

Vedanta



1937

Grusaida, St. Moritz, Engadin

Publisher's Note

We are pleased to share with you this reprint of the first of two volumes of *VEDANTA*, the quarterly journal published by Swami Yatiswarananda from Switzerland in 1937 and 1938— before his departure for Sweden and thence to America owing to the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 Europe.

The reader will find excerpts from the Swami's class-talks to European spiritual aspirants, since his arrival at Wiesbaden in 1933, as well as a superb selection of inspiring compilations and quotes from the great spiritual traditions, which bear witness to the reality and universality of spiritual experience, and the world-wideness of the methods that lead to revelation of the Reality — Personal and Impersonal — through absorption of the ego into its source.

The material was scanned from the cyclostyled A4 originals, kindly shared with us by Kurt Friedrichs of Hamburg, a disciple of the Swami.

The Swami's Class-notes that appear in *VEDANTA* were published, among other Class-notes, in *THE WAY TO THE DIVINE*, by Sarada Sevika Mandali, Bangalore (1968, with 2nd edition 1989).

—Publisher—

Vedanta Study Circle,
Athens, Greece.

April, 2003.

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A contemporary photograph



Paris, November 1937 — Swami Siddheswarananda, Swami Yatiswarananda and Monsieur Marcel Sauton.

NOTE: Monsieur Sauton was the host of Swami Siddheswarananda, who went to France in July 1937 in response to an earnest request expressed to Swami Yatiswarananda during the Ramakrishna Centenary celebration in 1936 at the Sorbonne. The Gretz Centre was established after the War.

(Picture due to the kindness of Meera [Maude Lallement])

VEDANTA

A Quarterly Journal Published by
Swami Yatiswarananda in Switzerland

Vol.1 No.1 — 1937, First Quarter

Truth is one, but sages call It by various names. — Rig-Veda

There is but one God, but endless are His names, and endless the aspects in which He may be regarded. Call Him by any name, and worship Him in any aspect that pleases you, and you are sure to see Him.

—Sri Ramakrishna—

The soul is infinite, omnipotent and omniscient. Stand up! Assert yourself! Proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him. Teach yourself, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul to see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when the sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.

—Swami Vivekananda—



THE RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MOVEMENT WHAT IT STANDS FOR

The Vedanta Movement, inaugurated by the Order of Sri Ramakrishna, is a purely spiritual and humanitarian Mission, absolutely non-political in its ideals.

Its object is to work for the perfection of oneself and also for the welfare of the world through self-discipline and service.

It carries on philanthropic, educational, moral and spiritual service through its hundred and more prominent centres in India, America and other parts of the world.

It stands for the exchange and assimilation of the best in the culture of the East and the West, and aims at promoting cultural relations and friendly understanding between India and other countries.

The Vedanta, which means the highest spiritual knowledge in Hindu culture, is universal in its outlook. Based on universal Principles, it serves as the rationale of all religions, and points to their underlying unity and harmony.

It looks upon all religions and systems of thought as different approaches to the Truth, as diverse forms of the One Eternal Religion, having as their goal the same Divine Principle, the One Pure Infinite, All-Pervading Being who manifests Himself in man and nature.

It recognises all prophets and Divine Personalities as different manifestations of the same Divine Principle, at the same time immanent and transcendent.

The Vedanta believes in the potential Divinity of all men and women, and encourages them to follow their own path according to their nature, capacity and law of being.

It asks the followers of each religion to preserve their own individuality and distinct features, and also to assimilate the truths of other religions.

It combines religion and philosophy, faith and reason, and advocates intensity and extensity in life and thought. It regards strict ethical discipline, scrupulous performance of duty, and earnest spiritual practice to be the means to the realisation of God, the Divine Principle, the common Goal in all.

OUR SYMBOL



A lake ruffled by the wind, the sun rising, as it were, from its waters, a full-blown lotus, rearing its head above two floating leaves, the swan sailing gracefully on the troubled waters, and a serpent with outstretched tongue, upraised hood and a Mantram in the central part of its body is a symbol devised by Swami Vivekananda of a soul equipped with the four Yogas.

In the light of the morning sun, on the ripples, rides the Swan playing among lotuses and listening to the hisses of the hooded serpent. The lake stands for the mind, the ripples for its Vrittis or modifications, the sun for *Jñāna-yoga* or Knowledge Supreme, the Swan for the Jiva, or individual soul, its swimming for *Karma-yoga*, or work without attachment, the lotus for *Bhakti-Yoga*, or loving devotion to God, and the serpent, an apt emblem of the Kundalini, symbolises *Raja-yoga*.

The snake, in its encircling aspect, stands for Infinity, the all-containing Spiritual Force to which it is the object of all Yogas to awaken the Jiva. The central Mantram meaning, "*May the Self inspire and guide us*", is an auto-suggestion which helps to arouse the sleeper, the key-note, vibrating to which the Jiva finds himself one with the music of the whole.

The entire idea represents a soul illumined by the blessed light of self-knowledge, which, possessing non-attachment and selflessness, is intensely active, engaging in the most strenuous tasks of life with a poised understanding and a sweet disposition, unchangeable either in success or failure, which, God-intoxicated, drinks deep of the nectar of the Love of God which makes the impassioned devotee think lightly even of Mukti [Freedom], which, knowing the supreme secret of Raja-Yoga, has brought the senses under control, mastered the whole mind, can at will withdraw into the inmost sanctuary of being, and is waited upon as its shadow by the peace which passeth all understanding, "a free man of the whole estate", one who has gained his full stature, and hence is truly free.

The Ideal of a Perfect Man

What I want to propagate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds. It must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic and equally conducive to action. Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their mind all the elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion and of work were equally present in their whole intensity. That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man. Everyone who has only one or two of these elements of character I consider "one-sided". And this world is mostly full of such "one-sided" men with knowledge of that road only in which they move, and anything else is dangerous and terrible to them. To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is my ideal of religion.

—Swami Vivekananda—



THE SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY

Sri Ramakrishna, the modern Indian Prophet of religious harmony, was born in 1836 and passed away in 1886. This is the year of his birth centenary. It is being celebrated in India, America, England, Switzerland and many other countries in Europe and in other parts of the world, and steps are being taken for spreading the Master's message in various ways as widely as possible.

Sri Ramakrishna realized in his superhuman life the highest ideals and fundamental unity of all religions, and spoke in the light of his unique experience and revelations.

Speaking of the potential Divinity of Man says the Master: "As fishes playing in a pond covered over with reeds and scum cannot be seen from outside, so God plays invisible in the heart of man, being screened by ignorance from human view."

"There is," he proclaimed, "but one God, but endless are His names, and endless are the aspects in which He may be regarded. Call Him by any name and worship Him in any aspect that pleases you, and you are sure to see Him. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Infinite. Every religion in the world is one of the ways to reach Him."

Swami Vivekananda, the greatest disciple of Ramakrishna, spoke thus of the advent of his Master and the universality of his teaching: "The time was ripe for one who would see in every sect the

same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being; one whose heart would beat for the poor, for the weak, inside and outside India; and at the same time whose grand and brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects, not only inside India but outside India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart, into existence. It was necessary that such a man should be born. And such a man was born in Sri Ramakrishna. His life was a thousand times more than his preaching. He was the harbinger of peace. He came to bring about the synthesis of the Eastern and Western civilisations.”

In India the movement bearing the name of Sri Ramakrishna has brought in a new epoch with its soul-stirring inspiration and practical idealism. About a hundred centres are rendering medical, educational and spiritual service to an ever increasing number of people—to the God in man—in different parts of the country. It is further fostering the spirit of intercommunal harmony in India along with that of service. It is also working for a synthesis of the best in Eastern and Western civilisations, and is promoting cultural relations and friendly understanding between India and other countries.

The message of the Master was first proclaimed to the Western world by Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions held in 1893 in Chicago in the United States of America. Later on, in 1895–1896, the Swami visited England and delivered a series of inspiring lectures which were greatly appreciated.

Prof. Max Müller brought out a short life and selected teachings of the Master — “His Life and Teachings” — as early as 1889. The great *Life of Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda* by Romain Roland was published in 1930. The original work in French, its translations in English and German, have popularised in Europe more than any other book, the universal teachings of Vedanta as interpreted by these two unique personalities of modern times.

The Vedanta Movement has been progressing well in America ever since it was inaugurated by Swami Vivekananda, and a number of Vedanta Centres have been spreading the message to ever growing circles of spiritual aspirants.

The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda form a rich literature in English. Books embodying the teachings have been pub-

lished in many of the Indian vernaculars and also in the German, Spanish, French, Russian, Dutch and Czech languages. Towards the close of the Centenary Celebrations a book exhibition will be held at the Belur-Math showing all the different translations of and works on the teaching of these two great personalities available.

From the 1st to the 7th of March 1937, a Parliament of Religions will sit at the Town Hall, Calcutta, which will address itself to every faith and tenet, old and new, and the participators are at liberty to expound their own ideals and ideas in a scientific and philosophical manner, without any spirit of intolerance. The necessity of convening such a Parliament can hardly be overemphasized in these days of social debacle and religious bigotry as it provides a forum for the exponents of all faiths and religions of the world for mutual exchange of their views on man's life and its goal and purpose as well as for the furtherance of national amity, international fellowship and universal peace:

In response to a steady demand for service, accredited representatives of the Ramakrishna Order have begun regular spiritual work in Europe since 1933. There is a Vedanta Society in London and Vedanta study-groups are being formed in different countries on the Continent. Systematic attempts are also being made to publish the teaching of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in Germany and France. It is so fortunate that during the year of Ramakrishna's Centenary, the first instalments of the publications in German and French have already made their appearance, and, as the important books get published, the universal message is going to reach, hereafter, a large circle of readers in all the countries of Europe where these two languages are more or less understood. May the message transform the lives of many and bring peace and blessedness to many. May it spread the message of cultural synthesis and religious harmony and promote a spiritual understanding and unity between the East and the West.



THE ETERNAL MESSAGE OF THE INDIAN SAGES

How to Live in God.

Fix thy mind on Me, the Divine Being; place thy intellect in Me; then thou shalt no doubt live in Me hereafter.

He who does work for Me alone and has Me for his goal is

devoted to Me, is free from attachment, and bears enmity towards no creature,— he entereth into Me.

Occupy thy mind with Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me, Thou shalt reach Myself; truly do I promise unto thee, for thou art dear to Me.

—**Bhagava4ud-Gita**—

Take Refuge in God

The Lord, who is His own master, does not at all require the worship of the little creature, for He is perfect in His own essence; but being merciful He accepts it. Whatever the creature may do by way of worship to the Lord turns to its own benefit.

Full of passion for Me, thinking Me their Lord and Lover, though they were not aware of My nature, hundreds and thousands attained to Me, the Supreme Brahman, because they associated themselves with the good. Therefore, seek after shelter from Me, the Self of all creatures, with absolute devotion and only thereby thou wilt be free from fear from all causes.

The eye does not see Him who sees everything and the consciousness of the seer does not vanish; betake yourself to that God who is the abode of all beings and who is like unto a bird that soars aloft unconnected with everything. He has no beginning, end or middle. There is nothing which is worth calling His possession and there is nothing which is not His possession. The distinction as inside and outside cannot be predicated of Him. These states and aspects only pertain to the universe. He is the support of the universe. He is the Truth and the great and perfect Being.

—**Bhagavatam**—

The Way of the Devotee

“A river increases in volume and velocity during the rainy season. The faith of My devotees who sing My praise daily increases in this manner. My devotees continue to direct their affection towards Me at all times in the same manner as the river Ganges continues to pour more and more water into the ocean. They do not worry whether it is day or night. Their highest ambition is to find Me in their heart. Every effort of their body, speech and mind is to encompass this end. These are the supreme devotees, and they attain My position which secures them the highest Yoga. They burn the unruly armies of passion in the fire of renunciation, and they

control their senses with firmness, being themselves unarmed.

“The greatest sin is the feeling of duality, and it is the realisation of Me which destroys that sin. Like salt dissolving in water completely, full devotion will turn you into Myself. The bonds will break of themselves. I shall release you from them.”

—*Jñaneswari*—

The Path of Devotion

“The body is the palace, the temple and the house of God; in it His eternal light dwelleth. In all things is His light. From it He is known, but He is found by love. The true One is found when the mind cometh home.

“When man hath love and devotion and is himself lowly, it is then, O Nanak, he obtaineth salvation.

“Drunkards abandon not drink nor fishes water; so God is pleasing beyond all else to those who are imbued with the wine of his love.

“Thy name alone is my lamp; suffering the oil in the container. The lamp’s light hath dried up the oil, and I have escaped suffering.”

—*Guru Nanak*—

“If thou must be mad, let it not be with the things of the world but be mad with the love of the Lord.

“Call with Love upon the hallowed Name of the Lord and the mountain of sins shall go out of sight, much as a mountain of cotton will burn up and vanish if it but catches one spark of fire.

“Bhakti Yoga [Devotion to God] is communion with God by means of devotion or Bhakti and self-surrender. It is specially adapted to this iron age, the Kali Yuga. It is the Yuga-Dharma, the way for the present age. It reduces work to a minimum. It teaches the necessity of prayer without ceasing.

“The insect flies from darkness as soon as it sees the light; the ant loses its life in the syrup, but never leaves it. So the lover of God cleaves unto God for ever and leaves all else.”

—*Sri Ramakrishna*—

If I want to be a hunter, I’ll hunt the rhinoceros. If I want to be a robber, I’ll rob the king’s treasury. What is the use of robbing beggars or hunting ants? So if you want to love, love God. Who cares for these things of the world? This world is utterly false; all the

Great Teachers of the world found that out; there is no way out of it, but God. He is the goal of our life; all ideas that the world is the goal of life are pernicious. This world and this body have their own values, a secondary value, as a means to an end, but the world should not be the end. Unfortunately, too often, we make the world the end and God the means.

—*Swami Vivekananda*—

Seek God Always

The great quality of Bhakti [devotion to God] is that it cleanses the mind, and the firmly established Bhakti for the Supreme Lord is alone sufficient to purify the mind! God, Thy names are innumerable, but in every name Thy power is manifest, and every name is pregnant with deep and mighty significance! We should think of God always and not consider time and place for doing so.

Let your souls ascend day night like unbroken string unto the feet of the Beloved whose throne is in your own hearts and let the rest take care of themselves, that is the body and everything else. Life is evanescent, a fleeting dream; youth and beauty fade; say, day and night,—“Thou art my Father, Mother, Husband, my Love, my Lord, my God,—I want nothing but Thee. Thou in me, I in Thee, I am Thee, Thou art me!” Wealth goes, beauty vanishes, life flies, powers fly,—but the Lord abideth for ever, Love abideth for ever. Stick to God. Who cares what comes to the body or to anything else! Through the errors of evil say,—“My God, my Love.” Through the pangs of death say,—“My God, my Love!” Through all the evils under the sun say,—“My God, my Love. Thou art here. I see Thee, Thou art with me, I feel Thee. I am Thine, take me. I do not belong to the world but to Thee, leave not then me!”— Do not go after glass-beads, leaving the mine of diamonds! This life is a great chance. What seekest thou, the pleasures of the world? He is a fountain of all bliss. Seek for the Highest, aim at that Highest, and you shall reach the Highest.

—*Swami Vivekananda*—

No Difference between Supreme Knowledge and
Supreme Devotion

The true Jñānin [one following the path of knowledge] is he who has the deepest love within his heart and at the same time is a practical seer of Advaita [the Unity] in his outward relations. And

the true Bhakta [one following the path of devotion] is he who realising his own soul as identified with the Universal Soul, and thus possessed of the true Jñana [Knowledge] within, feels for and loves everyone. Of Jñana and Bhakti, he who advocates the one and denounces the other, cannot be either a Jñanin or a Bhakta, but he is a thief and a cheat.

There is no difference between the Supreme Bhakti and the Supreme Jñana. The Supreme Bhakti is to realise God as the form of Love itself. If you see the loving form of God manifested everywhere and in everything, how can you hate or injure others? That realisation of Love can never come so long as there is the least desire in the heart, or what Sri Ramakrishna used to say, attachment for "Sex and Gold". In the perfect realisation of Love, even the consciousness of one's own body does not exist. Also, the Supreme Jñana is to realize the Oneness everywhere, to see one's own self as the self in everything. That, too, cannot come so long as there is the least consciousness of the ego. Realisation of Love comes to none unless one becomes a perfect Jñani. Does not the Vedanta say that the Brahman is Sat-Chit-Ananda, the Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss?

The soul is sexless, we cannot say of the Atman that it is a man or a woman. Sex belongs to the body alone. All such ideas, therefore, as man or woman, are a delusion when spoken of with regard to the Self and are only proper when spoken of the body. So are the ideas of age. It never ages, the Ancient One is always the same. How did it come down to earth? There is but one answer to that in our Scriptures. Ignorance is the cause of all this bondage. It is through ignorance that we have become bound; knowledge will cure this by taking us to the other side. How will that knowledge come? Through Love, Bhakti. By the worship of God, by loving all beings as the temples of God; He who resides within them. Thus with that intense Love will come Knowledge, and ignorance will disappear, the bonds will break and the soul will be free.

Bhakti or worship or Love in some form or other is the easiest, pleasantest, and most natural way of man. The natural state of this universe is attraction, and that is surely followed by disunion. Even so, love is the natural impetus of union in the human heart; and though itself a great cause of misery, properly directed towards the proper object, it brings deliverance. The object of Bhakti is God.

Love cannot be without a subject and an object. The object of Love again must be at first a being who can reciprocate our love. Therefore the God of Love must be in some sense a human God. He must be a God of Love. Aside from the question whether such a God exists or not, it is a fact that to those who have love in their heart, this Absolute appears as a God of Love, as personal.

—*Swami Vivekananda*—

Highest Goal the Same — But Methods Different

The object of Jñana is the same as that of Bhakti-Yoga and Raja-yoga but the method is different. This is the Yoga for the strong, for those who are neither mystical nor devotional, but rational. As the Bhakti-Yogi works his way to complete oneness with the Supreme through love and devotion, so the Jñana-Yogi forces his way to the realisation of God by the power of pure reason, He must be prepared to throw away all old idols, all old beliefs and superstitions, all desire for this world or another, and be determined only to find freedom. Without Jñana [Knowledge] liberation cannot be ours. It consists in knowing what we really are, that we are beyond fear, beyond birth, beyond death. The highest good is the realisation of God. It is beyond sense, beyond thought. The real "I" cannot be grasped. It is the eternal subject and can never become the object of knowledge, because knowledge is only of the related, not of the Absolute. All sense-knowledge is limitation, it is an endless chain of cause and effect. This world is a relative world, a shadow of the real; still, being the plane of equipoise, where happiness and misery are about evenly balanced, it is the only plane where man can realize his true Self and know that he is Brahman.

The Jñana-Yogi must be as intense as the narrowest sectarian, yet as broad as the heavens. He must absolutely control his mind, be able to be a Buddhist or a Christian, to have the power consciously to divide himself into all these different ideas and yet hold fast to the eternal harmony. Constant drill alone can enable us to get this control. All variations are in the One, but we must learn not to identify ourselves with what we do, and to hear nothing, see nothing, talk nothing, but the thing in hand. We must put in our whole soul and be intense. Day and night tell yourself "I am He, I am He".

—*Swami Vivekananda*—

THE DIVINE TEACHINGS OF THE WESTERN MYSTICS

The Nature of God

by John Scotus Erigena (800? – 877?)

Lift thyself up to union with God through Love. He is ineffably placed above all substance and incomprehensibly above all knowledge, both human and divine. Lifting thyself up beyond thyself and beyond all things so that thou art no longer held back by them nor prevented by the love of them and purified of the very least thought of the mind, putting away the spiritual as well as the divine workings, thou shalt lift thyself up to the most effulgent light of the most hidden Deity, which we call darkness, because we do not behold it, but superbehold it, do not comprehend it, but supercomprehend it. The state of union cannot be attained if not by the most fervent desire of mental prayer and by virtue of supramental affection, where the vision of the intellect does not reach. That is why such knowledge is called “unknowing”.

