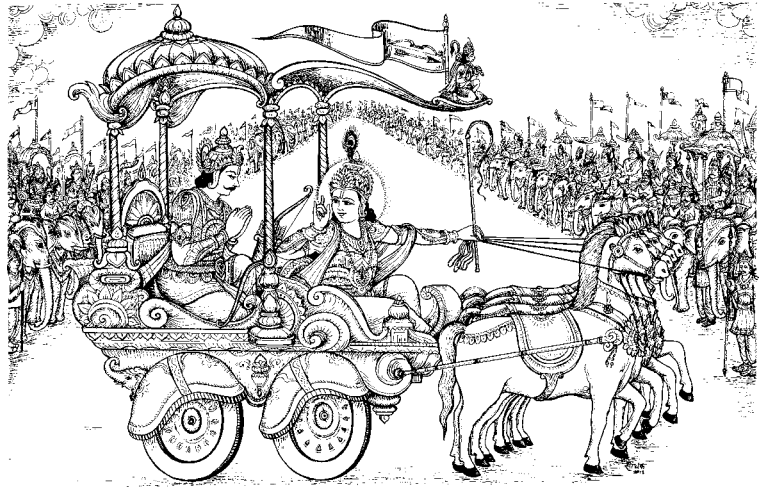


ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥



# KALYANA-KALPATARU

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

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## Śrī Gaṇeśa's Reverence to Rāma-Nāma

महिमा	जासु	जान	गनराऊ ।
प्रथम	पूजिअत	नाम	प्रभाऊ ॥

(Mānasa I. 18. 2)

The importance of *Rāma-Nāma* is properly known to Śrī Gaṇeśa who became Lord of *Śivagaṇas* and who is ordained to be worshipped first at every occasion because of his reverence to *Rāma-Nāma*.

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## Destiny versus Individual Effort

—*Brahmalina Sri Jayadayal Goyandka*

(Continued from 9)

Even in cultivating devotion to God, who is supremely compassionate and most loving, or in dedicating oneself to Him, effort and not destiny is predominant. God is realized through reverent and loving self-surrender to Him. Through reverent and loving dedication one comes to know the truth and secret of God. God is supremely kind-hearted and His compassion extends on all in a limitless measure—want of knowledge of this secret alone keeps one deprived of God-realization. Despite His supreme compassion he who does not fully realize it due to lack of faith and reverence fails to know the secret of God's compassion and remains deprived of the supreme benefit resulting from His Kindness.

If it is asked whether God is realized through His grace or through one's own effort, the answer is that when a man puts faith in His extreme kind-heartedness towards him, his spiritual endeavour mounts to a high pitch. On his endeavour attaining to a high pitch his heart gets purified with the result that he comes to know the real character of His supreme compassion and love. And God-realization now takes place. Supreme compassion and supreme love which cannot be accounted for are what goes by the name of disinterested goodwill. He alone is a disinterested lover who cherishes such goodwill. By knowing Him to be such a lover one attains supreme peace in the shape of God-realization.

सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति ॥

(Second half of *Gītā* V. 29)

If, however, a man relegates God-realization to the domain of fate, he remains deprived of it; for no one has so far realized God as a matter of course by depending on one's luck. If realization in the shape of God-realization could be automatically had, everyone would have been liberated till today. If, however, it is argued that God is realized through His grace, it is no doubt true; but he alone gets the full benefit of His grace who recognizes His kindness to himself. Without recognizing His grace ever flowing towards oneself one remains deprived to its benefit. If, for example, a householder has a philosopher's stone in his possession but values it as no more than an ordinary stone, he remains deprived of the benefits accruing from a philosopher's stone. If, on the other hand, he brings it into touch with a piece of iron, knowing it to be a philosopher's stone, he comes to have its benefits. Similarly, God's supreme mercy extends on every living being; but failing to recognize it in full people remain deprived of its supreme benefit.

In the same way, true knowledge of *Brahma*, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified, does not come by itself through good luck. If such knowledge could be automatically had through one's destiny everyone would have attained it. He who depends upon his fate thinking that knowledge of *Brahma* would come of its own accord through destiny remains deprived of it; for nobody has attained knowledge of *Brahma* through destiny till today, nor is it possible to do so. True knowledge of God is attained through the purification of one's heart. The heart is purified through disinterested action and disinterested action is accomplished through effort alone. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

नहि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।  
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

(IV. 38)

“On earth there is no purifier as great as Knowledge (of *Brahma*) he who has attained purity of heart through a prolonged practice of *Karmayoga* automatically sees the light of Truth in the Self in course of time.”

Another way to the attainment of wisdom is the loving practice of Devotion, The Lord delineates it as follows:—

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।  
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥  
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।  
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥  
तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।  
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

(*Gītā* X. 9—11)

“With their mind fixed on Me, and their lives surrendered to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, My devotees ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer the *Yoga* of wisdom through which they come to Me. In order to shower My grace on them I, who dwell in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom.”

It has already been submitted that Devotion to God too is cultivated through effort. He who practises exclusive devotion to God with reverence and love, recognizing His kindness to him and seeking His protection attains to the highest state in the shape of God-realization through His grace.

A third approach to the attainment of spiritual enlightenment lies through the fellowship of and personal service to

exalted and enlightened souls who have realized the Truth. The highest state in the shape of Liberation can be reached through this avenue as well. The Lord says to Arjuna in the *Gītā*:—

तद् विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।  
 उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥  
 यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।  
 येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥

(IV. 34-35)

“Understand the true nature of that knowledge by approaching illumined souls. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service and ask questions of them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that knowledge. Arjuna, when you have attained enlightenment you will no more fall a prey to delusion. In the light of that knowledge you will see the entire creation first within your own self, and then in Me (the Oversoul).”

Even the ways and means of attaining Knowledge enumerated in verses 13 to 17 of Discourse XIII of the *Gītā* have been referred to by the Lord under the name of ‘Knowledge’ itself. By recourse to these means too one gets enlightened and attains blessedness. The practice of all these means of attaining wisdom requires effort and cannot be carried on through luck.

Similarly, the means of securing supreme fixity in Knowledge as described in verses 50—55 of Discourse XVIII of the *Gītā* involve effort. Thus it is proved that in the attainment of Knowledge too effort alone and not destiny plays the chief role.

The practice of virtue in the shape of good conduct requires effort and cannot be carried on through luck. The

great sage Manu has referred to the following four as the final authority on *Dharma* or virtue:—

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।

एतच्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षाद् धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥

(*Manu.*, II. 12)

“The *Vedas*, the *Smṛtis*, the example of the righteous and what is agreeable to one’s own self—the wise declare these as the fourfold index to virtue.”

And describing the character of virtue common to all Manu says:—

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।

धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

(VI. 92)

“Firmness, forgiveness control of mind, non-thieving, (external and internal) purity, subjugation of the senses, sound reason, right knowledge, veracity and absence of wrath—these ten are the ten constituents of virtue.”

The special rules of conduct to be observed by the different *Varṇas* (grades of society) and *Āśramas* (stages in life) have also been discussed at length by Manu in Discourses III to VI of his *Manusmṛti*. All these can be observed through effort. None of these can be followed as a matter of course without effort and through luck.

Thus it is proved that while destiny is the dominant factor in the attainment of worldly riches and procuring sense-enjoyments, individual effort plays the chief role so far as the cultivation of virtue and the attainment of Liberation are concerned.



# Means of Attaining a Higher Destiny

—*Nityalilalina Sri Hanumanprasad Poddar*

In reply to your letter I submit that a fall is easy for a man, while ascent is hard to achieve. One is sure to fall even if one's foot slips a little: but one has to exert oneself in order to climb up. There is evil company and nothing but evil company on all sides at present. It has become almost difficult to get persons who would hold you by the hand and save you, come to your rescue and help you in climbing up. It is no wonder if a man meets with a fall under such circumstances. But even in these days those who are alert and active and who have taken refuge in some unfailing power capable of affording shelter can avoid a fall and climb up, can attain a higher destiny without much exertion. For this one has to do as follow—

1. One should never remain idle and should keep oneself engaged in a work which should not awaken much, less stimulate evil thoughts nor re-awaken evil thoughts which are dormant.

2. One should strive one's best to keep all one's sense-organs, viz., one's eyes, ears, nose, palate and tactile sense as well as one's mind united with the Lord, who is the only real substance, and should never enjoy through them pleasures which are undesirable—which lead to one's downfall.

3. In order to enable noble ideas to appear in one's mind, nay, to nurture and foster them, one should daily listen to the discourses of saints or reverently study good books.

4. One should daily practise *Japa* of any name of the Lord and should constantly remember Him to the best of one's ability.



5. One should have supreme and unflinching faith in the infinite, unfailing and unaccountable grace of the Lord.

6. As far as possible one should bear no malice to anyone, should not wish harm to anyone, much less harm anyone. Nay, one should contemplate and do good to others and should behave in a friendly way towards all. One should constantly remain full of commiseration for the woes of the afflicted. One should seek the welfare even of offenders and should wish and pray to God that they should come to acquire the disposition of saints. One should never vilify others.

7. Recognizing everything in one's possession as belonging to the Lord one should devote one's all without distinction to the service of living beings suffering from want according to their deserts without any sense of pride.

8. Recognizing the Lord to be one's greatest well-wisher in spite of His being the omnipotent and suzerain Lord of all the worlds, one should exclusively depend on Him.

My experience is that if a man betakes himself even to a few of the aforesaid disciplines, he can easily ascend to a higher level. It should be borne in mind that God-consciousness and to be endowed with divine properties are what is meant by ascending to a higher level. Ascension to a higher level does not consist in acquiring wealth and power—nay, not even the position of Indra (the ruler of gods and the lord of all the three worlds). He alone who has ascended to a higher level becomes eligible for attaining the highest goal of human life in the form of Liberation—God-realization or God-Love and, eventually attaining it, succeeds in achieving his object.

## **Desire is the Main Energy in God-realization**

*—Brahmalina Swami Ramsukhdas*

When a man desires money, his mind is attached to it. But when it is acquired, the mind renounces this attachment and so he feels happy. Had the money provided him joy, he would have never felt sad, so long as he had money. But he feels sad, even after possessing that money.

When a man desires anything, he becomes dependant on it. Suppose, a man has a desire to buy a watch he feels sad, without it; this is dependence upon it. He thinks that if he acquires money, he can buy a watch i.e., he feels independent if he has money, and dependent without money. But this is a wrong notion. If he acquires money and buys a watch he, instead of having dependence on the watch, has dependence on money, because money is also different from, the self. When a man's discrimination is hid by desire, he realizes his dependence on objects, but he does not realize his dependence, on money. He thinks that he has become independent, because of money. It is very difficult to renounce such a dependence, which disguises itself as independence.

The world is transitory. All the worldly objects such as the body, wealth, property etc., are decaying every moment, and are separating from us. But while enjoying these, we forget that they are temporary, we regard them as eternal and permanent. Not to talk of the common people, even a striver gets entangled in pleasures by considering these as eternal and permanent. It so happens,

because his discrimination is enveloped by desire.

