

# Uttishthata Groupzine

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## Human Excellence

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata ।

Arise, awake, and learn by approaching the excellent ones.

*Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached.*

- Swami Vivekananda

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ॥

Let noble thoughts reach us from every direction - RigVed

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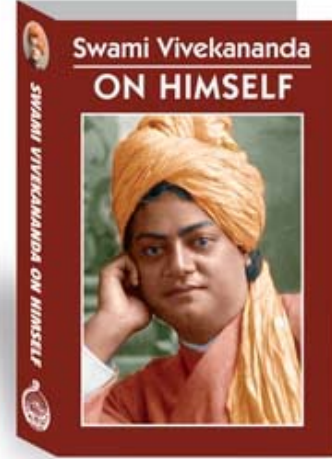
Volume # 1  
Issue # 6

Monthly e-Newsletter of Uttishthata Yahoo! Group  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/uttishthata>

December 2006

## BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

FOR THE SALVATION of his own soul, and for the good and happiness of the many, the Sannyasin is born in the world. To sacrifice his life for others, to alleviate the misery of millions rending the air with their cries, to wipe away the tears from the eyes of the widow, to console the heart of the bereaved mother, to provide the ignorant and depressed masses with the ways and means for the struggle for existence, and enable them to stand on their own feet, to preach broadcast the teachings of the Shastras to one and all without distinction for their material and spiritual welfare, to rouse the sleeping lion of Brahman in the hearts of all beings by the diffusion of the light of knowledge—for this the Sannyasin is born in the world!... it is for the consummation of this purpose in life that we have taken birth, and we shall lay down our lives for it.



My father and mother fasted and prayed, for years and years, so that I would be born. I know that before I was born, my mother would fast and pray and do hundreds of things which I could not even do for five minutes. She did that for two years. I believe that whatever religious culture I have, I owe to that. It was consciously that my mother brought me into the world to be what I am. Whatever good impulse I have was given to me by my mother—and consciously, not unconsciously.

The love which my mother gave to me has made me what I am, and I owe a debt to her that I can never repay. How many times I have seen my mother going to take her first meal when it was two o'clock. We took ours at ten and she at two because she had so many things to attend to. [For example], someone knocks at the door and says, "Guest," and there is no food except what was for my mother. She would give that to him willingly and then wait for her own. That was her life and she liked it. And that is why we worship mothers as gods.

I have such a memory. When I was only two years old, I used to play with my syce at being a Vairagi, clothed in ashes and Kaupina. And if a Sadhu came to beg, they would lock me in upstairs to prevent my giving too much away. I felt that I also was this, and that for some mischief I had had to be sent away from Shiva. No doubt my family increased this feeling, for when I was naughty they would say "Dear, dear! So many austerities, yet Shiva sent us this demon after all, instead of a good soul!" Or when I was very rebellious they would empty a can of water over me, saying "Shiva! Shiva!" And then I was all right, always. Even now, when I feel mischievous, that word keeps me straight. [from: Swami Vivekananda on Himself]

## Desires and Problems of Life

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

In the first place, this question itself seldom rises in our minds. We suffer endlessly and yet do not ask ourselves why we suffer. We fail in many undertakings and yet rarely seek to know the cause of failure. We commit many mistakes but rarely pause to consider their root cause. Questioning is a form of awakening. You can change or rouse the consciousness of a person by putting the right question to him....

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

One reason is that we are afraid of the responsibilities we would have to shoulder if we found the real answers. A second reason is that we already know too many false answers. We find or invent cheaper alternatives that enable us to escape from our troubles for the time being.... Another reason is that we hope that tomorrow our problems would be solved. We blame the world for all our sufferings and failures, and hope that the world would change tomorrow and then all would be well with us....

One of the most basic laws of the science of economics is that wants are unlimited but means are limited. In a general way this law applies in all fields including spiritual life.

