

Unto Bliss.

The Scriptures say, there was a time when man would spurn at worldly enjoyments and aspire for divine bliss. "Know thyself, realize God"—was the watchword of his life, the sole ideal of his existence. From the very birth of a child, nay, even before that, the ideal was inscribed on his mind and all through his life he was trained and educated for that very purpose. The four *Āśramas* or orders of *Brahmacharya* (student life of strict discipline and celibacy), *Garhasthya* (the household life), *Vanaprastha* (ascetic life) and *Sannyasa* (life of renunciation) as well as the four castes—Brahmans (the priestly class), Kṣatriyas (the warrior class), Vaiśyas (the trading class) and Sūdras (the labouring class) were instituted to enable each member of the community to realize this supreme ideal in life; and a strict adherence to the rules laid down for each caste and order was the surest way to the gradual unfolding of the Self and its ultimate approach to God. The sole aim of education was to point out the means of attaining the highest bliss.

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But the old order changed and changed for the worse. The ideal to be achieved lost its pristine position and man began to cling to lower and lower ideals till at length the enjoyment of worldly pleasures became the aim of man's life. One who moves in a smaller circle looks to his own personal comforts, whereas he who moves in a bigger circle seeks the welfare of his country. But even this latter ideal has got behind it a desire for self-gratification. Now, what does this happiness of our dream consist in? Wealth, honour, power, authority and domination—these should be acquired by whatever means it may be possible. Success should be

achieved and our ambitions realized, no matter if we have to tell lies for this, resort to underhand dealings, practise fraud and injure others' interests. The wonder of all wonders is that man, himself a mortal creature, seeks to lead a happy and peaceful life by robbing and killing his own fellow-men?

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But there is no help. Schools and colleges, universities and monasteries, temples and churches, all teach the same lesson—amass wealth, gain supremacy, obtain power; worldly happiness is the only happiness and worldly power is the supreme goal of life. That life which is devoid of these is no life at all. The result of this change of outlook is obvious. Everywhere there is a regular war going on for rights and privileges. Man's life has become miserable. Some are hankering after new rights whereas others are mad after safeguarding what rights they have already got. There is hardly any Raidas Chamar (Cobbler) or Sadan Kasai (Butcher)—mad in love of God and pining to see Him; but every one is anxious to enter the temples; and even those who have no faith in the God supposed to reside in the temple are bent upon taking everybody without distinction inside the temple. The less said of it the better! The very life of man has become external. We have sold ourselves for the sake of things external, for the enjoyment of sense-objects. We fight among ourselves as crows and kites over a piece of meat.

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There was a time when people would undergo penances and austerities for realizing God. But to-day we strain every nerve to heap up luxuries and objects of sense-gratification. There was a time when man would surrender his all at the feet of the Lord, but to-day

we worship Mammon instead. There was a time when man would forget all about his body in order to be one with the Cosmic Consciousness, but to-day even those of us who are treading the path of God-realization devote themselves heart and soul to their body rather than merge themselves in God-consciousness. Even the so-called saints and sages, ascetics and hermits are ready to sacrifice their religion and life at the altar of worldly joys and luxuries. Nay, this alone has become the true definition of religion to-day. And what is the result of this Mammon-worship, this hedonism? The manifestation of demoniac qualities in man, predominance of hatred, malice and vindictiveness, deep-rooted discontent and a life of abject misery in the guise of happiness.

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The inner condition of countries which are rich in worldly power and puissance and abound in sensual enjoyments, and which are advanced and prosperous in the eyes of the world, is a living example of this woful state of things. We have to look upon the condition of those countries with an Indian eye, with an eye of God-vision and perfect knowledge. We have lost this vision, we have missed the Indian point of view. A thick veil has covered our eyes and hence it is that our very mind has become perverted. We are to-day enamoured of everything foreign, however ugly it may be, and even our heart has become westernised. That is the reason why we see morality in corruption, virtues in sin, patriotism in self-aggrandisement, Dharma in Adharma, and progress in degeneration, and have devoted ourselves solely to the propagation of this irreligiosity and soullessness.