The Lord declares, that desire is the constant enemy of the wise, so that a man may save himself from it and may attain bliss, desire being the root of all sins and sufferings. Once, a man was looking for his wife. People asked him, "What is the name of your wife?" He replied, "Disgrace." They again asked, "What is your name?" He replied, "Wicked." People said, "Don't be agitated, she is a very chaste and faithful wife, she will come to you, because disgrace ever accompanies the wicked." Similarly suffering automatically accompany the man, who hankers after perishable pleasures.

A man wants to avoid suffering, but he does not renounce desire, which is the root cause of suffering. In the *Rāmacaritamānasa* it is declared, "A man can't attain bliss, even in a dream, so long as he does not renounce desire" (VII. 90. 1). The Lord, by the terms '*Analena*' and '*Duṣpūreṇa*', wants to explain that desire for enjoyment of worldly objects, is never satiated. The more he enjoys them, the more, the desire for these is strengthened. In order to satiate it, he is inclined to sinful acts. When he has desire for wealth, he wants to earn it, by fair means or foul. Then, at the second stage the desire engages him in theft and robberies, while in the third stage it leads him to commit violence and even murder. Thus the desire for pleasure, makes life miserable, here as well as hereafter.

The main obstacle to the practice of spiritual discipline is the desire for pleasure which is born by the contact of senses with sense-objects. This obstacle lingers for a long time. Wherever a striver indulges in pleasure, there his spiritual progress is arrested. As much as even the pleasure (joy) from trance, hinders his progress. Even the desire of

‘*Sāttvika*’ happiness and attachment to it arrest his spiritual progress—‘सुखसङ्गेन बध्नाति’ (*Gītā* XIV. 6). Therefore the Lord has declared that desire is the constant enemy of a wise (discriminating) striver—‘न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥’ (*Gītā* V. 22) and ‘दुःखमेव सर्वं विवेकिनः’ (*Yogadarśana* II. 15).



Highest knowledge, devotion, spirituality—these can only be acquired through great self-effort. One has to struggle hard to win them. Then only do they become one’s own, and enduring, filling the mind with joy unspeakable. None can make a gift of these to another. Spiritual practice has to be diligently performed. Then only can Realisation be attained. The degree varies with the intensity of spiritual effort. What is gained without discipline or hard labour loses its gravity, is not highly valued and does not bring happiness earned by hard struggle. Moreover, it goes away as easily as it comes, and it is of little use when we are buffeted by the angry billows of life. In dangers and difficulties, in trials and tribulations, it is swept away altogether. To make spirituality one’s very own, means saturating oneself thoroughly in the idea of the realisation of the Self, so that one’s nature is wholly changed and an entirely new personality is developed. It is like being reborn again in this very body. Is it child’s play? Such a thing is possible only if one is wide awake and strives for it to the utmost, as if one’s whole life is at stake. Thus one must continue spiritual practices without interruption and with single-minded devotion as long as the Goal is not achieved.

—*Swami Virajananda*

## Nāma Mahimā

—Swami Sivananda

What a lot joy the repetition of His Name brings! What a lot of power it infuses into man! How it changes the human nature marvellously! How it exalts a man to the status of divinity! How it destroys old sins, *Vāsanās*, *Saṅkalpas*, whims, fancies, depressing moods, sex-impulses and various *Saṁskāras*!

How sweet is God's Name! What a tremendous power it possesses! How it transforms quickly the Asuric, diabolical nature into *Sāttvika*, Divine nature! How it brings you face to face with the Lord and makes you realise your oneness with Him (*Parā Bhakti*—Supreme Love)!

The Name of God chanted correctly or incorrectly, knowingly or unknowingly, carefully or carelessly, is sure to give the desired result. The Glory of the Name of God cannot be established through reasoning and intellect. It can certainly be experienced or realised only through devotion, faith and constant repetition of the Name. Every Name is filled with countless potencies or *Śaktis*. The power of the Name is ineffable. Its Glory is indescribable. The efficacy and inherent *Śakti* of the Name of God is unfathomable.

Just as fire has the natural property of burning inflammable things, so also the Name of God has the power of burning sins, *Saṁskāras* and *Vāsanās* and bestowing Eternal Bliss and everlasting peace on those who repeat it. Just as burning quality is natural to and inherent in fire, so also the power of destorying sins with their very root and branch, and bringing the aspirant into blissful union with

the Lord through *Bhāva-Samādhi* is natural to and inherent in the Name of God.

O Man! Take refuge in the Name. *Nāmī* and *Nāma* are inseparable. Sing the Lord's Name incessantly. Remember the Name of the Lord with every incoming and outgoing breath. In this iron age *Nāma-Smaraṇa* or *Japa* is the easiest, quickest, safest and surest way to reach god and attain immortality and perennial Joy. Glory to the Lord! Glory to His Name!

It was the utterance of the Name of God alone that caused the salvation of a great sinner of the type of Ajāmila. Ajāmila was a righteous Brahmin in the beginning. He fell in love with a low-caste girl and committed many atrocious crimes. It was at the time of death he uttered the name of his son '*Nārāyaṇa*' and there came the *Pārṣadas* of Nārāyaṇa Himself to his rescue, and he (Ajāmila) was released from this world for ever. Mark here the extraordinary power of the Name.

You may be aware how the *Gaṇikā* (prostitute) Piṅgalā was mysteriously transformed into a saintly lady by the power of the Name (repeating the Name of Śrī Rāma) through her *Guru*, the parrot which she obtained as a lovely present from a thief, and how she easily obtained salvation, the parrot was trained to utter the Name "Śrī Rāma", "Śrī Rāma". Piṅgalā knew nothing of *Rāma-Nāma*. She heard the sound Rāma-Rāma through the mouth of the parrot. It was very melodious and charming. Piṅgalā was very much attracted. She fixed her mind on *Rāma-Nāma*, uttered by the parrot, and mysteriously entered into *Bhāva Samādhi* (union with Rāma). Such is the power of the Name of the Lord. It is a pity that the present-day people who have studied science and who brag of their worthless secular learning have no faith in *Nāma-Smaraṇa*. It is highly deplorable.

Just hear the glory of *Rāma-Nāma*. You must learn to take the Name of Rāma with full devotion and faith. When you study the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Tulasīdāsa you will learn how great the Divine Power of that blessed Name is.

Gāndhījī writes: “You might ask me why I tell you to use the word Rāma and not one of the many other Names of the Creator. True His Names are as many as and more than the leaves on a tree, and I might, for instance, ask you to use the word God. But what meaning, what associations, would it have for you here? In order to enable you to feel anything when repeating the word God, I should have to teach you some English. I should have to explain to you foreign people’s thoughts and associations.

“But in telling you to repeat the Name of Rāma, I am giving you a Name worshipped since countless generations by the people of this land—a Name familiar to the very animals and birds, the very trees and stones of Hindustan, through many thousand years. You will learn from *Rāmāyaṇa* how a stone by the roadside sprang to life at the touch of Rāma’s foot as he passed by. You must learn to repeat the blessed Name of Rāma with sweetness and such devotion that the birds will pause in their singing to listen to you, that the very trees will bend their leaves towards you, stirred by the divine melody of that Name.”

Kamāla got a severe scolding from his father Kabīra for prescribing to a rich merchant *Rāma-Nāma* to be repeated twice for curing leprosy. Kamāla asked the merchant to repeat *Rāma-Nāma* twice and yet he was not cured of the disease. Kamāla reported to his father this incidence. Kabīra was very much annoyed and told Kamāla. “You have brought disgrace on me by asking the merchant to repeat *Rāma-Nāma* twice. Repetition of

*Rāma-Nāma* once is quite sufficient. Now beat the merchant severely with a stick on his head. Ask him to stand in the Gaṅgā and repeat *Rāma-Nāma* once from the bottom of his heart.” Kamāla followed the instruction of his father. He gave a good thrashing on the head of the merchant. The merchant repeated *Rāma-Nāma* once only with *Bhāva*, from the bottom of his heart. He was completely cured of leprosy.

Kabīra sent Kamāla to Tulasīdāsa. In the presence of Kamāla, Tulasīdāsa wrote *Rāma-Nāma* on a Tulasī-leaf and sprinkled the juice over 50 lepers. All were cured. Kamāla was quite astonished. Then Kabīra sent Kamāla to blind Sūra Dāsa. Sūra Dāsa asked Kamāla to bring the corpse that was floating in the river. The corpse was brought. Sūra Dāsa repeated ‘Rāma’ only once (not the full Name Rāma) in one ear of the corpse, and it was brought back to life. Kamāla’s heart was filled with awe and wonder. Such is the power of God’s Name. My dear friends! My educated college youths! My dear Barristers, Professors, Doctors and Judges! Don’t be puffed up with your false secular learning. Repeat the Name of the Lord with *Bhāva* and *Prema* from the bottom of your heart and realise the Supreme Bliss, Knowledge, Peace and Immortality right now in this very birth, nay, this very second.

Kabīra says: “If anyone utters ‘Rāma’ ‘Rāma’ even in dream, I would like to make for his daily use a pair of shoes out of my skin.” Who can describe the glory of God’s sacred Name? Who can really comprehend the greatness and splendour of the holy Names of God? Even Pārvatī, the consort of Lord Śīva, failed to describe in adequate terms the grandeur and true significance of God’s Name. When one sings His Name or hears it sung, he is unconsciously raised to sublime spiritual heights. He loses



his body-consciousness. He is immersed in joy. He drinks the divine nectar of Immortality. He gets Divine intoxication. Repetition of God's Name enables the devotee to feel the Divine Presence, the Divine glory, the Divine consciousness within himself and also everywhere. How sweet is Hari's Name! How powerful is the Name of the Lord! How much joy, peace and strength His Name brings to one who repeats it! Blessed indeed are those who repeat God's Name, for they will be free from the wheel of birth and death and will attain immortality!

The *Pāṇḍavas* were never burnt to death, though the *Lākṣāgrha* (house of lac) in which they lived was burnt, because of their immense faith in the Name of Hari; the *Gopālakas* were not harmed by fire, when the wild fire broke out, because of their immense faith in the Lord's Name; Hanumān was never burnt though his tail was set fire to by the *Rākṣasas*, on account of his immense faith in Rāma's Name; Prahlāda was not burnt by fire because he had taken refuge in the Name of Hari; Sītā was not harmed through fire though she had to undergo the fire-trial for testing her chastity, because she had Rāma's Name as her sole refuge; the palace of Vibhīṣaṇa was not burnt when the whole of Lanka was burnt to ashes, because of his immense faith in the Name of Śrī Rāma. Such is the glory of the Lord's Name.



# Agni Devatā—A Multi-powered Deity

—Dr. M. S. Manhas

*Ṛg Veda* (*ṚV*), the oldest expansive scripture known to man, forms the foundation of Hindu religion and culture, and Agni *Devatā* (*Deva*, god, shining one) is the most prominent deity mentioned in it. *ṚV* has 10552 *Mantras* (verses) arranged in 10 *Maṇḍalas* (books). Out of these 10552 *Mantras*, approximately 2000 of them are devoted to Agni *Devatā*. The first *Mantra* of the first hymn of *ṚV* adores this *Devatā*. This speaks for the significance of Agni in Hindu life. Zoroastrian's *Zend-Avesta* also eulogizes Agni. Burning of essence in Catholic churches is an important part of their religious ceremony.

