

LIVING REALITY

By

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Sant Nirankari Mandal
Delhi – 110009

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First Edition : 1991 : 2100

Second Edition (Revised) : October, 2002 :1000

Price : Rs. 10/-

Published by

Sant Nirankari Mandal
Sant Nirankari Colony
Delhi – 110009

Printed by

Print System, New Delhi – 2

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SUBMISSION

It is rightly said that true saints live even after their death. This is because their lives and thoughts continue to be relevant to generations to come, who keep on drawing inspiration from them. Rev. Kishan Lal was one such saint. He understood the lofty ideals of the Sant Nirankari Mission well and used his powerful pen to explain and propagate these through his booklets, namely, 'The Mission and the Missionaries', Religion, Gyan and Mission' and 'A Bunch of Thoughts'.

The book in your benign hands – 'Living Reality' is an adoption of 'A Bunch of Thoughts' along with a new chapter 'Devotion' which is another specimen of his enlightened erudition. It is hoped that the English-knowing readers will be benefited by these valuable thoughts of the author touching upon the Sant Nirankari Mission's philosophy.

Kirpa Sagar
Member Incharge Publications

Delhi
October 3, 2002

FOREWORD

In this materialistic age, man, enchanted by the glitter of this perishable world, has developed a reckless craze for the pursuit of earthly gains and goods, totally oblivious of the spiritual side of his life. This grievous neglect has resulted in the moral degeneration of the society in general and of the individual in particular. To satiate his ravenous hunger for material possessions, man does not hesitate to stoop low to deploy dishonest and shady means to amass worldly riches. He has made tremendous progress in the material field, but at the cost of his spiritual advancement. Though materially affluent, spiritually he is a destitute; he is a victim of fallacies, doubts, superstitions, make-beliefs, falsehood, fatalism and distorted interpretation of the life-giving thoughts of the Great Masters. Consequently, he is unable to distinguish between right and wrong and truth and falsehood. Because of his confused understanding, he is incapable of catching the significance of the vital traits, which make man the crown creation.

In this book, the author, late Shri Krishan Lal (1918-1988), has briefly touched upon some very sensitive topics of vital importance and put them in their proper perspective. For example, God-consciousness is not a transitory phenomenon related to a particular time and place, as is generally believed, rather it is an innate state of mind, and for righteous existence, one needs the solid backing of God-consciousness, which in turn, implies God-knowledge. Further, God-knowledge is no doubt an imperative prerequisite as it lights the path one has to tread, but simply acknowledging and accepting it is not the be-all and end-all; it has to be nurtured and ripened into a realistic realization of all that it embodies and denotes. Realization is co-extensive with life, the whole life. In essence, it means being and becoming. Thus it brings about an edifying transformation in one's way of thinking in order to lead an active but truthful life of moral and spiritual discipline – God-consciousness.

History is replete with instances of people, with mere belief in God, becoming shining examples of righteous and noble living. Heavy responsibility, therefore, devolves upon those who have been blessed with God-knowledge to engage themselves in constant and consistent spiritual endeavor to comprehend and sustain the impact and significance of the God-knowledge and to project their God-consciousness by living upto the terse motto: Truth is hit; higher still is truthful living. Equipped with an enlightened mind and tempered with the consciousness of the omnipresent Supreme Lord, within and without, one should lend moral touch and spiritual flavour to one's all doings and dealings. However, to cultivate and sublimate God-consciousness into a spiritual mood, praying (*Simran*), selfless service (*Seva*) and congregation (*Sangat*) are the most important aids.

It is rightly said that renunciation is a means of spiritual attainment and solace. But renunciation of what: the world or the worldliness? In fact, renunciation does not mean renouncing the world but the worldly attachment, ego, lust and desires. It is no use renouncing the world and retiring to the forests or mountains if the mind continues to be ruled by attachment, lust and desire. A true renouncer

(*Sanyasi*) lives in the world, discharges his domestic and social obligations, and is yet not worldly! It is aptly said that a householder, whose mind is detached from the world, is truly great. As we know, all the Great Masters, whom we revere and worship, were householders.

Life is a process. Act one must and every action has its reaction. However, unlike the animals, who are condemned to lead a run-of-the-mill existence, man, endowed with the rare faculties such as sense of discrimination, awareness and freedom of choice of action, can make or mar his destiny. Thus, the Law of *Karma* (Law of Cause and Effect) does not reduce man to a helpless victim of destiny, as is erroneously believed by the fatalists – a thinking which makes man inert and results in inaction and stagnation – rather, it infuses in him a spirit of dynamic thinking and urge for a better future.

There are two different view-points on the Law of Karma. One is that man cannot escape the consequences of his past actions under any circumstances. The other is that he can be True Master's *grace*: whence he realizes his real self and, adhering to his teachings, acts with out attachment and the sense of doership. The author was thinking of touching upon this aspect of the Law of Karma, but could not do so due to his sudden demise.

The last chapter, "Thoughts to Ponder" comprises thoughts, some of which might be of the holy and renowned personages though the author did not mention their source. If allowed to play their full role, these will surely make a salutary impact on one's thought-force for a brighter, healthier and blissful life.

Like his previous works, '*Religion, Gian and the Mission*' and '*The Mission and the Missionaries*', this book is also a measure of the author's dedication and devotion to master. He has discussed the vital topics in an erudite and laudable manner in the light of the teachings of the True Master to whom he expresses his deep gratitude as ever in the following words:

"All praise to a benevolent Master but for
whose benign blessings, it would not have been
possible for me to make this humble attempt."

A rationalist by thinking, a lawyer by profession and a devotee by faith, he was utterly humble and self-effacing and, above all, a conscientious being who always remembered those who were helpful to him even in the least. As ardently wished by him, we convey his thanks to the editors of this book in his own words:

"I am extremely grateful to Sarva Shri Joginder
Singh and Des Raj Ahuja, who made a valuable
contribution by obliging me with concrete
suggestions and constructive ideas".

Thanks are also due to our younger and talented devotee, Ashwani Madhok, for designing the book and going through the proofs.

I earnestly feel that whosoever reads this book, will be imbued with Love, Light and Wisdom.

AMRIK SINGH
Member Executive Committee
Sant Nirankari Mandal

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

God is not a myth; He is a living Reality.

- BABA GURBACHAN SINGH

God-Knowledge is no doubt, the basic beginning, a starting point for God-consciousness, but mere acknowledging and accepting His reality is not the be-all and the end-all of spiritual attainment and should not remain mere a theoretical belief, a postulate or a doctrine. None can be with the Lord by simply imagining and nursing the wishful thinking that he is enlightened with the Divine Truth. And, if he thinks so, it will be tantamount to a sheer boast or delusion. It is but pertinent to understand that there is a perceptible distinction between mere imaginative thinking and conscious awareness, and hence one must discriminate between the real and the fictitious, the eternal and the transitory. One has got to be spiritually wise and not otherwise. Man must reach God, realize His nature and identify himself with Him.

Mere indulging in recitation of the scriptures or ritualistic austerities can hardly suffice to build up God-consciousness. No amount of reading, reasoning, intellectualism or imitating others with blindfold conscience can help to gain worthwhile awareness. Man ought to build a shrine in his heart if he is really sincere in his purposive drive to accomplish the ultimate aim. This, in turn, necessitates the guidance and blessings of the true Spiritual Master and committed faith in his word and wisdom.

“Conscience is God’s presence in man’, says Emmanuel. God has blessed every human being with the divine spark, but it falls to the lot of the fortunate few to fan it into a fulgent flame and sublimate it with effulgent bliss of God-consciousness. Obviously, man has to actually experience and palpably feel the undetectable omnipresence of the Divine Being, whoever abideth with him, in and round, all the time and everywhere and does not desert him even for a split-second; firmly bear in mind that nothing can escape the penetrating providential eye, that man cannot by any maneuver conceal anything from the Omniscient who X-rays, scans and scrutinizes ever the feelings and thoughts, however deep in the inner recesses of heart and that man’s actions are subject to His judicious, impartial verdict and unverifiable award of the omnipotent Supreme Authority which has got to be accepted as sacrosanct. A God-realized man is, therefore, even under the holy spell of His reverential fear that deters him from going astray, protects him from ignominy and turns him into a humble, resigned and God-fearing being who surrenders and merges his own will in the Divine Will.

Man, living amidst alluring temptations and distractions of this mortal world, at every step finds it well-nigh impossible to steer clear of the hazards and remain untainted like the mud-fish. Consequently, heavy responsibility devolves upon the blessed to embark upon ceaseless spiritual effort to acquire and equip

himself with necessary moral strength and edifying thought-force to ward off unhealthy influences for enjoying the bliss of God-consciousness.