Whatever thou negatest of God, thou negatest rightly of Him, but not all that thou affirmest of God, thou affirmest rightly. God being that which is beyond all intellect, and the unknowing of God being true Wisdom. God is the ambit of all that are and all that are not, of all that can be and all that cannot be, of all that appear to be contraries or opposites, God is the plenitude of all and all in all.

—(From *De divisione naturae*)—



Difference between Men and Beasts

[Anonymous]

“Between a man and a beast is no difference save in Understanding. Glorify thyself for no other thing. Thou pridest thyself on virtues, thou shalt be beaten by the beasts. Thou pridest thyself on swiftness, thou shalt be beaten by the flies. Thou pridest thyself on beauty; how much beauty is in the feathers of the peacock; wherein art thou worth more? In the image of God. Where is God’s image? In thinking and in understanding. If then thou art better than a beast because thou hast thought, whereby thou understandest what a beast cannot understand; therefore, forsooth, man is better than a beast. The light of man is the light of thoughts. The light of thoughts is above thoughts and surpasseth all thoughts. Yet, O

men, be ye not dark, be ye not untrue, unrighteous, evil, robbers, wretches, lovers of the world? This, forsooth, is darkness. Light is not gone away, but ye are away from the light. The blind man in the sun hath the sun present, but he is from the sun. Therefore, is he not dark? Yet again the world is dark, because the lovers of the world are dark; and the world is evil, because they who dwell in the world are evil, as a house is bad, not in its walls, but because of those who dwell therein.”

—*From The Again-biting of Conscience (14th. century)*—

Of the Despising of the World

by Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole (1290?–1349)

To despise this world is to pass through this life without loving temporal and passing things; to seek nothing in this world but God; not to care for vainglory nor comfort; hardly to take what is essential; and if at times the necessities of life are lacking, to bear it with goodwill. This is the “despising of the world”. Keep this in mind lest thou perish through love of it. Thus is the world despised and not loved.

All that we love we worship, and it is foul to worship dirt; that is to love earthly things. Rich men bind themselves as slaves to corruptible things and rejoice to be called “Lords of men” though they be “servants of sin”. If a man be a Lord of men, it is not of nature but of fortune; but if evil rule in his heart it is the fault of his own perverse will. Put away, therefore, thy wicked will, and thou shalt be free from the devil and from sin, and made the servant of righteousness which teaches thee not to love earthly things.

Covetousness of the world and the love of God are contrary the one to the other and cannot remain together in one soul. The place is so narrow that one falls out. The more thou castest out covetousness, the more thou dost experience the love of God. The more of covetousness, the less of love.

O wretched soul, what dost thou seek in this world, where all things are deceitful and passing away? The things that most flatter thee are quickest to deceive. Why dost thou busy thyself to obtain temporal possessions? Why dost thou yearn with great desire for the things that shall perish? Dost thou not see that they perish even before they are possessed? Thou dost build thy life on a false foundation; and when thou thinkest to stand thou dost fall into the

fire.

What things delight the man who sets himself to love Christ? He will despise the lustiness of youth and keep his strength for God. He will disregard riches. He will remember that favour is deceitful and beauty is vain. Need I write more? He will despise all things that in this world pass away as a shadow.

O Lover of the Flesh, what does dost thou find in thy body to cause thee so to delight in it? Does the form or shape of it please thee so that thou hast thy joy in a skin? Why dost thou not heed what is hidden under the skin? Dost thou not know that bodily beauty is the covering of defilement, the spark of corruption, and often the cause of damnation? Therefore let it suffice thee, all else being despised, to love God; to praise God; to be with God; to rejoice in God; not to depart from Him, but to cleave to Him with unabated desire.

The world itself makes us despise it, since it is so full of unhappiness in which is continual malice, destructive persecution, increasing wrath, consuming lust, false blaming for sin, and the bitterness of slander, where all things are confused and without order, where righteousness is not loved nor truth approved; where faithfulness is unfaithful and friendship cruel, since it endures only in prosperity and fails in adversity.

Other things there are that should move us to despise the world; the changeableness of time; the shortness of this life; the certainty of death and its uncertain advent; the security of Eternity; the emptiness of things present; the truth of the joys to come.

Choose what thou wilt. If thou love the world, thou shalt perish with it; if thou love Christ, thou shalt reign with Him.

—From *The Amending of Life*—

The Eternal Presence of God within Us

by Julian of Norwich (1343?-1413?)

Highly ought we to rejoice that God dwelleth in our soul, and much more highly ought we to rejoice that our soul dwelleth in God. Our soul is made to be God's dwelling place; and the dwelling place of the soul is God, which is unmade. And high understanding it is, to see and to know inwardly that God, which is our maker, dwelleth in our soul; and a higher understanding it is, to see and to know inwardly that our soul, that is made, dwelleth in God's substance; of

which Substance, God, we are that we are. And I saw no difference between God and our Substance, but, as it were, all God.

God is nearer to us than our own Soul; for He is the Ground in whom our Soul standeth, and He is the Mean that keepeth the Substance and the Sense-nature together so that they shall never dispart. For our Soul sitteth in God in very rest, and our Soul standeth in God in very strength, and our Soul is kindly rooted in God in endless love; therefore, if we will have knowledge of our Soul, and communing and dalliance therewith, it behoveth to seek unto our Lord God in whom it is enclosed.

And I saw full surely that it behoveth needs to be that we should be in longing and in penance unto the time that we be led so deep into God that we verily and truly know our own Soul. And truly I saw that into this high deepness our good Lord Himself leadeth us in the same love that He made us, and in the same love that He bought us by Mercy and Grace through virtue of His blessed Passion. And notwithstanding all this, we may never come to the full knowing of God, till we know first clearly our own Soul. For until the time that our Soul is in its full powers we cannot be all fully holy; and that is until the time that our Sense-soul by the virtue of Christ's Passion be brought up to the Substance, with all the profits of our tribulation that our Lord shall make us to get by Mercy and Grace.

It is God's good pleasure to reign in our understanding blissfully, and sit in our Soul restfully, and to dwell in our Soul endlessly, us all working into Him; in which working He willeth that we be His helpers, giving Him all our attending, learning His lores, keeping His laws, desiring that all be done that He doeth; truly trusting in Him, for soothly I saw that our Substance is in God.

—From *The Revelations of Divine Love*—

God the One Uncompounded Essence of All

by John Tauler (1300?-1361)

Moses spoke: "Hearken, Israel, the Lord He is God; there is none else beside Him." But in spite of that we can greatly profit by the special, particular, different names we attribute to Him, and by His essence which we should compare with our nothingness. For, as I have said many a time, just as man formerly thought everything according to the temporal manner, as regards our Lord's birth and works, life and way, so he shall now lift up his whole soul and

learn to soar beyond all time into the eternal essence and the eternal being. Now man can mirror his mind in the qualities of God in an effective way by reflecting that God is pure being, the being of all beings, although He is none of all these things. All that is, and is a being, and has being and is good, therein is God. St. Augustine said, "If thou be a good man, a good angel, a good heaven, put away the man, put away the angel, put away the heaven, and then what remains is the Essence of the good, that is God. For He is all in all things and nevertheless above things." All creatures possess good, it is true, and possess love, but they are not the good, neither are they love. But God alone is the Essence of good, of Love and of all that can be called being. It is to this that man should turn and become immersed in it with all the powers in an effective, feeling and contemplative manner, in order that his nothingness be wholly taken up and renewed thereby, thus gaining true being in the Divine Being which alone is being and life and action in all things. Then man should look at the quality of the uncompounded oneness of being, for God stands on the verge of uncompoundedness, and in Him is made one and made simple all manifoldness in the uncompounded oneness of being. His being is His working, His knowing, His rewarding, His loving, His directing all things to the One. His compassion, His justice: enter that and carry thy incomprehensible manifoldness into that in order that He may make it simple in His uncompounded Essence.

"It is expedient for you that I go away"

by John Tauler

Our lord spoke to his dear friends, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world."

Children, here it can be clearly seen that the Holy Ghost cannot be imparted to the friends of God, unless he first go away from them. And what is this "going away" but abandonment, disconsolateness, and unfitness for all good, being lazy and cold and heavy and dark? — then Jesus has gone away from us. If only people would come to see this and profit thereby; it would be a great thing to become a partner therein. Then all manifoldness would become oneness, and suffering consolation, discord peace, and all bitterness turn into true sweetness.

“It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world.” What and how will he reprove? He will clearly make it known and show whether the world lives secretly and hidden in a man, and this he will reprove and rebuke. But what is this “world” in us? It lives in us in this way, and this is its effect and influence; the feeling of love, sorrows, affection, fear, sadness, joy, desire, longing, anxiety. St. Bernard said, “By all that for which thou mournest and at which thou rejoicest, thou shalt be judged.” Children, this the Holy Ghost shall clearly discover and show in us when he comes, and he will reprove us for it. And may we never find rest so long as we see this evil and harmful obsession in us. It must be expelled. And wherever this harmful evil remains unreprieved and uncensored in man, i.e., wherever he is possessed with creatures, be they alive or dead, all this is the “world”. And wherever this evil is clung to without rebuke, it is an obvious sign that the Holy Ghost is not yet come, because Christ spoke the truth, saying that when he came, he would reprove and rebuke all these things.

—From Tauler’s *Sermons*—



How the Love of God Is the Life of Our Soul

By Diego de Estella (1524–1578)

Deeply must I love Thee, my Lord, for Thy Holy Love is my life. Of all the things which men love, none is loved so greatly as Life. To keep this, the ailing man takes syrups and purgatives and even allows himself to be bled and permits, if need be, that some limb of his body be cut off so as not to lose his life. Man suffers any kind of labour, however great, in order to live, although this life, which men love so dearly, cannot be properly called Life, but a shadow of death and a mirage of life, because of which the apostle called the Colossians dead. In the Scripture only the life lived by the righteous in Thy Holy and Divine Love is called Life and that of the sinners death. This corporal life is nothing else but that man has in himself a soul which gives form to the body, through which we feel, hear and perform all the operations and functions of life. And as the life of the body consists in having within oneself a soul through which the body moves and feels and walks, so Life consists in having within oneself another spirit which is Thou, my God, through Whom

our soul lives and moves to do the works of a life of grace, worthy of Life Eternal. Therefore, the holy apostle, speaking of the life Thou gave to our soul by Thy presence, says that we live and move and have our being in Thee. Thou art Love and by Thy presence our soul lives, just as it is dead when it has not Thee within it. Martha said that if Thou hadst been present, her brother Lazarus would not have died. And just as in Thy corporal absence Lazarus died, physically speaking, and was resuscitated by Thy presence, Thy spiritual absence causes death in the soul, for it is Thy presence which gives us a life of grace. As the presence of the soul gives heat to the body, by which natural heat it lives, Thy presence, which is the very Life of the soul, gives it heat, which is charity and love that the soul possesses when Thou dwellest therein.

Thus if thou wishest to know, my Soul, whether thou art alive or dead, see whether thou lovest God or not. He who does not love, dwells in death. So, as thou wishest to live, thou must love thy God, for He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Seek, my soul, that true love and cut off earthly affections with the help of this Celestial Divine Love of thy Spouse Jesus Christ, for in these temporal things there is no true and permanent love and in them thy mind does not feel the sweetness nor the softness of its Creator. Thy life does not consist in scholarship, nor in learning, nor in the possession of great wealth, nor in high Position, but only in loving God. Therefore, dost thou desire Life? There is no thing, more cherished, for, the Scripture says that for it man will give all he possesses. And if I love the life of the body so greatly, which wholly depends on having a soul within, I must love the life of the soul much more, because its presence causes the life of the body, which I cherish so highly. The cause is greater than the effect, and if the cause of the life of the body is the soul, the life of the soul is greater and better than that of the body.

Thus must I love my God and Lord above all things in order to give life to my soul, for had it no life, it would die for all time with the body, and if it be living, it will live in permanent rest with Thee in Heaven. And if I love this corporal life so much, I ought to love the life of the soul much more, for it is by the life of my soul that I consider this body a living thing. Oh, how much more shouldst thou labour, my Soul, to enjoy that real life, eternal and blissful! This life is transient, that one permanent; this one is a thing of a moment, that

one stable and lasting; this one changing, that one immovable and fixed; this one subject to troubles and miseries; that one free from all corruption and molestation; this one imprisoned and surrounded by many diseases and troubles; that one free from all calamity and anxiety. This life is no Life, but a prolix death and a shadow of Life, and that one is true Life where men live in the certitude of not dying, rejoicing with Christ in its glory. So if this life is cherished so highly, O Lord, why is not that one loved? If I desire this one so greatly, why then do I not die for the real one? If I labour so much for this one, why do I not work at all to attain what according to the true and proper meaning of the term is called "Life"? When that youth came to Thee to ask Thee what he should do so as to attain Life Eternal. Thou answeredst him, "If thou wishest to enter Life, keep the commandments." Thou didst not say, "If thou wishest to enter Life Eternal," as he had asked Thee, but, "If thou wishest to enter Life", for by this name of "Life", even if no "eternal" be added, this present life cannot be understood in any way, but only Eternal Life, for this life is no Life. But how shall I attain to this Life?. By giving my soul a life of love, for just as Hell is the sepulchre of the dead, so Heaven is the house of the living, according to the words of the Psalm, "Thou art my God, and my place shall be in the land of the living." Therefore, O my soul, live a life of love if thou really wishest to live eternally in Heaven and, if thou lovest not and art dead, listen to what Life Itself says to thee, "I am the resurrection and the Life"; resurrection for the sinners and Life for the living, And, of the sinners risen from the death of sin to the life of Divine Love, St. John says, "We are transported from Death to Life, because we love." Well dost thou see how Love resuscitates the dead and gives Life, and he who lacks this love, him God and the angels consider to be dead, and the demons speak of his sepulchre only and of the place in Hell where they shall put him, and where Death may feed him. He whom we find without heart-beats and cold, him we look upon as dead. Similarly, the demons, seeing a man without spiritual heart-beat and movement and possessing no natural heat of love, hold him to be dead, knowing full well that he is lacking in the life of Love. Who is that man who desires Life? All wish to live, and everyone desires Life. And as Thou wishest us all to live, O Lord, Thou commandest us all to love, and hast placed the whole of Life in love, so that we may live without work, for loving is a delightful and savoury employment. Many do I see, O Lord, who

are in the world, earning their livelihood with the sweat of their brow, going round the seas and the land just to earn their food, believing all this to be well directed effort, because by it they earn their food wherewith to sustain their Life. O Thou, our Creator, how good Thou art in Thy commandments which Thou orderest us to keep, for Thou couldst give us hard precepts, so that we should have to earn the life of the soul with great trouble, just as we earn the life of the body. But Thou wishest to give us the life of the soul at so low a price that we can attain it with great sweetness and delight, commanding us to love Thee. O pleasant precept, sovereign commandment full of infinite relish and sweetness, for even if Thou hast decreed, O God, that we should earn the food for our body by work, Thou wishest the life of the soul to be gained only by loving and by ceasing from all labour.

And so great is the skill and power of Love that like a strong bar of steel it draws sparks of the fire of Love at each blow which it gives. If thou art prosperous in health, honours, riches, draw the fire of love, praising God. If thou findest thyself sad, persecuted and disconsolate, draw the fire of love, thanking God. If thou feelest afflicted and burdened with sins, draw the fire of Love, imploring Divine favour and calling for Divine compassion. Oh, what a sweet precept, this precept of Love, and what a great good Thou hast done me, my God and my Good, by telling me to love Thee! Love is a very peaceful, very delightful and very soft thing and in it there is nothing rough, hard or troublesome. If, in order to possess Thy kingdom, Thou shouldst tell us to navigate across all the seas, or to walk many a wearisome day on land, or to be exiled, or going on pilgrimage or some other such very troublesome thing, I might find some excuse, though no legitimate or sufficient one. But since Thou but askest me to love Thee, which is an easy and delightful thing, it would be great foolishness and folly indeed to lose the opportunity of reigning with Thee and Thine angels for not having loved.

—From: *Meditaciones devotissimas del amor de Dios*—



How to Attain the Kingdom of God

by Louis Lallemant (1578–1635)

The status of the subjects of the Kingdom of God is of an emi-

nent dignity inasmuch as they obey God directly and do not depend inwardly upon anybody but on Him alone. They have full freedom, a perfect dominion over the world, the flesh and the devil. They walk with head erect, they do not fear anything. They possess a courage that is proof against all that can befall them in life.

In order to establish within us the Kingdom of God, we must banish from our heart all other dominion except that of God alone and make ourselves inwardly free from the affections which subject us to creatures. Usually one wishes to join the Kingdom of Grace as well as that of sin, and it is from this that the ordinary state of man is full of troubles and much divided. None, says Jesus Christ, can serve two masters. God wishes to reign alone in the heart. He cannot stand any companion. So the tyrants who dispute Him His sovereignty must be expelled from the heart so as to make Him its sole and peaceful possessor i.e., those objects which through inordinate affection rule in it to His prejudice, must be uprooted. The way to recognise them is to watch to what our thoughts ordinarily move, and what is the motive-force of the four passions which we feel most: joy, sadness, desire and fear. Having recognised this, we must apply ourselves energetically utterly to subdue it and to destroy it through contrary inclinations.

After having shaken the dominion of creatures in our heart, we must bind ourselves to the guidance of God through strict dependence, which demands that we abandon ourselves to Him without reserve and without care for the future, that we hazard our affairs and our interest, leaving them in the hands of God, especially as regards obedience, not making any move of our own accord and letting ourselves be governed like little children, that we offer ourselves freely to any future wish of God and that we resign ourselves completely to His present wish, accepting all from His hands without complaining and without permitting ourselves to desire any other thing.

In all this we should proceed in an inward manner and lead not only a good life but a truly inward life, regulating all the inner movements of our heart according to our God-given intuition. And this conduct comprises three acts. The first is to consult in everything the inner oracle and the Divine Spirit, fearing that the human spirit may get the start of it. The second is to fulfil faithfully whatever He orders. Otherwise, He withdraws and hides Himself. The third is to

do everything in the sight of God, as a homage to His sovereign Being and in union with His Spirit. If one does not accustom oneself to act in this way, one acts only through low and unmortified principles, even in the most saintly actions, and one always goes to one's ego, seeking oneself in everything and finding oneself in everything.

We should aspire after the blessed state of the Prince of Holy Liberty, trying to free ourselves as much as possible from the servitude of creatures, so that they no longer excite within us irregular movements and no longer trouble the peace of our soul. And if we depend on them for the maintenance of our life, let us not augment this dependence by our luxury and sensuality, but rather minimise it by abnegation, and holy poverty.

If we are forced to suffer the pain and the incommodities which other creatures cause us, let us bear them with joy in a spirit of penitence and out of love for God who has suffered for us much greater ones; but let us rise as much as possible above our sufferings and occupy ourselves as little as we can with them.

Oh, if we could but see the things of this life as they are, low, transient, deceptive! But we see them in a false light, just as when the clouds seem to touch the sky, in which reason corrects the error of the senses. But regarding the moral judgment we have of things, we permit ourselves to be easily deceived on every occasion, as we have but little supernatural light to correct the error of our senses and our reason.

What is it that prevents the operations of Divine Love within us? Trifles, mere nothings that occupy us. But in spite of that we fill our mind with them, we attach our whole heart to them and make them our pleasure. A petty, miserable attainment will rob us of the marvellous affects Divine Love would work in us if we were but properly disposed.

—From: *La doctrine spirituelle*—



Meditations on God

by Louis of Blois (1506–1566)

When you think of God with sincerity and devotion, you have the idea of a living and spiritual substance, transcending every creature, absolutely free from all limits, all powerful, sovereignly perfect,

simple and pure, with supreme beauty, sovereignly attractive, supremely lovable and gracious, sweet and delightful, a substance which persists by itself, not receiving its being from elsewhere and not dependent on anything else, but, on the contrary, the principle of existence in the things which exist, the source of life in the beings who live, the source of feeling, reason, holiness, light, for all that is sensible, reasonable, holy, luminous, perfect, in short, the source and cause of all good for all, of all dignity and power, of all virtue and wisdom, of all grace and beauty, of all sweetness and mirth, eternal plenitude of consummate bliss.