If we examine our own lives, we find that the greatest cause of sorrow is this: we take up something, and put our whole energy on it -- perhaps it is a failure and yet we cannot give it up. We know that it is hurting us, that any further clinging to it is simply bringing misery on us; still, we cannot tear ourselves away from it. The bee came to sip the honey, but its feet stuck to the honey-pot and it could not get away. Again and again, we are finding ourselves in that state. That is the whole secret of existence. Why are we here? We came here to sip the honey, and we find our hands and feet sticking to it. We are caught, though we came to catch. We came to enjoy; we are being enjoyed. We came to rule; we are being ruled. We came to work; we are being worked. All the time, we find that. And this comes into every detail of our life. We are being worked upon by other minds, and we are always struggling to work on other minds. We want to enjoy the pleasures of life; and they eat into our vitals. We want to get everything from nature, but we find in the long run that nature takes everything from us -- depletes us, and casts us aside.

That is the one cause of misery: we are attached, we are being caught. Therefore says the Gita: Work constantly; work, but be not attached; be not caught. Reserve unto yourself the power of detaching yourself from everything, however beloved, however much the soul might yearn for it, however great the pangs of misery you feel if you were going to leave it; still, reserve the power of leaving it whenever you want. The weak have no place here, in this life or in any other life. Weakness leads to slavery. Weakness leads to all kinds of misery, physical and mental. Weakness is death. There are hundreds of thousands of microbes surrounding us, but they cannot harm us unless we become weak, until the body is ready and predisposed to receive them. There may be a million microbes of misery, floating about us. Never mind! They dare not approach us, they have no power to get a hold on us, until the mind is weakened. This is the great fact: strength is life, weakness is death. Strength is felicity, life eternal, immortal; weakness is constant strain and misery: weakness is death. [CW of SV, Vol. 2, Page 2, WORK AND ITS SECRET]

## Human Excellence

- A Lecture by Swami Ranganathananda, continued...

When I told all this to Choudary, he was listening. I did all the talking, the second half was my time. First half was his talking. He was very happy. Again he asked, "Do you mean to say I get a philosophy from this book for my work here?" I said, "Yes, this is taught by a great Kshatriya to another Kshatriya. He wants Arjuna to be awakened. **"Tasmat Twam Uttishtha Yasholabhaswa Jitwa Shatroon Bhunkshwa Rajyam Samridhdham** – In the eleventh chapter after showing his 'Vishwa Roopa' to Arjuna, this is Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna and to all of you and me. **Tasmat** – therefore, **Uttishtha** – Stand up Arjuna, don't be lazy; don't be sleepy, stand up! There is a big work for you to do. **Yasholabhaswa** - there is a glory for man, acquire that glory. That glory is not there in us as human beings. When three hundred million people are poor and backward, many are illiterate, many are suffering all sorts of privation – can we say India is peopled by men and women? Not at all, we are not men! Let me quote the French author Victor Hugo, he said, - 'We are not men, we are only candidates to humanity.' People in India today are candidates to humanity. We have to achieve that humanithy, that manliness, that excellence of human life. Krishna is saying that, - if people are starving, animals are starving, what does it show? India is not peopled by human beings! Not men and women! 1/4<sup>th</sup> men and women, fractional men and women.

We have not achieved that highest human excellence. If that comes, these all will be wiped away. Not a single animal will be hungry in this country, not a dog will go hungry in my country – that is Swami Vivekananda's way of putting that great message of Krishna given in the fourth chapter, given in the modern period.

Choudary was very happy. Then I asked him, "Have you read Swami Vivekananda's books?" - "Yes some small book of sayings I have read." – "Oh! That is only a 'Chutni', main books you must read", I said. "I am going to Delhi tomorrow, to take charge of Delhi Ashrama. I will send you a book of Swamiji, provided you promise you will read". I don't want to waste a book. He promised, "I shall read". Then I took leave. He was all kindness, all that coldness which we had at the beginning all vanished. Very warm relationship came. He took me to the car, put me in the car. Then I took leave, I went to Delhi. I sent him the book – 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora'. Vivekananda's famous lectures which has created modern India, the modern conscience in India, which has turned out batches of patriots who fought for freedom. That is the nature of that book – 'Lectures from Colombo to Almora' – five of the most brilliant lectures were delivered in Madras. Man-making, nation-building, hard-work, wiping the tears from the eyes of people – all that constitute human excellence you find Swamiji conveys through that great book, a book along with other books like letters. Romaine Rolland describes in a wonderful sentence in his "Life of Vivekananda", - Vivekananda's words are great music. They are like Beethoven's symphonies, they are like the stirring rhythms of the march of handle caresses. I can not touch these utterances of Vivekananda, separated from me in books of 30 years distance without getting a thrill through my body as of an electric shock. And what shocks and transports must have been produced, when they issued from the lips of the living hero – that is the wonderful sentence.

