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# Achieving Harmony Through Diversity

Abdu'1-Baha

People, races, tribes and communities might have different and varied customs, habits, tastes, character, inclinations and ideas. Their opinions and thoughts are often contrary to one another. Yet it is possible for unity to be revealed and perfect accord among human souls to exist. Don't different notes in music blend to strike a perfect chord? Separately, each note is so different from the other. When strung together with care, they make beautiful music, and harmony is created.

Differences are of two kinds. One is the cause of annihilation and is like the antipathy existing among warring nations and conflicting tribes who seek each other's destruction uprooting one another's families, depriving one another of rest and comfort and unleashing carnage. The other kind which is a token a diversity is the essence of perfection and the cause of the appearance of the bestowals of the Most Glorious Lord.

Consider the flowers of a garden; though different in kind, colour, form and shape, yet, in as much as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, the diversity increases their charm, and adds to their beauty. Thus when the unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, takes effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellishes the world of humanity.

This diversity is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributes to the beauty, efficiency and perfection

of the whole. Under the influence of man's sovereign soul, and its power; the limbs and members, veins and arteries of body reinforce harmony. So diversity strengthens love and multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination.

How unpleasing it would be to the eye if all the flowers and plants, leaves and blossoms, fruits, branches and trees of a garden were all of the same shape and colour. Diversity of hues, forms and shapes enriches and adorns the garden, and heightens the effect thereof. In like manner; when diverse shades of thought, temperament, character are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. The celestial potency of the Word of God, which oversees and transcends the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thought, sentiments, ideas and convictions of people. It is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and the binder and regulator of humanity.

The disease which afflicts the body politic is lack of love and absence of altruism. When there is no real love and the condition is such that, unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love and accord may develop within them, there can be no healing, no agreement. Without love and unity there can be no progress or prosperity. Therefore, adhere to the power which wills create this love and unity in our hearts. Science cannot cure the illness of the body politic. Science cannot create amity and fellowship in the human heart. Neither can patriotism and racial allegiance effect a remedy. It must be accomplished solely through the divine bounties and spiritual bestowals which have descended from God.

*Baha'is celebrates Now-ruz on March 21. Contact:  
Office of Public Information, National Spiritual Assembly of  
the Baha'is of India.*

*(The Times of Indiq, March 17, 2008)*

# Islam Encourages Peace, Mercy And Forgiveness

By Aboobakar Thwahir

The term Islam stands for ‘peace’ and ‘submission to God’. How then can its adherents work for destruction?

Islam considers all life forms as sacred. The foremost basic right of a human being is the right to life. The Qur’an says about the one who kills an innocent person: “...it would be as if he killed the whole of mankind: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole of mankind.” (5:32)

The Qur’an prohibits murder. During war non-combatants are guaranteed security of life even if their state is at war with an Islamic state. The Arabic term ‘jihad’ has been much abused, to conjure up bizarre images of violent Muslims, forcing people to submit under duress.

The word jihad comes from the root word ‘jahada’, which means ‘to struggle’. So jihad is literally, the act of struggle. Prophet Muhammad said that jihad is the inner struggle for virtue, to submit to God in all aspects of life. Secondly, jihad refers to struggle against injustice. Islam, like other religions, allows for self defence. A suicide bomber is regarded as one who has killed himself, and he shall be punished in Hell, The Prophet said: “Indeed, whoever (intentionally) kills himself, will be punished in the Fire of Hell, wherein he shall dwell forever”.

Islam enjoins upon its believers to strive to purify themselves, as well as establish peace and justice in society. Regardless of how legitimate the cause may be, the Qur’an does not condone killing of innocent people. Terrorising defenceless civilians, and the bombing and maiming of

innocent men, women and children are all detestable acts according to Islam and Muslims. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness, and the vast majority have nothing to do with the violent acts that have been attributed Muslims.

Western scholars have refuted the myth of Muslims coercing others to convert. Historian De Lacy O’Leary wrote in Islam at Crossroads: “History makes it clear that the legend of fanatical Muslims, sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.” Muslims ruled Spain for roughly 800 years. During this time, non-Muslims there were alive and flourishing. Additionally, Christian and Jewish minorities have flourished in Muslim lands of the Middle East for centuries, often arriving there to escape the pogroms in Europe. Countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan all have significant Christian and/or Jewish population. The Muslim’s faith prohibits him from forcing other to see his point of view, and in fact guarantees them protection. The Qur’an says: “Let there be no compulsion in religion.” (2:256)

Islam far from being an intolerant dogma, is a way of life that transcends race and ethnicity. The Qur’an repeatedly reminds us our common origin: “O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)”. (49:13)

(The Times of India, December 14, 2005)

# Amrapali's Encounter With The Handsome Renunciate

By P. Venkatesh

The most attractive thing in Vaishali, the capital city of Lichhavis, was the beautiful dancer Amrapali. She was named after the mango grove she was first found in. Everybody was eager to win her love. She chose to be the Nagarvadhu, wife to the whole city.

One day, Amrapali saw a young monk. Mesmerised by his calm and attractive presence, she followed him. The sanyasi settled down beneath a mango tree, unmindful of her presence. Unable to attract his attention, she spoke: "Sir, please introduce yourself. Why do you lead an ascetic life in your youth?" "In search of Truth", replied the monk. Amrapali was first taken aback. She then teased him: "Of what use is the Truth that wastes your youth?" The monk smiled: "Lady, Absolute Happiness can only be attained thus for the happiness you seek is transitory pleasure".

Amrapali persisted. "Dear, leave this delusion and enjoy my hospitality which even royalty desires to experience," offered Amrapali. The monk thought for a moment and said, "I will ask my master. If he allows me, I will come". Then he took out a ripe Amra Phal (mango) from his bag and gave it to her with the instruction that the fruit be preserved without decay till his return.

The monk returned to Buddha's shelter and narrated the incident. Buddha gave him permission to stay with Amrapali, much to the puzzlement of other disciples. Buddha calmly said, "I have looked into his eyes—there was no desire. If I had said 'no', even then he would have obliged. I trust his meditation".

In the meantime, Amrapali tried all methods to keep the mango fresh, but failed. After one month, the young monk

returned. Passionately infatuated, she approached him. The monk ordered, "Lady! Bring me the Amra Phal". She did so: but the mango had decayed, emitting foul odour and was full of worms. She asked, "Dear, of what use is this rotten fruits to you?" The monk slowly removed the mango-stone from the fruit. Showing her the rotten skin, he spoke, "Where has the beauty, aroma and taste of the fruit gone? Whereas, the mango-stone is intact and free of decay". "Of what use is this mango-stone," argued the courtesan.

The monk smilingly explained. "The mango stone is the most useful. As a seed, it has the potential to regenerate a new body. Likewise, a human being's meditation is never wasted. This mango-stone signifies the eternal Soul. The protection of the Soul is the real shield: that is the absolute Happiness. Recognize this Truth Amrapali. You, who could not save the decay of this Amra Phal, how long can you protect your own body from disintegration?"

The Nagarvadhu was speechless; it was as if she had been awakened from a deep sleep. Moved, she asked forgiveness of the young monk. She felt cleansed and expressed her desire to see the monk's master. Later, Buddha visited Vaishali and stayed at Amrapali's abode. She touched Buddha's feet and said, "I tried my best to attract your monk, but he convinced me by his awareness that real life is in your shelter." She renounced the life of a courtesan and donated her belongings to the Buddhist Sangha. Buddha accepted her in the monastery as a disciple, to the chant of "Sangham sharanam gachhami, Dhammam sharanam gachhami."

*(The Times of India, June 30, 2006)*

# Travel Light To Enjoy The Journey Of Life

Tia Paranjape

I often wonder: Is it possible to love without attachment? We do have so much love to give, but is it the right kind of love? We tend to feel a kind of ownership over all that we love though we don't own anything or anyone.

It is easier to utter the words 'I love you' than to actually mean it. Love is perceived in many different ways. My mother would say: "Love, but never be possessive of what you love. Once you are possessive, you might claim 'this is mine' when in actuality nothing or no one is yours."

We are all here on a spiritual journey. Along the way we find several co-travellers who become part of our lives but they too have their own destination. There is a hierarchy of love. Right on top are parents, spouse, children, siblings, other family and friends. Love stops here and further down the ladder it becomes 'like'. Sri Sathya Sai Baba says love all as if your own. He talks of universal love. This is not easy to follow but may be we could try. For starters, we could do little things that make people smile. A kind word or tone would not take away from you but give a lot to the other person.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba says: "If you want peace and if you want happiness you must live in love. Only through love will you find inner peace. Only through love will you find true happiness. Love flourishes through giving and forgiving. Develop your love! Immerse yourself in love!

"...Love is the basis of everything. It is the single most important quality that has to be developed. All your thoughts must become immersed in this quality of love... then truth will naturally establish itself in your heart."

People who serve are Godlike; their service should be appreciated, whether they belong to your peer group or not. We need to learn to love without attachment. We love those who we feel are ours. What about the rest? Why is an amazing emotion like love saved only for those few people who we perceive as ours? For instance, how might one learn to love the person who has wronged us? I guess I would say OK, don't love, but at least try not to hate. That is an improvement.

Again, received wisdom from my mother says things can never bring you happiness. Once you've bought something, its value diminishes. At first I used to think that was not true, but in time I learnt that it is one of the few truths in life. I constantly try and make an effort to not get attached to 'things' now because at the end of the day they are things. This doesn't mean don't shop, don't want...it means realize that actual happiness cannot be attained from anything external.

Enjoy all the things you have and be grateful for it, as that too is the grace of God but do not expect it to give you anything. I find my peace every evening as I sit by myself and watch the sun set. That is when I feel real joy. The sun sets with such ease and that is how we should be.

I would get attached to songs and smells! Some smells can take you back in time and songs too can transport you to old memories. It is nice to remember but if we dwell on the past we are missing out on the present; we tend to miss out on new smells and songs as we're so preoccupied with the old. We have to let go, because holding on to something does not give us ownership rights. So much baggage! To enjoy the journey, travel light. In other words, practise loving detachment.

*(The Times of India, July 2, 2008)*

# The Wheel Is Useless As A Stand-Alone Invention

Deepak Ranade

The wheel was a path-breaking invention. The wheel, however, might not have been as useful if not for the invention of brakes and gears that help us control movement. The wheel made locomotion plausible but brakes regulated this motion.

The defining quality of any system is probably based on the degree of control one can exercise on it. In karate, up to the black belt stage, the discipline and regimen is for strengthening the body and speeding up reflexes. Thereafter, all subsequent degrees attained by perfecting self-control and restraint.

In evolution life forms have been empowered incrementally as they progress through stages. Human beings have the power of control, of temperance and restraint, and the ability to think beyond the self. Physiologically, higher centres in the brain have been given the responsibility of inhibition to maintain restrictive control on lower centres of the brain and spine. In spinal injuries, when the lower motor neurons are disconnected from the higher centres and they fire without control, it leads to reflex movements of the limbs, spasm of the muscles and so on. Though movement occurs, it is involuntary, uncontrolled and purposeless.

The ability to rise above reflex behaviour seems to be the summit of the evolutionary pyramid. Olympian Carl Lewis once explained the reason for his spectacular achievement: "I have mastered the art of self-denial". Behaviour that rises above the primitive reflexes forms the essence of culture and sophistication. All religions have a set of behavioural restrictions like fasting, celibacy and observing silence. These restrictions help the individual increase his will power,

temperance, self-control and discipline.

Some religions talk about renunciation. But renunciation eliminates choice. So it is probably indulgence in abstinence. The swing of the pendulum in the opposite direction charged with the potential energy to swing back to indulgence. It may also reflect a subconscious fear of lack of self-control. Like the instance of the guru, who was invited for a meal by his disciple. Whilst the other devotees were served on plantain leaves, the guru was served on silverware as a mark of reverence. The Guru however was offended and walked off as he was a renunciate. He may as well have eaten in the silverware. If he was no longer in any mundane bondage, there ought to have been no distinction between silver and leaves.

In reproductive behaviour, too, human beings have the freedom to choose. Any control is self-imposed. This self-control is the evolutionary upgrade. It is as if the remote control which operates all other animals has been substituted by a sharp discriminatory ability which bestows free will. In Hindu culture, it is called vivek buddhi. The intellect of discrimination. Free will reflects the ability to restrain rather than indulge. If indulgence was the purpose, all actions would have been reflexive, with scarce regard to volition.

Exercising restraint requires a higher form of intelligence. Indulgence required neither skill nor intellect. And renunciation relied more on extremism.

