

## **Hard-Work is Divine-Grace**

Translation of the Kannada Book.

Prayatnave-Parameshwara

by

Swami Purushottamananda

### **Foreword**

This is a very special kind of book. One look at the title of the book, ‘Hard-Work is Divine-Grace’, will explain clearly the main argument of this book. God’s physical intervention is not necessary for the success of our endeavours. Does the title not suggest that it is indeed God, in the form of ‘Hard Work’ ensures the fulfilment of all our endeavours? Truly, what is there in this world that is not achievable by manly effort that is systematic, disciplined and enthusiastic? When we can achieve all that we need by our own wholehearted effort, what need is there to wait for God’s Grace? To quench your pangs of hunger, all you need to do is lay the table and eat. What sense is there in waiting for Divine Grace for that? Alright, this seems to be a very simple illustration. Let us consider something more complex, more advanced like the incredible achievements of modern-day science and technology that provide us with almost miraculous gadgets and processes that save human tedium and enhance luxury in our lives. Isn’t each of them the result of the effort of capable persons?

God has already endowed everyone, without an exception, with three powers or faculties, which our ancient scriptures term as *Jnana Shakti*, *Ichha Shakti* and *Kriya Shakti*. To the extent a person uses these faculties, does he achieve proportionate results.

Lazy fellows, lacking in manly exertion, can never make their lives comfortable. But industrious persons will not only lead comfortable lives but also make the lives of others comfortable.

Lazy fellows, even if they surrender themselves to God, have no hope. And there is no doubt that the Almighty will shower His bounteous blessings on the industrious.

Industriousness is interpenetrated by divinity. Activity is but another form of the Divine. Love of labour is thus a very potent form of His Grace. So, let us imbue ourselves with the love of labour. Let industriousness be our motto. Now, no one can say they have no time or that they have no intentions to read this book, because God in the form of manly effort has entered us!

*Swami Purushottamananda*

### **Divine Grace? or Manly Effort?**

What is it that actually brings us joy, pleasure, luxuries, wealth, success and glory in our lives? Is it the Grace of the Lord? Or is it our own hard work? This has been an enigma since time immemorial. Well, most people don't seem to really worry about solving this dilemma. However, in the natural course of life, people face the extremes of joy and sorrow, success and defeat. More importantly, they see that although they put in lot of effort, quite often they fail in their endeavours. Then, faced with these contradictions of life, they wake up to the dilemma and ask – 'why is this so?'

But no amount of cogitation by the common run of people helps in solving this conundrum. Do you want to know why? This is because the minds of the common people are generally a confused mess. And the problem is extremely subtle and complex! It is not a dilemma that can be solved except by the clearest of brains and the sharpest of minds! We are however fortunate that saints, savants and seers, with such minds have indeed worked on this dilemma, unravelled its mystery and given us their answers. They have extracted the answer to this and such other life's dilemmas by digesting their own life's experiences. Their answers are really illuminating and worthy of our consideration. In this case, they declare: "*All the Self-Effort done by you in your previous births rebound back to you in this life as Divine Grace.*" (Fate, destiny, kismet, prodigious talent are all to be understood as synonymous with the term 'Divine Grace' in this sense.)

A question might arise here. You may say, 'It is okay if we explain fate, destiny, kismet or divine grace in this light. But how does one explain *jinxed* fate, *bad* karma, *doomed* destiny, *rotten* luck or a *fall from* grace?' We may, in answer to this, have to consider the vital distinction between *right action* and *wrong action*. Right action results in good fate, favourable luck and good destiny. Wrong action in the opposite!

The Sanskrit word for fate is '*Adrishta*'. Now, '*Drishta*' means 'the seen'. It denotes everything that can be seen or physically perceived. So, fate or '*Adrishta*' means 'the unseen'. We are unable to see each and every action that we did in our past lives. What then to speak of the *results* of those actions! Hence they are all clubbed under the apt term '*Adrishta*'. Good fate is the result of good actions, and bad fate that of bad actions.

Even though the cause of Fate is all unseen, the effects of this unseen Fate are too clearly visible. Whatever a lucky man touches turns to gold! And a luckless fool turns everything to dust! We see this phenomenon all around us. And seeing this, we naturally say, 'Oh! It is all the play of Lady Luck!' But is it really true? Again, the dilemma re-surfaces!

But the dilemma is needless. Because it is *our* own actions, our *self-effort* that keeps giving results as Fate, is it not? Therefore, it is the active man, the industrious soul, who reaps the benefits of Fate, Destiny or Divine Grace; and it is that lucky soul who becomes active and exerts himself profitably; and again it is that industrious soul that gets luckier and luckier. When we become capable of understanding this wonderful scheme of affairs, we also become capable of understanding all the wise words uttered by the wise men in this world!

“You are the makers of your own fortune!...stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future” When you understand these words of Swami Vivekananda, you will also understand Sri Krishna’s words ‘*Uddharet aatmanaatmaanam, na aatmaanam avasaadhayet.*’

Sir M Vishweshvariah<sup>i</sup> was born in abject poverty. Did he sit quiet waiting for his fate to change? Or did he lift himself up to glory by his own calculated, hard work? He says: “I sum up my personality in these few words: Hard work, disciplined habits, modesty in luxury, contentment, and cheerfulness.”

The maker of the famous Ford car, Henry Ford gives the following advice: “I have three secrets that have contributed to my success in life. They are: Hard work, hard work and hard work.”