Hindus eulogize Agni at various levels of consciousness. Agni is recognized as a source of heat and light (both physical and spiritual). Without Agni, the civilization as we know it would be inconceivable. It digests food, maintains a steady body temperature, and helps in the operation of various body organs. Life ceases in the absence of Agni's assistance. Its importance in industrial life is beyond question.

At the spiritual level, Agni *Devatā* is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. He serves as a divine cosmic force having consciousness, wisdom, and performs multitude of functions to help the seekers of truth in various ways in their goal of achieving perfection: abundance of light (knowledge both spiritual and scholastic), unconquerable might (power to support their freedom and to ward off hostile forces that stand in the way of their progress), and

inexhaustible delight (having happy and prosperous family life). Agni *Devatā* is not a physical being but a conscious cosmic force that resides in the seekers to help in the accomplishment of their goals. It is noticeable may be that Agni impels the seekers to succeed in their legitimate desires. The seekers have to put in the necessary effort to accomplish their mission.

In the *Aśvamedha Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*, it is mentioned that once *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa in answer to a question by Yudhiṣṭhira, explained the etymology of the word Agni. He gave the following reasons for this nomenclature:

In the beginning of creation, He first created fire-god from His mouth. This was done for the welfare of humanity that depended upon Agni for their survival. Since Agni manifested before other *Devas* and humans, the wise people called him Agni. This fact is also mentioned in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* (*ṚV.* X. 90. 13).

During all ritual acts, the first oblation in *Yajña* fire is offered to fire-god as he is the first amongst *Devas* to be worshipped. Therefore, he is called Agni (*Agra*-first+*ni*-lead, the one that leads).

The performance of *Agnihotra* ceremony results in the *Agraya* (supreme benefit) to those Brahmins (learned persons who are devoted to Brahman). Therefore, such persons, who adore fire-god and have control on their senses, mind, and intellect have risen to the exalted position of *Devas*. Aṅgiras is a prime example of such humans that rose to the status of *Devas*. Therefore sometimes the word Aṅgiras is used synonymously to designate Agni *Devatā* (*ibid.*....I. 1. 6)

**Agni Devatā—A Manifestation of the Supreme Being—**

*Śruti* says that all *Devas*, including Agni, are manifestations of the One Reality. They are divine powers without a

physical body. They operate indirectly when they are invoked by the seeker. *ṚV* (X. 90. 15) states, “From His mind was born the Moon. From His eyes came the Sun. From His mouth (came out) Indra and Agni, and Vāyu was born from His breath.” This *Mantra* clearly indicates that Agni along with other gods emanated from the body of the Lord as divine forces. They do not have a corporeal existence. *Mantra* X. 164. 46 (*loc. cit.*) is more explicit in this respect. It says, “They call Him (Supreme Being) Indra, Varuṇa and the divine fine winged Garutmān (*Garuḍa*). Truth is One and the sages call Him variously as Indra, Yama and *Mātariśvan* (Vāyu).” *Yajur Veda* VS, (32.1) clarifies the manifestation of gods in a more definitive language. “Āditya is That, Vāyu is That, Candramā is That, the bright one (Sun) is That, Brahman is That, *Apas* is That, and Prajāpati is That”. All these *Devas* have specific mission to act and operate harmoniously to help each other as well as humans that seek their help, *Sāma Veda* (442) says, “*Sadā devāḥ arepasah—Devas* are always free from blemish”.

### **The Adoration of Agni Devatā—**

The first hymn in *ṚV* summarizes a number of salient points related to the Hindu culture and spirituality besides the adoration of Agni *Devatā*. Agni is the foremost deity amongst a large number of *Devas* mentioned in this *Veda*. Although Indra is regarded as the king of *Devas* and Vāyu is the lord of the vital force. Agni occupies a unique position in the life of an individual. Agni sustains life from conception through birth, growth, and old age. Life ends with the departure of Agni from the body. To understand the role of Agni, the first hymn of *ṚV* consisting of 9 *Mantras* may be divided into 3 sub-group: *Mantras* (1-2), *Mantras* (3—6) and *Mantras* (7—9).

*Mantras* (1-2) eulogize Agni. This cosmic force of the Supreme Brahma has been visualized and adored as a *Purohita*—a family priest who always acts as the leader in all social and religious functions, a *Ṛtvija*—a high priest who administers the *Yajña* ceremony according to the prescribed rules, and a *Hotṛ*—a priest who pours the oblations in the *Yajña* fire, conveys them to various *Devas*, invites them to the sacrifice, and asks them to bring their gifts for the aspirant. In reality it is the Agni *Devatā* who performs all these functions. He is the bestower of the divine wealth. The role of the priests, who are assigned various duties in a *Yajña* ceremony, is symbolic and important. This is similar to the worship of an image of a deity at home or in a temple. In fact it is not the image that is worshipped but the deity behind the image.

Adoration of Agni is also mentioned in *ṚV* (V. 1.7). It says: ‘They adore Agni with hymns and oblations of *Ghr̥ta* (घृत) in the *Yajña* ceremony. Agni is intelligent and fulfiller of sacrificer’s desires. Agni has spread himself in heaven and earth according to the principles of *Ṛta* (eternal law, this word has now been replaced by *Dharma*-moral law)’. May the Agni *Devatā*, who is a manifestation of the Supreme Reality, and who was adored by the ancient *Ṛṣis* (sages) and is still eulogized by the present ones, bring here other *Devas* to help the ardent sacrificer. Such adoration of Agni was later developed into *Jñānayoga* during the Upanishadic period.

*Mantras* (3—6) form a separate group and succinctly summarize the powers of Agni. Through these powers He helps the sacrificer in various ways, such as gaining affluence and welfare, which increase day by day. A largess given by somebody will assuredly dwindle with time, whereas there is no decline if, it is obtained by

personal efforts. This also applies in the case of spiritual wealth which helps the aspirants to achieve blessedness—the ultimate goal of human endeavour. Agni is pleased with honest supplication and protects them from evil forces; which are always on the look out to disrupt their sincere efforts. These verses glorify personal endeavours to achieve success. One can easily detect the roots of *Karmayoga* and *Dhyānayoga* philosophies.

The last three verses (7—9) of this emphasize the daily paying of homage to Agni with complete faith, dedication, and reverence. Agni upholds truth, protects the sacrificer, and bestows valiant progeny, who shall live to ripe old age to enjoy the material and spiritual benefits. The sacrificer prays for an easy access to Agni. He/she also supplicates Him for a virtuous life, as a father guides the son. This prayer seems to be the forerunner of *Bhaktiyoga*, which was later formalized by saints like Rāmānujācārya, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Vallabhācārya and several others.

### **An Anecdote About Agni Devatā—**

This anecdote is mentioned in hymns (51—53) of the 10<sup>th</sup> book of *ṚV*. It is also found in the *Brāhmaṇa* portion of the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* (II. 6. 10). The elder brother of Agni died, one after another, while performing the functions of a *Hotṛ* in carrying the oblations from *Yajña* ceremonies to *Devas* in heaven. Agni got scared lest he might also face the same fate if he took up the duties of a *Hotṛ*. Therefore, he left home and hid deep in a body of water so that none could locate his whereabouts. This caused great consternation among the humans, because there was no one to convey their offerings to *Devas*. The *Devas* were also unhappy as their source of sustenance was interrupted. Search parties were dispatched in all directions to locate Agni and bring him back so that he could take up his family duties.

Finally the search party led by Yama and Varuṇa was able to find him hiding deep in water. They asked him to resume his family profession of a *Hotṛ*.

Agni expressed his reluctance as he was afraid of death as his brothers had met that fate while acting as a *Hotṛ*. The gods promised him immortality in lieu of his accepting this assignment. But Agni was not satisfied with this bargain. He wanted much more than this. He demanded exclusive rights of *Prayāja* (ability to know the will of the sacrificer before that start of (*Yajña*) and *Anuyāja* (ability to know the will of the sacrificer after the completion of *Yajña*). This information was necessary for properly guiding the sacrificer and to know beforehand whether the sacrificer was sincere in his request. The gods accepted this demand. In addition, the gods also granted Agni the right to receive a portion of sacrificer's oblations, and that all the four regions shall bow down to him. Agni further demanded that, since he has been chosen as the *Hotṛ*, he should know about the paths through which the oblations are to be carried to *Devas* in heaven. Having received from *Devas* all that he wanted, he accepted the assignment of a *Hotṛ* and other obligations to help the sincere supplicants in achieving the bliss of perfection in life.

This anecdote has an apparent meaning and a spiritual implication. Apparent meaning is quite obvious. Agni was well qualified for the task of acting as a *Hotṛ* and there was no other suitable candidate for this assignment. Therefore, he was well within his rights to demand the maximum benefits before accepting this job, and he got them.

R. L. Kaśyapa has given a spiritual twist to this anecdote. He opines that with time the universe evolves and so do the cosmic forces that govern this progress. This is similar to the human values. In olden days horse was

the primary means of transportation. Nowadays the horse has been virtually replaced by automobiles etc. The Vedic sage would say that horse (Agni brothers) has 'died' and the newer means of transportation (Agni *Devatā*) has become 'immortal'. In this anecdote neither the Agni brothers nor the Agni *Devatā* are physical entities, they are cosmic forces that change with the demands of time.

### **Power of Agni Devatā and their Relevance in Everyday Life—**

Of all *Devas* mentioned in the *Vedas*, Agni is the most important in the life of human beings irrespective of their colour, creed, religion or nationality. This *Devatā* is still invoked by all Hindus in their religious ceremonies. The significance of Agni lies not only in uplifting the life of an individual but also in coordinating and ennobling the social fabric of the society. As indicated earlier, there are about 2,000 *Mantras* in the *R̥gveda* devoted to Agni and additional 500 or so in *Yajurveda* (VS). It is impossible to summarize this voluminous work revealed to several *Ṛṣis* in the limited space of this article, though each one of them is important. Only an essence of the Agni vis-a-vis the individual will be given in this section. In order to appreciate this section it is necessary to have faith in the *Vedas* and a meditative bent of mind. Argumentation to win debating points would be futile, since self-realization is important in spirituality.

Agni is the protector of the body, bestower of long life, and confers intellectual brilliance. The sage implores Agni to remove any body defect so that one may be able to face the world without any disability. (*Yajurveda* VS, 3.17)

The aspirant prays to Agni, the sacred fire as well as the deity, for granting riches (both material and spiritual) so that he may live comfortably. (*RV. X 191. 1*). It may



be noted that *Vedas* do not advocate a life of total renunciation. Work and knowledge are the hallmarks of Vedic society.

Agni invited to shield the sacrificer when faced with a treacherous enemy (*Atharva Veda* VII. 7. 71). Invoking the deity in such dire circumstances does not mean that the deity will come running to fight the battles of the seeker. The deities are not corporeal beings. They are cosmic forces that emanated from the Supreme Being. They forbid inertia but abide in the heart of the devotee and impel him to triumphantly face the adversary. This is the only way to succeed.

