

# LOOK WITHIN



PREMA PANDURANG

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# CONTENTS

Commendable Elevation	1
Sit Still	6
Solitude & Loneliness	9
Stay Connected	14
The Momentous Moment	20
The Three Phases	25
How Do I Spend The Day?	31

## *Commendable Elevation*

Almost all of us are tense when we are selfish; when we are worried about our own well-being - 'me & mine' formula makes us tense. Full of stress, we are unable to see the world ourselves, and the situation, everything from an objective angle.

Let us, besides physical exercise, which is recommended by doctors as a must, put into practice a mental exercise too. Let us for a change think how a particular situation would affect someone else. Let us rise above 'me & mine' and replace it by 'you and yours'. We will see a new angle, a new perspective. We will go out of the way to help someone. A caring thought, a helping hand, a loving word, a compassionate touch, a concerned look, a tear of forgiveness, a smile of affection,

a selfless prayer, all these are the gifts of this commendable elevation of our minds. In that moment we have forgotten our problem - or else every minute we create a problem - we find we are addicted to problems and cannot live without them ! When our problem is forgotten, the Lord unleashes great pain within us. It is the obsession with the problem, which stifles our talent and stunts our growth. When these new pains are discovered within us, we become giants of compassion - go out to help the needy. Such moments should repeat themselves, our powers will multiply and we will in turn find supreme satisfaction in life - or else a rigmarole of events, a monotony of actions leaves us restless and insipid.

Rise and enjoy this commendable elevation!

My friend, my reader, make life lively. That is when we experience this commendable elevation of the mind - in this state we forget and forgive, we want to give rather than get, we see the good points in others rather than defects, we put more faith in the Maker than in ourselves, we have dissolved our ego and acknowledged His power, we become instruments in that moment of commendable elevation of the mind.

These moments if practised with care and effort will relieve us of physical agony, mental strain, emotional frenzy and spiritual distress. These are moments when humans turn angels and the world floats as paradise. These are moments of bliss and carefree existence. If we practise this state of mind every day consciously we will find ourselves in an exalted position, with no

mean desires and narrow outlook. These moments will make life worthwhile and existence meaningful. These moments will contribute to longevity and good health. The unselfish moments are golden moments of our life. They speak volumes of love and that is our basic nature. Love is natural, hatred unnatural; kindness is natural, enmity unnatural; forgiveness natural, revenge is unnatural. When we are natural, we are strong, when otherwise we become weak. Moments of commendable elevation of mind are moments of meaningful action and compassionate action. Hence these are supremely satisfying moments. Any action when performed giving us satisfaction is wholesome. Those acts by which we feel guilty, become of those we regret and repentance those acts are ugly acts. They drain our positive energy and drain our life's

meaningfulness. To be healthy, happy and longlived, let us take to these moments of commendable elevation of the mind - these make pigmies into giants, the plain faces beautiful, the nondescript into celebrities, the dull ones active, the mundane ones ethereal.



## *Sit Still*

Sit still, Oh my dear reader, these words are not addressed to you! I asked my mind - sit still! But how and when it asked me instead. I realized when the mind is worried about a secular future it is restless, when it is bogged down by emotional problems it is unsteady, when the moods of a bad boss distress you it is insecure, when the callousness of a beloved hurts, it is depressed, when the indifference or defiance of one's offspring confronts us it is diffident - but when the thought of God enters one's mind, it is Still - Still like the deep waters of a large ocean, our smiles spread all over our face, our hair stands on end, our eyes glisten, our skin glows one can almost hear one's heartbeat-when the mind is still-the body is energized, the mind

is purified, the heart is stabilized and the soul is rarefied.

Sit still at least for a few moments everyday practice it daily - one comes closest to one's Maker in these moments - who is still, calm, steady, sober, serene, tranquil and complete by Himself.

When we are not connected to Him, we are restless, tense, sad and depressed. When we are still we are connected; rather when we are connected, we are still. This stillness helps us to grow, to our better selves, it makes for clarity of thought and purity of mind. Stillness is not dullness, it is wholesomeness. It is a powerful state of the mind which has conquered prejudices, which has overcome ego, overpowered weaknesses, empowering itself with the breath of Grace. It speaks yet speaks only

about the Lord, it listens but only to His glory, it acts but never for itself, it strives for nothing but to belong and merge with the supreme stillness called God.

Sit still is the password for stillness.

