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A Path to Hindu Heritage

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We also invite our readers to send their comments regarding the *Marg* articles, or about other issues falling within the scope of *Marg*. We reserve the right to select, abbreviate, and edit for clarity submitted materials to conform to the editorial policy of *Marg* and the available space.

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THE MYSTIC SCIENCE OF OM

(Part One)

Mandukya Upanishad, which is the quintessence of all Upanishads contains only twelve shlokas and begins with this following shloka:

Om ityetad_aksharam idam sarvam, tasyo_pavyakh_yanam. Bhutam bhavat bhavishyaditi sarvam omkara evam. Accanyat Trikala titam tadapy

Accanyat Trikala_titam tadapy omkara eva

Omkar - the imperishable Brahman symbolized by OM is all this. The further explanation of OM is this: Whatever was in the past, whatever is in the present and is going to be in future—all this is OM. And that which is beyond the three periods of time is verily OM.

With Ek Omkar opens the sacred scripture of Japji:

"Ek Omkar Sat Nam Kartapurukh Nirbhaya Nirvaira Akal Amurt, Ajooni, Saibhang Guru Prasad Jap, Sach Jugad Sach Haibhi Sach Nanak Hosibhi Sach."

There is but One Omkar (God). His name is true. He is the creator. He is free from fear and enmity. He is beyond time, beyond death. He is unborn, formless and selfexistent. He can be realized by the Grace of Guru. He existed before the beginning of the world—He existed before the beginning of the yugas; He exists now and says Nanak—-He shall exist forever!

Mandukya Upanishad, one of the basic texts of Vedantic Philosophy - asserts the practice of

Swami Jyotirmyananda

meditation on OM as a dynamic means for attaining Selfrealization.

"Pravana (OM) is the bow, the individual soul is the arrow, Brahman or the Absolute is the target. O aspirant, hit the target with persistent vigilance; And just as the arrow becomes one with the target, so too become merged in Brahman (the Absolute)."

Patanjali Maharashi enjoins:

"Pravana or OM is the name of God (Ishwara); Its repetition and meditation should be practiced with meaning and feeling." Raja Yoga Sutras 1 -27, 28.

Lord Krishna proclaims in the Gita:

"I am the syllable OM among all the Vedas."

In the Vedic literature, OM is considered the essence of all the Vedas. OM is the name of God, Brahman, the Absolute. Voluminous scriptures are written explaining the glory of OM.

POWER OF CHANTING OM

OM is a combination of the Sanskrit letters "a, u," "m" and an ardha matra or half-syllable. When students see the word transliterated as "a-u-m," in an attempt to be careful to pronounce it correctly, they mistakenly form two vowel sounds resulting in something like "Ahom" However, the correct pronunciation is simply "OM." "A" and "U" blend into "oh" and end with the lips pressed together into a vibrating "mmm" sound.

Because of the presence of the ardha matra (half syllable or halant) at the end of OM, "M" signals the final sound. The halant is not pronounced; rather, it stops the chant of OM, so you do not put any vowel at the end of the sound. Without that halant, one would say "OMA" in Sanskrit pronunciation. This half-syllable is represented by a vindu or point.

You may chant or repeat OM vocally or mentally. Vocal chanting is of three types:

1. Short.

Prolonged, soft and deep, resonating with the spinal column.
Prolonged, out-going, loud.

То chant prolonged and resonant OMs, like the vibrations of a bell, breathe in deeply through the nose, then open the lips and begin reciting O. . .O. . .O. . .. When the breath is running out, close your lips and terminate the with sound а humming MMMMMMM. Feel the sound of OM creating a resonance in your spine that moves from the base of the spine upwards to the crown of the head. Repeat the chant as often as you like and see how effectively it promotes harmony in the vital forces (pranas) in the body, soothes the nervous system, generates a mystic potency in the



mind, and prepares the mind for a deeper meditation.

In prolonged, vocal chants of OM, there is a natural pranayama (breathing exercise). Such chanting of OM causes you to control your breath as you fill your lungs deeply with air and then exhale slowly as you chant the sound of the mantra. In addition, it creates a resonance in your spinal column, which is a kind of sonar massage, a sound vibration that massages the spinal tissue. Thus, OM pranayama has a great effect on your personality even if your mind does not know the subtler and profound meanings of the OM mantra.

Mental repetition of OM along with meditation is known as Japa Sahita Dhyana. Seated in a meditative pose, with eyes closed, continue mental repetition of OM. Let your mind continue to flow on steadily towards the sound-form of OM; but, at the same time, let your intellect reflect upon the underlying meaning and significance of OM. This profound meaning will be elaborated upon in the text that follows.

OM – THE PERFECT NAME OF GOD

As we have explained, OM is a combination of the Sanskrit letters "A," "U," and "M" with a half-syllable (ardha matra or halant). As the analysis of these letters in Mandukya Upanishad makes clear, there is a profound implication in choosing OM as the symbol of God, Brahman, the Absolute.

OM encompasses the limits of the field of human speech. With "A" you open your throat and mouth, with "M" you close your lips. "U" denotes all that is between the opening and closing of sound in human sound production. When you have said OM (A+U+M) you have used the entire vocal range from the throat to the lips, thus symbolizing the fact that you have uttered all that is to be uttered. When you have used up the entire range of sound production, nothing more can be said. Thus, all the sounds and words that can be produced in human experience are implied and contained in OM.

For this profound reason, the Sages chose OM as the verbal symbol or name of the allencompassing God or Brahman the Supreme Self who is all that exists. Through the Divine name of OM, they intended to direct the human mind to the transcendent reality of God.

Beyond the Waves of Names and Forms to the Ocean of the Self every meaningful word or "name" in the human language conjures up in your mind a form. The word "rose" immediately conjures up the form of the tender flower. "Waterfall" suggests the form of water dynamically cascading from a great height. The names of people whom you like, and dislike bring to your mind the forms of those people. All objects of this world have names and forms, and in this vast world of multiplicity projected by the conditioned mind, names and forms hide the Divine Self. Just as the ocean is "hidden" by its own waves and the sun is hidden by its own rays, so God is hidden by His names and forms.

Therefore, the world is described as prapancha or fivefold: It consists of pure Existence-Consciousness- Bliss (the essential nature of Brahman or the Divine Self) plus names and forms. In Sanskrit, Pure Existence is Sat, Pure Consciousness is Chit, and Pure Bliss is Ananda. Thus, the Divine Self is known as Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The unalterable Existence behind all things is called Sat. It is not dead existence, but it is knowable. So Pure Existence implies Pure Knowledge or Consciousness or Awareness-Pure Chit. That Pure Consciousness, again, implies Bliss. When you have pain and suffering, consciousness contracts. When you have joy, consciousness expands. If you think of a consciousness that is limitless, such a state is by its very nature blissful. So, what is Sat is Chit; what is Chit is Ananda — Sat-Chit-Ananda underlies all things.

On this three-fold screen of Sat-Chit-Ananda or Brahman, names and forms are projected by Maya or cosmic illusion. These names and forms are merely illusion, not the solid reality they appear to be. However, the human mind, conditioned by ignorance, sees only the multitude of names and forms that it has given to objects, ignoring the screen of Brahman underlying them at every moment.