In its true perspective and significance, God-consciousness is co-extensive with life. It encompasses totality of life; radiating and promoting values that govern all the living. It is being and becoming. If truly grasped and deeply felt, its impact is manifested and discernible when the devotee lends spiritual flavour and touch to his behavior in daily run of life, integrating work and dealings with ethical principles.

For proper assimilation, truthful realization and blissful fruition of God-consciousness, it is essentially required that one engages himself in the follow-up action of concentrating on Him consistently, singing His praises, rendering selfless service and keeping company of holy men so as to keep God consciousness in perspective and deep-rooted in heart. It may sound so simple and so easy to pursue and yet it is an uphill task that requires colossal will-power and momentous strength to attain such a transcendental state of mind.

With committed belief in and unwavering devotion to God Formless – Nirankar – the God-conscious man is imbued with humility, surrender and contentment and attains spiritual preparedness to pursue a stable course of pious life. He transcends the earthly finitude, rises above the worldliness and adopts the attitude of invulnerability towards his experience, both bitter and sweet. Thus his spirit remains unsullied and unscathed.

With disciplined mind, moral integrity and edifying thought-force, he is emancipated from sensual bondages, and is transported to higher realms of spiritual sublimation. He becomes immune to emotional flutter and impulsive drive. He maintains his poise treating adversity at par with prosperity. He remains even-minded in pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. Effortlessly and innately, he enters the stage of equanimity and tranquility, abiding peace and inner calm.

Inner sublimity permeates the spirit of a truly God-conscious man. By nature he is humble, resigned, compassionate, tolerant, forgiving, contented, honest, free from ego and a crusader of truth. He is not jealous and has no malice against anyone. He neither frightens nor is frightened. He is friendly and treats friend and foe alike. He is a well-wisher of one and all. He is full of love for His creation and is committed to selflessly serving mankind as a matter of duty. Above all, wish self-surrender, he is deeply involved in unbounded devotion to God Formless.

History has in it glorious examples of holy men who radiated magnificently sublime expression of God consciousness, at times, even at the risk of their lives.

Jesus Christ faced crucifixion willingly and cheerfully, but never abandoned his irrevocable faith in the divine Supreme Being. He underwent gruesome tragedy with celestial serenity and composure as becomes of a beloved son of God. Child-devotee Prehlada incurred the wrath of King Harayanakashyapa, his father, for not accepting him as the divine super being. He adamantly refused to

surrender to falsehood with the truthful realization that there was nothing to worry about when God was on his side. No amount of horrifying brutalities could either deflect him from the path of rectitude nor could shake and destabilize his firm belief in the all-pervading God Almighty. His ingrained God-consciousness was a pillar of strength to him, and he withstood the life-taking ordeals fearlessly and firmly like a solid rock. Illustrious luminaries like saints Kabir, Farid, Namdev and so many more had the conscious solemn realization of the omnipresent eternal Reality. They were personified symbols of God-consciousness. Having identified themselves with the Lord, they held the torch of divine light aloft and served as lighthouses for guiding the ignorant groping in darkness. It will require volumes to cover the exalted celebrities who have left an indelible mark with their ecstatic love for God and truthful realization of the Divinity all around.

In nutshell, God-consciousness cannot be imbibed by mere study of holy books or austerities, but can be cultivated and developed only by a conscious awareness and identity with the Lord.

TRIPLE “S”

Undeniably, solid spiritual base is an essential prerequisite for a truthful career of noble thoughts and righteous deeds, but it will be a mere wishful consolation if one rests content with *Gian* (God-knowledge) as the ultimate end in itself.

In fact, a stupendous task lies ahead for a devotee to embark upon a process of purposive drive for a practical life of spiritual profusion. This, in turn, involves and necessitates sincere and consistent spiritual endeavour – ever dwelling on God and singing His glories, serving fellow-beings and keeping company of holy men. Triple “S” – *Simran* (Prayer), *Seva* (Selfless service) and *Sangat* (Congregation) – are the pristine practices which play a decisive role in transforming and shaping one’s thought force and attitude towards life. If truly and vigorously practiced, they not only serve as strong moorings to hold fast to the Divine Truth but also prove invaluable and dependable aids for consolidating the preserving the gain with an indelible impact, durable stability and lasting continuity, and thus help man to build a priceless asset of godly way of life.

Let us now discuss briefly the scope and significance of each of these practices.

SIMRAN

Man is confronted with and tormented by chaos. So, he needs harmony. He has to resolve or dissolve the inner as well as outer chaos. Chanting of God’s Name and singing His glories with full intensity of thought and feeling and with deep faith is the highest discipline pregnant with potential power to dispel chaos, rescue man from ignorance and doubts, illusion and delusions, and is the only way for experiencing spiritual solace and equanimity.

Simran or praying is not merely a ritual. It is thinking and thinking for the countless bounties and blessings bestowed by the Lord. It is the opening of heart to the true friend and real benefactor. It opens avenues to let in God and to let in love for Him. It brings God in our relationship, puts us on God's side, generates highest values and aligns us with the spiritual side of life. This is the way which leads to submission and surrender, to prostrate at His Altar and merge our will in His Will. It helps us to keep the spiritual life in perspective and to sustain the God-man relationship, keeping it actively alive and bright in head and heart. Beyond any doubt, it is the surest way to pacify the heart and purify the conscience. It is the strongest shield and the only protection against temptations, allurements and voluptuous flirtations. It is through prayer that God's light shines.

Genuine and earnest prayer stirs the soul and is like a radar for navigating approach and proximity to the Lord. 'Longing and yearning' – ecstatic love for God – is the fuel power with which one can travel to the unexplored regions of the Beyond and enjoy the coveted spiritual experience. Soul should be as restless as one gasps for breath when the head is pressed under water. 'Longing and yearning' to be purposive should be as natural as breathing and should be directed and pointed to the chosen ideal, otherwise one wanders a lot without getting anywhere. Comparison permitted, ill-directed prayer will be like a letter without address that does not reach its destination, rather stinks in the pile of dead letters.

By continuously craving for Him, melodiously singing His glories with the symphony of head, heart and soul, riveting single-minded attention on Him, bliss sprouts spontaneously in the innermost being and one feels the power and strength packed in it. But one can see the reflection of the sun only in clean water. The mirror must be wiped clean; none can see the reflection if it is dirty. Likewise, one catches His vision in the mirror of pure heart and clear conscience. Weep for Him with a longing heart and yearning soul and reap rich harvest of spiritual blessings and beatitude.

He who seeks Him with a longing and yearning heart, can see Him, talk to Him and walk with Him.

The spirit becomes unclean if the heart is not washed with prayer.

Praying, to be sincere and purposeful, should be full to the brim with intense love for Him. Love is the most exquisite language which God heeds. Even the deaf, dumb and blind can feel its soothing aromatic touch and realize its efficacy. Devoid of love, praying is an empty boast. It is aptly said that God is love and love is God:

In love who remained, God he attained.

- ANONYMOUS

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,

He made and loveth all.

- S.T. COLERIDGE

Prayer needs no speech.

- MAHATAMA GANDHI

Devotion to the Lord and His worship is possible only when man submits to Him, surrenders to Him and completely resigns to His Will. Self-surrender melts away the self-hood and self-conceit. It is imperative that man shuns his ego and gets rid of the pride of his 'I-am-ness'. "No man can serve two Masters", says Bible. The notion of 'mine' is like a fetter that keeps man in bondage. As long as man has the feeling of 'mine and thine', he remains unworthy and unfit for dwelling on Him. The 'I' and the 'HE' cannot rest in the same coil. They are irreconcilable and remain poles asunder from each other. The wretched 'I' has to be purged and shown the exit to pave the way for the exalted 'HE' to be *received* and *installed* in the shrine of heart. Self-surrender is a pre-condition for prostrating at His Altar with utmost humbleness.

God's Name is a panacea for all ills. By chanting His Name, sins disappear. Lust, anger, ego and other beastly propensities and designs are destroyed, and one is not contaminated by evil. Evil cannot overcome him, rather he overcomes evil and consumes it. The pure joy one experiences in dwelling on Him boosts one's morality and one becomes self-disciplined, calm, patient, contented, humble and compassionate. Life becomes smooth, sinless and free from doubts and superstitions.

More things are wrought by prayer Than this world dreams of.

- TENNYSON

Nothing can obstruct the holy work of a saint.

A Simple prayer can remove all obstacles.