## *Solitude & Loneliness*

I sit alone in my room - before I go to bed.

For a while I felt lonely? What is loneliness? Or shall I change my perspective and call it solitude? What is solitude?

The former is negative; the latter is a positive attitude. The thought of loneliness is like going down a dark tunnel of the past and groping one's way in misery.

The perspective of solitude is a healthy attitude like a brave ascent to the mountain peak.

Most of us suffer from a phobia of being alone - but think - is not one really alone - in our mother's maternity ward, we arrived alone after a long lonely habitation in her dark & stuffy womb!

When we go to bed even if the most loving companion lies next to us, when that person sleeps, we feel alone!

When we appear for a job interview, we are alone! Even when we are in a train or a flight, our thoughts keep us 'alone' - thinking of our destination.

When we lie on the operation table ready for anaesthesia, we are totally alone!

When we face a serious problem - domestic or official, we are alone! Ultimately when we lie on our deathbed, waiting for the Master's call, we are alone! Our last journey is a lonely journey - when we are left burning in the crematorium or buried in a cemetery we are alone!

That is one way of looking at life! That is the loneliness syndrome.

Here is another position - strength giving, vivifying perspective - look at the moments of solitude.

In solitude you are alone but not lonely. In loneliness you are unnerved, in solitude you are strong, in the former you feel desolate, in the latter you are brave, in the former you are dead inside, in the latter you brim with life. In the former you dread your own self, in the latter you discover your noble self, in the former you feel all have left you; in the latter you begin to feel the Divine Presence of your eternal Father.

Solitude is a prerequisite to sadhana - self development scheme. It is a process and not an achievement. It helps you to adapt or adopt a path taking you to emancipation. Solitude is soothing, loneliness is scary. The latter is found everywhere; the former is the privilege of a chosen few.

Those who suffer loneliness count their seconds in gross time. Those who enjoy privileged moments of solitude spend their hours in blissful soul time.

Everyone who is reflective needs to be left alone for a while - to enable him to stand on the banks of life and watch the stream with impassioned detachment - to discover immortal longings amidst mortality, noble thoughts amidst mean surroundings, delectable humility amidst stifling pride, and desirable charity amidst abominable selfishness. Loneliness suffocates, solitude emancipates. To be bound is to be lonely. To be free is to enjoy solitude.

In loneliness one blames others and curses destiny - finds all blind alleys and dead ends. In solitude one gains confidence

in oneself and intuition inspired by grace helps him discover new paths and fresh vistas.

In loneliness one sees no positive signs at all - notices only minus points in one's life. In solitude, one rediscovers oneself, counting one's blessings and proceeds on the path of progress with poise and confidence.

Loneliness can destroy in a minute; solitude can regale spirits in a moment.



## *Stay Connected*

The mobile people advertise - "Stay Connected" Aye, it rings a bell- it means more than what it says. We are where we belong. We belong to the Supreme which is always there. It is we who have disconnected ourselves from that power - call it what you will.

There is so much widespread depression everywhere. Diseases are on the increase. Despair is rampant. Disability is the curse on many. One wonders from where all this began. Go back to the title "Stay Connected".

All disconnection leads to depression. Disconnection leads to disability, to devastation, to despair. Disconnection is losing one's real identity and hence leads to the state of a nondescript nonentity.

Disconnection is the bane of the "Doubting Thomas", those who doubt will be destroyed (Gita) "Samshayatma Vinashyati"

Stay Connected - know where you really come from, where you belong. You can command the sun to set, the moon to rise, the clouds to shower, the buds to bloom, the seed to sprout, the winds to blow, the storms to calm, the dead to rise, the deserts to bloom, the rivers to flow, the sick to be healed, the good to be shielded, the wicked to be struck dead! You are the microcosm and you come from the macrocosm.

Stay Connected - that is the burthen (pallavi) of life's song. In this you discover your strength - no-HIS strength - you awaken the giant - you discover your inner potential- you are not timid, you are not weak - you are strong - strong as a mountain - awake, arise and show the world

- who you really are - in this process you discover your power is HIS power and that power is infinite. Through this discovery you realize how shortsighted you were that you knocked at weak men's doors and found no positive offer of strength or power. You realised that your power comes from staying connected with HIS power.