How then, reflected the Sages, can we invoke the name of God so that the human mind goes beyond these limited names and forms of the world of multiplicity dwell on the Reality that supports and transcends them? With the deep revelation of the Sages, the scriptures derived the symbol OM. The melody of OM silences the impressions of the world within your mind and carry you joyfully to an awareness of the Divine Self, Brahman, or God. You realize that God is like t ocean. All names and forms are merely waves within the infinite Ocean of fullness that we refer to as God.

THE MYSTIC FORMULA OF OM (A-U-M)

OM (A-U-M) has been chosen as a formula attaining God-Realization. Meditating upon this formula implies focusing your mind sequentially up "A," "U," "M," and the ardha matra of M, and reflection upon the implications and subtle meaning of each these aspects of OM.

REFLECTING ON THE "A" ASPECT

When you start chanting OM (A-U-M), let your mind begin meditating on the A aspect of OM. Try to feel yourself as the physical body. You won't have much difficulty doing this because you identify yourself with your body every day. But what is the physical body?

Your body is a part of universal matter. When you eat, cabbages grown in Australia or peaches grown South America nourish your body. While you live when you die, cells in your body are recycled back into the earth. The physical body is formed out of five elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether) drawn from the cosmos. At every moment of your life, your cells are drawing from the cosmos and then diffusing back into it. You are drawing from the entire world of matter just as a lagoon draws water from the ocean and empties itself back into the ocean again.

Since you are inseparably related to the cosmos, you should understand and affirm, "If I am the physical body, I am also the earth, the moon, the sun, the stars, the breeze, the swirling clouds—I am the universal body, I am all."

This form of reflection does not mean that you should crowd your mind by keeping track in a mathematical way of how many things you are identified with! Rather it implies enjoying a sense of expansion. When you look at yourself day by day, you don't crowd your mind with the thoughts, "I am the toes," "I am the feet," "I am the nose." Rather, you just think of yourself as the whole body. Similarly, in Vedantic reflection on the A aspect of OM you should enjoy the expansive understanding that "I am the whole universe of matter from which the body arises, into which the body diffuses. Just as a wave is related to the ocean, so too my physical body is related to the entire physical universe."

From a very simple observation of the world around you, you bring your mind to an elevated understanding. And all of this is quite reasonable. It isn't some vein type of fancy. However, great imagination and insight is involved in grasping the idea that the entire universe is oneself.

When you are focusing your attention on the A aspect of OM and your physical identity, you are focusing on the waking state of consciousness. As you continue to meditate and reflect upon OM, you will also be probing into the deeper implications of the three familiar states of consciousness-— waking, dream and deep sleep—which are experienced by every human being in day-to-day life.

When the mind contacts the objects of the world through the senses it is termed the waking state.

When the mind withdraws the senses from the objects of the world, and yet projects experiences based upon subtle desires from the unconscious, it is termed dream state. When the mind withdraws the senses and enters that subtle state that is devoid of both external contacts with the objects as well as internal contacts with the desires, it is termed sleep state.

It is by delving deep into the mysteries of waking, dream, and deep sleep that a student of Vedanta learns that the innermost Self in man is beyond these three states of consciousness. During spiritual movement, the soul rises from the plane of the objects to the plane of the senses, from the senses to the mind, from the mind to the ego. Then, having crossed the veil of ignorance, it discovers its identity with the Supreme Self. Therefore, the first three letters of OM - A, U, and M — represent the three ordinary states of consciousness that one experiences daily along with their positive counterparts that are known through lower samadhi and higher samadhi. The ardha matra or half-syllable represents Turiya, the state that transcends the relative states of waking, dream, and deep sleep.

When focusing on the "A" aspect of OM, you identify with the physical plane of existence in your waking state of consciousness. As we have seen, this identity of yours in the microcosm in which you seem to exist as an individual has a counterpart in the macrocosm of the entire universe. In other words, whatever you are as an individual has a correspondence in the universe.



In the waking state, identified with your individual physical body, the jiva or soul is called Vishwa. Identified with the entire universe on the physical plane, the soul is called virat or vishwanara. God is vishwanara and you as an individual are vishwa.

While meditating on the A aspect, you are trying to dissolve your "vishwa-hood" and become pan of vishwanara. You are transcending your concept of yourself as an individual to merge with the totality of all physical bodies, to experience the physical universe as one organic whole.

REFLECTING ON THE "U" ASPECT

At this stage of reflection, shift your attention from the physical body to the mind and clarify your understanding that you are more mind than physical body. Your physical awareness does not have any independent reality without the mind. The moment you are chloroformed you are not aware of the body at all. Awareness of the body depends on the mind. Reflection on the U aspect of OM helps you to begin to identify more with the astral or subtle body or sukshma sharira—that part of your personality where the physical body is transcended. Your physical body is just a tool of your deeper personality. Your deeper personality is subtle. It is composed of vital forces, mind, senses, and intellect. Indeed, the whole world is essentially subtle. Physicality is a kind of illusion that is created by your mind.

To understand this more clearly, consider what happens in your own dreams. The dream experience is entirely subtle, abstract. A dream is not an experience in the physical plane. Yet in your dream, when you are experiencing your body, people around you, diverse situations and circumstances, all things seem so concrete, separate, real—yet they are nothing, but a magical show created by the mind.

At this point it must be understood that when Vedanta directs your attention to dream, we are actually pointing to the subtle experience of the astral plane in lower samadhi (super consciousness). In your practical life, nature leads you every day to experience the astral plane or your subtle body in an unconscious way through dream. However, it is only through deep meditation that you become separated from the physical body and experience the expansiveness of the subtle plane in a conscious way through lower samadhi, the positive counterpart of dream.

When you are identified with the mind or astral body in dream, you are called Taijasa, which means "effulgent." The universal astral body or cosmic counterpart of Taijasa is Hiranyagarbha, the Cosmic Mind. Through your reflection you understand that your subtle body is not an individualized entity. It is a wave in the cosmic subtle body that is Hiranyagarbha. Your thoughts do not originate in the ego-self; they proceed from the cosmic mind.

Thus, try to understand the possibility of uniting your mind with the Cosmic Mind. Try to understand that the Divine mind permeates your mind; the Divine subtle body permeates your individual subtle body. Allow your mind to relax and commune with the Cosmic Mind. Become a channel for cosmic thoughts. Feel you have no ego or will of your own—just God's Will. This form of reflection and devout meditation along with mental repetition of OM comprises the "U" aspect of meditation on OM.

REFLECTING ON THE "M" ASPECT

Next, focus your attention on the "M" aspect of OM and discover your identity with the causal body. The causal body is a highly advanced center within you, a center that is beyond mind and intellect. It is the vast realm of the unconscious.

When you are identified with the causal body, you are called praina. Just as your individual physical and astral bodies (Vishwa and Taijasa) are related to their cosmic physical and astral counterparts (Virat and Hiranyagarbha), so too, your individual causal body (Prajna) is related to the cosmic causal body, which in Sanskrit is called Ishwara or God. God is the cosmic source of all. An individual causal body is linked to God just as a wave is linked to the ocean. At the deeper core of your existence, you are one with God.

