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आ नौ भद्राः कर्तवो यन्तु विश्वतोऽर्दब्धासो अर्परीतास उद्भिर्दः । (R̥gVeda) *Let noble thoughts come to us from every side*

Science-Spirituality Dialogue The Mind-Body Health Connection



A Discussion with
Prof. Alan G. MacDiarmid (right),
Nobel Laureate in Chemistry and
Dr. T. D. Singh (left);
Physical Organic Chemist,
Founding-Director of Bhaktivedanta Institute

Dr. T. D. Singh (henceforth TDS): Professor MacDiarmid, we would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to discuss with you a few relevant points regarding the relationship between science and spirituality.

Prof. Alan G. MacDiarmid (henceforth AGM): It is most kind of you. I have read your letter and biography with great interest and I was very much looking forward to seeing you here. ... I was brought up as a Christian scientist when I studied in college. At that time I thought it was all nonsense. Now, I have a sort of complete circle. I now feel very strongly that prayer and the power of the mind can be very great and important on body chemistry and the immune system.

During a meeting of twenty Nobel Laureates in St. Petersburg, I was having a discussion with them over lunch. We were discussing the power of prayer on health. There are three experiments. In the first experiment, the patient and the person who is praying are in the same room and the patient knows about the prayer for him. The prayer had real biological effects such as change in blood pressure, pulse rate, etc. This is well-known. In the second experiment, the patient knows that he is being prayed for, but the person who is praying is not in the same room. This also had a profound effect on the patient. In the third experiment, the patient does not know that he is being prayed for. This experiment was not finished at that time. I am now seventy-seven years old. I work very hard, harder than many youths. I found in my own personal experience that the power of the mind for good or bad is enormous.

TDS: Indeed, it is extremely interesting to hear your own personal experience regarding the positive effect of prayer and the power of the mind on body chemistry and the immune system. ... According to ancient spiritual literature of India like the *Bhagavad-gita*, the mind is very powerful and it has the ability to be the best

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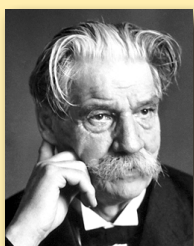
Spiritualizing Technology



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Sri Krishna Janmashtami
celebrations by
Bhaktivedanta Institute
Centers



*"Our inner happiness depends not on what we experience
but on the degree of our gratitude to God,
whatever the experience.*

— Albert Schweitzer
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

To Know about Life, Matter, and their Interactions is called Knowledge

friend or the greatest enemy. The mind is very subtle and has its material side as well as spiritual side. All thinking, willing and feeling processes come first to the mind. Even the negative impulses that will lead to physical illness come to the mind first. We want to see joy and happiness in every person by the influence of the mind. The discussion you had with the Nobel Laureates in St. Petersburg regarding the power of prayer on health is very interesting. According to Vedic culture, prayer has a soothing effect upon the mind and thereby upon health. From the spiritual perspective, prayer is a natural function of the soul, the life particle that animates living bodies and it becomes spontaneously visible when one is in danger or difficulty. I think we need more scientific studies about the influence of the mind over health as well as over matter. We may find some insights about the influence of the mind over physical health as well as spiritual health.

[Excerpt from the book, *Tattvajijnāsā* Vol-1 — Magazine of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]

On the Shoulder of Giants

Florence Nightingale

(Health, Healing and Love of God)

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) is best known as the chief founder of modern nursing and a reformer in the field of public health. As an administrator, educator and researcher, Florence Nightingale contributed significantly toward the development of nursing profession into structured institution and transformed the status of nursing from that of domestic service to profession. Nursing was then an unskilled occupation, and was viewed as lowly menial labor. Florence Nightingale was honoured in her lifetime by receiving the title of 'Lady of Grace' of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. In 1907, she became the first woman to be awarded the Order of Merit (Britain's highest civilian decoration).

Florence Nightingale was born May 12, 1820, in Florence, Italy and was named after the city of her birth. Growing up in a wealthy family, Nightingale was home-schooled by her father, William Edward who taught her, history, philosophy, and literature. She excelled in mathematics and languages. Her interest in nursing emerged in early childhood. While still a girl, she began to nurse sick relatives, servants, villagers and always accompanied her mother on visits to the sick poor.

At the age of 16, Nightingale experienced one of several "calls from God". She viewed nursing as the suitable route to serve both God and humankind. Thus, despite her parent's objections, she enrolled as a nursing student at the Lutheran Hospital of Pastor Fliedner in Kaiserswerth, Germany, in 1844. She went for additional training in Paris, with Sisters of Mercy in 1853. Soon after her training, Nightingale was appointed as a superintendent of a hospital in Harley Street in Central London. Nightingale is best remembered for her work as a nurse during the Crimean War in late 1854. She toiled hard to ensure cleanliness, sanitation, nutritious food and comfort to the wounded soldiers in Crimean. Since then she is revered worldwide as the "lady with the lamp" because of the reassuring sight of her carrying around a lamp to check on the sick and wounded during the night. In 1860, she funded the establishment of the Nightingale Training School, the first training institute for nurses at St. Thomas' Hospital in London.

