

Vedanta

380 NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2014

The Truth Of Success
Swami Bhajanananda

Self-effort
Swami Virajananda



Divine Wisdom

External Coverings

We see, then, that this human being is composed first of this external covering, the body; second, the finer body, consisting of mind, intellect, and egoism. Behind them is the real Self of man.

We have seen that all the qualities and powers of the gross body are borrowed from the mind; and the mind, the finer body, borrows its powers and luminosity from the soul, standing behind.

We believe that every being is divine, is God. Every soul is a sun covered over with clouds of ignorance; the difference between soul and soul is owing to the difference in density of these layers of clouds.

We know neither the subconscious, nor the superconscious. We know the conscious only. If a man stands up and says, "I am a sinner," he makes an untrue statement because he does not know himself. He is the most ignorant of men; of himself he knows only one part, because his knowledge covers only a part of the ground he is on.

The mistake is that we cling to the body when it is the spirit that is really immortal.

He who says he is the body is a born idolater. We are spirit, spirit that has no form or shape, spirit that is infinite, and not matter.

Some people are so afraid of losing their individuality. Wouldn't it be better for the pig to lose his pig-individuality if he can become God? Yes. But the poor pig does not think so at the time. Which state is my individuality? When I was a baby sprawling on the floor trying to swallow my thumb?

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Contents

242	Editorial <i>Gayatri Mantra</i>
245	The Truth Of Success <i>Swami Bhajanananda</i>
266	Self-effort <i>Swami Virajananda</i>
270	Sri Chaitanya's Philosophy of Love <i>Swami Prabhavananda</i>
275	Swami Vivekananda, The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna <i>Swami Harshananda</i>
281	God is also Mother <i>Hans Torwesten</i>
285	Leaves from an Ashrama 47: On the Production of Compost <i>Swami Vidyatmananda</i>
286	Annual Index
288	Programme

ISSN 1355 - 6436

Editorial

Gayatri Mantra

(Continued from the last issue)

Every day millions of Hindus, especially, the *Brahmins*, repeat the famous Gayatri mantra at dawn and dusk with deep faith and sincerity. They believe that the repetition of the sacred Gayatri mantra with devotion will bestow both prosperity and liberation.

This is the famous Gayatri mantra:

OM BHUR BHUVAH SVAH
TAT SAVITUR VARENYAM
BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHİ
DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAT

(Rigveda : 111-62-10).

Notice that there are four sentences in this mantra. The first line is not part of the Gayatri mantra. The last three sentences alone constitute the Gayatri mantra. The first sentence, OM BHUR BHUVAH SVAH is an addition appended later on. About how this came to be there is an interesting story.

Long back, Brahma, the creator, was approached by a devotee. He said, 'I am a person of small intellect. I am incapable of undertaking the study of these Vedas which are vast and deep. Please extract the essence of them for me'. Thereupon Brahma churned the three Vedas and extracted the three sentences from each of the three Vedas—Rig, Yajus and Sama. Even this was too much for the devotee. So Brahma again churned these three sentences and extracted their essence as Bhuh-Bhuvah-Svah, also known as *Vyahritis*. Too much for the devotee!! Again Brahma churned these three *Vyahritis* and extracted the sacred syllable OM.

The story apart, the symbolism we get from the story is this: the essence of the three Vedas is three sentences beginning with *tat savitur varenyam*. The essences of these three sentences is the three *Vyahritis*, and their essence is OM.

So if a person with faith and devotion repeats the Om he grasps the teaching of all the Vedas and will realise the Supreme Reality known as *Brahma*. The purpose of the Vedas (for that matter the essence of any scripture) is to lead man to God.

Let us now dwell on the meaning of the Gayatri mantra.

Gayatri Mantra

Om= Om;

Dhimahi =We meditate

Bhargas= on the Spiritual Effulgence

Varenyam Devasya= of that Adorable Supreme Divine Reality who is

Tat Savituh= the Source or Projector of the

Bhuh Bhuvah Svah= three world-planes the gross or physical, the subtle or mental, and the causal;

Yo= May that Supreme Reality

Prachodayat= stimulate

Nah= our

Dhiyah=intelligence, (so that we may realize the Supreme Truth).

(Om. We meditate on the Spiritual Effulgence of that Adorable Supreme Divine Reality who is the Source or Projector of the three world-planes : the gross or physical, the subtle or mental, and the causal. May that Supreme Reality stimulate our intelligence, so that we may realize the Supreme Truth.)

In simple words the meaning of the Gayatri mantra is:

"We meditate on the glory of that Being who has created or projected this universe; may He guide, inspire and enlighten our minds."

The deity to whom this mantra is addressed is the sun God, (*Savita*). This mantra contains twenty-four syllables in the well-known *Gayatri* meter; hence it came to be known as Gayatri mantra.

This Gayatri mantra is repeated piously at dawn and dusk (*sandhya*). By the devotional repetition of it all sins are expiated. The reverential worship and japa of the Gayatri mantra can give anyone knowledge, both secular or spiritual.

But the main purpose of the sandhya ritual is spiritual progress, the union of the individual soul with the Universal soul. At the time of being initiated into the Gayatri mantra a Brahmin boy also needs to wear a sacred thread. Henceforward he will be known as twice-born.

This is baptism, a spiritual re-birth and he is supposed to lead a pure and spiritual life—the sacred thread is there to remind him of this fact. The contemplation of the Gayatri mantra should continue until he realises God. The contemplation and repetition of Gayatri mantra are excellent means of unfolding human consciousness without

Gayatri Mantra

any limit until he reaches Self-realization. Only after God realisation all rituals drop off by themselves.

Sri Ramakrishna says:

How long should a man practise such devotions as the sandhya? As long as he does not feel a thrill in his body and shed tears of joy while repeating the name of Rama or of Hari.

He who has realized God no longer performs religious duties such as the sandhya. In his case the sandhya merges in the Gayatri. When that happens, it is enough for a person to repeat just the Gayatri mantra. Then the Gayatri merges in Om. After that one no longer chants even the Gayatri, it is enough then to chant simply Om.

'The sandhya merges in the Gayatri, the Gayatri in Om. A man is firmly established in spiritual life when he goes into samadhi on uttering Om only once.

There are countless spiritual aspirants who worshipped Gayatri with deep devotion and reached the *summum Bonum* of life. Here is the example of Sri Kshudiram, the father of Sri Ramakrishna.

Henceforth it was natural for him to be always indrawn, and in consequence he had from time to time various divine visions. Every morning and evening, during his prayers, he would repeat the meditation Mantra describing the Gayatri with such deep devotion and concentration of mind that his chest became flushed and tears of love flowed down from his closed eyes. Early in the morning he would go, basket in hand, to pick flowers for the worship, and at such times the goddess Sitala, who received his daily adoration, would appear before him as an eight-year-old girl dressed in red and wearing many ornaments. She would accompany him smiling, and help him pluck flowers by bending the branches in blossom. These visions filled his heart with joy. His staunch faith and deep devotion, which were reflected in his countenance, kept him always on a high spiritual plane.

Sri Ramakrishna was also initiated with Gayatri mantra when he was 12 years old at Kamarpukur. Though there is no written record he too like his father must have had deep spiritual experiences through the repetition of Gayatri mantra.

We will explore further the deeper meaning of Gayatri mantra in our next issue.

Swami Dayatmananda
(to be continued)

The Truth Of Success

Swami Bhajanananda

Why do we fail?

The pond in the forest was full of lotus plants, many of them in bloom. Bees were buzzing around the flowers. One big black bumble-bee was so absorbed in enjoying nectar that it lost all sense of time. Soon the sun set, darkness crept in, the petals of the lotus flower started closing. But intoxicated with the nectar, the bee was not aware of what was happening. When at last it came to its senses, it found itself trapped inside the closed flower. It then thought: 'Very soon the night will pass, the rosy dawn will come, the sun will rise, and this beautiful lotus will open again.' 'But alas! just then an elephant, which had come to the pond to drink water, pulled out the lotus and chewed down the flower, bee and all.'

To be absorbed in the pursuit of pleasure and, when difficulties come, to dream of a better future, only to see one's hopes vanishing down the gullet of the great guzzler, Time—this is mostly how human life is spent.

The life of every human being is filled with desires. Most of these can never be fulfilled and have therefore to be suppressed, ignored or transcended. We can hope to have only some of our desires satisfied. Even out of these only a few actually attain fruition. We ponder and plan, struggle and compete, experience and experiment, hope and dream, pray and worship. Yet very often our calculations go wrong, the edifice of our 'great expectations' comes tumbling down and the goal slips through our fingers. In other words, we often fail. Why?

In the first place, this question itself seldom rises in our minds. We suffer endlessly and yet do not ask ourselves why we suffer.