So this country will be completely transformed when it gets education in human excellence as conveyed in the Gita in the past, in the great literature of Vivekananda in our time. That is a great work that demands our immediate attention. To be remaining as undeveloped nation, is a shame to all of us! Because we have plenty of grains, plenty of

natural resources. Only we don't have that human excellence in work and in human relations.

A human relation is a big field of activity. To respect the other individual, that constable respecting that simple humble person. All over India today we can see – whether it is a power of constable or the power of the officer above – they all function to protect the rich and the top. The poor has no friend anywhere. Universal it is. That shows our slavish mentality. The salves are always cow to the people at the top and they suppress people below. When we cease to be slaves, when we become truly free, we develop the highest excellence. Then we shall become the friend of the poor, the strength of the weak. Today we are not, we are not the strength of the weak. The poor and the weak have to go to the wall. The rich and the powerful, they have been every thing. What a tremendous human transformation has to come, before we can become a free people living in a free nation!

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### Greed Ruins a Man

- A Story from Mahabharata

Srinjaya was a greedy king. He had only a daughter but no son. He felt about it badly. He enquired of the Brahmins, "Oh Brahmins! I want a son. Tell me the way." At that time the sage Narada happened to visit him. The Brahmins told the king, if he worships the sage Narada his wish will be fulfilled.

The King received Narada with great honour. He worshipped him and prayed for a son. The sage asked the King, "oh King! What sort of a son do you desire?" The King replied, "I want a son who will be beautiful, healthy and intelligent. Besides pearls should fall from his eyes and mouth whenever he cries or speaks." The Sage Narada blessed him saying that such a son will be born to him soon.

In due course, by the blessings of the sage Narada, a son was born to the King. Moreover according to the wishes of the King, pearls fell from his mouth and eyes whenever he cried. Soon the palace was filled with pearls. Even the doors, and the walls of the palace were inlaid with pearls, the story of this miracle-child spread like wild fire.

A gang of robbers in the forest came to know of this and decided to kidnap the child. They entered the palace at night and stealthily carried away the child. Later the attendants of the child came to know of the absence of the child which passed on to the King who ordered a massive search for the child.

The king's command reached the robbers who collectively decided future course of action. By that time, the robbers, who had collected enough pearls, thought that it will be wise of them to release the child since they have collected enough pearls. But one of them thought that if they cut the child to pieces they will get pearls from every drop of his blood. Accordingly they cut the child to pieces but no pearls came from dropping of his blood. They then realized that their greed has ruined them.

By then, the soldiers surrounded them, bound them and brought them to the king. The king came to know about the tragic end of the child. The king at last realized, "My greed has ruined me".

First gain God, and then gain wealth; but do not try to do the contrary. If, after acquiring spirituality, you lead a worldly life, you will never lose your peace of mind. – Sri Ramakrishna
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## Glory of the Gita – Bhagawad Gita for Executives

Translation and Exposition by Dr. Manohar Abhay

### State of Infatuation

O Madhusudan, I do not wish to kill them, even if they kill me or even if I get sovereignty of the three worlds, in exchange of this earth. (1-35)

Lesson: Infatuation makes a man inactive and self-defeatist.

### Indiscrete

O Janardan, what happiness we shall derive by killing the sons of Dhritrastra? Sin alone will be afflicted by slaying these felons (1-36)

Lesson: Indiscrete persons cannot differentiate between good and bad.