- BABA GURBACHAN SINGH

Cursory reading of scriptures and lip-rendering of hymns without capturing the sense and significance embodied in them is insipid and vague narration. Mumbling of unintelligible and incomprehensible words and phrases without actually understanding and grasping the essence is a sheer cry and totally infructuous exercise. Recitation just for the sake of recitation cannot infuse the requisite spirit. It is devoid of the magnetic touch and bewitching appeal that enthrall the heart and move it to align and blend itself with the meaning and spirit that it expresses and conveys. Only the tongue repeats mechanically, the heart does not throb gleefully. Man can not derive the joy and exalted state of feeling from something which is not only Greek to him but also does not spring from the innermost recesses of the heart. The devotee has to engage in and identify himself with the substance and spirit of prayer to enable him to rise to spiritual heights and active tangible results with lasting impact. To pray is to glorify, eulogise and sing with gratitude the praise of the Compassionate, the Benefactor, who has bestowed the human form and all the bounties, with head and heart untied in ecstatic love for Him.

Man has to be spiritually wise and must protect himself from ulterior ends while praying. Praying ought not to be a petitioner type of performance. There should be no strings attached to it and should not be motivated by worldly desires to have some ambition realized or to get some problem resolved. Neither any request for well-being nor for any impending need be linked up with it. Materialistic tendencies should have no mixing up or else the sincere and honest purpose of prayer is discoloured, defiled and defeated by baser ingredients, and the pious aim is set at naught. Selfish and alloyed prayer, conducted out of greed or fear or adulterated with some expectation of benefit, is bereft of intrinsic worth and devotional effectiveness. God should be the only object of prayer. Only a pure, chaste and unconditional prayer gets a ready response from Him:

Prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft.

- EMERSON

In whatever way men invoke upon Me, in the same way do I fulfill their desires.

- GITA 4:11

I will hear the prayer of him who prayeth, when he prayeth unto Me.

-QURAN, II

'God is listening', that is the basic postulate. Prayer, if sincere and genuine, can not go unheeded. The Lord is attentive to man's every thought and feeling. God does listen and respond if the prayer is sincere to the core and full to the brim with exuberance of devotion. Only a pure, innocent and earnest call elicits His gracious benevolence. God can not but heed the prayer of a pure mind and a longing heart:

Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered.

- GEORGE MEREDITH

Efficacy of prayer for gaining the spiritual experience can not be denied. One should consistently and constantly dwell on God and sing His praises and glories. The 'pot' must be scrubbed daily to avoid the dirt and dross getting settled on it. It is not enough cleansing it once. Pray one must unceasingly and to one's heart's content:

He who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together, but not a single moment without prayer. For without prayer, there is no inward peace.

- MAHATAMA GANDHI

Seeking God is a thrilling experience, finding Him is a joy in itself. Single-hearted prayer (*Simran*) and the true art of prayer bring concrete returns.

There is nothing to worry when God is on our side. Pray as if everything depends on Him:

Where sanity is
there God is;

And the sane can still see sanity
so they can still see God.

- D.H. LAWRENCE

It is when men begin to worship that they begin to grow.

- CALVIN COOLIDGE

A single grateful thought raised to heaven is the most perfect prayer.

- GOTTHOLD

Pray without ceasing.

- BIBLE (1 THESSALONIANS 5:17)

SEVA

Seva or selfless service is the composite whole that emerges from the blending of higher values and traits of head and heart. It is the nectar that flows out of a compassionate and noble soul. It is an irresistible voluntary urge that springs from man's gentle and affectionate nature. Coerced service or forced labour, done under compulsion or stress of circumstances, is painful and is a barren effort, lacking sincerity and honesty of purpose.

To serve is the coveted privilege of the humble and the loving. It is men with kind, sympathetic, magnanimous, merciful and touching heart, having a soft corner for others, who can have the taste of this blissful delicacy for others, they extend their friendly helping hand to those in distress, share their sorrows and inspire them with confidence and courage to face the heaviest odds. It beautifies, enriches and sublimates devotion to God. He who serves, is himself benefited as selfless service (*Nishkaam Seva*) enables him to subdue his ego and overcome selfishness.

Seva or service has a universal appeal and approbation. It knows no bounds of space or territorial jurisdiction. It transcends the divides of caste, colour, creed, nationality and race. No alphabets are needed to express or convey the sweetness packed in it. It has its own mute but melodious and eloquent language – love. Time can not detract from its grandeur and make it stale. The whole humanity comes within its ambit and the whole world is the field of its positive role.

There is nothing nobler than to devote this life in the service of others and render help to the needy. All religions, prophets, saints, sages and seers strongly advocate and enjoin upon human beings to own and imbibe this sterling virtue. In their teachings and preaching, they unequivocally declare 'service to others' as a mandatory commandment. The reason for such an identical view by all without exception is the hypnotic charm that it exercises to foster happy human relationship. It miraculously brings about a change of heart and turns even foes into friends. It enlivens and cheers up the dejected and the depressed. Its soothing touch brings solace and succour to the afflicted. It infuses hope, confidence and courage in the hearts of the forsaken, the deserted and the fear-smitten, and saves them from frustration. To the victims of social injustice and natural vicissitudes, it is source of relief and support. For the needy, it is a timely

boon. Undeniably, it is a sterling attribute that promotes mutual sympathy and help mutual trust and understanding, mutual respect and good-will. It brings about a healthy co-existence, leading to loving brotherhood and a society free from prejudice, bias, malice, discrimination and the like tendencies. In fact, it is binding chord between man and man and, above all, a solid base for religious tolerance.

There is, however, a deeper significance of the word 'service'. It does not simply mean doing service or good to others. Rather one should cultivate the attitude and spirit of service that whatever service one is rendering to others, is service rendered unto God Himself. Man should practice it as worship of God.

Seva should not be mistaken as an obligation or favour. It is duty enjoined upon man by the Lord. He is just a medium through whom the Lord gets His appointed mission fulfilled. He is no better than a servant who runs his master's errands and is at his beck and call. As such, he should never nurse the vain glorious feeling of being a benefactor. Such a sober affirmation will certainly keep the ego of doer-ship subdued and he will become a humble, God-fearing man.

Selfless service has in it an element of self-sacrifice – voluntary self-denial of personal considerations, interests, comforts and conveniences. Sacrifice and long face go ill together:

No sacrifice is worth the man unless it is a joy in itself.

- MAHATAMA GANDHI

But its magnificent human touch, invaluable intrinsic worth, ought not be eroded by narrow-mindedness and short-sightedness. Human sympathy and compassion must prevail over petty considerations and partisan prejudices to alleviate the hardships of the suffering humanity. *Seva* is not a business-like deal and should not be bargained or bartered. It is more in the nature of spontaneous volitional duty without the expectation of any reward or compensation in return. He who thinks of any gain in return of service is simply negating the spirit of service. Service (*Seva*) should always be selfless (*Nishkaam*). It is all unconditional gratis labour of Love.

Form of service matter little. One may serve with brain, brawn or bullion. To say that a particular form is better than the other is to ignore the underlying spirit of goodness which motivates service and is common to all forms. Any form of service, rendered with good conscience and according to one's ability and capacity, is equally good, provided welfare of fellow-creatures is its aim:

All service ranks the same with God.

- BROWNING

Above all the service rendered in obedience to the wishes of the True Master is the best.

Service by itself is noble if it instills joy and bliss. Cherished human relationship is the essence of *Seva* or service. It sprouts from love. If, at all, one is to offer,

one should offer love and service. An act of goodness is life's precious asset and they who possess it, ever live in the hearts of men.

He, who loves and serves his fellow-beings, is blest by God, and it is His truest worship. Love of God makes man holy, but he can become holier if he loves and serves His creation:

He profits most who serves best.

- ROTARIAN MOTTO

Freely we serve Because we freely love, as is our will To love or not; in this we stand or fall.

- MILTON

Small service is true service while it lasts.

- WORDSWORTH

In the world, take always the position of a giver. Give everything and look for no return. Give love, give help, give service, give any little thing you can but keep out barter. Let us give out of our bounties, just as God gives us.

- SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SANGAT

Conceding that truthful theoretical base and background has its own place, at the same time, it can not be denied that for practical implementation of God-knowledge, *Sangat* or congregation plays a vital role. It inspires and goads the blessed to hold fast to and mature the Enlightenment with an abiding and unbending faith. At times, person, having been initiated, wavers and vacillates in his faith. This deterioration is due to lack of spiritual exercise and warming up of the spirit, which entirely depends upon keeping regular company of the spiritual-minded.

