

SECRET WISDOM FROM ANCIENT INDIA

*Life-Secrets from
Chanakya, Vidur,
Krishna, Tulsidas &
other ancient Rishis.*

DEVENDRA BAJPAI



Preface / प्रस्तावना

All my life I have found great delight in the repeated readings of ancient epics and scriptures. What started as an enjoyment of the many tales of valour, courage, righteousness and other such exciting elements, upon closer readings led to far nobler insights – a generally more philosophical understanding of life and our purpose in this vast Universe.

At a younger age, such pursuits were significantly aided by the gentle but persistent guidance of learned yet unsung teachers – and how often have I lamented the loss, to those generations that will come after me, from the near absence of such mentors in current times. As I advance in years, I find my options are to (a) keep wringing my hands in despair, or (b) to do something about it myself, however inadequate that effort might be.

‘Secrets of Ancient Wisdom’ is the result of much hesitation and ambivalence, but it had to be done. It is a very humble and small collection of some intellectual pearls - quotes, words of wisdom, morals and human values – for those time deficient readers who may not find it practical or possible to scour vast age-old texts themselves, yet are keen to get a glimpse of the best parts. The ocean of knowledge is infinite, and the present effort is extremely inadequate in all respects, but is simply my effort to reach to you a distilled version of all that I found useful in my years of sifting through these epics. Reading this collection is akin to taking in a brief whiff of the fragrance of the gardens of Versailles a mile away. The gardens themselves have to be seen in person to comprehend their full majesty, and there can be no substitute for that experience.

I would additionally request you, my dear reader, to keep the following in mind as you glance through these next pages:

Firstly, this collection is not a religious one, even though it references a lot of religious texts, while devotion itself is explained. You will notice there are, to the extent possible, no inclusions of verses in any deity's praise or religious teachings (except my own salutation, at the start of this book, to Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati, which is a private matter between them and me). I am keen to bring to light only those teachings or insights which are of philosophical, intellectual or moral practical value to everyone, irrespective of religious denomination. The sheer volume of these snippets of literature presented here is very insignificant. However, in many difficult situations of life, these words have provided courage and inspiration to me.

Secondly, I have been reflecting on these shlokas, quotes, etc for years, and on occasions reciting them to interested listeners, and referring to them in private, each time finding new hidden meanings and enrichment. In this collection, I have primarily selected sections of Shrimad Bhagwad Gita, Hitopadesh, Vidur Neeti, Chanakaya Neeti and Ram Charit Manas etc. I am indebted, as a student and ardent admirer, to all those known and unknown poets / authors who have contributed to these texts over centuries.

Lastly, the real bridge I have tried to build is one of language. Reaching esoteric Sanskrit or Awadhi or other dialects to a more modern audience that is truly thirsty for knowledge. I am an imperfect translator, and of diminutive intellectual stature. I am sure those more knowledgeable than I am will wince at many places at the superficiality of my understanding, language and explanations. Those chidings I accept in advance, with a bowed

head. I only implore you to take this as a tasting, not the full meal itself. Should it whet your appetite, I strongly encourage you, dear reader, to try the original texts. You will be amazed.

It is important to point out that, thankfully, our modern sensibilities and a far more egalitarian attitude has now made us, as a species, rightly sensitive to discriminatory attitudes, in whichever sphere they may be found. We do not need to accept any “old truths” as absolute truths, and must simply partake of what we think is wise, fair and just in the context of our more enlightened sensibilities. I have made every attempt to keep out even the slightest hint of any distasteful biases, and stand firmly with the bright young women and men of today in their quest for an equal world for all.

My dear sons, Varun and Vineet, have been very insistent that I should gather, recollect and publish these verses, else I may never have found the energy to do so. Vineet especially has been the powerhouse behind this effort, goading me on at every step. Further, I must express my immense respect for Dr. S.K. Salwan, who has always inspired me to put together **Secrets of Ancient Wisdom**. Other notable seniors like Dr. V.S. Garg, Senior Educational Advisor, Apeejay Education Society also have been a source of constant encouragement. My wife, Vandana, has patiently been in my corner for the time that it has taken to complete this collection, as also in life. For that, I thank her and all other friends deeply.

