

Arise, Awake, Stop Not Till You Obtain Full Understanding of the Adventure of Human Birth

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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached! These are the famous words that were used by Swami Vivekananda when he made the clarion call in Chicago, more than a century ago partially inspired by the Sanskrit shloka from the *Katha Upanishad*.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत,

क्षुरासन्न धारा निशिता दुरत्यर्हुर्म पथः तत् कवयो वदन्ति |

Uthishtha Jagratha Prapya Varanibodhata

Kshurasanna Dhara Nishita Dustayadurgama Pathah tat kavaya vadanti

Arise! Awake!¹ Approach the great and learn,

Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path,

So the wise say – hard to tread and difficult to cross.

Here, Yama, the Hindu god of death advises Nachiketa and teaches him about the nature of the Atma (soul), The Brahman. Nachiketa² is the child protagonist in the ancient Hindu mythology. Nachiketa was sent to Yama, by his father, sage Vajashrava. He was taught Self-knowledge, the separation of the human soul (the supreme Self) from the body Yama. Nachiketa is noted for his rejection of material desires which are ephemeral, and for his single-minded pursuit of the path of realising Brahman / Moksha i.e. emancipation of the soul from rebirth.

The word ‘Uthishtha’ or ‘Awakening’ is used in Hinduism in various contexts. *Suprabhatham* (awakening hymn), which literally means auspicious dawn is a Sanskrit collection of hymns or verses recited early in the morning to awaken the Deity in Hinduism. (From Wikipedia) One of the earliest mentions of the Suprabhatham is found in the Bala kanda of Valmiki’s Ramayana, where Viswamitra calls out to Rama to wake up.

कौसल्यासुप्रजा राम पूर्वा संध्या प्रवर्तते ।

उत्तिष्ठ नरशार्दूल कर्तव्यं दैवमाह्निकम् ॥

Kausalya supraja rama purva sandhya pravartate ।

uttisthata narasardula karttavyam daivamahnikam ॥

¹ The various meanings of awakening are:

1. rousing; quickening: *an awakening interest*.
2. the act of awaking from sleep.
3. a revival of interest or attention.
4. a recognition, realization, or coming into awareness of something: *a rude awakening to the facts*.
5. a renewal of interest in religion, esp. in a community; revival.
6. the start of a feeling or awareness in a person: *a picture of an emotional awakening*.

² The name Nachiketa, (that which is unperceived) refers to the quickening Spirit that lies within all things like fire, latent in wood, the spirit that gives, the unquenchable thirst for the unknown. (From Wikipedia)

(Valmiki Ramayana Bala Kanda Canto XXIII Sloka 2 - “Kausalya is blessed with a worthy son (in you), O Rama! The morning twilight has set in.... (Therefore) get up, O tiger among men! Contemplation on the Deity and the daily routine of duties (making for the purification of the body) has to be gone through.” (Kalyana Kalpataru)

The Gayathri Hymn of the Vedas, recited thrice a day by millions, asks for the awakening of the intelligence so that when it brightens like the Sun at its zenith, the smog of delusion is destroyed. Then the waves of indecision and decision that confound, contradict and confuse are stilled. This is the process of yoga or the arrest of the wandering mind, as Patanjali defined it centuries ago³. (SSS Vol.8)

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in His Divine Discourse said,

*“What you must develop is the Vision Divine
An awakening of intuition most fine;
For you are really here on a HOLY MISSION-
That of discovering what you are,
Whence you came from and whither you shall go”.*

What is this holy Mission, the divine purpose for which man has come?

Men are proficient in various skills. They manufacture and operate diverse machines and master many fields of knowledge. However they have not acquired the peace that is their due. They are carried along by the torrential flood of worldly life. Though endowed with human capabilities exercisable through a human body, men do not choose the straight path of Truth. They wander about in false and fleeting pleasures and fritter their years, forgetting their innate, Divine Reality. This is far from the fulfilment they should aspire for. Mere skill, mere designing and manipulation of machines, hollow pomp, boast and assertions about being a *jnani* (liberated person) – these do not reveal the secret of human nature. Has man solved this mystery which includes all mysteries? Has he found the answer which is the key to all problems? Has he earned the knowledge which can make him know all that he has to know? (SSS Vol.14), 20-11-1979.