These are invaluable words of advice, culled out of a full life of manly endeavour and incredible achievements. Let us read these golden words, pregnant with life, with open eyes. Let us understand the meaning they convey with an open mind. And let us feel the import of these words with a sensitive heart, consciously allowing ourselves to be shaped by them. Only then will the power behind those words light up our lives.

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## Yogeswara – Dhanurdhara

People who are votaries of Fate tend to look down upon people who rely on Self-Effort. Self reliant people, who stoutly depend on their own effort, tend to call people who rely on Divine Grace as cowards. This war of words merely strains relationships, but does not reveal the truth of the situation. The truth stands revealed only to the calm, serene minded, noble hearted souls. The blind king Dhritarashtra, seated inside his palace, had his trusted minister Sanjaya to recount to him scene by scene every event of the historic Mahabharata War as it unfolded on the battlefield. Sanjaya was a highly evolved soul. He had a wonderful super-sensory faculty that enabled him to see clearly the things that occurred very far away, without his being physically present there. Sri Krishna, in his divine mood imparted the Bhagawad Gita to Arjuna, a very fine man with a sinless heart, just at the beginning of the Mahabharata War. Sanjaya saw the entire episode. At the end of that wonderful vision, he exclaimed,

*Yatra Yogeswarah Krishno yatra Partho Dhanurdharah!  
Tatra Srir vijayo bhutir dhruvaa nitir matir mama!!*

(Ch. 18, Verse 78)

*“Wherever there is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, accompanied by Arjuna wielding the bow – there reign good fortune, victory, prosperity and sound policy.”*

The more we dwell on the meaning of these wonderful words of Sanjaya, the more we can enjoy their beauty and depth. Just note the genius behind using the two specific words Yogeswara and Dhanurdhara to convey the meaning that their conjunction alone leads to success! This usage ought to arrest our attention. It demands that we delve deeper into them. The Sanskrit word *Yogeswara* actually means ‘one who has perfected a state of mystic union with the Divine’. It is also an oft-used epithet for Sri Krishna in our scriptures. In this context, however, *Yogeswara* is the symbol of *Jnana Shakti* and *Ichha Shakti*. Again, *Dhanurdhara* is a Sanskrit word that actually translates as ‘one who wields a bow, i.e a warrior-archer’. *Dhanurdhara* is the symbol of *Kriya Shakti*. Real wisdom consists in using all these three *Shakti* for worldly prosperity and spiritual success. “Wherever *Yogeswara* Krishna and *Dhanurdhara* Arjuna are present” - by these words, we are informed that these three *Shakti* have to be harmoniously present in our personality.

Divine Grace is the result of self-knowledge. Manly Effort is *Kriya yoga*. Work means effort or endeavour; and it can never reach fulfilment without God’s Grace. Therefore man must be *Dhanurdhara*; and must have obtained the grace of the Lord.

We must remember one very interesting point here. What did Sri Krishna say to Arjuna when he threw his bow and refused to fight the battle and sat tight? “Arjuna, don’t be un-manly. Be a man. Get up, and fight!” The Almighty Lord who is the sole authority to shower divine grace, himself is arousing a man and instigating him to fight and kill! How suggestive indeed! How metaphorical, truly! Does this not clearly indicate that God showers His Grace on man by *impelling him to action*?

Duryodhana too was no less a warrior than *Dhanurdhara* Arjuna. But it was Arjuna who won the war. The reason was the strength of Sri Krishna's Grace on Arjuna. *Dhanurdhara* is the symbol of Self-Effort. *Yogeswara* is the personification of Divine Grace! That manly effort on the one hand and this divine grace on the other hand— since these two commingled harmoniously in the Pandavas, they won the war and captured the Kingdom. Not only that; under their rule, concomitant to their victory actualised by this cause, righteousness reigned over the land and they earned eternal fame and glory.

It is foolishness to depend solely on God's Grace and do nothing and sit tight. Similarly, an industrious man, who is working hard to achieve a set goal, ought not to denigrate God's Grace. Therefore, Divine Grace and Self-Effort must always be together just as *Dhanurdhara* and *Yogeswara*. That is the balanced approach that leads to success in life.

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### **In praise of hard work**

The golden tool available for everyone who wants to achieve anything in this world is 'Industriousness'. Let a man choose a job he can do well and be at it, heart and soul.

Where is poverty for a man who loves to work? But he must have the inclination to work and he must know the method of working. One may approach experts and learn from them the techniques of working. But one can't get the inclination for working from anyone else. The desire for working, the enthusiasm that sustains the working has to spring up from within. There is no other way.

Bad habits and debilitating addictions may be one of the strong reasons for a person's poverty. But then, we do find many poor people who have no such addictions which could be siphoning off all their earnings. How do we explain their condition? We may have to say that their poverty is due to their bad luck and jinxed fate. But there can be no second thought about the fact, that in any case, laziness is the main cause of poverty in this world. So, if a person wishes to overcome poverty, he has to first of all completely banish laziness, procrastination and habits of their ilk from their personality. Having overcome laziness, he must engage in hard work and relentless labour.

Hard work, which is capable of conferring every desirable object to man, is however, open to all and not the monopoly of only the poor. The rich need it as much as the poor. If the rich wish to protect their wealth, they need to realise that all the wealth in Fort Knox is not capable of sustaining a man who merely spends and earns not. How can a man denigrate that hard work which made him rich?