Obesity, alcoholism, hypertension and diabetes, when they are lifestyle-related, point to the diminishing self-regulatory process. Affluence has given man the opportunity to indulge like never before. Austerity is facing extinction. Patience, contentment are no longer virtues but are relegated to mere words. All catastrophes like global warming, nuclear threat and poverty are merely a reflection of our ever-increasing inclination for indulgence.

*(The Times of India July 30, 2008)*

# Love Is The Undying Flame That Sets Life Aglow

**Discourse: Avatar Meher Baba**

Of the forces that can best overcome all difficulties, love is the most potent force because the greatest law of God is love, which holds the key to all problems. This mighty force not only enables you to put the ideal of selfless service into practice, but also transforms one into God. It has been possible through love for man to become God; and when God becomes man, it is also due to His Love for us.

Love is dynamic in action and contagious in effect. Pure love is matchless in majesty; it has no parallel in power and there is no darkness it cannot dispel. It is the undying flame that has set life aglow. Our emancipation depends upon our love for God and upon God's love for us. Where there is love, there is Oneness and, in complete Oneness, the Infinite is realized completely in every sphere of life, be it science, art or religion. The spirit of true love and sacrifice is beyond all ledgers and measurements.

A constant wish to love and be loving and a non-calculating will to sacrifice in every walk of life, high and low, big and small, between home and office, streets and cities, countries and continents are the best anti-selfish measures that we can take in order to be really self-ful and joyful. Love also means suffering and pain for oneself and happiness for others. To the giver, it is suffering without malice or hatred. To the receiver, it is a blessing without obligation. Love alone knows how to give without necessarily bargaining for returns. There is nothing that love cannot achieve and there is nothing that love cannot sacrifice. Love for God, love for fellow-beings, for service and of sacrifices; in short, love in

any shape and form is the finest give and take in the world. Ultimately, it is love that will bring about the much desired universal levelling of human beings all over the world, without necessarily disturbing the inherent diversities of details.

Divine Love is qualitatively different from human love. Human love is for the many in the one and Divine Love is for the One in the many. Human love leads to innumerable complications and tangles; but Divine Love leads to integration and freedom. Human love in its personal and impersonal aspects is limited; but Divine Love, with its fusion of the personal and the impersonal aspects, is infinite in being and expression. Divine Love makes us true to ourselves and to other and makes us live truly and honestly. It is the solution to all our problems; it frees us from every kind of binding; purifies our hearts and glorifies our being.

To those whose hearts are pure and simple, true love comes as a gift through the activating grace of a Perfect Master, and this Divine Love will perform the supreme miracle of bringing God into the hearts of men. To realize God, we must love Him, losing ourselves in His Infinite Self. We can love God by surrendering to the Perfect Master who is God's personal manifestation. The beginning of real is obedience and the highest aspect of this love which surpasses love itself is the aspect which culminates into the perfect obedience or supreme resignation to the Will and Wish of the Beloved. In this love are embodied all Yogas known to saints and seekers.

The Times of India, May 5, 2006



# Be Creative, Do Small Acts With Love

Discourse: Osho

Cleaning a floor can be a tremendously creative act. Creativity has nothing to do with any particular work. Creativity has something to do with the quality of your consciousness. Whatever you do can become creative if you know what creativity means.

Creativity means enjoying any work as meditation; doing any work with deep love. Are you thinking that if you paint, you will feel creative? But painting is just as ordinary as cleaning the floor. You will be throwing colours on a canvas. Here you go on washing and cleaning the floor. What is the difference? Talking to somebody, you feel time is being wasted. You would like to write a great book; then you will be creative. But a friend has come: a little gossiping is perfectly beautiful. Be creative.

All the great scriptures are nothing but conversations of people who were creative. What do I go on doing here? Conversing. They will become gospels some day, but originally they are conversations. But I enjoy doing them. If you really love something, it is creative.

A man of understanding is continuously creative. Not that he is trying to be creative. The way he sits is a creative act. Watch him sitting. You will find in his movement a certain quality of dance, a certain dignity. Life consists of small things; just your ego goes on saying these are small things. You would like to do some great thing—great poetry. You would like to become Shakespeare, Kalidas or Milton. It is your ego that is creating the trouble.

Drop the ego and everything is creative. Then everything is tremendously great. If you don't love, then your

ego goes on saying, "This is not worthy of you." Cleaning is great. Don't go on an ego trip. Whenever the ego comes and persuades you towards some great things, immediately become aware and drop the ego, and then by and by you will find trivia sacred. Nothing is profane; everything is sacred and holy.

And unless everything becomes holy to you, your life cannot be religious. A holy man is not what you call a saint. A saint may be just on an ego trip. And also he will look a saint to you because you think he has done great deeds. A holy man is an ordinary man who loves ordinary life. Chopping wood, carrying water from the well, cooking—whatever he touches becomes holy. Not that he is doing great things, but whatsoever he does, he does it greatly.

The greatness is not in the things done. The greatness is in the consciousness that you bring while you do it. Each moment of your life has to be transformed by your meditative love. When I say be creative, I don't mean that you should all go and become great painters and poets. I simply mean let your life be a painting, let your life be poetry.

Never allow yourself this tendency for being great, famous, someone bigger than life-size—never. Life-size is perfect. To be exactly life-size, to be just ordinary, is as perfect as it should be. But live that ordinariness in an extraordinary way. That is what nirvanic consciousness is all about.

If nirvana becomes a great goal for you to achieve, then you will be in a nightmare. But if nirvana is in small things, the way you live them, the way you transform every small activity into a holy act, in a prayer, your house becomes a temple, your body becomes the abode of God, and wherever you look and whatever you touch, is tremendously beautiful, sacred; then nirvana is freedom.

(The Times of India, July 26, 2008)

# A Tribute To Tagore's Mystic Cosmic Romance

By M. N. KUNDU

An experience of the infinite Absolute is expressed in the Rig Veda thus: "Oh, the vastness!" In Rabindranath Tagore's mystic vision, the vastness of the Omnipresent is manifested in a colourful and rhythmic feast of sight and symphony and the Creator appeared as his cosmic beloved. But His perpetual presence constituted a profound theme of divine romance, an earnest mysticism of intense joy and realization above any intellectual pursuit or bookish philosophy.

Tagore's divine romance is grounded in the reality of life but never in any sense in the negation of life. "No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight, hearing and touch will bear Thy delight", he wrote. He felt the embrace of freedom in innumerable bonds of delight and so he did not want deliverance through renunciation of joyful engagement with life.

An intense feeling of pantheism is the outcome of Tagore's cosmic romance. "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures". He feels that his limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life.

This world-affirming pantheism of Tagore, however, does not make him oblivious to the domain of infinitude where there is neither day nor night, form or colour, not even a single word. This realization of the dualism of the non-dual being made him sing, "Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well".

The unification of the non-dual with the mystic dual

is the hallmark of Tagore's poetic experience: "I dive down into the ocean of forms hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless". The Being of the Upanishads is translated into myriad manifestations.

The pilgrimage from form to the formless is a painful process. But the poet enjoys it all the same as it perfects him through purification and brings him closer to the cosmic beloved in attunement and facilitates surrender. That is why he says, "...Strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart... Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles. And give me the strength to surrender my strength to Thy will with love".

Worldly life takes its own toll and the poet is no exception. His occasional deviation from the divine path gives birth to pangs, "That I want Thee, only Thee—let my heart repeat without end". He knows in his heart of hearts that all desires are false and empty to the core. Hence to maintain the eternal attunement with the Infinite, he has to rise above the gravitational pull of finitude.

Tagore is perpetually joyful in his cosmic romance and so is not bothered in the least about liberation. "Deliverance?" said he. "Where is deliverance to be found? The Master himself has joyfully taken upon Himself the bonds of Creation, He is bound with us all for ever". His delight is to wait and watch at the wayside smelling the perfume of His eternal promise and sweet presence.

Tagore's cosmic romance found a profound elevation in the firm assertion, "Thou hast taken me as Thy partner is all this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of Thy delight. In my life Thy will is ever taking shape". Is this not the height of mysticism, a mingling of poetry and spirituality?

*(The Times of India, May 9, 2006)*

## **Don't Trash Goodness, Give It A Chance**

**Discourse: Swami Nikhilananda Saraswati**

Two types of personalities are predominant in us: the good or daivi and the bad or asuri. The recognition and development of good qualities will lead one to moksha and freedom from bondage and pain. Negative qualities on the other hand lead one into bondage, resulting in sorrow and dependency.

The positive and the negative are present everywhere and in all time periods. Even in the worst possible scenario, one could find something good. If a tragedy like an earthquake happens, it reveals how there are those who help total strangers even at personal risk. We also come across those who take advantage by looting and robbing.

Since both the good and bad tendencies exist in us, we are both potentially divine as well as devilish. Environment, association and circumstances might exercise a major influence. For spiritual progress, satsang is a good option. This means not only the company of the wise but also the company of good people, good books, good literature, good food and good television programmes leave an impact.

It is important, therefore, to avoid what is negative and encourage the positive. Even if one sees a little good quality in oneself or in others, encourage it! You might find something positive even in those you perceive as your enemies. So give goodness a chance.

Negative forces attract similar tendencies that create a corresponding environment. The same is true for positive forces. It is, therefore, a good idea to cultivate positive qualities. The good and bad don't have equal potential. Good has the power to face all negativities. One strong good

quality can fight against many negative ones. Similarly, in society if strong and positive forces arise then automatically negative forces are negated.

All interaction is merely a play of these qualities. To overcome anger one has to enhance love. This love is made pure when directed towards the Divine. Then anger dissolves. Once negative qualities are identified, they can be dealt with. They have the ability to take any form. Often anger appears as righteous and spiritual.

Dedicating oneself to a good person brings out the goodness from within us. In the Service of such persons we imbibe their qualities. When one dedicates one's life to God, then Godly qualities emerge. These qualities are inherent and have to be invoked and literally pulled out of us.

Goodness when dedicated to a higher cause gains tremendous power. Hanuman's dedication to Sri Rama was unshakeable. When people dedicate themselves to subtle causes like alleviating poverty, to ecology and the like they develop remarkable strength. Their goodness is used for the common good free of ulterior motives or intention of self-aggrandisement.

Goodness that is dedicated to God helps in the seeker achieving God-realization and takes him on the path to higher ideals. Being good and philanthropic due to pressure from society or the law or other lower reasons is not permanent. But goodness that springs from within is everlasting.

Notice negative trends as they rapidly become insurmountable. One cannot fight with a terrorist by becoming a terrorist. It is by strengthening the positive that one can override the negative. Remember goodness is not an action. It is a state of being.

*(The Times of India, August 12, 2008)*

# A Picture In My Wallet

## After All Those Years

Babujee Datta

A ticket collector in a train found an old worn out wallet in a compartment full of people. He looked inside to find the name of its owner. There was no clue. All that there was in it was some money and a picture of Krishna. He held it up and asked, “Who does this wallet belong to?”

An old man said, “That’s my wallet, Sir, please give it to me.” The ticket collector said, “you’ll have to prove that it is yours. Only then I can hand it over to you.” The old man, with a toothless smile, said, “It has a picture of Krishna in it.”

The ticket collector said, “That is no proof; anyone can have a picture of Krishna in his wallet. What is special about that? Why is your picture not there in it like most normal people?”

The old man took a deep breath and said “Let me tell you why my picture is not there in it. My father gave this wallet to me when I was in school. I used to get a small sum as pocket money then. I had kept a picture of my parents in it.

“When I was a teenager I was greatly enamoured by my good looks. I removed my parent’s picture and put in one of my own. I loved to see my own face and my thick black hair. Some years later, I got married. My wife was very beautiful and I loved her a lot. I replaced my picture in this wallet with a picture of her. I spent hours gazing at her pretty face.

“When my first child was born, my life started new chapter. I shortened my working hours to play with my baby. I went late to work and returned home early too. Obviously, my baby’s picture occupied the prized position in my

wallet.”

The old man’s eyes brimmed with tears as he went on. “My parents passed away many years ago. Last year my wife too left her mortal coil. My son, my only son, is too busy with his family. He has no time to look after me.

“All that I had ever held close to my heart is now far, far away from my reach. Now I have put this picture of Krishna in my wallet. It is only now that I have realized that He is the eternal companion, He will never leave me. Alas! If only I had realized this before. If only I had loved the Lord all these years, with the same intensity as I loved my family, I would not have been so lonely today!”