### Happy Family Life

Therefore, O Madhusudan, it is not proper for us to kill our own cousins, the sons of Dhritrastra and our own relatives. How can we be happy by killing our own persons/kins? (1-37)

Lesson: Pleasures of family life can be enjoyed by living with the family members.

### Man of Wisdom

Though they are blinded by greed and do not see evil in ruining the family or do not feel (find) any sin in being treacherous to friends. Why we, who see evil in the destruction of the family, think to turn away from this sin, O Janardana! (1: 38-39)

Man of wisdom preconceives the impact/effect of his act. He, by all means, tries to save his family from evils and destruction.

### Family Dharma

The Dharma (moral conducts and family traditions/rites) is destroyed with the destruction of the family. And Adharma (immorality) prevails in the entire family when its Dharma is destroyed. (1-40)

Lesson: The family Dharma (family's traditions, its moral and ethical values and its rites) is destroyed/damaged with the destruction due to calamities like war.

### Immorality

And when Adharma prevails, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupted (spoiled) and women being corrupted, O Varshineya (Descendent of vrsnis clan) dissolute progeny (mixed- breed) is born. (1-41)

Lesson: Dissolute progeny is born in a religiously degrade family

### Dissolute Progeny

The dissolute progeny supports the slayers of the family and leads the family to hell. The spirits of the ancestors of such degraded families fall down (in to hell) as the offerings of pinda (rice ball) and water are stopped (children of such families stop offering pindas). (1-42)

Lesson: Dissolute progeny brings agony to generations, both the ancestors and the present one.

## Why do we suffer?

- Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

We suffer as a result of our own actions; it is unfair to blame anybody for it. We have to surrender ourselves completely to the Lord with faith and devotion in Him, serve others to the best of our capacity, and never be a source of sorrow to anybody.

No one can suffer for all time. No one will spend all his days on this earth in suffering. Every action brings its own result, and one gets one's opportunities accordingly.

Each has to get the results of the actions he earned for this life. A pin at least must prick where a wound from a sword was due.

Such is life, here today, gone tomorrow! Nothing goes with one, except one's merit and demerit; good and evil deeds follow one even after death.

One suffers as a result of one's own actions. So, instead of blaming others for such sufferings, one should pray to the Lord and depending entirely on His grace, try to bear them patiently and with forbearance under all circumstances.

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## Swamiji's wit and humour

In the Gospel of Ramakrishna written by M, there are instances where Narendra (as he was called at that time)..mimics Sri Ramakrishna's going into Samadhi and his asking for water every time to come back from that state (of course, it was innocent humour without any malice)

Once, when Swamiji was in London, after a lecture, he announced a question period. A man who happened to be a native of SCOTLAND, asked, "What is the difference between a BABOO (a word used in northern India at the end of a man's first name as a sign of respect) and a BABOON?" He wanted to make fun of Swamiji. Swamiji then instantaneously replied, "Oh not much. It is like the difference between a SOT (a chronic drinker and FOOL) and a SCOT - just the difference of a letter". The man departed silently after Swamiji's answer.

Swamiji was making fun of that man's brazen foolishness!

Once he was travelling in a train, seeing his appearance two English men commented heavily on him, he sat as if he does not know English. One of them commented, he looks like donkey, another commented he looks like monkey. In the mean time a station came and Swamiji spoke to a vendor in that station in English. The two got annoyed and asked him whether he know English. Swamiji replied yes. They asked him why he was not bothered when they commented him as donkey and monkey. Swamiji replied "because I am sitting in between the two".

Swamiji loved to tell the story of a Christian missionary who was sent to preach to the cannibals (People who eat the flesh of other humans). The new arrival proceeded to the chief of the tribe and asked him, "Well, how did you like my predecessor?" The cannibal replied, smacking his lips, "SIMPLY DE-LI-CIOUS".