Since man cannot live in isolation, he is tended and moulded by company he keeps. *Sangat* feeds, nurses and protects the *Gianvan* or the enlightened being, replenishes, reinforces and fortifies his belief into a committed faith. The thought-force undergoes a substantial change through the edifying association and guidance of the true and a noble soul which, in turn, save him from wavering. To be in the company of the holy men is to make the existence a grand sweet song.

Sangat is the custodian and guardian of moral values and good conscience. Where the saints meet, there is no other talk except that of the Lord, love for Him, His worship and, of course, thanks-giving tributes to the Spiritual Mentor who has shown the Light and the way to achieve the goal. Benign company of the saints enriches and strengthens the faith of the enlightened one. It stimulates the spiritual force and serves as a stimulant for the soul. Holy society inspires confidence and brings about maturity of thought. It inculcates steadfastness and instills perseverance that helps make the faith deep-rooted and unshakable. Reformatory touch of holy men wipes off blots and blemishes. Their enlightening

discourses illumine and ennoble human mind and tend the perception and thought God-ward. Understanding, outlook and experience are widened, reaching higher dimensions, paving the way for spiritual ascendance. Doubt and uncertainty disappear. A unique state of ecstasy, peace of mind, tranquility and contentment permeate the mind. Undue involvement in worldly affairs gets a downward swing. Thus, one is equipped with a power full weapon of goodness and soundness of character that protects one from faltering. Fraternal influence of holy men and sweetness of their company arouse a sense of fellow-feeling and neighbourliness. Love is the pivotal point in such a gathering, and here love begets love in abundance. They share each other's joys and sorrows. Joys shared are joys doubled; sorrows shared are sorrows halved. Humility, tolerance and good-will further chasten and glisten the mutual relationship. Truth runs through the devotees, making the souls united and blended in oneness, binding them together with the thread of God-relationship.

Eternally Blessed is the Society of the Saints,
Meeting whom one is Imbued with the Lord.

- ADI GRANTH, PP.392-3

Kabir: Blessed is the Chander (Sandal) tree, Girded by useless
growth (Dhak); But, this too becometh fragrant like the Chandan,
for, it, in the nearness, liveth.

- ADI GRANTH, P1365

Association of Saints lends an edifying touch.

- BABA GURBACHAN SINGH

Thus, even an ignoble person is transformed to nobility though association with saintly men likes the polluted water that flows in the holy river Ganga and becomes *Ganga Jal* (Pure Ganga Water):

Kabir: Even if one discourses with the Saint for a brief moment, it
yieldeth fruit: for, the time one passeth with the Saint is never lost.

- ADI GRANTH, P.1377

Tulsi, association with a saint even for a short while washes away
millions of sins.

- TULSI SAHIB

Listening to a sage even for a moment is rewarding.

- GARIB DASS

When all other avenues have been exhausted, holy men come to the rescue. Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji always stressed the imperative need for attending the congregation without fail. Similarly, whenever anyone approached Baba Avtar Singh Ji with any problem, he would counter him with a simple query as to whether or not he was attending the congregation; and if not, he would advise him to do so regularly. Congregation of devotees of the Lord is the life-radiation centre, and one cannot have the taste and relish the ecstasy of devotional love without the Satsang (congregation).

Congregation is like a foundry for forging the human mind so that it may steadily get forward towards spiritualism. It is a nursery for the spiritual faculties and for flowering the spirit. It splashes colour and radiates light, illumines mind and dispels darkness. It is the seat of divine light and devotional learning. It is a holy institution which educates the mind and imparts lessons and morals which gradually get merged and blended into man's thought, speech, action, bearing the behaviour, keeping him on the right track of practical upright living.

However, for reaping the fruit of *Sangat* and for assimilating all the good that flows from it, one requires a clean slate, a clean mind, receptive ears, rapt attention and, above all, a pure heart.

Sangat is the most powerful and effective medium for cultivation and sustaining lasting continuity of Gian or God-knowledge and truthful living.

To sum up Triple "S": without inner light, there can be no delight. For self-sublimation in thought and feeling and for cultivating increased awareness of God's presence, practice, if not more, is as important as the precept. Know God here and now and make the known truly realized with the trinity of constant, consistent *Simran*, sincere, selfless *Seva* and fervent, Zealous *Sangat*.

TRUE RENUNCIATION

There is hardly any proposition which does not admit of more than one opinion, and all the more so in the spiritual field where theologians and philosophers, according to their specific line of thinking, suggest and lay down uncompromisingly conflicting ideologies. Even the gospel since Adam and Eve that "God is", is mooted and denied by avowed agnostics and atheists. No wonder, if the present theme of unusual sensitivity (renunciation) evokes controversy. Diverse and contrary approaches complicated the problem and give rise to a mass of confusion, making man worst confounded. Vaguely, he fumbles for a clear vision but finds himself helplessly unable to unravel the mystery and decide upon the right course he should adopt and pursue.

We are in the thick of worldly life and yet we are in search of peace of mind and contentment. It is natural for us to have desires, ambitions and concreted objectives of life in order to discharge our obligations towards family and society at large. In this process of worldly involvement, acquisition of worldly goods and gains for the satisfaction of our needs is unavoidable. Our indulgence in worldly affairs and craving for material possession grow more and more: satisfaction of one desire gives birth to another and yet another.

Essentially, our desires, ambitions and consequential efforts and actions are motivated by an irresistible urge to do better or to get more. But our efforts so often meet with disappointment and our actions fail to bear the desired fruit. When we are unable to reap what we desire, we are sadly disillusioned and awfully perturbed. We feel unhappy, sad and mentally sick. Does it mean that

we should give up desires, ambitions and actions if we choose to pursue a spiritual life and wish to accomplish self-realization and attain peace of mind? This paradoxical situation presents a real dilemma to many. We are faced with a riddle as to what has to be renounced and wherein lies true renunciation, and whether or not temporal engagements constitute insurmountable hurdles in our way to spiritual elevation.

All that is perceptible to the eye is *Maya* – transitory and fleeting – and must one day perish. Even man himself is mortal and his existence hangs by feeble thread, which might break at any moment. In fact, his very stay in this world is at the mercy and pleasure of his Lord Master. The whole creation is like a passing cloud, a bubble that is formed on the surface of water just to disappear the next moment. It is because of its fickle nature and impermanence of character that have impelled holy beings to declare this worldly phenomenon a shadow, a dream. Exponents of this view advocate that because of inherent temporary and passing nature, material creation is neither desirable nor worth setting our hearts on it. According to them it will be safer and wiser to shun worldliness and hankering after materialistic acquisitions as they constitute a potential threat to spiritual ascendance. They even go to the extent of preaching and exhorting positive detachment from temporal and social aspects of life, which means total curb on desires and ambitions and a highly rigid and austere living as ascetics, who deny to themselves active contacts with the outside world. This, in turn, will require control of sense organs, struggling and spending lifetime to achieve it. The path suggested is to retire to secluded corners; forests and mountains, far away from the din and hum of society, undergo penance and self-mortification. In other words, they preach inaction and stagnation. Ironically, such people, who even for the satisfaction of their bare needs depend upon alms from others, look down upon society with callous indifference, nay even contempt. And yet, the society has to support and bear the burden of their existence. In truth, they are parasites and for all practical purposes, they are lost to humanity. Let us see what Swami Ram Teerth says on this subject:

Renunciation does not require you to go into the deepest forest of the Himalayas; renunciation does not demand you to strip yourself of all clothing; renunciation does not require you to walk barefoot and bareheaded.

To give vent to his hateful bias against *Maya* (creation) and to project his innocence, man gives it a bad name and arbitrarily condemns it in no uncertain terms.

Ironically, he holds it guilty of alluring and bewitching and enticing him with its magic. Man gets so much enchanted and enamoured that he willingly falls an easy prey to its so-called tempting spell. And thus, he lustily runs after and chases it.