The ticket collector quietly gave the wallet to the old man. When the train stopped at the next station, he went to a bookstall at the platform and asked the salesman, “Do you have any picture of God? I need a small one to put in my wallet?”

When a man ceases to have any attachment either for the objects of senses or for actions and has renounced all thoughts of the world, he is said to have attained yoga.

One should lift oneself up by one’s own efforts and should not degrade oneself; for one’s own self is one’s friend, and one’s own self is one’s enemy.

He who regards well-wishers, friends foes, neutrals, mediators, the objects of hatred, relatives, the virtuous and the sinful alike, stands supreme.

The yogi who has subdued his mind and body, and who is free from desires and bereft of possessions, living in seclusion all by himself, he should constantly engage his mind in meditation.

The Bhagvad Gita, Chapter VI 4-5, 9-10

*(The Times of India, July 24, 2008)*

# All This Chaos Because Of Greed And Jealousy

Sreeram Manoj Kumar

The reason for all the chaos is not the outcome of doings of unintelligent or unemotional people. The real hindrance to happiness is that we have forgotten how to live content with what we have.

Contentment is like a precious pearl. Whoever procures it at the expense of 10,000 desires, makes a wise and happy purchase. In the Kathopanished Yama tells Nachiketa that both the preferable and the pleasurable approach man. The intelligent one examines both and separates them and prefers the preferable to the pleasurable, whereas the ignorant selects the pleasurable that chains him to unlimited desires.

Gautama Buddha in his four noble truths declares that there is suffering and misery in life and the direct cause of it is desire or craving. Desire works in one of two ways. Once a particular desire is born there are only two possibilities; either desire is not fulfilled or it is fulfilled.

If our kama or desire is not fulfilled, we're angry. When anger or Krodha takes over, frustration comes and then we feel frustrated. Matsarya or jealousy makes us feel terrible when, for instance, someone known to us has something that we don't have. If our kama is fulfilled, then there is the emotion of pride or mada for having what others do not have. This pride makes us feel that we are unique and all that we have is ours. It makes us forget that all the things of the world belong to Providence. When we attain what we seek, we develop an attachment for them. This is called moha.

Moha or attachment makes us greedy and this is

called lobha. In an effort to fulfill greed one often tends to take refuge in untruth and unlawfulness. People with passionate qualities are never satisfied with their position or possessions—they always seek to accumulate more and more and enjoy flaunting what they have. In this way they lose the power of thought and power of emotion which are the two important parts for the integral way of living.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks Krishna what impels a person to commit sin against his will. Krishna replies that desire and anger, born of passionate quality, are enemies that eat out atman. They obfuscate wisdom like smoke covers fire. They have their presence in the sense, mind and intelligence. By covering our wisdom they delude the soul, hence one should control them from the beginning. They are destroyers of wisdom.

The Self is greater than intelligence, which in turn is greater than mind. The mind is greater than senses, which are greater than material objects. Krishna tells Arjuna that by knowing the One beyond intelligence, that is, the self, desire is killed and so anger vanishes.

Aristotle says “I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is over self.” Desire is unquenchable. Once desire is born, it knows not how to die. Desire, when transformed into aspiration, helps life soar into the highest liberation, and supreme salvation does not seem so out of reach, after all.

All people desire what they believe will make them happy. If a person is fully content with self, we can only conclude that he is engaged with another, more eternal state of happiness that is called Bliss.

*(The Times of India, July 23, 2008)*

## Poor In Possessions But Rich In Spirit

Akhil Chandra

In Sanskrit, God is also called ‘Daridra-Narayan’ or God of the poor. Krishna embraced his poor friend Sudama and ate with extreme relish the dry beaten rice offered by him and left him richly endowed. During the course of the Mahabharata war when He visited Hastinapur for reconciliation between Pandavas and Kauravas, instead of staying in the place of Duryodhana, he accepted the hospitality of Vidhur, the step-brother of Dhritarashtra. Also known as Dasiputra, Vidur was an ardent devotee of Krishna.

During his vanvaas, Rama visited poor Shabri. He addressed her as mother (mata); he ate with relish what she served him and blessed her as his much cherished devotee. Often people who are poor in the material sense are found to be rich in spirit. Kabir who was poor, found himself so much closer to God through his honesty, truth, conviction and simplicity.

Jesus loved the poor. The Bible contains more than 300 verses on the poor, social justice and God’s deep concern for both the poor and those who help them “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”

Mother Teresa derived joy in helping and caring for the poor and destitute. “God still loves the world and he sends you and me to be His love and His compassion to the poor.” She was filled with the light of Jesus Christ, with love for Him and with one desire: “To quench His thirst for love and for poor souls.” ‘Service to poor is service to God’ remained her lifelong mission.

It is said that Guru Nanak demonstrated purity of poor people’s faith by squeezing a poor man’s bread and a

rich man’s cake—which were offered to him—in front of his disciples. To the surprise of the crowd, drops of milk trickled from the bread, while from the cake came drops of blood. Guru Nanak explained that poor man’s bread was earned by honest work, but rich man’s cake was earned by cheating the poor.

A man is poor not from materialistic possessions; he is really poor if he is devoid of knowledge, righteousness, charity and honesty. Detachment from worldly things can make one look poor in the material sense but such people exhibit richness in character and remain unshaken from their chosen path irrespective of material loss or gain. Such persons deserve to be called karmayogis as defined in the Bhagavad Gita; “The Karmayogi, who is content with whatever is got unsought, is free from jealousy and has transcended all pairs of opposites like gain or loss and is balanced in success and failure.”

According to Prophet Muhammad “ Riches are not from and abundance of worldly goods but from a content mind.” Kabir as reflected similar thoughts as “Jab awe santosh dhan, sab dhan dhuri samaan” (All worldly riches are mere dust compared to contentment of mind). Real richness is thus self-contentment, which makes one happy. Often people go into depression and feel unhappy without realizing that circumstances and material things do not matter. Such persons are full of expectations and demands, which can never get completely satisfied.

Contentment brings peace and satisfaction to one’s soul leading one to believe in the grace of God. A content man accepts with all humility what he has been given by God. He leads a life of happiness and peace and finds the treasure of contentment. Such contented minds deserve to be called rich even though they may in a literal sense be poor having meager worldly possessions.

*(The Times of India, July 29, 2008)*

# The Pursuit Of Happiness

M. Yusuf Khan

LIFE IN the fast lane has taken away the simple joy of living from us. While running after ‘success’ we seem to have forgotten what happiness is. The accumulated wealth and the achieved ‘targets’ have failed to give man satisfaction.

We do have our fleeting moments of pleasure but the sense of contentment remain elusive.

In the quest for mental peace man is willing to try out new fads but often, they fail to provide lasting happiness.

At best they are distractions that take your mind off the real problem temporarily.

The general perception seems to be that happiness comes from wealth and your progeny, hence we see people hankering for them. Some of us go to any length to acquire riches using fair means and foul with equal aplomb. But if we want eternal joy we have to delve deeper.

The innate desire to have children may have something to do with the preservation of the species but surely the purpose is not to provide unremitting happiness.

Numerous tales of old parents will testify to this statement. Children may give a sense of fulfillment but they do not guarantee happiness.

So, could it be that we are searching for joy in the wrong place? If we look again, it may appear so.

The real clue to happiness can be found in various old scriptures. For instance the Quran calls wealth and progeny Fitna (15/28) which like many Arabic words has several meanings but none of them allude to happiness or contentment even remotely.

The word means trial, source of mischief, test and so on.

Elsewhere, the Quran says, ‘without doubt, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction’ (28/13).

We have to ponder over this profound statement in the light of life experiences.

We will then realize that we are chasing happiness where it does not exist. Obviously it will remain a mirage.

By remembering God and there are different ways to do so, you remain connected to the real source from which flow all the bounties, including eternal bliss.

*The Hindustan Times, May 15, 2006*

## Thank Trouble

*Instead of getting angry nurture a deep caring and respect for troublemakers because by creating such trying circumstances they provide us with invaluable opportunities to practice tolerance and patience.*

The XIV Dalai Lama

## Great Energy

*If you’ve ever walked a mile into a virgin forest—you know, like a deep forest where trees have been uncut—the energy is totally different from the shopping mall.*

James Redfield

## Graduating From Life

**What should be the ideal pursuit in life—pleasure, work, wealth or knowledge? None. Just learn to do good,** writes *JERRY BOONE*

What should you do with rest of your life? About three thousand years ago, a Jewish King named Solomon aired his opinion on the subject. As he put it, he “wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives”.

Solomon was an interesting character, and he had a lot going for him. He was intelligent. Indeed, this sage-king still has the reputation of being the “wisest man who ever lived”.

He also had the means to do practically anything he wanted to do. In his old age, Solomon found time to reflect on his lifelong experiences. And he passed his thoughts down in writing. He starts off by telling us that everything in life is meaningless.

“I know, because I have seen it all. you name it, I’ve done it . I not only did it but I did it in a big time, kingly fashion. I denied myself nothing, nothing at all. But looking back on it now. I can tell you none of it amounted to a hill of beans.”

“What do you think is worthwhile in life? The pursuit of pleasure? I had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines. I had music from men and women singers; all the wine I could drink; and a palace full of people falling all over themselves doing everything they could think of to get in my good graces.

“Sure, it is enjoyable up to a point. But when you get everything you want whenever you want it, you quickly

discover how meaningless pleasure really is.

“Here is what I’ve learned: Whenever you seek pleasure, pleasure eludes you. The only way you may find pleasure is by seeking something else first. It could be nothing more than paying someone a sincere compliment, or giving someone a hand with an unpleasant task.

“The idea is that when you least expect it, happiness suddenly bubbles up like a well inside of you. You don’t find pleasure; pleasure finds you. Pursuing pleasure is like chasing after the wind.”

“If not pleasure, then what? Wealth? Do you think you should dedicate your life to the pursuit of wealth? I had houses, vineyards, gardens, parks, fruit trees, reservoirs watering groves of trees, slaves, more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem, horses and chariots and more silver and gold than anyone can imagine. I had it all. But if money and things could buy happiness then I would have been the happiest man that ever lived.”

“ But what did I discover? Just this: Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. A rich man doesn’t even sleep well at night. He is too worried about his money.”

“Money has its uses, but don’t lose perspective. We were born naked, and when we die, we’re going to take with us just what we brought into this world. Whatever we acquire will be left to someone who had not worked for it.”

If neither pleasure nor wealth are worthwhile pursuits, how about the scholarly pursuit of knowledge?

“Oh yes, I spent a great deal of time in study. I learned everything I could about every subject under the sun. That’s how I got my reputation for wisdom. It didn’t fall out of a tree, you know. What did I find out? Only this: The more



you learn, the more you discover there is to know. Even the brightest of us are ignorant of many things. Certainly, wisdom is better than foolishness, but remember, in a few years, both the wise man and the fool wind up in the grave. Before long both are forgotten”.

So, pleasure, wealth, and knowledge all have limited value. What’s left? Work? “Yes, I worked. I built houses, planted vineyards, gardens, parks, fruit trees, and groves of trees. I delighted in my work. That was my reward.

“Of course, it was merely a temporary ‘feel-good-about-it’ sort of thing. In the long run, all of our toil is useless. Whatever you make, you can’t take with you. And in due course, whatever we create will be torn down or destroyed and soon forgotten.”

So, the wise man threw a wet blanket over most of the things people devote themselves to today. Then what should we do? How should we spend our brief time on earth?

The answer is simple; “A man can do nothing better than to eat, drink and find satisfaction in work. Enjoy life with the one you love. Be happy and do good as long as you live. Whatever you do, do it with all the might because you never know when life might end.

“While we are young, enjoy life as much as possible. But don’t forget, God will judge everything we do. The years slip by quickly. Infants turn into youths, youths into adults, adults into middle age and middle age into old age. It doesn’t take long at all. ”

“All too soon, the troubles and afflictions of age sap the strength and weaken the mind. Then death calls your number and body returns to the ground from where it came and soul returns to God who gave it.”

Solomon concludes his advice with this warning:

“God will bring every deed into judgment including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked.”

Has Solomon’s 3,000 year-old advice stood the test of time?

Some things have changed. Primarily, we have more gadgets these days than they had back in his time. But our basic choices remain the same. We can dedicate our lives to pleasure, money or possessions, or knowledge, or work. Then again when we reflect on the brevity of life, the certainty of death, and the promise of judgment, we might decide Solomon knew what he was talking about.