The Truth Of Success

We fail in many undertakings and yet rarely seek to know the cause of failure. We commit many mistakes but rarely pause to consider their root cause. Questioning is a form of awakening. You can change or rouse the consciousness of a person by putting the right question to him. The great naturalist Louis Agassiz used to awaken the minds of his students by repeatedly asking them, 'What do you see?' Socrates and, ages before him, the Upanishadic sages turned the questioning method to advantage in imparting knowledge. Great men are those who ask great questions and thereby raise the consciousness of vast numbers of people to higher levels. As Susanne Langer has shown, through their questions they open new epochs in human history.² Socrates opened a whole new epoch with his question, 'What is virtue?'. The Upanishadic sages opened a new epoch by asking such great questions as, 'What is the self?', 'What is the Infinite?', 'How to know the knower?' and so on. These fundamental questions raised a host of other questions and opened new vistas of understanding. When all possible answers to the epochal questions have been found, that epoch comes to an end. Then another teacher raises another great question and opens a new epoch.

In our individual lives it is vitally important to keep asking ourselves fundamental questions. In order to solve the problems of life we must be awake, and we are awake only as long as we encounter Life. One of the best ways of keeping our encounter with Life ever fresh is to ask ourselves existential questions continually. Why do we not do it?

One reason is that we are afraid of the responsibilities we would have to shoulder if we found the real answers. A second reason is that we already know too many false answers. We find or invent cheaper alternatives that enable us to escape from our

Swami Bhajanananda

troubles for the time being. Says Swami Vivekananda: '*This moment we are whipped and, when we begin to weep, nature gives us a dollar; again we are whipped and when we weep, nature gives us a piece of ginger bread, and we begin to laugh again.*'³ Another reason is that we hope that tomorrow our problems would be solved. We blame the world for all our sufferings and failures, and hope that the world would change tomorrow and then all would be well with us.

The will to succeed

But time and tide wait for no man. The *Mahabharata* narrates how an old man had to learn this truth from his own son. The young boy said, 'Death overpowers the man who thinks: "*This has been done, this is yet to be done, and this is half done.*"⁴ Everything is controlled by time. In the *Mahabharata* the King of Death asks his son, '*What is (the most important) news?*' Yudhisthira answers, '*Time is cooking all beings in the cauldron of great delusion using the sun as fire and days and nights as fuel, stirring them with the ladles of months and seasons—this is the news.*'⁵

Only the desires are ours, the means of fulfilling them belong to the world outside. One of the most basic laws of the science of economics is that wants are unlimited but means are limited. In a general way this law applies in all fields including spiritual life. Limitation of the means includes both the scarcity of resources and the limitation imposed by time. The whole of human life is a continuous endeavour to manipulate limited resources within limited time to achieve the maximum satisfaction of unlimited desires.

Time is limited, resources are limited, and it is not possible to satisfy all the desires that arise in the mind. Therefore the wisest thing to do is to choose an ultimate goal of life, subordinate and

The Truth Of Success

orientate all desires to this supreme goal, and bend all one's energies to achieving this goal within the short span of life destiny has allotted to us. Success in life depends upon how best and how far one attains the goal of our life. It is a mistake to identify success with the satisfaction of some lower desires and to think that one's whole life has failed if these are not fulfilled.

It is not possible to be always successful at all times everywhere in every undertaking. Nor is it necessary. Real success lies in choosing the right goal and attaining it. Every person should choose the goal that lies within his capacity to attain—either in worldly life or in spiritual life. After attaining a lower goal we should strive for the next higher goal. Our life should be a progressive movement from fulfilment to fulfilment—not from frustration to frustration. There may be some failures in life but our life as a whole should not be a failure.

The important point is to make the will to succeed the dominant note of one's life. This does not mean one should become a careerist or a go-getter. What everyone needs is a bracing attitude that disposes one to succeed, and a strong will to persevere until success is attained. This is especially needed in spiritual life.

Sometimes failures in worldly life may turn a person's mind to the spiritual path. But this does not mean that spiritual life is meant only for those who have failed in worldly life. Nor is it true that success in spiritual life is incompatible with success in worldly life. The person endowed with the will to succeed can succeed in either worldly life or spiritual life or both. The person who harbours the defeatist attitude will fail in both the types of life. It is easier to succeed in worldly life than in spiritual life. '*The spiritual path is extremely difficult and dangerous as the sharp edge of a razor*', says the *Upanishad*.⁶

Swami Bhajanananda

The demands of sacrifice, self-control, concentration and perseverance that spiritual life makes cannot be met without great strength and courage. Even to pray intensely or to depend only on God one needs tremendous strength. A person who lacks strength will, instead of praying, either sit and brood over his troubles or go about blaming other people.

The primary purpose of religion is to give man strength to face the problems of life and enable him to succeed in Life. A Dostoevsky, a Maupassant or a Kafka can only expose the miserable conditions of society and leave man all the more helpless. But a Krishna, a Buddha, a Christ or a Mohammed reveals man's divine destiny and makes him overcome his wretchedness. Every religion asks man to face the problems of life boldly. Before delivering his great spiritual message, Krishna exhorted Arjuna: *'If you are killed you will attain heaven, if you win (the battle) you will enjoy the earth. Therefore, O son of Kunti, arise with the determination to fight.'*⁷ The point Krishna was trying to drive home is this: whether you follow worldly life or spiritual life, you should give up the attitude of defeatism, pessimism. Such an attitude is a denial of the evolutionary elan of life and an insult to God.

There is no disease without a remedy, no problem without a solution, no obstacle without a means of overcoming it. The purpose of every religion is to find a lasting solution to the problems of life. And the lasting solution that all religions have found is simply this: awakening to Truth. How does this solve the problems of life? All existence, all phenomena, all beings are governed by Truth and as the Upanishad declares, *'Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood'*.⁸ This is the most fundamental and universal law of the universe. Though it may appear to be too abstract, metaphysical or simplistic, the Law of Truth is of

The Truth Of Success

paramount practical significance. All our problems arise only from the inadequate opening of our being to Truth.

The Law of Truth

Our purpose here is not to define Truth but to understand its practical significance. There are three aspects of Truth which are of vital importance in practical life. One is its all-inclusiveness. Truth is the highest generalization possible for the human mind. All the laws of the universe that have so far been discovered and all those that will be discovered in future are nothing but the expressions of the fundamental law of Truth. There is nothing which is outside truth. Even error, ignorance, falsehood, illusion and unreality are within the realm of Truth; for, to say that a lie is a lie is an assertion of truth.

Understanding this fact has two practical benefits: it simplifies and harmonizes human life. Day by day human knowledge is increasing at a rapid rate and the mind of the modern man is cluttered up with countless ideas, concepts, facts and memories. Then there are the rules and norms of morality and conduct, imposed by religion, state and society, which constantly come into conflict with the ever increasing desires and changes in the social environment. All this makes human life very complex and confusing. However, if we understand that all forms of knowledge are only different manifestations of the one universal law of Truth, our thirst for knowledge will cease. Similarly, there is no need to worry about so many rules of moral conduct like non-violence, continence, truthfulness and renunciation. By holding on to the one eternal law of Truth constantly all these virtues automatically get fulfilled. This will make our life simple and well-ordered. Every person is unique, every time is unique, every situation is unique. This means that we have to take new decisions and act and react in a variety of ways constantly, all

Swami Bhajanananda

through our life. This is one of the major causes of tension and stress in our life. But if we hold on to the Law of Truth we can deal with every situation in a natural and spontaneous way. This important principle was taught by Sri Ramakrishna through a simple teaching which he gave his holy spouse Sarada Devi, 'Act according to the time, act according to the place.'

Religion and science are only two ways of seeking Truth in two different planes of consciousness. All the different religions have for their ultimate goal the absolute Truth; even the most fanatic follower of a religion cannot deny this. The Vedic sage enunciated this principle in the famous dictum, 'Truth is one; sages call it by different names'. Sri Ramakrishna gave it a more practical shape when he declared, 'As many minds, so many paths'. By following this simple principle we can avoid the conflict between religion and science and between one religion and another, and Live in harmony with others.

We now come to the second aspect of Truth which too has immense practical significance. It is: there are different degrees of Truth. The Vedic sages discovered, apart from the principle already mentioned above, two other important principles: one is that Reality consists of five levels of being; the other is that the microcosm (the individual) and the macrocosm (the universal) are built on the same plan. The five levels of being are matter, life, consciousness, self-awareness and bliss. Each of these has its own degree of truth and innumerable laws based on it. Corresponding to those levels, the individual being has five *kosas* or sheaths. For the all-round development and integral functioning of the individual each sheath must open freely to the corresponding level of cosmic reality and follow its truth. Everyone must follow the laws of truth operating at the different cosmic levels.

The laws of one plane may not apply in another plane. Reading books will not fill the belly, any more than taking food

The Truth Of Success

will increase the knowledge of the mind. The water of a holy river may purify the mind but, if it is polluted and contains pathogens, it may cause disease in the body. Both the effects of the water are governed by the laws of the mental and physical planes.

