

THE ESSENCE OF THE GITA

- ◇ The soul is immortal. It does not take birth. Nor does it die. Nobody can kill you. Then why feel worried? or fear anybody?
- ◇ Whatever happened in the past was for the good. Whatever is happening now is also for the good. Whatever will happen in the future will be for the good too. Hence do no repent over the past. Do not worry for the future just think of the present progress.
- ◇ What have you lost for which you weep? What is there that you brought with you but have now lost? What is there that you produced but has now perished ? You did not bring anything to this world. Whatever you have, you had it only here. Whatever you have given, you have given it only here. Whatever you have taken, it is from Him, the Almighty. Whatever you rendered, it was rendered into Him. Empty-handed you came and empty-handed you will go. Whatever is yours today was somebody else's yesterday and will be somebody else's tomorrow. You take delight in the illusion that it belongs to you. Alas, this illusory happiness is at the root of all your suffering.
- ◇ Change is the law of the universe. What you deem as death is, in reality, life. A moment can turn you into a millionaire: another can reduce you to a pauper. Free you-remind from such thoughts as 'this is mine this yours', 'this is ,this petty' and the shackles that hold you captive will "collapse. Then everything will belong to you, and you to everyone.
- ◇ Neither you belong to the body nobody to you. The body is constituted by the five elements: earth, water, air, fire and vacuum. After death, it disintegrate and return to these elements. The soul, however, is eternal and unchangeable. What are 'you the soul or the body?'
- ◇ Surrender yourself to the will of Cod. He is the best anchor. He who knows about this anchor gets liberated from fear, anxiety and sorrow for ever. Dedicate all your actions to Cod. It will enable you to experience the happiness of a truly liberated one.

—Lord Krishna

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KNOW THYSELF

MAHATMA DEVESH BHIKSHU



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Introduction

The question ‘Who am I?’ is as old as the human race on this earth and the answer given is equally as old, while exhorting us all, in just two words “Know Thyself”. Our Vedic seers have taken all pains to unravel this mystery and a number of Upanishadas are the explicit proof, which clearly tell us in dialogue form about the answer. The present book deals with the same subject.

The reading of this book will instil confidence in you, give you inspiration and courage and above all it is going to open a new vista in your life, about which you might not have even dreamt of.

However, reading and knowing only will not go a long way, unless the method outlined therein, is put to practice, so that such a knowledge may be shared by self-experience. Even a little effort you do, does not go waste, because the path of righteousness is straight and simple and makes the life more beautiful, happy and glorious, as Bhagwan Krishna has said in Gita :—

Even a little act of righteousness, saves man from grave dangers.

With Blessings,

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1

What is Self ?

The above question can also be asked in another way—Who am I? This question has been disturbing the mind of man from times immemorial and those who keenly sought its solution, were successful in unravelling this riddle. A common man does not bother about it, because he remains busy and entangled in the business of life and the world keeps him entwined all the while, leaving no spare time to ponder over this problem. And if there be any, he tries to engage himself in such useless trifles, which matter little and are of no consequence. It is most ironical that in the maze of the glitter of this world, we do not know, who we are. Most of the people waste all their life-time in trying to know and understand the likings and dislikings, attitudes and behaviour of other people, but they ignore their own-selves. So, we can say that how true is the axiomatic saying that there is shadow under the lamp. In trying to understand other and the world around us, we forget ourselves.

This is clear from the example of a story which I read when I was a child. Some travellers, numbering ten, were travelling together and whilst proceeding on their journey, a river came in their way. Now, there being no bridge or boat nearby, they decided to cross it, all together hand in hand. They knew full well that they are ten and, therefore, after crossing the river, thought it would be better to check that they all have crossed safely and none of them was missing. So, a count began—One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and nine. Lo ! one of them was not there; he must

have drowned. Now, another man did the counting and the result was the same. They were perplexed as to what has happened. At this minute, some other man came there and seeing their predicament, he offered to count them and lo, the number was correct; they were ten in number all right. The reason was that when they were counting, the one who did the counting forgot to count his own self.

The story is illustrative of the fact that we often forget about Self. The reason is quite simple; as the lamp of clay shadows the light underneath, similarly our body overshadows our soul and generally we make the mistake, of mixing them together, thus, the poor soul, being invisible remains unperceived and the body, being so gross and visible all the while, is only counted and taken care of. The fact is that it is the soul, who is the master and this body is just its house, a living abode. That is why when the soul leaves the body, it becomes useless, without any sign of life, inanimate and begins to putrefy, thus others are constrained to dispose it of by consigning it to flames. We call this action as the cremation of the body, which is dead. Hence, it is the soul which is so pure and divine in nature that so long as it remains in the body, the body remains full of life and vigour and none can dare touch it. Thus, we are not bodies, but souls.

The second reason is that in so far as our body is concerned there is always some fear lurking in our minds, because it is now and it may not be a minute after, but soul is imperishable and has to be ever after. There is thus no fear about the soul, as it has to live always within or without the body. Bhagwan Krishna has clearly stated in Bhagwad Gita that the soul, viz., Atman, is such a mysterious substance that it cannot be destroyed by any means:-

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोयति मारुतः ॥

This soul cannot be pierced by any weapon, cannot be destroyed by fire, cannot be dissolved by water and cannot

be dried by air. It means that this Atman is indestructible and the body is like its clothes which the soul discards like old and worn ones:-

वाससि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय, नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीणन्विन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

As a man wears new clothes, after discarding old ones, similarly the Atman gets new bodies, after discarding old ones.

The third reason of forgetting self is that the body is mortal and the soul is immortal. The body may go soon; hence we may enjoy as much as we can. None knows whether another opportunity will come our way or not. This is the cause of the difference in ideology between East and West. In East, we believe that this life is but a link of the chain; there was life for us before and there will be life hereafter. But, according to the Western philosophy, they do not believe in this ideology and, therefore, do their best to enjoy all in this very life; while we do not think so, because according to the Vedas, the Atman is immortal and imperishable. Such a belief also keeps us on the right side of life, what we may call morality because our next birth will entirely depend on our deeds of this life.

The fourth reason is that man generally forgets about what he has and ever hankers after what he has not. He feels and misses the absence. For example, if a tooth is broken, the tongue will reach that empty space again and again. The Atman is ever present; hence we never feel its absence. A poor man is always wanting wealth, but if there is plenty of wealth, then who cares! Similarly, when we are healthy, never any idea occurs about the body; but when sick, the thought always hovers over the body, more particularly of the part which is injured. The Atman is devoid of all such ailments, hence no heed of it. And then, who will take heed, but Atman himself! In the lap of clay, there's oil, wick and flame; similarly this body is made of five earthly elements, in which the breathing system works as oil, the various organs and mind do the work of wick, and the flame is the

Atman itself. Thus, we see that for a layman, *Self is the combination of earthly and divine substance.*

This subject has been discussed in Upanishadas also, more so it forms the very basis of Kathopanishad, where Nachiketa asks Yatmacharya about the fate of the soul. He says that he would like to know as to *what happens to the Atman, when a person dies*; whether it perishes along with the body or not. To this question, Yamacharya replied, not simply stating about the immortality of the soul, but explaining in great details how the Atman travels from body to body and when it comes in the specie of human being, how it can also attain salvation, if it works in the right direction steadfastly. Kathopanishad states:-

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मेनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥

Oh Nachiketa ! Try to understand this body through a parable. The Atman is the master-owner of this body, which is like a chariot ; consider the intellect as your coachman or driver and the mind as the reins.

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्व्रियांते गुचरान् ।
आत्मेन्द्रिय मनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥

The sense organs are like horses and the various things of enjoyment are their food. In this way, the soul along with mind and organs is called as the enjoyer by the learned people. In other words, it means that these horses, in the shape of organs, are driven by the intellect shape driver through the reins of mind; in this manner this soul travels through its journey in the chariot shaped as body.

Continuing the thread, Yamacharya says that those who are ignorant, their mind and sense-organs are not under their control and thus they fall in a pit of lust and passion, after the enjoyment of sexual and other sensual pleasures. But on the other hand, *those who understand the purpose of life*, are ever alert and like trained horses, *they control them with their mind and intellect and thus are able to reach their destination in the end.* Now, what is this destination,

the knowledge of which was considered absolutely essential for a human-being. *It was the knowledge of the creation* (viz Atman who makes use of this material world) and *lastly that of Param-Atman* (viz. God, almighty who has created this cosmos and the vast universe for the sake of Man). This is knowledge par excellence and every human-soul hankers to know as much about it as possible. On attaining this knowledge, a man understands perfectly well that the purpose of life is not just 'to eat, drink and be merry' and ultimately die like a moth or 'a mosquito, vanishing into nothingness in the oblivion of time.

The tragedy is that the majority of the human race is influenced by the philosophy of western ideology who confuse the identity of soul with that of mind or intellect. Only a few, who tried to understand from *Vedic scriptures and Upanishadas*, could appreciate the views expounded therein. The name of Dara Shikoh who learnt Sanskrit only for the sake of studying Upanishadas himself is worth mentioning. He got some Upanishadas translated into the Persian language also. He has written that Upanishadas are the depthless store-house of divine knowledge; their study *gives immense peace and solace to the soul and divine bliss, indescribable*. Similarly, Max Mueller in his book- "India-what can it teach us" says:-

"If the aim to know the reality of life is this that Man may not be afraid of death and be prepared to welcome it, then in my opinion there is no better way than to study the Upanishada Vedanta philosophy. I am greatly indebted to Upanishadas, as these were largely responsible for bringing reform in my life. These books of Upanishadas have and will continue to occupy a respectable place for the spiritual progress in the religious literature of the world."

Similarly, Paul-Dueson has called the Upanishadas as the invaluable result of Man's intellect. He further states that the people of India have such a treasure of self-knowledge and peace of the soul that none in the world possesses. Mr.

Hume in his book ‘Dogmas of Buddhism’ writes-”I have read the books of many learned people, including those of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, but did not come across such a deep knowledge as I found in Upanishadas and got so much consolation as I could not get anywhere else.”

The idea was not to delve so much on the spiritual side, but as a matter of fact, how can you segregate the two-*viz.*, the material and the spiritual sides of life, in case you are interested to know the ‘self’. Moreover, to lead a *life truly, honestly, straightforward and upright with morality and sincerity is nothing but material-cum-spiritual*. There can be no water-tight compartments, as in order to be a noble and virtuous human being, one must seek the shelter of spirituality, so that he may not err by indulging in materialism too far and too much!