But what about God judging the good and wicked? The moral law certainly implies that God cares about us, what we do with our lives, and the choices we make. Also our longing for justice, often frustrated in this life, leads us to believe, we will get whatever we are due in the world to come.

By the end of the book, Solomon reaches a different conclusion: Life has a point after all. Our sojourn can best be described as a sort of boot camp or school of hard knocks. We are here to learn. Learn what? Learn that pleasures, money, possessions, knowledge and work all have only limited value. None of these pursuits should be the focal point of our lives.

Our primary task is to develop character, that is, a certain type of character. Earth, we discover, is nothing more than a large training centre for character. Those who graduate have learned their lessons on: fair play, unselfishness, humility, courage, faithfulness, honesty, truthfulness and treating others with respect.

The Times of India, July 27, 2008

# Cow's Tale: She Was Tied UP With An Imaginary Rope

Discourse by MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI

A cowherd took his cows to the meadows every morning and brought them back to the cowshed at the end of the day. One evening, as he was tying the cows up for the night, the boy found that one of them was missing her rope. He feared that she might run away, but it was too late to go and buy a new rope.

The boy didn't know what to do, so he went to a wise man who lived nearby and sought his advice. The wise man told the boy to pretend to tie the cow, and make sure that the cow saw him doing it. The boy did as the wise man had suggested.

The next morning the boy discovered that the cow had remained still throughout the night. He untied all the cows as usual, and they all went outside. He was about to go to the meadows when he noticed that the cow with the missing rope was still in the cowshed.

She was standing on the same spot where she had been all night. He tried to coax her to join the herd, but she wouldn't budge. The boy was perplexed. He went back to the wise man who said, "The cow still thinks she is tied up. Go back and pretend to untie her". The boy did as he was told and the cow happily left the cowshed. This is what the guru does with the ego of the disciple.

The guru helps untie that which was never there. Like the cow, due to our ignorance, we believe that we are bound by the ego when, in fact, we are completely free. We need to be convinced of this, however.

The ego is an illusion with no existence of its own. It appears to be real because it is animated by the atman. The ego itself can be compared to dead matter; for without the atman, it would have no life.

Stop supporting the ego and it will withdraw and disappear. We ourselves lend the unreal ego its reality. Expose it for what it is, or rather, for what it isn't and that will be the end of it.

A dog wags its tail—the tail does not wag the dog. The same is true with the mind. The mind, or the ego, should be nothing more than a useful tool; a sadhaka (spiritual seeker) shouldn't let herself be ruled by the whims and fancies of the mind. The ego consists of our thoughts and our mind.

Our thoughts are our own creation. We make them real by cooperating with them. If we withdraw our support, they will dissolve. We simply have to observe our thoughts.

A lion made of sandalwood is real to a child, but to a grown-up it's a piece of sandalwood. For the child, the wood is concealed, revealing only the lion. The grown-up may also enjoy the lion, but he knows it is not real. For him, the wood is real, not the lion.

In the same way, to a Self-realized soul, the entire universe is nothing but the essence, the "wood" that comprises everything, the Absolute Brahman or Consciousness.

*Excerpted from Army Edelsten is interview with Amma for What is Enlightenment? Magazine published by Andrew Cohen.*

*(The Times of India, January 2, 2006.)*

# Why Vivekananda Is My Workplace Guru

Anshul Chaturvedi

“When you are doing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it...as the highest worship and devote your whole life to it for the time being”. The monk who said this. Vivekananda, was anything but impractical. His spiritual strength, sharp intellect and relentless work gave him insights that could impact corporate work culture just as much as they enrich monastic life.

Whatever our sphere of work or place in the corporate hierarchy, few among us would describe our jobs as being easy. Preoccupied with what we have to do from one workday to another, we have little time to reflect on whether we have got the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ right.

When agonising over right and wrong; when choosing the easy compromise over a more complicated but possibly better option, Vivekananda’s belief act as a benchmark. “He who is over-cautions about himself faces danger at every step: he who is afraid of losing honour and respect gets only disgrace; he who is afraid of loss, always loses”. Overcoming the fear of losing, not worrying incessantly about what the workplace universe may think of you, try to work for work’s sake.

Vivekananda also say to avoid looking wistfully, or with bitterness at what seem like more relevant and rewarding role than your own. “No man can long occupy a position for which he is not fit. By doing well the duty which is nearest to us, which is in our hands now, we make ourselves stronger and improving our strength in this manner, we may reach a state in which it shall be our privilege to do the most coveted

duties...” Egro, you’ll get what you deserve, not what you desire; so work primarily to change what you deserve and the rest will follow. He advocates neither submissiveness not envy.

A calm perspective yields contentment as opposed to the feeling of dissatisfaction that often overwhelms us at work. “We find ourselves in the position for which we are fit and if one has some capacity above another, the world will find that out. too...” He reminds us that “We are all apt to think too highly of ourselves. We determine what our duties are to a much larger extent than we are willing to admit. Competition arouses envy and kills the kindness of the heart”.

In the course of moving up the professional ladder, you are tempted to agree more with yourself. Then comes the inclination to bring others into your fold and convert them to your point of view. But a lesson that Vivekananda learnt from Sri Ramakrishna is one that you and I could learn, too. Ramakrishna shied away from the weakness that sainthood brings, of preaching to ensure a following.

Vivekananda explains: “His principle was, first form character and results will come of themselves...Be in no hurry to give your thoughts to others. First have something to give! Know Truth for yourself and there will be many to whom you can teach it afterwards: they will all come”.

We first need to improve on what we have to give and not hasten to teach or preach, believing we have learnt enough. If we hone our skills and build our character, those who wish to acquire them from us will come of their own accord; we need not rush to act as dispensers of wisdom. Let’s make a beginning by improving ourselves first.

*The Times of India January 11, 2008*

# A Democratic Attitude Helps Reduce Stress

Ravi K. Wadhawan

The qualities of the playful Krishna, dignified Maryada Purush Rama, serene Mahavira and Buddha define our cultural heritage. Despite the rich tradition, however, we are increasingly becoming vulnerable to stress and strain. We also accept that once we have stress in us, it can only be managed and not eliminated. Managing stress means we are accepting its presence in our lives as an inevitability.

Parents worry about the levels of stress in their children. This in turn makes parenting a stressful activity. Since stress is inside of us, it cannot be plucked out easily. Stress carries a huge quantum of energy and so is never still. It travels to every nook and corner of our body and begins to dominate our lives in all spheres.

Stress releases negative energy and disturbs the normal functioning of our heart, liver, kidneys and lungs. It permeates every cell in the body. The major manufacturers of stress are anger, ego, jealousy, irritation and our perceived failures. A better understanding and analysis of these factors can help us overcome them.

Generally opposition to what we wish, want and think, generates anger. A justified opposition should not anger us. But when reason is lost, we get angry. This gives rise to ego. Anger and ego are intricately related. Anger comes and goes while ego settles and forms layers. Over a period of time, ego begins to weight us down. A body weighting a mere 40 kg mass may carry with it a tonne of ego!

Acceptance prevents anger. And acceptance comes to those who are receptive to criticism. To be receptive to criticism, you must evolve a democratic temperament in an argument. When some body takes a view opposite to yours, it does not necessarily mean that he is wrong. You might be wrong. When you think that you are right, simultaneously

the other person is also thinking the same of himself.

A third person might find that there is no room for anger in this conflict because it is either a fight between two rights or two wrongs. There is also a third possibility that one of the two conflicting persons is right and the other one is wrong. But the problem here is that who will confess to being wrong?

Accepting the other person's right to his view requires a democratic attitude. Once we imbibe the spirit of democracy, acceptance becomes easier. This brings about a calming effect upon everybody involved in the conflict and improves inter-personal relations.

With the democratic approach to life, anger begins to disappear and with it, the layers of ego in us begin to dissolve. This makes us feel lighter, and happier. Irritation being the smaller version of anger also recedes once we are able to analyse anger.

Jealousy feeds anger. Its random energy burns and chars us from inside. It comes to us either from an inferiority or superiority complex. In its acute manifestation, it becomes harmful to both the person who is jealous and the person who is being envied.

Jealousy colours our perception of everything. We should count our blessings everyday and give thanks to God everyday. It will invoke generosity in us, forming an antidote to jealousy.

We can overcome negative tendencies in us by honestly analysing our feelings. We need to remember that any solution has to come from inside rather than from the outside. Once we empty ourselves of our negative feelings, we begin to feel at peace. Then we can live happily ever after.

*(The Times of India, December 29, 2007)*

## **Simplicity And Humility: Signs Of Perfection**

**R. K. LANGAR**

Where there is greatness, you are bound to find simplicity. Simplicity is a characteristic of greatness. It is the perfect alignment of one's thoughts, words and deeds.

Great truths are simple but we make them difficult. When you are simple your outer and inner lives coincide. When you are simple, there is no trace of crookedness. We make ourselves complicated by splitting our personality. Inwardly we are something but outwardly we are different because we mistakenly feel that our outwardly pattern of behaviour should be different under different circumstances.

We present ourselves as what we are really not. Such a person may or may not fool others but he is certainly fooling himself. He equates simplicity with being unimpressive and backward. He feels that a simple person cannot be successful in life. But simple persons have done great things in life. They are not only successful but are also perfect in all aspects of life.

A simple person sees things as they are and presents them without adding to or subtracting from them. So there is no scope for untruth. Their conscience is clear, free of any ambiguity. They create plenty of space in their mind to allow noble thoughts to enter. Simple people earn through fair means and are at ease with themselves and with others.

A materialistic man presents truth in a complicated way. He may distort fact to impress others. He is used to making mountains out of mole hills. If you present things in a complicated manner, it covers up your lack of knowledge

of the subject. But to explain something in a simple way is not easy. It requires thorough understanding of the subject. It requires talent. The more knowledge a person has of a subject, the more he would be inclined to put it across in a simple way.

When something is presented in a simple manner, it is well received and understood. The same goes for simple writing. There are writers who show their scholarship in their writings, even if what they write is not accessible (comprehensible) to the vast majority of readers.

Simplicity means doing what is necessary and remaining balanced. It means your life is an open book. Simple living means living in moderation. The thought process evolve corresponding to simple living and high thinking. Simplicity comes by living a regulated and organized life. Simplicity can be applied in all spheres of life, dress, food, talk, behaviour and in our interaction with others. For being simple one has to be oneself. A simple person leads a stress-free life since he is pure and truthful. Sri Aurobindo says that to express harmony, of all things simplicity is the best.

Simplicity as a prerequisite for spiritual advancement for it is those who are child-like who get divine illumination. There was one common factor in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Ramana and Mahatma Gandhi: Every one of them led a simple life. Whatever they wanted to convey was free from any kind of multiplicity. They were men of character with deep concern for the welfare and well-being of others. Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated how simple living generates high thinking. Simplicity is also one of the divine qualities as enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita.

*(The Times of India, January 30, 2008)*

# Action And Reaction, Cause And Effect

Subramanya R.

Destiny must not be construed as a curse on humankind. One version of interpreting destiny is directly correlated to an individual's Karma, Personal attitude and approach towards life and values decide your destiny. The cumulative factors precedent to actions and collective offerings create the agony and ecstasy of life.

Look at the monotonous realities of life as they unfold. The pattern changes, for better or for worse. No circumstance lasts forever. To defy and build resistance will only aggravate misery. Instead one has to live through the experience.

You need not be a saint to practise virtue. Mere awareness of what is right and wrong and thoughtfulness of identifying yourself with God would do you good. Perform actions without expectations. Actions performed to achieve good bring joy and happiness.

The brain is a chemical laboratory, a delicate balance must be maintained. Imagine a troupe of ballet dancers performing in unison. Anyone out-of-step would throw the entire performance off-balance. Similarly brain chemistry could also go haywire.

No one is capable of absolute evil. Good always triumphs over evil. Many a time we come across people doing harm to society spend in conspicuously on charitable causes to get over the guilt.

Mind over matter dictates the truth. One can accept unconditional thinking and filter the undesirable. Practise virtue and pursue virtuous deeds. One cannot escape destiny, we need to understand it as it presents itself.

Every moment in life poses its own opportunity for

us to relish and experience life. What is important is not how you struggled but how you reconciled and won.

The ability to continue in the face of defeat and to better your circumstance is divine. In the pursuit of finding your own destiny, you could change its course by exercising control with better judgment. Common sense could help us chart our future course.

By perpetually surrendering to the state of purity you can change your destiny. Destiny is amenable to thought and right action. We only need to subtly understand our limitations and practise humility.