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To seek happiness where it is not is just like wandering in a mirage in search of water. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has called this world transient and joyless,

full of pain and non-eternal. He has asked us to have no love for worldly objects, realizing that the world is full of pain and the evil of 'birth, death, old age and sickness'. It is only after we have given up all love for worldly objects that we can act as an instrument in the hands of the Lord, who is the stage-manager of the drama of this universe, and act our allotted part according to His injunctions. Then only it can be said that we are practising 'Karmayoga' as defined in the *Gita*. To-day we are out to ruin others and be ruined ourselves, thinking that it is the mandate of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa; but we are not prepared to shake off worldly temptations and resort to dispassion in right earnest. And the inevitable result thereof is that in place of 'Niṣkāma Karmayoga' we have fallen back upon evil actions—sinful actions. Actions are bound to be sinful so long as they are performed with a view to enjoying worldly happiness, and under the impulse of attachment and repulsion, and specially when they are accompanied by falsehood, fraud and violence. Sin invariably results in suffering and this is what we are having in plenty. How sad and strange it is that we have become slaves of our carnal desires and licentious, although swearing by *Gita*.

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All that we see to-day has mostly nothing to do with wisdom ('Jñāna') 'Niṣkāma Karmayoga' (disinterested action) or 'Bhakti' (Devotion). Attachment to the body, which is the greatest hindrance in self-realization, is growing day by day. All the different sects and parties are being organized simply with the idea of self-aggrandisement, which is the main obstacle in the practice of 'Niṣkāma Karmayoga'. Unconditional surrender at the feet of Śrī Bhagavān and implicit faith in and dependence on Him is the principal requisite of Devotion, and there is woeful lack of the same to-day. A truly wise man, a true Karmayogī and a true Bhakta will never

have recourse to mendacity, fraud, deceit, trickery, injustice and violence.

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One who seeks to tread the path of self-realization will have to relinquish the identification of the soul with the body. The idea of I-ness and My-ness will have to be eschewed by him and it will have to be remembered that the soul is quite as different from the body as one body from another. When such a spiritual height is once attained and identity of the self with the body given up, there is no possibility of sins being committed by the man any more. Similarly a work which is done in a disinterested spirit as a dedication to the Lord can never be associated with sins, devoid as it is of selfishness. Lastly, one who follows the path of Devotion surrenders himself completely to the will of God, so that he is rid of all evil intentions. It is nothing else than self-delusion to dream of Jñāna, Nişkāma Karma and Bhakti so long as immoral acts and evil practices persist, and so long as we continue to resort to practices forbidden by the Sāstras in order to achieve success in our worldly projects.

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This infatuation must go; but how is that possible? The thick veil of ignorance and lust has eclipsed our wisdom and we are out to delude ourselves more and more. What is worse, the darkness of ignorance now goes by the name of enlightenment. Like an owl we see light in darkness and darkness in light, as our very vision has become vitiated. And hence it is that the gratification of desires has become the very ideal of our life. We are held in bondage by a hundred ties of expectations, and are busy in amassing wealth by unlawful means for the sake of sensual enjoyments and by having recourse to lust and anger. Enmeshed in the web of delusion, intoxicated by pride, degenerated by avarice and possessed by vanity we have taken refuge in egoism, arrogance, insolence, lust and wrath and

have begun to hate the Lord residing in all beings. What else can the demoniacal properties bring in their train than the tortures of hell and the lowest depths in the scale of evolution.

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But how are we to mend this state of affairs? The only unfailing remedy is the worship of the Lord. Those who have in them a grain of faith in the Lord should pray to Him in a most devout and sincere way that He in His infinite mercy may bless others also with similar faith. Let them try to resuscitate faith in God which is gradually waning, by their irreproachable conduct and true devotion. Let them water the withering plant of piety and reverence for all that is sacred with the tears of true surrender. Let us abide by the teachings of sages as embodied in the scriptures. Let us no more take our saints and seers to be deluded fools. Let our life be a living store of austerities and abstinence and let us rely on the mercy of the Lord. Let us serve Him with unwavering faith and supreme reverence and mutter His sweet and sacred names.

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We should carefully consider the fact that the pleasures of the world are ephemeral and transitory, momentary like the flash of lightning. This body is like a jar of clay which will easily give way at the slightest stroke. Hence we should withdraw our mind from worldly enjoyment and dedicate it to God. Let us do our rightful duties for the sake of God. Let us not forget God for the sake of the world. Never mind, if we have to sacrifice the world at the altar of God; but let not the Lord be sacrificed at the altar of the world. Once we are thus resolved, it will no longer be necessary for us to renounce the world; for the world is after all nothing but a manifestation of the Lord Himself. Hari is the world, the world is Hari—

‘ हरिरेव जगज्जगदेव हरिः ’

“Siva”

Unto Bliss.

