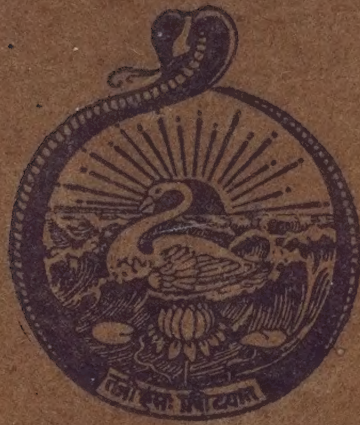


DYNAMIC RELIGION



SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

220.9.1

Presented

by

Swami Yatiswarananda

To Swami Yatiswarananda

With my love & Shastavga
Pronams.

Abani.

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PRA

DYNAMIC RELIGION

BEING FIVE LECTURES

BY

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

Author of "Subconscious Mind and Its Control," "Superconscious
Vision," "Cosmology," Etc.



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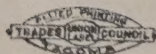
THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF PORTLAND
616 Kraemer Building, Second and Washington Streets
Portland, Oregon, U. S. A.

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Printed by Stanley Bell Printing Co., Inc.
1012 A Street, Tacoma
State of Washington, U. S. A.

AN HUMBLE OFFERING
AT THE BLESSED FEET OF
HOLY MOTHER
IN MEMORY OF
MY BELOVED BROTHER
SWAMI PRAKASHANANDA

FOREWORD

My dear friend, Swami Prabhavananda, has asked me to write a foreword for this book, probably, I suppose, because he wants an expression of the Occidental viewpoint on the problems dealt with herein. The subject is so vast and of such transcendent importance that only the highlights can be touched upon in the restricted space available, but I am glad to note a few points that occur to me.

*

A deep-seated unrest, a frantic seeking, trying, experimenting — these characteristics are dominant in the world today. The political and the physical sciences attract their hundreds of thousands, but most of all does an inarticulate longing for something different from any and all of them animate the great majority of mankind. Lacking certain means of material welfare, or falling short of perfect health, they vainly imagine that the fulfilling of their desires for material possessions or bodily well-being would encompass their needs and give into their eager hands happiness supernal and eternal.

The universality of this state of mind has called into being in the Western World a class of people who appear as teachers of various cults purporting to be spiritual, or as leaders of mental sciences, the laws of which they claim are operative over spiritual forces and qualities in the unseen world, and which, also, with true Western

efficiency, can be reversed and used to procure material benefits by the simple process of "holding" for them.

This pleasing and satisfactory method whereby one can certainly and safely gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles has an incredibly wide appeal, as can be seen by looking over current periodicals and crowded bookshelves.

Some of these "teachers" really seem to believe in the ethical soundness of the doctrine they expound, but in many cases they are frauds of an utterly unprincipled and most insidious type.

The last-mentioned find a fertile field plowed, sown, blossomed—yea, white unto the harvest. That harvest is theirs a harvest of credulity, false teaching, false understanding, false evaluating—all of which can be turned into shining gold or other personal perquisites by the wily "teacher."

Searchers after an undefined "something," thus led astray—partly by their own desire to satisfy a longing from within, and partly by the allurements and assurances that for money they can be taught the occult laws by which to attract material things unto themselves—seek the Pearl of Great Price in the muckheap of materiality, forgetting, alas! that the Pearl is literally beyond all price.

For such pernicious and subtly debasing philosophy I know of no better antidote than the five lectures in this book. Like a trumpet-call, the words of my Hindu brother pierce the drowsy languor of self-hypnosis in which are sunk so many millions.

The fact that spiritual treasures cannot be purchased by earthly riches is not a new discovery. It is set forth repeatedly in all the Scrip-

tures of the world—of the West as of the East—directly as well as inferentially. This was inevitable, for the sages who wrote those books were all in touch with the same basic Cosmic Truth; had all realized their oneness with the Central I AM.

If we of the West will but search in the Bible we profess to revere we shall find it in many places, especially in the Psalms, Isaiah and Amos. In the New Testament Jesus told the inquirers: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's;" but we seek in vain for any least hint that it is possible to barter the things which are Caesar's (material riches) and receive in exchange the things that are God's (the treasures of the spirit), or of being able to acquire spiritual development and then use it to draw to us earthly wealth. Again, in Acts 8:4-23, he may run who reads of the crushing rebuke Peter gave to Simon, who sought to buy spiritual development and higher powers with money.

The Western World is flushed with the passion of and pride in victory over material things; is verily "drunk with sight of power." Stride after giant stride has she made into the realms of matter—land, water, air; she has measured, weighed, subdivided and analyzed to an infinitesimal degree; laboratory upon laboratory has she equipped, that the laws of the finer, as of the denser, worlds may also be hers. Still she seeks. With gold and gear, with retort and scalpel, with microscope and telescope, she would storm the fastnesses of Life and wrench the inmost secrets from the Heart of Being—but not so may we find and enter The Kingdom. Teachers cry, Lo here! and Lo there! and Lo!—

it is neither; but both farther and nearer
 for it is in the Self alone—in the temple not made
 with hands. “Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
 an humble and a contrite heart.”

This truth does Swami Prabhavananda strive, in these lectures, to have us know, and, knowing, to realize for ourselves, turning a deaf ear to all enticements and allurements of those who—for payment—would show the way.

As a noteworthy proof of the fact that all the seers, sages, poets, prophets and Holy Ones of all time have contacted the same Cosmic' Truths, it is interesting to note the correspondence between the Sanskrit word “Yoga,” meaning “union,” and our Western word “religion,” derived from the Latin, “re,” again, and “ligo,” bind. That is the object of all religious aspiration and endeavor—to bind again the souls of men to the Source whence they sprang. This is accomplished by awakening them so that there is realization of, conscious oneness with that Source—that Source which we call God and our Hindu brothers call Satchidananda Existence, Knowledge, Bliss.

To one who reads these lectures, the purpose of the author is crystal-clear. He tells us where the spiritual self is enshrined and how it may be awakened and developed. Entanglements of vanity, pride, sensuousness, materiality, false teaching—all these hold back the spirit from conscious union with the All; but to those who devotedly seek That, That is revealed.

KINGSMILL COMMANDER.

TACOMA, State of Washington, U.S.A., March, 1927.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	vii
WHAT IS YOGA?	3
FULNESS OF LIFE	11
THE ART OF LIVING	23
THE ACID TEST OF A TEACHER	31
THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP	39
JEWELS OF THE SPIRIT	49

WHAT IS YOGA?