The turmoil within is only momentary; as time passes what you have construed earlier will fall off dry leaves. God created us with a purpose. We need to understand the values and gifts He has showered upon us. However, He does not believe in orchestrating our entire life.

Destiny is what we do to fight against vice and temptation. If the perception of destiny is misunderstood and we resign ourselves to it, not paying heed to how we can better our lives, thinking that it is totally a predestined issue—we are wrong. If we condemn ourselves to suffer and feel damned, the existence of whatever good has no meaning. It is not by reprimand alone that one learns the truth. One can overcome the impediments by devotion and prayer. If a conscious mind with clear intentions evaluates right and wrong, it can overcome.

Destiny is choice. Honest application and focused action leads to tangible achievements. It is the passion and commitment to purpose that uplifts. We must uphold values of higher planes to overcome deficiencies and inadequacies. We need to constantly upgrade and resurrect thoughts and better ourselves, may be to transcend and live again in a superior world free from the cycle of birth and death, for which we need to be prepared.

*(The Times of India, February 5, 2008)*

# Life Is Death, Death Is Life

Swami Sivananda

Death is separation of the soul from the physical body. Death becomes the starting point of a new life. Death merely opens the door to a higher and fuller form of life. Birth and death are jugglery of maya. He who is born begins to die. He who dies begins to live. Life is death and death is life. No one comes, no one goes. Brahmn or the eternal alone exists.

Just as you move from one house to another, the soul passes from one body to another to gain experience. Just as a man casting off worn-out garments takes new ones, so the dweller in this body, casting off worn-out bodies, enters into others which are new.

Life is a continuum. Death is necessary for further evolution. Dissolution of the body is no more than sleep. Birth is like waking up. Death brings new life. A man of discrimination is not afraid of death. Death unlocks the door to a wider existence. The soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere but its centre is in the body. Death means the change of this centre from one body to another.

The supreme soul or paramatman is deathless, decayless, timeless, causeless and spaceless. It is the source and substratum for body, mind and world. There is death for the physical body, a compound of five elements. The eternal soul is beyond time, space and causation.

To free yourself from birth and death, you must become body-less. Body is the result of karmas of actions. If you free yourself from raga-dvesha, or likes and dislikes, you will be free from karma. If you annihilate ignorance

through knowledge of the imperishable, you can annihilate the ego. The root cause for this body is ignorance. He who realizes the eternal soul, which is formless and attribute less, infinite and unchanging, frees himself from death.

The individual soul or jivas build various bodies to display their activities and gain experience from this world. They enter the bodies and leave them. The process goes on. This is known as transmigration of souls. The entrance of a soul into a body is called birth. The soul's departure from the body is death.

Man has always tried to know what happens after the death of an individual. Science has been struggling to unravel the mystery of what lies beyond death. Experiments have yielded many interesting facts. Natural death, it is said, is unknown to unicellular organization. When life on earth consisted of these creatures, death was unknown. The phenomenon appeared only when from unicellular the multicellular evolved.

Laboratory experiments have shown that whole organs such as thyroid glands, the ovary, suprarenal gland, the spleen, heart and kidneys isolated from the body of a cat or a fowl, can be kept alive in vitro to show increase in size or weight due to the appearance of new cells or tissues.

It is also known that after the cessation of an individual parts of the organization can continue to function. The white corpuscles of the blood, if cared for, can live for months after the body from which they were withdrawn has been cremated. Death is not the end of life. It is merely cessation of an individuality. Life flows on to achieve the universal till it merges in the eternal.

The Times of India, February 23, 2008

# Let's Just Accept What Cannot Be Changed

Aruna Jethwani

The Gurbani says. "Whatever happens naturally is the best". "Sahaj subah jo hoe so ho". This is also a mantra being featured in Human Resource Development (HRD) courses as it is considered an effective antidote to daily tensions. These words could foresee the momentum of life and the tumult of stress and ensuing frustrations. Tension more often than not gives way to frustration, causing unhappiness. Most of us find it difficult to cope with daily frustrations.

Often, we pursue goals and desires that are unrealistic. We pursue them with faith and determination hoping that persistence will yield results, which is not a bad thing. However, when the goal seems distant we should not bang our heads against the wall in frustration.

Osho said "No matter what you do, life turns out the way it turns out. Struggling with life does not help at all". A miracle must happen. But when it does not, the best thing to do is to fall in line with karmic happenings. Destiny has a role and is subject to certain limitations.

I once asked my guru, "Can you change the destiny of your disciple?" The answer was "Why? A true guru will not interfere with the karmic destiny of his disciple. He will only help him spiritually.

A young, talented girl who was frustrated with unrequited love, asked her guru: "Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" The guru replied, "If a child wants to play with a knife, will his mother give it to him even if he throws a tantrum? No. While working out your destiny, you might come across better choices. Maybe there is something better

in store for you. Let go. Start afresh before the hurt becomes a wound".

In the pursuit of our dreams we encounter delays, blockages and obstructions. We throw up our hands in frustration and scream "Why can't I do it?"

Don't push yourself against an unyielding wall. Take time off. Create a space. For on this journey, there are waiting rooms, transit lounges, and change of tyre on the way. Time, trust and tryst must synchronise with yield fulfilment. By that time you may have discovered a new purpose, a new goal, or even a new obsession. You may even find a spot of bliss.

Sahaj subah jo hoe so ho. When you fall in line with your karmic destiny, life is lived effortlessly. It is said that happiness lies in the rhythm of life. Life is a flow. Cascade over the obstacles. The rhythm of life gains grace and agility when you move on without the baggage of frustration.

Frustration can be as small as a prolonged wait for a raise in your salary or it may be as shattering as failure in a deep relationship. Frustration is self-consuming.

Effort has great value. But effort should be productive. Follow the law of least wastage. Despite that if things go wrong, follow the law of substitution. When nothing seems to work, follow the law of acceptance. Believe that whatever is in your destiny, acceptance becomes necessary.

Often, when you cooperate with your karmic destiny and internalise the law of acceptance, things just start happening. Your inner struggle is over. And your goals and intense desires are fulfilled in a mystical way.

*(The Times of India, January 1, 2008)*



# Fasting During Ramadan Is For Self-purification

By Syed Qaisar Mahmood

Most religions recommend fasting at certain periods of the year. Jews observe Yom Kippur, members of the Roman catholic and Eastern Orthodoxy churches fast during the 40 day lent period before Easter, Hindus fast on various days including full moon days. Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan.

The Holy Qur'an says: "Fasting has been ordained for you as it was ordained for people before you". Islam prescribes total fasting from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Fasting in Islam is not only abstinence from food and drink, but also refraining from misbehaviour and loose talk. The Holy Prophet said: "If a person does not refrain from falsehood and false conduct, Allah has no need that he should abstain from food and drink".

Ramadan provides an excellent opportunity to achieve the highest goals of life. "Just liberate a bondsman or provide food in the day of famine, to an orphaned relation or to a needy man in distress". Night hours during Ramadan are particularly conducive for spiritual and academic activities, suitable for meditation. Western scholars have described historiography as a Muslim science. The reason why Muslims have excelled in this field is that the Qur'an frequently asks man to learn from the fate of previous communities. The free time during Ramadan may also be used to read a bit of good poetry. The poet elaborates on the Qur'anic philosophy that howsoever high may be the status of a man in this world, his end is inevitable. He says, 'The paths of glory lead but to

the grave."

Ramadan is also a good opportunity for long walks, useful in enabling us to think systematically. It was while he was wandering alone that William Wordsworth got the inspiration to compose the poem 'The Daffodils', in which he described the mind as "that inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude".

The Qur'an too, emphasizes rational thinking: "In the creation of the heavens and the earth,/ In the alternation of night and day;/ In the ships that sail the ocean with cargoes beneficial to man;/ In the water which God sends down from the sky.../ In the disposal of the winds;/ And in the clouds that are driven between sky and earth;/ Surely in these are signs for rational men". (2:164)

Ramadan is also the month of nature cure. Fasting is a simple and natural way to cleanse and rest the body. Part of our energy is spent on digestion. In Ramadan, during daytime this energy is released. The body uses this energy to heal and revitalize itself. Fasting makes us feel refreshed both spiritually and physically. By giving the digestive system a rest, fasting detoxifies the system and stimulates metabolism, aiding healing and renewal. Even neuropaths recommend fasting one day a month. Ramadan must be full of remembrance of God, full of prayers, supplications and meditations, Tawba and Istighfar, because genuine repentance leads to the state of sinlessness. Ramadan stresses care for the poor and the neglected, respect for parents and youngsters, love for relatives and friends and consideration for believers of all faiths.

*(The Times of India, October 14, 2005)*

## A Thought For Lohri Festival

Bhartendu Sood

Many of us who go for a morning walk confront two contrasting pictures. One, of students rushing to schools and coaching centres by bus, cycle, car and scooter. The other picture which makes one sad is of deprived children who move around with large sacks on their shoulders to collect plastic and scrap from the heaps of debris or the left-overs that shop keepers leave outside at closing time. Children as small as six years are also seen doing all this. Unfortunately, this is the story of all Indian cities.

Why should it happen when our government is not only providing mid day meals but has started evening schools for those who can't go to the school in the morning? According to me, it is happening because we are happy only with our own progress and are not concerned with what is happening around us. If we ever engage these children in discussion, we will find that their mothers are working as our domestic help and their fathers are driving rickshaws to take us somewhere.

We don't mind if our own child, after having taken coaching for a year, which costs anything up to a lakh, suddenly declares that he would like to attempt the exam only next year. I have seen parents anxiously escorting their children to examination centres, even if they have to take leave from the office. But if our domestic help's child stops going to school, we don't have the time to speak to the school authorities. In most cases we don't even bother to know what her children do. But it makes a big difference when an educated person takes up the cause of such children.

We all can help the cause. It simply calls for distributing our love.

What we need to do is to monitor the education of at least one deprived child. Just as all our investments shouldn't be in one portfolio, likewise our love should not be only for our own one or two children. Deprived children will actually fetch us better returns.

*(The Hindustan Times, January 11, 2008.)*

## Discover The Plus Factor For That Healing Touch

Janina Gomes

The tests of life are its plus factor. Overcoming illness and suffering is a plus factor for it moulds character. Cortland Myers says that steel is iron plus fire, soil is rock plus heat, linen is flax plus the bath that cleans, the comb that separates, that flail that pounds and the shuttle that weaves. So let's include the plus factor in our lives.

Sometimes the plus factor is more readily seen by the simple-hearted. Myers tells the story of a mother who brought into her home—as a companion to her own son—a little boy who happened to have a hunchback. She had warned her son to be careful not to refer to his disability and to go right on playing with him as if he were like any other boy.

The boys were playing and after a few minutes she overheard her son say to his companion: “Do you know what you have got on your back?” The little boy was embarrassed, but before he could reply, his playmate continued: “It is the box in which your wings are and some day God is going to cut it open and then you will fly away and be an angel”.

Often if takes a third eye, or a change in focus, to see the plus factor. Walking along the corridors of a hospital recently where patients were struggling with fear of pain and tests, I was perturbed. What gave me fresh perspective were the sayings put up everywhere, intended to uplift. One saying made me conscious of the beauty of the universe in the midst of pain, suffering and struggle and notice the pink and gold of the setting sun against a horrendous flow of traffic returning home. The other saying assured me that God was with me when I was in deep water and that no troubles would overwhelm me.

The import of those saying also made me aware of

the nether springs that flow into people's lives when they touch rock-bottom or when they feel hassled, loney, or even deserted. The nether springs make recovery possible, and they bring peace and patience in the midst of pain and distress.

The forces of death and destruction are not so much physical as they are psychic and psychological. When malice, hate and hard-heartedness prevail, they get channeled as forces of destruction. Where openness, peace and good-heartedness prevail, the forces of life gush forth to regenerate hope and joy.

The life force is triumphant when love overcomes fear. Both fear and love are deep mysteries, but the effect of love is to build whereas fear tends to destroy. Love, when, it is not distorted in its meaning or expression, builds in a way that is difficult to fathom. Love is often the plus factor that helps build character. It helps us to accept and to overcome suffering. It creates lasting bonds and its reach is infinite.

It is true that there is no shortage of destructive elements—forces and people who seek to destroy others and in the process, destroy themselves—but at the same time there are signs of love and life everywhere that are constantly enabling us to overcome setbacks. So let's not look only at gloom and doom—let's seek out positivity and happiness. For it is when you seek that you will find what is waiting to be discovered.