This takes us to the third practical aspect of Truth: truth is not only knowledge but also power. Whoever opens himself to truth gets power. Truth is not an abstract concept but is identical with reality itself.⁹ And reality is power. Each level of truth has its own power. Whoever opens himself to a particular level of truth gets the power of that level. The nature of our life depends upon the way we open ourselves to different levels of truth and power. Being parts of Universal Life we are all immersed, as it were, in an ocean of power. But we must learn how to open ourselves to this power.

By taking nourishing food and proper exercise we gain physical power. Through education, reading and thinking we open our minds to the power of knowledge. Through scientific research scientists learn how to unlock the power hidden in atoms and molecules. There are people who learn how to open the chambers of psychic power. Spiritual people gain spiritual power through prayer and meditation. The 'charisma' of leaders is nothing but the capacity to open themselves to social power.

We often, very often, notice that virtuous people suffer whereas wicked fellows thrive in life; that those who follow dishonest means become rich whereas the honest remain poor; that immoral men enjoy good health, whereas pure and holy men suffer from various ailments; that materialists and atheists enjoy life whereas pious believers are tortured by doubts and conflicts. This is true not only of individuals but also of nations. Both Russia and China were formerly extremely poor countries, but after eliminating religion, churches, priests and monks they have now

Swami Bhajanananda

become Superpowers. By contrast India, with all its temples and *ashrams*, *yajnas* and *pujas*, saints and sages, non-violence and religious harmony, continues to be poor and neglected. When we see so much suffering, cruelty, injustice and immorality all around us we cannot help asking ourselves whether there is a God or a moral order governing the universe. Unable to find the right answer, millions of people have lost faith in God and religion.

The real fact is that the whole universe is governed by the Law of Truth. 'Truth alone triumphs', no doubt, but not necessarily the truth as we conceive it. If we wish to succeed in life, we must observe how the Law of Truth operates at all levels, and open ourselves to it at the appropriate levels. If an honest man fails in his business or in getting promotion in his office, it is not because of his honesty but because of his inability to open himself to the truths of the practical world. When the virtuous king Yudhisthira went to heaven he was astonished to find the souls of Duryodhana and other wicked heroes of the kurukshetra war occupying honourable seats there. Then a divine voice told him, 'The laws of heaven are different from the laws of the earth'. A hero is a hero even if his intentions are evil. The faith of a wicked man in the power of wickedness is often found to be far greater than the faith of a virtuous man in the power of goodness. As a matter of fact, many of the so-called good people harbour grave defects, and their pretensions to virtue are often only a cloak to hide their weaknesses. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the Serpent, but God was not deceived and drove them all out of Eden.

The operation of the eternal Law of Truth may be conceived as the exercise of the Divine Will or as the Divine Mother's Lila or as the supreme Lord's cosmic yoga. In whatever way it is conceived, Truth alone triumphs at all planes in all walks of life. Failures happen only when we do not open ourselves freely to

The Truth Of Success

Truth at all levels. What prevents us from opening ourselves to Truth? If Truth is so important and necessary, why is it that all people do not open themselves to it fully?

The root cause— ignorance

The first and most obvious answer to the above question is: ignorance. Ignorance of what? Ignorance of everything— ignorance of one's real nature as the *Atman*, ignorance of what is truth and the power of truth, ignorance of the nature of the world, indeed there seems to be no limit to human ignorance. But what is ignorance? Like knowledge ignorance too must be traced to the soul of man. According to some Protestant theologians man is a born sinner and depravity is his essential nature. Among the Indian philosophers some (Ramanuja, for instance) hold that ignorance is a limitation of self-knowledge caused by one's past *karma*. According to *Advaitins* ignorance is a distinct category, a kind of mysterious power known as *Maya*. Primarily a veil covering the *Atman*, *Maya* is the root cause of all other forms of ignorance and error.

As a metaphysical concept *Maya* may satisfy the intellect but, being an intangible negative principle, it is of little practical value. We have to come to grips with the problems of practical life and understand the immediate, tangible causes that prevent our awakening to truth and produce failures in life, especially in spiritual life. Some of these causes lie in the outer world and are beyond our control, but many of them lie within us and can be effectively dealt with through self-knowledge and intelligent effort.

Self-knowledge

One of the astonishing things about human life is that though everyone knows so much about other people and the outside

Swami Bhajanananda

world, he knows very little about himself. This is one of the chief reasons why he is so easily affected by his environment. He regards himself as one of the innumerable objects of the world and allows himself to be treated as a commodity. His subjective life and experience have little value, he values more the objects around him. His estimate of himself depends upon what others speak of him. In other words, the clearest sign of inadequate self-knowledge is the absence of self-respect and dignity. A person without self-respect cannot be expected to treat others with respect. He develops an irreverent, critical and often violent attitude towards the world. At the same time he is helplessly dependent upon the world. This love-hate relationship with the world distorts our view of reality and prevents us from opening ourselves to truth. It has to be changed, and for this self-knowledge is necessary.

Self-knowledge has different levels. Vedanta speaks of the five dimensions of the self corresponding to the five *kosas* or sheaths. Though it is good to know about all these levels, in the present context it will be enough to focus our attention on two of these which are beyond our ordinary means of knowing and yet profoundly influence our life. These are the unconscious and the transcendent. The transcendent aspect will be dealt with in the next section.

About the unconscious a great deal has been written in books. With the help of psychoanalytic techniques Freud and his followers have discovered many of the processes going on in the unconscious. However, it is not enough to learn about these from books or to psychoanalyse the minds of other people. We should learn to dive deep into our own unconscious and understand how the processes going on there control our own thinking and behaviour. Among these processes there are three which deserve special consideration here.

The Truth Of Success

One is continuity with the past. Being the store-house of the seeds (*samskaras*) of past experiences, it is the unconscious that provides us continuity with the past. Many of our past experiences were certainly unhappy or painful, and we would like to forget them and start a new life. But problems cannot be solved merely by forgetting them; and since many of our present problems and sufferings have been caused by the experiences of the past, it is necessary to keep a vital link with our own past life. That is why the Upanishadic sage tells himself, 'O mind, remember what has been done, remember what has been done.'¹⁰

Of course, there is no need to brood over the past mistakes, or to gloat over the past achievements. What is necessary is to build a new self. But a new self (that is, the empirical self or ego) cannot be created through plastic surgery; it has to grow out of the old one. Life is not a palimpsest but a continuous record. Spiritual life appears unreal to many people because it has no foundation in the past. In order to hide past life the self puts on several masks which prevent it from facing the truths of life. These masks are to be thrown off.

Secondly, the unconscious is also the power-house of the mind. The various instincts and drives that motivate us have their origin there. All these are, however, only different manifestations of two primordial, existential drives: *raga* (pleasure seeking) and *bhaya* (fear). It is the first that gives rise to the second, and these two represent the positive and negative aspects of the struggle for existence shown by all living beings. If we want to understand the problems of life we must understand how these two basic existential drives operate in us. They often prevent us from opening ourselves to Truth fully. This leads us to the third important point about the unconscious, namely, the repression of success.

Swami Bhajanananda

Paradoxical as it may seem, we very often actively work for our own failure— not consciously but unconsciously. Some failures are caused by unfavourable external factors like poverty, social injustice, lack of opportunities, etc. But when educated people placed in favourable circumstances fail to achieve some of the major goals of their life, it is clear that the cause lies within them. In his famous book *The Power of Positive Thinking* Norman Vincent Peale says, 'People are defeated in life not because of lack of ability but for the lack of whole-heartedness. They do not whole-heartedly expect to succeed.'¹¹ He quotes the well-known Canadian athletic coach Alec Percival to the effect that most people, athletes as well as non-athletes, are 'hold-outs', that is they are always keeping something in reserve; they do not invest themselves a hundred per cent.

Dorothea Brande in her excellent book *Wake up and Live* has shown that there is an 'unconscious conspiracy' in many people against their own success, which she calls 'the will to fail'. The natural tendency of every living being is to succeed. But in some people this will to succeed gets repressed so that they may fail in their undertakings. This repression is, no doubt, an unconscious process, but why do they do it? Why do people unconsciously wish for and ultimately bring about their own failure. There are several reasons. The most important of these is the fear of responsibility. Responsibility involves freedom of the individual, taking risks, facing the unknown, dealing with unpleasant facts, people and situations, keeping promises, and other troubles. The unconscious naturally wants security and comforts, even if this means remaining at a lower scale in life or failing in one's undertakings.

The repression of success, the 'will to fail' appears in different ways in our daily life. One is day dreaming. This generally means

The Truth Of Success

an escape into the world of fantasy. But endlessly planning about the future, brooding over the past, thinking about what other people have done or are going to do—all these are also forms of daydreaming. Another way the 'will to fail' works is the diversion of one's energies in the wrong direction. For instance, when the day of examination approaches, an engineering student may suddenly develop a tremendous interest in biology and may spend hours reading and preparing notes on that subject, neglecting the subject of his examination. Or one may abandon oneself to one's daily routine and fill one's time with ever so many trifling activities.