In the glorious Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost form only one true God, the living, uncreated, invisible God, free from all appearance and from all matter, not composed of parts into which he could consequently divide himself, incorruptible and unlimited, i.e., who is not limited either by place, or by duration, or by any time; God whom intelligence cannot comprehend as he fills everything, limits everything as if embracing it, enclosing it without, however, being its limit, always remaining above it. Thus, not having a place, he is his own place to himself. Similarly, time is not for him, for he is eternal, without beginning or end. Immutable, free from all change, without anything that could affect him, anything that he could undergo. He dwells in peace always, always identical with himself. And if he disposes of time and of all that changes, the successive moments have no access to his eternity and he himself eternally escapes all change.

All things are present to God as he himself is present to all things, even if he be deeply distant from the sense of the impious. But it is above all in the saints that he is marvellously present, because he dwells in them as in his own temple by his salutary grace. He is in all things through presence, through power, through essence, and nevertheless no thing touches him with its impurity. Nothing is impure for him, except sin, and even that could not defile him. What is called sordid in things of sense is so only for the senses; it is not so in sane philosophy. And as to knowing how God who always dwells in himself in an eternal stability, beyond all change, can find himself substantially, or “through his essence” in the creatures without these being in him as to their own nature—for there is no being in God through essence or nature except God himself—this cannot be attained in this life by the understanding of

the human mind.

And if it now be asked where God was before he made the world, the true answer would be that he was in himself, that he dwelt in himself, and that the world, once having been made, he is always in himself. Thus God is everywhere, everywhere without local situation or distinction of parts, but always complete, without becoming small in small things, but being in small things just as in big things, without quantity or dimension, in all his greatness.

The Divine Essence surpasses so greatly the created natures that compared with God, they should rather be called non-beings than beings. No doubt, they are beings, because they come from the highest being, but they are non-beings, because by themselves they are but nothingness; by themselves they are changeable and infinitely distant from and lacking in the immensity and perfection of God who is wholly immutable. There is but He who is in all truth and in all the rigour of the term, He who has not his being from another, who has neither beginning nor end and never changes. That is why He said to his servant Moses, "I am that I AM. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

—From *Enchiridion parvulorum*—

Two Prayers

by Louis of Blois

O Lord, mortify in me all vices and all inordinate attachment. Render me truly humble, resigned, chaste. Make of me a man after Thy heart, I abandon myself unreservedly to Thy good pleasure. May Thy beloved will fulfil itself in me and on me now and in all eternity. I offer myself to bear all that Thou wishest for the sake of Thy love and for my sins. Strengthen me by Thy grace, for by myself I am powerless, I am nothing. I wish to embrace and I do embrace all men in sincere charity. Load with blessings and benefits all those who have afflicted and offended me. O My Beloved, what do I desire beside Thee? Thou alone sufficest me, and I renounce all that is not Thou. Bless, aye bless my heart with Thy love. Make me to love Thee with a very pure and ardent charity. I beg of Thee, set me on fire, burn me, dissolve me entirely. To Thee I confide the end of my life. Succour all the living and all the faithful dead.

—From *Livini amoris igniariolum*—

O Lord, Thou torrent of priceless treasures, draw myself to Thee and make me hurry to the sweet fragrance of Thy perfumes with extinguishable fervour. Give me the grace to love Thee with all my heart and from the very depths of my soul, because it is Thou who lovest me first. May my tenderness for Thee, O only and highest God, be a blazing furnace! May my whole soul be consumed! May it be absorbed by the great sweetness of Thy love and become intimately united with Thee for Thine own eternal glory. O Dear Beloved, deign to prepare for Thyself a pleasant and delightful habitation within me. Give me a pure and upright heart, free from attachments and detached from the representations and images of creatures; free, tranquil, serene, limpid! O Sweet Light, lovable Light, infinitely beautiful, illumine me with Thy rays, penetrate into me, satiate me for the sake of the glory of Thy Name.

— From *Cimeliarchion*—



Warnings and Hints for the Spiritual Aspirant

[Notes of Class-talks]

by Swami Yatiswarananda

Concentration and meditation

Without previously having attained to a certain amount of sublimation and purification of our feelings and desires, concentration becomes very dangerous in the case of persons who have not prepared themselves properly for the higher life. It may lead to very bad effects. In a way, we all make the mind concentrated, but then we do not know how to manipulate it. This concentrated mind will run after sensual enjoyments and all kinds of worldly distractions and objects with a greater intensity for having become concentrated. So if we do not know how to handle it in the right way, it becomes a great danger. It is far better not to have concentration if one does not attain sublimation and purification at the same time. Therefore, the necessity of purity, of non-injury, truthfulness, continence etc., in thought, word and deed, has to be stressed very much. Without sublimation of all our desires and feelings, we cannot progress in the spiritual path. It is after we have followed a strict Code of ethics and morals that we should attempt concentration and meditation. The concentrated mind, if it is not purified, becomes a veritable demon and creates untold troubles for the spiri-

tual aspirant.

The concentration of a worldly man on his gross material gain, profit and enjoyment; the concentration of the scientist on his experiments, for instance on the structure of the atom or the constitution of the plant; the concentration of the psychologist on the movement and laws of thought; the concentration of the Yogi with his analysis of the ego and the non-ego—all these are but different forms of concentration, judged from the objective standpoint. But considered from the subjective point of view their contents differ very widely, and they lead to altogether different experiences and results.

The Yogic seeker after Truth, having no faith in God as ordinarily understood, may begin with the concentration and meditation on gross elements associated with time and space, and then take the elements beyond the limitations of time and space. He may next take up the subtle elements as the objects of his concentration and meditation, at first within time and space, and later on beyond their limits. Proceeding further, he may first make the mind, the “inner organ” and afterwards the ego the object of this concentration and meditation. And knowing the true nature of these objects he ceases to identify himself with these limiting adjuncts, and having come nearer to his Self he enjoys a wonderful state of bliss and illumination.

The Vedantic aspirant who believes in the existence of the Divine may at the beginning meditate on the physical form of some great holy personality, image or picture or symbolic representation of the Divine, first associated with time and space, and then without these limitations. Advancing further, he may meditate on the “heart” of the holy personality or on the Divine Mind and gradually imbibe the noble attributes associated with it. Later, he may pass on to Pure Consciousness, individual or cosmic, and thereby succeed in purifying and expanding his impure, limited consciousness, come in touch with the Infinite Being within himself, and even proceed to the highest Divine Realisation in which the meditator, like a salt-doll coming in contact with the ocean, gets merged into the Absolute Divine Principle. Thus, beginning with different forms of concentration and meditation associated with individualised consciousness, he may reach the highest Superconsciousness—the Absolute Reality, the One Undivided Principle—in which all subject-object relation-

ship, nay, all relativity is completely transcended.

By themselves, concentration and meditation may not have any spiritual value. As already said, they may even be dangerous if the person who practises them has not already attained a certain amount of mental purification and does not continue the process of sublimation at the same time. Concentration and meditation become spiritually effective to the extent to which the mind is purified of its dross, of all the dirt and filth and bad impressions and tendencies it has been allowed to accumulate through successive evil thoughts and actions. With the attainment of great dispassion and purity alone can the aspirant take up successfully the higher forms of concentration and meditation, ultimately leading to the highest Divine experience and freedom.

The "Godward" turn

Every average person has the capacity to practise concentration and meditation, although these are usually directed towards persons or objects of gain and enjoyment presented to us by the world. In order to follow the spiritual life, no new faculties need be created all of a sudden. The old capacities and tendencies are to be given a Godward turn without diminishing their intensity, and then the worldly man is transformed into a spiritual man. So the true devotee prays, "Lord, may I think of Thee with that strong love which the ignorant cherish for the things of the world and may that love never cease to abide in my heart."

The ego asserts itself again and again. So, says Sri Ramakrishna, make it the servant of the Lord. Desires and passions refuse to be controlled. Give a Godward turn to them, maintaining their intensity—so advises the spiritual teacher. Instead of yearning for the company of men and women, yearn for union with the Divine. See Him in all, but take care that you do not cheat yourself. He alone can satisfy the hunger of the soul. He alone can fill its void and give it permanent peace and joy.

Instead of being angry with those standing in the way of your sense-enjoyment, gross or subtle, be angry with all the obstacles lying in the path to the Divine. Learn to be angry with your lower desires, with your turbulent passions, with your very anger and avoid them all as your great and relentless enemies. Instead of wishing to possess another "human doll" or fleeting worldly wealth, covet the Divine and His inexhaustible wealth which can never be

lost and is alone able to give abiding peace. So says the Bhagavatam: "*Lust, anger, fear, affections, fellowship and friendship, when directed towards the Divine Being, lead to union with the Divine.*"

At the touch of the philosopher's stone all the base metals of desires and passions, of greed and anger, lose their evil nature and are transmuted into pure devotion bringing Bliss and Immortality to the soul. "*Even if the very wicked worships Me— the Divine—with devotion to **none** else, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved. Soon does he become righteous and obtain eternal peace. Boldly canst thou proclaim that My devotee never comes to grief,*" says the Bhagavad-Gita.

Time and again says Sri Ramakrishna, "Give a Godward turn to all your tendencies." Especially in the path of devotion, all desires and passions should be consciously given a higher direction without allowing them to decrease in intensity.

The process of self-purification

Let us take e.g., the question of anger. Why are we angry? Only because someone or something is standing in the way of what we think to be the object of our enjoyment. This is the only reason for all our anger. Always we find that anger is closely connected with the overstressed ego or a strong sense of personality, and without this strong sense of the ego and an inordinate desire for enjoyment, physical and mental, anger could never even rise in our hearts. So this ego, this desire of enjoyment, is the only cause of our becoming angry. If we do not desire any enjoyment, if we do not expect anything from anybody, but just give and act without ever expecting any return, giving up all expectations, there can never be any rise of anger. So we should get angry with our anger and not with others. We should get terribly angry with our desires for sense-enjoyment and not with the objects as such. This is the only practical way to uproot anger and eventually eliminate it. And without eliminating anger and other associated evils to a great extent, we can never make any progress in spiritual life. Lust and anger are the two greatest enemies in the spiritual path. So they should be carefully avoided by all aspirants.

Thus, whenever there is anger there is some attachment or other, some inordinate desire or affection, for, truly speaking, without attachment to some person or thing there can never rise any

form of anger. It is only our thwarted will to enjoyment that brings about anger. But this should be understood more in a subtle sense than in a gross one. It need not necessarily be any craving for the grosser forms of enjoyment that lies as the root-cause of anger.

It may happen that a person is fully convinced of the evil effects of desires, but still is not able to rid himself completely of them. What is such a person to do? How can he rise above them? He should connect them all, directly or indirectly, with the Divine, give every desire, every sensual impulse, every passion a Godward turn, consciously and knowingly, with an effort of the will. If he cannot rid himself of the inordinate desire for music, let him listen to devotional, holy music, and all the time he is so doing, let him think of the Divine. If his artistic sense and his desire to enjoy art are very strong, he should take up some holy form of art and make that a stepping-stone for rising to the plane of the Divine. If he is very fond of the sweet fragrance and beauty of flowers and wishes to enjoy them, let him pluck the flowers, offer them to the Divine and decorate the holy altar artistically with them. If he desires to love somebody, feels greatly attracted towards somebody, let him love the Divine in that person and be thereby directly drawn towards the Divine. If done consciously and knowingly, all this acts as a great controlling factor, as a great regulating agency, helping us in sublimating our desires and in giving them a higher and higher turn and attaining a greater and greater purity. But even here, the ultimate goal to be attained by the aspirant is perfect control and Divine Realisation. Everything else serves only as a stepping-stone to that. Following the graduated steps, we must be able to rise to the Highest sooner or later.

Unless all the filth and foulness which have gathered in the mind are removed from it, from all nooks and corners, our problem is not really solved. If some light just enters a room through a chink in the door and the rest of the room remains shrouded in darkness and continues to be dirty, nothing is achieved. There is no real spiritual illumination if just a tiny bit of light enters our mind and all the dirt and filth lying there is pushed away for the time being into some far-off dark corner. In such a case the man remains just what he was before he had this kind of "glimpse". Mere theories and philosophies do not help us in any way, however wonderful they may be. What is essential is the practical application, the sublimation, the

removal of all the dirt lying hidden in the dark corners of the mind, not the so-called perfect control of all the mental modifications [vrittis] as some people would have it, which only leads to self-induced sleep in the beginner, but not to any form of real illumination. People talking of the complete stopping of all the mental modifications [vrittis] at the very beginning of their spiritual life do not know what they mean,

Very often there is in us only a certain amount of external control, but as distinct from this there should be real internal control. If we are outwardly controlled, but are not able to stop the activity in the sense-organ or in the mind, we cannot attain to higher forms of control. If the senses have been controlled, but are still eager to come in touch with the sense-objects, real control has not been achieved, but only its outward form. Even then, a step has been taken in the right direction.

One form of control is to draw oneself away completely from the objects of the senses. Another form is to allow the senses to come in touch with things that are pure and not likely to harm the aspirant by rousing fresh desires in him. This is the better and easier method for most people.

O my mind, worship the Mother and repeat day and night the great Mantram [the mystic word] that you have received from your Guru. When you lie down, think you are making prostrations to the Mother. When you sleep, think you are meditating on Her. When you eat, think you are offering food to Her. With great joy Ramprasad proclaims, 'Mother dwells in all bodies. When you walk in the city, think you are going round the Mother Divine.'

The idea of this beautiful song is this: To connect consciously every thought and every single act of our life, either directly or indirectly, with the Divine—to practise the Presence of God at all times.

Recognition of the all-pervading Divine Principle.

The Divine is everywhere and in everything, but we should learn to discriminate and act accordingly. We should learn to become: more wide-awake and conscious. We should be more reflective and act less on the impulse of the senses and of our instincts, be they good or bad. We are so careless and easy-going in all this, that we follow the opposite course and bring no end of troubles on

ourselves.

We should fully recognise this idea of Unity, but in the right way. At present we recognise it so half-heartedly. And properly speaking, without acquiring true dispassion and detachment, we cannot recognise it whole-heartedly and act up to it. If we were convinced that the One Undivided Principle exists in all, we could not have any strong hatred or any strong animal love for anybody, separating him from the rest, but would only turn our eyes towards the Principle at the back of him. This does not mean that we are to behave like fools. No. We still should know the tiger to be a tiger, in spite of its being a manifestation of this One Undivided Principle. So we should not go and shake hands with it. We should know the Principle to be present both in man and woman, but this knowledge should not prevent us from discriminating and being careful so long as we are on this phenomenal plane. We should see the One Principle at the back of the worldly person leading an impure and immoral life, but we should not go and have intimate talks with him. This is very, very essential. And if we do not act up to this rule, our feet will slip one day, and we shall seriously come to grief. The aspirant can never be careful enough in this. To the extent that we recognise the One Undivided Principle in all, our hatred, our so-called human love, our attachment, would be diminished and lose all strength and influence. Wherever we find in an aspirant the desire to mix indiscriminately with worldly-minded people and with members of the opposite sex, there is something seriously wrong. His desires for worldly things and enjoyment have not yet lost their tenacity and no purification has been attained. So spiritual progress and realisation are altogether out of question

Ordinarily, our attachment clouds our whole understanding. We must be able to stress the spirit more than the form, more than the personalities and sense-objects, but so long as our craving for sense-enjoyment, our clinging to this little personality of ours, continues to cloud our understanding, we can never really think of this One Undivided Principle, and thus we go on committing the same old mistakes over and over again. So dispassion should be cultivated as much as possible by all aspirants, Without it nothing positive can be achieved.

The way to Divine Realisation — the highest goal of life

Christ says, "He who loves father and mother more than Me, is

not worthy of Me.” And that is perfectly true. But not only that, but also he who allows another to love him more than the Divine is not worthy of God. He who allows another to be more attracted by him than by the Divine is not worthy of God and cannot attain Him. When we make another person love us in such a way by not being sufficiently reserved, we are not worthy of God. So, in this, too, we should be very careful and wide-awake. We feel flattered, no doubt, we like being attractive to others, we like being loved by others as objects of enjoyment. But we are too impulsive and too unreflective to know that from the spiritual standpoint we create troubles both for ourselves and for others and prevent our progress. We should be dignified and well guarded. We should take such an attitude that others do not dare to approach us in a wrong way, In short, we should try to possess greater and greater discrimination.

Dispassion has both its negative and its positive aspect. We should try to disconnect ourselves from others as much as possible and then connect ourselves with the Divine, so that later on all connection with others can be done only through the Divine, but never again in a direct way. Human love connected with the Divine can be gradually transmuted, but if it is not so connected, it degenerates and always ends in disaster and misery, whatever we may think to the contrary. All our relationships, if they be direct relationships, are only born with the body and associated with others through connections of the body only. There is nothing lasting in them that could ever bring peace and real blessedness to any of us.

It is really very strange: People suffer so much and still they are not brought to their senses, but cling to all these false identifications. Very often we forget the goal and take the means to be the goal. The whole world is bound by the desire for wealth and by the desire for sex. But we should learn to develop a new attitude towards both. We make money the highest goal of our life, and then we come to grief. We make the love of a man or a woman the ultimate aim of our life, and end our life in misery. We should become introspective and know what is the real goal of life and then try to realise it.

Ordinarily, there is in us such an awful identification with our body and our senses and passions that we just brush aside God. Wherever there is skepticism with reference to the Divine, there is some inordinate clinging to the self and to the senses and their ob-

jects, because of which God is pushed out. So long as the individual is full of sense-enjoyment, desire for possession, of egoism and vanity, God has no place in his life. The Divine is pushed away by our creature-consciousness. If the mind becomes perfectly free from desires and passions, one realises the Divine then and there. So if we do not realise God, if we do not even get a glimpse of the Truth, we need not ask why it is so. We should know that in the conscious and in the subconscious mind there are still strong desires in us, and we should first rid ourselves of these obstructions. So long as we allow them to remain, the question of realisation does not even arise.

We should break the sway of our impulses over us. The very moment the impulses rise in us, we should try to expand ourselves, for then these impulses at once disappear just as the waves disappear in the ocean. The man who knows how to expand his consciousness, how to attain a higher form of consciousness, is not affected by such impulses that rise in the mind. One of the most effective means to rise above one's impulses is to come in touch with the Divine Consciousness, with that Infinite Presence which is always in us. And without knowing how to rise above our instincts, without knowing how to control and curb our passions and cultivating true renunciation and dispassion, without having tried to attain to the purity of mind and of body, there can be no spiritual life for anyone. So we should become more reflective and more discriminating. We are not consistent enough in our thinking and in our actions. There should never be any haziness in the Vedantic aspirant. Vagueness and indefiniteness have no place in true spiritual life. Everything should be clear. We must have definite and right thoughts, definite and right emotions and feelings, definite and right actions. Then alone can we proceed to the Divine Goal and realise it.



Meditation and Realisation

by Swami Brahmananda

Question — Maharaj, I am practising Japam and meditation, but I have not yet acquired any taste for these. Somehow or other I am struggling on. What must I do?

Answer — Is it possible to have that taste in the beginning? No. Struggle hard to attain it. Concentrate all your energies on its

achievement, and never for a moment pay heed to other matters, apply yourself whole-heartedly to it and to it alone, Onward! Onward! Never be satisfied with your present state of mind. Try to create within yourself a burning dissatisfaction. Say to yourself— “What progress am I making? Not a bit.” Sri Ramakrishna used to say to the Divine Mother: “Mother another day is gone and I have not seen Thee!”

Every night before you go to bed, think for a while how much time you have spent in doing good deeds, how much again in doing useless things, how much time you have utilized in meditation and how much you have wasted in idleness. Make your mind strong through tapasya [austerity] and Brahmacharya [continence].