Hard work is essential for safeguarding one's health. In fact the role of regular physical exercise in the maintaining of one's health is enormous. A constantly hard working man will not even know what illness means!

If you find a person is calm, happy and contented, it certainly means that the person is constantly engaged in some meaningful activity. It is constant activity that maintains the balance of body and mind. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. When the mind is constantly engaged in one or the other meaningful activity, all the tigers, foxes, ghosts, demons hiding in the mind vanish into thin air! And the mind becomes peaceful and silent. Springs of joy naturally flow in a calm and peaceful mind. If we observe dispassionately, the joy that accompanies salary and monetary remuneration is nothing compared to the satisfaction that accompanies the hearty discharge of one's assigned duty.

Everyone has to face the blues intermittently in their lives. Everyone faces days that have ups and downs. But, no matter how intense the failure that bites us, no matter how terrible the disasters that strike us down, there is a panacea always at hand. Do you wish to know what it is? It is '**Constant meaningful activity**'. We must be involved in some meaningful activity. When we are thus involved, when depression strikes, when problems come knocking at our doors, they don't enter and stay within us. They, as it were, feel, 'There is no one here to entertain us; what shall we do here now? Let us leave and strike root elsewhere!' Thus we can rid

ourselves of these unwanted 'guests'. Work has this tremendous capacity to rescue a man from the burning fires of depression and infuse him with new life.

Lust is another such fire. This fire quite regularly scorches the body and mind of youths. Work, again, has the capacity to extinguish youths from this fire. Indeed, work is a fire-extinguisher. Work is a very effective tool that can control this raging fire of lust that wreaks havoc in youths' personalities. There are instances of the Desert Fathers, the early Christian monks, weaving jute baskets in their free time, in order to overcome the unbearable onslaught of lust.

Thus, work can protect its votaries from unspeakable troubles, lift them up from poverty, insulate them against grief and sorrow and carry them across the sea of depression and melancholia. Not only that, it can confer peace and prosperity, and bring a sense of meaning to our existence.

Every achievement and development that is characteristic of human civilisation, making it what it is today, is the result of man's hard work. Each and every invention of science & technology, that would be the envy of the gods, is the result of man's hard work. The various schools and colleges relentlessly imparting knowledge to newer generations, the numerous hospitals and nursing homes that constantly care for the sick and diseased, the variety of hotels, restaurants and delicatessens that cater to every imaginable palate, temples and churches of every conceivable design, architecture and denomination, shopping malls that display so wonderfully each and every item that goes to make our daily life a little bit more comfortable, hair-dressing and beauty salons that are constantly engaged in beautifying our aging bodies, markets & bazaars that bring you every conceivable kind of edible grains, fruits and vegetables, Farming Institutes that teach the latest technologies in farming, the formidable defence forces comprising of the Army, Navy and the Air Force – how many more shall we enumerate! They are all the result of the relentless effort of human beings. It is work that has made it all possible. Let us recognise this incontrovertible fact and betake ourselves to work.

Truly speaking, most people do not even have a correct conception of how much work a single man can do, and what all he can achieve! This is a truth vouchsafed only to that heroic soul who has used all his inherent powers in the course of his activities.

When a person becomes aware of his own capabilities, his actions take on a miraculous hue! Such incredible power is lodged within each and every person. But it is mostly dormant, sleeping, as it were. First of all, it has to be made manifest. How? By means of work! Activity is the powerful tool that awakens the dormant powers in our personality. By the time we have systematically completed one job, the ability to take up another job, a bit more complex than the previous one, automatically wakes up within us. In this way, as we go on working, our intelligence, efficiency and ability keep on increasing within us. In this fashion, our inner powers get awakened and our personality starts getting an ethereal glow. People around us watch this in awe. But, those people, who now look upon us in genuine awe, have not however watched us as we were getting baked in the furnace of hard, systematic and sustained work!



Which particular activity should we undertake in order to bring about this transformation in ourselves? It is quite natural if this question arises at this point of our discussion. The answer is – **any** activity will do. It is not the particular type of job that is important. What is of paramount importance is the **way** we do whatever it is that we do. There is no work that is inherently superior or inferior. There are instances of saints being produced solely by the act of sweeping and scavenging. We may also quote examples of housewives, who raised themselves to sainthood solely by performing their routine, mundane household chores. Upanishad beautifully describes the incredible transformation of Satyakama Jabala by means of grazing cattle. Very recently, we have had the instance of the apotheosis of an ordinary temple priest by means of discharging devotedly his priestly duties in the case of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. And instances abound of Royal Sages such as King Janaka, who, though wielding immense worldly authority as absolute monarchs, were saints of the highest order.

So, it is really not important what type of activity one undertakes with the aim of effecting a transformation in his personality. It is however supremely important that whatever be the job one does, he has to do it sincerely, using his intelligence, with a certain faith in its efficacy, with *Shraddha*, and he has to expend all his powers in executing that job. If you don't apply your intelligence to the job, it will turn out to be shoddy. If you lack *Shraddha* in your job, it will never see completion. And if you don't apply sufficient energy to it, in all probabilities, the job may not even start! Hence, those of us who wish to achieve life-fulfilment ought to learn the secret of work, and apply ourselves wholeheartedly to our allotted duties with great faith and sincerity.