When the mind, absolutely restrained by the practice of concentration, attains quietude, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in his own self; when he feels that infinite bliss—which is perceived by the (purified) intellect and which transcends the senses, and established wherein he never departs from his real state; and having obtained which, regards no other acquisition superior to that, and where established, he is not moved even by heavy sorrow;—let that be known as the state, called by the name of Yoga,—a state of severance from the contact of pain. This Yoga should be practiced with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 6, v. 20-23.

*

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.—Psalm 25: 10.

WHAT IS YOGA?

IN the West, the word Yoga is associated with all sorts of hobgoblins and mystery-mongering; but it is nothing of the kind. It is a simple Sanskrit word meaning “union”—absolute union—with the Divine.

We have turned our faces away from God, have forgotten our real being, have lost our own kingdom (the kingdom of God)—and Yoga teaches us how to become re-united with Him; how to attain and realize our true being and the kingdom of God within.

The secondary meaning of the word Yoga is the path or method which helps us to accomplish this union and this attainment. There is not one Yoga alone, but many paths are there to realize the same union—the one Goal; in fact, “as many religions, so many paths”—therefore, as such, each religion is a Yoga—a separate and independent path by which to arrive at the realization of God.

One who follows the path of realization or one who has attained that union, is called a Yogi. Thus Christ was a Yogi; so was Buddha; so were Krishna and Ramakrishna.

No one can become spiritual without being a Yogi—i. e., without applying the teachings in his or her own life and striving to follow some path.

In the West, Yoga is generally associated with certain physical exercises—known as Yoga exercises. There is also a mistaken idea of a Yogi. He is considered some sort of a magician—one who can do mysterious feats or perform magic.

These misconceptions have arisen because of certain irresponsible persons who, taking advantage of the ignorance of the people, want to get rich quickly by exploitation.

You pay from twenty-five to a hundred dollars, and even more, and these charlatans will give you the yoga exercises—the “keys” to everything—from eternal youth to Cosmic Consciousness.

It is true that one branch of Indian Yoga philosophy evolved some physical exercises, but these are not used for any material or physical purposes. They are used as a means to the realization of the highest end.

The Hindus made a science of their religion, and thereby discovered that mastery of our own minds (self-conquest) is the first thing needed for self-realization. We are now slaves to our own minds—to our desires and passions. Mind must be conquered. The restless condition of the mind has to be calmed down and then Truth will reveal herself unto us. There is an inseparable bond between the body and the mind; therefore the conquest of the body aids in the conquest of the mind.

Mind and its workings are subtle and it is difficult to bring them under control—but the body is gross and it can be controlled much more easily than can the mind; therefore some physical exercises were developed to establish perfect balance and rhythm in our bodies, by means of which we can gain the same balance and rhythm for the mind.

Where there is proper instruction, there is nothing unnatural, mysterious or dangerous about the Yoga exercises. But, if learned from the so-called Yogis who charge for the knowledge they

claim to be able to impart, there is very great danger. A true Yogi never sells the Yoga exercises.

Yoga, when learned from a true Yogi, will help us to gain balance, rhythm—to attune our whole life in harmony with the One Great Ideal.

Has Yoga anything to do with occult powers and psychic phenomena?

Before giving a direct reply to this question, which I am so often asked, I will tell of a report I heard the other day. I was told Mrs. Blank had come into realization in the meditation class. (She attends the meditation class of a psychologist.) I was curious and also interested, for in the Hindu mind the word “realization” is associated with only the highest ideals and truths. I doubted much that any such meaning was attached to the word in this case, but—“in meditation” they had said . . . and so I questioned my informant. “What is that realization, please?” I asked. “Well,” was the reply, “she could not make the balance in her office accounts and in meditation she found the discrepancy.”

This is just a typical case, illustrating the utterly erroneous ideas many Occidental people have regarding meditation and realization—the mind, instead of dwelling in the thought of God in meditation, ruminating on absolutely material concerns and getting “realization”! . . . for material benefit only!

We find many, also, who claim to have psychic and spiritual visions. These are usually confused with dreams and hallucinations. Those so afflicted are to be pitied.

Yes, there are psychic visions and psychic phenomena, which are true as experienced. But these are of two classes—the lower and the higher. The

lower order of psychic phenomena is witnessed by undeveloped individuals or those who are degenerate. This is the type of phenomena usually met in spiritualistic seances, etc. The psychic (or, better, "mediumistic") faculty is seen to be developed mostly in degenerate souls—those who have lost control of their own minds and bodies, making themselves passive and negative—thus inviting the influence of earthbound excarnate entities on a low psychic plane. Sometimes we find this faculty developed in the lower animals—for instance, most dogs are psychic and see things which we do not.

Then there are the psychic phenomena of a higher order, wherein the vision grows through the power of concentration and purity of character. This world that we perceive with our gross senses is not the only world. Similarly, we are not merely the bodies and the senses. We possess higher faculties.

We have the mind, the intellect, the ego and the spirit—or, as it is expressed philosophically: the Spirit (Self) is encased in the sheaths called the causal body, the subtle or astral body and the gross or physical body. Correspondingly, behind and beyond this gross physical universe, there is the astral or spiritual universe. When the mind becomes concentrated, we raise ourselves to higher vibrations, and things existing on that finer plane of being are seen and heard with the subtler senses. With such visions we grow in knowledge and our purity of character becomes strengthened.

And the purity that we achieve by such visions is what? Nothing but unselfishness. In that one word—unselfishness—is contained the whole meaning of Religion. To enrich little me and mine is to go farther and farther away from religion,

from truth. Anything that helps us to free ourselves from our littleness, and makes us broad, loving and selfless, is religion. That and that alone is the true test of a true vision.

But, again, we must not take these visions as the ultimate of religion. They are mere passing phases on the way towards the highest goal. They are the milestones or the signposts on the road and we must not tarry there if we want to reach our destination.

Furthermore, in our progress, with the growth of the power of concentration, there may develop some occult powers. These must not be sought after. They are also passing phases and, to yogis on the way, are known as the subtler temptations.

We must always be on our guard against these powers and their use if we desire the ultimate truth—the Ever-Existent, Never-Changing Reality. As we have to conquer physical temptations, so we have to conquer the still more subtle ones which we meet on the higher planes. Keep the sword of discrimination always at hand.

What do these powers amount to, after all? Consider this parable, which Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master, used to tell. There were two brothers. One withdrew from the world in his search for truth. He came back to his brother after twelve years!—years of struggle and self-denial. His brother asked him: “What have you gained in these years of austerity and struggle?” “Come and I will show you,” answered the brother. They went to a river-side and the Yogi brother crossed the river by walking on the water. The lay brother called for a boat, paid the boatman a copper and was ferried across. Then he said: “Brother, is this all you have gained in twelve long years of struggle—to be able to do

something that can be had for the price of one copper piece?"