*R̥ṣi* Kutsa in (*RV.* I. 97. 1), during *Agnihotra* sacrifice, implores the deity to drive away sin and shower wealth and wisdom. (also see *RV.* II. 4.1). The underlying idea is the belief, that any sin can be atoned and forgiven through fire ritual. The five symbolizes the burning away of sins and purification of the mind. He further requests for immortality through his children and grandchildren (*Ibid.*, I. 97. 4). The sage knows that all those who are born have to die sooner or later according to the laws of nature. Continuity of the line through progeny is regarded as immortality.

Agni as also invoked to be the founder of growth and expansion among the seekers so that with their own strength they may overcome all hostile forces who would like to overpower the innocent. (*Ibid.*, II. 4. 9)

Agni is also called *Jātaveda* (the knower of all). (*Ibid.*, V. 4. 4)

Agni has been conceived as God, priest, sage, father, brother, friend, child, guest, etc. (*Ibid.* X. 7. 3)

Agni of irresistible powers is invoked to bring most powerful treasures with wealth from every side, and mark out the path to abundance. (*Ibid.*, V. 10.1)

The overpowering might of Indra and Agni is irresistible in battle. They attacked together the demon Vṛtra, who was a terror for humanity (*Ibid.*, V. 86. 23). This speaks for the might of Agni whose help even Indra, the king of *Devas*, needed to overcome Vṛtra.

Agni bestows seven treasures on every home (body). These seven treasures are: bliss of body (health), bliss of life, bliss of senses and mind, bliss of knowledge, bliss of pure ecstasy, bliss of *Cit Śakti* (cosmic force), and bliss of truth.

Twelfth hymn of the Ist *Maṇḍala* of *RV* provides an excellent summary about the role of Agni *Devatā* in the life of an ardent seeker. The seeker has to be ready with pure mind and body. He should invoke the deity with faith, dedication, total surrender, and perseverance. With the kindling of *Agnihotra* fire and reciting the Vedic hymns in praise of Agni, the deity abides in the heart of the seeker and conveys his oblations to other *Devas* and to invite them for the help of the seeker. *Devas* impel the seeker to make the right effort for achieving his goals. The abiding of the deities in the heart of the seeker is called by the *Vedas* as 'taking birth' in the seeker.



Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success and, above all, love. All time is yours, there is no indecent haste. Everything will come right if you are pure and sincere. We want hundreds like you bursting upon society and bringing new life and vigour of the Spirit wherever they go.

—Swami Vivekananda

# Glorious Doctrine of Karmayoga

—Thotalam Chellaswami

1. “The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision”.—*Helen Keller*

2. ‘धारणाद् धर्ममित्याहुर्धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः’—that which supports, that which holds together the peoples (of the universe), that is *Dharma*.—*Mahābhārata, Karṇa Parva*

3. In the *Yoga Sūtras* of sage Patañjali “universal goodwill” is exhorted as the essential *Dharma*—“*Sarvathā sarvadā sarvabhūtānām anabhidrohaḥ*”. *Sanātana Dharma* exhorts that the middle two *Puruṣārthas*—*Artha* and *Kāma* (wealth and desire) should be directed and regulated by the first *Puruṣārtha*—*Dharma* (righteous conduct) to gain the fourth *Puruṣārtha*—*Mokṣa* (total liberation).

4. The Hindu ethical thinkers never declared all are equal, but only “endeavoured to make all happy—‘सर्वे जनाः सुखिनः भवन्तु’”.

1. The First Group: *Svadharmā* is duty based on one’s innate tendencies and nature of *Svabhāva*. *Saṁnyama* (supreme poise-equanimity of mind), constitutes the characteristics that are the very basis of joy and peace—a sense of non-attachment, moderation and equal-mindedness in all aspects of life (*Samadarśana*), dispassion (*Vairāgya*), calmness of mind (*Śānti*), contentment, equal vision (*Samatvam*), devotion, universal love, consideration for others—their feelings, their rights, and above all a sense of humility. *Samarpaṇa* means dedication of all works to God abiding inhumanity. The second group is—Duty, Devotion and Divine Grace. Devotion is nothing but doing one’s duty

(*Svadharmā*) in *Yajña* spirit for welfare of and harmony in the society—*Lokasaṅgraha*, which will truly earn Divine Grace and consequent liberation from this world of *Samsāra* cycle. The two groups in a broad sense are one of the same, both reflecting the essence of the *Gītā* Sermon. In the most generalized sense *Samyama* and *Samarpaṇa* can be equated with devotion and Divine Grace respectively. *Svadharmā*, honestly discharged against the background and in the spirit of *Samyama* will lead to the spirit of *Samarpaṇa* meaning carrying on *Svadharmā* with *Īśwara arpaṇa buddhi* and humbly accepting the result as *Īśwara Prasādam*, which are nothing but the profound principles of devotion (*Bhakti*) and surrender (*Saraṇāgati*), which enables one to gain Divine Grace (*Īśwara Prasādam*). Similarly devotion to the Deity is nothing but duty discharged in the spirit of *Samyama* and *Samarpaṇa*, which lead the *Sādhaka* to surrender (*Śaraṇāgati*), which in turn enables gaining of Divine Grace (*Īśwara Prasādam*). It may be stated that *Gītā* doctrines of duty, devotion and Divine Grace is universal in its outlook and supremely non-sectarian and meant for the entire humanity, as indeed reiterated by many eminent commentators belonging to different faiths. Indeed persons following Christianity or Islam may, perhaps, get greater perspective, appreciation and understanding and so enabled to follow with greater conviction their own faiths or religions, if only they can study in good faith the duty, devotion and divine grace doctrines enunciated in the *Gītā* Sermon. These two groups highlighting the significant aspects of the teaching are mainly emphasized in the first, second and third group of six chapters respectively. The sermon treats *Jñāna* and *Bhakti* as one and the same and so *Jñāna* does not find specific mention in either of the two groups—‘तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥’ (*Gītā* IV. 38). He that has perfected *Karmayoga* realizes *Jñāna* (knowledge

of the self) in due time. We are not to miss Kṛṣṇa's assurances to devotees who follow the triple values in an integrated manner—that they will certainly attain Him—supreme liberation—‘स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥’ (VI. 31), ‘मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥’ (VIII. 7), ‘सन्नासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥’ (IX. 28), ‘‘स मामेति’’ (XI. 55), ‘संसिद्धिं लभते’ (XVIII. 45), ‘सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः’ (XVIII. 46), ‘मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥’ (XVIII. 65) and ‘सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥’ (XVIII. 66). All these thundering assurances are one and the same in the broadest sense.

2. The essence of the Sermon is adherence to threefold *Dharma*—*Dharma* of works, *Dharma* of devotion and *Dharma* of surrender under all circumstances of the human situation. *Karma* (work) done against the background of the wisdom that one is not the body, but the indwelling spirit soul (*Jñāna*) gets transformed into *Dharma* (holy action). As the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* stated: “Balance between materialism and spiritualism will make life worthwhile. Right knowledge of the self divine alone can bring this balance”. The *Karmayogī*, who practices supreme devotion attains to both the secular and spiritual well-being. In fact it is the coexistence of these two—*Dharma* of works (secular value) and the *Dharma* of devotion (spiritual value) that maintains stability in our social fabric and leads to well-being and happiness of the society. The disciplines that integrate these two *Dharma*'s are—devotion, dedication, discrimination and detachment, the four pillars on which the three *Dharma*'s—of works, wisdom and devotion are based. A true devotee has in full measure all these four qualities. Also in him the above stated three *Dharmas* are supremely integrated. It is such devotees alone are the dearest to the Deity. Vide—“Those devotees who with faith follow this way (set forth above) grounded on *Dharma* and leading to immortality (i.e., realize the essence of duty)—

‘ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते । श्रद्धधानाः’ (*Gītā* XII. 20) regarding Me as their Supreme Goal (trust Me completely and surrender their lives to Me), ‘मत्परमा भक्ताः’ (*Gītā* XII. 20), such devotees are exceedingly dear to Me. ‘तेऽतीव मे प्रियाः ॥’ (XII. 20) The expression *Dharmyāmṛtam* (*Dharmyam* and *Amṛtam*) in this verse is significant, the two words indicating both the values—social and spiritual. The life of a devotee according to this verse combines the twofold Vedic *Dharma*—the *Dharma* of works (secular-*Abhyudaya*—material prosperity) and *Dharma* of *Mokṣa*, liberation or self-realization (spiritual *Niśśreyas*—what Arjuna sought for). It is the coexistence of these two values that maintains stability in the world. It is the direct means to secure both secular and spiritual welfare of the world, through the unique combination of social action for *Lokasaṅgraha* and supreme devotion to the Deity, abiding in the humanity. The observation in (XII. 20), while emphasising that materialism has a place in life, warns that it cannot be the goal of life. Without the spiritual ideal it leads to gloom, endless anxieties and ruin. Spirituality alone makes life a fulfilling experience, bringing a hope and higher vision of and meaning for life. Devotion is the last word in spiritual *Sādhanā*, which eventually leads to surrender (*Śaraṇāgati*). Divine Grace is the last word in spirituality or religion and *Svadharmā* (one’s own duty consistent with one’s own natural tendencies, attitude and temperament—*Svabhāva*) for social good (*Lokasaṅgraha*) is the last word in ethics.

3. It is on the basis of the observations above, that Kṛṣṇa has developed His glorious doctrine of *Karmayoga*—presented below.

Glorious Doctrine of *Karmayoga*—Interconnected and Integrated presentation of *Gītā* Sermon’s Two Groups of Triple Values—“*Svadharmā*, *Saṁnyama* and *Samarpaṇa*—

Duty, Devotion and Divine Grace”.

