

A-Z of Time Management

SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA

It is no exaggeration to say that we live and move in time. This goes on from the time we are born till the time we die. I am not talking about rebirth here, because some people may not believe in rebirth, that is to say, in the theory of reincarnation. But generally speaking, often we calculate how much time is available from the time of birth till the time of our death. The answer we find is that it is *relative*. It may be seventy, ninety or hundred years. It may also be just twenty years. Who knows? The most certain thing in this life is that there will be death. And what is the most uncertain thing? The time of death, because nobody can say when he will die.

Se we really do not know how much time is left at our disposal. This is a paradox. Number one, we do not know how much time is still available to us, and the second thing is that we do not know what do we want to do during this time. What is the purpose of life? I do not know. What is the aim of life? I do not know. So ultimately what is of prime importance in time management is to find out the time. Suppose you are a college student and are given one project and you work day and night utilizing your time as best as possible. So you finish the project in eleven days which would have otherwise taken fifteen days. How nice! You feel what a great time management you have done! But afterwards when you go to the Principal, perhaps he tells you that he did not ask you to do that project. What happens then? You simply faint. So what has

happened to your time management?

Similarly, at the end of your life you come to discover that whatever you have spent your time on with best of time management, actually that is not what you wanted. What happens then? So the most important thing is to know what do you want in life.

Winning the game of life

Everyone wants to win the game of life. But what is meant by that victory? The first important step is to know what do you actually want to achieve. Ultimately, from that point onward starts this time management, because we have a limited time available in our life. In this limited time we have to achieve what we want to achieve. This is the first thing to remember.

So time is a relative thing. Time is not absolute. According to Einstein, time is also relative and curved. It is not straight. There is something called absolute in the Vedanta philosophy also, but that absolute Reality is beyond time, space and causation which is called *māyā*. We are not going into that philosophy, but this much you must remember that time is not constant. Time is not an absolute reality. Time is relative. For example, when you are sick and you are told by the physician that you cannot go out of the house and you cannot take some particular food items for three days, then, three days appear to you like three months! Oh, my God! Three days I have to remain confined in the house! Horrible! But when

you spend your time with your friend, one hour seems like one minute. One hour already over! you wonder. Or, again, when you watch a TV serial of your interest, may be three hours fly in the twinkling of an eye! So time is relative, it is not absolute. That is one thing to remember.

Importance of time

Now, what is the importance of time? *Unless and until you know the importance of time you will not know the importance of time management.* You must have heard the proverb that time and tide wait for none. Have you seen an ocean? What happens when you stand near the ocean? A wave comes and it goes back again. Then another wave comes, and goes. They keep coming and going constantly. Do they stop? No. Similarly, time. It goes. Nobody can stop it. It is flowing. In fact everyone of you must have noticed that time moves very fast.

What happens in the month of December? You try to get a new calendar at that time and feel that a whole new year is before you! By the time you start planning, doing this and that, another new year comes! If you are student, you find the examination comes so quickly. Suppose you have given the ninth standard examinations, shortly thereafter you will find that the tenth standard examinations are staring you in the face. You thought you will enjoy your days after the examinations were over. But you find you have to prepare yourself for another examination. So life is moving fast. Time is moving fast. This is everybody's experience.

Another phrase you must have heard—'Time is money'. But time is not really money. Why? Suppose you have invested rupees ten lakhs in business. If you lose five lakhs this year, you can make up the loss of five lakhs next year by performing better. That is possible. But *can you get back the*

time which is gone? What is the date today? 27th of May, 2011. And time? 8.30 a.m. Will it come back again? No, not today, but tomorrow. That will be another date. But 27th of May, 2011, 8.30 a.m. is gone for ever. So *time is more important than money.* This is what you have to remember. There is a phrase: Yesterday is history, future is mystery, and today is the gift. That is why it is called *present*. 'Yesterday' is a cancelled cheque. 'Tomorrow' is a promissory note, and 'today' is cash. So utilize it wisely. You have to focus on today. *Let us try to use everyday as the last day of our life.*

Many people think that our average life-span is sixty-five or seventy years. Previously it was thought to be thirty-five. But what happens when so many people die at the age of five, or, say, six months? It may be even one day. And, again, some are dying at ninety years. So the average longevity comes to sixty-five years. But there is no guarantee that you will live till sixty-five. One social scientist made a survey which has revealed some startling facts. He says, if your life-span is seventy years, that does not mean that you will *live* for full seventy years because twenty-eight years of your life are spent on sleeping. Of the remainder of your time, you spend ten years for studies, eight years for recreation, six years for combating various illness, five years for travelling. Then, eating consumes four years, and dressing three. How much time is left for the work then? Six years only! So only six years are at your disposal and you thought—you will live for seventy years and so there is enough time for you. But from the statistics given above you find that useful productive time is six years. This is the importance of time.