To become a true Yogi—to attain to the Unchanging Reality, the Everlasting Life, the Abode of Peace and Blessedness—we must go beyond all these planes; must conquer all these temptations. We must always remember that God alone is the Ideal. He alone is the Life and the Goal. Yoga is simply the Path that leads to Him.

In Hindu philosophy, the different paths or religions (Yoga) have been classified under four heads:

(1) Raja Yoga — The secret of union through the practice of concentration and meditation;

(2) Jnana Yoga — The path of union through analysis, philosophy and discrimination;

(3) Bhakti Yoga — The path of union through love and devotion;

(4) Karma Yoga — The path of union through unselfish work.

But though, theoretically, distinctions are made among the four Yogas, really they cannot be separated one from another. We may, by some outstanding trait in our nature, be more strongly drawn to one particular Yoga than to another, but to achieve a harmonious, all-round development we must have the help of all the Yogas; we must be active as well as meditative; we must cultivate our emotional nature and at the same time balance ourselves with philosophic reason.

So, by following the Yoga, we shall all ultimately reach that state which is known as the state of severance from all pain and misery—in short, we realize freedom, bliss and immortality . . . which are God.

FULNESS OF LIFE



Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.—John 6: 27.

*

“These sons belong to me, and this wealth belongs to me”—with such thoughts a fool is tormented. He himself does not belong to himself; how much less sons and wealth!—From The Dhammapada.

FULNESS OF LIFE

THE highly revered Western sage, Thomas á Kempis, in his "Imitation of Christ," said: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, except to love God, and to serve Him only. This is the highest wisdom, by contempt of the world to press forward toward heavenly kingdoms. Vanity, therefore, it is to seek after perishing riches, and to trust in them. . . . Vanity it is to set thy love on that which speedily passeth away, and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy abideth. Call often to mind that proverb: 'The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.' Endeavor, therefore, to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to things invisible."

How true are these words from the Bible: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." The tragedy of human life is that we want to satisfy our eyes with seeing. We want satisfaction and fulness of life in the domain of the senses.

By hunting after perishing riches and putting our trust in them, we are baffled again and again in our search for peace, for satisfaction, for fulfillment. Everything we seek is fleeting. Everything in which we place our trust proves false.

"This life they cling to is but empty show.
'Twere all as well to bid a cloud to stand
Or hold a running river with the hand."

When, through experience, we learn the unreality of material things, then is it that we seek God—the Eternal Truth; then is it that we place our trust in religion; then is it that we come to know the true meaning of religion, which is: “The search after the Eternal amongst the non-eternal; the highest abiding joy amongst the fleeting pleasures of life.”

People get frightened when this truth is told to them. Yet it has to be told, for the words—the naked and bold words—ring constantly in the ears of the adepts and the initiates, coming down from the hoary sages and seers of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bible: “Know the Self. Give up all other vain talks”; “No true peace or abiding joy in the finite. The Bhuma, the Infinite alone is joy”; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity except to love God and to serve Him only”; “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”

To those who have not yet learned through experience the vanity of the perishing things of life, religion is meaningless. If they think they want religion, it is not for the sake of God, the Eternal Reality. They would make of Him a means through which they would gain the perishing things of life. God, to them, is a means to a selfish end. This is making but a mockery of religion.

God, or Truth, must be demonstrated. This is the cry of the West today. A spiritual man or the value of true spirituality is judged by the power of demonstration. They rightly say that practical religion is the manifestation of Christhood or Buddhahood or Godhood. But what IS this manifestation—this demonstration? And

the up-to-date answer is: Cash, comfort, bank account—success, health, prosperity!

Poor Buddha! Poor Christ! They are to come once more, not to save humanity, but to learn from the modern West this new truth—how to manifest Godhood, how to demonstrate religion and psychology!

Buddha, who was himself a prince and heir to a kingdom, was indeed a fool to have given up his prosperity, his psychology demonstration, in search of something unknown—unmanifest!

And Christ! “The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” That is perhaps why he taught “Sell all thou hast and give to the poor and come and follow me.” Poor Jesus could not demonstrate by carrying a bank account or title deeds—except to Eternal Life. Neither had he any endowments—except the unsearchable riches. On no occasion do we find one single coin in his possession. At Samaria the disciples had to help him to buy meat. When he was asked to give tribute to Caesar he had to be given money because he was penniless. When they parted his garments among them, they did not discover any coin or notes.

And Ramakrishna—in the 19th century . . . before our very eyes! He was indeed a maniac! He could not touch coin.

You, my readers, have surely become impatient by this time. You will say: “Well, they lived in a different age and we are living in this modern age, when we need to have money—property.”

To which I reply: Yes, we need them. Let us have them; have even more than we need; but, for Heaven’s sake, not in the name of religion!

not in the name of God! not as a demonstration of Truth! Christ will not suffer us to do that. Do you not know how he drove the money-changers from the Temple?

*

Can anybody give me an illustration of anyone who has attained to prosperity through psychology or religion? Do not be hoodwinked by the alluring and impossible claims of the so-called "psychologist" and "religionist." Let us consider if these claims be true.

First let us see what philosophy, these psychologists teach.

They teach the highest truth—the truth taught in every religion: "You are divine. Manifest this divinity. You are a child of God, a reflection of the Divine, a spirit of God." But what is meant by the manifestation (or "demonstration," as they say) of this divinity? A Rolls-Royce car, the health of an elephant and the wealth of a Rockefeller or a Ford. Even those are not the highest demonstration, for they do not satisfy. The insatiable desire for more and more in the material world demonstrates, not spiritual development, but the materialization of spiritual conceptions.

To show the absurdity of considering material success as the hallmark of spiritual development needs no involved logical argument. I will relate from the Upanishads a story bearing upon this point. Indra and Virochana, the rulers of the Devas and Asuras, once set out separately in search of one who could teach them the highest Truth. They both went to Prajapati and, desiring to be taught, received this Truth: "You are God. Realize That." Both went back after hearing the Truth, but Indra could not remain satis-

fied. He thought, "If I am God, which is the real I? The body cannot be God, for it undergoes change, and God is the Changeless Immortal Spirit." ¹ So he went back to his teacher, and, having lived with him for many years, and meditated upon the Divine Spirit, realized That which is beyond all change . . . beyond the body, beyond the mind, beyond the intellect—beyond even the Ego. Thus did he make his life blessed.

Virochana, when taught that he was God, thought the body was divine, and began to decorate it and to live a life of pleasure and dissipation. But soon death overtook him and he lost the kingdom of Heaven within.

Such is ever the fate of those who want to "demonstrate" Spirit, Divinity, in terms of materiality.