2

Self Introspection

It means a sight of our own interior, an act of directly observing ‘the processes of one’s own mind or you may call it self-examination. Some people may think that such an examination has no meaning, because the doer or performer is examining himself and in such a way what useful purpose can be served after all! This is a very superficial idea and may be applicable in the case of those people who care less for their own well-being. ‘But this book is being written for those who are really eager to know about ‘self’ and whatever draw-backs, failings or weaknesses they are able to find in themselves, they would do their best to remove them. Of course, generally people do not like such an idea and they only try to see faults in others, while the same faults in’ their own person may never be visible to their own eye. It is about such people that a Sanskrit poet has said :-’

खलः सर्पि मात्राणि परछिद्राणि पश्यति ।
आत्मनि बिल्व मात्राणि पश्यन्नपि न पश्यति ॥

The wicked and mischievous persons always point out at the little faults of others; but they do not see their own great faults even. This indeed is a great drawback in man that he tries to conceal his own defects and at the same time magnifies even a tiny defect in others. How can such persons achieve perfection or even goodness in their own behaviour, conduct and character! They are after only maligning others in the eyes of the people, but the public cannot be fooled all the while. The best way is to be

‘selfish’ in this respect, in that we ought to try to set things right in so far as we are concerned and let others take care of themselves. Mr. Carlyle says, “If I reform myself, I will have the satisfaction that there will be one scoundrel less in the world”. So, self-reform should be our motto, if we want that our lives may be purposeful.

Besides, self-examination is going to be more efficacious through probing, as it has many advantages. The first and foremost is that if I am really honest and a very hard examiner, then I should be able to detect my failings more fully, than anybody else. As it may be possible that I may have certain weaknesses, which I keep hidden from all else, always wearing a mask of gentlemanliness. But in my heart of hearts, I know that I am prone to such and such frailty, which if remains unperceived, may get over me. And this fact is only known to me or to God Almighty, who is omniscient. Secondly, if that very fault is pointed out by someone else, I may take umbrage and feel lighted or insulted. Thus, we see that it is only through self-examination that ‘one can know his failings and in this way there are chances of this being over-come sooner or later. Hence, the best way is to lay bare your own self, examine every aspect thoroughly, not giving any room or scope for doubt and having detected the same make, a concerted effort to do away the same as soon as possible.

It is quite easy to say this, but to put it into practice requires a great deal of effort and time. Because once a person gets into some bad habit, it becomes very difficult for him to shake it off. Their attraction is so magnetic that one who is accustomed to such vices, goes towards them as if by magic and if someone who is his well-wisher counsels against it, he would just ignore the same; this has been clearly stated by a Sanskrit poet as under:-

नरः कुट्यसनासक्ता मात्रापित्रा परेण वा ।
उपद्रिटं हित मार्गं पश्यन्पि न पश्यति ॥

A man who is in the grip of some bad habit does not listen to the advice of his elders-parents or anybody else. Because he does not see any harm, though he suffers from it. Such a person becomes blind to his faults and ignores the sagely advice given to him. But if somehow such a person begins to think for himself and ponders over the loss which he is incurring in terms of not only money and time, but the precious moments of his life, then it is certain that he would wake up to this reality and once determined to root out this evil, there is no reason why he would not be able to surmount it.

In this connection, it would be better if I recount the conversation, as narrated by Mahrishi Vyasji Maharaj, between Dhritrashtra and Mahatma Vidur. Once Maharaja Dhritrashtra asked Vidur as to what is the best way to remove all the evil propensities, which keep us tied? Mahatma Vidur replied that the first means to eradicate these evils is to do self introspection daily for a few minutes, as it has been stated in our scriptures:-

प्रत्यहं प्रत्यवेक्षेत नरश्चरितमात्मनः ।
किन्तु मे पशुभिस्तुल्यं किन्तु सत्पुत्रैरिति ॥

A man should examine his character and conduct daily to see whether I am hanging myself into an animal or beast or I am following the path as shown by people of merit and virtue ! This is most essential and for this very reason, *we have to study the verses known as 'Samkalpa Sukta' every day*, so that our mind may always be of good resolves. The rhyme with which all the Mantras end is-

तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पमस्तु ।

Let this mind of mine be of good resolves. The *second means for achieving the above-mentioned aim is to lead each and every moment of life very carefully*, because a second gone, is gone for ever; it cannot be brought back twice Mahrishi Vyas says:-

उत्थाय उत्थाय बोद्धन्त्यं किमद्य सुकृतं मया ।
आयुः खण्डमादाय रविरस्तं गमियति ॥

Oh Man! keeping awake carefully at every moment, just think that how many good deeds have I done today, because he setting sun indicates that a day of your life will be gone Shortly. Consider the value of time in your human-life. Man's real wealth is not gold, silver, money, houses, bungalows, *etc*, but time which he is able to utilise properly. If you have been able to utilise every minute of your time in good, noble and virtuous deeds, then you have indeed made your life successful. But in case, this is not so and you have just wasted the lifetime whiling away in trifles, then there is nothing but repentance for you. Hence, value time and be careful in putting each and every minute to some good cause, if you want that the world should value you. The value of time is well estimated at a time when our near and dear ones are on the death-bed. They request and implore the doctor to give him some medicine, so that the patient could talk to them for a few minutes. For this they are prepared to pay any amount, but can any doctor give the patient or the dying person even a second's life ! It is in nobody's power, except God; hence do not waste this invaluable life in useless trifles.

Mahatma Vidur then quoted the following Mantra from Rig Veda:-

यथाहान्यनु पूर्व भवन्ति, यथ ऋतव ऋतुभिर्यन्ति साधु ।
यथा न पुर्वमपरो जहाल्लो, धातरार्याणि कल्पश्रैाम् ॥

As day follows day, season follows season; this goes on respective order regularly; similarly Oh living man! this order of life goes on. Do not waste even a second uselessly, make it purposeful and successful.

In Atharva Veda, there is a verse, which exhorts all human beings *not to act like any of the animals or birds, as mentioned therein:-*

उलूकयातुं शुरलूकयातुं जहि श्वयातुमुत कोक यातुम् ।
सुवर्णयातुमुत गर्भ्रयातुं, ह्रदेव प्रमृण रक्ष इन्द्र ॥

Oh Atman! Leave the habits of owl, wolf, dog, bird, Garud and vulture and crush these evil vices between two stones through austerity and penance. An owl moves and

sees and loves darkness; hence it has been advised that a man should shun ignorance (darkness) and worship knowledge, because all the sins and bad deeds are mostly the result of folly and stupidity. The second animal described in the verse is wolf, who is a very jealous animal by nature and always full of anger. Hence, here we have been told not to be jealous, but love each other. The third is dog, who is considered to be an enemy of his own tribe. A dog always barks at another dog and cannot tolerate it. Dog is also a flatterer; it will lie flat at his master's feet and will lick his hands, wagging his tail all the while, supplicating with his eyes towards his master at all times. The fourth in number is that of a bird, who is considered to be very lustful and passionate. This is considered to be the greatest evil in mankind and family-life is going to disaster these days because of this base vice. It has been truly said about such a person-

कामातुराणां न भयं न लज्जा ।

Those who are in the grip of this passion, have no fear or shame. This is quite evident these days, when we witness the so-called love-marriages, which generally end up in divorce. Cinemas and films on sex are responsible for influencing the minds of younger generation. The fifth is that of Garud, who is considered to be very haughty and proud; here we have been warned to be ever humble, and polite and never be proud of little achievements. Last mentioned is that of vulture, who is greedy by nature and we have been told not to be miserly and greedy in our day-to-day life, but generous and broad hearted.

Bhagwan Krishna has also said in Bhagwad Gita:

त्रिविधिं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।

कामः क्रोधः तथा लोभः तस्मात् एतं त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥

There are three doors to Hell-Cupid (lust or passion), Anger and greed; these will lead the soul to destruction and perdition; therefore, give these up all three in life. In our scriptures also, it has been stated :-

नास्ति काम समो वह्निः नास्ति क्रोध समो रिपुः ।
नास्ति लोभ समो व्याधिर्नास्ति ज्ञानात्परं सुखम् ॥

There is no fire like passion or lust; there is no enemy like anger; there is no disease like greed. And there is no happiness or pleasure like knowledge and learning. Because if you are really learned, then all the major vices will be under your control: they can have little effect on your behaviour and conduct.

As I have said earlier on, it is *only the self-awakening which can goad and inspire a person to lead an honest and truthful life*, because otherwise it is generally seen that a man becomes enemy of those who may care to warn him. Considering the subject from all angles, it is best for one who is eager to reform his own self to do self-introspection, without fail. This will be a regular check on his own mentality. In this connection, I would like to quote a verse in the end:-

यथा हि निपुणः सम्यक् परदोषा क्षणं प्रति ।
तथाचेन्निपुणः स्वप्न को न मुच्येत् बन्धनात् ॥

As a man is clever in finding out the faults and foibles of others at every moment, if he becomes so clever in detecting his own faults and weaknesses; then he is certain to be a perfect and ideal man. ‘Undoubtedly, we are so keen to know about others’ frailties and failings that we go to any extent to find them out, but when it comes to self, we become soft and weak and forgiving. Such a course is wrought with disaster to self-improvement and we should shun this habit with all our might. A Hindi poet has exhorted us:-

बुरा जो देखन मैं चला, बुरा न दीखा कोय ।
जो दिल खोजो आपना, मुझसे बुरा न कोय ॥

When I stirred out to seek a bad person, I could not find any; but when I saw within me, I found to my dismay that there is none so bad as I am.

3

Self Awakening

The above title gives a jolt, as somebody may dare to question and say that about three-fourth of the time, mostly people are awake and only about one-fourth of the time, it is spent in sleep. That such sleep being essential, then how can you say that we are not awake. This version appears to be quite true, but my intent is fraught with deeper meaning and I want you to grasp the idea that majority of the people spend their lives unconsciously or sub-consciously, without realising the very purpose of human life and thus they go away from this world unheard and unsung. Our Vedic seers have been telling us about this aspect or I may say have warned us time and again not to waste this life, moving as if asleep all the while. When a person is under the influence of some intoxicant or liquor, we say he is unconscious, but most of the people and even those who brand the intoxicated one unconscious, are themselves not free from this blame, because Man is prone to be under the influence of ego. So, the sooner a man wakes up to this reality, to better it would be for him and his future.

There is a very popular song, which generally people sing in the morning time:

उठ जाग मुसाफिर भोर भई, अब रैन कहा जो सोवत है ।
जो सोवत है सो खोवत है, जो जागत है वो पावत है ॥

Oh Traveller! Get up, the day has dawned, there is no night now any more. Those who sleep, lose the golden opportunity and those who are wide awake, get all what they want. This may appear symbolic, but the fact is that

man has to travel the journey of life and if he goes on sleeping, how can he reach his destination I 'Besides, he will also, be missing much, which he may have to regret later on. The tragedy of modern age is this that man is too much engrossed in the worldly affairs and materialism; he has little or no time for thinking about his own-self. Because according to his manifest and pragmatic view, the world is just to enjoy, thereby reducing the status of human-being to that of an animal or beast !