Regarding this Dorothea Brande says: '*The cold truth is that we apply the routine- observing tendency to our whole lives, growing mentally and spiritually more flaccid, more timorous, less experimental! with every day we spend supported by the rigidity of habit. We avoid responsibility which entails discipline.*'¹² 'Laziness, inertia, is yet another sign of the repression of success. About this Alexis Carrell remarks:

*'Laziness is particularly lethal. Laziness does not only consist in doing nothing, in sleeping too long, in working badly or not at all. But also in devoting one's leisure to stupid and useless things. Card-playing, cinema, radio, endless-chattering, rushing about aimlessly in motor cars—all these reduce the intelligence. It is also dangerous to have a smattering of too many subjects without acquiring a real knowledge of any one. We need to defend ourselves against the temptations provided by the rapidity of communication, by the increasing number of magazines and newspapers.'*¹³

Nowhere else is the 'will to fail' so commonly seen as in spiritual life. It may not be possible for all to attain *nirvikalpa samadhi* or merge like a salt doll in the ocean of Brahman. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, a one-litre pot is not expected to hold

Swami Bhajanananda

four litres of milk. But everyone is born with a certain spiritual potential and, if this has not been actualized to the full extent, he has Lived in vain. Complaining about lack of time and facilities, creating unfavourable situations oneself by neglecting one's duties or by quarrelling with other people—all these are clear indications that the 'will to fail' is active in the spiritual aspirant. The sincere aspirant who is determined to succeed will make the best use of his time, discharge his duties properly, and lead a well-adjusted regulated life. He will take all precautions, says the Upanishad, '*to protect the fire of Yoga in him as a pregnant woman protects the foetus.*'¹⁴

Knowledge of oneself, of one's capacities as well as limitations, is very much necessary for all people. There is an ancient saying which brings out the importance of self-knowledge.

He knows not he knows not, and he knows not—avoid him.

He knows he knows not, and he knows not—teach him.

He knows not he knows, and he knows—awaken him.

He knows he knows, and he knows—follow him.

Self-trust

Many people seem to have a lot of self-knowledge and yet fail in life. What is the reason for this? There is a link connecting knowledge and action: it is trusting oneself. If this link is missing, self-knowledge will be of very little practical use.

What does trusting oneself mean? We have seen that the two important dimensions of the self are the transcendent and the unconscious. Of these the transcendent is beyond the realization of most people, whereas the unconscious is full of defects. How then can one trust oneself? Indeed, many people would trust others rather than themselves. Lust, anger and other passions are lurking in the depths of the unconscious. Most people have the

The Truth Of Success

fear that these may 'spring upon them like tigers' (as Swami Vivekananda put it) and overpower them some day in an unguarded moment. This fear creates deep insecurity, inferiority complex and even self-hatred. Moreover, a good deal of psychic energy is spent in dealing with these problems, with the result that many people have a constant feeling of fatigue and exhaustion—neurasthenia as doctors call it.

It is of course true that, as long as the unconscious remains 'the Devil's workshop', it is not wise to trust it fully. But the unconscious is also the workshop of the angels! Deep down within us we have ever so many good instincts and impulses like love, compassion, purity, nobility and strength. Let us have trust in these good powers. This trust will come naturally to us if we have faith in the fundamental goodness of creation and firmly believe that Truth and Goodness will ultimately triumph. With this faith we have to exercise our good instincts more and more (through Karma-Yoga) and gradually bring the evil instincts under control. This is what purification really means. Once the whole of the unconscious is purified to a satisfactory extent, we must learn to trust it. For the unconscious is our psychic powerhouse, and unless it is allowed to operate freely, we will not have enough mental power at our disposal. This is one type of self-trust.

The higher, transcendent dimension of the self is known as the *Atman*. An eternal part of the Divine, the Atman is self-luminous, immortal, unchanging, blissful and free, unaffected by emotions, thoughts and impurities. It is the source of all knowledge and spiritual power. By its very presence, by merely focusing its light, it can purify and control any part of the mind. The Atman is our real nature. To understand it and to hold on to it at all times is the higher and real form of self-trust. Once Swami Vivekananda was asked, 'What is the true meaning of the assertion that we should depend upon ourselves?' Swamiji

Swami Bhajanananda

replied, '*Here self means the eternal Self. But even dependence on the non-eternal self may lead gradually to the right goal, as the individual self is really the eternal Self under delusion.*'¹⁵

The Atman being an inseparable part of the Supreme Self, dependence on the true Self *ipso facto* means dependence on God. The Atman is the door that opens to the infinite power and light of the Divine. To trust oneself does not mean to remain alone; rather, it means keeping the door of the spiritual heart open and letting the Divine do everything for us. So we need not be afraid of trusting our higher Self.

Self-directed effort

Self-knowledge and self-trust predispose a person to success but the actual attainment of success needs a third factor, right effort. Self-trust must issue forth in action. Otherwise too much preoccupation with oneself may lead to an unhealthy form of introversion (to be distinguished from introspection) which, as Henry Link has pointed out in his famous book *The Return to Religion*, is one of the main causes of failure and unhappiness in life. Speaking about introverted people Dr. Link says:

*They had done what they felt doing when they felt like it. They had failed to practise the many habits which lead to skill and satisfaction in a variety of contacts with people. They had pleased themselves first and so failed to learn how to give themselves to others. They had devoted their energies to the narrow subject: themselves. Now their energies were eating them up. They were finding that oneself, as an object of attention, is not sufficient for success; that doing the things they liked and avoiding those they disliked led to a sense of inferiority and an emotional hell. In trying to find their lives in their own way they lost them.*¹⁶

Knowledge, education, has its uses but too much preoccupation with it may prevent a person from putting forth

The Truth Of Success

right effort and convert him into an ineffectual drone. About such people Dr. Link comments: 'They needed to stop sponging which they enjoyed doing and which was becoming vice, and needed to start producing which they increasingly dreaded.' Knowledge has no value unless it is tested in actual life and this testing can be done only through work. Nobody will seek the guidance of a person who has only theoretical knowledge without any practical experience. A person without the 'will to act' can help neither himself nor others. If half of our miseries is caused by ignorance, the other half is caused by inaction. We often hesitate to act for fear of committing mistakes. This fear can be overcome only by acting, even if that means committing more mistakes. Says Dr. Link: *'I have told hundreds of clients that it is better to make seven mistakes than one. While one person hesitates because he feels inferior, the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior.'*

Nowhere is this more true than in spiritual life. The knowledge gained from scriptures and the *Guru* must be applied in actual life by serving God and man. Meditation is not a pleasant dream: it needs intense practice and struggle. A headache, stomach upset, distraction, lack of 'mood' or some such small difficulty is enough to make people give up prayer and meditation and resort to sponging, that is, reading books which they often mistake for the practice of *Jnana Yoga*! Too much reading creates a conceptual delusion which is all the worse for being unconscious. 'The mass of words is a forest which makes the mind wander.'¹⁷ Even what we know about *Bhakti* and *Jnana* turn out to be empty conceptual frames. When a person is hungry his immediate concern will be only food; a poem on hunger or a treatise on nutrition will not satisfy him. Similarly the soul which really longs for God will not bother about *Bhakti* or *Jnana* but will strive intensely for a direct, self-to-Self contact with God.

Swami Bhajanananda

Intense, self-directed effort is necessary to attain success in any field, spiritual or worldly. What is self-directed effort? If we study our actions we will notice two characteristics. One is that most of these are going on unconsciously. We are rarely self-aware during work. We say we were absorbed in work when in fact we were being helplessly carried away by its impetuosity. Work controls us, not we it. As a result, we are not able to keep ourselves open to Truth always. This is one of the main reasons why we commit so many blunders and suffer.

Secondly, we notice that most of our actions are triggered by the opinions of other people or by our instincts and emotions, some good, some bad, like love and compassion, jealousy and anger, greed and vanity, etc. This kind of work is really not our own; it is alienated work. The success that is attained through such work too does not really belong to us, nor bring us fulfilment. What then is our own work? There is deep within us a creative urge; the soul wants to express its powers, its beauty, its bliss. Only that work is ours which satisfies the inner creative urge by becoming a channel for the soul to pour forth its rays. Our work becomes ours only when it springs from our own soul. This kind of creative work is truly unselfish work, for it has no other motive than self-expression and self-realization. It does not generate competition nor necessitates exploitation.¹⁸

Creative, conscious work, which keeps us open to Truth, is self-directed work. The success attained through it alone is real success, our success, and it alone can give us real fulfilment.

The success of Truth

In conclusion, we should remember two points. Truth alone triumphs. When we succeed, Truth triumphs—not we. When we fail, we fail—not Truth. Secondly, all worldly successes are partial

The Truth Of Success

and temporary, being based on experiences of relative and incomplete truths. The highest and everlasting success is to become one with the ultimate absolute Truth.