But there is another aspect of *Maya*. It is the most beautiful and serviceable thing that God has created for the use and benefit of man. Nobody can deny its positive utility as a means of fulfilling aims and its inherent capacity and power to satisfy human needs. Since it is the creation of *Nirankar* – God Formless – man

has no justifiable right to denounce it. What really matters is the use and the way he makes use of it. It is entirely due to his own infirmities and lack of will power that he allows himself to be overwhelmed by it. It is for him to command instead of becoming subservient to, and be ruled, by it. He cannot by any imaginable argument uphold his innocence. As a doer, blessed with a sense of discrimination, he himself is guilty of his nefarious activities. It is not *Maya's* behaviour that is at stake, but man's own conduct that is questionable.

so far as the *Gianvan* (enlightened being) is concerned, by virtue of his inner light, the blessings of the True Master and the right type of thought-force, he is well armed to prevail over *Maya*. In fact, he is like a wirepuller and *Maya*, a puppet in his hands. He is like a snake charmer who tames and toys with the most poisonous reptiles, extracts their fangs and deadly venom, makes them harmless and uses them as a source of earning livelihood. He can refine and transform even the life-taking venom into life-saving boon. He can cull sweet honey from the beehive infested with bees with fatal stings. With solid spiritual strength, he succeeds in rationalizing and channelising his motives in the right direction. *Maya* has no sway over an awakened being and cannot touch even the fringe of his apron, not to speak of staining it. It cannot pull him by the nose-string. Instead, it runs his errands and meets his requirements as he chooses to employ it. It is *Maya* that has to perform its duty towards the employer, man, and not the vice-versa. But he will be able to harness *Maya* to his liking only if he is a saint in the true sense. So says Saint Kabir:

Brother, why cry snake, snake (nick-name of *Maya*);
One, who has realized the Truth, can overcome it.

- ADI GRANTH, P.480

Coming to the contention 'Renounce the world and worldly life', it may be said that God has created and ordained man to stay in this world as a normal social being, participating in the day-to-day business of life as an active and useful member. Life, in fact, is an assignment, nay a rare gift, from God. We are in the care of God, property of God and placed in His business. We have been stationed in this world under certain conditions and for a specific purpose by the Creator. We must not run away from it. If we disregard, defy or desert our duty, we will be looked upon as disloyal and unfaithful who have betrayed the Benefactor and stood against His Will. It sounds perfectly ethical and mandatory for man as a rational and highly developed being, superior to all other creatures, not to play the truant from domestic and social environments and surroundings, but to make this world a happy dwelling place and life worth living.

Some hold the view that temporal responsibility and spiritual duty cannot validly co-exist and go together. They think that the former encroaches upon and violates the sphere of the latter and that their combination, labeled as amphibious-half householder, half monk – can neither endure for long nor can it blossom into a happy balanced relationship. Accordingly, for proper performance in the spiritual field, they advocate and stress a monastic or ascetic way of living. But, given the fact that man cannot live in isolation and accepting that he has to lead a normal life, he has got to keep himself concerned and busy in carrying out his duties. As a householder, as a member of the large family, he has definite

aims and objectives and cannot afford to forget or forsake his responsibility to accomplish them. He cannot help entertaining desires, needs and ambitions, which motivate and necessitate efforts and actions. From the first cry to the last groan, life is a continuously incomplete struggle, and one even remains besieged by heterogeneous mass of wishful thinking and desires.

It is contended and claimed by some that without desires and ambitions, nothing worthwhile can be achieved. It is ingrained in human nature to excel in whatever field he is working. Success and progress in life, whatever be the field, have been possible through man's desire for striving to do better or aiming at gaining more and more than what has already been done or gained. Aim at the sun, and though one may not reach it, the arrow will surely reach higher than if aimed at an object at level with the head. The renowned poet Wordsworth says, "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grip." An Arabian proverb says that if at all begging be thy lot, knock at the larger gates only. "I would better be first in a little Iberian village than be second in Rome", so said Julius Caesar.

History is replete with names who have achieved greatness and laurels through their desires and ambitions to score and acquit creditably with praiseworthy achievements. These desires and ambitions, which goad us on to act, are a necessary part of man's worthy existence.

However, it has to be conceded that we should not rush headlong and get caught into the complex meshes of the world. Man gets entrapped in a vicious circle of passionate involvement in worldly affairs. His desires make undesirable and unbridled excursions. Unhealthy craze to amass and hoard worldly effects and riches reaches the pitch of greed and avarice. More or less, he starts worshipping Mammon. And a time comes when his conscience stops pricking, so much so that he stoops low enough and does not hesitate to employ even dishonest and mean means to attain his ends. He deviates and drifts away from righteousness. They slavish and frantic entanglement has the danger to cast shadow to eclipse the spiritual side of his life. Though wealthy with worldly riches, he is reduced to the position of a destitute spiritually. In his mad lust, he totally neglects and forgets the duty that he owes to his Creator.

Truly speaking, it is entirely due to his inner weakness and lack of spiritual and moral integrity that man is chasing his desires recklessly. Instead, he must make discreet and prudent choice and selection with a jeweller's eye and skill as to what to pursue and how to pursue it. Constant vigilance in this regard should ever be his watchword. As Christ said, "Be in the world but not of the world."

In the ebb and flow of life, one cannot procure and get all that one desires to have. Total fulfillment is not only next to impossible but utopian idea. Of course, if wishes were horses, one could ride any number. More than often, Man's efforts are dissipated and he meets with disappointment. He feels pained when his hopes are belied and his expectations draw a blank. He is disillusioned, frustrated and feels bruised and hurt. Greater the expectation, greater is the agony. He feels not only mentally oppressed and tortured but is also at war with himself. When tension mounts he, at times, with broken nerves and senses, foolishly and angrily goes to the extent of hurling accusations and curses on his

Creator. His mental equilibrium having been thrown out of gear, he loses equanimity, composure, peace of mind and patience. With such an agitated mind and obsessed feelings, he cannot *salvage* the Lord out of the mass of confusion prevailing around him.

There is the doctrine that salvation is possible through abandonment of action itself. No doubt, if action is abandoned, its fruit is automatically abandoned – pearls go with the pod. But the reverse is not equally true. According to the exponents of this theory, salvation is not possible so long as the slightest trace of fruits of action remains to be exhausted. As long as action is performed, there will be the fruit of action, which will bar the way to salvation. Giving up of the fruit of action is not enough. Action itself must be given up. Therefore, if to achieve salvation, one must get rid of the fruit of action, one must get rid of action itself – permanent renunciation of all action.

This raises the obvious question as to how all actions can be abandoned for even eating, breathing, seeing, hearing, etc. are actions, and how can they ever be abandoned except in death? The dictum that all actions must be abandoned is an impossibility. It has the support of less than a fraction of the self-seekers. This concept lacks wide acceptability and is not meant for wider audience, such a course is not meant for the common man, man in the ordinary run of life. Its feasibility and practical application for men of all shades and hues will be a mere exercise in futility.

Action we cannot renounce. It is the natural lot of man. While living, it is obligatory for man to perform his duty; and for carrying out his duty, man has got to act. It is, therefore, clear that the answer to the searching question as to what has to be renounced is not the action but the fruit of action. Desire or expectation of the reward or fruit of action is at the root of the malady. And, it is this desire for fruit which has to be annihilated. One should forget, rather think not of the fruit, leaving it to God who is aware to everyone's needs, and just out of His mercy or munificence, He does what is good for the individual and in the best interest of humanity. Maybe, what seems to be cruel act of providential wrath has a deeper meaning of supreme sacrifice at His Altar to serve as a beacon light to the spiritually blind and the ignorant to bring them to the right path. Do your best and leave the rest to Him as He wills.

Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit.

- MAHATMA GANDHI

In the Gita, it is laid down that since it is not possible for an embodied being to renounce action completely, he who has renounced the fruit of actions, has truly renounced. Our duty is but to act, never to be concerned with the results. Even prayers and generosity should be without concern for fruit. So let not the fruit of our actions be our motive, and, at the same time, let not ourselves be drawn into the path of non-action;

To action alone hate thou a right and never at all
to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive;
neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction... ..

- GITA 2:47

Better indeed is knowledge that practice (of concentration);
better that knowledge is meditation;
better that meditation is the renunciation of the fruit of action;
on renunciation (follows) immediately peace.

- GITA 12:12

Devotion is better than knowledge and desireless
action is better than devotion. He who realizes this
principle of Vedanta is to be regarded as the best man.

- SURYA GITA 114-77

An enlightened being has no desire for fruit of action.

- BABA AVTAR SINGH

Knowledge and devotion to be true, have to stand
the test of renunciation of the fruit of action.

- MAHATMA GANDHI

If man still clings to a fiddle with his desire for the fruit and builds castles in the air, he is just living in fool's paradise. He is knowingly inviting misery and suffering and is cutting at the roots of his peace of mind.

It is not possible to abstain from action. Nor is cessation of action desirable. Inertia is not freedom. Binding quality of action is the motive or desire that prompts it. Renunciation refers not to the act itself, but to the frame of mind behind.