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### **Manliness in our Efforts**

1. But for laziness in human nature, would there have been anyone who wasn't rich or anyone who wasn't learned? It is laziness that has populated this Earth, from coast to coast, with poverty and with slobs who are a disgrace to humanity!
2. Wealth gravitates towards active, efficient people. Weak people but blame everything on Fate. Use all the faculties you are gifted with, be industrious and exorcise this demon of *Kismet*. Despite your best efforts, if you fail, what do you lose?
3. Achievements come from manly efforts and not from fantasizing. Does game ever walk into the mouth of a sleeping lion?
4. This is the advice that Angada<sup>ii</sup> gave to his men who went out in search of Sita:  
Learned ones say that your endeavours are blessed with inevitable success if you have the following: boundless enthusiasm, efficiency in your actions, inability to accept defeat. So, I too say the same to you all.
5. Success depends on Luck **and** Self-Effort. True. But keep in mind, here, Luck means the Self-Effort you have done in your previous births!
6. Whatever we have done with intensity in our previous births manifests as Luck in this life. In other words, Luck, Fate, *Kismet*, Destiny are all nothing but our own efforts, albeit in a previous birth; (ergo, what we do now undoubtedly becomes Luck in the coming years!)
7. An ant takes such repeated steps with its teeny-weeny legs. But it takes those steps repeatedly. And, with such tiny legs and minute steps, it covers miles and miles of distance! However, even a huge bird, like an eagle or an albatross, with really long and impressively broad wings, if it lies idle, cannot budge an inch!
8. Deep study of the scriptures, imbibing the words of the Guru, performing disciplined spiritual practices – all these activities are always categorised under Self-effort and never Divine Grace.
9. Joy comes from right actions. Pain comes from wrong actions. Everything that we experience is the result of our actions. Without our effort (and consequent action), there can be no achievement (which is but a reaction).
10. Without deep introspection, never plunge headlong into any activity. Lack of common sense is the root cause of all our troubles in life. All graces shower on a person who is introspective and works with sufficient discernment.

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## **In the light of Swami Vivekananda's words**

### **1. Heart-whole:**

Once we have taken up a job, it is not right to go about it with half a mind. And it is worse to dabble in a dozen jobs, finishing none of them. These approaches are wrong because on the one hand, the job does not get completed and on the other hand, the mental powers are wasted. The impact that the quality of our actions have on the shaping of our character is immense! Our style of working is the clearest reflection of the state of our mind! All aspects of our personality develop in direct proportion to the improvement of our state of mind. How does this happen? Using one's enhanced mental capabilities, the worker will, on the one hand improve his bodily health and endurance, and on the other hand, he will sharpen his intellect and creative abilities too. All in all, his whole life becomes meaningful. This aspect of work is worthy of lot of detailed thought on our part. We need to imagine very vividly about the entire process by which our actions affect our personality and to what extent and to what heights can it raise it?

Swami Vivekananda says about one aspect of this phenomenon:

*"Do one thing at a time and while doing it put your whole soul into it to the exclusion of all else."*  
(VI. 89)<sup>iii</sup>

### **2. God Himself will single you out for his Grace!**

*"In a truly noble work, not to speak of men, even God Himself befriends the doer."*  
(VII. 160)

### **3. Welcome obstacles!**

When we take up an endeavour, quite naturally obstacles arise. Very often adverse situations may arise that are not at all congenial for us to complete the task undertaken. Most men lose heart when that happens. There are many who blame their fate and sink into despondency. But Swami Vivekananda says:

*"...it is a tremendous truth that if there be real worth in you, the more are circumstances against you, the more will that inner power manifest itself."*  
(VII. 249)

### **4. Importance of Responsibility.**

*"...even the best work loses its charm if one is forced to do by another. Without the idea of personal responsibility, no one can achieve anything great."*  
(VII. 392)

### **5. Quite different is the way of the intelligent!**

*"Even the greatest fool can accomplish a task if it be after his heart. But the intelligent man is he who can convert every work into one that suits his taste."*  
(VII. 508)

### **6. Here is the secret of success:**

*"Every successful man must have behind him somewhere tremendous integrity, tremendous sincerity, and that is the cause of his signal success in life."*  
(V. 240)

## **7. Obstacles serve a purpose!**

Everyone thinks that obstacles and problems hinder the all-round development of our personality. Everyone thinks also that if only they had no problems in life, no obstacles in their path, they could have developed their lives very nicely.

But Swami Vivekananda says:

*“It is these obstacles which knock and shape great characters.”* (VI. 268)

## **8. Be worthy of living!**

We are not talking of the innumerable other living beings that populate this planet. Let us look at the way man lives. Strictly speaking, half of mankind is purely parasitic. A quarter is fully helpless, dependent. Can such lives be really considered as ‘lives’? It would be better to classify them among vegetables or ‘breathing beings’ than include them under ‘mankind’. Swami Vivekananda says to Alasinga Perumal<sup>iv</sup>:

*“You do not deserve to live if you cannot help yourselves.”* (V. 67)

Let us analyse this wonderful statement. Does it not imply that – ‘those who desire to serve the poor, the helpless, and the weak and downtrodden, must first of all be self-reliant’!