But suppose somebody wants, not God, but prosperity. Can he get that through psychology? Let us discuss this point.

The psychologists give the lesson—a practical lesson for prosperity: "What you think, you become [using 'become' in the sense of 'obtain']. Now enter into silence. Free your mind from all thoughts except Wealth. Concentrate! Think of a bag of gold lying before you. Think hard. Believe 'ye have it'." Splendid lesson. [Charge, \$25.]

Now I say, my dear psychologist, when you are hungry, concentrate intensely on food. Do not eat anything! Simply think, and think hard! Believe ye have the food! Will your hunger be appeased?

Am I talking like an atheist, an unbeliever? Does not Christ want us to pray and believe 'ye have it'? Of course. God is within you. You need not go outside to search for Him. Nay, you

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are That. Meditate on That and you are sure to realize That—what you are in reality.

But not so with the bag of gold. If you want prosperity, no thinking and no psychologizing can give it to you. Better follow the path trodden by Rockefeller or Ford and not meditate on a bag of gold. Still better, perhaps, go and work in the fields or pick fruit than waste your time in meditation and with psychologists.

Do not the psychologists demonstrate prosperity? Indeed they do—at the expense of the credulous poor who give them each \$25 or \$50 cash for their lessons on prosperity! Think of it! A person who tells you how to make money charging money for that knowledge! Why does not he himself draw money from the Universal? When you go to him to learn how to make money he surely demonstrates prosperity—and you become so much the poorer!

Not always does he demonstrate, though. Once in Boston a young man came to Swami Vivekananda and handed him a slip on which was written: "All the wealth of the world is yours if you know how. Come to me. I will teach the secret. Charge, \$5," and asked, "Swami, what do you think of this?" Swami replied, "Splendid. But why haven't you the money to print it?" The young man was so enthusiastic over his idea that the Swami's remark was lost on him.

I have also a little experience to relate. The other day a doctor came to me. For a moderate charge she gives lessons on health, beauty and wealth. Health!—while she was with me, she had a fit of coughing. Beauty!—I have seen many more charming and beautiful women in America than she. Wealth!—she had not money

just then to advertise. But wait! She will demonstrate wealth in a few months. There are plenty of credulous people in America.

One more question arises in this connection. You may ask, Are not our prayers granted by Almighty God? Yes, He does grant our desires, if we desire hard, but—I will tell you a story which will explain my “but.”

Once upon a time (for that is how all stories begin) a man was walking the street. He got very tired and thought within himself: “Oh, if only I had a horse!” He was a student of psychology and knew the secret. So, as he walked, he concentrated on a horse and prayed to God, “O my Lord, get me a horse, please!” Lo, no sooner had he prayed than he overtook two strong people who had some difficulty with their mare, for she had given birth to a colt by the wayside and someone was needed to carry it, which they, being burly fellows, compelled this man to do. He said aloud: “Oh Lord, you granted my desire for a horse, but you misunderstood me a little bit.”

*

How we wish we could obtain Happiness, Eternal Peace! How we wish our lives to be flooded with joy, and all our desires fulfilled! There is a way, but in our ignorance we miss it and travel in the opposite direction.

The Great Teacher, Sri Krishna, has taught the lesson to “Look with an equal eye upon the dualities of life—pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, success and failure,” for those conditions which depend upon external objects and are “contact-born” are but transitory. Happiness or peace, fulness of life and freedom are not dependent upon any external possession, but

are within, in the domain of Spirit. When we realize that Spirit—or God, or the Kingdom of Heaven—within, then is it that we gain Eternal Happiness; that our life is flooded with joy and freedom.

To realize that highest blessing we must in the first place understand the transitory nature of all external objects and possessions, of all pleasure and pain, that the external world imposes upon us. When our attachment for these is conquered, then is it that we can rise to that higher plane of consciousness. As long as these ephemeral objects drag us down, we can never gain the “Eternal amongst the non-eternal”; we can never realize the “highest abiding joy amongst the fleeting pleasures of life.” There is no other way.

Study any religion or philosophy, study the teachings of any prophet or World-Teacher, and you will find that every one repeats the same Truth which is found in the Vedas, “By renunciation alone is that immortality gained.”

But, what is this renunciation? Is it a suicidal policy? Although it is a fundamental teaching of every religion, it is the most misunderstood of all. In Vedanta alone we find a true explanation of it.

What is this Ideal? Are we to give up the world? Are we to give up work? No. We need not give up anything but our attachment. Retain possessions, but be not attached to them. Live in the world, but be not of it. The first book of Vedanta (the Isa Upanishad) begins with the verse: “Whatever thou seest or perceivest, cover everything with God. By such renunciation alone thou canst enjoy.”

Cover everything with God. See the Reality, the Truth, the Divine Spirit in everything. Rise above the unrealities of life and then alone you really obtain bliss and enjoyment in this life.

See God in everything. Perceive the Unchangeable Reality behind the changing phenomena of the universe—that is the meaning of Renunciation.

Neither does it mean the giving up of work. On the other hand, Vedanta teaches us to work for the world—to work for all humanity, but with the attitude of service. In Vedanta there is no such word as “help.” Who are you to help? Is it not a blasphemy to think that you can help God’s world? Make your life blessed by serving the world. See God in all and serve all humanity as God.

Thus and thus alone can you go beyond the domain of the senses, the domain of changing phenomena, and realize and manifest the God in you—in whom alone is there the true abiding Joy, the real Freedom, the Fulness of Life. —

THE ART OF LIVING



Fill thy mind with Me, be My devotee, sacrifice unto Me, bow down to Me; thus having made thy heart steadfast in Me, taking Me as the Supreme Goal, thou shalt come to Me.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 9, v. 34.

*

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.—John 12:25.

THE ART OF LIVING

RELIGION is something we need in our everyday lives. It is not enough to learn about the Truth. We must make of it a working principle and apply it practically in our lives as we live them day by day. Unless we LIVE religion, we shall never know what it is.

It is interesting to analyze the various types of people one meets in the world. One type—the “practical” men and women, those who are wholly of the world and quite indifferent to any religion—find that they can live here without bothering about religion. Nor do they consider that religion would be of any real value to them in their practical, everyday lives.

Then there is another type—people who are religious. They go to church, hear sermons and lectures regularly, have their routine of prayer and meditation and are devoted and God-fearing citizens. But, strange as it may seem, they really apply religion to their daily lives hardly a bit more than do those of type No. 1. Religion, to them, is something for the “other” world, and, although they do not realize it, their devout practices are simply their attempt to earn their passage—to pay their fare—to the next world and make sure of pleasant accommodations after they arrive there.