Never allow your mind, speech or body to do a thing which may poison the air all about you; nor should you live in an atmosphere instinct with pernicious influences which may produce an adverse effect on your mind, speech and body. Whatever a man does with his body, whatever he speaks with his tongue and whatever he thinks with his mind, leaves its impression on the atmosphere: it sends its influence through every particle of the air within a specific area and affects favourably or unfavourably, as the case may be, every object existing in that atmosphere.

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Every inch of space round the earth is filled with air. A living organism is also animated and inspired by air in the form of breath. It is air that we inhale and exhale in every act of respiration. The air which we inhale takes along with it all the influences that are present in the atmosphere at that particular moment. Similarly, the air which we exhale brings with it all the influences and impressions which we carry in our mind and diffuse them in the atmosphere all around us.

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The influences which we inhale during respiration affect us mildly or strongly according as they are less or more powerful. If the mind which receives those impressions is already full of impressions of an opposite nature and more powerful than the

newcomers, the latter do not create any abiding effect on the mind. They impinge on it and reverberate, leaving their vestige on the mind, however slight and insignificant it may appear. If, however, such influences continue to impinge on the mind, they will in course of time overwhelm or kill the opposite type of influences already existing therein and take complete possession of it.

If the influences coming from outside meet with like impressions in the mind, their effect is speedy and appreciable. For instance, if any one has a lurking desire in his mind for woman or gold, and if influences tending to promote such desire find their way into his mind through the air that he inhales, they will be easily imbibed and make themselves palpably felt.

The influences that one communicates through the air that he exhales are diffused in the air up to a certain distance which is determined by the degree of their potency. Those whose will-power is considerably developed can send their mental influences up to long distances and can influence the minds of a number of persons having a will weaker than their own. Those who have a weak will cannot send their thoughts to long distances, nor can they influence the minds of a large number of persons coming in contact with them. It should be remembered in this connection that

the will-power of those alone is highly developed whose ideas are pure or Sattvic in nature.

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Vicious ideas, too, exert a considerable influence on those who come in contact with them. For it is with such ideas that the present-day atmosphere is mostly surcharged, and the minds of people are also filled with ideas of a similar nature. As a rule, a recipient absorbs elements of a sympathetic or favourable nature quickly and more completely.

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Those who harbour evil ideas and emotions in their minds, such as those of melancholy, grief, violence, malice, enmity, pride, greed, hypocrisy, anger, lust, cowardice, impiety, jealousy, fear, etc. harm not only themselves but communicate those ideas and emotions through the air they exhale and thereby poison the whole atmosphere round about them, thus affecting more or less all those who live in that area. In this way the external as well as internal atmosphere of that place gradually gets so poisoned that a newcomer with a guileless and innocent mind coming there must yield to the pernicious influences thereof. This fact is amply illustrated in certain particular places and spheres.

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The atmosphere of a place which is mostly inhabited by real Sadhus, even though they do not give discourses with their lips or even if they do not grant interviews to any one, is generally pure and suffused with noble ideas and influences. The

atmosphere of a place which is inhabited by burglars, dacoits, lechers, swindlers, debauchees and irascible persons, on the other hand, even if they masquerade as virtuous persons and preach noble truths, is nevertheless vicious. Any person with his eyes wide open can easily detect the difference. That is why the mere presence or contiguity of such saints is considered highly beneficial as live in utter seclusion and observe complete silence but whose mind is filled with godly ideas only. The godly ideas emanating from the minds of such persons are diffused in the atmosphere all round and spread virtue, morality and love of God everywhere, and even the lowliest and meanest of creatures are blessed by the light shed by them.

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Air possesses the properties of touch and sound. Having no other attribute of its own, it seizes the infinitesimal particles of objects with which it comes in contact and diffuses them here and there. It takes fragrance from the flowers and stench from filth and spreads them all round. Similarly, it picks a sweet melody or a jarring note and broadcasts them up to long distances. This broadcasting tendency of air is not confined to these external things and properties alone: it touches even the ideas subsisting in our minds and, seizing them, brings them out and diffuses them. It takes the infinitesimal particles of good and bad ideas inside and outside our bodies. This process is constantly going on in the air. That is why the atmosphere of a locality inhabited by saints is regarded as sacred, while that

of an abode of wicked persons is regarded as impure. Places of pilgrimage were inhabited by such saints and holy men; hence it is that they were, and still continue to be, regarded as sacred and sanctifying.