The only way most people experience the causal plane in their practical life is in deep sleep. In deep sleep, you have moved away from your physical body and your astral body. and you have come closest to the causal body. But in that experience, there is always a veil that separates you from God. The veil is called avidya, ignorance.

All that you experience in deep sleep is the temporary silencing of the ego, of the triad of seer, seen and sight, of the awareness of time and space, of the burden of

multiplicity. This temporary absence of all problems is not God-realization. If you went on sleeping all the time you would not be enlightened.

However, if you could lead your mind to a state of consciousness in which the ego is thoroughly trans- formed, you would enjoy the positive counterpart of sleep— perpetual samadhi. When you enjoy this higher samadhi, the ego is filled with blissful spiritual awareness and no longer wears the same robes of illusion. The unconscious becomes flooded with Divine impressions and your entire life is lit up with the glory of the transcendental Self.

In normal meditation, if you are meditating on a flower, you preserve the distinction of meditator and object of meditation. However. Vedantic meditation possesses a special characteristic: identity with the object of meditation. This form of meditation is called "Aham Graha Upasana." Vedantically, when you inwardly feel, 'I am the flower" or 'I am the Divine Self,' there is no trace of ego in it. You are transcending vour ego and becoming identified with the object of meditation in such a way that the concepts of 'subject' and 'object' are transcended.

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UNIQUENESS OF HINDUISM

It is the unique and all-encompassing nature of Hinduism that one devotee may be worshiping Ganesha while his friend worships Subramaniam or Vishnu, and yet both honor the other's choice and feel no sense of conflict. The profound understanding and universal acceptance that are unique in Hinduism are reflected in this faculty for accommodating different approaches to the Divine (Brahman), allowing for different names and forms of God to be worshiped side by side within the temple walls.

-- Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001), founder of Hinduism Today

RISE BEYOND ATTACHMENT

EXCESSIVE ATTACHMENT to any person or object can suppress a strong creative and spiritual movement within. Attachment means dependence upon the object of pleasure. Consequently, a festering weakness develops, leaving the person in a state of dejected helplessness.

The dynamic energy that once supported willpower withdraws into a state of inertia. The spiritual power that might have carried one to mystic heights is suppressed in an unknown cave of the unconscious.

Attachment is like the largeleafed tropical plants that cling and entwine the trunk of a healthy green tree. As each day goes by, it is enjoying and relishing the nourishment from the tree, thus reducing the strength of the tree to a low ebb.

Strangely enough, those who are more attached to their loved ones have greater capacity to hate them and torment them. The slightest shadow of doubt can

Swami Lalitananda

throw the loved one into a high degree of fury. Most violent acts are committed against the very person one had adored so passionately with a thousand sweet words. Therefore, attachment and hatred are like twins externally, but could without warning switch their names.

Deep down in the subconscious, these two giant snakes are coiled attachment (raga) and hatred (dwesha), one as deadly as the other to the blooming of the lotus in the heart of a spiritual aspirant. The cause of both is the sadistic ego that persists in its identification with the body. This brings about a separation from the universal stream of consciousness. The mind is kept in a state of agitation, resulting in lack of discrimination and dispassion. Life is then completely filled with miseries, turmoil, and unfavorable conditions.

In order to remove the chains of attachment and hatred, you must understand: "I am not this body, nor this mind, nor the senses, nor the intellect, nor this personality. All this will pass away, but I am essentially eternal spirit, ever free, without limitations."

You will surely be able to rise beyond the snare of attachment by reading the scriptures and reflecting upon their profound teachings; by hearing sublime lectures by highly qualified Sages; by beginning a definite trend of mental austerity; and by foregoing the evil habit of mulling over past events, recalling memories of pleasant experiences, and removing your dependence future on expectations.

Break those fetters of attachments that obstruct your spiritual progress. Always move forward with giant strides, like a lion in the forest of worldly entanglements.

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Courtesy: International Yoga Guide.

Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love, time is eternity!

DIVINITY IN EVERYTHING

Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

If the earth is divine, then whatever has grown on the earth is also divine, including our own body. Instead of realizing this divinity, which is already there in us and around us, we construct temples to install God there.

I was speaking about sublimity—how to generate sublimity by one's own sublime practices. You have to become sublime, and then you will find sublimity in everything around you.

People are looking for God, praising God, and in order to have a touch and protection from God thev erect temples, construct puja rooms and perform various rituals. Is it not quite away from the ideal, from the reality? The fact is that the whole earth itself is godly or divine, as are the other heavenly bodies hovering in the sky. All are born from the unfathomable space or void. Are they not divine?

If the earth is divine, then whatever has grown on the earth is also divine, including our own body. Instead of realizing this divinity, which is already there in us and around us, we construct temples to install God there. Not being able to find God in the rock created by God Himself, we create an idol out of it and worship it as God! Well, it is ok as a preliminary lesson, initial practice. But sooner or later we must try to feel divinity in the entire creation.

There is a beautiful verse Ma often sings:

लोकेश चैतन्यमयादिदेव श्रीकान्त विष्णो भवदाज्ञयैव। प्रातः समुत्थाय तव प्रियार्थं

संसारयात्रामनुवर्तयिष्ये॥

lokeśa caitanyamayādideva śrīkānta vi**ṣṇ**o bhavadājñayaiva|

Prātaḥ samutthāya tava priyārthaṁ

sa**m**sārayātrāmanuvartayi**s**ye | |

O Controller of the worlds, who is of the nature of consciousness and the first of all gods (of the nature of brilliance), O Mahavishnu, the consort of Sri (all these are names addressing the supreme Presence; some are personal, some are impersonal) — waking up by Your command in the morning, we undertake this voyage in the world for the sake of Your pleasure alone.

The consciousness within you, the power and presence within you, puts you to sleep. The same power wakes you up. Can you see how the divinity and sublimity are generated and felt by these thoughts? We find divinity in the very first involuntary action of waking up. The same divinity we all our activities find in throughout the day-in brushing teeth, taking bath, taking food, in going to the office and coming back home, in walking, talking, thinking, in everything that comes our way. The same divinity we find in the very purpose of our life: "I follow the course set by You for Your own Ultimate purpose". The whole life thus fits into the system of the world. It becomes a part of the Divine's huge Karmayajna.

You grow up, go to school, get employed, get married, bring up children, do many things in the domestic, social or professional field—all these you are able to do because the earth revolves, seasons follow, the sun rises and sets, the heart beats, lungs bellow and the mind thinks. When you link up all the activities—big and small-with the inner presence, the universal power and its will, then where is the scope for any preference and prejudice? The whole life will become divine and sublime when looked at with this comprehensive vision.

My dear souls, divinity is not to be gained from outside. It has to be generated. You have to become divine.

Your problem is that you think the samsara-yatra (voyage in the world) as yours and you keep God at a distance, allocating only a few minutes or hours for His thoughts. And you want to reach Him!