If you really want to know the importance of time you must ask a student about it. If you want to know the importance

of one year, ask a student who has failed in the exams and lost one academic year. But if you want to know the importance of one month, then you ask the lady who has given birth to a baby who was four weeks premature. If you want to know the importance of one week, you ask the editor of a weekly magazine. If you want to know the importance of one day, ask the businessman who lost his contract because he was late in submitting his tender by one day. Again, if you want to know the importance of one hour you ask the person who has been waiting for his/her lover for one hour. If you want to know the importance of one minute, then you ask the person who missed the train by one minute. If you want to know the importance of one second, ask the person who survived an accident for a split second. And if you want to know the value of one millisecond, ask the man who lost the Olympic gold medal just for one millisecond.

Some people think that time management is synonymous with punctuality. But that is not true. It is only one part of time management. However, keeping time is also good. But in India if you are too much punctual and, if you keep to the time, you will undergo frustration, because you know there is something called the 'Indian Standard Time'. Indian standard time means you will be late at least by half an hour. I went to Porbander with this fund of knowledge. I did not know then that there is another standard time—Porbandar Standard Time! In the Ramakrishna Mission centres, you know, we always start our function on time. 8.30 means 8.30 and the programme will start. At one such function that was scheduled for 8.30 a.m. some people came at 10.30 a.m. and asked: 'Why are you not starting the programme?' I told them it was one-hour programme. It is over

already. The carpets have been removed and the hall is now again locked. The speaker swamiji too has flown back to Bombay.

Gradually they came to know that in Ramakrishna Mission you have to reach in time if you want to attend a function. Believe me, it took so many years for me to train them. In Baroda also, the Indian Standard Time remained operational. So, as a remedy, I devised a plan. I used to give notice that the spiritual retreat will be held from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. I knew they will not come before 9 a.m. So the time for registration was slated to open at 8.30 and continue till 9 a.m. So this is how we try to cope with the problem.

We do not imitate Western punctuality

We have to learn so many things from the West. But you know, our modern-day youths are blindly imitating the Western materialistic culture. Swami Vivekananda was against such cheap, indiscriminate imitation. He warned us against becoming a flock of sheep. Of course, good things we must learn—from East and West. We must have, Swamiji said, Western science coupled with Vedanta. But good things such as the punctuality of the Western people we have not imported.

One of our very revered monks, Swami Ranganathananda, who happened to be the President of the Ramakrishna Order, was sort of an Indian cultural ambassador. He was sent by the Government of India to spread the message of Vedanta. He had many friends in various countries. He had a Japanese friend. When he came to India he met the swami and said: Swamiji, I find a very curious phenomena in India. In Japan we produce so many watches, but we do not consume them. We sell them outside to earn foreign exchange. In Japan we have only one watch per family. But, here in India, I find

everybody is wearing a watch—even a rickshawala. However, the strangest thing is that nobody keeps time!

In Japan, there was a train driver who was penalized as the train was late by three minutes. Why? Because there were 5,000 passengers in the train. Five thousand people multiplied by three minutes meant a loss of 15,000 minutes. That was the charge against him. But here in India, if the train is late by half an hour, it is considered normal. If it is three-four hours late, then you start asking what has happened. Sometimes a bystander finds that a long-distance train arrives right on time. But after enquiry he comes to know that the train is actually late by twenty-four hours!

I went to Europe in 2004. In London there is a beautiful Vivekananda centre. When I went to that centre, the swami-in-charge asked me to address a youth group. The programme was supposed to start at 6.15 pm. And, you know, you can't trust English weather. Suddenly there was a storm and heavy downpour. I had started quite early to be on time and reached the place about 6 o'clock. When I went there I found the hall empty. What usually happens in India in such a situation? The programme is cancelled. So I took it for granted that the programme was cancelled due to inclement weather. I went to the office and was offered tea. At 6.13, the organizer said, 'Swamiji, I think you are getting late'. 'What! The programme is not cancelled?', I asked in wonder. 'Who told you that the programme is cancelled?' I said, 'Such a heavy rain and I saw the hall empty!' 'Who says that the hall is empty? The hall is full. Just see', he said. Immediately I left the tea and rushed and I saw within five minutes, by 6.10, they started coming. They put their raincoats on the hangers provided and by 6.15 all were seated. The hall was full. It was one-hour

programme and exactly at 7.10 the organizer whispered, 'Swamiji, at 7.10 you must give back the mike to me. I shall give the vote of thanks. By 7.15 the audience must leave the hall because most of them have some other appointments.'