## **9. Cause of failure:**

At least within some people, there is unbounded energy and capability. But in most cases, those gifted people are blissfully ignorant of their inherent powers. So they shy away from undertaking great endeavours. And since they sometimes take up big assignments without arousing this inherent strength, they fail! Swami Vivekananda expresses this fact with his characteristic impress:

*“You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power.”* (VIII. 228)

## **10. Be fired with zeal!**

To take up a job and to be at it until it is completed is what is meant by the phrase ‘to be fired with zeal’. People who exhibit this quality are also called ‘Live wires’. In a way, zeal is akin to stubbornness, to fanaticism, even! It is easier to find this quality in wicked people than in good people! But if a society or a nation has to progress and achieve peace & prosperity, this quality must be present in good people in a big way. So also, unrelenting will power. When we take up a good, socially beneficial job, we have to doggedly forge ahead, overcome the obstacles that come before us, and ensure its completion. This requires will power or mental strength. Tremendous amount of it. Swami Vivekananda says:

*“To succeed you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. ‘I will drink the ocean,’ says the persevering soul, ‘at my will mountains will crumble up.’ Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard, and you will reach the goal.”* (I. 178)

### **11. The goal & the means:**

You need a path to reach the goal. If the path is alright, the goal can be reached. Now, which of them is more important? The aim or the means? Is it not prudent to say that both are equally important? But most people aver that the goal is more important. Hence they go on dreaming about the goal and neglect to give adequate attention to the means that would take us to that goal, and consequently they fail miserably!...Swami Vivekananda says:

*“One of the greatest lessons I have learnt in my life is to pay as much attention to the means of work as to its ends.”* (II. 1)

### **12. ‘Strait is the path’:**

A noble endeavour has many obstacles. In fact the magnitude of the obstacle is generally proportional to the scope of the work undertaken, in the sense, small and minor works are accompanied by small and minor obstacles while major projects are plagued by big, seemingly insurmountable obstacles. It is profitable to be aware of this scheme. Swami Vivekananda says:

*“All great undertakings are achieved through mighty obstacles.”* (VII. 480)

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### **Inspiration to the industrious**

1. You are the makers of your own fortunes. (II. 182)<sup>v</sup>
2. ...stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future. (II. 225)
3. He, who always speculates as to what awaits him in future, accomplishes nothing whatsoever. (VI. 455)
4. He who has a dogged determination...shall have everything. (VII. 250)
5. Do something heroic. (VI. 314)
6. ...it is the heroic endeavour to subdue adverse circumstances that carries our spirit upwards. (IV. 190)
7. ...without manly endeavour, no amount of Divine help will be of any avail to banish your inertia. (VII. 126)
8. We only get what we deserve. (II. 8)
9. Let us give up our pride and understand this that never is misery undeserved. There never has been a blow undeserved; there never has been an evil for which I did not pave the way with my own hands. We ought to know that. (II. 7)
10. ...great results are attained only by great patience, great courage, and great attempts... (V. 86)
11. The brave alone do great things, not the cowards. (V. 86)
12. Each work has to pass through these stages – ridicule, opposition, and then acceptance. (V. 91)
13. Every man should take up his own ideal and endeavour to accomplish it. That is a surer way of progress than taking up other man's ideals which he can never hope to accomplish. (I. 38)
14. On you lie the future hopes of our country. I feel extreme pain to see you leading a life of inaction. Set yourselves to work – to work! Do not sit idle, thinking that everything will be done in time, later on! Mind – nothing will be done that way! (V. 384)

15. ...you should work like a master and not as a slave; work incessantly, but do not do slave's work...ninety-nine percent of mankind works like slaves, and the result is misery...work through freedom! Work through love! (I. 57)
16. Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success. (I. 177)

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### **Work is beneficial**

1. Nothing promotes happiness like substituting work for worry.  
– *Anon.*
2. It is not work that kills, but worry.  
– *Anon.*
3. Every job is a self portrait of the person who did it.  
– *Anon.*
4. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well.  
– *Anon.*
5. If you have genius, love of work will improve it. If you have none, love of work will supply it.  
– *Anon.*
6. When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece.  
– *Anon.*
7. Only cure for grief is action.  
– *Anon.*
8. One of the most durable satisfactions in life is to lose oneself in one's work.  
– *Anon.*
9. Love the job you do; you won't have to work a single day in your life.  
– *Anon.*
10. Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action.  
– *Anon.*
11. Chop your own wood; it will warm you twice.  
– *Anon.*
12. I sum up my personality in these few words: Hard work, disciplined habits, modesty in luxury, contentment, and cheerfulness.  
– *Sir M Visveswariah.*
13. I have three secrets that have contributed to my success in life. They are: Hard work, hard work and hard work.  
– *Henry Ford.*
14. I never did anything worth doing by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident. They came by work.  
– *Thomas Alva Edison.*



## **Anatomy of Success**

1. A man who makes no mistake usually does nothing.  
– *Anon.*
2. Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but rising every time we fall.  
– *Confucius.*
3. I do not know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.  
– *Bill Cosby.*
4. Success is the result of good judgment, good judgement is the result of experience, and experience is often the result of bad judgement.  
– *Anon.*
5. If thou art a master, be sometimes blind; if a servant, be sometimes deaf.  
– *Thomas Fuller.*
6. A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him.  
– *David Brinkley.*
7. In this world, there is always danger for those who are afraid of it.  
– *G B Shaw.*
8. A wise man will make more opportunities than he finds.  
– *Francis Bacon.*
9. We cannot always oblige; but we can always speak obligingly.  
– *Voltaire.*
10. When I had money, everyone called me brother.  
– *Polish Proverb.*
11. Life is not the days that are gone, but the days that are remembered.  
– *P A Pavlenko.*
12. He that is overcautious will accomplish nothing.  
– *Schiller.*
13. Live together like brothers, and do business like strangers.  
– *Arabic Proverb.*
14. Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.  
– *English Proverb.*
15. You cannot be anything if you want to be everything.  
– *Proverb.*