We are, thus, advised not to give up action, but to direct our desires and ambitions only to our allotted duties, which we must discharge to the best of our ability and capacity under any given circumstances without any desire or expectation of the reward. It will, however, be necessary to understand clearly what constitutes our rightful duty in any given situation. Our ambition for money, name or fame, is aimed at satisfying the need of our body and ego, which are by their very nature temporal and ephemeral. On the other hand, our ambition to realize something deeper and permanent in the creation around us is in response to a longing of our inner being, which fails to feel satisfied with the material ambitions. We have to reconcile the seemingly opposite tendencies.

To choose the path of right action, the guideline should be that action which is done without the sense of doership, passion or prejudice by one, who does not seek its fruit, is righteous. We must, therefore, learn to rightly and honestly analyse the motivation behind our desires and actions and pursue those which are free from selfishness and are un-harmful to any person or society at large. If we have the right objective and right means to achieve them, our desires and actions, no doubt, will result in maximum good and give us the inner fulfillment which we have been longing for and seeking:

The secret of happiness lies in renunciation.

- MAHATMA GANDHI

May we though Thy grace do our duties without attachment to results.

* * *

LAW OF KARMA

(Law of Cause and Effect)

Death is only a special kind of variation. It is a mere dissolution of the elements that the mortal coil is composed of. The real man – the soul – never dies.

The *Jivas* when embodied (human beings) are subject to the Law of Karma. All beings must reap the consequences of their actions. No action goes in vain. No effort is lost. As one sows, so one reaps.

Our actions are our only property, our title deeds, of which we cannot be disinherited.

Consequent on death, when the soul gets liberated from embodiment, it does not travel alone to the *beyond*. It is also not correct to assume that it carries nothing out of the world. Our actions follow and accompany it beyond the grave.

Karma is an aggregate of our acts, both in the present life and in the preceding births. It covers our present, our past and our future.

Actions have full weight in the balance-sheet of eternity. The balance-sheet of good and bad actions determines the destiny in the life to come. Destiny is thus the net product or effect of the actions in the previous births. It forms only one arm of the Law of *Karma*.

Whatever a man today is, it is because of his past actions. His present status is caused by his past.

Conceding that man is the product of his past actions called *Karma*, it does not mean that he is a helpless victim of his destiny over which he has no control. Such thinking will make the Law of *Karma* an inert philosophy. If it were so, there will be no new action, which shall determine the future destiny. Thence man will be no better than other living creatures are blindly yoked to the destiny to live a life of *Bhoga Yoni* – run-of-the-mill existence – merely putting up with and perform insensibly and passively bearing all that is ordained for them.

On the other hand, the True Master teaches that the Law of Karma is a vital force that affords man an opportunity for dynamic thinking to achieve the fore-most aim of human existence. Unlike other creatures, he is gifted with intelligence, ability, reason, wisdom and will power to exercise his judicious discretion and measure up to the challenge of destiny. As such, he is rightly acclaimed as *Ashraf-ul-Mukhlukaat* – the highest being of God's creation.

Man has the capacity to choose his action. He has the faculty to discriminate (*viveka*) between right and wrong and adopt the path of his choice. Through self-effort (*purshartha*), he is in a position to change the influence of his destiny – the effect of his past actions. Right thought and right action can reduce or neutralize destiny. Thus, the freedom to modify the effect of the past and create a future, better or worse, depends on man's self-effort.

What man meets in life is destiny; how he meets it through self-effort becomes *Karma*. This leads us to understand that man can act to *shape* his future by regulating and channelising his self-effort in the right or wrong direction. Time spent in the company of the wise and the noble leaves an edifying impact on one's thought-force. He is more than likely to reflect similar virtues in practical life. But a person, who seeks and keeps the company of the vicious and the wicked, is bound to be influenced by evil tendencies. It is up to the man himself to decide upon the course he likes to adopt. He has the liberty to engage himself in self-effort which, in turn, helps him to make or mar his destiny. In other words, destiny is of man's own making.

The self-effort of today becomes the destiny of tomorrow. Man's duty is to act and perform right actions by resolutely turning the mind away from antagonistic forces. Destiny yields to consistent application of self-effort. But man has got to develop a new judicious vision, undaunted spirit, firm determination, unbending will power which equip him with integrity, character and right thoughts that materialize into right actions. It is not proper to grumble that *Karma* has brought about all this or that. Virtuous deeds of past life do help to create a good environment in the present life. Exert and concentrate on self-effort and change the unfavourable into favourable possibilities.

The wise and the noble have ever emphatically exhorted human beings to be good and do good in life. This presupposes their faith in the capacity of human spirit to act and perform righteously irrespective of what the destiny provides.

Man has to pay for all his deeds. This explains why even a person leading a noble, pious and chaste life has to suffer, may be for something he had committed in earlier births though he might be ignorant of the same. But his ignorance cannot prevent the operation of the Law of Karma.

Relevantly it may be asked as to why the Great Masters undergo suffering. Outwardly, the holiest of the holy seem to be worldly men like other earthly beings engrossed in performing their domestic and social obligations, but inwardly they are not at all attached to the world. They appear on this earth as divine apostles at a critical juncture when evil forces are on the ascendance and the socio-spiritual order is on the decline. They have the divine mission to combat and contain the spreading influence of evil and to restore righteousness. They look upon themselves as mere instruments of God, engaged in alleviating the suffering of ailing humanity plagued with rampant immorality, unrighteousness, falsehood and repression as also to guide and help human beings to reclaim and sustain spiritual values and human dignity by enlightening them through their teachings, preachings and exemplary truthfulness. With

highly seasoned spiritual prudence and transcending the self, they do everything in the name of God and for God. Imbued with matured innate sense of self-effacement, self-surrender and non-attachment, they never claim any credit for themselves for whatever they do, rather egoless as they are and true to their infallible devotion, they ascribe their faring to God with profound spontaneous joy and fathomless gratitude. In the process of carrying out their sacred mission, they have to meet with stiff opposition from the misguided and the vested interests but the holy beings, on their part, never shirk or shrink from resolutely and fearlessly pursuing the chosen path of truthfulness and selfless service to God's creation, come what may. No wonder, if in the tussle that ensues between good and bad, right and wrong, noble and ignoble, they have to bear untold hardships and inhuman brutalities even at the cost of their precious lives to determinedly resist the fictitious and the fallacious. Despite victimization and gruesome tragedies, they never allow their conscience to be soiled and stigmatized by surrendering to the agnostics and the avowed opponents. They are totally unmindful and not the least worried about what happens to their mortal coil. With their total surrender to God's Will, they bear the consequences willingly and cheerfully with evenness of mind and complete composure without any resistance or grumble. Consequently, their spirit of truth and selfless service survives all oppression and remains invincible. All their actions are purely in the nature of dedicated self-effort with the sole pious aim of fulfilling their assigned mission to rescue and redeem human beings in distress. Obviously, their suffering is matter of their right choice of action for the good of others as well as in deference of truth. The sufferings of the holy masters never go waste; rather prove a blessing in disguise. Their sacrifices serve as lighthouses to show light to the misguided with blindfold conscience. Such illustrious celebrities ever live in the hearts of posterity and are remembered with unbounded love and reverential gratitude. And the peak moment of their spiritual splendour comes when they consume hateful tirade with love and graciously bless even those who have sinned against them. They pray to the Lord for enlightening them and to show mercy to them. Spontaneously they invoke:

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

- BIBLE (LUKE: 23:34)

The Law of Karma is governed by cause and effect. The effects experienced in the present must have had their causes in the past, and the causes of the present shall grow into the effects of the future.

Destiny refers only to our past action, making man its victim, but the Law of Karma infuses the spirit of action the urge to work and progress by focusing attention on a better future through self-effort. It is the basic formula for right and purposeful living:

Some ignorant people says: *Karma* does everything. It is all destinies. I am destined by my *Karma* to be all this or that. Why then I should exert? It is my destiny only. This is fatalism. This is a fallacious argumentation. An intelligent man will certainly not put such a question. You have made your own destiny from within by your thought and action

- VIVEKANANDA

Shallow men believe in luck. Wise and strong in cause and effect.

- PLATO

DEVOTION

In the present age loaded with theological confusion and consequent spiritual chaos, the path of devotion (Bhakti Marg) is the best way to cultivate spiritual progress. The devotion presupposes that the devotees has a chosen ideal; and the ideal can be none else except the self-existent, all-pervading God Formless (Nirankar). The basic undeniable postulate is the God is: He is indivisible One and He does listen the prayer if it is sincere to the core. Before anything else, the devotee has to acknowledge and accept the reality of the holy object of his devotion. He has to identify the ripe concept of the Enlightenment as different from the unripe concept which is all darkness, and irrefragable affirm his irrevocable consecrated belief in Him and His worship alone. Nothing can be gained by mere reasoning. One has to cultivate an unshakable realization that He ever abideth in and around and steer a life of steadfast devotion to Him.