.....CONTINUES ON PAGE 19

TAP (तप) – THE PENANCE

Ram Prakash Singhal, Ahmedabad, India

Eight gems of Gita (6/1-3) namely: "1) Fearlessness, 2) Purification by Righteousness, 3) Situating Self in Pursuit of Knowledge, 4) Charity, 5) Restraint & Control of Senses, 6) Yagya - the Sacred Works, and 7) Swadhyay - the Study of Self" were discussed in earlier MARG issues. The eighth gem, called Tap (तप) – the Penance, is described below.

WHAT IS TAP

Tap is often misunderstood as severe penance done by torturing the body, starving, remaining awake for long periods, standing on one leg, burying in sand, sitting in fire or on thorns etc. legends also talk about many demons resorting to *Tap* to achieve demonic powers to overpower righteous people.

However, Gita considers *Tap* as a means to purify Self by observing austerities & doing penance with fervor and commitment. *Tap* empowers a practiser of Yog with 1) Power to support righteousness and resist wickedness; and/or 2) Tolerance for the harsh dualities and hurt, insult and injustice in the life.

Illustration: Milk spoils within 1-2 hours but remains good for few hours after heating. Seeded with rennet, it becomes curd that lasts for 2-3 days. And curd becomes butter on churning and remains good for many days. Nevertheless, when butter is boiled on slow fire, it separates impurities and becomes Ghee, which stays good for years. A practiser can similarly rise from lower to higher stage by constantly engaging in *Tap*.

Sage Patanjali prescribed *Tap* as one of the five sub-rules under *Niyams*, the regulations in his eight-fold path to attain Yog. Catholic Church also prescribes penance for the faithful ones to absolve from sins.

QUALITATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF TAP

Gita classifies *Tap* into three categories of *Sattvic* (imbued with nobility), *Rajasic* (shadowed with passion) and *Tamasic* (overpowered by ignorance) in 17/17-19:

"Penance practiced ardently by people having unflinching faith without desiring anything in return but engaging with the Supreme Being only, is the noblest. Penance done with desire of felicitation, honor & worship and/or out of ostentation is of the inconstant quality of passion. And the penance undertaken foolishly by torturing own body; and to harm others is of the lowest quality."

SATVIC TAP

Sattvic Tap enables its doer to purify his whole being including body, mind, heart and soul. Sometimes, it is undertaken for atonement of sins or to get relief from pain & distress. But the best type of *Tap* is performed to acquire power, courage and resources to fight against Adharm and protect Dharm. Arjun performed such *Tap* many times and acquired divine weapons. High principle of goodness, virtue & faith without desiring personal gratification guide its doer towards realizing his ethical, social, and spiritual duty and responsibility. Ancient Indian Rishis practiced *Sattvic Tap*.

Example: Mahavir Swami attached greatest importance to penance for attaining liberation. He, who sincerely performs *Sattvic Tap* becomes a pure, calm, equipoise compassionate soul. Mahatma Gandhi undertake fasts unto death for just causes.

RAJASIC TAP

Rajasic Tap is done to gain favor of gods to obtain material objects, honor, or to gratify passionate desires and ego. Though it may give joys in this world, and a place in heaven after death for some time, it is worthless for the liberation of soul. *Tap* done with arrogance, pride, and self-elation even for a right cause, is also *Rajasic*.

TASMIC TAP

Tamasic Tap is done by deluded, foolish people to pursue mean ambitions like gaining control on others, destroying natural resources or taking revenge. Demons like Hiranyakashipu, Raavan etc. got some supernatural powers by *Tamasic Tap*.

KIND OF TAP

Gita mentions three kinds of Taps in 17/14-16:

"Devoted worship of God, brahmins (knowers of Brahm), wise and elderly spiritual teachers, cleanliness, simplicity, chastity and nonviolence; these are called Sharirik Tap performed with the body."

"Vangamay Tap

Vangamay Tap is the penance of speech. It should neither agitate the speaker nor the listeners; be pleasant, truthful, objective and promote study of Self."

"Contentment of heart gentleness; charm in character spiritual; reflective thinking with calm mind - effective self-control; purity of emotions - instincts; these are called Manasik Tap, i.e., done with mind" (Gita -17/16)

A goldsmith subjects raw gold to various processes of heating, melting, molding, forming, cutting etc. to make ornaments. Similarly, a practiser as well as accomplished Yogi must subject his body, speech and mind to above-mentioned Taps to keep his character shining like an ornament. Purification is the most powerful tool to prevent ill health of the body, tongue and mind. Impure, unusable seawater becomes useful and indispensable as it transforms into clouds and rain by doing Tap in hot sun.

1. Sharirik Tap

Sharririk Tap unifies and keeps the body fit to perform its functions in perfect harmony with mind and soul because the body is like a ladder to climb to abode of God. One can perform it by earning a livelihood by righteous means, serving the weak, poor, elderly people, maintaining cleanliness in and around his premises, saving the environment, cultivating good habits and using money & resources for good causes.

Example: George Washington, the Commander General, did not hesitate to help some laborers who were struggling to lift a log while their captain stood just watching and supervising them because he felt it below dignity to join the labor.

2. Vangamay Tap

Vangamay Tap is performed to speech other purify or like communication means phoning, writing, singing, addressing etc. It should be truthful, likable, and beneficial to listeners without causing anxiety and disturbance them. to Speaking that which benefits others as well as self is the best. Speech reveals the character of a person. A silent person is like a shop closed with the lock of tongue. We come to know whether the shop is of diamonds or coal only after its lock opens. When a Yogi talks, his body language conveys the coolness of a waterfall, the calm of a placid lake, the compassion of a Guru, the love of a parent. Very soothing and comforting words pour from his mouth.

Example: On meeting Hanuman first time, Ram appreciated his speech thus:

"He, who is not learned in can never so Veds, talk beautifully. He is thorough with grammar as he does not utter even one wrong or slang word. His face, eves, evebrows, forehead and body do not convey anything other than what he says. His highly cultured speech is neither too long nor too short; neither doubtful nor secretive; neither too slow nor too fast: neither too feeble nor too loud but pleasant to the heart. Whatever is in his heart, it comes through his lips in a nobly modulated tone."

3. Manasik Tap

Manasik Tap is observed for purification of the mind. Cheerfulness, coolness, speaking less and listening more, effective control and purity of natural & emotional instincts are qualities essential to do Manasik Tap. It leads to achieving psychological, emotional spiritual & purification. It influences how we feel, behave and react in day-today life, and enables us to overcome challenges without any stress.

Sharirik. Vangamay and Maanasik Taps should be faithfully done in *Sattvic* mode as without expecting а duty appreciation, felicitation, respect recognition because expectations drag the doer in the world of passionate desires.



Gita:

"Never give up sacred works like Yagya, charity and Tap. Albeit they must be done as a matter of duty. An accomplished Yogi also must continue doing them (18/5)"

"А practiser desirous to become Yogi must diligently do Tap with the same spirit as when doing selfless, sacred activities and charity (5/29)"

Meditating, praying, being in company, leading good purposeful life, reading good literature, striking a balance between inner and outer worlds, letting the passion cool down by not reacting instantly, being busy productive activities, in cultivating good hobbies besides doing normal work; these are some ways to practise Tap.