16. Discipline, dynamism and dedication are the prerequisites for success.  
– *P O Roses.*
17. The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight; but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.  
– *H W Longfellow.*
18. Success is not achieved by lying awake at night, but by keeping alert in the daytime.  
– *English Proverb.*
19. Success is a ladder which cannot be climbed with your hands in your pockets.  
– *English Proverb.*
20. Coming together is the beginning; keeping together is the progress; working together is the success.  
– *Henri Foget.*
21. The lazier we are today, the more we have to do tomorrow.  
– *Anon.*
22. The wisdom of life consists in elimination of non-essentials.  
– *Anon.*
23. The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.  
– *Anon.*
24. Success consists in concentrating all efforts at all times upon one point.  
– *Anon.*
25. All things are difficult before they are easy.  
– *Anon.*
26. The reason why many people fail to recognise opportunity is that it comes disguised as hard work.  
– *Anon.*
27. I pray as if everything depends upon God, then I work as if everything depends upon me.  
– *George Washington Carver.*

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### **Wisdom from Adages**

1. He that forecasts perils will never sail across the sea.
2. Hope for the best; prepare for the worst.
3. Idleness is the root of all evils.
4. If wishes were horses, beggars might ride.
5. Industry is fortune's right hand.
6. It is too late to call back yesterday.
7. Life is too short and time is swift.
8. No pains, no gains.
9. Never put off until tomorrow what can you can do today.

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## **Work produces miracles**

The death of an industrious soul  
Is glorious on the whole  
A lazy bloke's whole life around  
Is but a dreary burial ground.

Joy of life, if you enjoy  
Need there be a heaven? Oh boy!  
If you but know  
'Secret of the Sweating Brow',  
Here is Paradise,  
Right before your eyes.

By far it's the greatest joy  
Behold a man amidst his toil  
Engaged in the job at hand  
A come-alive painting by Rembrandt!

The glory of the high & mighty  
Rests on the humble ploughman's shoulders  
Great Nations, a reality wouldn't be  
But for the hand that moves the boulders.

We need electricity and dams we need  
So also tube wells and fertilizers and feed;  
Yet...most urgently, you see  
Where is the hard labour's love?  
Of the 'Saint at the Plough'?  
Without which, all else a naught would be.

Students' studies; teachers' pedagogy  
Shop and factory, farming or artistry  
Each is rightfully labour, truly considered to be.  
Every useful, meaningful act is labour  
Rest is but a waste of time, strained and beleaguered.

Hard work! A true wonder! Man's only utility  
Hedonistic pleasure or a hermit's piety!  
Both results of Labour's bounty.

Laboreth thou, for thy family's few?  
Know it to be hedonism too  
Are thy toilings for the Lord, offerings free?  
Know it to be true Spirituality.

Oh! The beaming face  
Strong muscles; slob?-not a trace  
Behold the meaningful life, a blessing  
If he works with faith, zeal and efficiency matching!

A song can fill you with untold joys  
So too can a day well spent.  
Former depends on the singer's voice  
Latter on our own self, a heaven sent.

Seeketh thou a magic portal?  
Why! Hard work is there for you!  
The Oracles proclaim for one and all  
'Come, work hard and get your due!'

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## **God Help us!**

Despite toiling the whole day  
Many households there be  
That can't eat a square meal a day  
What is the reason?  
Ignorance, idiocy! And ...  
Cunningness of the Shylocks!

Hard work is certainly ambrosial. But...  
That hard work should be accompanied by –  
Evermore Common Sense.  
Hard work without Common Sense, is  
Mostly meaningless motion!

A land must have a leader  
A State must have a leader  
A Nation must have a leader.  
True indeed! Surely a leader is needed! But...  
If there are no hardworking people,  
Who needs a leader, and why need a leader?

A farmer engrossed in his labour needs protection  
A worker engrossed in his labour needs protection  
Yes. They all need a protector. But...  
If the protector becomes a predator,  
Then! The Almighty Lord be blessed!!

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## **Labor – liquor**

A hardworking labourer's body will but naturally get tired, exhausted.  
But...

He says, his exhaustion can't be cured by rest alone!  
He needs beer, whiskey and rum too!

The rich get sloshed in liquor.  
What if the toilers too lick her!

Beer, whiskey and bootleg!  
No harm if consumed in moderation, they say!  
But...  
When the liquor kicks in,  
Who is there to moderate whom?!

If the votary of hard labour  
Gets converted to the worship of hard liquor,  
Hard work will no longer be ambrosial because  
The liquor will reduce him to a vegetable.

There are many causes for the poverty of the hardworking lot.  
But the surest reason is the marriage of labour with liquor.

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## Back cover

*‘It is my firm opinion that wherever Yogeswara Krishna and Dhanurdhara Arjuna are present, there will be victory, wealth, glory and Eternal Dharma.’*

The Sanskrit word *Yogeswara* actually means ‘one who has perfected a state of mystic union with the Lord’. It is also an oft-used epithet for Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. In this context, however, *Yogeswara* is the symbol of Jnana Shakti and Icchha Shakti. Again, *Dhanurdhara* is a Sanskrit word that actually translates as ‘one who wields a bow, i.e a warrior-archer’. *Dhanurdhara* is the symbol of Kriya Shakti. Real wisdom consists in using all these three Shakti for worldly prosperity and spiritual success. “Wherever *Yogeswara* Krishna and *Dhanurdhara* Arjuna are present” - by these words, we are informed that these three Shakti have to be harmoniously present in our personality.