Arjuna prayed to Kṛṣṇa: “I take refuge in you ‘त्वां प्रपन्नम्।’ Please tell me unequivocally what is good for me—show me a path by which I can walk safely and confidently—‘यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे’. I am your disciple—‘शिष्यस्तेऽहं’. Do instruct me—‘शाधि माम्’. (II. 7)

4. The entire *Gītā* Sermon is in response to the earnest prayer of the devotee Arjuna. It is but natural that Kṛṣṇa leads him to attain *Niśśreyas* sought rather than to think that what is to be taught should only suit him as a man of action. Each person’s relationship with the Absolute is analogous to the part played by each organ of the body. They serve the body in their own unique way. So also each person settles into a certain pattern of self-expression that is most natural to him. In the *Mahābhārata* there is the story of an anchorite, a simple housewife and a butcher. In his spiritual pride the anchorite thought that his path (Knowledge) was superior to others for obtaining God-realization; but he realized that he was solely mistaken. A simple housewife and a butcher have proved to have unsurpassed wisdom in just being true to their own way of life, which enabled them to establish perfect bipolarity with the Absolute. The doctrine of *Karmayoga*, which finds a place in each of the eighteen chapters, introduced in (II. 39) as practical application of the first step in spiritual *Sādhanā*—know thyself—*Ātmānam Viddhi*—that one is the immortal soul divine and not body-senses-mind-intellect complex. Just as the Divine administration is for the peace and harmony of the universe, *Karmayogī* is expected to choose a role which is appropriate to his mental make up, aptitude and capacity and supremely satisfying (*Svadharmā*) and discharge the same keeping in mind the happiness and harmony of the society to which he belongs (*Lokasaṅgraha*)

with supreme enthusiasm (*Sve sve karmāṇi abhirataḥ*) and in the most religious spirit as worship of the Deity (*Svakarmaṇā tamabhyarcya*). This concept of *Lokasaṅgraha*, introduced in (VI. 29—32) is reiterated more forcibly and directly in (XVIII. 45—49). The *Karmayogī* should have no attachment to action, its agency and its fruits (XVIII. 49). He should consider whatever fruits that accrue to work done as Divine *Prasādam* and share the same with the society, which is consistent with the spirit of considering work as true worship of the Deity. The successful *Karmayogī* gains the purity of the mind, which paves the way for true knowledge (of God) and in due course leads to ultimate liberation. Kṛṣṇa's exhortation can be summed up as follows. 'Action certainly, but with understanding and subordination to divine will and purpose; action certainly, but without attachment to and anxiety about the fruits; action certainly, but as an offering to the Deity and with no egoistic feeling that I am the doer; Action certainly, but with faith that the Deity is the real doer through one's instrumentality to serve His design and purpose; action certainly but with supreme devotion and surrender as service to the Deity abiding in the society (*Lokasaṅgraha*)'. With these introductory observations, let us present how Kṛṣṇa's develops the glorious doctrine of *Karmayoga*, briefly without comments as Kṛṣṇa's observations are supremely pragmatic, simple and unequivocal, requiring no elaborate comments or explanations.

5. Kṛṣṇa stated very early in chapter three: "Man is part of the cosmos and the cosmos is ever in motion. So none can remain actionless even for a moment, for everyone is helplessly driven to action by nature-born modes—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*—"न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्। कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥" (III. 5). If action



is inevitable, the question arises—how then Duty (*Karma*) is to be performed to escape the inevitable *Karma* bondage. Kṛṣṇa's response to this question is that *Karma* should be performed as *Vikarma* (*Viśeṣa Karma*)—discharging one's *Svadharmā* in *Yajña* spirit (service to society abiding in God)—*Lokasamgraha*—dedicating the fruits of such work to God, which indeed is true worship of God. As a result of this the *Karmayogin* attains true knowledge of the self.

As Kṛṣṇa stated:

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।  
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥

(III. 9)

“Man is bound (*Karma* bondage) by actions other than those which are performed in the *Yajña* spirit (live and let live; give and gain). Therefore perform action (duty) free from attachment and for the good of the society (*Lokasamgraha*)”.

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि सन्न्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।  
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

(III. 30)

“Renouncing all actions in Me, your thoughts resting in the spirit soul, free from expectation, and egoism-selfishness, and with inner poise and serenity, engage in the battle of life”.

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।  
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

(*Gītā* IV. 38)

“In this world there is no purifier like knowledge (one is spirit soul divine and not body-mind-intellect complex). He who has attained perfection in *Karmayoga* (performing actions against the background of this knowledge) certainly gains realization of the self in due course”.

6. As a result of this, the *Karmayogin* ever abides in God whatever may be his personal way of living and gains liberation. As Kṛṣṇa stated:

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः ।  
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥

(VI. 31)

“Such a *Yogī*, who, having acquired the equanimity of vision, has attained integration with his own self as well as with his social environment and also with God and who fixed in oneness, worships Me abiding in all beings, lives in Me only, whatever be his way of life.”

Elaborating this observation, Kṛṣṇa relates *Svadharmā* to the very source of all manifestation and as a divine exhortation in the very pregnant expressions:

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।  
स्वकर्मनिरतः सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ।  
यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।  
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

(XVIII. 45-46)

“Man attains supreme perfection by loving devotion to his duty (*Svadharmā*)”. Explaining further this profound observation, Kṛṣṇa added: “He from whom all existences evolved, and by Whom all this is pervaded—by worshipping Him with his own duty (*Svadharmā*), man attains perfection”.

7. Hence Kṛṣṇa’s exhortation to continue *Karmayoga* even after attaining the highest realization, with the thundering assurance of attaining eternal immutable state of liberation.

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्ब्यपाश्रयः ।  
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि सन्न्यस्य मत्परः ।  
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥

(XVIII. 56-57)

“Carrying on his duties continually, taking refuge in Me, by My grace he reaches the eternal and indestructible abode (state). Mentally dedicating all deeds to Me, having Me as the highest goal, resorting to *Buddhiyoga*—meaning action in *Yajña* spirit (II. 49), you do ever fix your mind on Me.”

8. Let us recall what Kṛṣṇa stated very early in chapter three citing His own example as well as of the *Jñānīs*—self-realized souls such as King Janaka.

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।  
लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन्कर्तुमर्हसि ॥  
न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।  
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

(III. 20, 22)

“Only by discharging their duties without attachment to fruits *Rājārṣi* Janaka and other wise souls (Ikṣwāku, Manu, Ambarīṣa, etc.) attained supreme perfection. Even after such attainment, they continued to perform their duties (*Svadharmā*) with a view to guide mankind and for universal welfare (*Lokasaṅgraha*). There is nothing in the three worlds for Me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by Me; yet I am ceaselessly engaged in work (for the sake of social harmony)”.



## Prayer of a Child

—P. R. Akhileswaran

May I love God as I love myself,  
May I enjoy hearing His stories  
May I sing His Glories and revel  
And may I get good friends...to be Divine.

When I call Him when in need,  
May He respond then and there.  
When someone else wants His help.  
May He depute me to help them.

May mind be always pure,  
May I value the advice of the great.  
May I not speak ill of others,  
May my prayers clean dust within.

May I see God in everything,  
And love, birds and animals as His beings,  
Please bless me His smiling face,  
In order to spread joy in this world.



# Journey of a Soul after Death

—Swami Abhedananda

The ancient Hindus believed in a heaven which they called the *Brahmaloka* or the kingdom of Brahmā, the Creator and Father of the universe. Then gradually when the ethical ideas of right and wrong became very strong in the minds of the Hindus and when they understood the law of action and reaction, they believed that those who perform good and virtuous deeds in this life with the hope of getting reward, go to the realm of fathers (*Pitrloka*) and stay there as long as the results of good works will not be finished. When a departed individual has reaped fruits of all of his good and virtuous works which brought him to that realm, he is bound to come down to the earth and to be born again, according to his desires and action of his past birth. The spirit-world of the fathers was supposed to be in the moon. From the very ancient times the Hindus had a belief that the moon was the land of the dead, and it was the repository of all the departed souls, and all the germs of life came to this earth from the moon. It rained from the moon on this earth. The path, by which the departed souls go to the lunar region and enjoy there all the pleasures and happiness as a result of their own works and then return to the earth and are born again, was called the *Pitryāṇa* or the path of the forefathers.\* All mortals are bound to go by this path and return to this earth.

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\*संवत्सरो वै प्रजापतिस्तस्यायने दक्षिणं चोत्तरं च तद्ये ह वै तदिष्टापूर्ते कृतमित्युपासते ते चान्द्रमसमेव लोकमभिजयन्ते । त एव पुनरावर्तन्ते तस्मादेत ऋषयः प्रजाकामा दक्षिणं प्रतिपद्यन्ते । एष ह वै रयिर्यः पितृयाणः ॥

(*Praśnopaniṣad* I. 9)

But those who do good works not for getting reward, nor seeking anything on return and who live the life of purity and righteousness, will go to the *Brahmaloka*, the realm of Brahmā. There they will stay in all glory until the end of a cycle of evolution. In the meantime, if any one of them can attain the knowledge of the highest wisdom of oneness which is the absolute Reality, he will be free and will remain as one with the supreme Being all through eternity. Brahmā, the Creator; who is the king of this realm of the gods, will in the end of one cycle be free. Then in the beginning of another cycle, another Brahmā will arise from the infinite source of the absolute existence, intelligence and bliss. He will be the Creator or Projector of that cycle. This process will continue all the time. This Brahmā the Creator is like the Governor of a state. One fills the post for sometime, does his duty, then retires. Another, in the meantime becomes a candidate to be the Brahmā, and so he becomes. In this way, hundreds of Brahmās have come and gone. But those who after attaining this realm of the gods do not gain the highest wisdom of oneness, and come back at the beginning of the new cycle of this earth, and according to their desires and works they will be born again as the human beings of the highest order. Most righteous and virtuous will strive for the highest knowledge, or the realization of oneness. This is what they called *Devayāna* the path of the *Devas* or the bright ones. These two paths are described fully in the *Upaniṣads* in a metaphorical language, which is generally difficult to understand. They describe how the departed souls go from this earth to those regions, what stages they pass through, what experience they gather, how they return, and how they are born, and so forth. Those who go by *Pitryāna* or the path of the departed fathers, are such people

who are charitable, do good to others, and perform the virtuous deeds. When such people die, they go through smoke, then to night, then to dark fifteen days, from there to the six months when the sun moves south, from there to the world of the fathers, from the world of the fathers to moon.



*Samādhi* is the property of every human being—nay, every animal. From the lowest animal to the highest angel, some time or other, each one will have to come to that state and then, and then alone, will real religion begin for him. Until then we only struggle towards that stage. There is no difference now between us and those who have no religion, because we have no experience. What is concentration good for, save to bring us to this experience? Each one of the steps to attain *Samādhi* has been reasoned out, properly adjusted, scientifically organised, and when faithfully practised, will surely lead us to the desired end. Then will all sorrows cease, all miseries vanish; the seeds for actions will be burnt, and the soul will be free for ever.

—*Teachings of Swami Vivekananda*

When butter is produced by churning the curd, it should not be kept in the same vessel containing the butter milk, for then it will lose some of its sweetness and cohesion. It should be kept in pure water and in a different vessel. So after attaining some partial perfection in this world, if a man still continues to mix with the worldly and remains in the world, it is likely that he will be tainted; but he will remain pure if he lives out of it.

—*Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*

# Man and Society

—M. M. Varma

A seeker of Truth, or any thoughtful man for that matter, is confronted with the problem of social relationships. It is obvious that man cannot exist without social relationships. From birth to death he is dependent on social relationships. He cannot, therefore, run away from society or ignore the hard fact of social relationships.

At the same time, few thinking men would concede that man is merely a 'social animal'. What is it that distinguishes man from animal? The animal lives by instinct: on indulgence of the senses (*Bhoga*); whereas in man such exclusive conduct and motivation would mark him out as uncultured and even uncivilized—indeed as subhuman. There are certain codes of conduct for man, derived from higher values not composed of the five senses or of the chemical or other substances that go to make or feed the senses. The human being lives not by instinct alone, but regulates his conduct by certain moral beliefs and standards.

Where are these moral values, on which are based our codes of conduct and behaviour, derived from? Surely, moral codes based on social expediency—a mere 'live and let live' policy—would not be a mark of culture, or even of a good civilization. Certain minimum moral standards may be indispensable for keeping anti-social impulses and elements in check—and in that sense may be considered as products of social exigencies. But these would only be the measure of a 'rational animal'! But to men in whom is awakened the least intelligence (*Viveka*)—the main trait



of man, as distinguished from the animal—moral virtues are obviously derived from higher values: intangible and yet emerging from some deeper content of Man than his senses, or even intellect.