"The best way to do Tap (or any other pious activity) is that whatever you do, eat, enjoy, donate or sacrifice as oblations in Yajn, offer it unto Me (9/27)"

Some religious sects consider body as an obstacle in the path of liberation and advocate torturing it by doing severe *Tap*. Others do

How to do Tap: God says in it to get the power of performing miracles and fooling the faithful; and the worst ones do it to harm & oppress good people. However, God rejects such Taps in 17/5-6 saying,

> "People resort to severe penance due to false ego and hypocrisy. Impelled by desire, self-interest and power; they weaken their bodies and torment Me, who dwells in their bodies. Know them as conscienceless demons."

> **Example:** Buddha practiced severe Tap for six years to attain bliss. When he was about to die of weakness caused by it, he heard some passerby women singing:

'Tighten not the strings of a Sitar so much that they break and stop producing music; nor leave them so loose that you cannot play on them.'

He grasped the message and stopped doing severe Tap.

Moral: To think that the soul can attain eternal bliss bv torturing the body in which it lives, is akin to expecting a bird to be happy in a cage set on fire.

Benefits of doing Tap: God tells in Gita:

"Very many persons have purified themselves by Tap to get knowledge, spiritual and transcended into My divine existence earlier (4/10)"

"Oblations offered in Yagya, donations given, and Tap performed without faith do not benefit the doer in this life or after death (17/27-28)"

Vyas says in Mahabharat: 'Deities attain immortality and Rishis attain spiritual knowledge by doing penance. The followers of the path of desire fulfillment get wealth, children, pleasures etc. by doing penance and those who abandon the path of desire, attain liberation through penance. But the saints liberate themselves in this very life by doing penance and engage in public welfare works until death.'

Ram Prakash Singhal is the author of an exhaustive treatise on Gita titled as 'GITA for GEN A to Z'. The set of three volumes is available online at amazon.com.

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POSITIVE THINKING

It is within your power to become as happy, content, or successful as you make up your mind to be. Staying positive may not have an immediate effect on your situation, but it will likely have a profound and instantaneous effect on your mood and the quality of your experiences. In order for positive thinking to change your life, it must become your predominant mind-set. Once you are committed to embracing positive thinking, you'll start believing that everything that you want is within your grasp.

12

Courtesy: DailyOm.com

KAILĀŚA TEMPLE - (ELLORA CAVE 16)

Dr. Omesh K. Chopra

The Kailāśa temple (Cave 16) is one of the cave temples and monasteries known as the Ellora Caves. Ellora, also called Verul or Elura is the short form of the ancient name Elloorpuram. These caves are located 29 km (18 miles) from Aurangabad in Mahārāstra, India. There are more than 100 caves at that site, but only 34 caves that extend ≈ 2 km, are open to public. These caves have been excavated from basalt cliffs in the Charanandri Hills. Ellora caves occupy a relatively flat rocky region of the Western Ghats, known as the Deccan Lava Platea or Deccan Traps. The term trap has been derived from the Swedish word for stairs (trapp) and refers to step-like hills. Deccan Traps consist of multiple layers of basalt with solidified a combined thickness of >2000 m (6500 ft) of flatlying lava flows, and cover ≈500,000 sq km (200,00 sq miles) in west-central India. They were created some 65 million years ago (mya) when the Indian subcontinent, minus northeast corner of India, was drifting northeast from the south pole. Before 180 mya, Madagascar, Seychelles and the Indian subcontinent were part of East Gondwana supercontinent, wedged between Africa and Australia with Antarctica to the south and ocean to the north. Later ≈150 mya East Gondwana began splitting apart. First, Madagascar, Seychelles and the Indian subcontinent broke away from Africa, Antarctica and Australia. Then, Madagascar broke off

≈100 mya and Seychelles broke off ≈70 mya. Deccan traps were created while India was located over a volcanic hotspot under Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean ≈65 mya.



Fig.1. Some of the Buddhist Caves at Ellora. A Lower number of caves are to the right.

Ellora and Ajantā Caves are located in the middle of Deccan Traps or Deccan Plateau between Tapti and Godāvarī Rivers. Deccan Plateau is made up of basalt, a volcanic igneous rock produced when magma exits from Earth's core and cools rapidly very near the surface. More than 90% of all volcanic rock on Earth is basalt, an incredibly hard rock used extensively for sculpture in Egypt and India. Ajanta Caves are Buddhist caves, whereas Ellora Caves are a multi-religious rock-cut cave complex in Charanandri Hills with inscriptions dating from 6th century CE. These consist of 12 Buddhist caves (1-12) built between 5^{th} and 8^{th} century, 17 Hindu caves (13-29) built from 7th to 10th century, and 5 Jain caves (30-34) built in the 10th century. Each cave represents deities and mythologies that were popular during that period. A photograph of the



Buddhist caves is shown in Fig. 1, and map of the Ellora Caves location is shown in Fig. 2(a). The Jain caves are located about 1 km north of the Hindu caves. Among these, caves 5, 10 and 12 are popular among the Buddhist caves, caves 16 and 29 are popular among the Hindu caves and Cave 31 among the Jain caves. The Ellora Cave 16, Kailāśa temple, is named after Mount Kailāśa, the abode of Lord Śiva. The floor plan of the Ellora Kailāśa temple and a sketch of the temple are shown in Figs. 2(b) and 3, respectively.

There are several monsoon streams along the Charanandri Hills. Some of these flow through the Ellora caves site. The most spectacular is Elaganga stream which drains into the Siva, a stream of the Godavari River system. During the monsoon season, Elaganga forms a gushing waterfall that creates the "Sita-kinahani" lake between Caves 29 and 28. Furthermore, Cave 29 or Dhumar Lena, is the earliest excavations at Ellora and is among the largest Brahmanical cave. Cave 29 contains some of the most famous sculptures and carvings. In particular, the Kalyansundara panel depicting the marriage of Lord Śiva and Pārvatī.

Natural or man-made caves have played an important role in ancient India. Since ancient times, caves and monastic complexes have been built along trade routes. These caves served as rest areas and allowed monks and ascetics to travel long distance with merchants. Ellora was

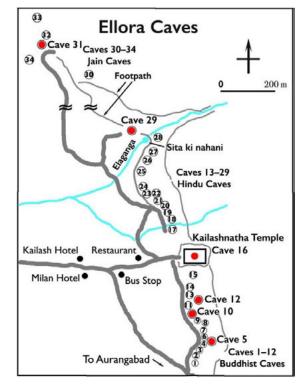


Fig. 2(a) Map of Ellora Caves

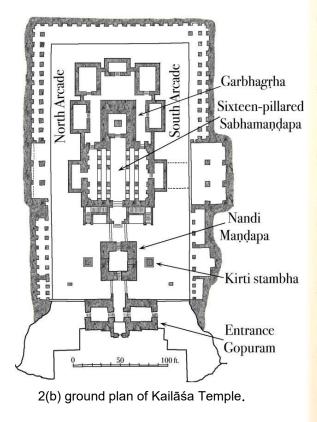






Fig. 3. South elevation plan of Ellora Cave 16 Kailāśa Temple.