Footnotes:

1. Free rendering of a Sanskrit verse commonly taught to children as a lesson in the correct use of the future tense.
2. Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Mentor Books. New American Library, 1951) p. 20
3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta - Advaita Ashrama, 1977) Vol. 1, p. 411
4. Mahabharata, *Santiparva* 175.20
5. *ibid*, *Vanaparva* 313.118
6. *Katha Upanishad* 1.3.14
7. *Bhagavad-Gita* 2.37
8. *Mundaka Upanishad* 3.1.6
9. During the early Vedic period individual life was not considered to be separate from universal life. Both pulsated together in one unified cosmic rhythm which the Vedic sages called *ritam* (similar to the Tao of the ancient Chinese). There was no need to 'practise' truth as a virtue, for the Vedic people 'lived' truth. Since truth is inseparable from Reality, by living in harmony with reality the law of truth automatically gets fulfilled. This harmony was to a great extent lost during the later Vedic period. *Satya* or truth got separated from *sat* or reality. In due course another term, *dharma*, came into vogue to denote cosmic order, and *satya* was reduced to the status of a virtue, truthfulness in personal conduct. In the Upanishadic period the spiritual existentialism of the early Vedic period gave way to essentialism, and the primary quest of the Upanishadic sages became how to realize the ultimate 'substance'. It was this quest that finally led to the discovery of *Brahman* and the unity of *Atman* and *Brahman*. This, however, led to the neglect or devaluation of the world. There is at present a great need to revive

Swami Bhajanananda

the earlier view which regarded Truth as identical with Reality.

10. *Isa Upanisad* 17

11. Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, 1967)

12. Dorothea Brande, *Wake Up and Live* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955)

13. Alexis Carrel, *Reflections on Life* (Bombay: Wilco Books, 1967)

14. *Katha Upanishad* 2.1.8

15. *Complete Works* (1973) 5:314

16. Henry C. Link, *The Return to Religion* (New York : MacMillan and Co. 1951) Though the author has somewhat exaggerated the difference between introversion and extroversion, this book, which was reprinted more than fifty times in less than twenty years, deserves to be read by all spiritual aspirants.

17. *Vivekachudamani*, 60

18. There is a trend in modern times, especially among western youths, to look down upon success as unethical. The disillusionment produced by the two World Wars and material affluence is chiefly responsible for this attitude which has given rise to Hippyism, Counter-Culture, New Age and other movements. But their criticism of success is applicable only to crass economic success achieved through cut-throat competition and exploitation. At all events there is no need to glorify failure.

(Reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata, September 1984)

There is no such thing as good and bad, they are not two different things; the same thing is good or bad, and the difference is only in degree. The very thing I call pleasurable today, tomorrow under better circumstances I may call pain. Thus, the Soul being pure and perfect, the man who does evil is giving the lie unto himself, he does not know the nature of himself.

Swami Vivekananda

Self-effort

Swami Virajananda

Prayer does not consist in reciting a set formula. That bears no fruit whatever. You must feel a real want within for what you pray for, suffer intense pain and agony, so long as your prayer is unfulfilled. You have to be restless to find out the ways and means of gaining the object of your prayer, in spite of insuperable difficulties in your path, and to strive heart and soul to achieve it, as if life itself depended upon it. Only then will your prayer be answered and your heart's desire be fulfilled. Only such prayers reach the throne of the Most High.

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

Swami Virajananda

If you give up your small self for the sake of others, you will not only find your real Self, but will also make others your own. The more you seek to save your little self, the more you lose your true Self and estrange others.

Go on struggling ceaselessly. Fight like a hero! Never look back, but ever go forward. Onward to the goal! Pay not the slightest heed whether you be exhausted, mangled or mutilated on the way. *Abhih, Abhih!* Be fearless! Courage! Courage! Do not allow even the thought of defeat to enter your mind. Realisation of the goal, or let the body fall—let this be your *Mantra*. Victory or death!—let this be the stake. If you have to die, die like a hero. Only thus can the fort be stormed.

Whining or self-pity is of no use at all. "I am too wretched, worthless, vile and weak; I cannot do anything by myself." These are the words of the namby-pamby, the do-nothing imbeciles. Can anything be done by such people? Strive hard, be wide awake and push on. Only then will success come. Will the road come to an end if you merely sit and think, "Oh! The road is long and difficult". Get up, start walking and as you proceed the road will grow shorter. Courage, hope, unexpected help will come. The path will gradually become easy and straight, and in no time you will reach the goal. Oh! the joy of reaching the fulfilment!

Many are under the impression that if they are initiated by an enlightened *Guru*, all their miseries will be dispelled in some mysterious way through his grace, if he only wills it! Thus, incurable diseases will be healed; employment after the heart will be secured; they will have worldly happiness and prosperity; they will prosper in business; they will be able to escape the evil influences of an unlucky star, and so on and so forth! There is no end of their supplications to the *Guru*! They ought to know that

Self-effort

there is no connection whatever between initiation or entering upon the spiritual path, and these trivial mundane matters. It is also childish to solicit such favours from the Guru; it is not at all a sign of spirituality. He is no Omnipotent Providence, no Dispenser of earthly gifts, no Ruler over the destinies of the people of the world. It is wrong to embarrass or trouble him by such importunate requests. They rather tend to make the disciple an object of the Guru's displeasure than a recipient of his favours and blessings. The relationship between Guru and disciple is of a purely spiritual nature, pertaining to spiritual matters only.

Service or worship with a desire for the fruit thereof is mere shop-keeping. True spirituality is not won with this outlook, and whatever result is obtained is extremely meagre and evanescent. Worship with desire for fruit does not purify the mind. It gives neither supreme devotion to God nor salvation, nor abiding peace and joy. Sri Ramakrishna could not accept or even touch things when offered to him with some underlying desire or motive.

To realise God in this life one has to do spiritual practices with all one's strength and ability, to offer one's all to Him, and if possible, a little more. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, have faith and devotion, in even more than full measure. The meaning is, that one should become like a vessel overflowing with faith and devotion. How many have this abundant measure? There is, however, no cause for despair. Go on with your *Sadhana* to the best of your ability. But always have this firm conviction that however hard you may strive, it is as nothing, it can never be enough when the goal is the realisation of the Self; for ultimately this goal can only be attained by His grace.

Swami Virajananda

But the grace of God descends only upon him who has striven his utmost, who has not spared himself, who has not let go the helm, and who has finally come to know, after many a hard struggle, that it is impossible to realize Him through self-effort alone, without His grace. When the aspirant feels that he is lost in impenetrable gloom, that he is about to drown in a boundless sea, his strength utterly exhausted by his efforts to keep afloat – then and only then does the Lord lift him up with His lotus hand and take him beyond the realm of life and death, where there is endless bliss and infinite peace! The possession of even a particle of that bliss makes the *Jiva*, or individual soul, happy beyond measure.

Why should you fear the world so much, as if it were going to devour you? Be brave and fearless! Be a hero and make light of the world, and the world will lose its hold upon you. "I am very weak, I am low and sinful, I am worthless. Nothing can be accomplished by me, I am incapable of doing anything"? Unless you give up such baneful ideas you will never succeed in achieving anything in life. Sweep those ideas away from the mind, stand up and say like a hero, "What is there that I cannot do? I am the child of Immortality: Immortality is my birthright, nothing can dispossess me of that!" Whenever weakness or listlessness assails the mind, recite the following verse:

"I am divine and nothing else.
I am Brahman the Absolute;
Misery and grief cannot touch me.
I am Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.
I am ever-free by nature.
O, my mind, say – Om! Tat Sat Om!"

(Reprinted from *Vedanta and the West*, May-June 1949)

Sri Chaitanya's Philosophy of Love

Swami Prabhavananda

Sri Chaitanya gave little care or attention to a theoretical consideration of the problems of God and the soul and the nature of the universe. Above all things he was a God-intoxicated man. His spiritual experiences transcended the realm of time, space, and causation ; his mind plunged into the domain where God is not an abstraction, but a reality in which dwell all joy, all sweetness, all love — a reality situated deep in the loving hearts of His devotees.

God is *Satchidananda* — Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, absolute, indefinable, inexpressible. He is the repository of infinite blessed attributes, the One Existence from whom the universe has issued forth, in whom the universe dissolves — omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent.

Such has been the account men have given of God, but to Sri Chaitanya these aspects of the Godhead meant little. For him God was the God of love — enchantingly beautiful, eternally youthful ; and man was the eternal playmate, the eternal companion, of the youthful Krishna. But for him this Krishna was not the Krishna of history, who uttered the mighty spiritual discourses of the *Gita*, the philosopher and the harmonizer and *avatara*. No, for him He was the Krishna of Brindaban, the great lover and embodiment of love, divested of all the powers of the Godhead, the playmate of shepherds and shepherdesses, as He plays upon his flute and draws souls unto Him by his enchanting love ; Krishna, the soul of souls dwelling in Brindaban — not a land one can point to on a map but the heart of man, the Brindaban that is the eternal abode of Krishna, beyond time and space.

