themselves, and the experience of the body as a result of its separation from them. This is a well established method used by mentors to explain a complex philosophical truth to his disciples. Below are given some of the characteristics of five well known faculties in the body:

**Vital force (*Prāṇa*):** This is the force that sustains life. It even supports a foetus in the womb when it is unable to communicate with the outside world. This support continues through child birth, younger age, adolescence, and old age. At death, the Self leaves the body and so does the *Prāṇa*. In this respect, the *Prāṇa* is both *Jyeṣṭha* (oldest) and *Śreṣṭha* (greatest).

**Speech (*Vāk*):** Speech claimed that it is the richest. The reason given for this quality is that a person, who is eloquent and can speak well, shall overcome all the contestants in a debate. The opponents who participate in such competitions have to be well known, qualified, and rich. A successful person quickly earns a well deserved reputation and simultaneous advancement in society. For an eloquent person this is a sure way to become the richest.

**Eye (*Cakṣuḥ*):** The eye considered itself the basis of a comfortable life. Only one with unimpaired eyesight can

move around comfortably without any danger of running into physical obstacles.

Ear (*Śrotram*): In olden days the knowledge of the *Vedas* and their interpretation was achieved only through oral communication. In the absence of hearing faculty, neither this knowledge could be acquired nor was it possible to perform rites and rituals which were dependent upon this knowledge. As a consequence there was no chance for such a person to achieve prosperity.

Mind (*Manah*): Mind is the repository (abode) of all information that is gathered by the sense organs. Mind transmits this information to the intellect for further action. It is the intellect that accepts or rejects this information. It may be noted that the senses and the mind, often considered the primary organs for our good or bad actions, are only means for collecting and collating the information. Intellect alerts the action organs for necessary action.

### **Relative Importance of Prāṇa and other Human Faculties—**

The description of the qualities of the five important human faculties, mentioned in the previous section is indicative of the fact that each one of them claims its superiority over the others. *Aham śreyām asmi*—I am the greatest. Once all the organs assembled to decide, which one of them should be declared the greatest? Since they could not come to a consensus, as none was willing to accept its inferiority, they approached their father, *Prajāpati* Brahmā, for his decision. Lord Brahmā gave a noncommittal answer that would not injure the feelings of anyone. He said, “He is the greatest amongst you whose departure from the body would cause the maximum misery.” Therefore, you can decide it for yourself who is the greatest.

## Prāṇa and Others Search for an answer—

In the light of Brahmā's answer, the five organs decided that one of them would leave the body for one year and the other four would serve as witness of the effect experienced by the body. After all of us have taken our turn, we shall assemble to decide who the winner is.

The first to go on exile for a year was speech. On its return, it asked the other four about the effect of its departure. The body said that it behaved like a dumb person, but eyes, ears, mind, and the vital force were helpful for my survival. All the faculties operate collectively with *Prāṇa* leading the way. In this case only the speech was missing, but that was its own decision.

The next to depart were the eyes. After their return from one year exile, they also enquired the state of the body in their absence. The body replied that I moved around as a blind person with the help of speech, ears, mind and vital force.

In the absence of the ear, the body experienced only deafness but the rest of the organs operated normally.

The body's experience in the absence of the mind was different but not life threatening. It lived with an undeveloped mind like a child. Children live without thinking. Speech, eyes, ears, and *Prāṇa* helped them to survive.

The last one to leave was *Prāṇa*. But before *Prāṇa* could leave on one year stipulated exile, all the body organs realized that they could not survive in the absence of *Prāṇa*. They became conscious of their inferiority. All of them begged *Prāṇa* not to leave because that would be a disaster for all. They unanimously recognized *Prāṇa* as their ruler.

Once the position of *Prāṇa* was settled amongst all the

body organs, it demanded to know what would be my food? They responded that anything edible for humans, birds, beasts, and insects would be your food. The implication of this statement is that the vital force absorbs all sentient and insentient, moving and non-moving or edible and non-edible objects. All phenomenal objects come into existence through the intermediacy of the vital force and eventually get absorbed by this very force. Another interpretation of this statement would be that a realized sage is not conscious of what he eats. *Prāṇa's* next inquiry was what would be my garment? They replied that water shall be your garment. Even today, orthodox Hindus have a sip of water before and after every meal for purification. This sip of water is also regarded as the garment of *Prāṇa*.

### **Eulogy of Prāṇa Vidyā—**

*Ṛṣi Satyakāma Jābāla*, an expert on *Prāṇa Vidyā*, taught this meditation to his disciples. To impress upon them the significance of this meditation, he said, “Should anyone say this to a dry stump, branches will grow upon it and leaves will sprout.” Whatever be the literal authenticity of this claim, it clearly highlights the importance of this meditation to the seekers of blessedness. There is a lot of imagery involved in the *Mantras* relating to *Prāṇa Vidyā*, but they unmistakably indicate the significance of this meditation. If by merely listening about this *Vidyā* a piece of dead wood can come to life and produce leaves, flowers, and branches, what must be its effect on humans who solemnly practice it! This *Vidyā* is easy to comprehend, easy to relate with life experience, and easy to practice. True to the gist of this meditation, one who knows about the significance of the oldest and the greatest (*Prāṇa*), certainly becomes the oldest and the greatest in society.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (VI. 1. 1—14) also discusses *Prāṇa Vidyā* in almost similar language as one finds in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (*loc. cit.*). In this *Vidyā*, the *Prāṇa* is conceived as the Supreme Self from whom all sentient and insentient objects have emanated. This shows the oldest and the greatest nature of the vital force which is worthy of meditation. It is the knowledge of the supreme Self that leads to liberation, and *Prāṇa Vidyā* is one of the facile means to accomplish this.



Never think yourself to be weak. Have firm faith in yourself. Think, “There is nothing that I cannot do; I can do everything if I will.” Why should you acknowledge defeat to your mind? Know that if you can subdue it, the whole world will be under your feet. One who has no self-confidence does not have real faith in God. Swāmī Vivekānanda has said that the real atheist is he who has no faith in himself. Nobody listens to the words of one who has no self-confidence; and God also does not listen to his prayers.

—*Swami Virajananda*

The *Karmayogī* does not entertain the feeling of ‘mine’ in respect of the mind, intellect, body and senses; he considers them as belonging to God. And he performs all his duties in an absolutely unselfish and disinterested spirit, acting under the inspiration and guidance of God, just like an instrument.

—*Gītā Tattvavivecanī*