located along an ancient trade route. Typically, these cave complexes were supported by wealthy merchants and kings. Ellora caves and its sister caves, Ajanta, which are also located in Aurangabad district, are testament to India's artistic and spiritual past. Ajanta Caves are older. They were built in 2nd century BCE and served as Buddhist monastic complexes. Both Ajanta and Ellora have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Kailāśa temple is one of the largest monolithic structures in the world and considered an architectural marvel. It is 50-m (164.0 ft) deep, 35 m (114.8 ft) wide and 33 m (108.3 ft) high. Some of the other examples of large monolithic structures are 17 m (55.8 ft) high statue (Gommateshwara) of Bahubali on Vindhyagiri Hill in Shravanbela Gola, Karnataka, and a 26-m (85.3 ft) high statue of his father Lord Rsabhadeva the first Tirthamkara and founder of Jainism. These two were built in 983 CE and 12th century, respectively. Though, the Pancha Rathas or Pandava Rathas monolithic monument complex at Mahabalipuram, in Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu were built earlier ≈630-668 CE.

Kailāśa temple is considered not only one of the most spectacular monolithic rockcut structure in the world, what is notable is the fact that it was carved vertically from top down into the tough basalt of Charanandri Hills with just chisels and hammers, more than 1500 years ago. Just imagine standing on top of a giant basalt cliff and plan excavating an area 50 x 35 m going 26-m down from the top to create not just an obelisk or pillar but a structure with several chambers and 3 levels and the walls covered with exquisite sculptures and fine carving. Then remind yourself that there is no room for any mistake because there is no "undo" or going back. Just look at the structure they created in an aerial view of Kailāśa temple and the entrance to the temple in Figs. 4 and 5 respectively.



Fig. 4. Aerial view of Ellora Cave 16, Kailāśa Temple from the southwest corner.

The Kailāśa temple is believed to have been built in stages. Although Kṛṣṇa I (Kṛṣṇarāja) of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty completed major portions of the temple, e.g., central temple, the Nandi shrine and entrance gateway, construction of the temple is believed to have begun under his predecessor, his uncle and founder of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty Dantidurga (735-757



CE). Ellora Cave 15 bears an inscription from him. Additional halls and sculptures were probably added later during the early 9th century. According to a legend, the king of Elloorpuram suffered from a severe disease. His queen prayed to her God Ghrishneshwar (Śiva) for her husband's life. She vowed that if her wish came true, she would observe a fast until she could see the *Śikhara*[†] of this temple. Thus, this temple was completed in 18 years. Obviously, this can't be true. Just imagine how much rock would have to be not only excavated but also disposed. Some scholars believe that one of the architects named Kokasa, promised the queen that she would be able to see the Śikhara from her window in 18 years. As promised, the queen was able to see the Śikhara within 18 years.



Fig. 5. Entrance of Ellora Cave 16 Kailāśa Temple.

A close examination of architectural elements and their ornamentation indicate that artists did not work on caves according to their own personal religious affiliation nor did they work as specialists for only certain types of caves, they worked on Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain caves simultaneously at certain times. They moved back and forth across the entire Ellora site. These artists seem to have established a sacred visual vocabulary, i.e., line shape, texture, space, and color, that crossed religious boundaries. The temple consists of more than 600 statues, bridges, intricate drainage system, rainwater harvesting, elaborate perforated windowpanes, narrow ventilation shafts, underground passages, secret balconies, peepholes, and stairways that connect different levels of the temple (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. A view of Kailāśa Temple from the front towards the back, i.e., from east to west.

The entrance to the temple is a twostories Gopuram (gateway).* Right in front at the entrance is a carve panel of Gajalakshmi sitting on a lotus with two elephants on each side. The top elephants are pouring water over her from a pot, while the two bottom elephants are filling the pots with water from the lotus pond.

⁺ Śikhara (mountain peak) refers to the cupola, roof or topmost part of the temple above the garbhagṛha of the temple in North India. It is known as vimāna in South India and Odisha in East India. Garbhagṛha is the innermost sanctuary of Hindu temples, or the sanctum sanctorum.

^{*} A gopuram or gopura is a rectangularshaped tapering entrance tower of a Hindu temple in South India. It is typically divided into multiple levels (*talas*), with each level illustrating intricate sculptures and carvings of Hindu gods, goddesses, and mythological scenes.



She is flanked by two large dvarapals or gate guardians (Fig. 7). Most of the deities within the confines of the outer columned arcade three-storey high, there are three main structures and two inner courtyards on both sides of the entry passage. Each courtyard has a large monolithic elephant and a 15-m tall Dhwaja stambha or Kirti stambha (victory pillar). The pillars symbolize strength and prosperity of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty. They had won several battles with their famous elephant brigade. However, the trisulas which once decorated the top of these pillars are missing.



Fig. 7. Gajalakshmi flanked by dvarapals

The courtyard is surrounded by a threestories arcade along the outer wall (Fig.8). Originally, there used to be bridges connecting these galleries to the central temple structure. With time these bridges have been destroyed. In addition, there are five dedicated shrines along the outer walls honoring Ganesh, Rudra, and the three river goddesses, Gangā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī. The river goddesses panel is located to the left of the main entrance. Gangā is shown sitting on *makara* with lotus petals and leaves behind her, Yamunā on a tortoise with creepers and water plants behind her and Sarasvatī on a full-



Fig. 8. Kailāśa Temple arcade

blown lotus with creepers and birds among the branches and leaves. Several large, sculpted panels of various deities as well as *mithunas* (erotic male and female figures, are scattered along the arcade. Most of the deities to the left of the entrance, i.e., north wall, are Shaivites (followers of Śiva) and to the right of the entrance or south wall are Vaishnavaites (followers of Vișnu).



Fig. 9(a) Ravana shaking Kailāśa

Also, scholars believe that the river goddess panel on the northern cliff face and the yajnashala (sacrificial hall) panel on the southern cliff face, were added by the later Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings. Some examples of these panels are shown in Fig. 9(a) Ravana lifting Kailāśa, the abode of Śiva, and Fig. 9(b) Mahabharata scenes.



Fig. 9 (b) Mahabharata scenes.

The Kailāśa temple itself consists of two structures. Both are two-storey high, but the lower level is solid. It is decorated with elaborate illustrative carvings. The first structure near the entrance is known as Nandi Maṇḍapa and contains Śiva's sacred bull, Nandi (Fig. 10). A maṇḍapa is a pillared hall or pavilion for public rituals.



Fig. 10. Second floor of Nandi Mandapa.