In rich men’s houses they keep a Darwan [porter] whose duty is to prevent thieves, cows, sheep, etc., from entering the compound. The mind is man’s Darwan. The stronger the mind becomes, the better. Mind has also been compared to a restive horse. Such a horse generally takes the rider along the wrong path. Only he who can hold a tight rein and check the horse can go the right way. Struggle, struggle on! What are you doing? Is everything achieved by the mere wearing of the Gerua-cloth [ochre-coloured cloth of the Sannyasin] or by renunciation of hearth and home? What have you realised? Time is flying. Do not waste a single moment. You will be able to work hard only another three or four years at the most. Afterwards both body and mind will become weak and infirm and you will not be able to do anything. What can be achieved without diligence?

You are thinking, “Let us first of all have yearning, faith and devotion; then we shall do our Sadhana [spiritual practices].” Is that possible? Can we see the day without the break of dawn? When the Lord comes, love, devotion and faith follow Him, as His retinue.

Can anything be achieved without tapasya? Brahma first heard —“*tapas* [meditate], *tapas* [meditate], *tapas* [meditate].” Do you not see what a severe tapasya even the Avatars [Incarnations of God] had to perform? Has anybody gained anything without labour? Buddha, Sankara, and others — what tremendous austerities they practised in their lives! What burning renunciation they possessed! What severe Sadhana they performed!

Real faith cannot be had in the beginning. First realisation, then faith. But at first the Sadhaka [aspirant] has to pin his faith —“blind

faith" it may be—to the precepts of his Guru [spiritual teacher] or of some great soul; then only can he advance toward the goal.

Do you not know the parable of the oyster as told by Sri Ramakrishna? The oyster floats about on the surface of the sea with its shell wide open, just for a little drop of the Swati rain [rain falling when the star Swati or Arcturus is in the ascendant]. As soon as it gets a raindrop, it dives down to the ocean-bed and there forms a fine pearl. Like the oyster, you too should be up and doing and then dive deep into the ocean of meditation.

You have no self-reliance. Personal exertion is an indispensable factor for success in the spiritual life. Do something for a period of at least four years. Then if you do not make any tangible progress, come and take me to task.

Japam and meditation are impossible unless you transcend the limitations of Rajas [excessive activity] and Tamas [inertia or lethargy]. Afterwards, you have to rise even above Sattva [illumination] and attain the high spiritual plane from where there is no return.

How difficult is the attainment of a human birth! Yet, it is only in the human birth that God-realisation is possible. Strive hard in this life and reach that state from which you will not have to come back.

The mind is to be raised, step by step, from the gross state to the subtle, then to the causal state, still farther to the Great Cause [Mahakarana] and finally to Samadhi [highest illumination]. Resign yourself fully to the Lord. He is everything. There is nothing besides. "*Verily all this is Brahman.*" Everything is His and His only. Never be calculating. Is self-surrender possible in a day? When that is achieved, everything is achieved. One must struggle hard for it.

Life is eternal. The span of man's life is at most a hundred years. Give up the pleasures of these hundred years, if you want to enjoy eternal life, and with it, eternal bliss,

—From *Spiritual Teachings* of Swami Brahmananda—



PRAYERS

*O Lord, Thou art the source of infinite energy,
do Thou fill me with energy.
Thou art the source of infinite strength,*

*do Thou endow me with strength.
Thou art the source of infinite courage,
do Thou inspire me with courage.
Thou art the source of infinite fortitude,
do Thou steel me with fortitude.*



*We offer our salutations to Thee,
the Bestower of good and auspiciousness,
We offer our salutations to Thee,
the Bestower of the Light, Bliss and Peace.*



*May the All-Pervading, the Self of the self
be realised by me.
May the highest bliss be realised by me.
May the All-Pervading Being, the Self of the self,
the Highest Bliss be realised by me.*



*May my body be pure. May I be free from impurity and sin.
May I realise myself as the Light Divine.
May my mind become pure. May it be free from impurity
and sin. May I realise myself as the Light Divine.
May my self become pure. May I be free from impurity and
sin. May I realise myself as the Light Divine.*



*Thou art the Imperishable, the Supreme Being.
Thou art the great refuge of the Universe. Thou art the
Supreme Goal. By Thee the universe is pervaded.
Salutations to Thee before and to Thee behind. Infinite
in power and prowess, Thou pervadest all.
Thou art the Father of the universe, greater than the
greatest. Thou art the One Object of worship.
I prostrate myself before Thee in adoration and crave
Thy forgiveness. Forgive me, O Lord, as a father
forgives his child, a friend his friend, a lover his
beloved.*



*Salutations to Thee — the Existence Absolute — the
Support of the worlds.
Salutations to Thee, the One Reality without a second,*

the giver of salvation.

*Salutations to Thee — the Intelligence Absolute — who
dost appear as everything.*

*Salutations to Thee, the Self of the self — All-Pervading —
the Absolute Being.*

*On Thee, the One alone, do we meditate. To Thee, the
One alone, the witness of the universe, do we
render our salutations.*

*In Thee, the One alone, who is the support of all,
the self-existent Lord, the vessel of safety in the ocean
of life, do we seek refuge.*



*Desirous of salvation I seek refuge in Thee, the Effulgent
Being, whose light reveals the glory of the Self, the Divine in
us who is absolutely pure and immortal by nature, who is the
way to perfect purity and immortality for us.*



*From the unreal lead us to the Real.
From darkness lead me to Light.
From death lead me to Immortality.*



Meditations

*He is the Supreme Principle of Existence, the Supreme
Truth, the Supreme Light, the Supreme Self.*

*He is the Cosmic Being permeating all that exists, all that
is in the universe, seen or heard.*

*The Infinite, the Immutable, the Omniscient, the Self, the
End of Creation, the Origin of all that is good, shines in the
hearts of all beings.*



*The Self is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the
speech of speech, the Cosmic Power manifesting Itself as
the vital energy.*

*What none can comprehend with the mind but by which
the mind is comprehended, know That alone to be the Su-
preme Being.*

*What none can see with the eyes, but by which one sees
the functions of the eyes, know That alone to be the Su-*

preme Being.

What none can hear by the ears but by which hearing is perceived, know That alone to be the Supreme Being.

What none can breathe with the breath, but by which breath is directed, know That alone to be the Supreme Being.



He is the One Divine Principle hidden in all beings, the All-Pervading, the Self within all beings, who watches all actions, dwelling in all beings, who is the Witness, the Perceiver, the One without a second, the Absolute beyond all limitations.

It is not for the sake of the husband that the husband is loved, but for the sake of the Self that the husband is loved.

It is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is loved, but for the sake of the Self that the wife is loved.

It is not for the sake of the sons that the sons are loved, but for the sake of the Self that the sons are loved.

It is not for the sake of everything that everything is loved, but for the sake of the Self that everything is loved.



He who dwells in the earth and is within the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, who controls the earth from within, He is the Self, the Controller within, the Immortal.

He who dwells in the sky and is within the sky, whom the sky does not know, whose body the sky is, and who controls the sky from within, He is the Self, the Controller within, the Immortal.

He who dwells in all beings, and is within all beings, whom all beings do not know, whose body all beings are, who controls all beings from within, He is the Self, the Controller within, the Immortal.

He who dwells in the breath and is within the breath, whom the breath does not know, whose body the breath is and who controls the breath from within, He is the Self, the Controller within, the Immortal.

He who dwells in the mind and is within the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is and who controls the mind from within, He is the Self, the Controller within, the Immortal.

He is the Self free from all sins, free from old age, free from death and misery.

He is neither feminine, nor masculine, nor neuter.

He is below, He is above, He is behind, He is in front, He is to the right, He is to the left. He, verily, is everything.



I am neither the body, nor the senses, neither the mind nor the ego, neither the vital energy, nor the intellect. I am the Witness, the Eternal Indwelling Self, the Infinite Beneficent Being.

I am the Self, neither masculine, nor feminine, nor neuter. I am the All-Pervading Being, the Light Supreme.

I am the Light of the Self, the light that is the Inmost Self, the Supreme Being, the Light of lights, the Light existing by Itself.



I am the Self, changeless and formless, all pervading and omnipresent. I am beyond the touch of sense-attachment. I am beyond all bondage and relative knowledge. I am the All-Pervading Self, I am the All-Pervading Self.



VEDANTA

A Quarterly Journal Published by
Swami Yatiswarananda in Switzerland

Vol.1 No.2 – 1937, Second Quarter

Truth is one, but sages call It by various names.— Rig-Veda

The Immanent and the Transcendent

The Effulgent, All-Pervading Being, having innumerable heads and innumerable eyes, is the origin of all the good that exists in the world. He has manifested Himself as the universe and He again is the great Deity – pervading the elements. Beyond all change, He is the Supreme Lord of all.

He transcends the whole world, and also manifests Himself as the whole world. He is the Eternal Being, the Support of all, the Remover of evil. The existence of the whole world depends on Him.

He is the Master of the world, the Supreme Self, the Lord, The Permanent Good, the Changeless, the Cosmic Being, the Great Goal of Knowledge, the Self of the universe and the Supreme Refuge.

He is the Supreme Reality, He is the Absolute Truth, He is the Supreme, Resplendent, All-Pervading Being. He is the centre and support of the whole universe which is already manifested or will be manifested hereafter.

—Taittiriya Aranyaka—

As the one fire assumes different forms according to the shapes of the different objects it burns, so the One Self that resides in all beings appears different according to the forms It enters into. It exists outside of them also.

As the sun who forms the eye of the universe is never defiled by the external impurities seen by the eyes of man, so the One Self that resides in all beings is never contaminated by the evils of the world as It transcends everything.

—Katha Upanishad—

There is naught higher or different from That: naught greater or more minute than That. He stands, One without a second, immovable, like a tree rooted in His own glory. By this Self the whole universe is filled.

That Divine Lord, being all-pervading, omnipresent and Benevolent, dwells in the hearts of all beings, and makes use of all faces, heads and necks in this world.

This Self is indeed the mighty Lord. He is the imperishable internal Light that controls everything. He guides the intellect of all beings so as to enable them to gain Liberation.

—**Swetaswatara Upanishad**—

This whole universe is filled by the All-Pervading Person to whom there is nothing superior and than whom there is nothing smaller or larger.

—**Swetaswatara Upanishad**—

With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads, and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere in the universe, the Supreme Being exists pervading all.

It manifests Itself through the functions of the senses. Yet It is without senses. It is unattached, yet It sustains all. It transcends relative existence, yet It is the experiencer of everything.

It is within and without all beings. It is motionless, and yet It moves. On account of Its subtlety It is incomprehensible. It is both far and near.

Though impartible, yet It exists as if divided in beings. It is to be known as the Sustainer of beings, generating them and reabsorbing them again into Itself.

The Light even of lights, It is said to be beyond darkness. Knowledge, The One Truth to be known and the Goal of Knowledge,— It dwells in the hearts of all.

—**Bhagavad-Gita (13.13–17)**—



THE ETERNAL MESSAGE OF THE INDIAN SAGES

The Goal and Aspects of Vedanta

[Compiled from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*]¹

Brahman indescribable

Who can describe what the absolute Brahman [The Pure Being] is? Whatever can be uttered by the mouth has become defiled, as it were, like the leavings of food. All Holy Books have become defiled, as it were, like the leavings of food, for they have been uttered by human mouths. But there is one thing that is never defiled in this manner and that is the Absolute Brahman. No one has succeeded in describing the Absolute by the words of mouth. Brahman is unspeakable, indescribable, unthinkable.

Parable of the ant and the mount of sugar

An ant went to a mount of sugar. The ant did not realise how high the mountain was but ate a small particle of sugar and was satisfied. It carried home another particle in its mouth. On its way it thought, "Next time I will carry the whole mountain." Such, alas, is the thought of small minds. They think they have known the Absolute, not realising that Brahman is beyond the reach of mind and thought. However great the mind may be, it cannot fully comprehend the Absolute Brahman. The greatest spiritual teachers may be compared to lame ants. They could carry in their mouth at the utmost eight or ten grains from the mountain of sugar.— It is as absurd to say that Brahman has been fully comprehended by a great man as it is absurd to say that the whole mountain of sugar was carried away by a large ant.

Brahman is like the ocean

What the Vedas and other Scriptures have said about the Absolute is like the description of the ocean given by a man who saw the vast ocean. When asked what the ocean was like, he exclaimed in utter amazement—"Oh! What I have seen! How vast is the expanse! How big are the waves! What a thundering roar!"

Like unto this is the talk about the Absolute Brahman. The Vedas declare that Brahman is the ocean of Absolute Existence, Intelli-

1. The first English version, written by M. himself, published in 1911. Presently available as *The Condensed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. [Ed].

gence and Bliss. Even the greatest spiritual teachers only stood on the shore of the infinite ocean, saw it, and touched its waters.

Parable of the salt doll

Some believe that even the greatest souls did not go into the ocean, for whoever enters into that ocean of Brahman does not return to this mundane existence.

A doll of salt once went to the ocean to measure its depth. It had a desire to tell others how deep the ocean was. Alas! Its desire was never satisfied. No sooner had it plunged into the ocean than it melted away and became one with it. Who would bring the news regarding its depth? Similar is the condition of the individual ego which enters into the Infinite Ocean of the Absolute Brahman.

Brahman is silence

Discussions and argumentations exist so long as the realisation of the Absolute does not come. If you melt butter in a pan over fire, how long does it make a noise? So long as there is water in it. When the water is evaporated, it ceases to make further noise. Again, if you throw a piece of dough into that hot clarified butter, there will be noise until the cake is thoroughly fried. The soul of a seeker after Brahman may be compared to fresh butter. It is mixed up with the water of egoism and worldliness. Discussions and argumentations of a seeker are like the noise caused during the process of purification by the fire of knowledge. As the water of egoism and worldliness is evaporated and the soul becomes purer, all noise of discussions and argumentations ceases and absolute silence reigns in the state of Samadhi [Superconsciousness].

Purified ego of the saint

Thus realising the Absolute Brahman in silence, the soul comes down to the plane of relativity to help others and to teach mankind the highest wisdom of Brahman. Then he talks again and makes a noise again, as the hot clarified butter does when in contact with a piece of dough. Such a soul retains the sense of "I" simply to help mankind. Sankaracharya—the great exponent of Non-Dualism—and other spiritual teachers kept the purified sense of "I" without which all teaching is impossible.

Sages speak for the good of others

The bee buzzes so long as it is outside the lotus and does not

settle down in its heart to drink of the honey. As soon as it tastes of the honey, all buzzing is at an end. Similarly, all noise of discussion ceases when the soul of the neophyte begins to drink the nectar of Divine Love at the Lotus Feet of the Almighty. Sometimes, however, the bee after being intoxicated by the honey makes a sweet buzzing sound. So the God-intoxicated soul sometimes speaks for the good of others.

Pure Non-Dualistic Vedanta

So long as the individual soul has the slightest attachment to the world of senses and desires it cannot attain to Brahma-Jñāna [Realisation of unity with the Absolute through knowledge and self-analysis]. He is a Jñāni who relinquishes all worldly desires and sense-pleasures by saying "Not this, not this", and then realises the Supreme Brahman in Samadhi [Highest Superconsciousness].

A Jñāni [one following the path of knowledge and self-analysis] knows that all phenomena of the universe which are subject to evolution, whether physical or mental, are within the realm of Maya [phenomenon]. They are unreal and transitory, like the objects of vision in a dream. Therefore, as one climbs the staircase step by step, until the roof is reached, so he rises above them step by step saying, "Not this, not this", until he reaches the Absolute Brahman, which is the roof of the phenomenal universe. A Jñāni goes so far as to realise that Brahman is the Absolute Reality and all phenomena are unreal.

Qualified Non-Dualistic Vedanta

Another point of view is that of qualified Non-Dualism. The Absolute must not be considered apart from the world and the soul. The three form one, three in one and one in three. Let us take a Bel-fruit. Let the shell, the seeds and the kernel be kept separate. Now suppose some one wished to know the weight of the fruit. Surely it would not do to weigh the kernel alone. The shell, the seeds and the kernel are all weighed with a view to come to know the real weight of the fruit. No doubt, we reason at the outset that the all-important thing is the kernel—not either the shell or the seeds. In the next place we go on reasoning that the shell and the seeds belong to the same substance to which the kernel belongs. At the first stage of reasoning we say, "Not this, not this". Thus the Absolute is not the individual soul. Again, it is not the phenomenal

world. The Absolute is the only Reality, all else is unreal. At the next stage we go a little further. We see that the kernel belongs to the same substance as that to which the shell and the seeds belong. Hence, the substance from which we derive our negative conception of the Absolute Brahman is the identical substance from which we derive our negative conceptions of the finite soul and the phenomenal world. Our relative phenomena must be traced to that Eternal Being which is also called the Absolute. Hence, the Absolute is qualified by the finite soul and the phenomenal world. This is the doctrine of the qualified non-dualistic Vedanta.

Dualistic Vedanta

Dualistic Vedanta teaches that the individual soul is one thing and God another. "I am distinct and separate from you." This body is like a bowl: mind, intellect and egoism are like water within it, while the Personal God is the sun which is reflected in the water, and this reflection or image of the Divine Being can be perceived by the individual soul in ecstasy.

Monistic Vedanta

In Monistic Vedanta, however, Brahman —the Absolute— is the Reality and all else is unreal like a dream. Egoism is like a stick which lies upon the waters of the infinite ocean of Existence-Intelligence-Bliss Absolute, and makes it appear as divided. But when the stick is removed, the apparent division ceases, and the waters of the ocean remain undivided. The knowledge of this indivisible oneness brings the highest state of Samadhi [Superconsciousness], where this egoism is entirely obliterated. But the great spiritual teachers like Sankaracharya kept a little egoism of knowledge to teach mankind.

Ramakrishna and reconciliation of the paths of Vedanta

A Jñani, having only the transcendental knowledge of Brahman, goes so far as to realise that Brahman is the Absolute Reality and all phenomena are unreal. A Vijñani, possessing an intimate knowledge of both the transcendental and immanent aspects of Brahman, however, goes further and realises more. He sees that the roof and the steps are all made of the same substance. Few can stay long on the roof [the realm of the Absolute]. All those who reach this state of Samadhi [Superconsciousness] must return to lower planes, just as no one can sing "si", the highest note of the

gamut, for a long time. The sense of “I” drags one down. But when a Vijñani returns from Samadhi to a lower plane of consciousness and perceives the world of relativity, he sees Brahman everywhere, and that the same Absolute Being appears as the individual souls and all the phenomena of the universe. He realises “I am He”.

There are various paths which lead to the realisation of the Absolute Brahman. The path of a Jñani is as good as that of a Bhakta [devotee]. Jñana-Yoga—the path of knowledge and spiritual analysis—is true; so is Bhakti-Yoga—the path of devotion. There is another path of Bhakti mixed with Jñana which is equally true. So long as the sense of “I”, “me”, “mine”, remains in the devotee, the path of Bhakti is easier for him.

A Vijñani, however, realises the Absolute Brahman as the unchangeable Reality of the universe, firm and immutable. It is beyond all activity of Maya—the Cosmic Energy producing the phenomenon. He also sees that the world has evolved out of the three Gunas—the constituents of Prakriti or Cosmic Energy.

Maya

Maya or Prakriti consists of “Vidya” [knowledge] and “A-vidya” [ignorance]. Vidya is that energy which leads Godward. It manifests itself as discrimination, non-attachment, devotion and love of God. But Avidya leads to worldliness. This energy expresses itself as various passions, desire for wealth and honour, ambition, work with attachment, selfishness. All these Vidya and Avidya forces rise from the Divine Energy of Brahman,—they cannot affect Brahman.