From UK, I went to Holland, Germany, France and then Switzerland. When Swamiji was ill, his Western friends took him to Switzerland. There is a church of Mother Mary where Swamiji felt very much inspired. Naturally I wanted to see the holy place. So I took a bus and went to that place. But to reach the church you have to walk. So I walked and went to the church. When the visit was over, I came back to the bus stop. I knew when the bus that would take me to the railway station will come. The scheduled time was 3.35. So I ran and reached the bus stop around 3.35 and waited, waited, and waited for ten minutes. I thought the bus must be late. Another person was standing nearby. I asked him why the bus was not coming. 'Is it running late?', I asked. He said, 'What do you mean? The bus came exactly at 3.35. It stops only for 30 seconds because very few get up and get down here'. Then he drew my attention that my watch was going slow by one minute. That was how I missed the bus!

Punctuality and time management

But one thing you must remember—punctuality is not time management. You know Gandhiji was very punctual. He had given time to a top British official who was supposed to meet him at 3.40 p.m. The person came about two minutes late. So he was told to wait, and after ten minutes he was allowed to meet Gandhiji. The official then complained: Gandhiji, I heard that you are very punctual. But you made me wait for ten minutes.

Gandhiji said: What was the time? 3.40,

isn't it? and I waited for you till 3.41. Since you did not come on time I took over my next work. My next assignment was to take snacks. So as an exception I am giving you time after finishing my work because you are such a senior officer. I don't want to waste more than one minute.

The British official understood his fault for which he apologized.

You must have heard about George Washington. He was also very punctual. One day he asked his secretary: Why are you late? He said: My watch is not giving the right time. So Washington said: Okay, now you have two alternatives—either you change the watch or I change the secretary.

I had been to America. There also people are very punctual. Swamiji was in America. Once he had to catch a train. But he was late. His friends were telling—Swamiji run, run, the train is coming, you will miss it. Then Swamiji very calmly said, will there be no next train?

One day he was very late for lecture. The lady who had organized that saw something which she had not seen earlier. She noticed Swamiji was going to the drawing-room before a big mirror and saw himself again and again. As you know, Swamiji was very careless about his appearance. But that day he appeared to be a different person. He was going to the mirror again and again. The lady was surprised at such behaviour and she wondered why Swamiji was going back to the mirror each time he tried to enter the lecture hall.

Later Swamiji explained to her: You see, my mind was in such a high state that I did not feel my body. I thought I am beyond body, and I am beyond time. So I wanted to remind myself that, no, you have a body. So I had to see in the mirror again and again and tell myself that this is your body. But as soon as I came away from the mirror I lost

that body consciousness and forgot how I looked like. But that was Swami Vivekananda! Needless to say, we are not like him. So let us come down to our level.

Some time before Dr Kalam became the President of India, I thought I would invite him to Porbander to speak to the youth and to inaugurate one of the school buildings. I telephoned him and he himself answered to say that he was very busy and he will come later on. Then I heard one day that he was coming to Rajkot in December, 2001 to attend a function at the Christ College. Porbander is very near Rajkot. So I went to Rajkot myself. It is a three-hour drive. Then I sent a message to him and said: Dr Kalam, I want to extend my personal invitation to you to come to Porbander. So I want to meet you personally. Please tell me where should I meet you? At the airport, or at the place where you are staying?

He sent a message immediately: 'Swamiji, you are a monk. I should come to meet you'.

You see, he was such a humble person! Then I told the head of our Rajkot centre that Dr Kalam was coming to meet us. 'How can he come? We have not invited him formally!' he wondered. I said: But he is coming today after one hour on his way to the airport.