But, oh dear writer, says my woe-begone brother - the world seems so insipid, so devoid of love, no one belongs to me, I to no one - what do I do then? Pray - stay connected and in this you will meet those who are connected - the salt of the earth, the selected few, the elected few, the blessed few, the good souls - yes God-reminding souls who only repeat to themselves and to you - Stay connected.

Good company is God-reminding company. If one stays connected with the

Supreme, one will discover good company. Those who believe will begin to flock towards you. You will discover you are not alone. But do not fret or fume. For a while, a void will seem to surround you. You may even feel like giving up your former faith - but you will discover that faith has become a part of your system - inseparable, integral.

Moments are passing by. Moment after moment - are we gaining them or losing them? How many inconsequential things we spend time on! How many irrelevant matters we talk and kill time? How many ounces of precious energy we spend on unethical activities and unnecessary occupations? How many imaginary bridges we cross and worry about several problems when the Master solution called God is so close to us!

He is the One we live for, live by, live in,

live on, live beneath, live towards. He is our sole succour, support, solace and substance. Let us not regret for the past that is spent, let us contemplate on the future left for us- in His hands. Let it be useful, humble, ethical, selfless, spiritual and God dedicated.

No time to waste! No time to wander - go straight towards God - do not meander, do not saunter, do not wobble, do not swagger- take strides, leaping towards the goal for which you were born. Let the flesh not rule, let the mind not misrule, let the intellect not misguide, let the heart lead by the soul discover the innate presence of the Supreme, the Lord of Brindavan, Sri Krishna. Quantitative time is lost; make up for it with quality time-fill days with charged hours, hours with charged minutes, minutes with charged seconds, seconds with charged moments!

In the kingdom of God, it is never late. Today is the day, this is the hour, here is the decision for change and remember- He is the cause to change.

Wake up the Lord! He is always awake! Ask Him to wake up the dormant soul which has been slumbering for ages. Wake up the soul to ultimate reality or else it will be slumbering for ages to come - and salvation will become a tall order!

Sit still, sit alone, without a flutter of the eyelash or the tremour of the eye lid, or the twitch of a muscle- sit still and drown yourself in the ocean of His mercy.

Meditation is not a process- it is a condition of the mind-and you mind the mind to make it grow from depression to hope, from fearfulness to fearlessness, from darkness to light, from loneliness to the divine presence of the Lord.

## *The Momentous Moment*

For a while, one is lost in thoughts - deep thoughts, sudden thoughts, momentous thoughts. All of a sudden - the moment comes to one's mind. How important the moment is - In one moment one finds daylight break in and darkness disappears when the sun appears. Similarly in one moment the sun sets and the night steps in. In one moment one falls in love and commits to one's partner for a life time. One moment brings one close to one's spouse, the holy mangala sutra (thread) or the wedding ring are offered in one moment. And yet strange in one moment, the divorce court announces the marriage is annulled! In one moment of tempestuous joy the couple come together and in one moment, the offspring is conceived. When

the anxious mother waits with the swelling womb, in one moment the babe is delivered. Strange but true, as relatives are watching in one moment life comes to a stand still at the death bed and the soul has left its erstwhile home - the body forever. In one moment the result of the examination is declared, the student has passed or failed, one moment decides whether the candidate has been rejected or selected. Moments are momentous. They seem insignificant to the peripheral perspective! Yet they are decisive moments. One moment saves the dying patient on the surgeon's table! One moment announces capital punishment for the condemned criminal, one moment makes the pilot take off to a height of 39,000 ft. and in one safe moment he brings back the flight to its safe landing! Moments are momentous!



In one moment the shivering bud blooms into a blossom, in one moment the crawling infant begins to take its tottering steps in this unknown world! One moment quenches the thirst of a parched throat or a meal quells the hunger of a starved being. Moments are momentous!

Rash unthinking, in one moment man commits sin and with sheer repentance, the Lord forgives him in one moment! Just one moment and Warren Buffet offers billions to charity, one moment the Buddha renounces the world for ever. One moment Jesus is crucified, in one moment Socrates departs having drunk hemlock. In one moment Florence Nightingale chooses nursing in the Crimean war, in one moment Aurobindo the statesman turns seer! Vivekanandas are chosen in one moment and Ramanas asks

a momentous question 'who am I' in one moment!

Moments are momentous! One moment it took for Arjuna to watch his kinsmen and go into depression which made the Lord start the Gita in one moment. Arjuna asks for a cosmic vision in one moment, he was granted divine glasses to watch the mega show! One moment made Arjuna realise his dependence on the Lord and the matchless glory of the supreme.