The seeker of Truth, or the man of thought, therefore, naturally cannot be content with somehow ‘passing his life’ amidst social relationships as best as possible—i. e., with as little conflict or frustration as possible. He cannot help probing deeper below the surface of social relationships.

This has given rise to two main currents of thought among thinking men all over the world—a school of thought specially (though not exclusively) in the East, which, more or less, tends to turn its back on society and seeks one’s salvation through a comparatively solitary and contemplative life; and the other seeking to reform society because it believes that the individual is the product of social environment. The former would point out that man’s physical life on earth being transitory and ephemeral, he can afford to discard it and that his highest adventure consists in seeking the super-physical, the Eternal....The latter confessing ignorance of the super-physical, pleads for a ‘full’ life—in the best sense of the word—while it has to be lived.

There would appear to be some element of truth in both the schools of thoughts. The element of truth in votaries of a ‘full’ life in the world is obvious. Man is born in society, lives in society and dies while in society. He cannot exist without social relationships of some sort. Therefore, it is his duty, while he lives, to live to the full and to tap for himself and his fellow men all the happiness he can from life, even if it be transitory and ephemeral. What else can he do?

It is hard to deny an element of truth in the other

man too, who pries into the hidden potentialities of man, the hidden soul content of man, which he contends is the only eternal verity.....and therefore, the only thing worth living for and dying for. Life on earth, in the ultimate analysis, is a passing show, he says—a bubble. Like the sword of Democles, Death hangs on each man's head and levels the proudest man in the dust! Some men have almost demonstrated the fact of 'life beyond'—a life beyond even the hard fact and challenge of Death—Saints and Sages, Seers and Mystics of all ages and climes whom mankind respects and reveres and to whom we owe much in human culture.

Para-Psychology is beginning to dissolve the 'rational' man and to peep into the supramental regions of man's personality.

Modern Physics too stands puzzled at the ultimate truth of Matter itself: "a Universe composed of energy materializing under certain tendencies and assuming the illusory form of solid matter."

All said and done, however, the hard fact of man having to live in society remains. To shirk life and its obligations because life is transitory would be senseless and cowardly. Such as life is, it is our allotted role. What we have to ponder over is whether man's inevitable life in society may not have a higher purpose and meaning than we casually perceive on its surface.

True, Gautama Buddha was moved to detachment by sight of a single dead body.....etc. and his Enlightenment led him to proclaim *Nirvāṇa* as the ultimate salvation for man. Jesus Christ proclaimed the 'Kingdom of Heaven' as man's true abode. Other seers have also proclaimed (in varying accents) the super-physical and super-mental goal of man.

And yet—and this is important—they did not preach flying from life. They preached love and right action. The Mystics proclaimed that man is a ray of the Divine and that his present life is a pilgrimage to this source of his being: for which man's sojourn on earth is in the nature of an apprenticeship. And love and right action, and quest for Truth—which are their legacy—account for man's heritage of the noble codes of conduct and culture.

The *Bhagavadgītā* itself is largely a sermon on Action! But it propounds disinterested, selfless action—not action motivated by baser desires.

Thus, man's life in the world would seem to have two aspects: (i) a 'full' life of action in social relationships which he cannot and must not shirk; and (ii) an irrepressible, unceasing psychological process of 'self-discovery'—releasing richer and fresh values of life illuminating men's role in society. A progressive harmony between the twofold process would strike the balance of the success of his mission.

The former is his field of action: the world. At the same time, man dare not shut out the transcendent source of his consciousness, in the constant unfoldment of which consists his evolution till he attains perfect soul-consciousness—which is the purpose and goal of his earthly life: which and this is my 'thesis'—is a school for the unfoldment and flowering of his soul. The evolution of his body and mind is only 'preparatory' to the evolution of his soul—the former drop off when their purpose is achieved and the soul flowers into its heritage of pure consciousness etc: *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*.

A school postulates a 'full' life for all its students, in all its 'classes'. Only, it prepares its students for a fuller post-school life. The problems set in a school are never 'made easy'. The scholars are trained to grapple with the

problems. Even so, man's environment is the tool of his *Sādhanā* for higher life in the Divine, not his 'life'. Man's life in the world of phenomena is in the nature of an apprenticeship, even as a student's life in a school. A school inasmuch as it consists of all types and grades of students, can never be perfect in its units except in the sense that it may furnish the best education for its budding alumni. Similarly, the best organized society can only furnish congenial environment to its citizens for growth, for unfoldment, for progress.

*Dharma* (whatever names be given to it and with varying emphasis or annotations) is the Captain of the school. It makes for the bridge between man's earthly life and his soul-realization—the Captain as well as the law of the school of life. The 'Reign of Law' we speak of in politics is a shadow of the ultimate. Reign of *Dharma* in cosmic evolution.

*Dharma* provides a 'full life' to all—far from denying life. In *Dharma* lies the law of growth, of harmony, of progress, of peace. Each individual (each student of this school) has to discover his *Swadharma*; which would reveal to him his place in society: his rights and duties, his functions and obligations, the purpose and significance of all social relationships, individual as well as corporate.

*Dharma*, of course, rules out the concept of man being only a 'social animal' or even a 'rational animal'. But it chalks out a 'full life' to man at all stages and in all phases. It advocates action; but right action, right speech and right thought. What else has a man to do in society?

*Dharma*, in brief, comprises love of Truth, fellow-feeling and self-discipline. Love of Truth results in renunciation of all untruth (*Asat*); fellow-feeling results in selfless service. Self-discipline is a base of *Yoga* that commutes

man's fissiparous tendencies and thoughts into single-minded aspiration for Reality, which, even as 'steam,' produces power and light.

Finally, when man has finished his 'schooling' under the captainship of *Dharma*—played out his part on the stage of the world—and developed the qualities of the soul; will the captain of *Dharma* sound his bugle to *Mokṣa* (salvation, liberation, fulfilment: whatever name we give it).....but not before that. We cannot implant a flower on the plant; the plant itself is a flower in the making. Even so, *Dharma* is *Mokṣa* in the making?

Now, let us look at the other side of the picture. A so-called 'full life'—action, action, action without higher aim and with the channel of man's transcendent source blocked—leads to what?

It accounts for the paradox that while through the aid of Science man has drawn closer together, he lacks Love and tolerance; while Science has made humanity more prosperous, we derive poor happiness from that prosperity because of our ever-increasing greed—for Science can eliminate poverty but not greed; while humanity has conquered high peaks of knowledge, it is hardly much richer in wisdom.

Social organisations (including Government and all its ever-mounting heap of 'legislations') can organize relief of poverty but not of greed; provide knowledge but not wisdom; provide comforts and even luxuries but never the fulfilment of every desire of man, or eradicate desire; provide medical relief for body's maladies but not prevent Death or eradicate the fear of Death—and so on!

The individual, therefore, has to solve his ultimate problem himself—society can only help by providing congenial environment.

And only as 'soul-conscious' desireless individuals emerge from the school of the world and as 'Old Boys' serve as 'Light houses' for society, giving the right direction, will the ship of humanity sail smoothly.

Otherwise, for ten problems solved a hundred more problems will arise; for ten boils dressed up, a hundred more boils will spring up while the blood-stream is impure.

And at any rate, the 'soul potential' of man shall never allow humanity to be turned into a well-fed, well-clothed and well-housed zoo.



The greatest  
of all knowledge  
is that which makes  
all knowledge possible.  
May you become blessed with  
that supreme experience  
beyond all things  
perceived by the senses,  
thought of by the mind,  
Inferred by the intellect  
or felt in the deepest depths  
of your feelingful heart.  
Beyond all this is something  
Indescribable, Imponderable,  
Which makes all these things possible—  
The awareness and consciousness  
which says that I Am.

—Swami Chidananda

## Read and Digest

Don't be lazy. Lazy is forsaken by man and God.

\* \* \*

True religion is to free us not to bind us. The object of religion is to make us govern and rule, not to make slaves of us.

\* \* \*

The true Self is the source of all pleasure, joy, happiness and Bliss. Realize that and know that and be happy.

\* \* \*

Life yourself, raise yourself above all low, petty desires. Become one with Divinity.

\* \* \*

You are that sublime Divinity, that True Reality know that, think that, feel that, and rise above all sorrow and trouble.

\* \* \*

“Opinions ought to be weighed, they ought not to be counted”. Majority is no proof of truth.

\* \* \*

Ignorance only is sin. Ignorance is the cause of wretchedness. So long as you are ignorant, you are miserable.

\* \* \*

Pain and sufferings are blessings of the world; if there were no pain or suffering, there would be no progress.



# Perception of Advaita

—R. T. Nathan

The principle of *Advaita* is that the individual Self (*Jivātmā*) is not different from the universal Self (*Paramātmā*). *Jagatguru Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya* resurrected our waning *Sanātana Dharma* in its pristine glory and re-established the *Advaita* cult. According to him this cosmic world has only an apparent existence which is only a manifestation of the Supreme Brahma who is *Sat* (External Truth), *Cit* (Universal Consciousness) and *Ānanda* (Bliss) and it is not real. The apparition is due to the play of *Māyā*. The Supreme Brahma is only real and eternal which activates all animate beings and inanimate objects in this world. The Vedic lore announces in its great statement (*Mahā Vākyas*) viz. *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi* (I-*Jivātmā*-am-Brahma) *Tattvamasi* (Brahma is you—*Jivatmā*), *Ayaṁ Ātmā Brahma* (This *Jīva* is Brahma) etc. *Jivātmā* in individuals is the universal *Paramātmā*. This identity has to be realized by the *Jīva* in its birth as a human being which is a rare opportunity to realize this truth and get benefited by the ultimate merger with the *Paramātmā*. The Brahman can be realized by knowing our inner being by delinking us from the body and mind distracting them from the natural pull towards the outer world temptations and desires and not yielding to them. This process involves hearing (*Śravaṇam*), contemplation (*Mananam*) and meditation (*Nididhyāsana*) to understand the import of the Vedic scriptures. The exercise has to be continuous and keen on attaining the perfect knowledge (*Jñānam*) of the *Advaita* concept with



the blessings of God and *Guru*. The Supreme Self may not be visible to the physical eye but it has to be realized by intuition of a higher order and is an insight to be experienced. Falling to find this unity among the many diversities is due to ignorance (*Ajñānam*).

Śrī Ādi Śaṅkara has written many philosophical treatise highlighting the *Advaita* principle and one such book is *Advaitānubhūti*. Therein he explains the concept in detail with illustrations. The following is an attempt to provide a precis of the same.