Under the deadly influence of the sensual desires, Man moves around and thus in the words of a great philosopher, he is no more free than a captive in prison or a parrot in a cage. He has surrendered his all before these evil vices and, thus leads a prisoner's life, thinking that he is enjoying the world, but at what cost ! This he realises too late, when all his energy and youthfulness is gone. Moreover, at this late stage, it becomes very difficult for him to change for the better and thus his fate is sealed. For such a pass, he himself is to be blamed and none else, though most of the people find an easy excuse of circumstances. All the same, it makes little difference, because what matters is some perceptible change and if it is not coming about, then it is all useless prattle. In Vedas there are many verses which exhort Man to awakened and vigilant at all times. Even when we kindle fire in a Yajna, the following Mantra is spoken:-

उद्बुधस्वाग्ने प्रतिजागृहि त्वसितापूर्ते स सृजेथामयं च ।
अस्मिन्सधस्ये अध्युत्तरस्मिन् विश्वे देवा यजमानश्च सीदत ॥ यजु० ॥

Oh leader ! arise thou and be wakeful in all thy activities. May thou and these people of thine work in unison for the fulfillment of the desires and the accomplishment of the works of public utility. May you all, all the elite and the worker 'of philanthropy, be established in the householder's stage the most important of all the stages of life.

Vedas give the message of remaining awake:'

स्व गृहे जागृह्यप्रयुचछन् । अथर्व० ॥

Oh Man ! Never be idle and lazy in your house, more so about your duties and responsibilities towards the society and to your country. Not only this, even women have been specifically told to be awake and careful in a similar manner:-

अस्मिन् गृहे ग्राहपत्याय जागृहि । अथर्व० ॥

Oh Woman! In this house be wakeful and vigilant towards the household duties, because the house lady has to perform various deeds, in carrying out her duties in the upkeep of all the members of the family.

The Brahmana group has similarly been exhorted to remain wakeful not only themselves, but keep others also alert and awakened, as it is the Brahmana group of the society which directs all else to act in such a way as to be beneficial to all, without exception:-

उत्तिष्ठ ब्रह्मणस्पते देवान् यज्ञेन बोधय ।

आयुः प्राणं प्रजां पशून् कीर्ति यज्ञमानं च वर्धय ॥ अथर्व० ॥

Oh Brahman ! Get up and be attentive and cautious; make all those eager to garner the divine knowledge, advance further by your sagely advice and company and in this way guide them so that their life span, bodily strength, children, animals and fame increase day by day. In this manner, the whole society was kept busy in their respective fields of activities, doing their duties and discharging their roles in the various spheres of the country, thereby not only making their own lives successful, but making the nation strong and progressive in all respects.

The rulers and administrators also announce and pro claim:-

वयं राट्रे जामृत्याम् पुरोहिताः स्वाहा ॥ यजु० ॥

We, the leaders of the nation, be ever wakeful and vigilant in proficiently doing our tasks, entrusted to us-this is our firm resolve.

In order to get salvation, Man has to be wakeful all the more, as he has to live in this world, but detached and never become engrossed and entangled in the sensual pleasures

even for a moment. So, how much careful he has to remain all the while this has been narrated as under:-

तद्विप्राप्तो विपन्यवो जागृवांसः समिन्धते ।
त्रिणोर्यत्परमं पदम् ॥ यजु० ॥

Such learned, noble and virtuous people who always remain wakeful and vigilant, feeling the grace and presence of God-Paramatan all the while and are never careless or idle even for a moment, are able to attain emancipation.

Bhagwan Krishna has also told Arjuna in Bhagwad Gita as under:-

या निशा सर्वेभूतानां तस्यां जागति संयमी ।
यस्यां जागृति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मनः ॥

Oh Arjuna ! That which is night for all the living-beings, *i.e.*, when all else are asleep, a yogi, being immersed In the bliss and grace of God, keeps awake; and in these ephemeral enjoyments of sensual pleasures when all the living-beings keep awake, for the Muni, knowing the sum and substance of all these, it is like a night, because he remains oblivious of these. In other words, this is what we call detachment. *To do one's duty as ordained and never to think of the reward, was the prime thought of Indian philosophy*, which was the key-note of all our scriptures, but to our dismay, this is now being forgotten because of the Western influence. And this is the root cause of all our troubles, as more and more people now think of their rights, little caring about their duties. Gita says:-

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते माफलेः कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते संगोऽस्व कमेणि ॥

Oh Arjuna! Your only right is to do your work, not on the reward or result, and you never desire or wish about the result but at the same time never wanting not to do your work or duty. It is quite true that work well-done is it self a reward, because those who care more for their duty, rights come to them unasked. In Yajur Veda, it has been stated:-

भूत्यै जागरणमभूत्यै स्वपनम् ॥

To keep awake is the cause of fortune and prosperity and to sleep is responsible for destruction. Evidently, when a person is asleep, he is just unconscious and oblivious of all what is going on around him and in such a state he can even be beheaded, because he knows not and cannot give any resistance. The poor fellow is more or less like a dead person already and there have been many cases when people have been killed whilst asleep.

In Rig-Veda, it is stated that the people who give up the sleep of illiteracy and ignorance, as also that of unrighteousness and are ever wakeful about education, knowledge and learning as also that of righteousness, they only get all the material and spiritual wealth in this world. Actually, such people are successful because they remain vigilant and avail of the opportunities which come their way, while those who go on sleeping, miss them. Similarly, there is another verse which says that those who sleep, their luck also sleeps; those who get up, their luck also gets up and those who move on, their luck also moves on along with them. It means clearly that a man is the maker of his own fate or destiny; it is all useless to blame others for his own faults and foibles and keep on cursing his own self. What is required is to be careful and vigilant in life, as this is what is life-like since sleep is like death!

In SamVada, there is a verse, very beautiful and educative on the subject:-

यो जागार ठमृचः कामयन्ते, यो जागार ठमु सामानि यन्ति ।
यो जागार तथयं सोम आह, तवाहमस्मि सशमे न्योकाः ॥

One who is wakeful, gets all the knowledge of arts, science and technology. The entire progress in this world has been done by those who kept awake. A nation, which is awakened and vigilant, gets on the scientific path more and more. This is quite clear from all the discoveries and inventions which have been made from time to time, as is evident from the history of progress of science in the various fields.

‘सुखाथिनो कुतो विद्या’

Those who want to lead a life of comfort and luxury, can never achieve anything tangible or worthwhile because the goddess of success demands sacrifice of enjoyment and pleasures. Only those who are ever-awake get real happiness and peace, since the feeling of having done something well, gives inner happiness, uncomparable with any material gain. But, on the other hand, who just pass their lives sleeping in unconscious or sub-conscious state, they incite their sensuous passions all the while and in this way they lose all their energy, vigour and vitality. Hence, where is the question of their attaining anything in life. They remain like a clod of earth or a piece of stone, being lifeless in sleep or in a state of intoxication. They can get nothing either here or there and thus miss the opportunities of both the worlds.

Remember that *once your ‘Self’ is awakened, there are immense possibilities* about which you might have never given a thought. This Atman is All-powerful and can achieve wonders, but *first we have to get rid of the bondage of lust and passion, of sensual pleasures; this should become an obsession with us, because unless and until we are not hell-bent to curb these tendencies and propensities in us*, these may raise their heads and in our unconscious state, take undue advantage of our weakness. So, we have to be very-very cautious on this score and never forgive ourselves for our lapses, because then and then only a state of perfect watchfulness can be attained and a time will come when this will become enjoyable to you, as you will then remain in a state of bliss and happiness.

If you are fully awake and conscious; your mind never wavering; truth has dawned to you. You actually know thy ownself; understand the pangs of pain; know full-well about the state of death; you have compassion and love for all others; have faith in you as also believe in the giving-up all; then there may be no darkness or shadow under the

lamp of clay, but there can be no darkness under your own 'Self', Atman is illuminating, lustrous and more brilliant than any light, but needs to be awakened to shower its glow all around.

4

Self-Confidence

In simple words, it means that one should rely on his own ability and power to undertake the work which needs to be done, with full faith and confidence. It is often seen that people are afraid of accepting any responsibility, because of the hesitancy which occupies their minds for the obvious reason that they have not had the opportunity to perform the same before in their lives. It clearly means that inexperience and non-practice of any work is the main cause of our shaking and wavering mind, as the feeling of making ourselves stupid and proving failure grips our thought and thus we like to remain in the background. 'But this attitude is not good and must be got rid of as soon as possible. It matters little, if in the beginning you are not so impressive or successful, but in case you are determined to prove your worth, there is no reason why it should not be possible for you to perform the task in the same way as others are doing. You may be able to do the same even better, once you acquire the self-confidence which is most essential for a successful man in any calling.

For generating confidence in yourself, it is necessary that you must work hard and prepare for the eventuality when it presents it self before you, lest you may be caught anawares, On such occasions, if you are not well prepared you may have to cut a sorry figure . Besides, you may come across such persons who may not care to listen to you. In that case, one has to persevere in one's efforts and at long last, a day comes when the whole labour is rewarded. First of all you must have faith in your own competence and never look back, always taking your temporary failures

in your stride, considering the dictum that failures are the pillars of success. The two main reasons for the loss of self-confidence are : (1) poverty and (2) criticism. In so far as the *first* is concerned, *any person with good habits and intelligence can overcome this drawback* to a very large extent and so long as he works hard and earns his living the honest way, at least in his own heart, he should give due respect to his own self and need not be overawed by those who are rich and wealthy, at the same time giving due respect to others also. *The fear of criticism has to be shaken, always having in mind that there is no limit to perfection and there is always room for improvement.* This should of course give you encouragement and hope to improve upon your performance day after day and once this process starts, then your confidence will boost and give you more impetus to attain perfection.

In schools and colleges, it is often seen that some students are very intelligent and hard-working, but they cannot speak fluently when it comes to debating. Because they become nervous and feel shy to face the audience, while others who may not be so intelligent, yet they make their mark in oratory. It is all because of self-confidence. It does not mean that those who fail initially, cannot overcome their weakness; they can certainly do so if they continue to practise with determined effort and soon they will find that the inhibition which haunted them in the beginning was nothing, *but only in their notion* and then they laugh on their own folly. Some years ago, I read about a very fine orator and parliamentarian, Edmund Burke, who after election to the English Parliament, when tried to speak on some issue for the first time, could not speak and the only word, he could utter after a great effort was.....

“I.....I.....” and then his mind just became blank and he could say no more. Desperately, he took his seat, perspiring all over and very much humbled by his own Performance. But in course of time, he became such a fine orator and

speaker that very few could equal him in this sphere, all because he practised and worked hard and was successful.