Unity in diversity

The Vijñani realises that the same Absolute Brahman appears as the Personal God with all attributes and blessed qualities. The Vijñani sees that the individual ego, phenomenal world, mind, intellect, devotion, dispassion, knowledge—all these are the glory of the Supreme Personal Deity. If these manifestations of the Divine Glory did not exist, who would have worshipped Him as the Lord of the universe? If a rich man does not possess wealth and property but becomes bankrupt, nobody will call him rich. Do you not see how beautiful is this world? How many varieties of phenomena—the sun, moon, stars, various kinds of animals, various kinds of

plants and vegetables, things large and small, good and bad, some men with great powers, others with few. The Lord dwells as the All-Pervading Being equally within all living creatures, great and small, nay, even in the smallest ant or animalcule. The difference lies in the manifestation of powers. There is nothing in mere book-learning. One should study books simply to find out the ways by which He —the Absolute Brahman— can be realised.

The "I" persists

If you ask — Why does a Vijñani prefer to have love or devotion? the answer is — Because it is difficult for one to be free from the sense of "I". In the highest state of Superconsciousness it may vanish for the time being, but it comes back again, while for ordinary individuals it is almost impossible to eliminate this sense of "I, me and mine". Even if you cut off the branches of the Banian tree again and again, new branches will sprout so long as the root is alive. Similarly, you may try to get rid of the sense of "I", but so long as the root is alive it will sprout again and again. Even after acquiring Brahma-Jñana [realisation of the Absolute], the emancipated soul is forced back to the plane of this sense of "I".

The way to spiritualise the "I"

Thus, if the sense of "I" is the cause of all troubles and if it is impossible to be free from it, let it stay on as "I", the servant of the Lord.

Asked by the Lord Incarnate, a great devotee replied— "When I think of myself as embodied, I am Thy servant and Thou art the Lord. When I think of myself as the individualised soul, I am Thy part and Thou art the Universal Whole. But when I think of myself as the pure Spirit, I am one with Thee. Then I realise, I am Thou and Thou art I."

The Absolute Brahman cannot be known by reasoning. Be His servant and taking refuge with Him, pray to Him with earnestness and sincerity. He will surely reveal Himself unto you, Book-learning or intellectual discussions cannot reveal the Divinity.

The Absolute and God the Personal — the same Being

He who is described in the Vedas as the Absolute Brahman is the Personal God, my Divine Mother. I pray to Her. That which is the Absolute, impersonal, beyond all attributes, is also the same as the Personal God who is with all attributes and blessed qualities.

The Absolute Brahman again is inseparable from the Divine Energy.

The term “Brahman” refers to that aspect of Divinity which is impersonal and which is beyond all activity. But when we think of Him as creating, preserving and destroying all phenomena, then we call Him the Personal God.

In reality there is no distinction between “Brahman” or the Impersonal Absolute, and “Shakti”, the Divine Energy, the Divine Mother. Brahman and Shakti are one, just as fire and its burning power are one. As by the word “fire”, we understand its power of burning, so by the latter we know that it is the same as fire. By realising the one, both are realised. They are one, just as much as milk and its whiteness are one. We cannot conceive of a gem without its brightness.

They are one just as the serpent and its sinuous motion are one. We cannot conceive of the serpent without its serpentine movements.

The Divine Mother bestows the highest knowledge of Brahman by bringing Her devotee into the state of Samadhi [Highest Superconsciousness]. She it is who again brings him down to the plane of sense-consciousness and allows him to retain the sense of “I” and “mine”.

By the power of my Divine Mother all mortals possess the sense of “I” and “mine”. SHE again reveals to the soul of one who is in Samadhi that all living beings, nay, the whole universe, are but the manifestation of Divine Energy. It is SHE who makes one reach the Highest Knowledge of the Absolute, and SHE again makes another HER beloved devotee who surrenders himself to HER omnipotent will. This truth is the great secret of secrets.



Think of Death Always and New Life Will Come Within

From *Conversations and Dialogues*
[Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda]

Sw. Vivekananda — “You are all studying different schools of European philosophy and metaphysics and learning new facts about nationalities and countries, can you tell me what is the grandest of all the truths in life?”

As none put forth any reply, the Swami exclaimed in his inspiring language:-

“See here, we shall all die! Bear this in mind always, and then the spirit within will wake up. Then only meanness will vanish from you, practicality in work will come, you will get new vigour in mind and body, and those who come in contact with you will also feel that they have really got something uplifting from you.”

Question — “But, Swamiji, will not the spirit break down at the thought of death and the heart be overpowered by despondency?”

Sw. Vivekananda — “Quite so. At first the heart will break down at the thought of death and despondency and gloomy thoughts will occupy your mind. But persist, let days pass like that,— and then? Then you will see that new strength has come into the heart, that the constant thought of death is giving you a new life, and is making you more and more thoughtful by bringing every moment before your mind’s eye the truth of the saying, “*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*”. Wait! Let days, months, and years pass, and you will feel that the spirit within is waking up with the strength of a lion, that the little power within has transformed itself into a mighty power! Think of death always and you will realise the truth of every word I say. What more shall I say in words!”

“Praise and censure have no value in this world of ours. They only rock a man as if in a swing. Praise I have had enough of; showers of censure I have also had to bear; but what avails thinking of them! Let everyone go on doing his own duty, unconcerned. When the last moment arrives, praise, and blame will be the same to you, to me, and to others. We are here to work, and will have to leave all when the call comes.”

Qu.— “How little we are, Swamiji.”

Sw. Vivekananda — “True! You have well said! Think of this infinite universe with its millions and millions of solar systems, and think with what an infinite, incomprehensible power they are impelled, running as if to touch the Feet of the One Unknown, and how little we are! Where then is room here, to allow ourselves to indulge in vileness and meanmindedness? What should we gain here by fostering mutual enmity and party-spirit? Take my advice: Set yourselves wholly to the service of others. Believe me, far greater happiness would then be yours than if you had a whole

treasury full of money and other valuables at your command. As you go on your way serving others, you will, on a parallel line, advance in the Path of Knowledge.”

“Alas! What folly for men in this world to spend their days fighting and quarrelling with one another as they do! But how long can they go on in that way? In the evening of life (i.e., at the end of one’s whole course of transmigratory existence) they must all come home to the arms of the MOTHER.”



Seek the Grace of God by Emptying the Heart of Desires

[Compiled from the *Abhangas* of Tukarama]

Make a vow that you will seek the grace of God by emptying your heart of its innate desires. God will come to your rescue by the power of the Name and take you across the ocean of life. God does not possess salvation ready-made so that He may hand it over to His devotee. Salvation consists in conquering the senses and the mind and making them empty of the pursuit of objects and creatures.

God has no form, nor any name, nor any place where He can be seen; but wherever you go, you see God. He has neither form nor transformation, but He fills the whole world. He is neither impersonal nor personal, but is beyond all knowledge. This God cannot be attained except through love.

The Vedanta has said that the whole universe is filled by God. All sciences have proclaimed that God has filled the whole world. The Puranas have unmistakably taught the universal immanence of God. The Saints have told us that the world is filled by God. Tuka indeed is playing in the world, uncontaminated by it, like the sun which stands absolutely transcendent. The real God is the universal immanent God. Meditate on Him, says Tuka.

One laughs in vain and one weeps in vain. Vainly do people say that this is mine and this is thine. Vainly does a man sing, and vainly does he meditate. Unreality meets unreality. The unreal man enjoys, the unreal man renounces. Unreal is the Saint. Unreal is Maya. The unreal Tuka, with an unreal devotion, says unreal things to unreal men.

All my desires are at an end and my end is achieved. When I became powerful beyond measure, at that very moment I died. Tuka

looks on both sides and sees Himself by himself. God is the giver, and God is the enjoyer. What else remains to be experienced! With the eyes I see my own form. The whole world appears to be filled by Divine Music, says Tuka. I see Thy Feet everywhere. The whole universe is filled by Thee. Thou hast become everything to us. Whatever I speak is a recitation of Thy qualities. When I walk, I turn round about Thee. When I sleep, I fall prostrate before Thee. All wells and rivers are now Thyself. All houses and palaces have now become the temples of God. Whatever I hear is the name of God.

We should empty the heart of its contents, then will God live in it. No other skill is required in order to see God. We shout nip all our desires in the bud. Where desires end, there God enters and dwells.

He who has seen God stands, as it were, on an eminence. He who has seen God is afraid of none. He who has seen God will ask what he likes of God Himself. He who has seen God knows that God cuts off his inner desires with a pair of scissors.

Sainthood can be acquired only at the cost of life. He who is not prepared to sacrifice his whole life should not boast of spirituality. He alone is a servant of God, who loves God wholly. He cares for nothing else. When calamities befall him, he holds fast to his spiritual practice.

The sun and the lamp and the diamond show things which are visible. But the Saints show things which are invisible. Parents are the cause of birth. But Saints are the cause of the cessation of birth. It is for these reasons, says Tuka, that we should go to the Saints unasked, and cling to their feet.



The Absolute Is beyond all Speech and Thought

[Compiled from the *Amritanubhava* of Jñanadeva]

Brahman is beyond all speech and it is as impossible and futile to speak about IT as to measure one's own height by measuring one's shadow by one's own hands. IT is beyond all relative conceptions such as existence, intelligence and happiness; and also beyond the opposites of these that are implied in them. IT is neither existence nor non-existence, for IT is Absolute Existence. IT is neither intelligence nor non-intelligence, as IT is Absolute Intelligence. IT is neither happiness nor misery, since IT is Absolute Bliss. IT transcends all duality of contrary and relative conceptions and is

absolutely one. IT is like the beauty that has not yet assumed any form, or like the holiness of a virtuous act before it is performed. IT transcends all generality and particularity and is, ever delighting in Itself. Silence is the greatest speech in Its case. For all ways of proof proclaim that Brahman cannot be proved, and all illustrations and parables solemnly declare that IT cannot be shown. All conceptions and scientific characterisations vanish before IT. Efforts prove fruitless and even experience grows hopeless of verification.

How can words describe Brahman, where experience itself vanishes together with the experiencer and the experienced?— where the supreme speech itself disappears and no trace is found of any sound? It is as unnecessary to describe Brahman in words, as to wake up one that is awake, or to cook food for one who has taken his meal, or to light a lamp when the sun has risen.

The Self or the Absolute is Pure Knowledge and beyond all relative conceptions of memory and forgetfulness. The Self that is self-evident and self-existent stands in no need of proof by word.

Even the knowledge “I am the Self” is itself a limitation to the Self, because it is related to ignorance; while the Self is beyond both knowledge and ignorance and is of the nature of Pure and Absolute Knowledge. Real liberation is attainable only when this relative knowledge of the Self also vanishes.

Knowledge that shines by destroying ignorance, is itself swallowed up by Absolute Knowledge which leaves no distinction whatever between knowledge and ignorance, as the sun that fills the whole universe leaves no room for any distinction between light and darkness.

As a lamp is wholly filled with light, so is the universe entirely filled with the Supreme Intelligence eternally vibrating with life. And the seeing and the non-seeing of the Self are like darkness and light in the case of the moon, which being really unaffected by these, ever lives in its own unmodified conditions.



The All-Comprehensive Nature of the Divine

[Compiled from the *Jñāneswari* of Jñānadeva]

Before Me the Divine, the Holy Scriptures are dumb. Life and intelligence are unable to encompass Me. Before My lustre the sun and the moon fade. Just as the embryo in the womb of the mother

does not know the age of the mother, so all the gods are unable to know Me. Animals residing in the ocean do not know the extent of the ocean. Flies cannot go across the sky. The wisdom even of the sages does not disclose My entire form. Many ages have passed away in the attempt to determine who I am, what I envelop, and how I take forms. Since I am the source of all these sages and gods and living beings, it is very difficult for them to know Me.

It is as difficult for beings of this world born of Me to know Me, as it is for water, which has come down from the mountain, to reach back to the top, or for a tree to remain in full blossom after it has been pulled out by the root. The sap of the tree cannot envelop the tree. Wavelets cannot hold the ocean. So the entire universe cannot be contained in an atom. Though I am difficult to know, yet if a man were to leave off all external objects and be wholly indifferent to the senses, if he proceeded on this path, he would lose the pride of body and would transcend the five elements. If he were to secure steadiness of mind in this manner, he would begin to realise My Eternity from the Light of the Self. Though in human body, know him who knows Me truly as without beginning and omnipotent, to be in reality a part of Me.

From the ant to the Creator, there is nothing except Myself, the Divine. He who has realised this truth has attained the awakening of Jñana [Highest Knowledge]. He never, therefore, gets a bad dream in which distinction of inferior and superior is made. Only the Yogis realise that I and My Vibhūtis [forms] and the beings held together by My forms are all one. Due to this union through Jñana-Yoga [the Path of Knowledge], the highest goal is achieved by him who is absorbed in Me wholeheartedly.

I am the Creator of the universe, and its sustenance is also through Me, the Divine. Waves originate in water, they depend on water, and their life is through water. The only support from all points of view for the waves is nothing but water. In this way, for the whole universe, there is no other support except My form. Realising thus that I, the Divine, am omnipresent, people worship Me with devotion and affection in all places. I am the same in all countries and at all times. The wind moves in the sky and assumes the form of the sky. So the devotee, constantly thinking of Me who am omnipresent, moves in this universe cheerfully. Remember that he alone knows the true knowledge of Self. He regards everything as

My form and he secures union with Me through this Bhakti-Yoga [Path of Devotion]. Those who are absorbed in Me with all their heart are conscious of life and death moving through the endless ocean of Jñāna [Highest Knowledge].

I am limitless. Even the most extensive thing, viz., the sky, is contained in Me. I am the soul in every living being. In his body, I am the heart and the skin which covers everything. I am the beginning, middle and the end of all living things. The cloud has the sky under it, inside it, above it, everywhere. Being created in the sky, it remains in the sky, and when it comes to an end, it is still in the sky. So am I, the threefold condition of all things, viz., the origin, maintenance and the end. The contemplation of My forms will enable you to realise this infinity and omnipresence.

In My form there is no room for distinction of high and low. My forms are infinite. Even a small particle of Me can envelop the whole universe. Therefore devote yourself wholeheartedly to Me, abandoning all feelings of distinction and separateness. Whoever, by devotion, destroys duality between himself and everything else, beginning from the smallest animalcule to the highest being, in whose heart faith has become firm, so that he seeks nothing in this whole world except Myself, reaches Me. Burning wood ceases to be wood and becomes fire. The darkness of the sky disappears, when the sun rises. With realisation, I-ness disappears, and the feeling of duality is destroyed. Then Myself, he and everything else become one. The final unity is attained. Whoever performs his duty for My sake, dedicates all his acts to Me and concentrates *all* his affection on Me alone—whose sole aim in this world and in the next is Myself, the purpose of whose entire life is to seek Me, who forgets his Jiva-hood [being an individualised soul] and sees Me in everything, and is, therefore, friendly towards everything, who devotes himself unabated to Me—finds himself meeting Me, the Divine, when this body full of the threefold defects comes to an end.

Being omnipresent, I have no characteristics. The clouds gather in the sky, but the sky is not in them. The water is in the clouds, but the clouds are not in water. Lightning is produced from the contact of the clouds, but is there any water in lightning? Smoke is produced by fire, but there is no fire in the smoke. Similarly, all characteristics arise out of Me, but I am not in them.

People seek to confine Me in a small measure, whereas I am

immeasurable. They conceive Me in a particular form, whereas I am formless, and they strain themselves in performing difficult rituals to attain Me, when I am ready at hand. These misguided worshippers, moving in a circle through their illusion, resent such criticism, because their worldly intelligence cannot see My Light. If they knew the truth, they would know there is not a thing in which I am not, just as nothing could be turned soft and liquid without water, nothing could escape the touch of wind, and nothing can contain space. Remember that I alone am everywhere in this universe, containing it within Myself. I have been in the heart of all beings that have gone in the past and of all that exist now, or will be in the future. In fact, they are not different from Me, and it is misleading to talk of their coming and going. You cannot classify that which is unreal, like a snake made from your rope, which can be described neither as black, spotted or straw-coloured. I am Eternal. I am Omnipresent. Just as a lamp is full of light inside and outside, I, the Universal Self, by My internal and external light pervade internally and externally the whole universe.

There was nothing before Me nor can there be anything after Me, the Root of all, either with form or without form, the Ruler of everything without beginning and without end. I am the support and I am that which rests on the support. At all times the Master of everything and perpetually present, self-existent and always omnipresent, I am everywhere and I am also on the other side of everywhere. I am in everyone, old and new. I am greater than everything and smaller than the smallest atom. All things rest in Me, because I envelop all things, though I am without contact and without sorrow. I am the Supreme Being. I am beyond words or hearing or colour or reach, equal everywhere, independent, Brahman and Para-Brahman.

On your tongue let there be simple names of Me, Who am the dwelling place of everything, in order that they may fertilise your heart. Perform for Me all actions that you do by your hands and all movements, in which your feet are engaged. Go on sacrificing to Me by dedicating to Me all things which you do either for yourself or for the use of others. Inflamm your sense of service and then serve everything that comes to your eye, realising that they are mere forms of Mine, and abandoning hatred of all living beings, bow everywhere through humility with the full and unshakable con-

viction that I, the Universal Self, exist everywhere. In this way you will secure My full protection. Then in this world no third thing will exist for you and you will find complete union between Me and you. Then you will enjoy union with Me at all times.

People, standing on the shores of an ocean, think that the larger waves are swallowing the smaller waves, but from the point of view of the water, which wave can be said to have destroyed which wave? There is no wave destroying any other wave. In this way, for him who has identified himself with the true form of the Self, no other object remains which he can abandon or destroy.



THE GREAT MESSAGE OF ISLAMIC SUFISM

On Real Companionship

[Compiled from the *Kashf Al-Mahjub* of
Ali b. Uthman Al-Jullabi Al-Hujwiri]

Companionship must be for God's sake, not for the purpose of gratifying the lower soul of any selfish interest, in order that a man may be divinely rewarded for observing the rules of true companionship. Falik b. Dinar said to his son-in-law, Mughira b. Shuba, "If you derive no religious benefit from a brother and friend, at once abandon his society that you may be saved", i.e., associate either with one who is superior or with one who is inferior to yourself. In the former case you will derive benefit from him and in the latter case, the benefit will be mutual, since each will learn something from the other. Hence, the Apostle said, "It is the whole of piety to instruct one who is ignorant", and Yahya b. Mu'adh said, "He is a bad friend with whom you need to say 'Remember me in thy prayers'", because a man ought always to pray for anyone with whom he is associated even for a moment, and he is a bad and faithless friend to whom you need to apologize for a fault that you have committed, because apologies are made by strangers, and in true companionship it is wrong to be on such terms. The Apostle said, "A man follows the religion and ways of his friends; take heed, therefore, with whom you form a friendship." If he associates with the good, their society will make him good, although he is bad, and if he associates with the wicked, he will be wicked, although he is good, because he will be consenting to their wickedness. It is related that a man said, while he was circumambulating the Ka'ba,

“O God, make my brethren good!” On being asked why he did not implore a boon for himself in such a place, he replied: “I have brethren to whom I shall return; if they are good, I shall be good with them, and if they are wicked, I shall be wicked with them.”

The Sufi Religious Teachers demand from each other the fulfilment of the duties of companionship and enjoin their disciples to require the same, so that amongst them companionship has become a religious obligation.



The Parable of the Butterflies

by Fariduddin Attar

One night the butterflies were tormented by the desire to unite themselves with the candle-flame. They held a meeting and resolved that one of them should go and experiment, and bring back news. A butterfly was sent to a neighbouring house and he perceived the flame of the candle which was burning within. He brought back word and tried to describe the flame according to the measure of his intelligence; but the butterfly who presided over the assembly said that the exploring butterfly had attained no real knowledge of the candle-flame. A second butterfly went forth and approached so close to the flame as to singe his wings. He also returned and threw a little light on the mystery of union with the flame. But the presiding butterfly found his explanation not much more satisfactory than that of the preceding one.