This Krishna, love divine, is not to be acquired by man, for it is already existent in the soul, though covered over by ignorance, by attachment to the world of the senses. When the clouds of

Swami Prabhavananda

ignorance have been swept away, this love, eternally existing and to be identified with Krishna and the soul of man, becomes manifest. In such a way does man come to realize himself and attain Krishna.

We may remind our readers in this connection of Sankara. He declared that infinite knowledge is identical with the Self, but that this knowledge is covered over by ignorance. What Sankara called infinite knowledge Sri Chaitanya called infinite love. In reality, there is no difference between the two.

In order that this divine love which already exists in man may become manifest, Sri Chaitanya teaches *Sadhana bhakti*, disciplinary devotion through the practice of chanting the name of God, hearing and chanting His praises, meditating upon the divine play and deeds of Krishna, and engaging in the rites and ceremonies of worship. He lays special stress on *japam*, repeating and counting the beads. Patanjali, father of Yoga philosophy, also approves the practice as one of the methods of spiritual attainment. For the name of God, and God, are inseparable, and the living presence of God is in His name. By chanting or counting the beads one needs must meditate upon the presence of God.

In order to make spiritual practices effective, Sri Chaitanya advocates the conduct expressed in a well-known verse of his own composition:

"Be humbler than even the lowly grass.

Be forbearing as the tree.

Disclaim honour unto thyself and give honour to all.

Chant the name of Hari always."

By such conduct of life the divine love is made manifest in the heart. There are five stages corresponding to various expressions of love on the plane of human life.

The first is *shanta*, the peaceful stage in which as he finds joy in the thought of God, the aspirant attains poise and tranquillity.

Sri Chaitanya's Philosophy of Love

He feels God near to him, but still no definite relationship has been established between him and God.

Then comes *dasya*, the spirit of a servant, in which the aspirant feels that God is the master, or that He is the Father, the Protector.

The third is *sakhya*, the spirit of friendship. God is now realised as friend and playmate. He is felt to be nearer as the sense of awe vanishes and the God of power and grandeur is forgotten. He is now only the God of love—a friend, kind and sweet.

Then comes a higher stage called *vatsalya*, when Krishna, God of love, is a sweet child, and the devotee must take care of Him. This state is higher because in our human relationships a father or mother has a deeper affection for a child than a child has for its parents.

The fifth and last stage is *madhura*, the sweet relationship between the lover and the beloved. The sense of sex is completely wiped away, and yet the strongest relationship upon the human plane, that between man and wife, finds its ultimate realization in the new relationship between man and God, that sweet relationship in which God is the Beloved, the Friend, and in which all the elements of love, admiration, service, comradeship, communion are present. This type of love is to be found in the shepherdesses of Brindaban, above all in Radha. When this kind of love dawns in the heart, mystic union is attained.

The famous conversation between Sri Chaitanya and Ramananda, one of his principal disciples, epitomizes the philosophy of the master as recorded by his biographers. This we here quote:

Sri Chaitanya : What is the goal of life?

Disciple : A man must follow the rules and injunctions as prescribed in the Scriptures. This is the means of attaining devotion.

Swami Prabhavananda

Sri Chaitanya: This is the external part of religion, only a means, not the goal. What next?

Disciple : Surrendering the fruits of action to Krishna.

Sri Chaitanya: This, too, is external. What next?

Disciple : Devotion that arises from self-surrender.

Sri Chaitanya: This, too, is external. What next?

Disciple : Devotion with knowledge.

Sri Chaitanya: This, too, is external. What next?

Disciple : Pure devotion, which knows no reason.

Sri Chaitanya: That is good. Go further.

Disciple : Loving devotion is the best.

Sri Chaitanya: That is good. Go further.

Disciple : The spirit of service to Krishna.

Sri Chaitanya: That is good. What next?

Disciple : To love Krishna as a friend.

Sri Chaitanya: That is very good. Go further.

Disciple : To love Krishna as a child.

Sri Chaitanya: That is also good. Go further.

Disciple : To love Krishna as the beloved bridegroom.

Sri Chaitanya: This is no doubt the furthest goal. But tell me if there is any attainment further than this.

Disciple : My understanding does not reach beyond this. But there is another stage called Prem-Vilas-Vivarta.

The biographers of Sri Chaitanya record that at this point Sri Chaitanya stopped Ramananda from speaking, indicating thereby that the highest truth, the highest secret, must not be divulged. *Prem-Vilas-Vivarta* is the truth of mystic union, wherein there is no longer the distinction between the lover and the beloved. In this is realized the truth of non-dualism-*Tat Tvam asi*- "Thou art That."

(Reprinted from Voice of India, September 1938)

Swami Vivekananda: The Apostle Of Sri Ramakrishna

Swami Harshananda

More than two thousand years ago Jesus Christ, commended and commanded his chief disciple Simon thus: 'And I say to thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosened in heaven.' Simon, the poor fisherman, now became the Apostle Peter, the rock on which Christ built his mighty church, possessing the keys to the kingdom of Heaven and invested with the power and authority 'to bind' or 'to lose' things on earth.

One thousand eight hundred sixty years later, a similar scene was enacted in the big room of the Cossipore garden house. The *Paramahansa*, ailing for nearly a year, was imparting final instructions to his beloved Naren (the future Swami Vivekananda) to keep his 'flock of sheep' together, to train them in a life of renunciation and to work with their help for the spiritual regeneration of this ancient land of India. Even the direction to build a new type of monastic organisation incorporating within it the ideal of serving suffering humanity as a manifestation of Divinity came from the Master himself. Given the guidance and armed with the spiritual power tangibly transferred by his *guru* into himself, 'the king of men' (Narendra) ere long became 'the king of ascetics' distributing wisdom and bliss (*Viveka* and *Ananda*) to a large section of humanity both in the East and in the West.

Swami Harshananda

An 'apostle' is one who is sent: as 'envoy' a 'legate'. Sent by whom? May be by men, may be by godmen, may be by God Himself. All the great religious leaders, teachers, messiahs and prophets were apostles of God, messengers from the Most-High. They had their own apostles too, Mahavira had his Gautama. Buddha had his Mahakassapa and Ananda. Christ had his twelve apostles led by Peter. Prophet Muhammad had his Abu Bakr. Sankara had his four apostles. So were Guru Nanak's successors who were all his own apostles in a way.

An apostle is chosen by his Master, trained by him and guided by him. When the Master departs, his glory and power descend upon the apostle to inspire him to fulfil the commission entrusted to him. Working for his Master with unflinching devotion, meditating upon him constantly, the apostle in course of time gets completely identified with the Master himself. That is why in the apostolic succession, each of the persons who occupies the seat is revered as the original apostle or the Master himself.

The choosing of Vivekananda as his apostle by Ramakrishna was done before either of them was born in this world. Ramakrishna's vision of the seven sages and of one of them being chosen by the Divine Child to follow him down to this earth testifies to this. He even knew when Narendra was born, since he had a vision in which he saw a ray of light from Kasi entering the Simla area of Calcutta.

The first meeting between these great souls at Dakshineswar has been graphically described by both of them. It is clear from these descriptions that the *Avatar* had met and recognised his apostle, whom he had been eagerly expecting, though the apostle himself had yet to go a long way in recognising his Master.

After getting confirmation of his earlier visions by testing Narendra on his second visit, Ramakrishna started the spiritual ministry of his disciple in right earnest. Dry intellectualism,

Swami Vivekananda, The Apostle Of Sri Ramakrishna

bordering often on sarcasm or cynicism or atheism which was slowly gripping young Naren's mind as a result of the study of Western philosophies, had to be knocked out first. Ramakrishna's earnest attempts in this direction often met with little success. Naren could hold his own. Poor Ramakrishna would sometimes be nonplussed by the scintillating logic of his brilliant disciple. But then, the Divine Mother would come to his rescue! What he could not do through logic, he would achieve through 'magic' – by the magic touch of his hands, thereby helping his beloved disciple to transcend the bondage of his own intellect and get at the truth by direct experience. Within the space of about three years, the mighty intellect of Narendra had been sufficiently chastened, humbled and refined to accept the super-sensory experiences of his Master and to surrender at his feet.

The Master always bestowed special attention to his beloved apostle Narendra, sometimes lavishing his love on him, sometimes subjecting him to severe testing and at other times giving direction to his self-confidence or exuberance or enthusiasm. As a result of such meticulous training Narendra was now fully ready to start on the road to the fulfilment of his Master's cherished dreams.

Towards the end of his earthly drama, Ramakrishna spent long hours in privately instructing Narendra about the work he had to do when he himself was gone. He gave him a taste of the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* for which he had been hankering, but subsequently 'locked up' that experience. He specifically entrusted his future monastic disciples to his care and transferred his spiritual powers to him three days before the final departure.