Here, the incidents of *Mahrishi Dayanand Sataswati's* life come to my mind, when he went to the great city of Kashi for the first time, where he was to be involved in the debate with the learned Pundits of Kashi. So, a follower of Swamiji, Jawahar Das asked him- The pundits of Kashi are well known for their knowledge and learning, being well-versed with the scriptures, how are you going to win them over in the debate? Even if you are able to prevail on one, how are you going to prevail over all of them?" To this, Swamiji replied "Among all these pundits, there is one Shastri from South, who has some understanding about the Vedas, can talk to me for some time. The rest are not so ask and learned; they only have some knowledge of new Vedanta and grammar; therefore, I am quite confident to prevail over all the twenty-seven pundits who have been invited to participate in the debate." History is witness to this episode, how Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati proved what he said and was able to vanquish all the pundits of Kashi in the debate.

One day, Jawahar Das heard that on the instigation of these pundits, some hooligans wanted to insult Swamiji. He went to Swamiji and informed him of this, with great worry. Swamiji replied-Do not worry. This is not a new thing for me. I have had such experiences before in my life. When I was in my father's house, it so happened that one of our neighbours took possession of one of our fields. When my father told me about this, I got so much excited that I took a sword and all alone I was able to chase the neighbour and his men away. Even now if ten to fifteen hooligans attack me, I alone am quite sufficient for them all. Indeed, this was true as many a time, he was able to ward off the attackers in this way. In Mirzapur in U.P. once it so happened that there was one Chhotugiri Gosain, who was very healthy and stoutly built and was bent upon creating trouble with

Swamiji. So, one day he went to Swamiji's place of stay, with some of his henchmen in order to kill him. Swamiji at once understood their intention and stood up with a stone in his hand and called out loudly-"Fool ! you want to frighten me; had I been frightened in this manner, how could I wander throughout the country, awakening people about your misdeeds. He then called out loudly-If there is anyone, please shut the door; I alone am sufficient to put them right." They all got so much frightened by his loud voice that they fell to the ground shivering and even in fear they urinated and became unconscious. Then Pandit Ram Prasad sprinkled some drops of water to bring them back to consciousness and they were allowed to go after Mahrishi gave them some advice. Such is the ideal of power, strength and self confidence !

Another living example is that of *Guru Hanuman*, who has devoted all his life to do some good to others and to the cause of wrestling. His life account was published in the illustrated Weekly some time back. He belongs to a village, Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh and came to Delhi, when a child, as both of his parents died and there was none to look after him. So, in his childhood, he had a great desire to meet God and in this quest, he went to Hardwar and used to sit for hours together on the Ghats of Ganga, when he met some Arya Samajists. They told him that if he wanted to fulfil his quest of meeting God, then he will have to work hard. Only hard and strenuous work is the key to Godliness. They told him many such stories the sum and substance of which was that hard work was the key to success. Guru Hanuman was fully convinced and understood that one should not pass his life in laziness. Therefore, he returned to Delhi and began studying in a school. Being weak in his childhood, his colleagues in school would taunt him and thus he was prompted to take interest in wrestling. Thus, he began to learn the art of wrestling and doing exercise regularly and soon he became the strongest student in the

school. Now, all the other students began to talk to him politely. In this way, he became fully devoted to the cause of wrestling and neglected his studies.

Narrating the tale of his childhood, he stated that the first bout which he won in wrestling was in Hardwar, in which he was given one rupee as the reward. In those days, the value of a rupee was much more, as the fare from Delhi to Hardwar was six annas. In order to augment his income, he also ran a Dhaba (a small hotel in a thatched hut). He used to charge six paise for a meal, while others charged only two paise because the preparations were excellent and it was purely vegetarian. From this, he could save two rupees a day. Once he went to Lahore to take part in wrestling there, with five rupees in his pocket; when he returned, there were still one and a half rupees left, there he stayed in a hotel and the charges were one paise per day. Such 'were the cheap times when things were available in plenty, but money was scarce. Guru nanuman says that it is his firm belief that with consistent strenuous hard work, a man can render possible what may appear impossible in the beginning. Idleness is nothing short of death. This is what I tell my children, whom I have brought up. He did not marry, but many orphan children are being looked after by him. He is now eighty-five years old and uses an old bicycle which he bought when he was still a young man. When his children run a race, Guru Hanuman follows them on his bicycle.

In 1929, Chandra Shekhar Azad came to his place and stayed with him for some days in the guise of a labourer. Even Gandhiji and Jawahar Lal Nehru visited Delhi's area in which Guru Hanuman lived. He remembered the event of Subhash Chandra' Bose's visit clearly. Subhash Babu asked him, "you make your health; do you render any service to the cause of the country?" So, we see how an orphan and weak boy rose to such great height in his 'lifetime, because of his 'self-confidence and hard work. Many

of his disciples have won laurels in wrestling, not only in our country, but in international bouts, the prominent of whom are (1) Rajendra Singh, (2) Sudesh Kumar (3) Kartar Singh, (4) at Pal and (5) Jagminier All of them have been given Arjuna Award by the Government.

In Vedes and scriptures, there are many verses in which Man has been told to recognise the power of self-confidence because it is such' an inspiration which prompts him to do any task. Expressing his self-confidence, Hanumanji says:-

पातालतः किमु सुधार समान यामि,
निपीड्यं चन्द्रममतं किमुताहरामि ।
उद्वन्द्वचण्डकिरणं ननु वारयामि,
कीनाशपाभमनिशंसं किमु चूर्णयामि ॥

Oh Master! may I bring nectar from the nether world or may get nectar after wringing the moon; may I stop the Sun with its fierce and fiery rays; or reduce the God of Death to powder! Such was the self-confidence in brave Hanuman to do wonders. Hanumanji was a great man of his time very much learned and well-versed in Vedas. A Vedic warrior says:-

अंगिरसो भवेमद्भिं रूजेम० ॥ ऋग्वेद ॥

We may become fierce and lustrous like fire and crush the mountains. In another Vedic verse,

‘अमाम्योज आ चके’

It has been stated that I pray for lustre, splendour and self confidence, so that all the directions may bow before me:-

मह्यं नमन्तां प्रदिशस्वतस्त्रः ॥ अथर्व० ॥

According to the philosophy of the Vedas, a man can do anything, as it is all upto him to harness the powers which God has blessed him with. His Grace and make this world more and more beautiful and worth living. A person, who believes in the Vedic philosophy, is ever full of self-confidence and never gets perplexed by any obstacles or difficulties which are bound to come in his journey of life, as he is least worried about the outcome. He knows only to do his best and leave the rest to God.

5

Self-Restraint

Vedas have laid great emphasis on self-restraint as we find many verses in which man has been advised to practise this golden rule in life, so that his life may become pleasant and successful. In Hindi or Sanskrit, it is known as *Brahmacharya* and it is *considered the foundation on which the edifice of humanity stands*. This is quite evident from a man's life, because the early period of about twenty-five years, when he is required to get education and training which fully prepares him to face the world during the rest of his life, is known as the *Brahmacharya-Ashram*. Thus, while he acquires knowledge and learning which enable him to play his role in the building of the nation, he conserves his energy which directly helps him in achieving his aim, because *without good health, nothing is possible*. Hence, the importance of self-restraint becomes all the more important which a man must learn to make a part of his life, if he is really desirous to lead a long and useful life. *Brahmacharya is the source of power and plenty, virtue and vitality*.

Modern times are known as the times of money and wealth, as a consequence of which, man on the whole is becoming more and more licentious, passionate and sensual. 'Eat, drink and be merry' appears to be the aim of most of the people, little realising the fact that such a course is not conducive to the well-being of mankind. Man must heed the advice given in our scriptures by sages and saints, as practised by our ancestors to abstain from too much enjoyments and pleasures, because this is certain to bring destruction in the end. It has been truly said-

‘भोगा न भुक्ता वयमेव भुक्ता’

We do not enjoy these things, but they, in turn, finish us. This is quite clear from experience that those who indulge in sensual pleasures, their organs become weak and they, in turn, get sick and die soon. Some Hindi poet has nicely described their plight:-

ब्रह्मचर्यत्व को जो समझ नहीं पाते;
सच्चे सुखसे वे सदा दूर रहते हैं।
कामनसओं के जाल में फस कर;
वासना भोगसे मजबूर रहते हैं

Those who cannot understand the virtues of self-restraint, always remain away from the real happiness of life; as they are entangled in the web of their own desires and are helpless before the attractions of sensuality. Such persons do not have strong will-power and are weak in all respects, as they bow their head before their passions and lust.

Unfortunately, our Government is mainly responsible for creating such a foul atmosphere, because through the mass media of television, cinema and radio, they give wide publicity to such material which conveys all negative aspects of life viz., passion, lust and sex in the name of love and violence in the name of peace. What will be the future of such a nation, only God knows! We are blindly following the Western philosophy, giving go-bye to our own, because those who are at the helm of affairs have no knowledge or understanding of our culture and civilisation. In their opinion only dance, drama and song is the Indian culture, little realising the fact that ours was a society of Rishis and Munis, who guided the destiny of the nation and the kings and rulers obeyed their dictum and the people followed and practised austerity and renunciation gladly. ‘Simple living and high thinking’ was the norm of life in those days, there being no dissension or quarrel of any kind, as everyone had his rightful share and enjoyed this life in peace and plenty. This was known as ‘Ram-Rajya’ about which Mahatma Gandhi used to talk often, with the

fond hope that after Independence, we may again be able to see such times.

Our rulers are blind to the history even. The case of Romans is worth quoting-how they rose to great heights and having won in many battles, they founded a large empire. Subsequently, the Romans became lazy and licentious and the result was that they lost all. The history of Mughal Empire is more or less on the same lines. Leave them aside, even our own recent history of independence, how we faced all trials and tribulations, many of our ancestors sacrificing their all, who laid their lives, fought with all their might facing all sorts of difficulties and troubles, got independence. But what is happening now? Their own kith and kin are amassing wealth at the cost of the country and the nation ! The consequences are fraught with disaster. It is all because of our loss of character and having no faith in self-restraint, as preached by Mahatma Gandhi.

Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati writes in his famous book, Satyārtha Prakash:-

“In a country, where marriages are performed at a ripe age and self-restraint is practised along with the education there is happiness always. Whereas, in a country, where young children, illiterates and uneducated get married, that country drowns in pains and sorrow. Because *with the observance of Brahmacharya and true education, all is well and without these two, everything goes waste and to naught.* He states at another place in the same book-” In a country, where proper self restraint, education and Vedic Dharma get publicity, such a country is indeed fortunate.”