The *Jīvātmā* is *Paramātmā* (Supreme Consciousness), who is Absolute Truth, Eternal Bliss, Permanent and Immutable Spirit. *Paramātmā* manifested in material body is *Jīvātmā*. *Paramātmā* is always *Jīvātmā* and *Jīvātmā* is always *Paramātmā*. The feeling of dualism between them is due to ignorance. Even when the body is lost, *Ātmā* remains. A statue of God made of copper is taken as God and seen different from copper. When the godly power imputed in the statue is removed, copper remains. So also *Paramātmā* is not affected by the *Jīvātmā* even if it is seen as *Jīvātmā*. For a man with defective eyesight, moon appears as two while a man with perfect eyesight sees it as one only. Brahma appears as two due to illusion (*Māyā*). The space within a pot and outside is the same space, which is proved when the pot is broken. Just as the space in various pots and outside is the same, the *Jīvas* in all bodies are the same *Paramātmā*. On the loss of bodies, *Ātmā* is not lost as space is not lost with the breakage of pots.

Water gets solidified with the association of clouds. When the ice melts water remains. So also water bubble appearing distinctly from water, becomes water when the bubble bursts. Brahma appears as part of this world due

to *Māyā*. When the illusion is overcome Brahma is realized.

A snake does not bother about its slough it has released. *Ātmā* is not concerned about the body it has left from. The body/mind equipment gets lively with the association of *Ātmā*, but such perishable bodies should not be taken as *Ātmā*. An iron ball put in fire becomes red hot. The heating agency cannot be burnt by any other agency. This establishes that *Ātmā* (Self) is not *Anātmā* (Non Self) and *Anātmā* is not *Ātmā*. *Ātmā* is real while *Anātmā* is unreal.

A garland is made of different kinds of flowers tied to a thread. When the flowers wither and fall from the garland the thread remains intact. So also *Ātmā* is not affected by the variation of the bodies abided by it and on their loss. The rays of sun passing through the gaps of the coir/tape of the cot are seen as separate but they are rays of the same sun. Any defect in the web does not affect the source of the rays. The defects of bodies do not affect the same Brahma abiding in all of them.

The different coloured objects juxta-posed with a crystal causes the crystal to appear to have these colours, while crystal has no colour at all. Sky appears blue while sky has no colour and the apparent blue complexion is only due to the confusion created by the sky's vast expanse. *Ātmā* is not affected by the aspirations of the three sheathed bodies. Only an ignorant man sees the bodies as *Ātmā* and he has to take many more births till he attains the perfect knowledge and realize the self lustrous Brahma (*Jñānam*). A man with headache feels the world around him as revolving, while it is still and steady; stable and firm.

Sun casts its reflection in water in different places. When the water gets disturbed, the clarity of sun's reflections is lost. But sun is not affected. The properties

of water like cold, etc., also do not affect the sun. When water in the vessel evaporates the reflection of the sun is lost. But the sun is not affected. *Ātmā* appears extinct when the body/mind intellect complex ceases to function or during deep sleep. But *Ātmā* remains! The sun lightens the cloud obstructing the sun and shines itself. Self shining *Ātmā* lightens the body complex affected by illusion, while itself not getting affected by the body's delusion.

The mistaken notion of rope as snake is due to the presence of rope. So also is the case of mistake of a post as thief. When the mistake is overcome, rope or post remains. So also *Ātmā* is realized when the illusion is overcome. The reflected face in the mirror is not the real face. The real face remains even if the reflection is removed. *Ātmā* remains the same even if its resemblance in the mind is removed.

Whatever experienced during the dream appeared as real to the mind in that state. Whatever experienced during waking state appear as real to the body/mind entity. During sleep *Ātmā* remains as a mute witness with no function of the body/mind aspect. In other states body/ mind is kindled by the *Ātmā* only. The pain and pleasure experienced during dream state do not affect the body/mind during the waking state. The realized knower does not sport any liking for the pain and pleasure experienced in the waking state realizing it as *Māyā*. For him, there is no *Samsāra*.

One who does not mistake the rope as snake has no fear of snake. The body, sense-organs, life force, mind, intellect and ego are all of the unsteady material outer world subject to feelings/emotions emanating out of ignorance and they are not *Ātmā*. But their functioning is because of *Ātmā* only.

Water mixed with milk appears as milk only. Only swan is capable of removing water therefrom. Only a saint or realized soul can distinguish between *Anātmā* and *Ātmā*. He who has attained the knowledge of Brahman by realization of Brahman becomes Brahman. *Prajñānam Brahma* Knowledge (of Atman) is Brahma.



The principal aim of human life is the realisation of God, or the attainment of *Mukti*. Man alone has the prerogative or the ability to attain this highest object of life—none else, not animals, not even Gods, or heavenly beings, can have it. It is denied to animals, because they are devoid of the faculty of discriminating between the Real and the unreal. Attainment of liberation is impossible for Gods, because they are too occupied with the continuous enjoyment of the intense pleasure and splendours of heaven. What time is left for them for the practice of discrimination and renunciation? For this same reason, it is also difficult for those persons who own vast riches and much property to attain *Mukti*. Again, for those who are extremely poor and destitute and are ever tormented and perplexed, gnawed by hunger and driven by want, it is difficult to gain spirituality. Realisation of God is far easier for men of moderate means, because they stand between those two extremes. It is seen in the history of the world that nearly all the great personalities who have left an indelible impress on religion, society, polity and other fields of human activity or realms of thought, by the power of their genius, have been born of middle-class parents of moderate means—neither rich nor poor.

—Swami Virajananda

## The Gospel of Love

The wild tale of pathos shall ever remain writ large on the Temple of Love. She lived on tears and she slept on tears : this shall be the language of love in which Mīrā will go down to posterity. This child of the Lord, nursed in the best of the worldly circumstances, feeling disgusted with the obstructions placed on her meeting freely her divine Beloved, directed her course to those very regions where His kingdom lay, where the mad ravings of the world could not reach her and where the darts of Satan fell scotched like so many pieces of feather. She had started in search of a place where she could lie undisturbed in the thoughts of her Beloved. She was a child that did not look on Him with the dwarfed vision of the world's artist. While freedom was her creed and liberty her watchword, the slaves of forms, formalities and dogmas could not understand her. Her bondage lay in her love for her Beloved, and the subtle chains of love that she put on herself were not visible to many eyes. She started on her way to Brindaban. Her journey over, she found herself ushered into the region of love, affection and beauty, where she could with freedom continue her search for the Beloved.

At Brindaban this messenger from the Lord has preached the cult of *Bhakti*. Beautiful are the dramas she has enacted on this world's stage and lovely are the paintings she has painted on the canvas of life, charming is the music of the poems she has given to posterity, steeped in mystic lore and perfect in their rhythm and symphony.

The music of her songs thrills the heart. It is in concord with the soul. Peace dawns as if by the help of some miraculous power. To the dying and the broken heart they apply the balsam of life and give unction to the soul.

In the ruthless sea of life there are many whirlpools, through which these devotees have steered clear, unscathed and pointed the Way. But it is not a lesson that can be learnt by rote. It is the fortunate one alone that is afforded the opportunity to learn. By her life Mīrā showed there is no reason for an aspirant to get disheartened when she, descended from in a noble and conservative family, could row her boat safely through the troubled waters and conventions of the world, unchilled and unruffled by adverse winds, regardless of the sarcasms of the world and in the teeth of mighty persecutions. Her path was the simplest and yet the most difficult which can be followed without going into the forests or practising penances. It can be acquired in a moment—for it comes as a gift and none can claim it as of right. An aspirant has only to find out one who knows the mystery, one who is dear to the Lord; for he is the best interceder who can speak for us to Him. It was this search for the Master (*Guru*) that made her start on her errand and she was fortunate when she found her Teacher and through him the Way Home. But, before she met Raidāsa, she had to undergo painful ordeals, both external and internal in her noble cause—love.

Who understands what is love? It is inexplicable. It can be described only by those who have had an experience of it themselves. Its signs are various and varied. It is known by its effects. A blank face and a vacant eye may be an index of the burning heart within. The attributes of Love are the same everywhere. It is a perilous position in which the lover place himself, but one which he will

not willingly give up at any cost. It is a grief in which one feels pleasure. When he recites the tale of separation, it is with a view to consoling himself. Although the sword of *Māyā* hangs overhead, yet he is unhurt. And where is sleep in love ! Sleep is a condition of the tired mind. None knows when the Beloved might arrive. The vigil is long continued and the effort sustained. The eyes know no fatigue. The lover looks a maniac, the result of continued wakefulness and waiting. *Mīrā* describes this condition thus—

मैं बिरहण बैरी जागूँ जगत सब सोवे री आली ॥  
 बिरहण बैठी रंग महलमें मोतियनकी लड़ पोवे ।  
 एक बिरहण हम ऐसी देखी अँसुवन माला पोवे ॥ १ ॥  
 तारा गिन-गिन रैन बिहानी सुखकी घड़ी कब आवे ।  
 मीराँके प्रभु गिरधर नागर मिलके बिछुड़ न जावे ॥ २ ॥

“O friend, all the world sleeps; I the separated one,  
 sit awake.

There is one like me who sitting in her palace of  
 pleasure strings together a necklace of pearl;  
 Of yet another I know who weaves a garland of tears.  
 The whole night I pass counting the stars; when shall  
 the hour of joy arrive?

The Lord of *Mīrā* is Giradhara Nāgara: it is by meeting  
 Him that from anguish she shall be relieved.”

दरस बिन दूखन लागे नैन ।  
 जबतें तुम बिछुरे पिय प्यारे कबहुँ न पायो चैन ॥  
 सब्द सुनत मेरी छतियाँ काँपै, मीठे लागें बैन ।  
 एक टकटकी पंथ निहारूँ भई छमासी रैन ॥ १ ॥  
 बिरह बिथा कासों कहूँ सजनी बह गई करवत नैन ।  
 मीराँके प्रभु कब हो मिलोगे दुखमेटन सुखदैन ॥ २ ॥

"Mine eyes ache for a sight of Thee;  
 Since Thou hast left me, my Lord, never have I found  
 rest.  
 My bosom heaves at every sound, Thine voice sounds  
 so sweet.  
 I have fixed my sight on Thy path and await Thy return;  
 the night seems a half-year.  
 O, to whom shall I recite the tale of the pangs of  
 separation!  
 My friend, I feel as if the saw is being applied to my  
 eyes.  
 When wilt Thou meet me, O Lord of Mīrā, who art  
 the bestower of joy and allayer of pain."

सखी, मेरी नींद नसानी हो।

पियको पंथ निहारत सिगरी रैन बिहानी हो ॥

सब सखियन मिल सीख दई, मैं एक न मानी हो।

बिन देखे कल नहीं परत, जिय ऐसी ठानी हो ॥ १ ॥

अंग छीन व्याकुल भई, मुख पिय पिय बानी हो।

अंतर बेदन बिरहकी, वह पीर न जानी हो ॥ २ ॥

ज्यों चातक घनको रटै, मछरी जिमि पानी हो।

मीराँ व्याकुल बिरहनी, सुधबुध बिसरानी हो ॥ ३ ॥

"Friend, I have lost my sleep.

The whole night I have passed in waiting for the  
 Beloved.

My comrades offered me their counsel, but to none did  
 my heart pay any heed;

Without a sight of Thee my heart is restless, so stubborn  
 is my heart.

My body is emaciated, I am without peace, and the  
 name of The Dear One is on my lips.

The pain of separation burns my heart, yet he cares  
 not for it.