The main mission that Ramakrishna entrusted to Vivekananda was the regeneration of the Motherland in which spirituality had fallen to a low ebb. No man, however great, can accomplish such a task without a well-organised effort. Hence

Swami Harshananda

the second task that Ramakrishna put on his shoulders was to prevent 'the boys' from returning to the world and to make excellent monks out of them. With these monks he had to found a new type of monastic order. To build such an organisation and to work through it, material help was necessary. To get this, he could go out of our country. That Ramakrishna himself had willed this is evident from the fact that he appeared in a vision to Vivekananda urging him to go to the West and subsequently confirming this in the vision he granted to Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother.

After the passing away of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda toured the country extensively to get a first-hand experience of the nation's problems. He discovered to his dismay that the greatest problem of the teeming millions of India was hunger and want. It was a crime and madness to teach them religion. Had not his own Master told him this plain truth? So, the first task in this regard was to work for the amelioration of the masses on the physical plane by building orphanages, feeding houses, free dispensaries and hospitals. Relief work in times of emergencies and calamities, natural or otherwise, was also a part of this scheme. Another phase of the work was the building up of educational institutions to disseminate the right kind of knowledge which helps man not only to earn his bread but also to build up his character. Finally, the great teachings contained in our *Upanishads* and the *Gita* which had been relived and corroborated by Ramakrishna in his own life, but which had been sealed all these years from the masses, had to be broadcast far and wide.

It was with these ideas revealed to him on the Rock of Kanyakumari, that he set out for the West from where alone he could hope and expect to get the necessary help. But then, as he himself has said, he did not want to go as a beggar. India had

Swami Vivekananda, The Apostle Of Sri Ramakrishna

enough spiritual wealth accumulated over millennia, which she could freely give away and of which the material West was badly in need. He could distribute this wealth in return for the help he would get from there. His Master had shown by practical demonstration that all religions were true and that all of them lead to the same goal. He could give this most wonderful message of the harmony of all religions. That he did give this message to the West and succeeded to a marvellous extent in another aspect of fulfilling the duties of his apostleship, is now a matter of history.

Before he voluntarily shed his mortal coil on the 4th of July 1902, Vivekananda had established a mighty movement and had put it on a firm foundation. The momentum given to it by him would carry it forward for a few centuries more. Not only that, his life, personality and teachings had already become a primary source of inspiration to many a great Indian who would work vigorously for the uplift of the Motherland.

The regeneration of a nation often needs a reappraisal, a reinterpretation and even a readjustment of its ancient philosophies and values in the context of the changed circumstances. This is exactly what Ramakrishna and Vivekananda did. They brought out and broadcast the esoteric truths to the masses in a way they could understand. Vedanta was made practical by connecting it with day-to-day life. The dividing line between the sacred and the secular was wiped out by showing that the secular can be elevated to the sacred by just changing our attitude towards it. Humanitarian service was converted into the worship of

the Cosmic Spirit. Monasticism was released from its cocoon of personal liberation and recharged with its real spirit of dedication.

Looking back now, we can safely assert that the Prophet of Modern India was absolutely right in choosing his Apostle, who has faithfully and forcefully carried out his Master's commands.

(Reprinted from Vedanta Kesari, January 1977)

After every happiness comes misery; they may be far apart or near. The more advanced the soul, the more quickly does one follow the other. What we want is neither happiness nor misery.

Both make us forget our true nature; both are chains—one iron, one gold; behind both is the Atman, who knows neither happiness nor misery. These are states, and states must ever change; but the nature of the Soul is bliss, peace, unchanging. We have not to get it, we have it; only wash away the dross and see it.

Stand upon the Self, then only can we truly love the world. Take a very, very high stand; knowing our universal nature, we must look with perfect calmness upon all the panorama of the world.

But as a man sees his own face in a mirror, perfect, distinct, and clear, so is the Truth shining in the soul of man. The highest heaven, therefore, is in our own souls; the greatest temple of worship is the human soul.

Swami Vivekananda

God is also Mother

The Double Nature of the Ground

(Continued from last issue)

Hans Torwesten

Father Death has often been called the Great Democrat, because he makes all men equal. Everyone has to go naked into the earth, just as he was born and cannot take anything with him. It is not by chance that the Great Mother, who gives birth to all beings, often appears as the goddess of death, who takes man back into her womb – as the terrible Mother Kali; as the gentle Mother Earth; as Mother Mary, who not only gives birth to the naked child Jesus, but takes the grown-up son again in her lap: naked and dead, bereft of all visible greatness.

St Francis, who had a fine feeling for the motherly – advised every superior in his Order to be like a “Mother” – insisted, when he lay dying, to be laid naked on the earth – closely snuggled up to his secret love, “Poverty”, which had “led him astray” into this hard and simple life.

The close connection to the mystical Ground again emerges in this case: the divine Ground and the Mother as the Great Equaliser. In the eyes of the enlightened, who dives into the Ground and comes up again, the whole world is the variation of the *Tau* of Equality. The Divine Mother bestows on anyone who loves Her this look of equality, which enables us to bow down before anyone and anything, because we see everywhere only the various masks of Her presence.

As however the Mother is also always the exact opposite to what she is, she appears as *Maya* to be also the great enemy of the transcendental Ground. Was she not always bitterly fought against by the great mystical ascetics – and not only by the

Hans Torwesten

Protestants? Did not even her “son” Ramakrishna, who always called himself her child, at least sometimes have to separate himself from her – indeed, did he not even seize the sword of discrimination to cleave his Mother in two and thus finally be able to be able to dive into the chasm of the pure Absolute? Does this not relate to the demand to “murder the mother”, which many psychologists make, because they think that only in this way can manliness come about?

As the Ground especially embodies for us the “One”, which is then covered by the playful activity of the cosmic *Maya*, it has a rather male character, at least for the ascetics. Manliness almost coincides in this case with asceticism: it turns its whole attention to turning back to the man’s inner being, which has not yet lost itself in the outside world and otherness of *Maya*. In order to achieve this the ascetic hero must see through the deceptions of *Maya*, must not pursue any of her seductive skirts, must not go close to any of her billowing or soft curves. He must remove veil after veil, in order to reach the naked being – not “her” nakedness of course, which for the ascetic is only her thickest and most refined veil, but to the bright light apollonian nakedness of the pure spirit, whose sea of consciousness is not disturbed by the waves of *Maya-Prakriti*. This pure consciousness is called “Purusha” in India, literally the complete “original man”. He it is who is like the original Adam of the mystics in paradise – the being in itself, while nature – *Maya-Prakriti* – is the “other”, the “outside oneself”, which leads us astray, splits us up and loses us in exile. The “being untouched by the female”, which also plays such a big part in Christian asceticism and was a pre-condition

God is also Mother

for the highest spiritual salvation, receives here in Indian philosophy its highest physical consecration, because it is not any longer a question of ethical purity, but of the untouchableness of the pure spirit.

We do not at this point need to stress once again that the final Ground has no sex, that it is neither male nor female, that it transcends all this dualism which characterises our life in the relative Maya world. Yet, depending on the way one approaches this Ground, it can in our eyes subjectively take on a more male or more female colouring. Anyone who fears, contests or just denies the mystical Ground, often sees in It a possible “competitor” to the male creator God: as a background, which could rob the Father God of some of His absoluteness. In this case one often suspects there is something “female”, something a bit fishy. The Ground seems to escape the last grasp just like the female, it has something, flowing and liquid that cannot be grasped. It is not by chance that the expression “liquidate” originally came from mysticism, because the super-personal Ground “liquidates” everything, it turns into fluid all seemingly fixed beings and dissolves them – not only the human I, which drowns hopelessly in its depths, but also the person of God. The apparently so harmless Ground is in this case like an all-devouring acid, from the passive grasp of which nothing escapes, not even the person of a male creator God, who becomes the victim of an over-ruling supreme power, because it shows him to be something in the foreground.

This sucking up and devouring action has something uncanny and dangerous about it, especially for the person in an

Hans Torwesten

ethical religion characterised by the patriarchs and hierarchs, and one would not be surprised if this formless and unimaginable Ground, when “appearing” should be as the frightful black Kali, which threatens to crush and suck up him and all his male accomplishments. The Maya power of Kali, which covers the Ground, also has the power to reveal to him the destroying power of the passive Ground.

(To be continued)

Translated by John Phillips

The whole universe is one. There is only one Self in the universe, only One Existence, and that One Existence, when it passes through the forms of time, space, and causation, is called by different names, *buddhi*, fine matter, gross matter, all mental and physical forms. Everything in the universe is that One, appearing in various forms. When a little part of it comes, as it were, into this network of time, space, and causation it takes forms; take off the network, and it is all one.

Therefore in the *Advaita* philosophy, the whole universe is all one in the Self which is called *Brahman*. That Self when it appears behind the universe is called God. The same Self when it appears behind this little universe, the body, is the soul. This very soul, therefore, is the Self in man.