These Shaktis are faculties, the details of which are explained in the various chapters of this small book.

Divine Grace is the result of self-knowledge. Manly effort is Kriya yoga. Work means effort or endeavour; and it can never reach fulfilment without Divine Grace. Therefore man must be *Dhanurdhara*; and must have obtained the grace of the Lord.

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## **Grace and Effort**

One of the most debated topics among spiritual aspirants is that of divine grace and self effort. Which of these is more important for a sadhaka? Are grace and effort mutually contradictory? Is it true that the aspirants following the path of knowledge depend solely on self effort, while the devotees rely solely on grace? What should we do – should we wait for god's grace to descend on us or should we exert ourselves for god realization? Questions such as these haunt aspirants to no end.

God realization is only through divine grace. But this divine grace makes a man to act. The entire misconception regarding grace and self effort arises from a faulty view of grace being something passive. That is not so. You may pray to God for his grace. What God does next is he makes you perform sadhana. Divine grace comes in the form of self effort. Svetashvatara Upanishad says so<sup>1</sup>. But the self effort of a sadhaka who has received divine grace is full of humility, self surrender to the divine will, egolessness, and suffused with an attitude of service to fellow beings. These qualities are all related. Let us however note one important point that a man may act either due to divine grace falling upon him or due to the impulsion of one's own ego. There is a great difference between the actions of a man in both cases. Actions arising due to divine grace falling upon him are qualitatively different from the other kind of actions.

If a sadhaka is full of humility, it means he has surrendered heart and soul to God. And one who has surrendered himself to God has no separate ego of his own. The actions of such a person are called Service. Each of his actions is an offering of love to his beloved God. Outwardly, his actions do not seem different from those of any other person. But, inwardly, there is a totally different set of emotions and motives propelling those actions. And the result of those actions on his personality is also something marvelous! Hanuman had these qualities. So, Sri Ramachandra, his Ishta, lifted him up to His own level! Such action is religion. Swami Vivekananda said that religion is the idea that raises a brute to the level of man and a man to godhood.

In Hanuman we see the clear example of self effort arising from divine grace, the right kind of self effort. But self effort can arise from one's own ego also. From outside, it is quite difficult to differentiate between the two. But there is one acid test in this regard. And that is the result of the effort made by the person on his own personality. There is a marked naturalness in the activity of the sadhaka who has obtained the grace of his Ishta. And quite contrariwise, there is a patent heat, an impulsion, an aggression, a tension in the activity of one who acts purely from his own ego's promptings.

The self effort that arises out of one's own ego will take a man so far and then he gets stuck. His sadhana itself will create tremendous obstacles to him. While in the case of a person whose self effort arises due to divine grace, the sadhaka prays for divine grace, and then he practices a little, receives more grace and so on, till divine grace lifts him to realization. His actions or sadhana gradually dissolve all his problems for him.

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<sup>1</sup> Svetashvatara Upanishad: 6.21

Let us take another example from the Hindu Puranas – Hiranyakashyapa. He was a demon king who was extremely strong willed. But his will arose from his own ego and not from the grace of God. By his own self effort, he got a vision of Lord Narayana, his Ishta, and then he managed to extract a boon from the Lord, too. But that very boon brought about his death. His self effort made him the foremost amongst notorious villains. These seem to be nice stories for telling our children, but let us allow the grand message to sink into our mind. Here is a sadhaka, Hiranyakashyapa, who performed intense tapas, the intensity of which perhaps was no less than that of any other perfected soul. As a result of that sadhana, he was able to kindle the benign grace of his Ishta Narayana on himself. He saw lord Narayana in a spiritual vision. He was able to talk to his Ishta! Surely this was no mean achievement! And what happened in that vision? He had no love for his Ishta. His interaction with his Ishta was not like that between two lovers, you see. His interaction with his Ishta was pure business, shop-keeping. He wanted something from his Ishta. He wanted a boon, a most peculiar boon. All demands are peculiar, so to say. He asked that he should be able to preserve his body for ever, that he should not die. What a preposterous demand! One cannot but wonder what sort of sadhana he must have performed that did not reduce his love for his body even a little after so much Tapas! And what was the result? As a consequence of that boon, he became utterly arrogant, causing intense suffering to all around him. He became a great villain, a curse on society. And remember, he too had a genuine vision of God!

Let us contrast this case with that of Prahlada, his own son. His self effort consisted in constantly praying to Lord Narayana for his grace. His famous prayer was '*The tremendous love a worldly man has for his things, let me have for you.*' He too had a vision of his Ishta. But what a difference when contrasted with his own father! Today, Prahlada is the Emperor of the spiritual world!

Katha Upanishad says 'This Self is not to be achieved by the weak.' But the same Upanishad also says, 'whom the Self chooses, he alone realizes the Self.'

So, self effort is no doubt essential. But let us pray intensely to our Ishta. Let us importune our Ishta to impel us into the right kind of activity, the activity that will reveal our Self to us, making us blessed.

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N.B.: This is a morning *chinthana* recorded at Ponnampet Ashrama on 11th October 1999, delivered by Revered Swami Purushottamanandaji Maharaj.