And really he came without invitation at 6 o'clock. Then, first we took him to the exhibition and after that we were hesitant whether we should tell him to go to the temple. We just asked him if he would like to go there. He said: 'Yes, yes, I would like to go'. At that time evening prayer was in progress. But as soon as he entered the temple, he said: 'Swamiji, can I sit down with the students there?' Some students were sitting in the front. We entered from the back side. So he walked to the front side and sat down with the students who were

singing. His mind was so pure that as soon as he sat down, his mind got absorbed in deep meditation. His entourage got anxious about the delay, for he had to go to the airport. Then our swamiji said: 'Dr Kalam, you are getting late'. But he was then in another world. Afterwards, when he was given a tap on his shoulder, he got up and almost ran to the main gate. His shoes were there at the bottom of the stairs. He did not wear them. He took them in hands and ran towards his car and then wore his shoes. Then we asked him: 'Dr Kalam, what happened?' He said, 'Swamiji, the music was divine. Through ears, it entered into my mind, then into my heart, and then into my soul and I was lost.'

I told him that he must come to Porbander once and he came on 13 February, 2002. There is a room where Swami Vivekananda used to meditate and we have preserved it as a meditation room. There he sat in meditation which was so deep that we had to drag him out literally as it was getting late. For this reason, when he came to Baroda on 30 March, 2008, I did not make him sit because once he sits down he does not get up. So, for two or three minutes he stood still and then came down. He wrote in his book, *Ignited Minds: At Porbander and Rajkot*, sitting in that room of meditation, I lost myself. Later, at a function in Calcutta he told the audience that while meditating at Rajkot and Porbander he was lost in meditation and for the first time had the first-hand experience that time becomes indeterminate.

Benefits of time management

So we have to learn the importance of time, both for ourselves and for others whom we keep waiting. Now let us consider the benefits of time management. The first benefit is that if you practise it you can do

more work than what you do in less time. Second, your efficiency increases. Third, your productivity increases and when your productivity increases, your output also increases and then naturally you get more money out of it. Not only that, with proper time management your physical and mental health improve. Your stress and strain decreases.

The *Readers' Digest* published a few years ago an article that informed readers of a peculiar bank which credits you with some money every morning, but on condition that you must utilize that money by the end of the day. If you do not utilize the money it cannot be carried forward. Next day again you will get the same amount of money. This bank is called 'Time Deposit'. Everyday twenty-four hours were deposited in this bank, whatever seconds, minutes you utilized properly were yours, and the rest were gone forever. Next day again you get a new deposit of 86,400 seconds. And now you see how many hours are taken by sleeping, eating, and school, and other entertainments including internet cheating and chatting. Nowadays, cheating-chatting are going simultaneously.

I tell you an incident. A girl in Ahmedabad came to me and said that she wants to commit suicide. She was having 'internet chatting' with some friend and ultimately it grew into love. She said to the boy, 'I want to marry'. He said, 'Yes, yes, I will marry you'. The girl said, 'Okay my parents should see you'. So the boy came to Ahmedabad and met her parents. The parents were not so happy because he was from some other caste. But finally they gave their consent. Now, the girl said to the boy, 'You should show me your parents'. He said, 'My parents are not well nowadays. I shall show them afterwards. But the boy kept on postponing the meeting.'

So, one day the girl telephoned to the boy. But from the other side another lady answered. She said, 'Who are you?' The girl asked, 'Who are you? Why are you taking up the phone?' The other person replied, 'I am the wife of that person'. Then she discovered that her Internet friend had married someone six months back, although he kept telling her that 'I will marry you'. She asked, 'Why didn't you tell me?' He replied, 'I thought your heart will break. I did not want to displease you'. Naturally, the girl was very much shocked and became a psychiatric patient. However, she is more or less ok now. So, such things are happening these days.

So you must analyse how much time you have at your disposal and then set your short and long-term priorities accordingly. All you write down and review them from time to time. The first letter of the alphabet is 'A'. In time management it means *analyse* your priorities. Next comes 'B', which means *bite* as much as you can chew.

There is a beautiful book by Stephen R. Covey—*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People : Sharpening the Saw*. There is a story in the book which says that there was a woodcutter who fell down exhausted after cutting some trees. One man came by and made him take a little rest and asked him to sharpen the saw which was blunt. The woodcutter said as we do: What you say is correct but where is the time? When I ask students to read Swami Vivekananda at least for five minutes a day and to do some meditation, this is what they say—'Where is the time?' I tell them that if they do meditation they will get better concentration and would be able to do more work in less time; also they will be able to study better. But we don't understand that. This is happening because you don't analyse your priorities in life.