In Atharva-Veda, there is a Sukta on Brahmacharya, some verses out of which are quoted hereunder:-

ब्रह्मचारीणश्चरति रोदसी उभे तस्मिन् देवाः संमनसो भवन्ति ।
सदाधार पथिवी दिवं च स आचार्य तपसा पिपर्ति ॥

A brahmachari makes *all the matter favourable to himself which exists between the earth and the sun.* By this, *all the divine qualities reside in the Brahmachari.* In this

way, he holds both the earth and the sun by his austerity and penance. By this, he also makes his Acharya successful through his devotion. As it has been stated in another verse that an Acharya holds his disciple. Brahmachari in his womb for three days and nights, which means that in the Acharya's Ashrama, the Brahmachari gets all knowledge about sciences, deeds and worship.

ओधयो भूतभव्यमहोरात्रे वनसपितः ।
संरसाः सहर्तुभिस्ते जाता ब्रह्मचारिणः ॥

The drugs and herbs sprout and fruition according to the season and the year also passes as per the seasons. In the same way a man ought to practise Brahmacharya and *even in Grihastha Ashram should live with self-restraint, entering in sexual intercourse with his wife for the sake of progeny only*. It is not proper for married couples to be lustful and passionate, but exercise self-control as much as possible, because too much of sex saps the power and strength; the vigour and vitality is lost and the body and mind become weak, thus inviting ailments and sufferings in its train. In this context the following Mantra is worth noting:-

पार्थिव दिव्याः पशव आरण्या ग्राम्याश्च ये ।
अपक्षा पस्त्रिणश्च ये ते जाता ब्रह्मचारिणः ॥

All the animals and birds, born on this earth, whether in the forests or in the villages, who roam about everywhere, on the ground or in the sky, they are all Brahmacharis by nature, because they automatically follow the urge of the season unlike man, who indulges in sex, in season, and out of season: But again, I would like to point out that it is not the fault of the people, as they are fed on such material, which arouses their sexual feelings and as a consequence, the public is becoming weak and sickly day by day, as also characterless. The numerous cases of rape which we read in newspapers are also the outcome of the publicity of sexual material through cinemas and television. So, is the cause of many crimes of loot, murder and killings, as the scenes of sex and violence abound in the films in the name

of enjoyment and fun. All such stories find place in the sub-conscious or conscious minds the people and the result is before us all to see.

Here, I may give an example from the biography of Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati, who remained Brahmachari throughout his life and preached the teachings of Vedas. Once when Raja Bikram Singh asked him to demonstrate the powers of Brahmacharya, Swamiji smiled and did not say anything. After his discussion and talks, Raja Bikram Singh who came in his coach, driven by two horses, climbed into it and after bidding salutations, wanted to depart, asked his driver to drive the horses. The coachman accordingly left the reins loose and even gave one or two lashes with the whip, but the horses could not move, though they tried their best with all the might. At this Raja Bikram Singh got somewhat annoyed and perplexed and when he saw turning his head backwards, Swamiji smiled and left the wheel of the coach which he was holding the impact of which was such that the two mighty horses could not move forward. Raja Bikram Singh at once got down from the coach and was so overtaken by his feelings that he could hardly utter a few words, saying that indeed the powers of Brahmacharya are miraculous, of which he was fully convinced by what he saw. The names of Hanumanji and Bhishma Pitamah are quite famous and well-known to all and how both of them created history of Brahmacharya need not be recounted.

In our prayer, *we always pray that we may live up to one hundred years, with all our senses and organs in full working order.* The following verse is another example:-

बर्च आ धेहि मे तन्वा सह ओजो वयो बलम् ।
इन्द्रियाय त्वा कर्मणे वीयाय प्रति गृह्णामि शतशारदाय ॥

In my body, there 'may always be power and strength, lustre and valour vigour and vitality for one hundred years, so that I may be able to do good and noble deeds and my vital fluid may ever remain intact. These days people die

at an early age; there is no reason to go far to seek its cause; it is all because the people do not observe the rules of Brahmacharya in life. *This can be achieved if we take care of two vital facts-(1) our food should be sattvik and vegetarian, and (2) our thoughts should be pure.* I have described these in greater detail in my previous books, which the readers may study.

In the Vedas, there is a Mantra in which a Brahmachari says-“Tell me, where should I move this earth?” This is an allegorical statement in that a Brahmachari gets so much divine power and strength, ability and competence that he can say the world from one side to the other, as many great men were able to show the right way in their times and thus changed the course of events which were to follow. In this connection, I may narrate a true incident from the biography of Swami Ram Tiratha, when he visited America, where he delivered many lectures during his stay there. At a place in some city he was required to stay there for a week and thus according to his programme, he gave seven discourses-one a day. On the sixth day, just after he finished his lecture, he told the audience- Tomorrow will be my last lecture here at this place. Hence, please note that those who are eager to be present, must come punctually because unlike the previous six days, when I have spoken for about an hour daily, tomorrow’s lecture will be of one minute’s duration and I will speak only one sentence, which will be the gist of all my lectures I have delivered so far.”

Hearing this, people of America present in the audience, were overjoyed and on the seventh and last day, it was seen that the crowd was much more as compared to the previous days. Now, what Swami Ram Tirtha said is worth noting:-

“My own-self in the form of ladies and gentlemen !

An individual, who remains unmoved by all the vices of this world, viz., passion, anger, avarice, infatuation, vanity, jealousy, lethargy and so on, and is thus able to win over all his senses and mind, he can move this world all alone.”

6

Self-Reliance

The *life-history of most of the great men* is a clear proof of the quality which all of them possessed in a very large measure is that they depended of their own ability and power, on their self capacity and intellect and above all on their personal courage and valour. With perseverance, diligence and resolution, they worked their way up to the top, without ever looking back, with iron will, undaunted by the many difficulties and obstacles which came in their life's mission. *In the early stages, they were all alone in their crusade. But this did not worry them in the least and the examples of the sun and the moon gave them courage and solace*, in removing the darkness from the face of the earth. Their determination was as firm as a rock, because they never wanted any personal reward for themselves, as they knew full well that *great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice, and is never the result of selfishness*. It is a very simple fact that if you want to be successful in any venture, you will have to work hard and in the right direction yourself. Readymade success is not possible, nor a man should ever desire or hanker after it, since it is not earned by the sweat of your brow, you cannot enjoy it with heart and your happiness and pleasure will be at a discount. Remember self-earned fruits are always sweeter.

In this context, I may point out that nowadays, some students try to achieve success in examinations by foul means. But think of it coolly, is it going to help him in any way? Such a student is twice the loser, because for one thing, he does not possess the knowledge of the subject

and can never get very good marks by copying. Secondly, he forms a bad habit, which tarnishes his character. On the other hand, if he takes a lesson from this mistake and works hard next time, he may be able to get a good position, which may ultimately be helpful in his future career. Such actions have given a bad reputation to the student community as a whole, about which each and every student must ponder. All the students must therefore, earn the respect in the society by their behaviour and conduct. This is the time when you are making your own self and in doing so, if you adopt devious ways, it is your own doom.

You and you alone are the maker of your own destiny and nobody else. Only foolish and weak people look to the stars, whether these are auspicious and favourable. The Mother Nature is always ready to give you what you want, but you must first deserve its bounty by your enthusiasm and hard work. In *Yajur Veda*, the following verse inspires all to depend on self-help:-

स्वयं वाजिस्तन्व कल्पयस्व स्वयं यजस्वं स्वयं जुास्व ।
महिमा तेऽ न्नेन न संनशे ॥ 23-15 ॥

Here, we have been told to *make ourselves capable and strong to face the challenges of this world*. It has also been stated that if you want the good result beneficial to you, then you must act yourself. You can be great, not alone by wishful thinking but by doing earnest endeavour to become great. Have no faith or trust on others, because even the greatest man on this earth or such other devious means cannot make you great. The only best way is to work yourself upwards.

‘यो वै यथा चिन्तयति तथा भवति’

As u man thinketh, so he becometh. Therefore, you should always nourish good and noble thoughts and chalk out the programme accordingly. See what a Hindi poet says:-

मत समझो हम तो साधारण तुच्छ जीव है ।
दृढ़ता से देवत्व प्राप्त तुम कर सकते हो ॥

Do not think that we are only ordinary creatures. Such a feeling does not behove a Man, whom God has endowed with all the qualities and has placed all the riches of the world at his disposal. If you remain firm in your resolves, you can certainly attain to godliness. It is not a new phenomenon. Our ancestors were able to rise to such glorious height; then why can't we?

Swami Paramhansa Yoganand has written:-

“Do not continue to live in the same old way. Make up your mind to do something to improve your life, and then do it. Change your consciousness; that is all what is necessary. Realise your own powers and make a resolve that you are not going to be affected by troubles! you are not going to be finicky; you are not going to be a victim of your bad habits and changing moods; you are going to be free from such bondages. You need not remain the same old self. Destroy that image which you have superimposed on your true self. Bring forth the soul-image that God gave you. Every day you look in the mirror, you should see reflected there a better person.”

In Atharva-Veda, there is a Mantra; which fully reflects the idea of self-help:-

स्वर्यन्तो नाऽपेक्षन्त आ द्यां रोहन्ति रोदसी ।
यज्ञं ये विश्वतोधारं वितेनिरे ॥

The virtuous learned persons, who spread the message of public-weal with their good and noble deeds, sacrificing their all and ascend to the top in their life-time, do not look for help from others. They do so entirely on their own and in course of time, people follow them. It matters little what You do, but it should be done with concentration and dexterity. Even an ordinary person feels proud in saying- "This is my hard-earned money, which I got through the hard work with my hands and ten fingers. I do not like begging, as I consider such money nothing but curse."

In this context, I remember a true story which I read in some book a few years back. Once *Raja Bhoj* invited many

learned pundits to begin a Yajna, which was to continue for a month and as was the custom in those days, soon after the Yajna was over, meals used to be served to all, whosoever cared to partake. One of these days, after the Yajna was over and people were busy taking their meals, Raja Bhoj happened to go out of the town, where in the forest, he saw a woodcutter, chopping wood from a tree. He went near the wood-cutter and asked him- Don't you know that Raja Bhoj is doing Yajna, which will continue for a month. In that yajna any body can go and have the meals; why don't you go there along with your family? You need not labour so hard these days." The wood-cutter smiled and replied- "I know about it, but I do not want to eat the meals, which I have not earned." Raja Bhoj was astonished to hear these words and went away, praising the poor wood-cutter's faith in his own work and his feeling of self-respect.