Both of these types, though good and commendable in their own ways, have missed the true meaning and scope of religion.

A false division is made between practical, secular life and spiritual life. The first type knows only the secular life. The second knows the secular life and also a certain phase of what they consider spiritual life, but fails entirely in finding, or does not even seek for, any reconciliation or harmonious working basis between the two.

Still another type is quite modern and found only in the Western world. These people think they have made religion practical. They imagine they have effected the reconciliation between the secular and the spiritual life. Their idea is to enrich their secular, physical lives along material lines of "prosperity," "success," etc., by the use of the powers and virtues acquired and developed through their so-called spiritual lives. In short, they try to secularize (really to commercialize, to "cash in" on—if I may use a common expression) the spiritual life.

All of these have missed the mark. It is a false line of demarcation—this, between the secular and the spiritual life. There is but one life—call it either secular or spiritual, according to the view or ideal you hold.

God alone is the Truth, the Reality. He alone exists. This is the highest truth taught in every religion. What is meant by reality? That which never changes, which is eternal and everlasting. The unreal is that which today IS and tomorrow IS NOT.

What, then, is this universe, this plurality of matter and material things? That which we call the material universe is not real. Its nature is ever changing—today it is; tomorrow it is not. All is God. On God, on reality, is superimposed

this unreality; just as, in semi-darkness, a rope can appear to be a snake.

To give another illustration by means of an analogy. The ocean is ever-existent. Waves are seen on its bosom, but in the last analysis those waves are merely name and form. They are ever-changing. The ocean—the central fact—remains. If we look at the waves only, apart from the ocean, what are they? They are unreal. But the substance in them, which is the same as ocean, is real.

So it is with this manifold universe. Apart from God, who is the Reality, the Substance, this universe is unreal. Thus there is one Infinite Existence—the Eternal Spirit; and on That is seen the play of name and form which are ever-changing.

Therefore, the truth is that there is but One Life, One Existence. When viewed without true wisdom we see only the material universe or secular life, and when the light dawns—there exists but God alone and life is spiritual only.

When, through ignorance, we see this life as secular, we find in it no meaning or purpose. Does the so-called practical man in the world know why he is living? He toils and labors hard, day by day, to hoard up possessions, to enjoy a little of this life. But does he get any real enjoyment? When the call from the other side comes, he has to leave everything behind and there is the end of all his hard labor.

An illiterate farmer in India once likened the so-called practical people of the world to the bulls with which he was ploughing his field. "Poor animals!" said he; "they work hard, but they know not why. They do not get any share of the results of their labor for themselves."

But when we look upon life as spiritual, the whole meaning and intent of it becomes clear. The entire purpose of life is to attain freedom and everlasting bliss, or, as it has been expressed beautifully in Vedanta Philosophy—to attain God, Who is Satchidananda . . . Immortality, Knowledge, Bliss. We live and work solely for the attainment of that ideal. Through the various processes of evolution, we are all moving toward that one goal.

The question can then be asked: Are we to give up altogether the material, secular life and live only a spiritual life?

Yes, we have to live one life only—the spiritual—and banish all secularism. Our only struggle in life must be to realize God—He who alone is the Truth, and in Whom alone is everlasting life.

What then of this world? How can we live? How can we work? If we abandon our secular life how can we maintain existence and do work in the world?

This is a very common misunderstanding among most of the aspirants and seekers after Truth, and (as so often) it can be clearly answered by a story from the Indian Scriptures.

When Rama, the great hero of India, was very young, he wanted to give up the world and retire to lead a contemplative life.

Vasishtha, a great sage, came to him and said: "My boy, what can you leave? Is not God all? Is He not in the world? Is He not in the work, too? What could you give up?"

That is the truth. Give up secularism, but not life and work. In short, see God everywhere and spiritualize the so-called secular life.

In India this beautiful ideal is taught to everyone: In and through every bit of work you worship God. When the farmer goes to work in the field, he worships his plough with which he works, he worships the field, he worships the produce of the field. Thus the artisan, the mechanic, the business man — everyone's work, and also the field of that work, is God and His temple. And through their respective lines of work they are only worshipping God in so many ways.

Some time since I was reading an article about India in one of the American magazines. The writer is an Englishman, and he tried to show the superstitions of India by relating that the coolies there would not work with a machine until the machine was worshipped as God.

A superstition indeed! Would to God, then, that we Indians never give up our "superstitions" and become "civilized"!

Therein is the highest truth. Spiritualize the whole life. Every kind of work is a means to the realization of the one Ideal.

When we attain to that outlook on life we shall be truly practical and shall not toil and labor mechanically like the bulls of the farmer. With such a viewpoint there can be no labor lost, nor any defeat in our attempts, for every moment of our life we breathe a prayer in and through every labor, through every activity of life. We live for that one Ideal, moving on and ever on towards the realization of that Supreme Goal—the manifestation of Satchidananda.

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This, then, is the secret of the art of living. Not by the drawing of any imaginary line of

demarcation between the secular and the spiritual life; nor by effecting a so-called "reconciliation" between the two by the lowering of the Great Ideal in order to cling to the vanities of the sense-life—to make God the means to an unworthy, sordid end. No! But by living the life—all life—for realization of the Infinite, everlasting Ideal.

Our whole life will then be a continuous breathing of prayer, a continuous worship and meditation.

THE ACID TEST
OF A TEACHER



He (the Divine Self) of whom many are not even able to hear, whom many even when they hear of Him do not comprehend; wonderful is a man, when found, who is able to teach Him; wonderful is he who comprehends Him, when taught by an able teacher.—From the Upanishads.

*

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again;

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.—John 4: 13-14.

THE ACID TEST OF A TEACHER

QUENE of the great teachers of India—Sankaracharya of blessed memory—has rightly said: “Rare indeed is a combination of these three—human birth, a desire for freedom and the contact with a real teacher.” We are all blessed with human birth, but how few of us are blessed with the desire for freedom!

In the Upanishads it is written: “Man becomes true if he comprehends God in this life; if not, it is his greatest calamity.” What greater calamity can there be than to fail to achieve the purpose of human life? It is true that no soul will be lost. Everyone will ultimately realize the innate glory of the Self and attain to the freedom which is the birthright of that Self. But until and unless we realize this divine birthright of ours, we are being crushed under the wheel of birth and death; we cannot free ourselves from the bondage of misery.