Man drifts rudderless in the tumultuous sea of quick changing thoughts, ideas and ideals. By himself, it is well nigh impossible for a seeker of Truth to make any break-through or headway in the spiritual field. However, much intelligent and well-versed a person may be, none can spiritually advance and progress except through the guidance of a Spiritual Mentor. The spiritually wise have even recognized and emphatically stressed the need to reverentially bow at the feet of a holy personage and humbly beseech him to enlighten the opaque mind, lacking insight and understanding. A spiritual Master pulls the veil of ignorance aside, removes the opacity of understanding and brightens the blurred perception. He awakens and enlightens the spiritually retarded self-oriented with blissful knowledge that flows from his authenticated word of light. On his part, the devotee has to firmly bear in mind that he derives his spiritual reliability and moral strength from his undulterable faith in his Master and his sanctified word. With unflinching devotion to the Master, he is certain to perceive, experience and grasp whatever he mentions to him. Faith in the Master, his word and work is at the root. As is the faith so is the devotion to the Lord.

God is not the exclusive domain of any one sect, faith or religion. He is the coveted ultimate goal, common to one and all, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. Nor is devotion the exclusive monopoly or luxury of the privileged few. All are children of One Supreme Patriarch and are equally entitled to share His love. Approach may differ, but they point to the same common destination.

The Almighty is the creator of all things, big and small. Man's everything-brain, brawn, bullion-belongs to Him. Even his very existence and stay in this world are entirely at His discretion and at His pleasure. God has bestowed countless

bounties for man's benefit and he is just a pitiable beneficiary, who depends and lives on His unbounded generosity. Naturally, in return for His limitless munificence, it becomes his first and foremost duty to worship Him, day in and day out, with devotion gratitude.

Devotion is complete dedication to the fundamental Cause of all causes. Singing carols in His praise and practice of praying with utter humility and heartfelt gratitude as a way of devotion is the most suitable discipline for our age. It goes wonderfully well with man's mundane life and other forms of earthly disciplines. As a worldly being bound by natural and normal existence, man is actually incapable of practicing more demanding and arduous systems, which isolate him from domestic and social activity.

Self-worship is the anti-thesis of devotion to God. All wrongs flow from the assertion of self. Nothing is more hideous than the nescience of agnostic 'I' which manifests itself in the form of ego of the embodied mind and self. Narrow, consuming ego with all its horrible droppings is essentially man's defiantly obdurate enemy. It is like a fetter that prevents man from prostrating at His Altar. The ingrained sense of self-importance of the swollen-headed wrecks and ruins the mental and spiritual health like the fire that reduces the sandalwood (fragrant plant) to ashes. Its maddening disastrous effect whirls the head pollutes the heart, soils the conscience of the self-oriented, rendering him unworthy of pursuing the gigantic splendid task of devotion to the Lord. Self-righteous arrogance turns him into a devastating arsenal of self-destruction. The position is that even an imagined feeling of self-conceit should not be allowed to raise its ugly head. Annihilation of ego and immunity from the fatal incidence of self, are, undoubtedly, mandatory requirement. Devotion can be cultivated and preserved with utmost humility and a loving heart. Self-surrender melts away the confining self-hood. Be humble, because it is in a devoted humble heart that the Lord takes His august seat. Relinquish ego; submit and surrender to Him; merge own will in His will and do everything in the name of God and for God.

Some advocate control of mind through control of organs – absolute control of aspects of personality. They waste their lives in their efforts of sense-control and mind-control and fighting against impression gathered by mind. Some don robes of a particular colour, carry a staff and bowl or spend their life in telling the beads. Some dust their bodies and foreheads and go a begging in the guise of fake devotion. There is also a common notion that one should retire to secluded corners under self-imposed social prohibition. Such men shun activity. Like louts-eaters, they love the inert way of life and love the philosophy of inaction and indolence. However, fact clearly stands out that they are no better than a handful of clay, lost to humanity for all intents and purposes.

Man has to live a natural active life, earning livelihood honestly. He is not to give up work and most perform his domestic and social obligations. His duty is to act. Though he cannot give up action, he is not to feel concerned with the fruit of action, or be obsessed with the expectation of results of his liking. It is entirely in the hand of Supreme Adjudicator and Sole Rewarder. Action and devotion are the two facets of life. Both processes can co-exist and can be simultaneously carried on, side by side. While action cannot be given up; devotion is a must.

Attachment to action does not entitle man to unchecked liberty to lustily and madly run after worldly goods and gains. He must ensure that while living amidst the impurities of the world, he keeps himself above-board and untainted like the lotus flower. He is also to remain forewarned that the glory of the world is like a flower which stands in full bloom in the morning but fades in the heat of the day. As such, he should not get stuck up in over-involvement and over-entanglement in the murky life of cheap fleeting pleasures which irretrievably push him away from the devotional course. Obviously, this necessitates curb and control on unbridled and indiscreet desires which come galloping. A harmonious relationship and a balanced synthesis between the temporal and the spiritual has got to be established and maintained. In fact, the temporal unavoidably needs moral blend and spiritual base to lend it ethical flavour and touch to make this world a blissful place to inhabit and life itself dedicated to devotion to the holy Father.

It is not enough to have intellectual ideas. One should be able to react emotionally, as well. Harmful ideas and negative tendencies of mind, which are not conducive to devotional life, have got to be eliminated with a determined will. Emotions and impulses are to be sublimated and sweetened with divine love. Senses should be given upward and God-ward turn. Thereby devotional life becomes easier, enabling man to experience the pure joy of dwelling on God.

Devotion belongs to the realm of heart. It is the heart that has to be tamed, rationalized and warmed up in utter love for God. It is misleading to bank upon extraneous practices, mindless ceremonies, self-mortifying austerities, etc. Beating of drums, ringing of tinkles, babble of nerve shattering noise do not arouse even a bit of devotional consciousness. Devotion has become more a matter of rituals and priest-craft, with little effect on the life of the individual. Sanity, sanctity and devotion have lost circulation like a base coin. In a riddled materialistic world, ceaseless singing His Name and glories with the symphony of head and heart is the best path of devotion.

Cursory reading from holy books and recitation of verses is an insipid and vague narration without capturing the sense and spirit behind. Mere utterances without actually grasping the essence lack penetrating touch and bewitching appeal which infuses the required inspiration that moves the heart to align and blend itself with the spirit of recitation. The devotee has to identify himself with the sense and meaning embodied in the prayer to reap tangible results with lasting impact.

Devotion springs up from our spiritual mood – a mood in which one establishes relationship with God, keeps it bright before eyes and actively alive in heart. For cultivating the required mood, the aspirant can garner the needed spiritual strength through the practice of prayer. Prayer keeps the devotional life in perspective. Ordinarily, the mind remains scattered here and there and everywhere. By constant and consistent dwelling on God, mind gets controlled and settled on Him. Meditation, which simply means that the mind should stay where it is with concentration, follows when it is directed to Him. Divine love – devotion – sprouts, blossoms and gets rooted in heart,

But it is only a pure, innocent and unconditional call that gets response from God. Genuine and earnest prayer cannot go unheeded. By continuously craving for Him, melodiously singing His praises, riveting single-minded attention on Him, love for Him arises spontaneously. But one can see the reflection of the sun in clear water. The mirror must be wiped clean. Likewise, one catches His vision in the mirror of pure heart and clean conscience. It is with a loving heart full to the brim with the exuberance of prayer, one can see God, talk to God and walk with God.

The good of mankind is the highest good. Service of mankind has always been the crux of the teachings of saints. Devotion means love and love means service with dedication. God reflects Himself in humanity and if God is present in man, then devotion to God should take the form of service to fellow-beings. In fact, one can evaluate the extent to which one is devoted, by the way one treats his fellow-beings. By serving the children of the Lord one serves the Lord and this is His true worship.

Devotion is co-extensive with life. It is realization and not more dogmas and doctrines, however much appealing they may be. In essence, it is the composite whole of values and ethos which govern righteous living.

Its values are expected to be reflected in the daily life of those who express belief in and loyalty to God. It embraces in its domain the totality of life charged with what man honestly believes. It truly imbibed, devotion must affect the whole life of a man of God, who is not only a man of prayers but also a man of affairs, living a practical social life in this action-packed world.

The greatest security in devotion lies in more and more becoming conscious of the Divine all the time, undetectably attached and in depending upon His grace in all eventualities. He who sees the SELF in his own Self and all a SELF, becomes a knower of Infinite Truth – a true devotee.