When John Donne said "Death be not proud", he might not have meant only physical death, but also the ability to overcome all powers and forces of death and destruction and to emerge victorious in life as well.

*(The Times of India, October 25, 2006)*

## **Divine Prophets Bring The Message Of Love**

**Neda Nooreyezdani**

Throughout history, God has revealed Himself to humanity through a series of divine Messengers, each of whom has founded a great religion. A succession of divine teachers were sent for the purpose of educating humanity about the Creator and for cultivating the spiritual, intellectual and moral capacities of the human race.

The relationship between God and man is fostered through prayer, knowledge of the scriptures revealed by these teachers, love for God, moral self-discipline, and service to humanity. One benefit of cultivating a spiritual life is that the individual increasingly develops those innate qualities that lie at the foundation of human happiness and social progress.

The coming of each new Prophet marks a pivotal point in time. Each releases a fresh spiritual impulse, stimulating personal renewal and social advancement. To understand why these divine teachers have been sent to us one has to understand the nature of God. The nature of God is limitless, infinite and all powerful. It is impossible for us mortals with limited intellects and finite capacities, to directly comprehend the reality of God. It is through Messengers that God has chosen to make Himself known to humanity. The Prophets mirror God's attributes and perfection, providing a pure channel for the communication of God's will to humanity.

God's messengers have a twofold station. On the one hand, they are divine beings, reflecting perfectly God's will. On the other hand, they are humans, subject to birth, disease, suffering and death. They have distinct physical

identities and they address humanity at particular stages. These differences give rise to cultural distinction between religions that sometimes conceal their inherent unity.

Fundamentally however, the message has been the same. Each has stressed the importance of love for God, obedience to His will and love for humanity. Although the words have varied, each has taught the individuals should treat others as they would like to be treated themselves.

Today, humanity as a whole has entered a new stage in its collective existence; like an adolescent entering adulthood. And it is at this stage that a new Messenger carried the latest word of God amidst a period of messianic expectations in many. A young merchant—the Bab, Meaning the Gate—announced that He was the bearer of a long-promised Divine revelation destined to transform the spiritual life of the human race. “O peoples of the earth”, the Bab declared. “Give ear unto God’s holy Voice...Verily the resplendent Light of God hath appeared in your midst, invested with this unerring Book, that ye may be guided aright to the ways of peace...”

This declaration that spiritual renewal and social advancement rested on “love and compassion” rather than “force and coercion”, aroused hope and excitement among many people.

His coming the Bab explained, represented the portal through which the universally anticipated Revelation of God to all humanity would soon appear and Whose mission would be to usher in the age of peace and justice promised in all world religions.

*Today is the birth anniversary of The Bab, Herald Prophet of the Baha’i faith.*

*(The Times of India, October 20, 2006)*

## God Happened Because There Is Devotion

**Discourse: Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev**

Many truly scintillating human beings have happened—they have shone brighter than the stars in the sky. Why is it that somebody seems to have come with enormous capability and somebody else has to struggle with every little thing in his life?

People say, “he’s gifted”. Nobody is gifted; you have to earn everything. Either you earn joyfully, or you earn miserably—that is all the choice there is.

There are a variety of sadhana through which one earns. But the simplest way, the easiest way and also the most self-destructive way is devotion. What is Grace, first of all? If you look at yourself as machine—you have brain, body, everything. But what you call as ‘Grace’, is the lubrication. Without lubrication, you have a great engine but you get stuck at every point, like so many people who are intelligent and capable, but often they get stuck because there is no lubrication.

Devotion would be the easiest way to become receptive to this Grace, so that the process of life become graceful. The cunning mind, however, is unable to devote itself to anybody or anything. You can sing songs of devotion, but you have your own calculation. What has God done for me? Calculating minds cannot be devout. Trying to be devout will be just a waste of time and life.

A devotee is not somebody’s devotee; devotion is a quality. Devotion means a certain single-pointedness—you are constantly focused towards one thing. To such a person, Grace will happen naturally and he becomes receptive. What or whom you are devoted to is not the issue. What you

need to know is, God does not exist. But where there it is a devotee, God exists.

So the power of devotion is such that it can create the Creator. Thinking minds always have an allergy to devotion, because devotees have made such fools of themselves. This is simply because fear is passing off as devotion.

Extreme deviousness is passing off as devotion right now, with a large population. If one knows the joy of devotion; devotion is truly for the intelligent, not for the stupid because without devotion, there is no profundity to your life. Nothing is worthwhile if you analyse it with your thought. Whole existence, including you and everybody else, is worth anything if you just cut it down with the knife of your intellect. Only when devotion arises, there is depth. Devotion does not mean going to the temple and chanting 'Ram, Ram'. Anybody who is one-pointed; anybody who can absolutely give himself to whatever he is doing, is a natural devotee. He need not have a deity to become a devotee—he is a devotee. God will happen. It is not because there is God that devotion has come. Because there is devotion, God has happened.

Knowing devotion just as an emotion, maybe makes your life a little sweet. Devotion, however, is more than that it is intended to completely demolish you the way are. If you just become a little better—that is not the intention of the devotion; devotion means dissolution. The root word for 'devotion' is 'dissolve'. Only one who is willing to dissolve himself can be a true devotee. In what and how is not the point.

*(The Times of India, September 28, 2006.)*

## Two And Two Could Make More Than Four

Rudrapatna Subramanyam

A baby announces its arrival in the world with its shrill cries; a man announces his departure from the world by his unbroken stony silence. The book of life covering the period between birth and death contains pages of joy and sorrow, success and failure, triumph and tragedy, pleasure and pain, fulfilment and disappointment, health and sickness. Life is a mixed bag of pairs of opposites. Highs and lows are inter-woven and form integral parts of the mosaic of Life.

It is our basic nature to seek happiness. Do we get it? When we look around, we find ourselves surrounded by sufferings. We feel uneasy; that we are perched on an island of some happiness, surrounded on all sides by deep and dark waters of unhappiness. Is happiness just a mirage? The fact is that there is neither undiluted happiness, nor unabated unhappiness. Life is both, however, the nature of pain is such that it appears that the unhappy phase of life is interminably long.

When we are faced with unhappy situations, we may derive some comfort by observing and learning from Nature. A cold and dark night yields to the refreshing morning Sun, with its soothing rays of warmth, radiating light dispelling darkness. After every chilly winter, there comes the spring, bringing warmth, hope and cheer. At the end of dark long tunnel, there is light.

Happiness is a state of mind which keeps us in a state of well-being. Several important ingredients go to make the 'commodity' known as happiness. But this precious commodity is simply not available in a departmental store. While money can buy pleasures, it cannot buy happiness. A rich man need not necessarily be happy. By the same token, a poor man need not necessarily be unhappy. Happiness has to be experienced from within. A fairly comfortable financial position, cordial and harmonious family relations and good

health contribute to a happy life. But these alone would not ensure enduring happiness. Many a time, we script unhappiness for ourselves and others.

The mind reacts to external stimuli and this could sometimes bring us happiness or unhappiness. For enduring happiness, the internal war that rages within our minds should first cease. We should come to terms with external ground realities. As physical training keeps the body in good shape, so also mental training helps in keeping the mind tranquil and balanced in the face of adversity.

Things happen not as we want them to but according to a pre-ordained scheme of things, over which we have little control. We were not consulted about the choice of our parents, place of birth, our sex. Neither will we be consulted about our time of death, place and manner. The cards are dealt to us. We have to play them to the best of our ability. We do not gain anything by fretting or fuming over things over which we have no control, whatsoever. We only become unhappy in the process. Accept gracefully the things given to us, the good or bad, and abjectly surrender to dictates of destiny.

Life does not lend itself to strictly scientific analysis. In the rough and tumble of life, two plus two may not necessarily equal to four. There are many questions for which we have no answers.

*(The Times of India, September 26, 2006)*

## **You Live Once You Know How To Deal With Death**

**Jamuna Rangachari**

Isn't it amazing that we never think of death as a real possibility in our own lives? Coping with death—whether dealing with the possibility of one's own death or that of a loved one—remains one of the greatest challenges of our lives.

In the Mahabharata, once Prince Yudhishtira goes to quench his thirst in a pond that is in the territory of a Yaksha. The Yaksha had tested several people, including his brothers and they had all failed to answer his questions satisfactorily. Now, it was Yudhishtira's turn. One of questions the Yaksha asks Yudhishtira is: "What is the greatest mystery in this world?" Yudhishtira replies (to Yaksha's satisfaction): "Although many people are dying everyday, most of us don't realise or think about death. Isn't the hope that we'll be living forever, the greatest mystery of all?"

A similar message is to be found in a story 'What Men Live By' by Leo Tolstoy. In the story, an angel is sent to earth by God to learn some important lessons in life, one of which is: "What is not given to man". Through his experiences on earth, the angel learns that 'It is not given to man to know his own needs'. Explaining the second lesson, Tolstoy says, "It is not given to any man to know whether, when evening comes, he will need boots for his body or slippers for his corpse".

When dealing with the issue of death, most people go through several stages—denial, depression, anger and finally acceptance. We tend to toggle between these stages, with depression and anger, sometimes never leaving us totally.

Spiritual masters and philosophers since long have said and written much on how to reach and remain in a state of acceptance. The following story of a grieving woman and Buddha's advice to her, illustrates the fact that death is universal and unavoidable, and so should be accepted as being an inevitable part of life.

A woman grieving the loss of her son asks Buddha to bring him back to life. Buddha asks her to bring a mustard seed from a house where there has never been any death. Failing to find any home where there had been no death, the inconsolable mother now accepts her loss. She went a step further. Realising that the world is impermanent and seeking an end to the cycle of suffering, she joined Buddha's order and diligently followed his teaching. Hence, coping with her loss was the first step on her spiritual journey.

Most rituals associated with death are, in fact, designed to enable us to reach a state of acceptance of coming to terms, with death as a natural, inevitable event. For instance, the lighting of a lamp or candle, a tradition in most religious belief systems, is meant to help light up the soul's journey which is groping its way. It is believed that the soul at this stage is most receptive to our offerings of prayer.

Whatever our belief system, it is clear that by focusing on helping the departed soul, our own grief vanishes slowly but steadily. In doing so, we would perhaps, move closer to understanding the impermanence of life. A mediaeval book on the craft of dying says, "Learn to die and thou shall learn how to live".

*(The Times of India, August 31, 2006)*

## Giving Up vs Giving In

Pankaj Kumar

What is the concept of surrendering to the will of God? It is that we follow the essential teachings of our religion, do our duty and let God worry about 1,001 factors not under our control. We trust that what God does will be good for us.

This concept allows us to concentrate on living our life and doing well what needs to be done, instead of fretting about matters beyond our control. But this does not mean being inactive and resigned to fate. In adverse situations, we can keep trying and praying anyway.

"God knows what is good for you infinitely better than you do. Surrendering to His will is a higher form of worship than visiting temples," said Swami Sivananda.

This is not as "fatalist" as is commonly supposed. If our daughter is seriously ill, for example, we may not be able to think of the best course of action because of our attachment to her. The concept of surrender means that we focus just on providing medical treatment and leave the rest to God. This lets us to come to terms with misfortune.

With our finite mental powers, we may not comprehend why something has happened. But with the passage of time, we see the event in perspective. A young man or woman who studied hard but failed a crucial exam may find after a decade how the event changed his or her career for the better. This emotional logic works in some situations at least.

It is often helpful in times of crisis to say mentally. "Let Thy will be done, I want nothing."

Devotees of Lord Krishna call this concept 'Prapatti'.

In times of difficulty, two questions may be relevant: “Am I trying? Am I following the essential teachings of my religion?” The fact is that the absolute Reality cannot be described. When a Buddhist master was asked—what the nature of reality was, he replied, “Walk on!”

In simple terms, this means that we keep on trying taking one step at a time.

The Hindustan Times, March 12, 2008

\* Men read, study and hear all god’s names, yet God’s designs are not known, How shall iron become pure gold unless it be touched by the philosopher’s stone.

—Bhagat Ravidas

\* Let me dedicate and offer my body and soul as my worship, Thus, by the Guru’s favour, shall I find the Pure One.

—Bhagat Ravidas

\* True knowledge is the service of eternal values—the service of God—the service of humanity—the service of poor and lowly.

—Mahatma Gandhi

## The Power Of My Kara

Roger H. Barnsley

I am President and Vice-Chancellor, Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. In December 2004, my wife and I visited India for the first time.