A third butterfly then flew forth; he was intoxicated with love for the flame and flung himself wholly into it; he lost himself, and identified himself with it. It embraced him completely, and his body became as fiery-red as the flame itself. When the presiding butterfly saw from afar that the flame had absorbed the devoted butterfly and communicated its own qualities to him, “That butterfly,” he exclaimed, “has found what he wished to know, but he alone understands it. Only he who has lost all trace and token of his own existence knows what annihilation is. Until thou ignorest thyself, body and soul, thou canst not know the object which alone deserves thy love.”

In the unity, what remains of the existence of “I” or “thou”? So how can “I” or “thou” or “man” or “woman” continue to be?



Some Teachings from the Works of Al-Ghazzali

The highest stage of spiritual Realisation

The highest stage is reached by one to whom all truths and realities are revealed intuitively, who by virtue of his exalted position enjoys direct communion and close relation with the Most Holy. The real nature of this position is known only to him who enjoys it. We verify it by FAITH. A child has no knowledge of the attainments of an adult. An adult is not aware of the acquisitions of a learned man. Similarly, a learned man is not cognisant of the holy communion of the saints and prophets and of the favours bestowed on them. Although the divine blessings descend freely, those are fit recipients of them whose hearts are pure and wholly devoted to Him alone. "Verily," says the Hadis, "the desire of the virtuous is to hold communion with me, and I long to look at them." "He who approaches me a span, I approach him an arm's length." "The divine favours are not withheld, but hearts are dimmed by impurity and fail to receive them." "Had it not been that the devils hover round the hearts of men, they would have seen the glories of the Kingdom of Heaven."

The position of man

The body serves as a vehicle for the soul, and the soul is the abode for knowledge which is its fundamental character as well as its ultimate object. The horse and the ass are both beasts of burden, but a superiority of the former is found in its being gracefully adapted for use in battle. If the horse fails in this, it is degraded to the rank of mere burden-bearing animals. Similarly with man. In certain qualities man resembles a horse and an ass, but his distinguishing trait is his participation in the nature of the angels, for he holds a middle position between the beast and the angel. Considering the mode of his nourishment and growth, he is found to belong to the vegetable world. Considering his power of movement and impulses, he is a denizen of the animal kingdom. The distinguishing quality of knowledge, lifts him up to the celestial world. If he fails to develop this quality and to translate it into action, he is no better than a grunting pig, a snarling dog, a prowling wolf, or a crafty fox.

If man wishes for true happiness, let him look upon reason as a monarch sitting on the throne of his heart, imagination as its am-

bassador, memory as treasurer, speech as interpreter, the limbs as clerks, and the senses as spies in the realms of colour, sound, smell, etc., etc. If all these properly discharge the duties allotted to them, if every faculty does that for which it was created, and such service alone is the real meaning of thanksgiving to God, the ultimate object of his sojourn in this transitory world is realised.

Man's nature is made up of four elements which produce in him four attributes, namely, the bestial, the brutal, the satanic, and the divine. In man there is something of the pig, the dog, the devil, and the saint. The pig is the appetite which is repulsive, not for its form, but for its lust and gluttony. The dog is passion, which barks and bites, causing injury to others. The devil is the attribute which instigates these former two, embellishing them and bedimming the sight of reason, which is the divine attribute. Divine reason, if properly attended to, would repel the evil by exposing its true character. It would properly control the appetite and the passions. But when a man fails to obey the dictates of reason, these three other attributes prevail over him and cause his ruin. Such types of men are many. What a pity it is that these who find fault with those that worship stones do not see that on their part they worship and adore the pig and the dog in themselves and in others. Let them be ashamed of their deplorable condition and leave no stone unturned for the suppression of these evil attributes. The pig of appetite begets shamelessness, lust, slander and such like. The dog of passion begets pride, vanity, ridicule, wrath and tyranny. These two, controlled by the satanic power, produce deceit, treachery, perfidy, meanness, etc., etc., but if divinity in man is uppermost, the qualities of knowledge, wisdom, faith, and truth, etc., will be acquired.

Seek holy company

Christ says, "Love God by avoiding the wicked, seek His nearness by shunning their company, and please Him by courting their displeasure." "With whom should we keep company, O Word of God", asked the people. And Christ replied, "Sit with those whose appearance reminds you of God, whose words add to the stock of your knowledge and whose actions serve as an incentive for acquiring the kingdom of Heaven."

Ignorance of God the worst malady

It is said that Christ once saw a blind forlorn leper who was pray-

ing: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Who hast saved me from such maladies which have overtaken many of us." "Art thou not in misery?" asked Christ. "Tell me which is the malady which has not overtaken thee?" "Thank God," cried the leper, "I am not like him who does not know God." "Thou art right", said Christ. "Give me thy hand." And the breath of Christ instantly healed the leper and he became one of His followers.

Patients would like to be cured, but they often eat things which are injurious to their health. Similarly, a person would like to love God, but very often follows his own impulses.

Knowledge is the seed, practice is the crop, and sincerity is the water nourishing it.



Some Sayings of Rabi'a of Basra

Think of God often, and so you may speedily be given that which shall bring you rest.

O my Lord, if I worship Thee from fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship Thee from hope of Paradise, exclude me thence, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, then withhold not from me Thine Eternal Beauty.

If anyone loves anything more than the remembrance of God, then his remembrance of that thing leads him astray, since he is a vessel for something else that he is remembering besides HIM.

I take refuge in Thee from everything which has distracted me from Thee, and from every hindrance which has hindered me from Thee.

Once when Rabi'a had immured herself for a long while in her house without coming forth, her servant said to her, "Lady, come forth out of this house and contemplate the works of the Most High." "Nay," said Rabi'a, "enter rather into thyself and contemplate His works in thyself."

One of the learned theologians of Basra, once visiting Rabi'a, began to enlarge upon the defects of the world. "You must be very fond of the world and full of attachment," said Rabi'a, "for if you were not, you would not talk so much about it. He who really intends to buy something keeps on discussing it. If you were really disentangled from the world, what would you care about its merits

or its faults?”



Some Teachings of Malik b. Dinar

He who has no need of women, relies upon God Almighty. No man attains to the degree of assured certainty in the Divine Knowledge, unless he leaves his wife as if she were a widow.

There are three things which indicate a longing for the world in the man who seeks them: He who seeks a livelihood, he who marries, and he who writes traditions.

In God there is no duality. In that Presence, “I” and “me” do not exist. “I” and “he” and “thou” become one. Since in unity there is no distinction, the Quest, the Way and the Seeker become one.

The man who seeks peace from his religion must give rest to his body and heart and withdraw from the society of men, and the wise man is he who seeks solitude for himself.



THE SPIRITUAL PATH

[Notes of Class-Talks]
by Swami Yatiswarananda

Begin early

One has to begin as early as possible with one’s spiritual life. Unless we have sown the seed of spirituality in our soul early in life, there is no possibility of creating the spiritual mood in later life. Those who are not spiritually-minded while they live in the world can never be spiritually-minded when they retire from the world. They will find that the old impure impressions have become so deep that there is no possibility of effacing them, that they have become the slaves of their instincts and impulses, that they can no longer act in the way they would like to, and cannot take up a higher and purer life, neither mentally nor physically. Our ideal is to make a beginning of liberation in this very life and to make the best use of the time that is given to us.

The Lord’s Grace

The Grace of the Divine comes to a person in the form of self-effort, in the form of the will to strive for something higher and more

permanent than all these phenomena. Some speak of destiny, others speak of self-effort, while again others hold, "Yes, it is true that everything depends on the will of the Lord, but the Lord desires that I should strive my utmost. Self-effort comes to me as a manifestation of my "destiny"; it is the will of the Lord that creates in me the desire for striving." But without purity and real, unfeigned dispassion, there can never be any spiritual life or even any deep spiritual striving. Unless we strive our very utmost and our best, the Lord's grace will not descend on us.

Control the mind

What is most essential in all forms of spiritual life is to keep the greater part of the mind thinking of God, thinking of the Ideal, and never to allow it to give its thoughts entirely to the world or worldly affections and relations, even when occupied with some worldly duty. We must know how to divide the mind to some extent, so that we can make one part of it cling to the Lord and to the Lord alone, whatever be our occupation. Through constant practice, through unflinching practice, we may develop an attitude of mind that enables us to think and to feel that whatever we do is a service to the Lord, and that we have no right to the fruits of any of our actions. "O Lord, whatever works I do, I look upon them as forms of worship to Thee." This service may be physical, intellectual or spiritual.

Watch the reactions in your mind brought about by certain people and things, and act accordingly. Avoid everything that is apt to rouse old evil impressions and thoughts belonging to your former life. We cannot allow ourselves to run after worldly love and affections and have the higher Divine Love at the same time. God and worldly affections cannot live together.

Definite idea of the path and goal

We should have the ideal fixed that neither worldly nor heavenly pleasures are our goal, that our ultimate goal is Self-Realisation, neither this world nor heaven, nor any other world. Heavenly enjoyment is no better than earthly enjoyment and so long as there is hankering after heavenly enjoyment, we can never attain the goal. We must yearn for God more than for His creation, either in heaven or on earth.

Before we actually begin our spiritual life in real earnest, we must decide if we are really fully prepared to pay the price. We

must fix once for all our ideal, our conduct of life, and everything, and then stick to it whatever happens. If we wish to transcend all the unrealities, there must always be a certain amount of the dare-devil in us, a certain amount of fearlessness and true heroism. Unless we are prepared to sacrifice all our worldly desires and our sense of I-ness, we can never hope to realise the higher ideal. "Give us discrimination, give us renunciation, give us devotion and knowledge"—let us pray to the Divine.

Discrimination

You must never associate too freely with people and must always use discrimination. If another person attracts you, just direct the mind into some higher channels, create in yourself some dislike or disgust for the person in question, so that person loses all charm for you. Later on this disgust is to be effaced so that you can look at that person with the same indifference with which you would look at a stranger you have never known. In spiritual life, although to a great extent you cut off your personal relations with others, you come to have a wider love and sympathy for them through the medium of the Divine. When one finds something higher, the lower ideal automatically loses its attraction and is put aside.

We should also practise a certain amount of control and discrimination regarding the food we take. And so long as we are in the body, the body must be properly taken care of and nourished to keep it a fit instrument for the realisation of the Divine and for the Divine work. There is much more body-consciousness in the person who is ill or weak than in the perfectly healthy and normal person. And we have to see that our body-consciousness is reduced to a minimum if we want to make good progress in spiritual life.

Unless our mind be to some extent pure and non-attached and prepared for renunciation, we can never even think of God-Realisation. Try to purify your heart, to purify your mind as much as possible. Then the blazing fire of spiritual realisation will burn away all desires.

Hints for Meditation

Meditation on the Holy Personalities

Few people can begin their spiritual practice with the meditation on the Formless and Attributeless Aspect of the Divine. Even the conception of God without form but with attributes is beyond the

grasp of the many. So long as it is impossible for us to form even an idea of the Divine in both His transcendent and immanent aspects, we should first of all try to think of the Divine Glory as manifest through the Holy Personalities—the great Incarnations and Prophets of mankind. It is very easy for us to speak of worshipping God “in truth and in spirit”. But since as a matter of fact, we cannot do so, it becomes a meaningless phrase and nothing more.

We think in terms of our small, limited, impure, individual consciousness but the Great Ones think in terms of the Infinite Consciousness. We are like small, tiny, self-forgetful bubbles, while they are like mountain-high waves that are always conscious of their ocean-origin. The ocean never comes to be limited by the wave-form.

The Incarnation is a glorious manifestation, but never the whole of God who is the reality at the back of ordinary beings also.

Tiny bubbles that we are, we find it difficult to understand even a full wave-consciousness. By worshipping and meditating on the Great Ones, we are able to come in touch with their superconsciousness. This breaks the bonds of our limited existence and brings in a new light, a deeper awareness that lies hidden in the depths of our being. The waves bring us in contact with the ocean. By lifting ourselves consciously to the plane of *their* knowledge, we get rid of all our false notions, of our being identified with the body, of being men and women. Dropping the limiting adjuncts, we get a new and purer sense of existence—a universal consciousness that gives the true meaning to our individual existence and life.

The individual and the Universal

In trying to separate itself from the ocean, the bubble runs the risk of bursting its bubble-form, as it can never exist without the contact of the ocean. But the trouble is that we are not conscious of this great fact. We consider ourselves to be separate entities, separate from the ocean and separate from one another. When this initial mistake is made through ignorance, all other mistakes follow as a matter of course and make our life one of endless misery.

Although we may take our limited existence to be absolutely real at first, we find on deeper consideration and experience that it is not so. The false conception of reality is wholly due to ignorance. It is through this that we come to cherish many a petty and ignoble

idea and suffer because of that. However, by getting rid of the false conceptions, we rise above all illusory, limiting adjuncts and regain our true nature, the true dignity and glory of the Divine in us—who is not only our SELF, but is the SELF of all.

Hints for meditation

In the beginning of our spiritual life we have to create our own images, but these are always images of which the pattern is right, i.e., imaginations of something that is *real*, not of some thing wholly imaginary. Some stress the sense of the Presence more than the form, although they, too, may call up the form. The same Being permeates both the form called up and the devotee, as It is the devotee's own eternal Being—his true SELF.

Just think that your whole heart or head is permeated with the Divine Effulgence and that this Light is part of the Infinite Light that pervades everything. Melt away your whole personality, your I-ness into That. Melt away your body, your mind, your senses your emotions into That. Just imagine this very vividly. And then this infinite ocean of Light takes shape, a part of this Light becomes solidified in the form of your Ishtam [Chosen Deity] but, never lose sight of the infinite background of which your Ishtam, and you yourself as well as all others are parts and which permeates all these. The ocean, the One Eternal Principle, lying at the back of both yourself and the whole universe, must never be lost sight of, because it is That which is to be fully realised by you one day.

But one who does not lead a pure life and is not disciplined ought never to follow this instruction, because meditation becomes dangerous in the case of a person who is not properly prepared and has not gone through the proper preliminary training.

Self-surrender

Only one who has really passed through strenuous self-effort can give himself up and surrender himself wholly and unconditionally at the feet of the Divine. All forms of striving make the mind pure and fit for the Divine touch. And self-surrender can only be accomplished after having gone through one's spiritual practice with great perseverance and doggedness. Self-surrender can only come when our wings are dead-tired like those of the bird sitting on the ship's mast, that tried in vain to reach land when the ship was on high sea and finally returned to the mast.

Too much activity is very dangerous because it usually becomes like the aimless activity of the monkey. This kind of activity is just restlessness, and we see it in people who are terribly afraid to be left to themselves. But, on the other side, you find a form of so-called self-surrender that is nothing more than inertness, indolence, lethargy. And this is just as bad as aimless activity. The true aspirant should always try to combine both activity of the right kind, and self-surrender.

Study and practise!

Religion is something different from and something more than book-knowledge. Through mere scholarship, through mere intellectual study, you can never learn the Truth. When we think too much and too highly of intellectual life, we can never realise the essential truths of religion.

“Let one study as well as he can, master the subjects, but after having become a great scholar, let him renounce desires and try to live upon the strength which comes from knowledge.”

One must be free from all guile, from all falsehood, all lack of uprightness, from all the perversities of the mind, and then become a man of meditation, if one wants to make real spiritual progress.

Having known the essentials of spiritual life, having formed a clear idea of the Divine, you should try to practice the disciplines. Do not read too many empty words. That creates only disturbance and trouble. Now, this does not mean that you should not go in for studies, but you should make it a point to study with a view to realise the Truth and, along with your studies, there must be some real spiritual practice day by day. You must always train your intellect and have your fixed studies, think deeply on the problems, and form a habit of clear thinking and deep studies, so that you would feel uncomfortable the day that you have not studied anything deeply, pondering over it and over the truths it contains. This daily study is to be made an important item of your spiritual practice.

Lust and greed

Sri Ramakrishna's message is: “Be spiritual and realise the Truth yourself.” By living the spiritual life, we can make the Divine living in our own life. The Master shows us how we may overcome sex and greed; these are our greatest obstacles on the path of all spiritual progress. He wishes us to have a new outlook towards our-

selves and others; men as well as women must have the Divine outlook and not think of themselves in terms of sex and body. To see the Divine in oneself and in all others, men and women, is the only solution for the world-problem of sex and the relation between the sexes. This is a most vital point to note for the spiritual aspirant. You can never rise above the sex-idea by just hating woman or man, as many mystics of the Middle-Ages tried to do. Something more is needed. The Divine is in me, in all, in everything. "I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am the SELF."

Buddha's practical instructions

It was the mission of Buddha's life to ask people not to think too much of philosophies and metaphysics, of rites and ceremonies, but to make religion —the Spiritual Law— a living; force in their own lives by leading a life of purity, meditation, spiritual discipline and mental control. What did Buddha say of God? He was silent on the point. It is not essential to speak of God so much, but far more essential to *follow* God's path, to *live* the spiritual life. What is the use of saying: "O Lord, how beautiful Thou art! How beautiful are Thy skies! Thy stars, Thy whole creation!" The Creator is always greater than His creation and does not feel proud of it. Seen from our human standpoint we find it great, but to God it is insignificant. So it is more important to follow God's path than to praise God eternally, without ever doing anything. This lip-service is of no use to the aspirant.

Once Buddha was asked, "Sir, is there a God?" —"Did I say there is a God?" —"Then there is no God, Sir?"—was the question. —"Did I say there is no God?"—came the reply. Buddha wanted to stop all empty and hair-splitting discussions and speculations and make people *do* something. So he said, "When a house is on fire, do you first go and trace the origin of the fire or do you try to extinguish it?" But we in our foolishness very often try to trace the origin first, but before we have succeeded in the attempt, the whole house is burnt down and nothing remains of it but a heap of ashes.

We always want everything to be done for us by somebody else. There can be no vicarious salvation without any self-effort on the part of the aspirant. Most so-called religious people are mere parasites in the world of religion and spiritual life. It would be better for them to take up something else.

Avoid temptations

During the period of our spiritual training we must try as much as possible to avoid all temptation, both in its gross and subtle forms. We should salute anything that may become an object of temptation to us from a safe distance. Let us not go near it. We must not rely too much on our own strength for a long time to come. We have such a dirty mind full of filthy impressions that once it is really stirred up, it may create no end of troubles. Lust, hatred, greed, vulgarity, all these are lying hidden in us and waiting to make us their prey. And so we must be on our guard.

Always the trouble arises through our being too little aware of the danger in the form of a tiny and apparently insignificant ripple in the mind. The outer stimulus, even if it be a very subtle and scarcely perceptible one, gradually affects the mind. Sometimes even the memory of some old impure impression is enough to upset us, because the germ or the seed is always inside, never outside. Unless the seed be inside, it can never sprout.

Attachment in any form may be enough to muddle the brain and bring about the spiritual ruin of the aspirant, but when attachment and anger combine, the whole mind becomes chaotic, and all progress is stopped. All struggle for the Higher Life comes to an end when passion has its sway over a person. That is why we should carefully avoid any harmful stimulus, even if it be a very subtle one, and keep our mind engaged with the higher thoughts. We should not give an opportunity to the lower propensities and impulses, and avoid as much as possible the company of persons of the other sex as well as that of those of our own sex who do not lead a strictly moral life, at least during the period of our spiritual training.

“Fill the mind with Vedantic thoughts until you fall asleep or until this body of yours drops off.”

We should not give an opportunity to the passions to sway us. It is the nature of the mind to think, and if we do not give good and pure thoughts to the mind by avoiding all old impure associations, it is bound to think of bad and impure ones. So be up and doing. Always be on your guard, and follow the path intelligently and assiduously.



P R A Y E R S

O Lord, with the passing of every day the duration of life is seen to shorten, and youth to decay. The days that are gone do never come back. Time verily is the devourer of the world. Fortune is fickle and short-lived as ripples on the surface of water, while life is momentary like a flash of lightning. Therefore, O Thou Refuge of all, do Thou even now protect me who seek refuge in Thee.