“Manava (human being) is endowed with immense power. That is why the Upanishads exhort man thus: *Uthishtha, jagratha, prapya varanibodhata* (arise, awake, stop not till you obtain full understanding). “O simpleton, wake up from this slumber of ignorance. Turn your vision towards the effulgence of prajna. Get rid of Tamasic quality. Give up worldly desires. Understand the ephemeral nature of the world.” (SSS Vol.35)

³ Man alone is capable of awakening the serpent-power of the life-energy that lies dormant in him as the Kundalini Sakthi and elevate it through chakras (higher fields of awareness), up to the thousand-spoke wheel on the very crest of the head. This is the Urdhwa Gathi (the Upward Path). This yoga sadhana is possible for man, since he has a straight body and can sit with his trunk and head held in a straight vertical line. Quadrupeds and bipeds other than man are severely handicapped. They cannot tap the vital Kundalini Sakthi. (SSS Vol.16), 22 July 1983

The Sanskrit word *Manava* for Man means *Maa* (not), *Nava* (new). That word intimates that man has had a series of births and deaths and is heavily laden with burdensome heritages of good and bad. He doesn't land on earth for the first time. His task is to discard this burden and become free. For that he must concentrate on another meaning of the word *Manava*, where *Maa* stands for nascence, delusion and mistaken identity, '*na*' stands for 'without' and *va* stands for '*Varthana*' (Action). Man must act, speak and think without being deluded by the apparent, in preference to the real. Man ignores the Atma (Divine Soul), which is the only Reality, and allows himself to be fascinated by *Maya* (illusory energy), which scintillates and deceives.

Man is the representative of the Divine. God is not separate. '*Daivam Manusha Rupena*' – God is in human form. Human life is the result of the merits of several previous lives. '*Jantunaam Nara Janmam Durlabham*' - Human life is very rare. *Nara* is not anything new. *Nara* means Atma. Atma is imperishable. *Raha* is perishable. *Na* means no. *Nara* means imperishable. It is only the body that changes. The Atma does not change. (DTB Vol.6, p. 7)

Since he has in him the Divine enshrined as the Atma, man has the high status of an embodiment of the Divine, a *Prathinidhi* (representative) of the Divine. The senses activated by the mind bring in experiences which are collected and coordinated by the mind. *Buddhi* (intellect) illumined by the Atma examines these and directs action along beneficial lines. Acting under the dictates of the mind brings disaster; acting under the instructions of the illumined *Buddhi* is desirable. This is the great boon that man has won from God. (SSS Vol.16), 22 July 1983

"Mana eva manushyaanaam Kaaranam bandha mokshayoh": for men, it is the mind that causes bondage and grants liberation. (JV, p. 19) The mind is a bundle of wishes and unless these wishes are removed by their roots, there is no hope of destroying the mind, which is a great obstacle in the path of spiritual progress. (GV, p. 40)

Samskaras of life

Men are immersed in many activities and they are engaged in various undertakings. This is a well-known fact. They are so many in number that sometimes one may feel that the span of twenty-four hours is too short for his daily activity. Drinking, eating, reading, walking, sitting and besides, dreaming, hating, boasting, praising, weeping, laughing, moping, hoping—all types of activities go on without end. They fill up the span of life. These activities are all intimately attached to the mind. This makes life a mere collection of *Samskaras*⁴ (worldly existence, flux), which makes an impact on character and personality. (Prema Vahini)

⁴ Samskara (samskaara). Inborn desire, mental impression of acts done in former state of existence. Purificatory ceremony or sacrament. (Glossary for the Vahinis) The ancient sages felt that it was not enough to develop the human qualities in the child. They envisaged a system of *Samskaras* (cultural training) for the spiritual development of the child. The *Samskaras* are intended not only to develop further the human qualities but also to eliminate all remnants of animal nature in man. Samskara is a system of practices by which the bad tendencies in man are got rid of and good tendencies are inculcated. They are intended to turn the *Pravritti* (outward-looking) tendencies of man towards the cultivation of the *Nivritti* (internal).