During that trip, most of which was in Punjab, I noticed that almost everyone wore bangles (steel karas). I asked my host, Mr. Ron Mundi about his bangle and he told me the religious reason that Sikhs wore the karas. He also mentioned that he attributed his recent good fortune and good luck to wearing it. Several days later, our group travelled to Amritsar to visit the Golden Temple.

While there, I purchased a simple copper kara for my right wrist. It was my intention to wear it for a while and then take it off when I returned to Canada, several weeks later.

On December 24, 2004, my wife and I flew from Delhi to Krabi, Thailand. We spent Christmas Day Snorkelling, offshore on an Island in the Andaman Sea.

On the morning of December 26, my wife and I discussed our plans for that day. We strongly considered another day of Snorkelling Offshore or a trip to Phi Phi Island by ferry. But for some unknown reason, I wanted to rent a motor scooter and explore the interior of Thailand. This was a very unusual suggestion as I had not driven a motor scooter for over 40 years, since I had an accident on a motorcycle and because my wife is quite nervous in traffic and had never ridden on a motor scooter.

But that day we did rent the motor scooter and spent the day in Island, away from the coast. When we returned, we found that the tsunami had hit and caused wide-spread devastation and death. Many Snorkellers and visitors to Phi Phi Island had died.

When my wife and I tried to understand and come to terms with our good fortune, we remembered the kara I bought at the Golden Temple. I am not a superstitious man, but I believe that its power saved us that day. I have never taken it off ever since that time.

*(The Hindustan Times, August 21, 2007)*



## The Fisherman And The Pearl

Sami Rafiq

After reading Mr. N K Soni's Inner Voice, last week- "Modesty blazes", I was reminded of another quality that distinguishes enlightened ones: patience or 'sabr'. A Persian folktale called "Marvarid" (The Pearl) highlights this virtue that Sadhus, Bhikshus, Hermits and Sufis achieved.

A poor God-fearing man and his wife earned their livelihood by spinning cotton into thread and selling it in the market. One day, as the man came home from the market, he met a friend who was in dire need. The good man gave his day's earnings to his friend and went home empty-handed. His wife said that since there was no food in the house and no cotton either for the next day, he could take the only things they had, an earthen pot and a broken dish, to sell. The man took these to the market but found no buyers. He turned sadly to go when he saw a fisherman passing by with a fish to sell. The fisherman said, "Since no one is buying my fish and your articles, why don't we exchange our goods?"

The grateful man took the fish home and his wife cut it up to cook. To her surprise, she found a pearl inside. But her husband said, "If there is a hole in this pearl, then it belongs to someone else and we will look for the owner, but if there is no hole, then God has sent it for us." Not finding a hole, he took it to a jeweller. It turned out to be a rare pearl and the good man sold it for enough money to live comfortably thereafter.

As he went home, he passed a starving beggar. When the beggar asked him for money, he was moved and said: "Brother, I was also in your state some time ago, but now you can have half my money".

As he gave the money to the beggar, an angel appeared in his place who said, "God was testing your patience and generosity, take the money and live in peace."

The Hindustan Times, August 28, 2008

## The Grace Of Giving

Syed Zaigham Murtaza

The Almighty says, apply yourself to the welfare of mankind. The Almighty loves that sacrifice of what a person loves most, given unconditionally. As all know, Abraham, the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, saw himself in a dream, sacrificing his son—Ismael. He considered it a command from his lord. Although a sheep was offered at the last moment by God's command, Abraham's devotion was considered of most high degree.

We, people, boast of our daily donations and so-called charity. In reality, what do we do? Donate our useless things, stale food or petty amounts! Yet we complain that the Almighty is not generous to us. The poignant tale of Hazrat Ali at the deathbed of his wife Fatima comes to mind. "Fatima, you have never asked for anything ever," said Ali, "At least give me the opportunity to serve you once in life." "Can you bring me a pomegranate?" whispered Fatima, more to please him than anything else,

Ali left home and after much searching, managed to get a piece of pomegranate from a fruit-seller. On his way home he saw an ailing person. Ali stopped by him and asked him his wish. He too craved a pomegranate! Ali divided the piece he had and served him one portion. But the fellow demanded another and then another, until it was all gone. In the end Ali returned home empty-handed but he had no sign of failure on his face.

It was the only wish Fatima had expressed to him. But for him, the poor sick stranger was in greater need of the pomegranate, as he had never tasted one. The point is the best sacrifice is of what you love the most. The Almighty says that scripture is most truly pleased when something precious is given away generously with no expectation of reward. Believers trust God knows our needs and never expect quick gains. But when in real need, somehow we are provided for.

*(The Hindustan Times, March 13, 2008)*

## The Three Kinds Of Karma

Dr. Shrinath Sahal

THE AXIS on which philosophy of the Gita rotates is *Karma* (action, deed). The word is derived from the Sanskrit verb *Kri*, meaning to do, to act. Sri Krishna says, “No one stays still without working (doing), even for a moment. Your existence is impossible if you do not work,”

“A frightened mouse runs to his hole; a scared serpent to a well, a terrified elephant to its lake—but where can a man fly from his *karma*”, asks the Guruda Purana.

There is no escape from work (read ‘duty’) for a living being. The Gita announces three kinds of *Karmas*: *Karma*; *Vikarma* and *Akarma*. *Karma* is the unclouded, virtuous deed; *Vikarma* is a bad, vicious act; and *A-karma* is the deed done without any yearning, done just as oblation.

Man has options to choose his kind of doing. But a person, performing worthy *Karma* is held in high esteem (Rig Veda). A good deed (*Sat-karma*) is to perform one’s duty honestly; earn a livelihood without compromising with character and behave with others in a friendly way. Assuredly, God will not ask—“What kind of car did you drive” But the scripture is certain, he will ask. “How many people did you drive who had no transportation?” He will not ask—“How many square feet was your house?” He will ask “How many people did you welcome into your home?”

These are some basic tenets of *Satkarma*. Additionally we should not despair, instead, work for work’s sake without any motive. “Then, what do I earn out of it?” we may ask. The Gita answers that with work, you have the right but not the result.

Pundalik looked after his parents with devotion.

Pleased with his service, God appeared Himself before him. But Pundalik paid not attention to God and remained engrossed in his work. Instead, he asked God to wait till he finished serving his parents. God was so pleased with his staunch sense of duty that He left his image on that brick as Pandurang for evermore.

The Hindustan Times, August 29, 2008

### Thank You

When we meet real tragedy in life, we can react in two ways—either by losing hope and falling into self-destructive habits, or by using the challenge to find our inner strength. Thanks to the Buddha’s teachings, I have been able to take this second way.

—The XIV Dalai Lama

### Finding Joy

Spiritual education is essential to bring peace around us, to make this world a beautiful place to live in...If the mind is bitter you can’t find joy anywhere. If the mind is sweet, you find joy everywhere. Meditation is finding the sweetness inside.

—Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

## Measuring The Success

Rup Narayan Das

When materialism and pursuit of fame and fortune overtake reason, we need to know how to measure success. There are reports in the media that a successful model or an actress commits suicide at the prime of her career or of a Civil Service topper being jailed for corruption or dowry demands or the child of a high-profile person committing suicide under depression. After slogging so hard when one gets into IIT or the IAS or wins a scholarship from a reputed university or gets a major break in business, sports, modeling or media, if one cuts short one's life or lands up in ignominy then the very purpose of success is lost.

Further, the question is— is it enough if you are successful, neglecting the grooming and upbringing of your children in the right direction without inculcating in them the very virtues and values which brought the fame and fortune to you? While your success is important, equally or perhaps more important is the way you bring up your children; without this your success is vulnerable and fragile. There is nothing wrong if you pamper and prod your children; but too much of protection breeds indolence which kills their initiative and dynamism. It is a fact which the children of the second generation who are enjoying the fruits of their parents must realise. We must create before we consume. But in our craze and craving for fame and fortune, sometimes, we tend to lose the holistic view of life, and the relevance of values and virtues. What helps us really is not wealth, position or power that are vulnerable to outside factors.

Rather it is personal traits, finer civility and good old honesty, integrity, character, rationality, good judgment, fairness, conviction, uprightness, sensitivity, fellow-feeling, initiative, dynamism, intelligence, hard work and ultimately our strength of mind which work. This is our inner wealth. Outer wealth is easily lost but these things sustain us and help us get through time of crises. They enable us to take life and its challenges in our stride.

*(The Hindustan Times, August 15, 2007)*

**\* This is our mission in life. We do not write on stone, but we can touch the lives of people with hearts overflowing with goodness and kindness and to do that is really to be a 'messenger' of God. And the message can be in the small still voice of the breeze, and not in the thunderstorm or the lightning.**

## Just Live Alone In The Present

P. P. Wangchuk

I find nothing more striking in Gandhian philosophy than his “walk alone” comment. Of course, the Buddha preached and practised it. And hence, you have the monks, living alone, physically and mentally. The Buddha said that the past and the future were a burden on our consciousness. The present is what we should bother about. But we should not be swept away by it.

What Gandhi and Buddha meant was not being alone physically. ‘Alone’ here has a deep meaning for us to look deeper into our inner and real selves. The Buddha always told his monks that living alone is a gainful and blissful way of living and that there is a definite way to it. They should let the past and the future be alone and concentrate only on the present. He told them to observe deeply and see that the past is no longer a burden on their consciousness. It should not blur their view of what’s happening around and what will happen. What is gone should be best forgotten and left out as a bad memory. Since the future has not yet come, why should one bother about it unnecessarily. Wasting our valuable time and energy in “what is not” is nothing short of befooling ourselves.

But “to live alone” truly is not that simple. Giving up the past as an unwanted baggage, and the future as a nightmare, cannot be done by ordinary people. One has to be at ease not only with own self but with the rest of the world too. There cannot be any allowance for any binding desire. Only then one can be hopeful of untangling the fetters that keep one enslaved. One can get freedom from the past and the future only through the constant practice of the art of living alone. Living alone gives a meaningful life, a life that has a definite target. Such a life can free mankind from any kind of bondage. It can help seek nirvana too.

*(The Hindustan Times, January 16, 2008)*

## Thank Your Higher Self

John Cali

*Make every day of your life thanksgiving, a day to show gratitude to the universe, to your guides and teachers, says John Cali.*

There are many souls incarnated on the earth plane who appear to be struggling with attracting into their lives the barest, most basic necessities of physical survival. Abundance on all, or at least, many levels seems to elude them. And many of these souls often wonder why. Why them? Why is life such a struggle? Why can they not have more in their lives, more joy, more peace, more love, more money? More of all forms of abundance.

You know that you create your own reality, your own experiences, every aspect of your experiences on the earth plane. However, even in knowing that you may find little comfort or solace. And yet it does not have to be this way. Abundance, in all forms, is your birthright as a child of the Goddess, the God. You are not only a child of the God/Goddess, you are the God/Goddess. You are one with God and so this brings us back to the question of why so many, even among you, the light workers, are living lives of struggle.

You will hear, have already heard, voices telling you your ‘lot in life’ is “God’s will.” Well, that’s true. The only problem is most of those uttering these words, or something similar do not realise they are God!

They are the God, the Goddess who has willed their own struggles, their lot in life. Simply being aware of, and accepting that reality is very freeing. After all, the truth shall set you free. We are in no way advocating you to beat up on yourself if you are struggling with any aspect of your

life. And of course, it is true your higher self, your soul, can and will use whatever, circumstances and conditions you are experiencing at the human level as the raw material, if you will, to produce a higher good for you. Another way of saying that is: Whatever is happening in your life can and will ultimately result in your highest good. However, your highest good does not have to come through pain and struggle. It can come to you joyfully and easily.

If you are not experiencing the abundance you want in your lives, it is because you are literally pushing it away from yourselves. After all, your natural state, your birthright, is abundance. You have always been provided for, even in the midst of your self-created struggles, though perhaps not in exactly the luxurious style to which you would love to become accustomed! But you have always been taken care of.

Think about that for a moment. Think about what you consider the worst experience of your life. Even in the midst of that experience, were you not provided for? Was there not someone watching over you? You have never been totally destitute, totally without resources, without recourse. You are, after all, divine beings, albeit in human form for a time. But still, you are Gods and Goddesses. And as such, you have power, great power, divine power, absolute power to do, to create, to be anything you wish.

This is when “Thanksgiving” becomes important. It is a good thing. The idea to set aside a time of thanksgiving was indeed a divinely inspired one. And there is a firm spiritual foundation underlying. If you will, be giving of thanks. It is what you might call a universal law. It is the Law of Gratitude. Another law of the Universe goes something like this. You get what you focus your time and energy on. It

is called the Law of Attraction.