### **Food for thought**

*Given below are a few stories that should make you think:*

- I was once going down the riverside, looking for a place to sit down for fishing. Fishing, you know, is really relaxing. Apart from listening to music, and taking long walks, it is fishing that I recommend for relaxation, although not necessarily in that order. So, here I was taking a long walk along the river side, looking for a suitable place to sit down and throw my bait, when I saw a man lifting a fish from the waters and placing it on a tree. I asked him, “What are you doing? Why place it on a tree? Why don’t you carry a basket with you to collect your catches?” His reply, still ringing in my ears, was, “Catch? What do you mean? This stupid fish was drowning in the rapid currents of the river. I was passing by when I saw it. I just saved that fish from drowning!”
- The General had decided to attack the enemy although his troops were outnumbered ten to one. The morale of his soldiers was at its lowest. Just before the battle started, he assembled his handful of boys and told them, “Battles are decided by Destiny. Numbers don’t count, but fate actually decides the fortunes of an army. Let’s all pray to the Almighty for a minute, and then I shall toss a coin; heads, we shall win; tails, we shall lose. Let destiny reveal herself today.” After the prayer, he tossed the coin and it landed heads up. This unforeseen development fired up the inspiration of his handful of soldiers. And they achieved a full victory, killing every single man on the enemy side! During the victory celebrations, an inebriated soldier shouted, “Hail Destiny! No one can change Destiny!” Then the General stood up and showed the raucous soldiers the coin he had used. It had heads minted on both sides!
- Thomas was out a-hunting in the forests of Belgian Congo. He stumbled upon a fox which had lost all its four legs. Yet, it looked quite healthy. It intrigued him. How could a wild animal in the thick jungles stay healthy without its limbs? He hid behind a thick bush and waited for hours, wanting to observe the habits of this strange fox. Around evening, a tiger came with a dead deer in its mouth, laid it down on the ground, ate its fill and left the remains for the fox to eat. ‘Lucky jackal’ thought Thomas and left. But this was surely a quirk of fate today, what happened between the tiger and the fox. It could not happen every day. He was determined to unravel the mystery of the limbless, healthy fox and so he returned again the next day, and again the day after. Each day he saw the same thing being repeated; that tiger came to the fox each evening with a game in its mouth, ate its fill, leaving the rest for the fox. This revelation had a terrific impact on Thomas. He understood that the Lord Almighty supplied sustenance for all His creatures. He decided to sit in a corner and wait for others to feed him. A fortnight passed and no one came by. Thomas was reduced to bones and life merely hung on to him. He was all but dead. But his faith in the Lord’s benevolence did not waver, for he had seen it in the jungle. Then, one morning, with the rising sun, Thomas heard the voice of God, booming inside his heart, “Fool! Open your eyes and see! Imitate the tiger, not the fox!”

- A group of spiritual aspirants approached the Abbot and asked, “Father, give us some words of wisdom.” The old monk said, “Wisdom is not in words, but it is revealed in action.” They were a group of sincere aspirants, and they plunged headlong into various kinds of activities. Observing them for about a year, the Abbot said, “That is not action. That is all mere motion.”
- He was walking along the main road of the city. The road was the pride of the entire region, full of the best shops and filled with fine people attired in the very best of dresses and jewelry. He was highly pleased to see that the city of which he was the Mayor was at its best. But at the corner of the street, on a piece of rag spread out on the pavement, sat a leprous old man, with festering wounds all over his hands and face, a-begging. The sight of this man was such a contrast to the finery all around, a shrill note of utter discord. The Mayor, with upturned face, and with genuine concern, asked the Maker, “Oh, Lord! What is this misery? Can’t you see how despicable this creature is? Don’t you have any kindness at all? Indeed, what injustice! What have you done for this creature that you have created?” From the skies a voice thundered, as it were, “Why? I have created *you*! What have *you* done for your own brother-creature? Why haven’t *you* helped him?”
- Leonid Bernstein had an engaging hobby of gardening. Every day, in the evening, he would spend at least two hours tending his garden. And every day, at that time, his Rabbi would walk along the road on his customary evening stroll. Every evening the Rabbi saw Bernstein nurture his garden. He could also see the sense of pride in his eyes when, months later, the garden became a really beautiful place. Feeling responsible for his fellow-Jew, the Rabbi used to call out to Bernstein, “Bernstein, a really beautiful garden you’ve got there. But remember that God and you are partners in it.” This went on every day. After a few days, Bernstein got tired of the Rabbi’s words. One day, when the Rabbi gave out his customary call, “Bernstein, a really beautiful garden you’ve got there. But remember that God and you are partners in it”, he retorted back, “But, Rabbi, you should’ve seen it when God was the only partner!”

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i Sir M Vishweshvariah was the Chief Engineer of the Mysore Government in the late 18th century & early 19th century. He successfully designed and commissioned the first hydro-electric power project in India at Shivanasamudram.

ii Angada was the Prince of the Tribe that helped Sri Rama to fight against Ravana. He was the son of King Sugriva.

iii These numbers refer to ***Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume & Page Number, 1989, Mayawati Memorial Edition, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata***

iv Alasinga Perumal was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who inspired by the Swami, and constantly guided by him through letters written from America, achieved many pioneering milestones in the embryonic Ramakrishna Movement.

v These numbers refer to ***Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume & Page Number, 1989, Mayawati Memorial Edition, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata.***