Pray that you may take delight in His Name
Pray that your love for Him may ever grow.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Religion is co-extensive with life; it is being, becoming and realizing.

We should not merely tolerate; we should give the same respect to other religions as we give to ours.

We should not only bear with other religions, but also imbibe their virtues.

True religion instills love for God through fraternal dealings with fellow-beings.

The different religions are windows through which God's light shines in man's soul.

True religion leads man to liberty, light and love, and inculcates values that govern human life.

Devotion is the divine spark; the cementing, unifying and integrating factor between man and God.

Purpose of religion is to unite and not to divide.

Religion is sacred; let us protect it.

Religion is outraged when evil is perpetrated in the name of religion.

There are many religions but only one morality.

A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.

One, who offends not, is a perfect man.

Where boasting ends, there dignity begins.

Thoughts are mightier than strength of arms.

Doing good is certainly the happy action of life.

A pure heart penetrates heaven.

Happiness begins where wishes end; he who hankers after more, enjoys nothing.

Happiness is neither within nor without us; it is the union of ourselves with God, the source of eternal happiness.

He serves all who dares to be true.

If it is not right, do not do it; if it is not true, do not say it.

A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but also parent of all other virtues.

Drops hollow a stone not by force, but by the consistency with which one follows another.

Great men are they who believe that the spiritual is stronger than the material force.

The heart of a good man is the sanctuary of God in this world.

This span of life was lent for (pursuing) lofty ideals to improve ourselves and to serve mankind.

So long as lust smells sweet, we are loathsome to God.

Successful men are those who build their foundations out of the stones thrown at them.

Life is journey, not a home.

There are three things that make life lovely: beauty of reverence, dignity of patience and joy of usefulness.

To dare nobly, to will strongly and never to falter, is the path of duty.

For the lips, truth; for the voice, prayer; for the eyes, pity; for the hands, charity; for the figure, uprightness; for the heart, love. This is the best spiritual cosmetic.

Control tongue, temper and temptation.

Dare to do right, fear to do evil.

It is better to hold a candle than curse the darkness.

Wisdom is the health of soul.

Kindness is the golden chain by which the society is bound.

Without courage, there cannot be truth and without truth, there can be no achievement.

Sweetest bread is that which is earned by toil and sweat.

Forget not the favours thou hast received.

Forget the favours thou hast done to anyone.

Politeness is to human nature what warmth is to wax.

Extend to everybody kind salutation.

Live in harmony with others.

Injure not the feelings and reputation of others.

He, who digs pit for others, himself falls in it.

He who gives bad advice, is the worst enemy.

There is no darkness, but ignorance.

Knowledge is a blessing, but a curse if it creates a sense of pride.

The wise is he, who knows his weaknesses and strengths.

Do not covet what belongs to others.

If you have no charity at heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble.

Giving to the poor alone is charity; all other giving is of the nature of loan.

Tongue is a double-edged sword which cuts both ways.

A slip of foot you may recover; a slip of tongue you never get over.

Words are the only objects which last for ever.

Think twice before you speak.

Consider well before you commit.

You can suffocate a thought by expressing it in too many words.

Flattery is a bad, brittle coin.

Put not your trust in money, but put your money in trust.

Riches and rank do not make for happy life; happy is lives are useful lives.

Without a rich heart, wealth is a poor beggar.

Refusal of hospitality is the greatest poverty.

Venture not to do injustice to your duty.

The great pleasure of life is to discharge your duty with pleasure.

Hold integrity sacred.

Be fair, just and honest in dealings.

Wrong means can never lead to right ends.

Negative thoughts weaken the man.

A pessimist sees only the dark side of cloud, while the optimist does not see clouds at all; he is walking on them.

All the strength and success you want is within you.

Lie not for any consideration.

Nothing is more hideous than ignorance.

Think no evil, speak no evil, see no evil.

Try not to appear what you are not.

Drunkenness is the ruin of reason.

Never does a man look so small as when he is trying to look big.

Boasting is a cry of despair, arising out of inferiority.

Beware of the perpendicular 'I' pronoun – narrow, consuming ego.

Anger is half-madness; consume it with love.

People, who give vent to anger, lose the reason.

Ego is the seed-pot of all vice and viciousness.

Bloated sense of self-importance wrecks human structure and hastens man's doom.

Jealousy arises out of lack of confidence in oneself.

A jealous person can never be a well-wisher of others.

Hate and terror are a great hazard to happy human relationship.

Next to hate, fear is the most destructive emotion.

Raise not even your little finger to point at anyone.

Forbear to judge, for we all are sinners.

Greed is mania that plays havoc with honest living.

Protect yourself against superstition, fatalism, communalism, fanaticism and bigotry, which spread disaster and misery in society.

Be at war with your vices to be at peace with yourself.

Temper is a valuable possession; do not lose it.

Be good to others on your way up; you may meet them again.

Words of sympathy skillfully administered are the best therapy.

Watch your word, action, thought, character and habit.

Remember value of time, success of perseverance; dignity of simple living and high thinking, worth of character, power of kindness, virtue of patience, pleasure of working, joy of hospitality, purity of feelings, nobility of thought, honesty of motive, sincerity of purpose, sweetness of compassion, strength of humility, righteousness of equality, value of equity, justice and good conscience.

Sincerity can never go waste; it returns with returns.

Love is selflessness; self is loveless-ness.

Love is the greatest possession on earth; its happiness cannot be measured.

Start is day with love; fill the day with love; end the day with love.

Love of God and love of neighbour are the two-sides, inward and outward, of a truly religious person.

Love is the guiding light of the universe.

Divine love is a flower which in its early bud is happiness and in the full bloom, heaven.

Only a humble heart can love and serve.

Be humble; love all; hate none.

Saints conquer the world with humility.

The forgiver is himself saved from the fire of hate and bitterness.

Man in the grip of fear is the most dangerous enemy of man.

Prosperity and happiness consist in contentment.

Happiness is never perfect until it is shared.

No offence is too small to be condoned if it conflicts with honesty.

Hope is friend in need.

Hope is the life-saving belt.

The greatest test of courage on earth is to bear the defeat without losing heart.

Benevolence and mercy have a mission full to the brim with milk of human kindness.

Oneness – one race and one creed of humanity can be inculcated and fostered by surrender of ego or self to pure selfless universal love and devotion.

To enlighten and awaken the ignorant is the highest sacred duty par excellence.

Humanism is life's precious blood.

They who sacrifice life for others ever live in the hearts of men.

Be calm and composed in pain and pleasure.

The way of peace is simple and straight; it is the way of love and truth.

There is no service like his who serves because he loves.

Selfless service destroys demons of ego and selfishness.

All are one; be alike to everyone.

Truth at all costs; truth is the nearest argument.

Truth is the current that animates all creation.

Adversity is a state when man gets acquainted with him-self.

Handsome is he, who handsome does.

Actions are the little deeds, which accompany the soul to the Beyond.

As one sows, so one reaps.

Keep not an eye on the fruit of action.

To give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.

Discipline is a refinery where talent becomes ability.

Self-discipline is the greatest discipline.

Character is the summit of being.

Crisis of confidence arises out of crisis of character.

Character is an asset, which is the noblest of all possessions.

To be born a gentleman is an accident; to die as a gentleman is an achievement.

Man is known by his worth, not by birth.

The practical is the sublime.

Truthful living is the hallmark of meritorious existence.

Practical life of a Karma Yogi (action-oriented person) is the highest way of living.

It is foolish to stumble twice against the same stone.

Any man can make mistake, but only an idiot persists in his error.

Meditation is the art of living with oneself.

Human life is the only opportunity to strive for liberation.

Salvation lies in liberation from the snare of desires, temptations and allurements.

Fear has no place in our relationship with God.

The feeling of shame and repentance is actuated by the inner voice of God that stirs the conscience.

The greatest tormentor of human mind is a guilty conscience.

There is no substitute for conscience; either you have it or you don't.

Conscience is watchdog that barks at sin.

There is no tranquil sleep without good conscience, nor any virtue without God-conscience.

You can always change your mind by changing your head.

God's Name plus right activity is the immortal message.

Everything one does should be practiced as worship of God.

To surrender, to be resigned, to merge one's will in the will of God, leads to equanimity and poise.

God makes all things good, but man meddles with them and makes them evil.

Do everything in the name of God and for God.

Service of mankind is the service of God.

WORSHIP GOD AND BE A GOOD MAN;
TRUST IN GOD AND DO THE RIGHT.

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