I tell students: Now that your class XII

examinations are over, you can study Swami Vivekananda. They say, 'Oh, Swamiji, you don't understand. Only one examination is over. Now we have to give the entrance examination'. I say, okay, after that you come and then I will give you a book on Swami Vivekananda. When they come after some time I tell them again, now your engineering examination is over. They say, 'No, I have to give medical examination also'. So they have not decided whether they should study engineering or medical science. They will accept whatever clicks. Therefore, as they want to appear for hundreds of tests, they can't prepare well for any test. They are under full of stress. They do what everybody tells them to do. Consequently, they remain undecided and end up carrying the donkey on their shoulders instead of riding on its back. So *bite as much as you can chew*. First find out your aptitude and then act accordingly. Don't listen to all what other people say. Follow your own law of being and don't become a flock of sheep.

One teacher was giving lessons in mathematics. He told students that ten sheep were going along the road and five went into the ditch. He asked: How many were left? They answered 'five'. The teacher said 'yes'. Meanwhile, a boy suddenly stood up and said: 'No Sir, the answer is wrong'. The teacher said: 'You fool, you don't know this simple mathematics!' 'Sir', replied the boy, 'you are mathematics teacher, yet you don't know the mathematics of sheep! Sheep has got such a nature that if one of them goes to ditch, then the second will go, the third will go, the fourth will also go, and the tenth will also go. So ten minus five is equal to zero—this is the mathematics of sheep'.

That is the story. Indeed, sheep want to imitate. So I tell them to be *original*, to be like a lion. If you want to be a doctor, be a doctor. If you do not get admission to MBBS, why do you not study Ayurveda or

alternative medicine? I remember, once I went to a house and saw a girl weeping because she could not get admission to the MBBS course. I told her to study Ayurveda. She got angry to hear this and said many harsh words to me. I told her that I know the trend. Already ten years back many Americans were going for alternative medicines and not allopathy. Five years from now the same change will come to India. But she was not convinced. Finally, she could not get anywhere and so she reluctantly took up Ayurveda. Five years ago I met her in Bombay and she said: 'Swamiji, I am sorry for the words I said that day. But today I am so thankful to you for your suggestion'. Today she has married a fellow Ayurvedic practitioner and opened their own clinic and earning money, while, she said, her friends had not got jobs as yet, they were still spending money in doing specialization.

The third major thing in time management is 'C', ie to *combine* the activities. There are so many activities which can be combined. Find out for yourself what multitasking activity you are able to do within the set time like some housewives. They are so efficient that while the cooker is on, they will knead the dough and prepare chapattis. Likewise while you take tea or coffee you can go through your charts and graphs.

Now the fourth important thing is 'D'—to 'delegate'. Some students are very clever. They delegate their homeworks to their friends. No, that is not delegating. You need to delegate work which can be performed by others without meaning any loss to you. For example, mothers delegate some work to the maid-servant. But students should try to do their work themselves. Self-help is the best help. Delegate right work to the right person to increase efficiency of work. And one shouldn't always try to be a perfectionist, and do all the work oneself. It will lead to

stress. So we should learn to trust in the ability of others.

The fifth important thing is 'E' or *elimination*. There are so many items which take lot of your time, but they can be easily eliminated from your schedule. How? Take up activities which will benefit you. Then, the next thing is to stay focused on the job at hand. When Dronāchārya asked Arjuna: 'Do you see the bird on the tree?' Arjuna said 'No—I only see the eye of the bird', for he had to hit the eye of the bird which was a part of his training in archery. So stay completely focused on the activity you are engaged. 'F' stands for being focused.

Now 'G' and 'H'. 'G' stands for *gossiping* which has to be reduced if one wants to have more time for good work. And 'H' is *harmony*. We have to bring harmony between work and worship, between office work and home work. Balancing is very important. You see how efficiently working women balance their time—attending both to office and household chores responsibly.

'I' is *interference* which affects concentration of the mind. Suppose, I take up an activity with all earnestness but suddenly there is an SMS from my friend. The mind immediately goes to that SMS, etc. So you have to take measures to minimize such interruptions.

'J' stands for *judging*—judging yourself. Judging yourself is self-evaluation in terms of time management.