When Vivekananda's western women devotees came to Belur math, he would send Swami Subodhananda (Khoka Maharaj) to look after them and supply their needs. Once Subodhananda said to Swamiji: "Please excuse me. I can neither speak English properly nor can I understand their language." Swamiji said: "You will not have to worry about that. **When they tell u 'Thank you,' you say to them, 'I don't care.'"** However when Subodhananda followed Swamiji's instruction, the women devotees were puzzled. They laughed when they discovered that it was Swamiji's mischief. (*from the book "God lived with Them"*)

One day there was a festival at the house of a devotee called Adhar. Sri Ramakrishna went there with disciples, M and Hazra. There was a kirtan during which Swamiji sang. After the kirtan was over, Sri Ramakrishna said, smiling: 'Hazra danced'  
Swamiji: 'A little'  
Sri Ramakrishna: 'A little?'  
Swamiji: 'Yes. His belly danced too'

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## Swami Vivekananda and his compassion

Swami Vivekananda was staying in the Math. Some Santhal labourers used to work in the Math. They were poor, uneducated and simple. Swamiji had great sympathy, bordering on love, for these labourers, who, despite honest and hard labor, could not feed their family adequately. The compassionate heart of Swami Vivekananda would grieve and melt for these poor fellows. He would inquire about their family, say simple jokes, and mix with these 'lowly fellows'. The spiritual personality of Swamiji would see suffering Narayana in them. His heart would get filled with unparalleled pity, compassion, and kindness towards these Santhal workers.

Like Gopis of Vraja, who would protest to Krishna not to play the sweet music on his flute, for it attracted them to Him and His Raas-Lila with such great intensity that they used to forget their homes and husbands, these workers would also protest: "O my Swamiji, do not come to us when we are working, for while talking to you our work stops and the supervising swami rebukes us afterwards." With such intensity of love, Swami Vivekananda would attract these poor labourers.

One day Swamiji had a desire to feed these workers. Accordingly, he made arrangements for their lunch. At his orders, bread, curry, sweets, curds, etc., were arranged for the Santhals. Sitting before the Swami, all of them relished the sumptuous food. One Keshta said: "O Swami, whence have you got such a thing! We never tasted anything like this." Feeding them to their heart's content, Swami Vivekananda said, "You are Narayana, God manifest; today I have offered food to Narayana." [Year 1902, Place: Belur Math]

After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth - God is present in every jiva; there is no other God besides that. 'Who serves jiva, serves God indeed.'

Cut out the word help from your mind. You cannot help; it is blasphemy! You worship. When you give a morsel of food to a dog, you worship the dog as God. He is all, and is in all.

## Difficulty of Preaching



"It is extremely difficult to teach others. A man can teach only if God reveals Himself to him and gives the command. Narada, Sukadeva, and sages like them had such a command from God, and Sankara had it too. Unless you have a command from God, who will listen to your words?

"God does reveal Himself to man and speak. Only then may one receive His command. How forceful are the words of such a teacher! They can move mountains. But mere lectures? People will listen to them for a few days and then forget them. They will never act upon mere words.

"At Kamarpukur there is a small lake called the Haldarpukur. Certain people used to defile its banks every day. Others who came there in the morning to bathe would abuse the offenders loudly. But next morning they would find the same thing. The nuisance didn't stop. (All laugh.) The villagers finally informed the authorities about it. A constable was sent, who put up a notice on the bank which read: 'Commit no nuisance.' This stopped the miscreants at once. (All laugh.)

"To teach others, one must have a badge of authority; otherwise teaching becomes a mockery. A man who is himself ignorant starts out to teach others-like the blind leading the blind! Instead of doing good, such teaching does harm. After the realization of God one obtains an inner vision. Only then can one diagnose a person's spiritual malady and give instruction.

"Without the commission from God, a man becomes vain. He says to himself, 'I am teaching people.' This vanity comes from ignorance, for only an ignorant person feels that he is the doer. A man verily becomes liberated in life if he feels: 'God is the Doer. He alone is doing everything. I am doing nothing.' Man's sufferings and worries spring only from his persistent thought that He is the doer. [Picture courtesy: Bharat Churiwala]