Depending on whether it has walls, a mandapa can be "open" or "closed." Beyond it, towards the center is the main sixteenpillared Śiva temple, 29.4 -m high, Sabhamandapa that leads to the main shrine or Garbhagrha (womb-chamber) housing the lingam (Fig. 11). The Sabhamandapa has porches towards the north, west and south and is surmounted by a vimāna with four talas (layers). The base of the temple has been carved to suggest that elephants are holding the structure aloft (Fig. 8). Sculptured stone bridges connect the Nandi Mandapa to the gopuram as well as the Sabhamandapa. Another bridge connecting the Sabhamandapa to the southern cliff face has since collapsed. The southern lower exterior wall of the Sabhamandapa is carved with detailed sculptures depicting scenes from the Ramayana and the northern exterior wall is carved with scenes from the Mahabharata (Fig.9b). The southern exterior wall on the upper storey depicts the abduction of Sita and the battle of Vali and Sugriva. Originally, the entire structure was coated with a white plaster to make to make it appear covered with snowlike the sacred Mount Kailāśa. Traces of this plaster can be seen even today.

There is an interesting legend about the Kailāśa temple at Ellora and Aurangzeb, the 6th Mughal king of India who destroyed thousands of Hindu temples during his reign. He also tried to destroy Ellora Cave16 Kailāśa temple. He sent thousand men to destroy the temple in 1682 CE. It is believed that they worked for three years but managed to



Fig. 11. sixteen-pillared Sabhamaṇḍapa.

break or disfigure only a few statues and sculptures. Finally, he gave up realizing that it was not possible for him to fulfill his ambition of destroying the contents of cave 16.

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CONT. from page 9

The fundamental ignorance lies in creating and preserving this difference or division between you and divinity, between you and God.

All are Divine. Divinity is everywhere. Feel this by becoming sublime...Words will come to a stop. Thoughts will cease...You will start feeling vastness, silence, peace... Eyes will close by themselves, heartbeat will come down. So much of sublimity you can feel...feel...feel!

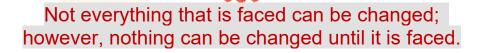
Swamiji's voice became lower and lower, deeper, and deeper, and finally faded into Silence from which has come this world and all the heavenly bodies. With the sun finally being able to pierce the eastern clouds, the whole assembly was bathed in the morning rays, and more so in the engulfing sublimity.

Jai Guru!

"My dear souls, divinity is not to be gained from outside. It must be developed from within. You must become divine." The fundamental ignorance lies in creating and preserving this difference or division between you and divinity, between you and God."

Reference:

From the book Prabhata Rashmih. Vol.- 1



WHY INVADERS MOSTLY WON FIGHTING INDIANS

Deepak Seth, Faridabad India

The views presented in this article are exclusively of the author."

That Indians invariably lost most of the battles with invaders is a fact of history. This has been true from prehistoric times to our recent past. The India China battle of 1962 to some extent fits into this pattern. It will be well to note that this trend is not confined only to Muslim invasions and to view it in this manner will be to miss the larger picture. There were many pre-Islamic invasions as that of Huns and Sakas with similar end results. Foreign invasions go far back in our history-perhaps the Aryans were among the earliest invaders and settlers-but the debate has largely been centered around the Islamic invasions because those invasions were not just physical invasions but had an added dimension of cultural and religious invasion.

defeats constant Our almost in battlefields have been the cause of great pain and embarrassment to Indians who have some sense of their roots and history. From the civilization point of view, India has been a great country which has had more than its share of saints, sages, mathematicians, and other wise men. But they could do nothing to save the country from repeated humiliations at the hands of invaders. And this is what we V.S. Naipaul call our civilization a wounded civilization. Historians have called India the land of easy conquest where time and again much smaller armies of invaders have defeated much larger armies of India. So, what made India the land of easy conquest? Generally, the answer given is

that it was because of Jaichand's - this is traitors within the country as also due to lack of unity among Indians. This is, definitely, one of the reasons, but it cannot be the main reason as there have been traitors in almost all countries and there has been infighting and deceits everywhere, but no country has had such a pitiable record of defending itself against foreign invaders.

I think the main reason of our poor showing on the battlefield is as follows: -

In the centuries gone by-leaving aside the last 3-4 centuries- the only power available in the world was MUSCLE POWER either of the humans or of the animals. Science, Machine power and the technology associated with warfare came only in the last 3-4 hundred years. Since muscle power was the only power going those who had muscle power dominated those who had less of it (It is also because of this reason that males dominated females). Indians for various reasons have been deficient for muscle power. This was true centuries back and is true even today. Our poor performance in the Olympics, high incidence of heart decease and diabetes proves this point. The physically weak Indians could not withstand the onslaught of muscular tribesmen who came from across the Khyber. Later these very tribes embraced Islam.

But why is that Indians are so poor in physical fitness? There could be multiple reasons. Is it in our genes? Perhaps! But then there have been so many waves of



immigration into India so many races settling in this country means that this country has multiple genes. Is it that physically strong races settling in India have their vitality sapped within a few generations? And then a weakened country inviting fresh rounds of invasions. Why it is that people live in India tend to lose vitality and physical fitness. I think it is due to the climate and the way of life.

Climatically India is a warm country & this climate is not conducive to much physical activity which makes for poor physical fitness. It also has a bearing on way of life. From ages the way of life in India has been very different from the way of life of people living in the central Asia and Afghanistan from where invader largely came. Indian subcontinent is very large and had perhaps the largest cultivatable land from the lands then known. Its warm climate enabled at least two crops in a year as against one crop in the cold countries. This offered Indians prosperity and a settled way of life not be found elsewhere in the world. India was called Sane Ki Chiriya not for nothing. This was true both in the Hindu period of our history as also in the Muslim period. There evolved a civilization where culture and art and other things of the mind like religion and philosophy grew. Religions like Buddhism and Jainism evolved with Ahinsa (Non-violence) as its core. Things of the mind like philosophy and music grew further because of the respect they commanded from society there by brain getting more prominence by brawn. Contrast this with conditions in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The climate was harsh. There was no agriculture and survival were a challenge. Fighting was the only way of life in which only the fittest

would survive. This gave rise to a martial culture totally lacking in India. When Bahar invaded India, he easily overcame the much larger army of Ibrahim Lodhi. However, a few generations later the Mughals meekly submitted to Nadir Shah. And a few years later a larger army of Marathas suffered a crushing defeat in the hands of a much smaller army of Ahmed Shah Abdali.

The invasions had a devastating effect on India both physically and emotionally. This aspect has already received and is receiving a lot of attention so there is no need for me to dwell further. However, it cannot be denied that the invaders who decided to settle in India and the steady stream of immigrants coming into India injected into this country a fresh dose of vitality which India would be badly in need of. So while the existing culture was vandalized, brutalized and emasculated, new cultures took root and prospered. This is true of whether it was the Aryan invasion of 4000 years ago or the British coming to India 400 years ago. Some people have put forward the theory that the Aryans were original inhabitants of India, and it is from here they spread to different parts of the world. To my mind this theory is laughable. Any original inhabitant of India could never have had the vitality to travel thousands of miles, overcome and overwhelm the locals and settle there. As wherever they went those areas could not have been without any local human population and to settle there, they would have had to fight it out which appears to be beyond the physical capabilities of any race originating in India.