*May the wicked become virtuous.
May the virtuous attain tranquillity.
May the tranquil be free from bonds.
May the freed make others free.*



VEDANTA

A Quarterly Journal Published by
Swami Yatiswarananda in Switzerland

Vol.1 No.3 — 1937, Third Quarter

Truth is one but sages call It by various names. — Rig-Veda

THE ALL-PERVADING

He who inhabits the earth but is within it, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, and who controls the earth from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits water but is within it, whom water does not know, whose body is water, and who controls water from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits fire but is within it, whom fire does not know, whose body is fire, and who controls fire from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits the sky but is within it, whom the sky does not know, whose body is the sky, and who controls the sky from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits the air but is within it, whom the air does not know, whose body is the air, and who controls the air from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits the sun but is within it, whom the sun does not know, whose body is the sun, and who controls the sun from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits the quarters but is within them, whom the quarters do not know, whose body is the quarters, and who controls the quarters from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits the moon and stars but is within them, whom the moon and stars do not know, whose body is the moon and stars, and who controls the moon and stars from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits darkness but is within it, whom darkness does not know, whose body is darkness, and who controls

darkness from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits light but is within it, whom light does not know, whose body is light, and who controls light from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits all beings but is within them, whom no being knows, whose body is all beings, and who controls all beings from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He who inhabits the mind but is within it, whom the mind does not know, whose body is the mind, and who controls the mind from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self.

He is never seen, but is the Witness; He is never heard, but is the Hearer; He is never thought, but is the Thinker; He is never known; but is the knower. There is no other witness but Him, no other hearer but Him, no other knower but Him. He is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self. Everything else but Him is mortal.

—*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*—



THE ETERNAL MESSAGE OF THE INDIAN SAGES

The Place of Non-Attachment and Work in the Life of the Spiritual Aspirant

[Compiled from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*]

How to control the desires and passions

It is not possible for one to rid oneself entirely of the passions. Hence, let us give them a different direction. In the place of sensual enjoyment, let the object of our desire be God Himself. Let us enjoy the ecstasy of Divine Bliss. Let us be proud that we are the sons of God—the servants of the Most High. Let us be proud of having believed in the name of the Lord and say, “I have taken His hallowed name and I am already free from sin, free from bondage, and I care not for salvation. The things of the world are not, indeed, mine—money, honours, family and the rest—but the Lord is mine and all those that love the Lord.”

“Do I covet riches or titles? No, what I covet most and long for most is the Vision Divine.”

In this way the six passions [lust, anger, avarice, delusion, pride and envy] may be turned Godward. Once there is in the soul the love of God, once the repetition of His Holy Name fills the devotee with joy, no effort is needed for the control of the passions. Such control comes of itself.

When a man is troubled with grief, can he be in a mood to enter into a quarrel, or to join a feast, or to give his mind to sensual pleasures? Can a moth ever seek darkness after having seen the light once?

The value of constant practice

Viveka [Discrimination] and Vairagya [Dispassion] go together. Viveka means the sifting of the Real from the non-real. And Vairagya means dispassion towards the objects of the world. This does not come all on a sudden; “Woman (Man) and Gold” have to be renounced first mentally.

By unbroken practice the dispassion for “Woman (Man) and Gold” is awakened; so has it been said in the *Gita* also. Continuous and unbroken practice of meditation brings an extraordinary power to the mind; then none feels any difficulty in subjugating the senses, passion and lust. It is like a tortoise that never extends its limbs, once it has drawn them in. Even though you cut it into pieces, it would never extend them.

How to know God

Nothing can be achieved in the path of spirituality without discrimination between the Real [i.e., God] and the unreal or phenomenal universe; and without non-attachment to riches, honours, sensual pleasures, in short to Sex and Greed.

Non-attachment is of many kinds. One kind of non-attachment springs from the acute pain due to worldly misery. But the better kind arises from the consciousness that all worldly blessings and affections, though within one’s reach, are transitory and not worth enjoying. Thus, having all, he has not anything.

Religious awakening and the time factor

Everything rests upon time. For all religious awakening we must wait. At the same time, the precepts of a religious teacher should

be listened to and followed. One may be put in mind. of these precepts on a future occasion and then one would. probably cry out, saying, "Oh! Yes, I heard this from such and such a person at such and such a time." Another reason is,—our worldliness *gradually wears off* as the result of our listening to these precepts regularly from day to day. Our worldliness is like the intoxication caused by wine which wears off gradually if repeated doses of rice-water are taken.

Divine wisdom and non-attachment

The more is a person's attachment to the world, the less is he likely to attain Divine Wisdom. The less his attachment, the more is the probability of his getting such wisdom. Thus, wisdom may be said to vary directly as non-attachment to the world, its riches, its pleasures, etc., and inversely as attachment to the world.

The six steps leading to God-Realisation

First Stage — The mixing in good company, i.e., the company of holy men.

Second Stage — Admiration and love for higher things, i.e., things relating to the spirit.

Third Stage — Single-minded devotion to one's ideal. The ideal may be one's own spiritual preceptor. The ideal may be the formless. The ideal may be God Personal or any of His innumerable manifestations.

Fourth Stage — The stage of speechless wonder at the thought of God.

Fifth Stage — This stage is intensified when the feeling of devotion reaches the highest point after God-vision. This stage is not attained by ordinary human beings who are not capable of conquering the flesh. It is reached by incarnations of God alone, who appear in this world for the salvation of mankind.

Sixth Stage — Prema goes hand in hand with Mahabhava. Prema is the most intense love of God after realisation and is strictly the highest stage of spirituality. The two marks of this Stage are: first, the forgetfulness of this world; second, a forgetfulness of the self which includes one's own body.

Work without attachment

The attachment to work marks all human communities. But re-

member, it is a mark of the earliest stage of life! Work for the sake of one's own worldly good—riches, honour, fame—is degrading. Worldly activity will only bring on increasing ignorance. It will make you quite forgetful of God and attached to “Woman (Man) and Gold”. Therefore, the attachment to work—an attachment leading to spiritual degradation—is to be condemned.

You cannot get rid of work, because Prakriti [Nature] will lead you on to it. That being so, let all work be done as it ought to be. If work is done unattached, it will lead to God. Work so done is a means to the end, and God is the end.

To work without attachment is to work without the expectation of any reward or fear of any punishment in this world or the next.

Difficulty of the problem in this Age

Work without attachment, however, is exceedingly difficult, especially in this age. The fact is, one must have true knowledge of the love of God. It is possible for the ideal man alone to live a life of work without attachment. Others get easily attached, more or less, to things of the world and they know it not. Hence, it is our duty as imperfect men to find out, if possible, the shortest path that leads to God—the end of our life. Let us do the duty that is nearest us. Let us bring down our work to a minimum by earnest prayer and self-surrender.

Problem solved for this Age

Thus, on account of the difficulty of work without attachment in this age, communion [Yoga] by prayer, devotion and love—by the practice of Narada's Bhakti-Yoga—has been enjoined as better adapted to this age than Karma-Yoga or Jñana-Yoga. Bhakti-Yoga will enable us to see God with much less difficulty than by any other kind of Yoga.

Effect of devotion upon work

No one, however, can avoid work. Every mental operation is “work”. The consciousness that “I feel” or “I think” involves “work”. What is meant by the Path of Devotion [Bhakti-Yoga] in its relation to work is that work is simplified by devotion or love of God.

In the first place, this love of God reduces the quantity of one's work by fixing one's mind upon one's own ideal, i.e., God. Secondly, it helps one to work unattached. One cannot love the Lord

and at the same time love riches or pleasure or fame or power or worldly prosperity. He who has once tasted the drink prepared with sugar-candy does not care for that made with molasses.

Work Is not the end of life

No greater mistake can be committed than to look upon work as the be-all and end-all of human life. Work is the first chapter of human life, God is the conclusion.

On one occasion a householder said to me, "I should deem myself fortunate if I could build hospitals and dispensaries, lay roads where there are none, sink wells for the good of the people in seasons of drought, set up schools and colleges." Thereupon I said to him, "It is all very well that you should do all these works but can you do them unattached? If you can, it will lead to God. Otherwise not. But to work unattached is exceedingly difficult. In any case, take care and do not confound the means with the end. Work is a means, if done unattached, but the end of life is to see God." Let me repeat that the means should not be confounded with the end,—that the first stage on a road should not be taken for the goal.

No, do not regard work as the be-all and the end-all—the ideal of human existence. Pray for Bhakti [true devotion to God]. Suppose you are fortunate enough to see God. Then what would you pray for? Would you pray for dispensaries and hospitals, tanks and wells, roads and serais [guest-houses]? No, no, these are realities to us so long as we do not see God. But once placed face to face with the Vision Divine, we see them as they are—transitory things no better than dreams. And then we would pray for more light,—more knowledge in the highest sense,—more divine love, the love which lifts us up from man to God, a love which makes us realise that we are really sons of the Supreme Being—of whom all that can be said is that He exists, that He is knowledge itself in the highest sense, and that He is the eternal fountain of love and bliss.

Therefore, never lose sight of this goal of life that I have pointed out to you. Never lose sight of the ideal. In this connection I will tell you a parable.

The wood-cutter and the holy man or "Go on ahead!"

A man was cutting wood in a forest when he was accosted by a Holy Man. The Holy Man said, "Go on ahead!" The wood-cutter

came back home with his load of wood, wondering why the sage had bade him go ahead. Thus passed away some days. One day he was put in mind of the Holy Man's words and made up his mind that day to go farther on with a view to cutting wood. What was his surprise to find that portion of the forest full of sandal-trees! Of course, he brought cartloads of sandalwood to market and soon grew enormously rich. In this way again some days passed. Then he was once more reminded of the injunction laid upon him by the Holy Man, "Go on ahead!" So again did he form the resolution of going into the forest and of making a further advance. What was his surprise to find a silver mine close to the bed of a river! This he had never looked for even in his dreams. He worked at the mines and brought away tons of silver with which he made a splendid bargain. It is needless to say that after this he turned out to be one of the millionaires of the day. But once more, after the lapse of some years, did the Holy Man's words come back to his mind. He thought within himself, "The Holy Man did not bid me stop at the silver mine, but he told me to go on ahead." This time he went across the river and came upon a gold mine and finally on a diamond mine! Needless to add that he grew as rich as the god of Wealth.

So go on ahead, my children, and never lose sight of your ideal. Go onward and never stop until you have reached the goal. Reaching a particular stage, do not run away with the idea that you have come to your journey's end.

Work is only the first stage of the journey. Bear in mind that doing acts unattached is exceedingly difficult, that, therefore, the path of love [Bhakti-Yoga] is better suited to this age, and that work, even if unattached, is not the end of your life but only a means to the end.

Truthfulness and sincerity

Unless one gives up the worldly propensities, there can never be a true awakening, nor God-realisation. Worldly propensities beget only hypocrisy. God cannot be attained save by simplicity of heart.

"Let thee have such Bhakti within thy heart and give up all cunning and deceit. Have devotion, service and resignation and easily shalt thou reach God."

Those who are engaged in business, such as work in an office

or trade, should stick also to truth. Truthfulness is the Tapasya [discipline] of this Age of Kali. All these things are to be fully comprehended and borne in mind always.

Peace everlasting

When there dawns the real knowledge of Brahman, all attachment for the world, all pleasure in “Woman (Man) and Gold”, disappears. There comes then a perfect cessation of all passions. While burning, wood makes a crackling noise, but when it is wholly burnt and reduced to ashes, no more do you hear the sound. With the destruction of attachment, the keenness of the thirst for pleasure also disappears; finally comes Peace. He can never be attained if there be even a little of attachment. Thread can never pass through the eye of a needle if there be the least protruding fibre.

The more you approach God, the more you will feel Peace, Peace, Peace, Supreme Peace. The nearer you go to the Ganges the greater you will feel the coolness,—still cooler will you feel on bathing.

The devotee's [Bhakta's] attitude towards work: his prayer

The true devotee [Bhakta] says,—“O Lord, work with attachment, I see, is dangerous, for just as a man soweth, so must he reap. I see, again, that work without attachment is exceedingly difficult. Save me from the first, O Lord, for else I shall forget Thee. Deign to make less and less what work I have, until by Thy grace I see Thee and no work remains to be done. Till then, may it please Thee to grant that I may be blessed with that love, devotion and self-surrender to Thee, which is the one thing needful. As for the little work that is left for my share, grown less and less by Thy grace, do Thou grant that I may have strength to do it without attachment. But until I am blessed with the Vision Divine, and thus realise the true end of life, grant that my soul may not be disposed to look about for fresh work, unattached though it be,—unless I indeed receive from Thee Thy commandment to do Thy work.”

Only the very few care for the higher Life

Alas! I look in vain for customers who want anything better than the lowest quality of pulse! Everybody runs after “Woman (Man) and Gold”. Few do aspire for higher things!

They are attracted by female beauty,—by money, honours, titles, not knowing that the blessed vision of the Lord—the Divine

Beauty—will cause the highest place, even that of the Creator, to appear as a thing not worth one's while to strive for.

It is given to pure souls alone, who have not touched the world, to love God alone—to have but one aim—to have the mind fixed upon the Lord.

Once a young Nepalese lady came here in company with "Captain". She played nicely on the Eshraj [a kind of violin] and chanted the name of the Lord at the same time. Her sweet voice drew quite a number of people into the room. Somebody asked her if she had married, she replied with some sharpness, "I am the handmaiden of the Lord! He is my Lord and Husband! Him alone do I serve and not any created being, such as man is!"

The influence of old impressions

In a certain place there were seated some men who had renounced the world, when a young woman chanced to pass. All continued as before to meditate upon God undisturbed, except one person, who looked on her with a glance of his eye. This man who had been attracted by female beauty had been formerly a householder and was the father of three children when he became a Sannyasin.

If you rub garlic into a solution and put it into a cup for a long time, would it not be hard to make the cup free from the smell of the garlic? It is possible even for a man of the world to become pure like the young men or women who have not touched the world and seek God alone, but the power of doing this miracle must come from the Almighty; and nothing is impossible with God. The thing is, one must give one's whole mind to the Lord.

Let the reins that hold you back be cut asunder by the Sword of His Holy Name. The Name of the Divine is capable of cutting in twain the bonds of Death! Go on ahead! And halt not on the way. Go deeper into the forest, you shall find sandal wood. Go yet deeper, you shall come upon a silver-mine. Do not stand where you are. But go on ahead. Yes, deeper still, and you shall be placed in the midst of diamonds and rubies and sapphires! Yes, go on ahead! March on unattached and never halt till you have come up to the great ideal of your life—The Seeing of God!



Fragments of Conversations with Swami Vivekananda

[Compiled from *Conversations & Dialogues*, C.W., Vol.III]

Swami Vivekananda — He who always speculates as to what awaits him in future, accomplishes nothing whatsoever. What you have understood as true and good, just do that at once. What is the good of calculating what may or may not befall in future? The span of life is so short, and can anything be accomplished in it if you go on forecasting and computing results? God is the only dispenser of results; leave it to Him to do all that. What have you got to do with it? Don't look that way, but go on working.

You have heard of Sri Ramakrishna's words, haven't you? He used to say, "The breeze of mercy is already blowing, do you only hoist the sail." Can anybody, my boy, thrust Realisation upon another? One's destiny is in one's own hands,—the Guru only makes this much understood. Through the power of the seed itself the tree grows, the air and water are only aids.

Question — There is, Sir, the necessity, also, of extraneous help.

Swami Vivekananda — Yes, there is. But you should know that if there be no substance within, no amount of outside help will avail anything. Yet there comes a time for everyone to realise the Self. For everyone is Brahman. The distinction of higher and lower is only in the degree of manifestation of that Brahman. In time, everyone will have perfect manifestation. Hence, the Scriptures say, "In time, THAT is realised in one's self."

Question — When, alas, will that happen, Sir? From the Scriptures we hear how many births we have had to pass in ignorance!

Swami Vivekananda — What's the fear? When you have come here this time, the goal shall be attained in this life. Liberation or Samadhi—all this consists in simply doing away with the obstacles to the manifestation of Brahman. Otherwise the Self is always shining forth like the sun. The cloud of ignorance has only veiled It. Remove the cloud and the sun will manifest. Then you get into the state of "*the knots of the heart are torn asunder etc., etc.*" The various paths that you find, all advise you to remove the obstacles on the way. The way by which one realises the Self is the way which Sri Ramakrishna has preached to all. But the goal of all is the

knowledge of the Self, the realisation of this Self. To it all men, all beings, have equal right. This is the view acceptable to all.

Question — Sir, when I read or hear these words of the Scriptures, the thought that the Self has not yet been realised makes the heart very disconsolate.

Swami Vivekananda — This is what is called longing. The more it grows, the more will the cloud of obstacles be dispelled, and the stronger will faith be established. Gradually the Self will be realised like a fruit in the palm of one's hand. This realisation alone is the soul of religion. Everyone can go on abiding by some observances and formalities. Everyone can fulfil certain injunctions and prohibitions, but how few have this longing for realisation! This intense longing—becoming mad after realising God or getting the knowledge of the Self—is real spirituality. The irresistible madness which the Gopis [the shepherdesses at Brindaban] had for the Lord, Sri Krishna— yea, it is intense longing like that which is necessary for the realisation of the Self! Even in the Gopis' mind there was a slight distinction of man and woman. But in real Self-knowledge there is not the slightest distinction of sex.

The more advanced a society or nation is in spirituality, the more is that society or nation civilised. No nation can be said to have become civilised only because it has succeeded in increasing the comforts of material life by bringing into use lots of machinery and things of that sort. The present-day civilisation of the West is multiplying day by day only the wants and distresses of men. On the other hand, the ancient Indian civilisation, by showing people the way to spiritual advancement, doubtless succeeded, if not in removing once for all, at least in lessening, in a great measure, the material needs of men. In the present age, it is to bring into coalition both these civilisations that Sri Ramakrishna was born. In this age, as on the one hand people have to be intensely practical, so on the other hand they have to acquire spiritual knowledge.



THE SONG OF THE SANNYASIN

by Swami Vivekananda

*Wake up the note! The song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach,
In mountain caves and glades of forest deep,*

*Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
 Could ever dare to break; where rolled the stream
 Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.
 Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say—
 “Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
 Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore;
 Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng,
 Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free;
 For fetters, though of gold, are not less strong to bind;
 Then off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say—
 “Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Let darkness go! the will-o'-the-wisp that leads
 With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.
 This thirst for life, for ever quench; it drags
 From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.
 He conquers all who conquers self. Know this
 And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say—
 “Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*“Who sows must reap,” they say, “and cause must bring
 The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none
 Escape the law. But whoso wears a form
 Must wear the chain.” Too true; but far beyond
 Both name and form is Atman, ever free.
 Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
 “Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*They know not truth who dream such vacant dreams
 As father, mother, children, wife, and friend.
 The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?
 Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?
 The Self is all in all, none else exists;
 And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
 “Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*There is but One—The Free—The Knower—Self!
 Without a name, without a form or stain.
 In Him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.
 The witness, He appears as nature, soul.
 Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
 “Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world

*Nor that can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Say, “Peace to all: From me no danger be
To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high.
In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all!
All life both here and there, do I renounce,
All heavens and earths and hells, all hopes and fears.”
Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Heed then no more how body lives or goes,
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame; say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser, praised, and blamer, blamed are,—one.
Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro’ Maya’s gates.
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?
The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed; and food
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows Itself. Like rolling river free
Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Few only know the truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, great one; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Maya’s veil. Without
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold! Say—
“Om Tat Sat, Om!”*

*Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The "I"
Has All become, the All is "I" and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"*



Praise to the Divine Destroyer of Darkness

by Sankaracharya

Him from a single aspect of Whom this whole universe has sprung into being, by Whom again it is held together, by Whom it is pervaded, and by Whom it is illumined through pleasure and pain,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of phenomenal existence, I praise.

Him, Who is all-knowing, Who is indeed all and perfect, Who is bliss itself, Who dwells in the Gunas and has, therefore, endless attributes, Who is the Unmanifest that differentiates the undifferentiated, and Who is both the Real and the unreal,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of phenomenal existence, I praise.