So I bid you a short, fruitful and philosophical journey as you browse through the next few pages – you may be surprised at what treasures lie within, and your thirst for more!

Devendra Nath Bajpai
New Delhi
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Devotion to God, Life & Spirituality

The quest for one's place in this Universe is a constant one. Learned individuals across millennia have pondered this question. Such a quest is a complex one, with uncertain, unpredictable and often contradictory outcomes. Various schools of thought have hypothesised the existence of a benign, loving God, others have questioned it. A created world, or one that came into being itself? (No text ponders this more than the Rig Veda – so much so, that Carl Sagan was sufficiently impressed by it as the deepest inquiry into such questions at that early stage of human intellectual and philosophical progress).

The following verses are some excellent insights into how a person's actions must be governed, and what an individual's relationship with God, society and other individuals should ideally be. It is delightful to see the emphasis on one's duties, karma, and how our own actions significantly influence the course of our lives!

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो माम्, ये जनाः पर्युपासते,
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानाम् योग क्षेमम् वहाम्यहम् ।

– गीता

अर्थात्

जो व्यक्ति अनन्य रूप से परमेश्वर का चिन्तन करते हुए
उनकी उपासना करते हैं, उन सबका योग (प्राप्ति)
और क्षेम (कुशलता या रक्षा) स्वयं ईश्वर करते हैं ।

One who devotes oneself with complete
submission and devotion to the Almighty,
such a person is protected both in prosperity
and overall well-being by God himself.

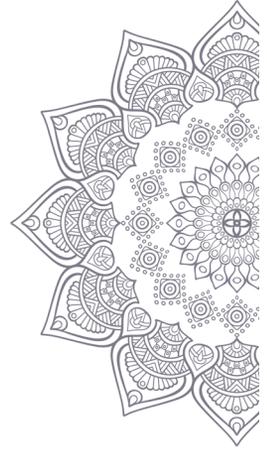
सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज,
अहं त्वाम् सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुच ।

– गीता

अर्थात्

ईश्वर उनको आश्वस्त करते हैं कि जो भी सभी धर्मों
(कर्तव्य/कर्मों) को मुझमें त्यागकर मेरी शरण में आ जाता है,
उसे मैं सभी पापों से मुक्त कर देता हूँ ।

God assures those who are solely devoted to Him,
by eschewing all other paths or distractions, that
He will grant them salvation, and they should not worry.



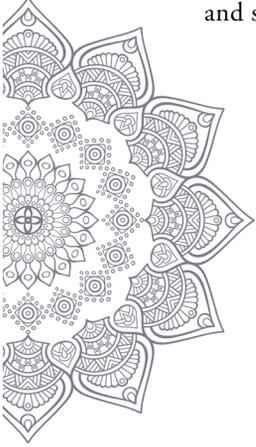
अहनि—अहनि भूतानि गच्छन्ति यम—मन्दिरम्,
शेषाः स्थिरत्वमिच्छन्ति किम् आश्चर्यमतः परम्।

— महाभारत

अर्थात्

प्रतिदिन असंख्य जीव निरन्तर मर कर यमलोक जाते रहते हैं,
फिर भी जो जीवित बचे हैं वह ऐसा सोचते हैं कि उनका जीवन
स्थायी है। इससे बड़े आश्चर्य की बात क्या हो सकती है।

Everyday countless living beings are dying, yet the ones
still living delude themselves and act as if they are immortal
and spared from death. What else can be more astonishing!



पंचमेऽहनि शष्टे वा शाको पचति वै गृहे,
अन्त्रणी चाप्रवासी च, स वारिचर मोदते।

— गीता

अर्थात्

चाहे कोई व्यक्ति इतना साधनहीन हो कि वह कठिनाई से कुछ
भोजन प्राप्त कर जीवन यापन कर लेता हो। परन्तु यदि वह
अपने आवास पर रहता है (प्रवासी नहीं है) और किसी प्रकार का
ऋणी नहीं (न धन का न उत्तरदायित्व का) वही वास्तव में प्रसन्न है।

An extremely poor person may also be happy if he
is under no debts or obligations and is peacefully
staying in his own house (not being exiled).