If you focus mostly on lack and limitation, those are what you experience in your life. If you focus mostly on abundance and prosperity, you will, you must, experience those in your life. It’s the law! And it’s your choice. You get to choose whether to use the laws of the Universe for or against yourself. And so, the giving of thanks, the expression of gratitude, is a truly magical tool. A tool you have, literally at the tip of your tongue. You would be hard-pressed to say there is nothing in your life, you can be thankful for. Sit down and make a list, if that will help you remember all the good things, all the abundance, you have in your life right now. Think about the cloths you wear, the food you eat, the roof you sleep under, the money you have the loving and supportive family and friends you are blessed with. Give thanks for the many blessings you already have in your life and they will increase. They must increase. It’s the law of the universe.

Make every day of your life thanksgiving, a day of giving thanks to the universe, guides and teachers. And also thank your higher self, the one who helped you create all the abundance you already have in your lives. And, by the way, thank the human you too. You are all beings of great wisdom and courage. And we applaud your willingness to incarnate at this time in your planet’s history.

*(The Times of India, August 27, 2006)*

## **Act Without Expectation: It Relaxes & Rewards**

**Discourse: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**

It's often believed that if people become spiritual and dispassionate about the outcome of their actions, they will stagnate; there will be no progress.

In fact, the opposite is true. Creativity and enthusiasm can spring only when you are well rested; and you cannot rest if you are anxious about the outcome of your actions.

When we perform every action with an eye on the end result, we get lost in the end and don't enjoy the means of getting to the end. But when we perform some actions as an expression of joy and do not bother about the result, the action itself brings fulfilment.

When we act expecting joy, the action becomes inferior. For example, you want to spread happiness, but if you try to find out whether the other person has become happy, you get entangled in a vicious circle. In the process, you lose your happiness.

Anxiety about the outcome of your action is what pulls you down. At the beginning of a project if you start worrying, then your whole enthusiasm for the project gets dampened. When you are aware of your potential, just jump into action without bothering about the result.

When you are in doubt, any activity you do will bring more doubts. When you have a choice, the grass on the other side will look greener and this prevents you from enjoying what you have in your hand. When you are bothered by a choice, relax.

The choice is never between good and bad; it's always between bad and worse or good and better. Choices

bring conflict and there is freedom in choicelessness.

How can you be centred when there is conflict? There is a Chinese saying that when you are in doubt, take a pillow and go to bed.

In Narada Bhkti Sutras, Narada says, "Karmanyapi Sanyasyati". Take a break, not just from activity, but also from the fruit of the activity. It will bring deep rest from doubts and conflicts. One who is not concerned about the outcome and is centred on the action, goes beyond dualities, beyond conflicts.

The wise one is beyond all actions. Yet he continues to engage himself in action. You can only let go of what you have. So to let go of the fruit of action, you need to have the fruit and to have the fruit, you need to act!

This is so beautiful. If you have never acted, then how can you drop either the action or the fruit of action. So be active.

Keep doing your work and drop the fruit of action. The fruit of action is there as the motivation for you to start acting.

Krishna used the fruit of action to motivate Arjuna to fight. He told Arjuna that if you die in battle, you will attain heaven and if you win, you will rule the world. Jesus did the same.

When you are bogged down by laziness, you need motivation to do something and the expected fruit of action acts as the motivation factor.

But once you start acting, let go of the expected result. Just focus on the work on hand. This is the way of the wise!

The Times of India, March 3, 2008

# What Makes You A Leader Is Complete Awareness

**Discourse: Shri Shri Nimishanada**

Today, no one is functioning with full potential. That is why we are anonymous. Usually, one notices three patterns in the lives of people. Some lead, others follow, while many quit.

Leaders are those who have self-motivation, zeal and dedication. They have the ability to tune in to their inner Self, so they can guide and motivate others. Those who follow must have the enthusiasm to comprehend and implement the mission and vision placed before them. They must also work at transforming their own short-comings. We see many quitters around us. They have plenty of complaints and grievances; they rarely enjoy life. They flow with worldly currents and lead mechanical lives.

What quality prevents life from becoming mechanical? What ingredient ignites zeal and keeps boredom at bay? Awareness. If we are constantly aware, life is always interesting. We enjoy everything for everything inspires us. Awareness is not alertness. Alertness requires effort and has an element of stress and tension. Awareness is alertness without tension. When we are in this relaxed state, zeal and interest are spontaneous. From interest come memory and dedication. We should do nothing mechanically. Even stirring a spoon of sugar into a cup of tea should be done with complete awareness. Then there is always a deep sense of joy and connectivity with Divinity.

We should be aware of what we are doing every second. You may feel that this will produce tension. No, we are always aware of our name and family. Does this make us tense? Awareness is a relaxed and expansive state that eliminates tension. If we are constantly aware, we give

cravings no scope to take root. Even drinking a cup of tea can be done with complete awareness so that we savour every sip. Then the tea is enjoyed by the body, senses and mind. There is satisfaction and no craving.

When we fulfil a desire mechanically, the deeper levels of our being are not satisfied and we develop an obsessive craving for that object. Lack of awareness also generates indifference for others, while awareness creates complete connectivity, with Divinity and all beings. Without this connectivity, we are not open to divine grace though it is flowing to us constantly. When we are conscious of connectivity, we live in a state of heightened awareness.

We often strive to amass property for future generations. Physical property may be lost. It may lead to strife and litigation. The best legacy we can leave behind is awareness and wisdom. Mahatmas are remembered with reverence not for the property they amassed, but for the principles by which they lived.

The outer world is constantly changing. The cars that are today's status symbols will be the bane of tomorrow. All material things lose their value after a while. Divinity never changes. God is ever the same. Divinity transcends time and space. Awareness of Divinity takes us to the only state that is worthwhile—constant bliss that is independent of bodily existence.

When we stop imposing conditions on life, we surrender to the divine tempo. Then our life becomes a feast of bliss. We embrace life with open arms. We become natural leaders who inspire and ignite the flame of awareness in every heart.

*(The Times of India, February 29, 2008)*

# PINGALWARA DIARY

(UPTO APRIL 2016)

Services rendered by Pingalwara Institution for the service of the suffering humanity are:-

## 1. Homes for the Homeless

There are 1712 patients in different branches of Pingalwara now a days:-

(a) Head Office, Mata Mehtab Kaur Ward, Bhai Piara Singh Ward	349 Patients
(e) Manawala Complex	826 Patients
(b) Pandori Warraich Branch, Amritsar	83 Patients
(c) Jalandhar Branch	39 Patients
(d) Sangrur Branch	224 Patients
(f) Chandigarh (Palsora ) Branch	94 Patients
(g) Goindwal Branch	<u>97 Patients</u>
Total <u>1712 Patients</u>	

## 2. Treatment facilities

- (a) **Dispensary & Laboratory:-** Pingalwara has a dispensary and a laboratory for the treatment of patients. It has an annual expenditure of about Rs.90 lakhs. Medicines are also distributed free of cost to the poor and needy people.
- (b) **Medical Care Staff:-** Experienced medical staff like Nurses, Pharmacists and Laboratory Technicians are available for the care of the Pingalwara residents.
- (c) **Blood-Donation Camps:-** A Blood Donation Camp is organized on Bhagat Ji's Death Anniversary every year. The blood is used for Pingalwara residents and road accident victims.

- (d) **Ambulances:-** Ambulances with basic Medical aid are available for victims of road accidents on G.T. Road, round the clock and provide facilities for taking Pingalwara patients to the hospital.
- (e) **Artificial Limb Centre:-** There is an Artificial Limb Centre at Manawala Complex, dedicated to the memory of Bhagat Ji which provides free of cost Artificial Limbs to Polio-affected and amputee cases. 7654 needy people have benefitted till April 2016.
- (f) **Physiotherapy Centre:-** A Physiotherapy Centre equipped with State-of-the-art equipment is functioning in the Manawala Complex since June 2005. On an average 80 patients are treated everyday.
- (g) **Operation Theatres:-** There is a well equipped Operation Theatre in Bhai Piara Singh Ward Amritsar for general surgery and A Micro Surgery Operation Theatre in Manawala Complex where Cochlear Implants and major operations are carried out.
- (h) **Dental, Eye, Ear & Ultrasound Centres:-** These Centres have been set up to provide these services to Pingalwara residents, sewadars and their families.
- ## 3. Education
- Pingalwara Society is running five Educational Institutions for the poor and needy children.
- (a) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Manawala Complex:-** This school provides free education to 750 students from the poor and deprived sections of the society. They are provided with free books and



uniforms. Children being brought up by Pingalwara Society are also studying in this school.

- (b) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Buttar Kalan (Qadian):-** This school is dedicated to the sweet memory of Bhagatji. 446 students are getting free education under the able guidance of well qualified teachers. The school also provides financial help to students who have finished their school studies and are aspiring for higher studies.
- (c) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education, Manawala Complex:-** This school is providing Special Education to 185 Special children.
- (d) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for the Deaf:-** Bhagat Puran Singh School for Deaf Children is functional at the Manawala Complex since May 2005. The school is equipped with state-of-the-art training aid and has 150 children on its rolls.
- (e) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education, Chandigarh (Palsora):-** This school caters to the needs of Special adults of the branch.
- (f) **Vocational Centre:-** This Centre is providing free training in embroidery, stitching, craft work, making washing powder, candle making, painting, etc. Young girls from the villages of surroundings areas are the main beneficiaries.
- (g) **Computer Training:-** Computers are available in all the schools for academic and vocational training.
- (h) **Hostel facilities:-** There are separate hostels for boys and girls in Manawala Complex. Many girls are

pursuing higher studies in different colleges.

#### 4. **Rehabilitation**

- (a) **Marriages:-** After being educated, boys and girls at Pingalwara are married to suitable partners. 37 girls and 4 boys have been married off till date.

#### 5. **Environment Related Activities**

- (a) **Tree Plantation:-** Bhagat Puran Singh Ji was deeply concerned about the degradation of the environment. A vigorous campaign of tree plantation is started every year on Bhagat Ji's Death Anniversary. Each year 15,000 to 22,000 trees are planted in various schools, colleges, hospitals, cremation grounds and other public places. These include Amaltas, Kachnar, Behra, Champa, Arjun, Sukhchain, Chandni, Zetropa, Kari-patta were distributed to different institutions.
- (b) **Nursery:-** Pingalwara has its own Nursery where saplings of various plants and trees are prepared. Every year, the aim of nursery is to grow more than 54 different kinds of saplings every year.

#### 6. **Social Improvement Related Activities**

- (a) **Awareness:-** Pingalwara has played an important role in spreading awareness about the evils in the society. This has been done by printing literature on religious, social and environmental issues at the Puran Printing Press Amritsar and is being distributed free of cost. It has an annual expenditure of printing and publicity is about 1 crores 50 lakhs rupees.
- (b) **Puran Printing Press:-** The Printing Press has been updated with an Offset Press.

(c) **Museum and Documentaries:-** A Museum, and a number of documentaries have been prepared on Pingalwara activities as well as on zero budget natural farming. The C.D.s are freely available from Pingalwara.

A feature film produced by Pingalwara Society Amritsar EH JANAM TUMHARE LEKHE (Punjabi) on Rev. Bhagat Puran Singh Ji, founder Pingalwara and his struggle not only for selfless services of wounded humanity but for Environment Crisis also, will prove a beacon for the generations yet to come after us.

#### **7. Help to the victims of Natural Calamities**

Pingalwara makes an effort to provide succour to the victims of natural calamities like floods, earthquakes and famines. Aid was sent for the earth-quake victims in Iran, Tsunami disaster victims, Leh landslide and flood affected areas.

#### **8. Cremation of unclaimed dead-bodies**

Pingalwara cremates unclaimed dead bodies with full honour.

#### **9. Dairy Farm**

180 cows and buffalos at Manawala Complex provide fresh milk to the Pingalwara residents.

#### **10. Old Age Homes**

Old age homes at Sangrur and Manawala Complex of Pingalwara caters to the needs of elderly people.

#### **11. Projects Completed and Under Construction**

Since 1997 ambitious projects of Sangrur, Palsora at Chandigarh and Manawala Complex have been completed. In the year 2009 new buildings—

Administrative Block, Puran Printing Press, Deaf School, T.B. Ward at Manawala Complex and at Head Office and a New Administrative Block have also been completed.

In the year 2013, a new modern Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education in Manawala Complex of Pingalwara and a new Block for Pingalwara patients in Pandori Warraich Branch is under construction and is fast coming up.

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa

Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh

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