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In Tulasidas' *Rāmacharitamānasa* it is mentioned that evil propensities like lust, anger, etc. could not enter the precincts of the hermitage of Śrī Kākabhuṣuṇḍi (the Crow Sage) within a radius of eight miles. Even in the present times we have seen and heard of cases where sinful proclivities have either been curbed or have not at all appeared in the presence of certain saints. When even good and bad ideas existing in the mind can influence the atmosphere, it is much easier for our vocal and bodily activities to affect the air likewise. Hence it is no wonder that the atmosphere was so sacred round about the hermitage of Śrī Kākabhuṣuṇḍi, where, besides the mind of the sage being always merged in the Lord, there were regular discourses on the glories of Śrī Hari.

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Just as one should be careful not to harbour any evil thought in one's mind, even so he should take care not to utter an evil word with his tongue. One should never speak indecent, harmful, false, useless, unpalatable, insulting, angry, haughty, profane, cowardly and proud words. Words of this nature contaminate the whole atmosphere of the place where they are uttered. Not only do they have an adverse effect on the mind of him to whom they are addressed, but they affect all those who are present within hear-

ing of those words. Just as heroic words infuse valour into the hearts of the audience, similarly words of cowardice uttered by a cowardly person has a dispiriting effect on the hearts of the hearers. The marvellous effect produced by musical instruments of war and the spirited compositions of bards and rhapsodists and the utterances of saints and holy men, arousing dispassion, is obvious.

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Likewise you should not do anything with your body or with any sense-organ, which may foul the air. In short, keep your mind filled with pure ideas and noble thoughts; always speak truthful, wholesome, sweet and good words with your tongue; and make it a point to perform noble actions with your body. The good of the world as well as your own lies in this. Similarly, you should always live in the vicinity of those who have got such a pure mind, speech and body and associate with them. Neither you should create a vicious atmosphere nor should you live in such an atmosphere.

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One who harbours feelings of animosity creates enemies in the world; one who cherishes love for others adds to the number of his lovers and friends; one who has his mind fixed on objects of sense-enjoyment keeps himself engrossed in worldly pleasures; one whose mind is full of valour creates an atmosphere of heroism; one who is a coward fills the air with cowardice; one who is a devotee produces a line of devotees; one who is an unbeliever propagates unbelief; one who is trembling with fear spreads fear all round;

one who is fearless makes others intrepid; one who is happy and contented makes others happy; one who is plunged day and night in sorrow, grief and misery communicates the same to others; and he who loves God enhances the strength of lovers of God. Hence banish all thoughts of enjoyment from your mind and fill your heart with love of God alone. If you find yourself unable to do so, always cherish pure and sublime ideas in your mind and develop them. In this way you will be able to make the whole atmosphere round about you Sattvic and pure. By gradually nurturing pure ideas you will be able to strengthen your will-power; then you will be able to send your noble thoughts deep into the hearts of others up to long distances and purify them. You will thereby not only make yourself happy but also make a large part of the globe happy without giving any discourses or sermons.

The following are some of the noble qualities and virtues which you are required to cultivate:—

harmlessness, truth, purity, compassion, love, charity, forgiveness, self-control, self-sacrifice, dispassion, absence of pride, love of solitude, tenderness of heart, straightforwardness, humility, spirit of service, tolerance, respect for other faiths and creeds, absence of hatred, equanimity, contentment, appreciation of others' merits, absence of cavilling, benevolence, absence of attachment and egoism, aversion to honour and praise, an eye to public good and dependence on God, etc., etc.

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Go on developing such like ideas and virtues of mind, speech and body constantly with vigilance and perseverance. In this way you will not only be able to cross the ocean of *Māyā* but also help countless millions of souls to do so.

“Siva”



An Humble Cry.

Seized I am by a pitiless and invincible foe,
And hopes for protection see no light.
Sufferings and tortures stand in a row,
Efforts and energies being helpless to fight.

The long anguish has the peace of mind disturbed,
And so, with a tattered heart I pray unto Thee;
With these scentless flowers at Thy holy feet offered
I pray, O God ! make me all care-free.

—B. R. Sharma.