IS INDIA DOOMED TO REMAIN AT THE RECEIVING END OF THE INVADERS

The answer is a big no. Historians have divided Indian history in three parts-Hindu period, Muslim period, and the British period. I would like to divide the Indian history or rather the world history in two parts- The Age of Brawn and The Age of Brain. As I have already written that the people living in India for various reasons were always deficient in muscle power and since in the age of Brawn that was the only power available, they were at a great disadvantage. The result was their domination and exploitation by outsiders who were superior in muscle power.

The Renaissance in Europe was a period which produced many thinkers who produced a flood of new ideas in physical sciences and social sciences. This ushered in the age of brain power. Science gave rise to technology which in turn brought the industrial revolution.

This hugely impacted the techniques of warfare. Brain was now giving a tough competition to brawn in the battlefield. Brawn was losing its pre-eminence if not its relevance. This works to India's advantage as it is endowed with immense brain power. Here one can give the example of Israel. The Jews were never known for their martial qualities, but they made great scientists, artists, doctors and managers. Soldiering was never their profession. And yet Israel has been able to maintain themselves in the hostile surroundings in the middle east.

India must learn the right lessons from history. It must realize that what we have gone through in the past we never have to go through again. Our old handicap is becoming less and less relevant and we must build up on science and technology. However, the importance of a sound body cannot be overstated. A few years back there was news report that a village not very far from for Delhi had more than 60% of its population infected with TB. This is worrying as areas such as these provide recruits for our defense forces.

We should give due priority to our defense preparedness. Our defense apparatus needs cutting edge technology which this nation can easily develop. And finally, today's wars are also a matter of good management both in times of peace and in times of war. This is again where we must hone our skills as traditionally, we have been lacking in skills of war management.

About the Author: Deepak Seth is an Electrical Engineer by profession but also a very passionate reader of wide range of subjects particularly relating to Indian civilization and history.

There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point. The world is ready to give up its secrets. If we only know how to knock, how to give it the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration!

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THE UGLY TREE

A long time ago, there were thousands of tall and beautiful trees in a dense forest. They were happy and stood tall and proud. Among them, there was also an ugly tree whose branches were badly twisted, and its roots had uneven curves. All the trees made fun of that tree.

How are you, hunchback?' the other trees always shouted, and their laughter made the tree feel sad. However, it never raised a voice against them. The ugly tree thought, 'I wish I were as beautiful as the other trees. Why did God do this to me? Neither can I provide shade to the travelers, nor can the birds make their nests on me. Nobody needs me.'

One day, a woodcutter came to the forest. He took a look at the trees and said, 'These trees are lovely, and I must cut them.' As soon as he picked up his axe, the trees became frightened.

'Chop, Chop, Chop', and the trees started to fall one by one. 'None of us is going to be spared', screamed one of the beautiful trees. Soon, the woodcutter's axe brought that tree to the ground.

By now, the woodcutter had come near the ugly tree. He had just raised his axe when suddenly he noticed how crooked the tree was. 'Hmm! This crooked tree seems to be useless to me. I cannot make long straight logs of this ugly tree', he thought. And he moved towards another beautiful tree. The ugly tree heaved a huge sigh of relief. The tree realized that by making it unattractive, God had actually given it a boon.

From that day, the tree never complained. It was happy with his crooked branches. It never forgot how it was spared from the woodcutter's axe, only because it was crooked.

'The Ugly Tree' is a well-known kids' story that teaches us that everything has its own advantages and disadvantages. In this story, the tree didn't have a good appearance and was very sad about it, but its appearance, which it hated so much, ended up saving its life in the end. The woodcutter cut down the other trees and spared the ugly tree as he thought that it would be of no use to him.

Moral of the story:

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We should never blame God for our troubles as there is always a reason behind his actions. Parents should teach their children to embrace whatever they have wholeheartedly. **God** does everything for a reason. When the crooked tree faced a difficult situation and was saved because of its appearance, it understood that God had helped it by making it look that way. After that day, the tree never hated its crooked branches and hunched trunk and started loving itself.

HOW MANY CROWS?

Akbar was a great Emperor of Mughal era during the late 17th century and Birbal was his wisest and witty minister.

One day, Akbar was taking a long walk in his garden with Birbal, as he looked towards the sky, he observed that many crows were flying around. He cooked up a question in his mind to test the wisdom of Birbal.

He said to Birbal, "for a long time I have been thinking of getting to know the count of all the various animals in my kingdom." To start with I want you to tell me how many crows there are in my kingdom?" Birbal started thinking about the number and after a moment Birbal started laughing.

Akbar enquired, Birbal why are you laughing., I am the king and want to keep track of everything happening in my kingdom.

Birbal said, Hazoor (Sir) I was laughing because as I was computing the crows, I realized that there are some baby crows must have just hatched. However, the exact number of all crows, per our last count, in your kingdom are ninety-five thousand, four hundred and sixty-three crows."

How are you so sure that your computation is correct," the King asked.

(From Akbar - Birbal stories)

Birbal replied, Sir, you can get them counted.

The emperor said, "If there are less than or more than the number you quoted then you would be fined two thousand Muhars (round gold coins).,

Birbal replied immediately, Hazoor, "I agree with your punishment, but if I am correct then what would be my reward?

Birbal continued, Hazoor, let me add here that if you get the crows counted and the count is more than the number I mentioned, in that case you also must take into account of all those crows who have come to your kingdom from the neighboring area to visit their relatives.

"After a long pause, Akbar started speaking again and said, if there are less crows than the number you quoted, you will still be punished."

Birbal immediately quipped, in that case you will have to get the count of all those crows who have gone to the neighboring kingdoms on vacation. Hazoor, my count is correct.

Akbar was very pleased with all the answers that Birbal gave. After reaching the palace Akbar awarded Birbal for his wisdom and for his witty answers.

Moral: Even if the question is silly, you can manage the situation by thinking on your feet and giving a witty answer.



HINDU CALENDAR 2024 (VIKRAM SAMVAT 2080-81)

		irch - 2024 un – Chaitra)			il - 2024 a – Vaisakh)			ay - 2024 akh – Jyeshth)
06	WED	Vijaya Ekadashi	04	THU	PapMochani Ekadashi	04	SAT	Varuthini Ekadashi
07	THU	Pradosh	06	SAT	Pradosh	05	SUN	Pradosh
08	FRI	Maha Shivaratri	08	MON	Amavasya	07	TUE	Amavasya
09	SAT	Amavasya	09	TUE	SAMVAT 2081	14	TUE	Vrishabha Sankranti
14	THU	Meena Sankranti			BEGINS	18	SAT	Mohini Ekadashi
20	WED	Amalaki Ekadashi	09	TUE	Gudi Padwa,	20	MON	Pradosh
22	FRI	Pradosh			Navratri Begins	23	THU	Purnima –
24	SUN	Purnima Holika Dahan	13	THU	Baisakhi, Sankranti			Buddha Jayanti
25	MON	HOLI	16	TUE	Navratri Ends			
20	WON		19	FRI	Kamada Ekadashi			122 1
	-		20	SAT	Pradosh			AL SAL
			21	SUN	Mahavir Jayanti			Carlos -
	्रि वर्मी प्र	रक्षति रहिला	23	TUE	Purnima , Hanuman Jayanti			धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः



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Address Correction Requested

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