There are two types of activities, good and bad. The effect of both on the life of man has to be considered. The acts and activities that have transpired and that have been thrust back into forgetfulness by subsequent events have left a trace of their consequences in the mind. The residue is there. When you try to bring back to memory at bedtime the events of the day, everything that happened from the insignificant to the significant will not answer the summons.

Those which are meaningful, those which are deeply embedded inside, these alone can be recalled. When such is the case with the happenings of a single day, when we forget all events that are not associated with joy or pain, what shall be said of the events of last week or months or years? Only the chief events are registered clearly. The rest turn hazy and recede and disappear. These few are the Samskaras. At the very end of life, it is this small quantity that will come into the memory. Those experiences that persist to the very last moment, the two or three that well up into consciousness when one recalls all that has happened in life, these are the real sustainer, the genuine achievements. This does not mean that all other acts and all other experiences have been a waste. Forgetting those means only that their work has been accomplished and their value realised.

Thus, of the Samskaras of life, someone or other, stronger than the rest, stands out to the last. Life is like that, this has to be learnt. The net result of all this living and toiling is that which comes to memory at the last moment of life. Therefore, direct the entire current of life towards the acquisition of that Samskara which you feel best for the last moment. Fix your attention upon it, day and night. The feeling that dominates the moment of death works with great force in the coming life. This truth must guide man for the journey of this life too, for Samskaras are the wherewithal for this journey, as well as for the journey after this. Life is eternally stalked by Death. But yet, man does not tolerate the very mention of the word "Death." each living thing has at birth received a ticket to Death and has come on a journey. So whatever your struggles and safeguards and precautions, the Place has to be reached someday. Whatever is uncertain, Death is certain. It is impossible to change that Law. (Prema Vahini)

Lord Yama told Nachiketa, "This human body which is like a water bubble is bound to burst one day or the other. Therefore, realise that *atma tatwa* which is real and eternal". You can recognise that *atma tatwa*, not by your *charma chakshu* (physical eyes) but by *jnaana chakshu* (eyes of wisdom). Then, the question arises as to what is *Jnaana* (wisdom)? Is it physical knowledge or secular knowledge or knowledge relating to the objects of Nature? No, it is none of these. Experiencing the principle of non-dualism is true wisdom (*advaita darshanam Jnaanam*). *Atma* transcends the name and form.

Lord Yama, therefore, exhorted Nachiketa to attain *atma-jnaana*. Today, people are going mad in search of spiritual knowledge. They adopt umpteen numbers of practices and bodily postures and call it spiritual *sadhana*. But, none of these can help to attain *Atma-jnaana*. What is important is *prema* (love) which is the undercurrent of all forms of spiritual *sadhana*. Realising the perishable nature of this *deha* (body), one has to realise the in-dweller (*dehi*), who is none other than the eternal *Atma*. (SSS Vol.37)

The true and eternal *atma tatwa* is immanent in one's own body. It can be realised only by the *jnaana netras*⁵ (eyes of wisdom). You have to gradually give up *deha abhimana* (attachment to the body) and cultivate *atma abhimana* (love for the *atma*). (SSS Vol.37)

Become aware from this moment that you are the Atma. When the fog of ignorance vanishes, the Atma in each will shine in its native splendour. (UV) Awareness is Life. Awareness is Bliss, Awareness is the realisation of your oneness with the Divine. This is the Awareness you must cultivate. To discover the Divine in you means also recognition of the Divine in every one. Do not imagine that this is so very difficult. What it calls for is continuous conscious attention and action. (SS June '87) It must be Constant Integrated Awareness that you are not the body BUT Atma, that you are God.

Do not merely talk about Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa (truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence). You should awaken these values in your heart. *Uthishtha, Jagratha, Prapya Varanibodhata* (arise, awake, go to the noble men and learn from them the secret of attaining divinity). You should awaken the values of truth, righteousness and peace that are lying dormant in your heart. Why are they lying dormant? They are lying dormant because you are not putting them to any use. On the other hand, you are putting all your worldly feelings and tendencies into action. Since you are not putting these values to use, they are lying dormant. Put them to use. Then all your worldly tendencies will be subdued and the values will be awakened.