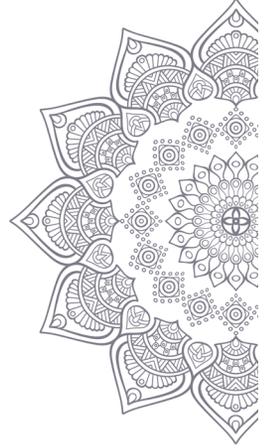
भोगा न भुक्त्वा वयमेव भुक्त्वाः
तपो न तप्तं वयमेव तप्त्वाः।
कालो न यातो वयमेव याताः
तृष्णा न जीर्णा वयमेव जीर्णाः ॥

– विदुर नीति

अर्थात्

हम विषयों को न भोग सके, विषयों ने ही हमें भोग लिया।
हम तप नहीं कर सके पर तप ने ही हमें तपा लिया।
काल व्यतीत नहीं हुआ हम ही व्यतीत हो गये।
तृष्णा समाप्त नहीं हुई हम ही समाप्त हो गये।

We have not enjoyed a luxurious and materialistic life – instead, materials have consumed us; we could not do any penance, as we remained engrossed in this illusory world. Time continues to live on, while our living years go on reducing. Sadly, the lust in us did not become old and wither away, while we have aged and shall soon be reduced to nothing.



पूर्वे वयसि तत् कुर्यात् येन वृद्धः सुखं वसेत्
यावज्जीवेन तत् कुर्यात् येन प्रेत्य सुखं वसेत्।

– विदुर नीति

अर्थात्

जीवन की आरम्भिक अवस्था में ऐसे कर्म और
आचरण करे जिससे वृद्धावस्था सुख पूर्वक बीते।
जीवन भर ऐसे कार्य करे जिससे मरने के बाद यश मिले।

In the first phase of life, a person should do things
which make him healthy and happy in old age.
And, throughout life, one should indulge oneself
in acts that lead to glory after death and
ultimately moksha (i.e. salvation after death).

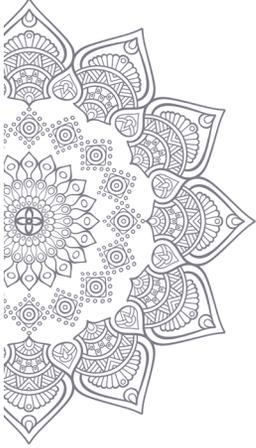
विद्या मित्रं प्रवासेषु भार्या मित्रं गृहेषु च
व्याधितस्यौषधं मित्रं धर्मो मित्रं मृतस्य च।

– चाणक्य नीति

अर्थात्

घर से दूर प्रवास में विद्या, घर के अन्दर पत्नी, बीमारी
में औषधि तथा मरने के पश्चात् धर्म ही सबसे बड़े मित्र हैं।

Away from home, knowledge/wisdom is a person's
best friend, within the house a spouse is the best
friend. For a sick person, medicine is the most
appropriate friend, and after death, dharma
(good deeds done while alive) is the best friend.



शान्तितुल्य तपो नास्ति न संतोषात्परं सुखम्
न तृष्णायाः परो व्याधिर्न च धर्मो दयासमः ।

— चाणक्य नीति

अर्थात्

शान्ति के समान कोई तप नहीं, संतोष से बढ़कर कोई प्रसन्नता नहीं, लोभ से भयानक कोई रोग नहीं तथा दया से उत्तम कोई धर्म नहीं है ।

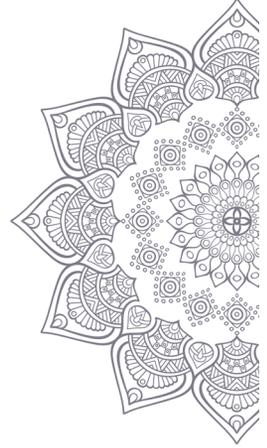
There is no penance like peace,
no happiness like contentment,
no disease like greed and
no religion like mercy.

गते शोको न कर्तव्यो भविष्यं नैव चिन्तयेत्
वर्तमानेन कालेन प्रवर्तन्ते विचक्षणाः ।

अर्थात्

अतीत के बारे में शोक न ही करना चाहिये और न भविष्य की अधिक चिन्ता । वर्तमान समय के अधिक से अधिक सदुपयोग करने में ही लाभ (हित) है ।

One should not dwell unnecessarily on the past,
nor should one worry about the future.
The only focus should be to maximize the
utilization of the present moment.



नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ।

– गीता
अर्थात्

इस जीवात्मा को न तो शस्त्र काट सकते हैं,
न अग्नि जला सकती है, न जल इसे गला
सकता है और न वायु इसे सुखा सकती है ।

This jeevatma (soul) is indestructible. It cannot be
cut by any weapon, cannot be burnt by fire, neither
it can be melted nor can it be evaporated by air.



वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय
नवानि गृह्णाति नरोपराणि
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णानि
अन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ।

– गीता
अर्थात्

जैसे मनुष्य पुराने वस्त्रों को त्यागकर दूसरे
नये वस्त्र ग्रहण करता है, वैसे ही जीवात्मा पुराने
शरीरों को त्यागकर दूसरे नये शरीरों को प्राप्त होता है ।

As a human being discards old clothes
to put on new ones, the soul also leaves a
body (upon death) and takes on a new body.

क्रोधादभवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो, बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ।

– गीता

अर्थात्

क्रोध से अत्यन्त मूढभाव उत्पन्न हो जाता है, मूढभाव से स्मृति में भ्रम हो जाता है, स्मृति में भ्रम होने से बुद्धि अर्थात् ज्ञानशक्ति का नाश हो जाता है और बुद्धि का नाश हो जाने से पुरुष अपनी स्थिति से गिर जाता है, नष्ट हो जाता है ।

Anger causes severe illusion (bhrama), from that occurs the loss of good sense and memory, subsequently wisdom is destroyed, and finally a person falls from grace.

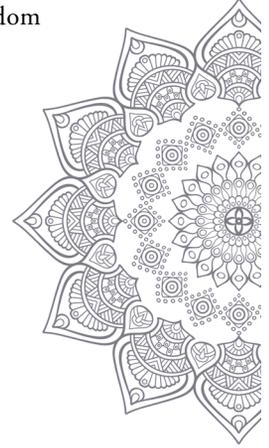
तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता
भवन्ति सम्पदं दैवीममिजातस्य भारत ।

– गीता

अर्थात्

तेज, क्षमा, धैर्य, शुद्धि (अभिमान का अभाव, दयाभाव आदि) एवं किसी से भी शत्रुभाव न होना एवं अपने में पूज्यता के अहंकार का अभाव—ये सब दैवी सम्पदा लेकर उत्पन्न हुए पुरुष के लक्षण हैं ।

A radiant personality, a forgiving nature, courage, cleanliness, a friendly attitude and lack of undue lust for glory are the properties of a person having an element of divinity.



अयं निजः परोवेति गणना लघुचेतसाम्
उदार चरितानां तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ।

— हितोपदेश

अर्थात्

प्रायः छोटी बुद्धि वाले ही अपने-पराये में सदा
भेद करते हैं। उदार चरित्र वालों के लिए तो
यह सारी पृथ्वी एक कुटुम्ब के समान है।

Only people with narrow minds differentiate
between persons who are close to them and
others who are not. For truly magnanimous
people, the whole world is like their own family.



यस्य नास्ति स्वयं प्रज्ञा, शास्त्रं तस्य करोति किम्,
लोचनाभ्यां विहीनस्य दर्पणः किम् करिष्यति ।

— हितोपदेश

अर्थात्

जिस प्रकार दोनो आँखों से अन्धे व्यक्ति के लिए दर्पण का
कोई महत्व नहीं होता, उसी प्रकार बुद्धि से रहित व्यक्ति के
लिए पढ़ने अथवा सुनने का कोई महत्व नहीं होता।

Like a blind person has no use/value for a mirror,
similarly an insensible person can hardly be
enlightened by scriptures and good literature.