'K' is *keeping to the time*. That is, we have to be punctual. There may be so many uncertainties. But we must be prepared for them, especially while travelling to keep an appointment to attend an important meeting. I tell you an incident from the life of Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, the 11th President of our Order. I had the privilege to serve him when I was a brahmacharin. Before joining the Order he was in the Army serving its accounts department. So he

worked like a disciplined soldier. In fact, in the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, everything goes on the dot. But he was extra-military. He followed his timetable so rigorously that you could time your watch by seeing what he was doing. Every morning at 6.15 he would go for morning walk; at 7 he would take his breakfast; at 7.30 he will take Upanishad class; at 8 he would take bath; at 8.30 he will be writing commentary on Shankarāchārya, or whatever it is. Everything was fixed. You could correct your watch by seeing his movement.

Before joining Belur Math, I was a management consultant. So I had some ego. I was not afraid. I was very free though I was the juniormost member of the Order. And he was then the General Secretary—a sort of chief executive of the whole world organization. Of course the head is the President, but he does not get involved in executive work. So the General Secretary is like the CEO—topmost person of the Order, and I was the juniormost. Gambhiranandaji's eyes were weak. So somebody would read out and he will listen. So that was his routine. I heard that everyday after lunch he took some rest and at 2 o'clock he listened to some books that were newly published. Somebody will read out from such books for fifteen minutes. So one day I went and said, 'Maharaj, may I have the privilege of reading out to you everyday at 2 o'clock?' I had just joined. I did not know that the swami was considered to be very grave and nobody had the courage to go and talk to him. But I was very free; so I said like that. He said, 'Okay, you come from tomorrow'. Next morning I heard that he was very particular about time. So I did not take any chance.

From 12 o'clock itself I was full of tension and sat down on the bench just opposite his room. Exactly at 2 o'clock he

opened his room and I went inside with a book. He asked me to sit down and I did and started reading out. Exactly at 2.15, he said, 'Okay you can go'. For three days this routine went on very nicely. Now on the fourth day I became a little relaxed. I took a little nap. When I woke up I found it was already 2 o'clock. So I washed my face and ran immediately. Already it was five minutes past two. So the door was open. I felt so sorry. When I went inside, he asked me to sit down and I just prostrated. As soon as I sat down he did not tell me a single word, but there was a clock which he turned toward me. Now imagine my condition! From next day onward I gave up the nap and kept on sitting on the bench immediately after lunch. That was a great lesson. This punctuality helps a lot.

Now 'L', which means *learn* to say 'no'. Sometimes we want to oblige everybody. But you must have the courage to say 'no'. Your friend says, I am playing cricket, so you must come and watch me play. But next day you have an important assignment. But you tell your friend, 'Yes, yes, I will come'. Another friend tells you something else and you say 'yes' to that. But you have to decide what is to be your priority. So, at times you have to say 'no' and say that with politeness but firmly.

'M' is *managing* your physical health. For that you must do regular exercise, follow your routine, take care of your dress, food etc.

'N' signifies '*now or never*'. Do not procrastinate the work in hand because tomorrow may not come. This dilatory behaviour is an expression of *tamoguna*, or *tamas*.

'O'—Then *organize* your work. That is 'O'. You must have a proper filing system, and maintain a notebook. Sri Ramakrishna was so methodical. He had only one almirah and he knew where each item was kept. The

tenth President of our Order was Swami Vireswarananda. I had the privilege to serve him. His eyes were very weak but he would tell that so many items have arrived. One day one swami said that a particular shawl was not there. But he said the shawl was there, open the third drawer from the ninth number—that shawl has come from such and such person on such and such day. So you see, organising things saves our time.

‘P’ here denotes *planning* which again is very important. If you cannot plan you cannot have time management. In America one big industrialist told a management consultant that if he could teach the former only one technique of time management and it proved useful, he will give the consultant \$ 25,000. The management consultant gave the industrialist one pad of blank papers and said: Every night you write down what you are going to do next day in order of priority.

After a month the industrialist sent him the cheque: So planning is essential to achieve your long and short-term goals.

‘Q’ tells us to *quit*. In 1942, there was the Quit India Movement and the British had to quit India. But now you have to quit long hours of television viewing. In America it is the third generation of TV viewers. In 1964 TV had come to the market. They carried out a research and found that children, whose parents and grandparents were seeing more than six hours of TV, are born with a special faculty—they have very strong optical nerves. They can now see TV for ten hours. But analytical nerves are altogether absent in them. There is no analysis, and no imagination. In the name of entertainment the ‘idiot box’ is just spoiling our minds and brain. Therefore you quit that which you find is not beneficial to you. Suppose, you come to know that one of your friends is a drug addict. Everyday he comes and tells you to join him. What should you do? Quit that friend. The type of people you associate

with decides your future. So whatever comes in your way of personality development, character development, progress, or in your way of study—quit that. You have to be very firm and steadfast in this matter.