There is no help for you outside of yourself; you are the creator of the universe. Like the silkworm you have built a cocoon around yourself. Who will save you? Burst your own cocoon and come out as the beautiful butterfly, as the free soul. Then alone you will see Truth.

Swami Vivekananda

Leaves from an Ashrama 47: On the Production of Compost Swami Vidyatmananda

We are in March, nearly April. We have sustained yet another winter, of days dripping and dark. Yes, we at the *ashrama* hibernate a bit in winter, like our friends the natural creatures which live fearlessly around us. And like them we shall exult and buzz with pleasure with the return of the sun.

Now the feeling comes of wanting to tidy up the grounds of the ashrama: collect broken branches dropped by trees through age or as a result of wintry blasts; dispose of stones which have mysteriously worked their way up to the surface since last fall; curry-comb the grass of accumulated pinecones and needles such as might stifle any aspiring shoots.

And leaves, fallen leaves that inspire this ashrama member to stand reflecting, rake in hand. As he works, so works the Lord, sweeping up the fallen of last year and encouraging the new of this year to increase. Leaning on his rake, he sees the pattern of it all. 'A generation of men is like a generation of leaves,' says Homer, speaking of this period of the year. 'The wind scatters some leaves upon the ground, while others the burgeoning wood brings forth.'

Here are last fall's leaves of the chestnut trees—longish, pointed like an arrowhead, notched, dusky-brown. Already hardly a single chestnut leaf can be found whole and intact, so promptly do they turn themselves to mould, to compost, to food. Chestnut leaves melt away into nothing before spring, a whole year's crop dissolving into the soil. They are compliant. They don't have to be raked up, for which the ashrama member is grateful.

Follow the chestnut tree, not the plane tree, whose leaves are like parchment cut-outs, or those replicas of leaves one sees in

Swami Vidyatmananda

plastic, destined to save tabletops from rings of wet glasses. The leaves of the plane tree are practically indestructible; they do not decompose. April, and they are still whole. All winter they somersault across the grounds, piling up in plantings and against hedges, from which they must be picked out one by one and disposed of--vexatious to the man with the rake. Otherwise they will roll back with every changing wind, unsightly against yet other borders. 'Next year I shall collect them as they fall,' he says, 'and burn them at once. Such a botheration!'

'Let me be like the chestnut leaf,' muses the man with the rake, 'not like the leaves of the plane tree. Let me never be troublesome to anyone. Content to disintegrate gracefully and contribute my thimbleful of compost to the generation rising up.' And the ashrama member senses Swamiji beside him, in his red clerical coat, arms folded across his chest, a big grin on his face--the Greenacre pose. He is delighted: 'Who cares for great things? Why not do small things as well? One is as good as the other. The greatness of small things--that is what the Gita teaches--bless the old book.'

And in the midst of the depths of misery and degradation, the Soul sends a ray of light, and man wakes up and finds that what is really his, he can never lose. No, we can never lose what is really ours. Who can lose his being? Who can lose his very existence? If I am good, it is the existence first, and then that becomes coloured with the quality of goodness. If I am evil, it is the existence first, and that becomes coloured with the quality of badness. That existence is first, last, and always; it is never lost, but ever present.

Annual Index 2014

A Wonderful Meeting	(Swamiji & Nag Mahashaya)	184
Chaithnya's Philosophy of Love	Sri Swami Prabhavananda	270
Destiny of Man, The	Rev. M. Guy Labergb	14
Detachment and Renunciation	Swami Bhuteshananda	126
Editorials :		
Ascent to Truth through Prayer		98
Gayatri Mantra		194, 242
Lead Us From the Unreal To the Real		146
Prayer: Conditions and Fulfilment		2
Types of Prayer		50
Ego in its Extreme Expansion		
(The Editorial from Vedanta kesari 1976)		22
Gargi And Yajnavalkya	Swami Tadrupananda	61
God is also Mother	Hans Torwesten	36, 93, 133, 189, 281
God, In Search Of A Hidden	Swami Shraddhananda	87
God, The Hindu (Vedantic) Idea of	Swami Tapasyananda	220
Holy Mother , Reminiscences Of The	Kumud Bandhu Sen	179
Holy Mother's Life , What Inspires me Most in		
Swami Parahitananda		75
I Saw the Recording Angel	N. Bangarayya	114
Illuminating Dialogues From Indian Lore:		
(Swetaketu That Thou Art)		173
Illumined Souls Live in this World, How		
Swami Yatiswarananda		151
Inner Voice, The	Gerald Heard	166
Leaves from an Ashram :	Swami Vidyatmananda	
44 Angling for the Large and Beautiful Prize		46
45: Anticipation and Consequences		137
46: Samsara as Developer of Moral Muscles		238
47: On the Production of Compost		285
Nama-Japa, The Divine Path	Sri P. Chandrasekhara Menon	30
New Blanket For The Old Ones, A	Swami Sridananda	54
Prophet's Promise, The	Swami Sunirmalananda	101
Questions Of Spiritual Seekers Answered		
Swami Madhavananda		82, 139

Self-effort	Swami Virajananda	266
Spiritual Practice, On	Swami Yatiswarananda	199
Success, The Truth of	Swami Bhajananda	245
Swami Vivekananda and Neo-Vedanta		
	Swami Bhajananda	5
Swami Vivekananda, The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna		
	Swami Harshananda	275
Synthesis Of Yogas In Swami Vivekananda, The		
	Swami Nityabodhananda	40
Time, Some Reflections on	Aldous Huxley	233
Toward The Goal Supreme	Swami Prabhavananda	65

God is neither knowable nor unknowable, but something infinitely higher than either. He is one with us; and that which is one with us is neither knowable nor unknowable, as our own self. You cannot know your own self; you cannot move it out and make it an object to look at, because you are that and cannot separate yourself from it. Neither is it unknowable, for what is better known than yourself? It is really the centre of our knowledge. In exactly the same sense, God is neither unknowable nor known, but infinitely higher than both; for He is our real Self.

I have divided myself into God and me; I become the worshipped and I worship myself. Why not? God is I. Why not worship my Self? The universal God—He is also my Self. It is all fun. There is no other purpose.

You Are Infinite God is true. The universe is a dream. Blessed am I that I know this moment that I shall be free all eternity . . . that I know that I am worshipping only myself; that no nature, no delusion, had any hold on me. Vanish nature from me, vanish [these] gods; vanish worship . vanish superstitions, for I know myself. I am the Infinite.

Swami Vivekananda

Programme for November - December 2014
Sunday discourses begin,
at the
Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End at 4:30 pm
Tel: 01628 526464 - www.vedantauk.com

Nov	2	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 58	Swami Dayatmananda
Nov	9	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 59	Swami Dayatmananda
Nov	16	Day Retreat	
Nov	23	Message of Vedanta	Swami Gautamananda
Nov	30	Katha Upanishad 13	Swami Shivarupananda
Dec	7	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 60	Swami Dayatmananda
Dec	13	Holy Mother's Puja	
Dec	14	No Class	
Dec	21	No Class	
Dec	24	Christmas Eve	

Day Retreat

With Swami Dayatmananda and Swami Shivarupananda
at the Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, on 16th November
from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm

Note: Children are not allowed at the Retreat.
Please bring (vegetarian) lunch to share.

Holy Mother's Puja

Saturday 13th December
at Bourne End at 4:30 pm

Christmas Eve Celebration

Wednesday 24th December
at Bourne End at 5:00 pm

Was that the individuality I should be sorry to lose? Fifty years hence I shall look upon this present state and laugh, just as I [now] look upon the baby state. Which of these individualities shall I keep?

Mother, father, child, wife, body, wealth—everything I can lose except my Self . . . bliss in the Self. All desire is contained in the Self. . . . This is individuality which never changes, and this is perfect.

This Very Soul is the Self in All. In this external world, which is full of finite things, it is impossible to see and find the Infinite. The Infinite must be sought in that alone which is infinite, and the only thing infinite about us is that which is within us, our own soul. Neither the body, nor the mind, not even our thoughts, nor the world we see around us, are infinite.

The Seer, He to whom they all belong, the Soul of man, He who is awake in the internal man, alone is infinite, and to seek for the Infinite Cause of this whole universe we must go there. In the Infinite Soul alone we can find it.

(Swami Vivekananda)

Vedanta

is a bi-monthly magazine published, since 1951, by the
Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, Buckinghamshire
SL8 5LF, U.K.

Phone: (01628) 526464

www.vedantauk.com

Subscription rate for 6 issues: £9 or \$17.50 post free.

Editor: Swami Dayatmananda

Editorial Advisers: John Phillips

£1.50

You are infinite. Where can you go? The sun, the moon, and the whole universe are but drops in your transcendent nature. How can you be born or die? I never was born, never will be born. I never had father or mother, friends or foes, for I am Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute.

Perfection is always infinite. We are this infinite already, and we are trying to manifest that infinity. You and I, and all beings, are trying to manifest it.

Swami Vivekananda



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