The tragedy of life is that we do feel the bondage, but we do not know the way of escape. We cling to life, we long for happiness, we desire freedom. If we analyze the motives of our manifold activities and thoughts, we shall find back of them the urge to manifest life, joy and freedom. God is Sat Chit Ananda (existence, knowledge, and bliss); and That is the Self, the True Being within us. That Truth within every individual seeks manifestation. But in our ig-

norance we hope to realize and to manifest the Eternal through vanishing unrealities. As one great mystic philosopher has so beautifully said, "You, the almighty cause of the universe, trying to reflect yourselves in little mudpuddles!" That is exactly what we are trying to do. We are seeking life—life eternal—by clinging to that which is every moment dying. We seek to realize our freedom by pursuing that which creates even stronger bondage.

What is it that can give us eternal life? Wherein is our true joy? How are we to realize our freedom? The reply is: Seek God. Seek the Truth. "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free." We have to realize the Truth; to manifest the spirit, the God within us. Therein lies our freedom, our joy, our life eternal.

When we come to understand—perhaps after many bitter experiences through many lives—that in God, in Truth alone is there true freedom, then arises within us the desire for freedom, the conscious struggle to realize the Truth. And it is a law that whatever a man truly desires, to that will he truly attain. How we desire material things! How we struggle for material success and prosperity! How intensely we long for even the lesser things! Have we an equal desire for Spiritual things, for God, for Truth? "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Seek Him and Him alone and your heart's desire will be fulfilled. "Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

The real help for spiritual growth, therefore, is within. We have to bring to the search a deep thirst and an earnest desire for the Truth.

But this does not preclude our receiving help from outside. Nay, for in the vast majority of cases such help is absolutely necessary. When we come in contact with a spiritual teacher, "the higher spiritual life is awakened, growth is animated and powers and possibilities of the soul are quickened. Man becomes holy and perfect in the end."

But how are we to know a teacher? "Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round, staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind." (Mundaka Upanishad.) The world is full of these. Everyone wants to be a teacher.

Is there, then, any way to know a true teacher? Yes, there is—but we must use our common sense, that common sense which, alas! is so uncommon in this world! The same question was asked in ancient days and we find the reply in the Vedas: "He who is learned in the Scriptures, sinless and unpolluted by lust—is the greatest knower of Brahman and is the real teacher."

The general belief in the West is that there is little, if any, need to look into the life and character of the teacher. We have to learn only from what he says, what he preaches. But this is a mistake when applied to a Spiritual Teacher. If I wish to study chemistry, physics, or any branch of *Apara Vidya* or the secondary knowledge, I need not inquire into the life and character of the teacher. All I need is to receive and assimilate the lessons he teaches on these subjects. But religion is not book-learning, nor mere intellectual knowledge. Religion is realization—life—character. He alone who

has seen the Truth can give us the Truth. And who sees the Truth? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Unless one is pure, how can one claim to teach about God?

A real teacher who has realized the Truth for himself can transmit the power and quicken the impulse for higher realization in the mind of the disciple. If he is not pure, if he is not himself what he teaches, how can he impart the Truth?—how can he infuse the Spirit?

How are we to know the teacher is pure? When we find out that he is free from lust. And what is the greatest lust? The lust for gold.

So always look for the motive of the teacher. Has he come to teach out of his love for humanity or to satisfy some selfish end? If his motive is selfish, to gain name, fame or wealth,—keep away from him—no matter how apparently great are the truths he presents. He may be intellectual, he may have gathered information from a great many sources, repeating the same like a parrot, or have some knowledge of magic—but he can never give religion. It is dangerous to allow oneself to be taught by him, for he cannot transmit any good, but he can transmit evil to the disciple.

How easy it is in this country to get so-called religion! Twenty dollars and you become adept in the technique of concentration! Would to God religion COULD be bought! In India if a religious teacher sells his teaching he will be literally spat upon—for in India they know the qualifications of a true teacher.

You say expenses must be met! Surely. But why sell? If you have anything real to give and if there are real seekers—do they not know that your expenses are to be met? If they do

not, they are not yet ready for the Truth—no use crying in the wilderness before them.

In conclusion I would appeal to my sisters and brothers in America to beware of these so-called Teachers. Even though one has something to give out, if he charges, he at once loses the power of transmitting. This is a spiritual law. And I would ask anyone in the spiritual world to contradict this statement if he can.

The people of this country themselves are mostly to blame for these false teachers. The housewife who leaves her jewelry exposed and her doors unlocked has but herself to thank when the thief accepts her tempting invitation to steal.

If you allow yourselves to be duped and defrauded by all sorts of deceivers masquerading under the guise of Spiritual Teachers, not only will you be robbed of your money, but you will make of this country of yours a huge insane asylum.

You say you want “practical teaching” for your money, so these false teachers note down some practices of yoga, some exercises from the books, and give them to you without transmitting to you the full knowledge necessary to maintain the proper balance while learning and applying the lessons. Then, if you try to follow these practices of which you have been told, or (as they call it) to “use the key” that they have given you, without fulfilling certain necessary preliminary conditions—conditions which it is not practical to fulfill in the Western World—you will wreck yourselves physically and, very likely, mentally also.

When you find a real teacher who is pure, unselfish, free from lust—approach him with

true reverence, open your heart to him and the Truth will be transmitted.

The main necessity, however, for spiritual growth is the desire for freedom. If you really have a true desire for God, you will meet your teacher. There is no lack of Teachers. They are ready to impart the knowledge—but—where are the disciples? As my Master once said to me: “They come to buy potatoes and eggplants—when we have gems and diamonds with us. They do not know the value. We are ready and willing to give. But where are the true seekers?”

THE PATH OF
DISCIPLESHIP



Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.—John 8:31-32.

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With the heart unattached to external objects, he realizes the joy that is in the Self. With the heart devoted to the meditation of Brahman, he attains undecaying happiness.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 5, v. 21.

THE PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP



GREAT mystic sage of India once said: "Gurus (teachers) can be had by thousands, but no one to be the disciple!" How true! Everyone wants to be a teacher, but few there are willing to be the disciple first.

A story is told of a student who came to a teacher, seeking to become his disciple. The teacher examined the boy, and, finding him not yet ready for discipleship, informed him of the disciplines that he would have to undergo in order to become a disciple. He told him also of the hardships and austerities of a student's life. After listening to the teacher, the student asked him: "But then, what has the teacher to do?" The teacher replied: "He has to look after the conduct of his students, keep a watchful eye over them and teach them."

The boy at once said, "Sire, make me a teacher, then. For that is easy—to sit quiet and teach."

(Since I came to this country I have had a few applications from people who would like me to make religious teachers of them!)

They think that, to become religious teachers, they have only to master a course of study, preferably given in a few easy lessons. They think that by memorizing the lessons or getting an intellectual understanding of the philosophy they can go out and teach humanity. They forget

that Religion is Realization. It is not book-learning—it is life. It is purity of character and motive. It is growth from within.