Another allegorical tale about *Maharaja Yayati* is that he was able to go to heaven, because of the result of his noble and virtuous deeds. By and by the fruits of his holy deeds were over and a day came when he had to quit the heaven. When this was being done, Maharaja Yayati requested- It is right that I have to leave this place, but send me to earth where good and noble people with holy souls reside." This request was acceded to and accordingly he was sent amongst such holy people. When these sagely people saw that Maharaja Yayati has been ousted from the heaven and was coming to earth to live amongst them, they were overjoyed, as they remembered the golden age of his reign, when there was plenty and peace all round. So, they said that with the coming of Yayati, this earth will become heaven and there will be no need for us to go anywhere else. So, all began to question Raja Yayati, as to why he has been sent away from heaven or whether he has come on his own and such other questions. Maharaja Yayati replied, "It is a very simple rule. As a man's wealth is finished, all his friends and relatives leave him; similarly when the fruits of

a man's holy 'deeds are over, he is deprived of the heaven. All our actions and deeds have limitations and so are their results. On coming back to this earth, he again wants more and more. It is, therefore, proper for an intelligent person that he should not indulge in bad and vicious actions."

Hearing this, all those noble people present there, wanted to give the credit of their virtuous deeds to Raja Yayati, so that he may continue to live in heaven. But Yayati refused to accept, saying-

“अहं तु नाभि गृह्णामि, यत् कृतं न मया पुरा।।”

“I cannot accept the fruits of such deeds, which I have not alone myself.” When Maharaja Ashtaka insisted on accepting his deeds, Yayati replied- “ I have been giving alms always in my life; how can I accept your deeds. *It is proper for a man that he should not live on others' doles .or help.*” When another king, known as Pratardana offered the fruits of his holy deeds, Yayati replied -”*A man should never wish to take credit for others' deeds.* If misfortune overtakes him, even then he should not get discouraged and become so pitiable.” Then Raja Sumana came forward and insisted that Yayati should not come down from heaven, but accept his deeds, on the strength if which he can continue to live in heaven. He also told Yayati that in case he was reluctant to take these as alms, then Yayati may give in return a blade of grass as their price. To ‘this Yayati replied- I do not remember that I have ever done such a false business in my life. Should anyone deal in this manner, as if trying to deceive a child?’ He added-

“माऽहं राजन् अन्य कृतेन भोजम्।”

“I will not eat, Oh king! which has been earned by others. I should eat what I have earned.” Such was the ideal of self help, described in our scriptures. Even kings and queens' ‘particularly those who were keen to take sattvik food only, used to toil themselves by tending the cows and watering the trees in their orchids and used to take milk and

fruits which they were thus able to earn through their own personal labour.

In *Mahabharata*, Maharishi Vayas has written a very beautiful story a rich young man once insulted and pushed away some young son of a Rishi, who felt so much slighted and dejected by this incident that he decided to commit suicide, as he thought that life without wealth was not worth living. When he was preparing the pyre, he saw a man whose both the hands were cut off in an accident. This man who was without hands reproached the Rishi 's son, saying that all the creatures in the world want to take birth in the shape of man; fortunately, you have been born in that specie and over and above this, you are a brahmin and yet you are eager to commit suicide. Look at me, I am so unfortunate that I have lost both my hands. In my view, this blessing in the shape of hands is the best wealth and in your view the best wealth are the riches in the shape of money and gold in this world. One who has got the hands, what else is required to such a person, because it is within his powers to earn whatever he wants by these hands, by he should look to others for help-this is most surprising? As you are eager to acquire wealth, similarly I am eager that I should have my hands, since everything else in this world can be achieved with the power and strength of these two arms. In my opinion, there is no other: blessing or benefit in this world, as to have the hands, with which you can do what you like. Hearing these words, the son of the Rishi gave up the idea of suicide because he got encouragement and inspiration to work hard and depend on self-help.

To be self-reliant, one should have an optimistic outlook of life, always imbued with enthusiasm. He should not get discouraged by the ups and downs of life, but take them in his stride always nourishing happy thoughts. A poet wrote the following lines, comparing the attitude of two persons who were behind the bars:-

Two men saw from the prison bars;
One saw the mud, the other saw the stars.

Someone has rightly said-success without labour is not worth having. You do not enjoy it. The more you have to exert to get something, the more you are able to enjoy it, because the idea of having worked so hard, gives you inner happiness.

7

Self-Respect

In common parlance, it is considered that a, *man who is not indebted to any* and is able to live on his own being dependent on somebody else, is a *respectable person*. But I say how many people can qualify on the above definition, whom we can truly call respectable? And if a person is not respectable in other people's eyes, then how can he dare give respect to self? According to our *Vedic scriptures, each and every man and woman born on this earth, is indebted in many ways-debt of parents, Acharyas, society and the country and above all of God Almighty*. But generally man is selfish and he does not care to repay these debts during the course of his life and yet clamours all the while that he is a very self-respecting person! So, we have to shed this attitude and become concerned, considering it our first and foremost duty in life. Einstein said- A human being is a part of the whole, called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affections for a few nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by *widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty*. No body is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation for inner security."

Generally, we are too selfish and have little or no time for 'others', not understanding the fact that *we are part of the*

whole and if we neglect our duty -today, the same calamity may overtake us tomorrow and then we will grumble that few people care or have any concern for their public duty. But when it was our turn and there was a clear opportunity to render public duty, we were found wanting! So often we find people knocked down by vehicles. The passing crowd gives only furtive glances and rushes along-no one wants- to get involved. Here, your personal involvement is essential, by giving time and money. At every corner, we find an invitation to involvement, but being too busy we commit a sin. Very few people show genuine concern. We are a nation of don't cares" and this attitude is costing us very-very dearly.

Deep inside many humans, conscience cries out and even the reading of such crimes makes you sick and ashamed as though you were personally involved. But in actual life, anguished cries are heard and instead of trying to help or reporting to the police, hands are put over ears. What is needed is not public demonstration of our dedication, but a *standing by the principles, that when someone is helpless or in pain ,it is our duty to help*. Being concerned has other angles also. Consider the rot that is served as entertainment these days. How many of us have the courage to stand in public and denounce it or do something about it? Genuine concern is never patronising or condescending, because we only repay our debts and in doing so, we share someone's pains and sorrows. If there is something going on in this civilised world, more specially in your country, of which your conscience strongly disapproves, it is your bounden duty to rally public opinion against it. A European philosopher Wilcox has said-"As we go through life, there are little kindnesses we can either do or neglect. Others are watching us to see how closely our deeds match our words. *The true greatness lies in being kind.*"

दया धर्म का मूल है, पाप मूल अभिमान ।
तुलसी दया न छोड़िये, जब तक घट में प्राण ॥

Kindness is the root of Dharma and vanity is the root of sin. Therefore, *never give up kindness in your life.*

It is a very well known saying- “Pride goeth before a fall.” Whosoever became vain and proud on his achievements, he went down in the end. Showing the drawbacks of vanity, Mahatma Vidur has written:-

जरा रूप हरति हि धैर्यमाशा मृत्यु प्राणान्धर्मचर्यामसूया ।
क्रोधःश्रियं शीलमनार्यसेवा, द्वियं काम सर्वमेवाभिमानः ॥

Old age destroys beauty of the countenance, *hope* destroys endurance, death destroys life, habit of seeing faults in others destroys the conduct of righteousness, anger destroys wealth and beauty: company of bad and service of mean people destroy character; lust or passion destroys shyness and vanity destroys *ALL*. Hence, if you are eager to get true knowledge, respect name and fame, then never be vain or proud of your place or position. Mr. Young has written- “We rise in glory as we sink in pride.” The field of knowledge is vast and, therefore, if any one thinks that he alone is wise in speech or in mind he hath no peer, such a soul when laid open is ever found empty.

You should not be haughty or vain personally, but for your country, your culture and civilisation, you should feel proud through and through. A Hindi poet has said:-

जिस को न निज गौरव तथा निज देश का अभिमान है ।
वह नर नहीं है, पशु निरा है और मृतक समान है ॥

One who has no self-respect and is not proud of his country, he is not a man, he is only an animal and is equal to a dead person. So, we should all be proud of our country, but unfortunately a large section of Indians look to other countries, as they have no patriotic feelings and give more importance to the sect to which they belong. Because they are being misguided by their religious leaders for their selfish ends and our Government also helps them to pursue the wrong path, as it serves their purpose and policy of “Divide and Rule”.

Now, the fun of the situation is that while our Government agrees that according to the constitution, Hindi is our national language, it is not being used in the Government offices as such. But English is used for all purposes and thus there have been many awkward situations, when representatives from other countries have expressed surprise at our apathy in this connection. Many years ago, when Smt. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit was to represent our country as Ambassador in Russia, on reaching in Moscow, she gave her credentials in English. To which, the authorities in Russia, expressed their unwillingness to accept, stating that either it should be presented in your own national language or in Russian. So, our Ambassador at that time had to cut a very sorry figure and had to give her credentials in Hindi. The world mocks at us, but the politicians in power are brazen-faced, as they neither care for the opinion of the masses, nor for the mockery, which is heaped on us by the nations of the world!

On another occasion, a delegation from Russia visited our country in connection with some parleys being held here. As is the custom, the delegation was duly received by members of our protocol division, who conversed them in English all the while courteously. At one stage, to the consternation and surprise, the leader of the Russian delegation spoke in chaste Hindi fluently and the leader of the Indian party was taken aback; he apologised and asked him in Hindi, how he was able to learn Hindi, which he was speaking so nicely. To this, he replied that before coming to India, they had been learning and practising Hindi, preparing fully well so that they could converse to Hindi when in India. But to their amazement, they felt as if they have landed in England, and not in India, because here the atmosphere was such that one could not help feeling so. You can, therefore, assess yourself my dear readers, the ridiculous, position in which we are today after forty years of independence. Our slavish mentality persists and we are not prepared to get rid of this chain, tied round our neck!

A true democracy should ensure the dignity and freedom of the Individual. *We got the freedom, but what about our national self respect ?* Where we are heading to, at least this is not comprehensible either to the common-man or to any body who has some brain in his head and has love for his country. In the ruling party: majority of the people are flatterers and sychophants, who blindly toe the line of their leader, being selfish, insincere and dishonest, We brag and profess of the progress which our country has made during the last forty years of independence, forgetting the fact that our ambassadors and ministers are always out on foreign jaunts, with a begging bowl in their hands. In the name of plans and projects, we have taken loans from not only the international organisations, like the World Bank: but also from many other countries, great or small. The debt is so large that even its annual interest amounts to thousands of crores of rupees. How can a debtor country talk of national self-respect is beyond one's imagination? A few days ago, I read in the newspapers that Japan is advancing some loan and assistance to us. During the last war, Japan was bombed and the destruction was so much that it is indescribable. The first atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two important cities of Japan. But that tiny nation has astonishing advancement and progress, while our country having had no such revages of any war is so much backward that more than half of the population is below the poverty line. Many people cannot get even two square meals a day and starvation deaths have quite often been reported in the newspapers.