She published 200 books, reports and pamphlets related to



Florence Nightingale (1820-1910)

“Faith is the real eye and ear of the soul, and without faith the spiritual world is as much a hidden one to the soul as the art of painting to the blind man.”

nursing practice which have been guiding principles even today. These include *Notes on Nursing* (1860), *on Hospitals* (1859) and *Notes on Nursing for the Labouring Classes* (1861). In 1874 she became an honorary member of the American Statistical Association and was awarded the Royal Red Cross for her work by Queen Victoria, in 1883

Nightingale was also noted for her statistician skills, creating coxcomb pie charts that highly influence the direction of medical epidemiology. The statistical ideas were an integral part of her religious beliefs. According to her, since the statistical laws reveal patterns in the world around us, had the power to reveal God's providential plan: "to understand God's thoughts, we must study statistics for these are the measure of His purpose". In all her deeds, Nightingale sought to unify science and religion in a way that would bring order, meaning, and purpose to human life. Her work, *Suggestions for Thought*, is exclusively devoted to the explication spiritual philosophy. She opined that, faith is the real eye and ear of the soul, and without faith the spiritual world is as much a hidden one to the soul as the art of painting to the blind man. Nightingale believed in a personal God and communion with Him was something deeper, richer, fuller, more positive than the fear of God. The fear of God is the beginning, but not the end, of wisdom, for perfect love casteth out fear. "With regard to health or sickness," she wrote, "these are not 'sent' to try us, but are the results of keeping, or not keeping, the laws of God; and, therefore, it would be 'conformable to the will of God' to keep His laws, so that you would have health." Healing, like all physical phenomena, is a lawful process. It is regulated by nature, that is, the expression or manifestation of God. "Nature alone cures," she wrote, "and what nursing has to do ... is to put the patient in the best condition for nature to act upon him."

Admiring Nightingale's life of sacrifice to fulfil the will of God and her profound religious thought, she has been enrolled by the popular voice among the saints. Indeed, her holistic approach to health care is greatly acknowledged and practiced worldwide.

Vedanta & Science

Spiritualizing Technology

In *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that life is non-physical and a non-chemical entity. "The soul is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain" (Bg. 2.20). The material body is simply a temporary vehicle. The individual gets the body according to the result of his previous karma (action). The human form of life is a facility given to seek and inquire about the spiritual nature of life. Vedanta sutra provides the framework, *athāto brahmajijñāsā*.

Once the nature of the passenger (the self) is understood as a spiritual entity, all the bodily instruments and functions can also be spiritualized. Thus technology can be spiritualized. This will amount to developing a spiritual technology. In this approach our intelligence has to be spiritualized and the mind can be spiritualized. All the senses will be directed toward a spiritual goal and thus technology and business can be used for a spiritual end. It is just a change of consciousness, from material consciousness to spiritual consciousness.

One may ask how can one practically spiritualize technology? According to the teachings of the *Gītā*, there is *karma*, *vikarma* and *akarma* (Bg. 4.18). *Vikarma*, forbidden work has to be avoided. Works which are of destructive nature which are caused by passion and ignorance should not be done. Works should be done as an offering with devotion to the Lord (Bg.9.27),

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam*

Translation: Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform—do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me.

If one is offering with the understanding that mind, intelligence, words and bodily activities should be engaged in service to the Lord, the works can be spiritualized. One can purify and spiritualize the mind and senses through a change in consciousness. This change is suggested in *Bhagavad Gītā* when Krishna tells Arjuna of the knowledge of yoga whereby one can work without fruitive results.

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"O son of Pṛthā (Arjuna), when you act by such intelligence, you can free yourself from the bondage of works," (Bg.2.39). This is the meaning of spiritualization of works including technological works.

Krishna further explains that a person will be elevated to the highest perfectional stage using *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir* (Bg.2.41). When a person works as an offering to Krishna, he will enjoy transcendental happiness in the discharge of this service. The sense of eternal servitorship to the Lord makes one immune to all reactionary elements of work. The key is "to give up all sense of proprietorship" (Bg.4.21) and develop the state of being *dhīra* (balance of mind). "He who is satisfied with gain which comes of its own accord, who is free from duality and does not envy, who is steady in both success and failure, is never entangled, although performing action" (Bg.4.22). Science and technology are concerned for external or bodily happiness without caring for internal or spiritual happiness. *Gītā* teaches that this is due to lack of spiritual knowledge. True knowledge is *rāja-vidyā* (king of knowledge). The king of knowledge is to understand the spiritual nature of the self (life) and its natural function, devotional service (*bhakti yoga*) to the Supreme Lord (Bg.9.2).

According to *Gītā* in order to enjoy real happiness and fulfilment a person should know what is the right action to be undertaken.

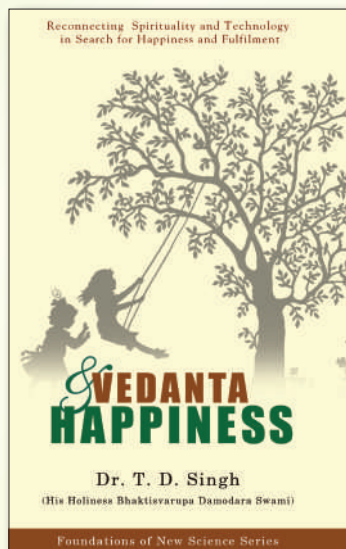
[Excerpt from the book, *Vedanta and The Science of Aging*, Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata]

New Book Release

Online Store: <http://store.binstitute.org>

Vedanta & Happiness

Softbound: Rs. 50;
Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata



The pursuit of Happiness is the common goal of every living being. All around the world, human beings toil day and night, ultimately, for the single purpose of being happy. In this age of scientific and technological advancement, we now have greater access to products and services that give us comfort and entertainment. But it is apparent that these facilities which provide material comforts don't seem to have a lasting effect on our state of Happiness. Can one's state of Happiness be more lasting and, perhaps, ever-increasing? If so, what is the nature of such a state of Happiness? And what are the ways through which such a state of Happiness can be attained? This book attempts to address and examine these questions more deeply.



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