A beggar would like to distribute a million dollars in charity! First acquire, then—and not till then—can you give.

Acquire love, purity, divine character—then you will radiate these by your very presence. You will be blessed yourself and will bestow the Divine love and blessings upon others.

You may learn by rote the Bible, the Gita and all the teachings of all the teachers of the world; may be able to give fine discourses, preach eloquent sermons, and talk learnedly on philosophy; but you cannot be a true Spiritual teacher until and unless you have yourself manifested and lived the Truth.

Sri Ramakrishna, the great mystic of India, used to say: "In the Hindu almanac is written the forecast of so many inches of rainfall for the year. But squeeze the book—not a drop!"

Similarly, one may speak of Divine love, one may talk of philosophy—but if one has not manifested and lived the love and the truth, one cannot let them shine forth. Such a man's own life is barren; how, then, can he bring out flowers and fruits in others' lives?

So, we must first become disciples, acquire and manifest Divinity and become masters of ourselves. Only then are we fit to call ourselves teachers.

The path of discipleship is a path of self-discipline. We all need discipline except those who are perfect and those who are on the lowest rounds of the ladder of evolution.

The perfect souls do not need any, because through discipline in the past they have reached

the desired goal and are beyond all disciplines. The lowest, because they have not yet grown enough to understand the ideal and therefore do not as yet require it.

Oftentimes we find people who pray, worship, meditate—but do not obtain any result. Why not? Because they do not first gain control of their selfish desires and animal passions. To obtain that control, discipline is essential.

If we epitomize all the Scriptures and teachings of the world, of every religion, we shall find the central truths therein are “Self-mastery and self-knowledge”—mastery of the lower self, mastery over the ego, selfish desires and passions, and knowledge of the true nature of the Self—which is Divine, and one with God.

When we say “Religion is realization,” we mean that it is the realization of the Divine Self within, the Christ within, the kingdom of God within. To seek God (or heaven) you need not direct your gaze into the sky. Look within. He is there. He is your very self. Jesus became the Christ by having realized that Christ within himself, and so he could truly declare—“I and my Father are one.”

The highest truth that has been taught in Vedanta is the realization of our oneness with God—the Absolute, all-pervading Spirit, in whom alone is there everlasting joy, peace, blessedness, freedom and life eternal . . . and “Thou art That.” But why is it that we ourselves are not conscious of this Divinity? It is because the Light is covered by the clouds of ignorance.

The object and ideal in life is to let this light shine in ourselves, and that is achieved by the purification of our motives and our character and the removal of the clouds of ignorance.

A great philosopher of India in explaining the process of evolution, said: "The change of one species into another is attained by the in-filling of nature."

The effect is already there in the cause. Only the obstructions to its manifestation have to be removed. Potentially we are all Christs, and this Christhood that is already germinal in us has to be evolved by removing the obstructions. All the training and religious discipline that we have to undergo are simply for that purpose—to remove the obstructions.

And is not that also the central idea in the religion of Christ? If we delve deeply into the basic principles of every religion, we strike the same note that is vibrant in every heart; for the hearts of all religions are the same. The central idea of Christianity is—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom is already within. But "watch and pray," purify yourselves and it will shine.

Alas! how few of us are ready and willing to "watch and pray"!

Let us be true to ourselves and ask of our inner selves the question, Why do we want religion? Our hearts will answer: "Because we still lack full and complete happiness." We may have everything in our outer lives that makes man happy; makes him feel the joy of life—yet there remains the lack of something in our hearts. In our ignorance we often think: "Oh, if we could have this or that—some more wealth, or better health—we should be happy." And the desire for and longing for things makes us miserable. But as soon as our wants and desires are satisfied, we again find ourselves in the same condition—still there is the lack of

something; still we are not happy; still other wants and desires crop out and make us miserable.

Thus our life goes on and thus it must ever go on until we know what we really want and until that real want is fulfilled. If we analyze farther, we find that the real want in us is the yearning for something that is abiding, that is eternal, that does stay with us.

When we seek happiness or prosperity in the world, we seek them because we imagine they are permanent. But always we are disillusioned.

We take time to learn the Truth—and the only Truth—that “Christ abideth forever.” He alone is the Truth. In Him alone is Life Eternal, joy everlasting.

So, to knock at the door of Truth, to enter into the path of discipleship, the first thing necessary to bring into our lives is discrimination—discrimination between reality and unreality. In Hindu philosophy this is known as “Nityanitya vastu viveka.”

And what is reality? It is that which abideth forever. The unreal is that which changes and passes away, eluding our grasp every moment. That which passes away cannot satisfy our real thirst, cannot fill the lack that we feel in our hearts. So seek only the real—that which abideth forever. This is what Christ meant when He said: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

And when we bring this discrimination into our lives, then no longer our hearts crave for the satisfaction of evanescent pleasures. They become insipid and give us no pleasure. We no longer want to remain slaves to momentary im-

pulses of selfish and passionate desires. There arises in our hearts what the Hindu sages designated as "Ithamutrārtha Bhogaviraga"—dispassion for the fleeting enjoyments in this life or any life.

But then there arises in us a real struggle to gain mastery over the lower self. When we consider and analyze ourselves, we find that we are slaves to certain habits we have formed because of lack of discrimination. And, in spite of great efforts, we find it sometimes impossible to rise above them.

You will find in the lives of all great teachers and saints, in the lives of all aspirants—there has been a great struggle to achieve mastery over the lower propensities.

Nothing can be achieved without struggle. Life is a struggle. This we realize even at the outer portal of the domain of spirituality.

In the life of the ordinary man, in the life of a slave, there is no struggle. He gives himself up to every impulse, every propensity, every tendency of his mind. His only struggle is to gratify, and the more he gratifies the more restless he becomes.

The purer you become, the more you advance toward God—the greater grows the struggle. Now, perhaps you may not care even if you do something evil. But as you grow, if even an impure thought crosses the border of your mind, you will feel it greatly, and intense will be your struggle.

Arjuna, the disciple of the great Master, Sri Krishna, felt this struggle in his life and said to his Master: "Sir, it is impossible! Rather easier it is to control the elements than to control our own minds."

The Master replied: "Yes, it is difficult, but not impossible. And we must gain this mastery. It is attained by practice and discrimination alone."

There is no use in simply brooding over our mistakes in life. We cannot grow if we think only of our weaknesses. If the room is dark and we cry all our life, "It is dark! It is dark!"—the darkness will not cease; but bring in the light, and the darkness, even though it may be ages old, will vanish in a moment. So, to overcome our evil habits, to free ourselves from our slavish desires and passions—we have only to create good habits and tendencies. Practise good and you conquer evil. Discriminate and practise—that is the only way.