Like the *Cātaka* crying out for the clouds, like the fish  
 pining for the water,  
 Mīrā lies restless in her separation from  
 her Beloved—so lost to herself is she.”

Such is the state of the poor troubled soul at every moment. None likes to hear even the tale of these people. Nobody has time to listen to their effusions of emotions, unless one is similarly affected. When the restless soul wanders thus, troubled by the love current, and knows no rest, the Lord Himself comes to them, listens to their tale, rubs off their tears and clasps them to His bosom. But the panting and thirst should come first, and then alone the divine support will follow. When no peace comes, the lover wanders weary and thirsty. His condition is then like that of the fish out of water.

A victim of the shafts of love, Mīrā hungry and thirsty passed days and nights in silence, waiting and crying for the Beloved:

“How could I live without Hari, O mother,  
 For the Dear One I have gone mad; it is like the weaver  
 eating out the wood.

Medicines and herbs do not work on me, it appears  
 all madness to me.”

When this climax was reached, she found her Lord and in the following lines expressed her condition:

माई, मैं तो लियो रमैयो मोल ।  
 कोई कहै छौना, कोई कहै चवडै,  
 लियो है बजंताँ ढोल ॥  
 कोई कहै कालो, कोई कहै गोरो,  
 लियो है मैं आँख्याँ खोल ।  
 कोई कहै हलको, कोई कहै भारी,

लियो है तराजू तोल ॥ १ ॥  
 तनका गहना मैं सब कुछ दीनाँ,  
 दियो है बाजूबंद खोल।  
 मीराँके प्रभु गिरधर नागर,  
 पूरब जनमको है कौल ॥ २ ॥

“Rāma, Have I bought, O mother.

Some say it is in secret; some say it is by stealth.

No, I have taken it to the beating of drums.

Some say He is black, some call Him fair: with open  
 eyes I have taken Him.

Some say He is light; and He is heavy, say some.

All the ornaments of my body have I given up even  
 to the bracelet.

Mīrā’s Lord is Giradhara, so it was ordained in the  
 previous existence.”

Here is the secret of all religions. This is the only secret path through which one can approach Him. It is not outward show nor the following of conventional rules that can bring about this condition. The path is through love. Every moment of separation is a pang of death to the lovers. The only words that come on their lips are, “Lord I am Thine and Thou art mine.” Their lives are differently led. The decorum of society does not bind them. They live away from all forms and shows. The paraphernalia of priestcraft, the ceremonies in the temples and the formal prayers at the churches do not appeal to them. To all appearances they do not sit in prayers, yet not a moment passes when they are not praying to their Lord. They sing with the *Sūfi*:

“Father, I know not how to pray, nor can I conform  
 to the ceremonies.

I know only this much: to bow before Thee when  
 Thou blessest me with Thine vision.”

Similar sentiments are embodied in what Mīrā said:  
“How I yearn for a vision of Thee : when shall I see  
Thine face?

My perplexed heart knows no peace : meet thou soon,  
O friend.

Mīrā’s Lord is Giradhara Nāgara : she is burning in  
separation from Him.”

The condition of the devotees is the same at all times and in all climes. The agonies of the soul know no subsiding. Days and nights pass in tortures. Sleep leaves the eyes and no craving is left for anything. Love for god is something different from that for human beings. The lover’s passion is thirst in its intensity. It is unique in its variety. Day and night, the flame of love burns in the hearts of the fortunate few. It smoulders in the adepts, but the spark never dies out. It seems to gain energy from within. The solace comes in the flow of tears, and the creeper of love is nourished by the eyes. This is how the thirst is quenched. Their life is a queer paradox. They are supreme artists and very bad caricaturists. They paint things in their nudity. They belong to the Children’s School of Art all innocence and purity. They lose heart at the least obstruction. At the minutest apprehension of the removal of divine touch they run to the Lord and say, “Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?” They alone realize the value of the ethereal touch. They do not live. They linger in the world. They lead a life of supreme indifference. The knowledge of the world is not their creed and there is no fear in throwing off the shackles of forms and ceremonies. There is a rank carelessness about their actions. This is not immodesty in them, but complete surrender to the Lord. They know of only one union—that with the Lord. It is sacrilegious for them to enthrone in their heart any one

else than Giradhara or even to think of others. Such being the devotion, they meet the Beloved with open arms. The ties of flesh stand broken. So it was with Mīrā. With the Lord alone she recognized a relationship and in Him alone she found a friend. When she saw the Lord, she cast her looks in modesty, in humble submission, and realized how long she had strayed away from Him. Her suppressed feelings gushed forth to do homage to Him. She fell at His feet, but He raised Her to His bosom. She felt peace in the arms of Her Lord. With the light of fidelity and singleness of purpose clear from her eyes, she started singing to Him—

मैं अपने सैयाँ संग साँची।

अब काहेकी लाज सजनी, परगट हो नाची ॥

दिवस भूख नहिं चैन होय कबहूँ, नींद निसि नासी।

बेध वारको पार हो गयो, ग्यान गुन गाँसी ॥ १ ॥

कुल कुटुंब सब ही आन बैठे, जैसे मधुमासी।

दासी मीरा लाल गिरधर, मिटी जग हाँसी ॥ २ ॥

“I am true to my Lord;

Why should I feel abashed, O comrade, now that I  
have danced in public.

All day I feel no hunger, nor find any rest; at night  
my sleep is gone.

The secret arrow of love has pierced my heart and  
appeared to the other side.

My family and kin have swarmed round me like bees.  
Mīrā is the servant of Giradhara, the ridicule of the  
world has lost its sting for her.”

At another place she expresses this state of fearlessness in the following lines:

श्रीगिरधर आगे नाचूँगी।

नाच नाच रघुनाथ रिझाऊँ, प्रेमी जनको जाचूँगी।

प्रेत प्रीतके बाँध घूँघरू, सुरतकी कछनी काछूँगी ॥ १ ॥

लोक-लाज, कुलकी मरजादा, यामें एक न राखूँगी।

पियाके पलंगा जा पौढूँगी, मीराँ हरि रँग राचूँगी ॥ २ ॥

“In the presence of Giradhara will I dance,

Him I shall please by dancing, and His lovers I shall  
solicit;

Love and affection shall be the trinkets of my feet and  
Remembrance shall be my dancing robe.

The world's regard and the family dignity I shall all  
discard,

And I shall go and sleep on the bed of the Beloved.  
Mīrā shall dye herself in the colour of her Hari.”

This is how Mīrā lived. All her attention was directed to pleasing her Lord. She lived in love. This everlasting spring of love sprung in her after years of silent waiting and devotion for the Lord. It therefore knew no drying up. Ceaselessly it gushed out. This was renunciation, the absolute denial of everything. No place was left for an alien thought in the mind. The only craving was never to part from Him; and how sweetly she cherished the new treasure is apparent from what she says on the subject:

बसो मेरे नैननमें नन्दलाल।

मोहनी मूरत, साँवरी सूरत, नैनाँ बने बिसाल।

अधर सुधारस मुरली राजत, उर बैजंती माल ॥ १ ॥

छुद्रघंटिका कटितट सोभित, नूपुर सब्द रसाल।

मीराँ प्रभु संतन सुखदाई भगतबछल गोपाल ॥ २ ॥

“O dwell in mine eyes Thou darling of Nanda,  
Enchanting is Thine figure and dusky Thine complexion  
and big Thine eyes,  
And so beautiful looks the flute on the lips, its  
note sweet like nectar,  
On Thine bosom is the Vaijayantī wreath:  
There is a belt of little bells round  
Thine waist, and the trinkets in Thine feet  
sound sweet.

Thou art the giver of joys to the saints,  
O Lord of Mīrā and the protector of Thine devotees.”

What else could Mīrā’s eyes see but the Lord. She gave herself up completely to Him. This was renunciation, the suppression of all activities and desires. This is the only channel by which men can reach Him. Renunciation is the necessary outcome of love, and love does not consist in bargaining and bartering. It does not ask for any gift or comfort in lieu thereof.

From the time the devotee sells himself off to the Lord, he ceases to have anything to do with himself. All his property, wealth and pride, show and power, which he foolishly thought his, he offers to the Lord. He gives up all he has—and after all what are these possessions worth, except Love. He goes to the temple, and through the veil, he sees rays of glory shooting forth and says, “Father, I have come to Thee, helpless and infirm, but with hopes fixed in Thee. In utter humility I lay myself before Thee. Do whatever Thou wishest.” Volition is dead in me. I have ceased to be my old self. Nothing is mine. Everything belongs to Thee. I come, stand and knock at Thy door. I ask for alms. Turn away this beggar if Thou so wishest: bestow on him Thine blessings if Thou so wishest. Kick me if that is Thine wish. I am a sinner and

have not the strength left in me to repent. Master, I beseech Thee, while the shadows lengthen and when the hour comes to die, take me out of the swamps of the dirt of world. I have nothing with which to purchase this boon. The love that I have, is not the arrogant love of the world, the result of pride. It is not that which has strayed so many of Thine fair children from the rightpath and drawn them away from Thee. It is not the love for the flesh and blood, the love for the beautiful eyes or the pretty face. It is the love which is the outcome of humility. When all my companions, wealth, power and fame forsook me and their betrayal stood personified before me, I sought the protection of Thine feet; and in the silence of night, when everybody slept I tossed restlessly on my bed, drenching it with tears, crying in all bitterness and asking within myself. Is this love?

जो मैं ऐसा जानती, प्रेम किये दुःख होय।

नगर ढिंढोरा पीटती, प्रेम न कीजै कोय॥

“If I knew, to love was to invite pain, I would have proclaimed by beat of drum, let none love.”

And as my body has been reduced a skeleton and the reddish glow of my cheeks has turned pale, the falling breath has entreated Death to grant but one boon—the sight of the Lord, the glorious vision, before life passed away:

“O black vultures, eat away everything, leave nothing  
of this flesh;

Only leave these eyes, for they still hope to see  
the Lord.

No, black vultures, eat away these eyes as well,  
Only make an offering of them to Lord, before you  
devour them.”

And this last hope has kept life enlivened. My hope has been in the distant meeting, as in solitude I lay musing in divine thoughts. In that pensive mood your benevolence has been my only hope. This has been the only softening element, mellowed by the fragrant memories of the passing years, when not a tear of anger has been shed at Thy seeming indifference; not a syllable has been heard in complaint, not a gesture of revolt displayed. The hope of the distant meeting has given me as much food as the separation itself. The painful watching of the stars in the sky, the restless tossing on the bed have for their end the gleam of the glorious future. The prop has been the divine embrace. I have tried to suppress the feelings, but the body has betrayed me. The eyes have told the tale in the language of tears. They have betrayed the path I was following in silence and in that I have found myself helpless. I can boast of no wealth or power or strength. I have no offering to make, yet I have started to have You. When I saw You, I said I want to purchase You. But for what price? I gave myself up to you—body and soul. What was this giving and what was this article purchased, few will know. Suffice You sold Yourself to me and I purchased You. It was a bargain. I became Yourself and You were idolized in me—a mighty comedy and a majestic melting away into infinity.

Mīrā lost herself in the Lord as the colour loses itself in the water.