In a moment an outburst of anger pollutes the atmosphere and the near and dear get alienated. At the same time, in a moment a peal of laughter breaks through the silence of a grim atmosphere and radiates joy everywhere.

Dear Reader, moments are momentous. Weigh your moments, measure your

moments, carry them with a faith inspired heart. Moments measured, measure life! When life is measured with discretion, spent with a direction, filled with devotion, naturally leads to moments and moments of unadulterated joy!

Measure your moments, measure your day, measure your life, measure your destiny, measure grace and Grace is immeasurable.

## *The Three Phases*

Dear Reader, every moment one is obsessed by one of these stages or phases, call it what you will - what happens at that time wait and listen. When one is obsessed with the past - one naturally compares it with one's present. If one is passing through good times having overcome bad times, one feels confident and hopeful about the future. When one has seen better days, going down memory lane can be an addiction, as an escape into an euphoric world! It keeps one floating in an imaginary aircraft with a nonexistent pilot! It takes us through several vistas making us forget reality grim reality.

It serves as an enervating experience draining our energy, depleting our hope, diminishing our joy, destroying our self

confidence, debilitating us fully to lead us on to physical weakness, mental disturbance and emotional instability. A visit to the corridors of a pleasant past can have grim results.

Beware my reader - you will understand - of a journey into the past!

Those who are hyper planning and in a frenzied manner also with enormous ambition, are walking on air. They are not famous visionaries but men of enormous ambition! They build big castles in the air; they have big dreams and hollow plans. They forget the present to leap into the future and are baseless, foundation-void straw men. They do not understand this fact of continuity.

The man who lives in a vague and distant future is only planning and planning

and planning. Greed and over-ambition prompt him to be impractical. He lacks the stuff to back up his plans, he lacks the tenacity to achieve them. He is only a victim of hollow dreams.

It is the man who lives in the present who is practical. He realises the fact, the truth, the reality that 'Present is a present'. Present is the only phase which is present - the past is past come and gone, the future is vague, a nebulous cloud yet to be seen and felt. Only the present is tangible.

Dear reader live in the present, breathe in the present, pray in the present, control in the present, belong to the present. The tangible palpable present in a few hours today will become yesterday and a new uncertain tomorrow will be today.

Do not waste time living before and

after and pining for what is not - live and explore the present - from waking hours to sleeping time - the whole day lies before you giving you a golden opportunity to make it an investment for a stable future. Our deeds of today are the foundations of tomorrow. One good deed today wipes out the stigma of bad deeds gone by - with the silken cloth of repentance. Present is of paramount importance - hence our regrets of yesterday disappear and dreams of tomorrow recede into a vague horizon!

The present is a responsible phase, an epoch making phase. The supermen of history learnt from the mistakes of the past, lived meaningfully, purposefully, ethically, creatively, courageously in the present. Hence they were prophets of a sane and happy future - tomorrow.

Never say - oh one day is gone - say one

better day has dawned. Never say - woeful tomorrow - with a positive today, it has to be a better tomorrow.

The present is a point of equilibrium between a day gone and a day to dawn. It is audit time - internal audit as Swami Sivananda put it! Evaluate, eliminate, eradicate, educate, emancipate, enunciate and elaborate - whatever you need to, the present wasted is a future endangered. A present vitiated is a devastation drawn near. A present well spent is the forecast of a divine destiny.

The man in the present has faith in God. He asks forgiveness for his past trespasses and begs strength for the battles in the future.

His prayerful present is an invisible shield against depression and hopelessness.



It fills him with positive energy and divine plans. To him every morning is a divine wake up call to ethical excellence and social responsibility. The man of the past and that of the future both live only for themselves. The man of the present lives for God.

He knows, he creates, he realises, he understands and he preaches that God is the present on whose massive shoulders stands the edifice of Time - call it Future, call it Dreams, call it Divine Grace.

The man of the present stays connected with the Divine. He learns from the past, improves in the present and moves towards a glorious future.

## *How Do I Spend The Day*

What a question? A question everyone asks and few understand the true meaning of it. Seconds, minutes, hours, days, nights pass by and we are scarcely aware of time passing, or is it surpassing Time? Who conquers ultimately? It is Time. We are victims - unwittingly, unwillingly.