This practice is known to the Indian sages as the acquirement of "shama," "dama," etc. In short, it is the practice of self-control.

Through such control we have to gain poise within ourselves. Without this poise nothing worth while can be achieved. If we want success in spiritual life, we must needs acquire poise and balance.

But, again, just as we meet with failures in our search for happiness in the outside world, so do we meet with failures in seeking the lost balance of our mind amid external conditions and circumstances.

Whenever we lose the balance, the tranquillity of our minds, we blame outward conditions or other persons. How we wish conditions would change and be favorable! We pray and struggle hard to change the outward circumstances. We say to ourselves—Oh, this terrible world! The world becomes horrible to us. We regard people as obstacles in the path. Everything

goes unfavorably with us. Then we seek to change the conditions, to re-make the world, to reform everyone—friends, husbands, wives and children to root out all evil from the world! But we forget the central truth—that the real evil, the real obstacle, lies in ourselves. If we can only root out the evil in ourselves, reform ourselves, the world also will be reformed.

The fact is that we allow ourselves to be affected by external conditions. When they are unfavorable, we seek to re-make them.

We forget that external conditions will always be the same. It is like undertaking to straighten a dog's curly tail. As long as you hold it, you can keep it straight. The moment you release it, there is no trace of all your efforts.

This world is a world of duality and relativity. Here the pairs of opposites hold sway. Favorable and unfavorable conditions—both will remain. Heat and cold, pleasure and pain, good and evil—this duality is the basic law of all manifestation; it is that which makes possible the universe. Without it there could be no world as we know it. These pairs of opposites will remain as they are, the law of duality will continue to function, and amid the conditions resulting therefrom we must acquire poise by not allowing ourselves to be influenced by our surroundings.

Remember the great truth: "Nature is for us, not we for nature." We have reincarnated to gain experience. From the dualism of nature we must gain that experience and become victorious over (because superior to) the changes of life.

Happiness and misery, good and evil—all are teachers. From them we have to learn our lessons and regain our lost balance.

If you think that you can root out the evil from the world by reforming it, thereby attaining to peace and tranquillity, you are greatly mistaken.

My Master once told me this story: A boy sat on the beach, all ready to take his bath in the ocean. He waited and waited. The sea was turbulent; waves were tossing high. The boy waited for them to subside. But alas! they did nothing of the kind. They pursued their natural course and the boy could never take his bath.

So it is with life. We cannot wait for "ideal" conditions. We must bathe in the ocean as we find it, or not at all, and from the midst of this rough, tossing, turbulent ocean of life must we emerge—cleansed, purified, triumphant. We must deal with life as it is, not as we might wish it to be.

Sri Krishna taught in the Gita that a Yogi is he who looks with an equal eye upon both heat and cold, pleasure and pain. This equilibrium, this unshakable serenity, is called yoga. "Know these to be impermanent in their nature; so bear them patiently."

This teaching is indeed something new and strange to the modern West—for here is taught that "evil" is an illusion, that "misery" is an error. True!—"evil" is an illusion, but—so is "good." "Misery" is an error, . . . so is "happiness." Does not the same nerve carry both pleasant and unpleasant sensations? How is it possible to deny the one and accept the other? And can you really do so? Alas! the people try to deceive themselves by simply denying the other side of life. When something goes ter-

ribly wrong with them, when they have a disagreeable or sad experience, they try to seem to be happy and well—though all the time they know they are simply deceiving themselves or trying to do so. They think if they deny and close their eyes they will be safe.

No, that is not the way to avoid the experiences of misery in life. Do not deny them—acknowledge them; face them. They also are great teachers. What a beautiful ideal Christ held before us by putting Himself on the cross. And do you not remember what He said unto Simon Peter: “Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

This is the highest attitude to hold in life toward everything that befalls us—as “given by my Father.” A great mystic sage of India used to consider everything as “a messenger from heaven.” Yes, and if you regard everything as a messenger from heaven come to teach you the lessons of life—where is there left any more evil, any more misery? Our entire lives are transformed because our attitude toward life is changed. Self-control, serenity, tranquility in the midst of the pairs of opposites, is attained. Thus, and thus only, can poise be won.

To enter into the path of discipleship means, above all else, to feel an intense longing for God, a yearning for truth and freedom. This is known as “Mumukshutwa.” This desire is awakened by our constant discrimination between the real and the unreal. Seek and desire That alone which is “Nityonityanam” — “the Eternal amongst the ephemeral things of life”—and “Rasanam rasatamaha,” “the highest abiding joy amongst the fleeting joys of life.”

JEWELS OF THE SPIRIT

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.—John 6: 63.

The good is one thing, the pleasant another; these two, in diverse ways, bind a man. Wise indeed is he who clings to the good. He who chooses the pleasant, misses his end.—From the Upanishads.

Earnestness is the path of immortality, thoughtlessness is the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die; those who are the thoughtless are as if dead already.—From The Dhammapada.

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.—John 6: 58.

Nor is that Self to be gained by one who is devoid of strength, or without earnestness, or without right meditation. But if a wise man strives after it by those means, then his Self enters the home of Brahman.—From the Upanishads.

Since enjoyments that are contact-born are parents of misery alone, and with beginning and end, O son of Kunti, a wise man does not seek pleasure in them.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 5, v. 22.

The Yogi is regarded as superior to those who practice asceticism, also to those who have obtained wisdom (through the Shastras). He is also superior to the performers of action (enjoined in the Vedas). Therefore, be thou a Yogi, O Arjuna!—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 6, v. 46.

Renouncing all actions to Me, with mind centered on the self, getting rid of hope and selfishness, fight—free from (mental) fever.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 3, v. 30.

Resting in Brahman, with intellect steady, and without delusion, the knower of Brahman neither rejoiceth in receiving what is pleasant, nor grieveth on receiving what is unpleasant.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 5, v. 20.

He who can withstand in this world, before the liberation from the body, the impulse arising from lust and anger, he is steadfast (in Yoga), he is a happy man.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 5, v. 23.

(Relative) existence has been conquered by them, even in this world, whose mind rests in evenness, since Brahman is even and without imperfection: therefore they indeed rest in Brahman.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 5, v. 19.

Whose happiness is within, whose relaxation is within, whose light is within, that Yogi alone, becoming Brahman, gains absolute freedom.—Bhagavad-Gita, ch. 5, v. 24.

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.—John 6: 35.

Verily I say unto thee: The Blessed One has not come to teach death, but to teach life, and thou discernest not the nature of living and dying. Selfishness is death and truth is life. The cleaving to self is a perpetual dying, while moving in the truth is partaking of Nirvana, which is life everlasting.—From The Dhammapada.

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