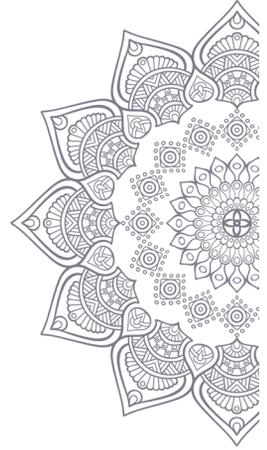
त्यजेत् क्षुधार्ता महिला स्वपुत्रं,
खादेत् क्षुधार्ता भुजगी स्वमण्डम् ।
बुभुक्षितः किं न करोति पापं,
क्षीणा नराः निष्करुणा भवन्ति ।

– हितोपदेश

अर्थात्

भूखी स्त्री अपने पुत्र को भी छोड़ देती है,
भूखी नागिन अपने अण्डों को खा लेती है ।
भूखा भला क्या पाप नहीं कर सकता ।
क्षीण व्यक्ति (भूख से) करुणारहित हो जाते हैं ।

In the distress of hunger, one can abandon
a child, a serpent can eat its own eggs.
It only proves that a hungry person can
commit any sin. Sadly, the hungry and
weak ultimately are forced to shun their
mercy and compassion.



एकस्य बान्धवो धर्मो न जहाति पदात्पदम् ।

अर्थात्

धर्म ही एकमात्र ऐसा बन्धु है जो कभी साथ नहीं छोड़ता है ।

Dharma (noble conduct and duty) is the
only kin who never abandons a person.

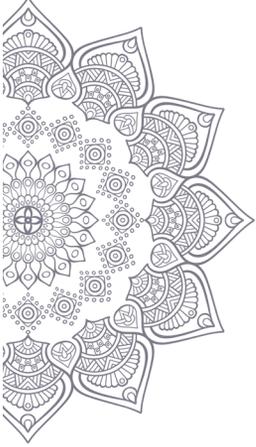
अनित्यं यौवनं, रूपं, जीवितं द्रव्यसंचयः,
ऐश्वर्यं प्रिय संवासो मुह्ये तत्र न पण्डितः ।

– हितोपदेश

अर्थात्

यौवन, रूप, जीवन, द्रव्य-सन्चय, ऐश्वर्य,
स्त्री-पुत्रादि से मोह आदि सब अनित्य है ।
बुद्धिमान व्यक्ति को इनसे मोह नहीं करना चाहिये ।

Youth, beauty, accumulated wealth, prosperity,
loved ones are all temporary and short lived.
Wise people should not get attached to them.



सानुकूले जगन्नाथे विप्रियः सुप्रियो भवेत् ।

अर्थात्

ईश्वर की कृपा हो तो शत्रु भी मित्र बन जाता है ।

With God's grace, sometimes even an enemy can
become a friend (ie, keep an open mind – one who
is an enemy today could potentially be a friend
in future, under the right circumstances).

ज्ञानस्याभरणं क्षमा ।

अर्थात्

ज्ञान की शोभा / आभूषण क्षमा है ।

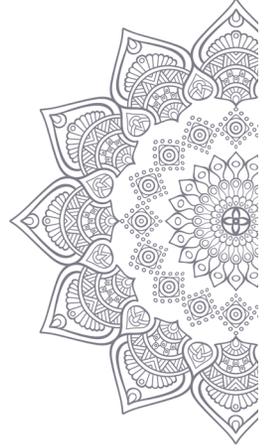
Knowledge is further embellished when
combined with forgiveness.

को धर्मो दयया विना ।

अर्थात्

दया के विना कैसा धर्म ?

What kind of dharma will it be,
if it does not preach and practise kindness?



धर्माचार विहीनानां द्रविणं मलसञ्चयः ।

अर्थात्

धर्माचरण से हीन मनुष्यों के लिए धन संचय मल संचय के समान है ।

Without having focus on dharma, accumulation
of wealth is merely like accumulating garbage.

सुखस्य मूलं धर्मः धर्मस्य मूलमर्थः ।

अर्थात्

सुख का मूल धर्म और धर्म का मूल धन ।

Dharma is the basic source of happiness,
and wealth supports those who practice dharma.



न च धर्मो दयापरः ।

अर्थात्

दया और करुणा से बड़ा कोई धर्म नहीं है ।

There is no dharma greater than kindness.

क्षमातुल्यं तपो नास्ति ।

अर्थात्

क्षमा के बराबर कोई तप नहीं है ।

There is no greater penance than forgiveness.