A lion has no fear and walks majestically without looking back. That is why it is called the king of animals. A spiritual giant is fearless like a lion. One with worldly desires is like a sheep that is all the time fear-stricken. As you know, sheep follow one another blindly. If one sheep falls into a well, the rest will follow suit. You should be like a lion and not like a sheep. Give no scope to fear. Develop courage and valour without giving scope to fear. *Dheeratvam* (fearlessness) is the hallmark of *Daivatvam* (divinity). You should make efforts to rise to the level of divinity. You don't need to fear anything. Fear comes only when there is some defect in you. (SS Dec '12)

*Where there is righteousness, there is virtue,
Where there is virtue, there is discipline,
Where there is discipline, there is peace.*

⁵ The seeker has to be very vigilant about his point of view, the things he seeks to visualise, the things he longs to cast his eyes on. For, it is *dhrishti* (the view) that decides attachment, sorrow, passion, etc. You are the noblest being yet created, and so, you have to develop a sight that sees no high or low, that sees all as suffused with divinity, and therefore, not different one from another. Shankara declared, "Make your *dhrishti* charged with *jnaana*; then, the seen will appear in its true light as *Brahman*." Such sight is called divine, supernatural, super-sensual and auspicious. Each body that you see before you is a mirror in which if only you open your eyes you can see the image of God. The God in you is in each of them, too. Do not imagine the others to be distinct; they are only you, in so many mirrors. The world is filled with your kith and kin; all are sparks from the same flame. (SSS Vol.9), 29-7-1969

On the other hand, where there is fear and lack of virtues, there is Asanthi (unrest). Virtues are the foundation of peace. You should develop virtues. (SS Dec '12)

Pursue nobler ends, have grander ideals

Man is the only animal that can transform his own nature, along lines consciously laid down. Man is endowed with two special gifts; *Viveka* (the faculty of reasoning) and *vijnaana* (the faculty of analysis and synthesis). Use these gifts for discovering the truth that all are inspired by the same Divine Principle; all are urged by the same inner motivator.

The human body capable of great adventures is a gift from God to each of you. It has to be used as a raft, on which you can cross this never-calm sea of *samsara* (change) that lies between birth and death, bondage and liberation. Awaken to this primal duty even when your physical and mental faculties are keen; awake even while your power of discrimination is sharp. Do not postpone the launching of the raft, for it may become unserviceable soon. It may be burdened with illness, so that all your attention will have to be spent on its upkeep. Think of the incomparable joy that will surge within you, when you approach the shore of liberation! Sadhana, Sraddha, Sahana, Bhajan and Naamasmarnam help in crossing the ocean of Samsara.

To realise the Lord in every being, you must cultivate *Prema* and drive out the bats that infest the dark caverns of your heart, the bats of hate, envy and malice. Let the light of *Prema* illumine your thoughts, your words, your movements, your activities, your judgements. When you become transmuted into *Prema*, the Lord who is *Prema swarupa*, will reveal Himself to you, and play on the Flute, awakening your higher consciousness in the flood of Universal love. (SSS Vol.4)

Reduce your desires to a certain extent. Desires are needed in the world but they should be within a limit. (DTB6-P7/8) All deeds have their own consequences. So strive to avoid the slightest trace of evil activity. Keep your eyes pure; fill your ears with the words of God, and the stories of Godly. Use the tongue for uttering good words and kind and true words. Let it always remind you of God. Such constant effort must grant you victory and you will earn holy Samskaras. (Prema Vahini) Take the first step today, in this long pilgrimage and find the lotus of your heart blooming into a thousand petals and then, the flame of awakening into the truth, lights itself, as Prasanthi. Give up, in order to gain; restrain, in order to receive; become blind (to the external view), in order to see more clearly (the inner vision). (SSS Vol.5), 23-11-1965)

Samastha Loka Sukhinobhanthu

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The above article has been culled and compiled from *The Kalyana Kalpatar*, Gorakpur , U.P: Gita Press. *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia* and the discourses of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba published in the following books:

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