This is the country, known as the Golden Bird, where milk and honey used to flow in abundance. What is the condition now, I need not recount, as you all know and experience it in your daily life. Mahatma Gandhi advocated throughout his life that the rulers should live as simply as a common man. But the life-style of our Ministers with all the pomp and ostentation surrounding them far outpaces

the colonial rulers of the past. Now, they are so much afraid because of their misdeeds that they even do not move in public and crores of rupees is being spent on their security alone, Which the public has to pay for their misrule! These politicians have no self respect whatsoever. They do not listen to the voice of their conscience. It is doubtful whether they have any soul, because from their bad actions and misdeeds, it appears as if they are soul-less!

The growing unemployment and increasing *poverty has finished all the self-respect of the common-man* of this country. Majority of the people are illiterate, who do not understand the value of their vote. In the name of democracy, they are being exploited, while the Government connives at the activities of the criminals and tax-evading industrialists and there is no question of punishing the law violators, because the law breakers are generally the law-makers themselves. If any solitary person raises his voice against the corrupt machinery, he is hooted down and chased as if he were a criminal, since those in power expect that the public should be honest and truthful. But in so far as they are concerned, they are above all these trivialities. In such a country, how can anybody have self-respect? It has been truly said that if intelligent and good people do not take part in the government, they will have to suffer rule of the bad people. To day the condition is such that any good and honest person does not like to stand in any elections, more so because it is beyond the means of a common man.

All the same, *one has to sacrifice his entire possessions and life itself for the sake of self-respect. Without being depressed by the adverse circumstances*, as many people of our country followed the path during the worst' days of British rule. Swami Dayanand Saraswati,. Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Purushottam Das tandon and many more, who fought throughout their lives for the sake of their self-respect.

8

Self-Defence

Every one loves his own life and for that it is essential that one should have the necessary power and strength to defend his self, when any danger comes. While people now talk of ecological balance and plead that all flora and fauna which have been created have their place, yet the same people plead play in and day out that eating fish, meat and eggs is useful for health. In my opinion, the two things are not compatible. If you really believe in ecology, then there should be no violence against any creature, howsoever tiny it may be. To my mind, all the creatures have their place to live on this earth and Man should keep to his own domain, in so far as his food is concerned and need not intrude upon the lives of other animals and birds. How strange it looks that when it comes to the tribe of human-being, he wants to take all precautions that it should not be hurt from any side? Then, what right a man has to kill the poor animals and birds on the specious plea that there is hardly any room on this earth for them.

So, it is natural that all living-beings want to live and it is for Man to evolve such a system, where all can live in peace, because he is the supreme creation and rules the destiny of all, including self. Tragically, we find that Man is also not sparing his own specie, in that in the so-called days of modern civilisation, the rule of 'Might is Right' is practised every- where. The struggle for life goes on and only the fittest survive is true even today . It is a different matter if the shape of might has taken different forms, *viz*, the spectacle of powerful ruling over the weak,

the rich ruling over the poor and the learned ruling over the ignorant, can be seen everywhere all over the globe. Hence, the first requirement in life is to be strong in body. As Mahrishi Dayanad Saraswati has said “Without the power and strength of the body, the power of intellect cannot be of much use. Thus, we should do our best to strengthen our body and protect it by all means.” He has stated further, elaborating the point, that if we go on increasing our learning and knowledge, but are otherwise weak in body, then only one strong man can vanquish all the hundreds of learned people. And if you increase only your bodily strength, and neglect your conscience or Atman, then you cannot administer and rule the country nicely, without good and proper education. Therefore, it is essential that *we should ever endeavour to increase our power of the body as well as the power of our soul.*

Here, I am reminded of a story I read many years ago. A learned-philosopher was once going somewhere across a river in a boat. In a passion of ego, he asked the boatman whether he had any knowledge of history; to which the poor boatman replied in the negative. He then asked the boatman whether he had any knowledge of geography ; to this question the boatman’s reply was again in the negative. At this stage, he asked the boatman whether he had any knowledge of Mathematics or Science; the boatman’s reply was again the same. He, however, added-”Babuji ! I am an illiterate person. Why are you asking me such questions ?” At this the philosopher remarked in vanity-”Oh my dear boatman ! you have wasted all your life.” Just when they were conversing, some dark clouds burst upon the sky from nowhere, and soon it began to rain heavily, with strong winds blowing. The river became turbulent and the boatman was struggling hard to control the boat, but soon It became apparent that it was going to capsize. He now asked the philosopher whether he knew swimming. The philosopher replied in the negative. Then the boatman

jumped out of the boat, saying- Babuji ! As you do not know swimming, your life is wasted.” The boatman swam to the shore and the vain philosopher died in watery grave, because he did not know swimming.

Once Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati was performing Sandhya on the bank of the river Ganga- all alone, sitting in meditation, with eyes closed, when some Muslim goondas happened to pass that way. Seeing Swamiji, they conspired that it was good opportunity for them to throw this Sadhu in the river, as he had been criticising their sect in his discourses. So, two of them, who were strong enough, put their hands under Swamiji’s arm-pit-and thus raising his body wanted to throw in the river. Swamiji pressed his arms so well that they both had to plunge into the water along with him. In this way, Swamiji did not leave them for a few minutes and remained under water ; thereby causing them suffocation. At long last, he left them and the poor fellows struggled to the shore some how, with the help of their colleagues. But Swamiji remained under water for quite some time and went some distance away’ because the goondas resorted to stone-throwing : it was all useless. When they did not see the Swamiji for a little while, they went away, thinking that he must have drowned.

Now, coming to the spiritual power or strength of the soul, there are many examples in the pages of the history, which tell us that such people were the seers of the future and were able to change the course of the events, as they were the ones who sacrificed their all for the sake of truth and certain values, which they cherished most in their lives. They only cared for the voice of their conscience, Irrespective of the consequences and were thus able to immortalize themselves. They will be remembered for all time to come, as they have left their footprints on the sand of time, which prove as a guide and inspire the coming generations to be firm in their resolve to continue the battle in the service of the country and the people. There is a very

well-known saying-”For the sake of the family, sacrifice the individual ; for the sake of the community, sacrifice the family; for the sake of the country, sacrifice the community; and for the sake of the soul (Atman), sacrifice the whole world. There is another similar quotation- *“What doth it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his own soul?”*

The example of Vir Hakikat Rai, who was just a boy of about twelve years of age, is well-known to all. He gave up his life, but did not accept conversion to Islam , come what may. His parents pleaded with him to get converted to Islam, but the boy remained as firm as a rock. Their argument was that at least they would be able to see him, though as a Muslim. But the boy’s reply was astonishing when he said that this body is to perish one day, sooner or later ; then why get it tarnished and sully the soul, which is immortal. By his Sacrifice, he has indeed carved his name in the temple of fame and he can never be forgotten, so long as even a Hindu lives on this earth.

Coming to the recent past, the glorious example of Mahrishi Dayanand Saraswati, who throughout his life preached the teachings of the Vedas and staked his all, heart and soul, for the cause of humanity is well-known to all. He never compromised with any sect and whatever drawbacks he saw, he told the people clearly, without mincing words, as to how the Popes, Maulavis and Pandits were exploiting the people in the name of religion. During his life-time, he challenged the leaders of various sects and whenever any body came forward, he was able to vanquish them all, because of his erudition and knowledge and in this way was able to expose their hollow claims. Many people whose self-interest was thus being endangered, became his enemy and these wily fellows tried to poison him. Once someone told him that he should give up criticising the sects, otherwise it was likely that he would be done to death some day. His reply was most candid and forthright-”If for

the sake of telling the truth, I will be killed,. I do not care.” He then added- They can only destroy my body; there is no force on this earth, who can destroy the Atman, because it is immortal. Hence, I am least afraid of such threats. I am engaged in God’s mission and he will look after me.” He dedicated his life for the cause which was most dear to him. He lived for it and he died for it. The work of such Great souls does not go in vain. Whilst most of the people come and go, these Great and noble souls live for ever. Their influence is so wide and pervasive that the world cannot easily forget them.

The well-known discussion between *Yajnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi* runs thus-when Rishi Yajnavalkya thought of abandoning his family-life and proceed to forests, he called both of his wives and told them that he wanted to distribute the property between them, so that there may not be any bickerings later on. Maitreyi asked-”On getting this property, will I be blissful?” The Rishi replied in the negative. At this, Maitreyi again asked whether she would get the bliss if the wealth of the whole world was given to her. The Rishi told her- No, your life will be just like other wealthy people.” Then Maitreyi said :-

“येनाऽहं नामृता स्यां तेन किं कुर्यामिति ।”

What shall I do of this, if I cannot get the immortal bliss?
Maharishi Yajnavalkya then gave the following sermon to her:-

A husband is not dear, because he is husband, but as he fulfils the desire of the Atman. Similar is the case with wife, son and wealth. All these worldly things, are not dear because of their existence, these are dear so long as they are able to meet the want of the Atman or Soul. Don’t we see everyday in this world that many parents, couples, children, etc., all these dear relations get separated during their life-time. Even the relations of many become so estranged that they do not speak to each other and in some cases become dead enemies even. When some house is on fire, everyone tries to save his own self first; none risks his

life for the sake of others, howsoever dear the relation may be. Because all these relations are dear so long as the soul gets satisfaction out of them and when the soul does not get satisfaction, then these are no more dear as was the case previously. In the end, Yajnavalkya told Maitreyi thus:-

आत्मा वा अरे दृष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः ।

Oh Maitreyi! *Only this Atman should be seen, heard, accepted and always thought of.* Because when we are conscious of the soul, then we cannot do, utter or even think of anything which may be repugnant to it. It is holy and pure and has to be maintained as such by our good and noble deeds. But man generally gets involved in undesirable matters and thus forgets his own self. We can do, utter and think of many such things which we ought not to; but remember the one cardinal fact that you may be able to deceive the world, you cannot deceive yourself!

In order to save our souls, Man has framed various rules of behaviour and codes of conduct, based on their own customs and traditions, or many may prefer to call this 'religion' which in common parlance is known as moral order. These are to be practised in life, but if there is any such code or rule which does not go with the holiness and purity of the Atman, mind this that such a rule is not right and needs to be discarded. Because the voice of Atman gives the correct judgement and must be respected above all and if the society accepts this norm, then there would be happiness all-round, as it has been truly said :-

आत्मानि प्रतिकूलानि परोऽं न समाचरेत् ।

That which is not liked by yourself, cannot also be liked by others. And it is the sum and substance of all Dharma.