‘R’ signifies a fixed *routine*. That means there should be a timetable for twenty-four hours. Suppose, you set your alarm clock for 5 o’clock. On the first day it is possible that you get up, put the button off, and sleep for another hour. Does not matter, it happens, but set the alarm again for the next day. This time keep it away so that you have to get up to stop the alarm. Then immediately put some water on your face and do a little exercise. After this you won’t be able to sleep again. For some day, following the routine may seem monotonous. You don’t mind going to school because that is an old routine you have been following since childhood. But new routines are somewhat difficult to follow. Nevertheless you must do it. You also should reserve some time for meditation and prayers. This will deepen concentration and develop efficiency in work. Now the mind is not in our control. We are under the control of our mind. How to control our mind? By controlling our life. How to control our life? By regulating our life. How to regulate our life? By following a routine. After a certain time the mind gets accustomed to that routine. But don’t make this routine too much idealistic because in that case you may find it too tough to follow and soon give up. So prepare a routine that you can follow.

‘S’ means *saving*—saving time minute by minute. Drops of water form a pond. When you cannot save hours, save some minutes at least. For example, you take one hour to eat. Can you reduce the one hour to fifty minutes.

‘T’ tells us to *tame* the monkey. The monkey is inside our mind. Swami Vivekananda said:

How hard it is to control the mind! Well has it been compared to the maddened monkey. There was a monkey, restless by his own nature, as all monkeys are. As if that were not enough, some one made him drink freely of wine, so that he became still more restless. Then a scorpion stung him. When a man is stung by a scorpion, he jumps about for a whole day; so the poor monkey found his condition worse than ever. To complete his misery a demon entered into him. What language can describe the uncontrollable restlessness of that monkey? The human mind is like that monkey, incessantly active by its own nature; then it becomes drunk with the wine of desire, thus increasing its turbulence. After desire takes possession comes the sting of the scorpion of jealousy at the success of others, and last of all the demon of pride enters the mind, making it think itself of all importance. How hard to control such a mind!

But if you do not tame this monkey you cannot have time management because you must have self-discipline.

‘U’ is *utilizing* the time management tools. What are the tools? Alarm clock, planning calendar, note pad etc.

‘V’ is to *verify*. You want to meet somebody. Okay, go. Then you find that that person is not there. What a loss of time and energy! So before setting out you should verify whether the person will be there at the appointed time.

Now ‘W’. There is something called *wastage* of time and we all know where we waste our time. So write down what productive activities you are doing and cut out the unproductive ones.

‘X’—*xerox* your schedule and let others know your plans and engagements so that it saves your time as well as their time and thus protect you from unwanted and

unnecessary troubles.

‘Y’ indicates *yes*—telling yourself ‘yes’, that you will be able to do it. That confidence should be there. Yes, I can do it. Maybe, a little, but I shall. Little by little you will be able to do the whole work and complete your task. Implement positive changes in yourself and see yourself transformed into a person of confidence.

‘Z’ stands for *zoom*. Have a nice sleep at night. If you have a nice sleep at night in the morning you will feel fresh, and with new energy you will be able to complete all your work in time. The *Bhagavadgitā* says:

*Yukt’āhāra-vihārasya
yukta-ceshtasya karmasu /
Yukta-svapn’āvabodhasya
yago bhavati duhkha-hā //6.17//*

—‘For one who is temperate in food and recreation, who is detached and self-restrained in work, who is regulated in sleep and in vigil—Yoga brings about the cessation of the travail of *samsāra*.

And now how to get concentration of mind. Remember C is directly proportionate to P, where C is equal to concentration and P is equal to purity of mind. Purer the mind, greater is the concentration. And if you are not able to do time management properly, you will have lot of stress, and if you are not able to manage your stress properly you will not have time management. Both are inter-dependant. Swami Vivekananda said: The calmer we are and the less disturbed our nerves, the more shall we love and the better will our work be. So if you are stress-free, you will be able to perform better. All are related—efficiency, proficiency, dexterity, concentration of mind, stress and time management. ■

* This article is based on a lecture delivered by Swami Nikhileswarananda on 27 May 2011. The swami is Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Vadodara.