When Time conquers us we flow along Time unaware of the havoc it has caused in our lives - scarcely knowing that we ill spent time, misspent time destroyed the preciousness of Time. When we are victims of Time we are unconscious of Time. We are not even aware of subtle Time as a concept. We see watches but we are not watchful.

We see Time is passing but do not know we are passing. We see seasons change but we do not change. We tear-off calendar

pages but do not realise that twelve months of our life have been torn off our calendar!

We make holy resolutions on New Year's Eve and forget them before the end of January. Pause, my friend, my soul mate, do not go very fast or else Time will devour us! Halt and find - where does Time conquer us.

It is when we get up without a purpose when good mornings are digital and cold, breakfasts are bland, when rush hours to office drive one crazy, when work at office is heartless and mechanised, when evening sets in to bring us to an uninteresting TV show and a cup of coffee lies unheeded on the side table.

When children seem to irritate, spouses seem to nag and supper is a silent meeting of company isolated not companions who belong to us. When sleep comes not

without a tablet and the day is gone - are we gone! Where?

Do not worry! Do not fret! Life is a lovely gift of the Maker and make it lovelier by offering it to Him! To conquer Time is to use Time the right way. Indian seers told us to care for the body, mind and soul! What a holistic approach to human welfare!! Any lopsided emphasis in this formula leads to disaster or despair! Give the body its due - look after it for it is the vehicle of the indwelling soul! It is a holy temple of the Maker! A healthy body cannot afford addictions!

Keep fit physically to keep fit mentally! The body is a lovely machine or several factories put together with no noise! No pollution! Automatic in its functioning and consistent in its action. It is amazing in its powers and fascinating in its capabilities.

Give it its due! Care for it, groom it, make it grow strong and not weak or sick! Spend a few minutes of the day in looking after the body. Habits and food play a major role in body care. Habits are to be developed, not as a fad or fashion as the mob commands, but healthy habits which prevent one from dissipation of energy- a precious gift of God. Food has to be sathvic - leading to serenity, tranquillity and peace. Moderation in food and various indulgences is necessary. We cannot eat all that we want and as much as we want. Excessive food leads to obesity, insufficient intake of food leads to anorexia! Both are forbidden by Indian sages.

Along with habits and food - consider activity and rest as equally important. Activity is a must but not frenzied activity. It should be meaningful, mind elevating soul regaling activity. At the same time,

one should not over exert oneself. Many call themselves workaholics and end up as physical wrecks! The body needs rest and sleep. It is necessary to rest and enjoy sleep to keep the body fit!

Give time for the mind! Let it not move along the beaten track of a mob! Let us cerebrare or celebrate cerebration! The Maker gave us a subtle power of the mind which has infinite capacities. Make it help us grow. Let it not guide us from darkness to pitch darkness but to infinite light! Let it feed us with noble thoughts and prompt us to nobler deeds. Let it put value before all valuables! Let it be the driving force of our life towards the pinnacle of excellence!

Mind and body help us function as professionals! Our job requires time, energy and brains! Do not think that frequent holidays and sudden resignations

are solutions for problems at work! They only aggravate the agony! Love your work! Love your job, for it is a God-given job, a God propelled job! Duty is cumbersome when one performs it for oneself - Tension and depression are natural outcomes of such a duty. At the end of a heavy day, if you are still smiling, it means you know how to disburden yourself. Ego prevents disburdening, Humility accelerates it. Ego makes you tense, humility says relax. Ego says I do it, humility says He makes me do it. Ego is battered and shattered by set backs, humility accepts setbacks as essential experiences for a journey of excellence. Duty becomes delectable when offered to one's Maker and when it is done in a spirit of excellent dedication!

At the end of the day, quickly review the day. Have 'I really lived' or 'has life passed

by!' Did I help only myself or someone who needed my help! Selfless deeds of kindness are the prizes the soul wins in the course of the day. Make the soul dwell on its ultimate goal- remembering man is a mini-God in the making. Compassion, conviction, courage are qualities of the Maker and present in the soul these need to be kept alive.

Have we given enough time for the soul, the propeller of our life, the one who outlives the body outgrows the sensuous, ascends to eternity, expands into infinity and dissolves in divinity! If the answer, is yes, it is a well-spent day.

Have a nice day, my soulmate, my friend, my reader a meaningful, purposeful happy day leading you from man to man, man to Nature, man to GOD.





