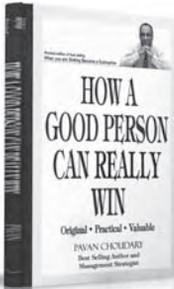


REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



How a Good Person Can Really Win

Pavan Choudary

Wisdom Village Publications Pvt Ltd.,
A1-01, The World Spa (East), Sector 30
and 41, Gurgaon, Haryana 122 002.
Website: www.wisdomvillagepublications.com. 2013. xviii + 238 pp. PB.
₹ 195. ISBN 9789380710457.

This is a book which helps the Naïve—one for whom means are as important as the ends—to battle and win against the Vile—for whom only ends matter, not the path. In a time, when without handling politics, nobody can go up in the ladder, this book has the potential to help those who are confused or have lost their path in black, white, and grey areas of politics and complex power play.

A revised edition of the book published earlier as *When You are Sinking Become a Submarine*, part one of the book covers the mentality, way of manipulation, and actions of the Vile and part two and three explain in detail, different ways for achieving goals effectively by a Naïve.

There are many things that this book can be praised for. Other than the dos and don'ts, lots of stories and historical incidents have been added as well. This helps the readers to understand the concepts easily, remain focussed, and thus makes the learning an enjoyable experience. With every what to do, it also explains why to do, act, or behave in a certain way which is great because nobody wants to follow any advice blindly without understanding the reasons. The remedies or solutions to battle politics by Vile is not a rocket science or something extraordinary that has been mentioned here. These are more of behavioural changes or actions that are needed in the day-to-day life of a Naïve.

There is a small glitch though that could raise doubts in the reader's mind: An incident is mentioned to have happened in the author's life on

page 84—for explaining why one should not be judgemental at first sight—has an uncanny similarity with an incident mentioned by Stephen R Covey in his book (See Stephen R Covey, 'The Power of a Paradigm Shift' in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Franklin Covey, 2004), 13-4).

Lastly, not only Naïve is advised, but Vile has also been given a chance to correct oneself by giving examples of how one's actions can dig one's own grave. By doing so, this book also gains the capacity of entering a person's bookshelf, who might have more similarities with Vile than with Naïve. The Ruler is given practical advice as well. In sum, this book qualifies to be in the bookshelf of anybody working in a corporate, business, or political environment.

Papiya Debnath
Pune



On Evil

Terry Eagleton

Yale University Press, 302 Temple Street, New Haven, CT 06511-8909, USA. Website: www.yalebooks.com. 2010. 192 pp. HB. \$25. ISBN 9780300151060.

Hell is the kingdom of the mad, absurd, monstrous, traumatic, surreal, disgusting and excremental which Jacques Lacan, after the ancient god of havoc, calls Ate. It is a landscape of desolation and despair. But it is a despair that its inhabitants would not wish for a moment to be snatched from them. For it is not only what gives them an edge over credulous idealists of every stripe; it is also the misery that assures them that they still exist. Even this, did they but know it, is a lie, for theologically speaking, as we have seen, there can be no life outside God (78).

Who will believe that Terry Eagleton, the Marxist and atheist, wrote the above? It is Eagleton's erudition which finally makes him 'see into the life of things' (William Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*) and write:

Human beings can indeed achieve a degree of self-determination. But they can do so only in the context of a deeper dependence on others of their kind, a dependence which is what makes them human in the first place. It is this, as we shall see, that evil denies. Pure autonomy is a dream of evil. ... In Shakespearian drama, those who claim to depend upon themselves alone, claiming sole authorship of their own being, are almost always villains (12).

This is not very far from the Hindu understanding of karma and divine and demoniac natures as explicated in the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita. The truths of the Gita are so universal that a 'deep reading' (Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1994), 148) of the social sciences and the humanities will perforce reveal what dawned on Eagleton so late in his life—that Immanuel Kant's categorical imperatives may be more true than Marx's atheistic rants. Though later Eagleton will reread Marx and assure us that Marx was right as far as the movement of capital is concerned (see his *Why Marx Was Right* (New Haven: Yale University, 2011) and note the 'was' in the title!), this need to justify Marxism itself proves how Eagleton has changed his earlier rigid atheistic stance (see his *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1975)) and has turned theologian: 'The demonic, by contrast, is a cackle of derisive laughter at the very idea that anything human could conceivably have meaning or value' (74).

His comments on demonic possession in *The Exorcist* (1973) itself is an eye-opener on two counts. First, after the passing of Leslie Fiedler and Frank Kermode, in English fiction we have only Eagleton as a literary critic worth reading; and then there is the snooty Harold Bloom. Bloom cannot bear for instance, the works of Stephen King while Fiedler equated King with Cormac McCarthy as early as January 2003. Bloom is contaminated with the agendas of Freud being fixated

or stuck with(in) the Oedipal Conflict (see Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University, 1973)) and now churns out guides or crambooks. The point here is that we ought not to take Bloom seriously anymore. Therefore, when Eagleton takes into consideration popular culture for his discussions about theodicy, we should take it as a signal to reframe English literature syllabi globally, and especially in India. Sadly, Indian humanists are notoriously outdated in their range of fiction-reading. This, in spite of what Edward Said once wrote:

There is first of all the slow disappearance of literature itself from the graduate and in some places even the undergraduate curriculum ... In some, perhaps many institutions the broad historical or call it chronological knowledge of literature that used to be expected and required is no longer even available to students, much less taught and emphasized. And for some time now, the very object of former scrutiny, the literary work, has been all but eliminated (see Edward W Said, 'Restoring Intellectual Coherence', *MLA Newsletter* 31 (Spring 1999), 3–4).