9

Self-Realisation

In the previous chapters, we have tried to solve the riddle of 'Self' through discussion on its various aspects from different angles and have thus known clearly that this world consists of the inanimate matter which has been blessed to us for utilisation of the soul. The soul which is formless is housed in a body, consisting of the five elements-earth, water, fire, air and ether. The body is also inanimate, but as the soul resides in it, which is animate and life itself, people generally forget the distinction between the two, because of the fact that body is visible and soul is invisible. This becomes quite obvious to all, when the soul leaves the body and at that time, in the worldly language, we call that such and such is dead and as soon as possible dispose of the body. So, it is the soul, which when blended with the body, has life and is able to do the various actions and deeds, but as soon as the soul departs, the body is rendered lifeless and therefore, useless.

In Nyaya-Darshana, the characteristics of Atman have been described as under:

इच्छा द्वेष प्रयत्न सुख दुःख ज्ञानान्यात्मनो लिंगमिति ।

These are the six characteristics of Atman-(1) to wish, (2) to be jealous, (3) endeavour; (4) happiness, (5) pain, and (6) knowledge In Prashnopnishada; Rishi Pippalada described Atman as under:

एष हि दृष्टा, सृष्टा, श्रोता मन्ता, बोद्धा, कर्ता, विज्ञानात्मा पुरुः ॥

Here, seven parts or actions have been given in the sentence stating-this Atman (1) is the seat, (2) maker of

ideas, (3) hearer, (4) thinker, (5) knower, (6) doer and (7) has the know ledge and learning. If we summarise all these-, then we can do so only in three words, as stated in the Upnishadas :

The Atman is the Knower, Doer and Enjoyer, i.e., knowledge Action and Experience of pleasure or pain, these three qualities or characteristics are present in it ; such an animate and conscious power is Atman or Soul.

The ideal of self-realisation is the supreme goal of life, which one must realise to put an end to the cycle of births and deaths. Bhagwan Krishna says in Bhagwad Gita- when liberated from birth, death, old age and sorrow, a man enjoys immortality.” This ideal has been so captivating that great souls readily surrendered their all in order to attain it. Because they found that everything everywhere is changing and nothing remains permanent in this world, except the ‘Self’, Hence, it is the ‘Self’ that ought to be realised. This ideal has always appealed to the noble souls. Accordingly, all our Vedic scriptures tell us to seek and find peace, not by indulging in the worldly affairs, but by using it all in a detached manner, in case we want to realise our own self. Most of the people forget the aim of life and that is why they suffer and are not able to enjoy the bliss of salvation or self-realisation . It is because of the ignorance as also the attractions of the world which keep us bound in a web of our own making.

How to get out of it? The hurdle becomes all the more impregnable, as the fallacious idea of confusing self with the body continues, though we repeatedly say-”I have done this, this is my body” yet we fail to recognize what and who is this ‘I’ who claims ownership over this body! This is nothing but ego and our main business is to conquer it. In this connection, it would be better to relate a discussion, given in Chhandogya Upanishada, where it is narrated that when the gods, viz. Devas and Rakshas, who held their separate meeting , to decide the issue of Atman, were not able to do so, their representatives, Indra of Devas

and Virochana of Asuras, went to seek the answer to this from Prajapati (*viz.*, God). I may here caution the readers that this is a parable and we have to try and understand the lesson, we get from it. Prajapati asked them to do penance as brahmacharis for a period of thirty-two years. Having finished it, he asked them to bring a pot full of water and see their reflections in the same. He told them that it was Atman. Both of them returned to their places and told what Prajapati had to say about Atman. At this, the Asuras were very happy and they only think of the body, all in all. Whilst, when Indra told this to the Devas, they said, “this is incomplete knowledge, because the body is ever-changing and Atman is not. Hence, go back and get real knowledge of Atman.”

Indra went back to Prajapati and said- If this body is Atman, then in that case, when we beautify it, the Atman also ought to be so, and when it gets dismembered, the Atman should also be dismembered .

नाहमत्र भोग्यं पश्यामीति ।

I do not see that who enjoys these all.” At this Prajapati asked Indra to do further penance as a brahmachari for another spell of thirty-two years. As a matter of fact, what Prajapati meant was not understood by them. His intention was deep in that whatever you see, it is because of the power of Atman ; the body without Atman or soul cannot see. How ever, when Indra came to Prajapati at the expiry of the second spell of thirty-two years, he told Indra :

य एष स्वप्ने महीयमानश्चरत्यो आत्मेति ।

One who remains with dignity in the state of dream, is Atman. Indra returned, but on the way he became suspicious and came back to Prajapati and said thus- In a dream, there are good and bad scenes and experiences, where one enjoys as also suffers. Such cannot be Atman.”

Prajapati then told him to do further penance for another spell of thirty-two years. Having finished this, Indra presented himself, then Prajapati told him- In sleep,

you experience Atman.” Indra being satisfied was on his way home, when again he became doubtful and returned to Prajapati and said “This does not appear to be the real solution”.

अयमहमस्मीति न जानाति ।

This is ‘I’ is not experienced.” At this, Prajapati got convinced that Indra has to be told about Atman in detail. I may here again tell the readers that as for the first time, Indra and Virochara could not understand the idea of Prajapati, similarly Indra could not understand him second and third time as well. Because Prajapati meant that *the mind which works in the waking and dream states, can only work with the active help and presence of Atman*. Without the Atman, it is nothing but dead. The third time in deep sleep, one is quite unconscious, but the breathing-system, known as Prana, works continuously with the active help and presence of Atman; without the Atman, Prana also ceases to work. But Indra was satisfied at first and later on got confused, as it is the tendency of all human-being! to recognise the body, as we see it in gross form, and forget the Atman, the real owner of this all.

This time, Prajapati asked Indra to do penance only for a period of five years. Having done, Indra presented before Prajapati, who preached him as under :

- (a) This body, which is visible to all, is the food of Death;
- (b) This *body* is the bode of the immortal and formless soul;
- (c) So long as the soul- Atman remains in the body *thinking it as one, the pleasures and pains will be experienced because in the body, you cannot be free from these.*
- (d) *Pleasant and unpleasant become meaningless, when we understand the reality that Atman is formless- it is different from body.*

At this stage, Indra asked Prajapati the means by which he could get knowledge of this bodyless and formless Atman. How its knowledge could be attained? was Indra’s

question to Prajapati. Then Prajapati gave four similies, so that Indra could understand this clearly and stated thus :

“Oh Indra! Look at the sky. In between the earth and sky, there are four things-(1) Air, (2) Clouds, (3) Lightning, and (4) Thunder.

All these four are bodyless, but (1) the air gets active with the heat of the Sun’s rays, (2) because of the warmth of the Sun, the clouds appear, (3) the lightning flashes because of the influence of the Sun, and (4) there is thunder in the sky be cause of the instigation of the Sun.” Drawing Indra’s attention to these natural scenes, Prajapati told him that from these we learn that as all these four bodyless matter become visible to the eyes because of the influence of the Sun, similarly with the grace of God, that Supreme Effulgence, you can experience the presence of Soul-Atman .

Explaining further the relation between the body and the soul, Prajapati told Indra that as the horse yoked in a chariot is separate from it, similarly the Atman blended with the breathing-power, though united with the body, is separate from it, it is not a part of the body. Prajapati went on further, explaining the *identity* and likeness *of the soul* as under:

- (a) It is sinless; or Atman’s natural instinct is towards virtue;
- (b) It is ageless and never gets old.
- (c) It is deathless ; only the body dies, atman is immortal and imperishable ;
- (d) It remains *unaffected by the pains and pleasures* which are the result of combination and separation in this world;
- (e) It is *free from the bodily deterioration* of hunger, thirst, etc.

The above are the negative aspects or qualities- of the Soul; the positive aspects or qualities are :

- (a) Ever *likes truthfulness*; and
- (b) Always likes to be of noble and true resolves.

When the soul becomes free from the Samskaras of Sin, it becomes holy and pure, with inclination towards truthfulness.

In the end, Prajapati told Indra that such a soul is to be searched. Though it is ever present in the body, yet man does not take heed of it and stands all his life for attaining the outwardly material and wealth.

स अन्द्रेटव्यः :

It is to be searched.

स विजिज्ञासितव्यः :

Atman-Soul is the one to be longed for and *there ought to be a deep and inner urge to have its knowledge*. The more a man is anxious to know about it, the sooner he will be able to accomplish it, as his anxiety would certainly goad him to adopt the means, which have been prescribed in our Vedic scriptures. In this connection, see what Mundak Upanishada says:

सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा द्वा आत्मा;
सम्यग् ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम् ।
अन्तः शरीरे ज्योतिर्मयोहि शुभ्रः
यं पश्यन्ति यतयः क्षीण दौः ॥

Yogis, who throughout their life endeavour to do away all the dross, and become holy and pure, can see or *experience the Atman-Soul, by adopting the four-fold means* (1) *Truthfulness* in thoughts, words and deeds, (2) *Penance*-under no circumstances to leave the path of righteousness, (3) *Proper knowledge* with education and prudence, and (4) *Brahmacharya*- Self-restraint to the maximum extent possible.

Concluding, I may ask one simple question as to what is the need of all this, because the aim may still remain a dream, with all our efforts in this direction. The answer is already given in the book, but I may clarify the same once again. Man is the best and supreme creation of God and if he remains good, the world will be good. Hence, the purpose is to make man good and noble, and the *best way is to let him know his own Self*. When he realises his ability capacity, power and strength and proceeds rightly to seek 'Who am I?' the entire problem is solved. Man In

the process becomes glorious, as his behaviour, conduct and character become excellent, thereby in turn the result would be that this world is going to be more beautiful and heavenly, indeed worth living, there being no quarrel or dissension on trifles, as we witness today. Because Man having realised his own Self even to some extent will rise above these mundane matters.

Feedback

(Know Thyself)

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Second Edn.

Pages: 418

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जीवन का मूल्यांकन कम के आधार पर ही किया जाता है। कर्ममय जीवन व्यक्ति की सबसे बड़ी पहचान है। इससे ही व्यक्ति कुछ बतना है।

मन

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प्रस्तुत प्रस्तक मन का मनन करके मन-मस्तक को आप अधिक सफलता के मार्ग पर मांडकर अधिक आनन्दप्रद और खुशहाल बना सकते हैं।

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About the Author

S. THIAGARAJAN, is a pioneer in teaching photography in India to both amateurs and professionals. He, as an expert, has contributed in developing instructional materials on photography for National Council of Educational Research and Training, NCERT at Delhi and also was an expert on the panel of JNT University, Hyderabad. He was associated with Photographic Courses of SNDT Womens' University, Mumbai. He has been conducting in campus classes in several colleges.

The author, an accomplished photographer with many awards as well as technical papers and articles to his credit, is the founder secretary of Madurai Photographic Society. He is actively involved with various Photographic associations for well over five decades.

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