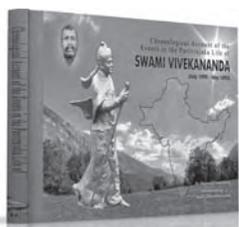
Secondly, Eagleton is willing to at least acknowledge and scrutinise demonic possession and thereby affirm the opposite of the demoniac as will be mentioned at the end of this review. This shows an openness of mind which our current breed of scholars finds unbecoming of their empirical stances. Further, Eagleton's book is worth reading for both the facts of its being a reaffirmation of the literary and of the reality of evil. His first chapter entitled *Fictions of Evil* (19–78) should be made compulsory reading for litterateurs, philosophers, and theologians alike. *On Evil* is the best book available now on the eponymous topic, as well on literature. Eagleton in this book is at his best as a man of letters. Literature can provide insights into theodicy and philosophy which the tortuous texts of established philosophers can never do. Eagleton, the staple of literature students worldwide (see his *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982)) cannot be said to not know his Derrida or as quoted above, his Lacan. Yet he sees the problem of evil through an exclusive literary hermeneutic: 'The poet William Blake sometimes

pretends to take the side of the devil, not least in his *Proverbs of Heaven and Hell*. He seizes the conventional opposition between good and evil and mischievously inverts it, making evil the positive category and good the negative one. But this is simply a tactic for scandalising respectable middle-class Christians, with their anemic notion of virtue. Blake's true belief is summarised in a single phrase: "Everything that lives is holy" (125).

Terry Eagleton's book *On Evil* is ironically a commentary on the Holy (see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University, 1917)) and the sovereignty of the good (see Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1970)).

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

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**Chronological Account
of the Events in the
Parivrajaka Life of
Swami Vivekananda
(July 1890–May 1893)**

Dr Shyamali Chowdhury

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata 700 029. Website: www.sriramakrishna.org. 2015. xx + 226 pp. HB. ₹ 360. ISBN 9789381325650.

Much less is known of the itinerant life of Swami Vivekananda. Such rare men take birth perhaps once in a cycle. All such souls carefully avoid publicity, just in order to protect the purity of their lives from common gaze. And they do not leave any diary of their day-to-day affairs for posterity. They only *live* an authentic, illustrative life. It is that which leaves indelible marks, not only in the minds of the contemporary generation but also on the corridor of time.

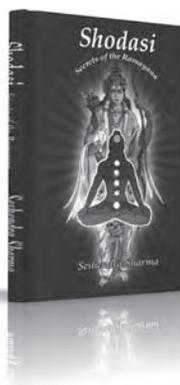
Quite a good number of dedicated souls have been conducting painstaking in-depth researches on the unknown reaches of Swami Vivekananda's itinerant life, both in India and abroad. A few of such stupendous research works have already come out in some monumental volumes like *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, *Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian Newspapers*, *Vivekananda O Samakalin*

Bharatvarsha (Bengali), and *The Master As I Saw Him*. These volumes have thrown much light on the obscure parts of Swamiji's life. But notwithstanding all such attempts a great portion of his life still remains unravelled.

To facilitate such arduous researches on Swamiji's life, Dr Shyamali Chowdhury, the author of the book under review, has dived deep into the unknown recesses of that great life and has struggled to give us many important events less known to the common people in this short and elegantly printed research book. Her research comprises only the short period of Swamiji's life between July 1890 and May 1893, of course with a difference. In the text portion of the book she has carefully arranged the events in chronological order in a tabulated form. Such presentation enables the readers to have a glance at the events which are strewn within only 129 pages of this book. She has collected all her material from 41 books, 6 journals, and 41 websites as we gather from the bibliography. Printed on art paper, the book also provides in an appendix a rare opportunity to view a large number of photographs of contemporary personages associated with Swamiji as also the houses, temples, rivers, and palaces he visited and resided in India during his itinerary. Another important appendix is devoted to furnishing explanatory notes on certain facts and views with the author's own remarks. Undoubtedly this book will provide to all researchers a ready reference for Swamiji's life during the particular itinerant period. The author very much deserves congratulations for this contribution towards the advancement of studies on Swamiji's meaningful and educative life.

Swami Kritarthananda

Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math



**Shodasi:
Secrets of the Ramayana**
Seshendra Sharma

Gunturu Seshendra Sharma Memorial Trust, 32, Janata Flats, Kanthi Sikhara Complex, Panjagutta, Hyderabad 500 082. Email: saatyaki@gmail.com. 2015. 245 pp. PB. ₹ 400. ISBN 9789380710457.