There is naught else than Him; yet this universe is not His real nature, He is not the objective world, for He is of the nature of non-objective consciousness. And though He is devoid of the distinction of the knower, knowledge and the known, He is nevertheless always the Knower,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of phenomenal existence, I praise.

Him Whom the knowers of Brahman realise by meditation as the Supreme Lord within themselves, known as Brahman, as the secondless, infinite, unborn, subtle, inscrutable Effulgence residing in the heart and attainable only by devotees,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of phenomenal existence, I praise.

Who indeed can live, if He do not reside in his body? He alone, therefore, is the Supreme Bliss and He is the incoming and the outgoing life. By such reasoning does the Scripture declare that He IS,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of phenomenal existence, I praise.

Him, the Knower, without realising Whom within one's own self as "I am He", all this appears as real, but Who being realised, all this becomes unreal,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of

phenomenal existence, I praise.

Him Who is realised as the consciousness that ultimately remains when the self that is not free from impurity is burnt in the fire of knowledge kindled by the eightfold Yoga, like gold alloyed with iron in the furnace,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of phenomenal existence, I praise.

Him Who is the effulgent light of consciousness, the first Cause, the praiseworthy, Who shines like lightning within the heart, in Whom the sages, worshipping Him with devotion as the Ultimate Reality within their own selves, merge themselves even in this life,—that Divine, the Destroyer of the darkness of phenomenal existence, I praise.



Songs and Psalms

by Poygai Alvar, Nammalvar & Dadu

*The mountain stream delights in the bosom of
the distant roaring Deep.*
*The earth-born flower delights in the warm
caress of the sun.*
*Life delights in the loving embrace of Death. My
heart delights in Thee.*
*From out of the endless temptations and follies of
life, I fly unto Thee.*
*I ever weave Thy Name in the garland of my song
and place it at
Thy Holy Feet as my humble tribute of love and reverence.*
*Ages pass; we ask and ask; Thou standest smiling;
we cry out
Baffled; for Thy name and form are a mystery still.*
*Whatever the name which sweeps along the
harpstrings of a loving heart,
Whatever the form which a devout being carves out
and enthrones in its
Silent depths, whatever the image which has
been the dream and vision
Of our soul—are the name and form of my
Worshipful One.*

— Poygai Alvar—



I grew weary of the prison-bars of the senses and embarked on my perilous journey to the distant home of my Beloved. Crossing the region of Love and Hate, I wandered far beyond the world of good and evil. And in the illimitable Void, where Time spins off into Eternity, where Thought is not, I came on the hidden spring of all life.

—Nammalvar—



*We are born in this world to die.
 God has sent Death to be our partner.
 Since I have reflected upon death, I have followed
 the Path of Immortality.
 I do not vex myself about death, I was born to die and
 I do not regret the thought of death.
 Death is welcome to me; I shall be happy after death.
 He who killeth all worldly desires before death
 becometh immortal.
 I have cast off all doubts about pain and pleasure! and
 have completely surrendered myself to God.
 I behold pain and pleasure as illusion : the whole world
 is fettered by it. The life passeth away in
 self-seeking and sensuous delights.
 O Man thou wilt not take heed!
 Thou tellest lies for thy enjoyment; and ever more
 art enclosed in the meshes of Maya.
 Dadu saith : Pain and pleasure will not accompany thee:
 give thy heart to the Lord in love.*

—Dadu—



Ekanatha: Some Teachings from the Abhangas and the Bhagavatam

Death is unavoidable

Death is sure to overtake us some day or other. The flower is dried up and the fruit comes in its place, and some time after even the fruit disappears. One goes before, another comes behind, and yet all pass into the hands of Death. Those who run away on hear-

ing the name of Death are themselves placed some day on a funeral pile. The coffin-bearers who regard a dead body as heavy, are themselves carried in a coffin to the cemetery some day. It is only those who go in submission before the Divine that do not come within the clutches of Death. We should, therefore, live in life as mere pilgrims who come to a resort in the evening and depart the next morning. As children build houses in sport and throw them away, similarly should we reckon this life. As birds alight in a court-yard, and then fly away, even so should we pass through this life. We should never follow what the impulses of our mind dictate us. What the mind regards as happiness comes ultimately to be experienced as unhappiness. We should, thus, always keep our mind imprisoned at the feet of the Divine. Sexual passion has ruined many, and it is only those who completely conquer sex that are able to consummate their spiritual life. The God of Love, you may say, is like a very powerful ram or like a great lion. He jostled with Sankara [Siva], sent fear into the heart of Indra, threw himself against Narada, destroyed Ravana, killed Duryodhana, caught in his meshes a great sage like Visvamitra. Only it was the sage Suka, who by the power of his one-pointed meditation, caught hold of this ram, brought him and imprisoned him at the feet of the Divine.

The Name of God

The Name of God gives us Divine happiness, but a person immersed in the pursuit of "Woman (Man) and Wealth" has no belief in the efficacy of the Divine Name. It puts an end to all diseases of body and mind. It enables us to preserve perfect equanimity. God runs to the help of the devotee that devoutly remembers Him.

The necessity of purification

The *sine qua non* of all spiritual life is purity, internal as well as external. The mind becomes impure by contact with evil desires. So long as it is not purified, all talk of spiritual life is useless. As gold purified in a crucible shines bright, so the constant meditation on the teachings of the Guru [spiritual teacher] makes the mind pure and bright with spiritual lustre. Thus, if inside the mind is purified by the words of the Guru, that purity is sure to reveal itself through external activities and the conduct of life. Mere bodily purity, without purity of heart, is absolutely useless. It would be a mere farce like bathing a donkey. It is an empty show. What is ab-

solutely necessary, therefore, is an internal purity of the heart coupled with the external purity of good actions. We should by all means avoid the pranks of a monkey. Seeking of wealth is one sure road to ruin. If we were to add to it the seeking of women (men), purity cannot be attained and we do not know what may come to pass.

Solitude

To attain the Divine, it is necessary that a man must retire into solitude. He must lead a lonely life. Where there are two, Satan is always the third. This can be illustrated by the instance of a young girl to be married. Suppose, while alone in the house, her house was visited by the members of her would-be husband's family. Consistent with her modesty, she would offer hospitality through a window, thus showing that she was alone in the house. But she would now think that she must help her mother by pounding rice. When she would begin pounding, with the raising and lowering of her hand, her bangles would make noise. But that noise would carry an impression to the bridegroom's party that her family was poor. To avoid such an impression, she would take off one bangle after another. So long as there were more than one bangle on each arm, they would continue to make noise. She would, therefore, leave on each arm but one bangle, so that all noise would come to an end. This illustration shows how a spiritual aspirant must retire from the world and lead a lonely life for God.

The place of the mind in spiritual striving

As a diamond can be cut only by a diamond, so mind can be conquered only by mind. This unconquerable mind is, as it were, a maidservant of the Guru [spiritual teacher], and is at his beck and call. If, therefore, it is unconditionally handed over to the control of the Guru, it shall give the aspirant the contentment and bliss which it alone can give. It is proverbial that the human mind is naturally full of many vices. But it has one saving feature. If it chooses to secure Divine Grace for man, it can certainly do so. Mind is its own friend or foe, as the bamboo is the cause of both its growth and destruction. The striking and rubbing of one branch of a bamboo against another produces a spark of fire that burns a whole forest of bamboos. Mind can destroy itself similarly if it so thinks. The best means for its control is thus to make it our friend through the grace of the Guru who alone can control it.

Obstacles to meditation

In the way of meditation there are four pitfalls against which an aspirant must guard himself. They are: Dissipation, passion, fickleness and absorption. All these are the faults of an unsteady mind. To revolve in the mind the sweetness of sense-objects when one is sitting for meditation, is *dissipation*. To attend to descriptions of the love between man and woman and other love-stories, is *passion*. To pass from one field of consciousness to another, and thus to be every moment unsteady like a madman, is *fickleness*. To be inattentive through sad indifference to the chief object of meditation, and thus to be ultimately lost in sleep or in blue or yellow colours, is *absorption*.

God-Realisation

Once God is revealed in His true universal form, a devotee becomes dead to all world-vision. Once He is revealed, the subtle body, the cause of all bondage, perishes without a stroke. A gust of strong wind dispels an array of clouds, so His spiritual light dispels all desire and attachment. With the destruction of desire and attachment, vanish all doubts and duties. As darkness cannot stand before the light of the sun, qualities with their effects, knowledge and ignorance, the individual soul with the Personal God, all vanish away. Even the repetition of "I am He !" is no more to be heard. All fear of birth and death disappears and the state is reached where the world is not, and the Divine alone is. His devotees reach that stage by constantly praying to Him and meditating on Him.



Some Pages from the *Dasabodha* of Ramadasa

The necessity of spiritual life

We do not know what accidents may befall us. As birds fly away in various directions, so our wealth and wife and sons will fly away from us. As soon as the body falls, the SELF may migrate to a worse existence. In thy previous existences thou hast suffered immense pain, and it is only by exceeding fortune thou hast been relieved therefrom.

One's mother is of no avail, one's father is of no avail, one's sister and brother are of no avail, one's friends and wife and sons are of no avail. All these follow thee only if they derive happiness from thee. Thou bearest their burden in vain for the whole of thy life, and

they will ultimately abandon thee. If thou wert to die at this moment, thou shalt fall off from God as thou art centred in I-ness. Thousands of mothers and fathers and daughters and sons thou hast had in thy former births. Thou followest after mean people for filling thy belly, and thou flatterest and praisest them. Thou sellest thy body to him who gives food to thee. But thou forgettest God who has given thee birth. Sinful and mean are those who follow sensual enjoyment, leaving God. He who wishes to have eternal happiness should follow God, leaving the company of all worldly men, which is the cause of all sorrow.

The need of a teacher

Without a Guru [spiritual teacher] we can never attain to real knowledge. He who has the earnest desire to see God should move only in the company of the good and pure, for without their company, God cannot be attained. One may practise any course of spiritual practices one pleases, but it would be all useless without a true Guru. Even though one may study all the sciences and attain to all kinds of powers, without the grace of the Guru one cannot realise the Self. Meditation and concentration, devotion and worship, would all be useless without the grace of the Guru. Without his grace one moves on like a blind man, floundering and falling into pits and ditches as one wends one's way.

What the mind cannot attain can be attained through the power of the Guru. The treasure-house may be full of treasure, but it is all shut up, and one cannot go inside it unless one has the key in one's hands. What this key is, is known to the disciple with the help of the Master. The grace of his Master is indeed the key which illumines the intellect, breaks open the door of dualism, takes us to infinite happiness and lands us for ever in the Superconscious State. That state is beyond mind. That satisfaction is beyond all desire. Imagination cannot imagine the superconscious condition. It is beyond what the most potent word can express. It is beyond all mind and intellect. It is beyond all things of the world. It is for this reason that one should dissociate oneself from the world and reach spiritual experience. Only he who has attained to spiritual experience will be comforted by these words of mine.

The value of meditation

Whatever we may desire from the very bottom of our heart shall

come to take place by the Grace of the Divine, and all obstacles will come to an end. By meditation on the Divine is acquired illumination. By meditation on the Divine, greatness is attained. Therefore, one's first duty in life ought to be to meditate on God. This is indeed a matter of one's own experience. Set thyself to perform the duty of life by meditating on the Divine and thou shalt surely succeed. Only thou shouldst feel from the bottom of thy heart that God alone is the real agent and not thyself. If thou regardest thyself as the real agent, thou shalt land thyself into many difficulties and temptations; on the other hand, if thou believest that God is the real agent, then shalt thou attain to fame and to greatness and to power.

What Is knowledge?

Knowledge of all the sciences is not knowledge. To distinguish a good horse from a bad one, to know the various classes of animals, to have a knowledge of all the different parts of a thing, to have a knowledge of all the different kinds of birds, is not knowledge. To know the various metals, to know the various coins, to know the various jewels, is not real knowledge. To know the various kinds of seeds, to know the various kinds of flowers, to know the various kinds of fruits, is not real knowledge. To know various words, to know various languages, is not knowledge. To speak straight away, to have ready wit, to compose poetry extempore, is not knowledge. To know the art of singing, to know the art of dancing, is not knowledge. All this is only skilfulness and not knowledge. It looks as if it were knowledge, but real knowledge is wholly different from these. That knowledge by which a man attains to Liberation is of a different kind altogether.

Real knowledge is Self-knowledge—the Vision of the Self by the Self. Real knowledge consists in knowing God, in cognising His Eternal Form, in distinguishing the Real from the unreal. Where the whole phenomenal world hides itself, where it is at an end, there alone is knowledge. Knowledge goes beyond the mind, beyond the intellect, beyond all disputations and argumentations. It goes even beyond the BEYOND and beyond the highest stage of speech. It is good always to advise others that they should meditate on the Supreme sentence, "THAT thou art"; what is wanted is meditation on the true substance of that great sentence. Difficult indeed is that knowledge by which one attains to one's Self, to one's original

form, which is self-born and eternal. When we begin to know our Self, all partial knowledge will be at an end.

The Self Is not bound

No one indeed is bound. People have been vainly deluded by the illusion of identity with the body. Sit in a quiet place and seek spiritual rest in thy original form. By that means wilt thou grow in strength and purity. When thou hast attained to Self-knowledge, then will complete dispassion fill thy whole mind. Do not vainly delude thyself by saying that thou art liberated and give loose reins to thy senses. In that way, if thou dost not curb thy senses and passions, thy spiritual thirst will never be quenched. I tell thee, that whatever thou searchest, that thou shalt be.

As only when the threshold is crossed, does one enter into a temple; so only when the phenomenal world is crossed, does one attain to the Rea



THE WISDOM OF BUDDHISM

The Five Precepts

- I undertake the precept from Killing to abstain;
- I undertake the precept from Stealing to abstain;
- I undertake the precept to abstain from Wicked Love;
- I undertake the precept to abstain from Lying Words;
- I undertake the precept to abstain from sloth-producing spirits, liquors, drink.

The Meditation of Love

- Let me be peaceful;
- Let me be kindly;
- Let me be free from suffering;
- Let me keep my own happiness!
- Even so,
- Let all beings be peaceful;
- Let them be kindly;
- Let them be free from suffering;
- Let them keep their own happiness!

The Mind

[From the third chapter of the *Dhammapada*]

This restless, unsteady mind, difficult to guard and difficult to keep free from contamination, the wise man makes straight, just as the arrow-maker makes straight an arrow,

Just as a fish thrown on the land, far from the water where it dwells, quivers and shakes and throbs, so does this mind when shaking itself free of the power of the Tempter.

Difficult to discipline and unsteady is this mind, ever ready to pounce on fresh pleasures. The subduing of that mind is good. A mind subdued, brings happiness.

Impossible to see, subtle, ever-ready to pounce on fresh pleasures: let the wise man guard his mind. A mind thus guarded, brings happiness.

This mind, wandering far, self-existent, without bodily form, dwelling in a cave—whoso would control it finds freedom from the bonds of the Tempter.

In an unsteady mind, ignorant of the good Law and of wavering faith, wisdom does not reach perfection. In a mind freed from the contamination of lust, whose thoughts are free from hate, who has conquered both merit and demerit, to him who is wide-awake there is no fear.

Realising that this body is like a pot, guarding his mind like unto a fortress, let him give battle to the Tempter with wisdom's sword. Let him protect what he has won and retain it with perseverance.

Not long hence, alas! this body will lie face upwards on this earth, abandoned, unfeeling, useless like a burnt log!

Like a thief doing evil to his enemy, or one hating, hates his opponent, nay, much worse is the evil done by an ill-placed mind.

Neither father, nor mother, nor even relations, can do so much good as a mind well-placed.



The Five Great Gifts

[From the *Anguttara Nikaya*]

These five gifts, O brethren, are great gifts, supreme, long-lasting, traditional, of ancient days; they were unconfounded before,

they are not confounded now, nor shall be hereafter confounded with other things; they are gifts not scorned by recluses and Brahmins who are shrewd. What are the five?

Herein, Brethren, the Ariyan disciple abandons taking life, is opposed to taking life. So opposed to it, Brethren, the Ariyan disciple grants security to all beings in fullest measure, he grants them freedom from hate and injury. So granting to the full, he is himself a sharer in such security, in such freedom from hate and injury. That Brethren, is the first of the five great gifts that are supreme, long lasting, traditional, not scorned by recluses and Brahmins who are shrewd.

Secondly, Brethren, the Ariyan disciple abandons taking what is not given, abandons wrong conduct in respect of sense-desires, abandons falsehood, abandons indulgence in liquors, fermented or distilled, that gives rise to neglect. Abandoning all these, he grants security to all beings in fullest measure, he grants freedom from hate and injury. So doing to the full, he is himself a sharer in such security, in such freedom from hate and injury. This, Brethren, is the fifth of the five great gifts.



Consciousness and Individuality in Nirvana

[From the *Sutta-Nipata*]

Upasiva — Alone, O Sakyan, and unsupported, powerless am I to cross the great flood; with what to rest on, tell me, all-seeing One, may I find support and cross this flood?

The Buddha — Be mindful and seek the state of nothingness resting upon “nought is”, cross thou the flood. Put aside lusts, avoid doubtings, and by night and day look for the destruction of all craving.

Upasiva — He in whom passion for all lusts is gone, who rests on nothingness and has put aside all else, who is released in the highest of releases of perception, shall he abide there without departing from it?

The Buddha — He in whom passion for all lusts is gone, who rests on nothingness and has put aside all else, who is released in the highest of the releases of perception, shall abide there without departing from it.

Upasiva — If he abides there without departing from it for a long term of years, all-seeing One, and there should be released and in the stage of coolness, will the consciousness of such a one be re-born?

The Buddha — As a flame, blown out by the wind, disappears and cannot be named, even so the recluse, when released from name and body, disappears and cannot be named.

Upasiva — He who has disappeared, is he non-existent, or is he free from sickness in perpetuity? This, O Recluse, explain to me well, for this matter is well known to thee.

The Buddha — No measuring is there of him that has disappeared, whereby one might know of him that he is not; when all qualities are removed, all modes of speech are removed also.



The Wheelwright

[From the *Anguttara Nikaya*]

One day when the Exalted One was staying in the Deer Park at Isipatana, he addressed the monks, saying:

“Once upon a time, monks, there was a king called Pachetana. Now, one day, the king said to his wheelwright,

‘Master Wheelwright, in six months’ time there will be a battle. Can you make me a new pair of wheels?’

‘I can, your Honour,’ replied the Wheelwright.

Now, when six months all but six days had gone by, he had finished but one wheel. Then the king asked him:

‘Is the new pair of wheels ready, Master Wheelwright? In six days there will be a battle.’

‘One wheel is completed, your Honour, during these six months all but six days.’

‘But can you finish the second wheel in six days?’

‘I can, your Honour’, answered the wheelwright.

Six days later, after finishing the second wheel, the wheelwright went to see king Pachetana.

On getting there, he said to him, ‘Your Honour, here is the new pair of wheels finished.’

‘But, Master Wheelwright, I see no difference, no, no difference whatever, between the two wheels, the one that took six months all but six days to make, and the one you finished in six days.’

‘There is, however, a difference, your Honour. May it please your Honour to look.’

With these words, the wheelwright set that wheel, which had taken him six days to make, rolling. It went on rolling so long as the impulse imparted to it lasted. Then it circled round and round and at last fell to the ground.

After that, the wheelwright set rolling the wheel which he had made in six months all but six days. It went on rolling so long as the impulse that set it moving lasted, and then stood still; you might have thought fixed to its axle.

On seeing this, the king said, ‘Master Wheelwright, tell me how is it that the wheel you made in six days rolled on while the impetus lasted, then circled round and round and fell to the ground, whereas the one which took you six months all but six days to make, stood still, fixed, as it were, to its axle?’

‘Your Honour,’ replied the wheelwright, ‘as to the wheel I finished in six days, its rim was crooked, full of defects and faults. So were the spokes and hub. In consequence of the crooked, faulty, defective nature of rim, spokes and hub, when set rolling, it went on so long as the impetus that set it going lasted. Then it circled round and round and finally fell to the ground. As to the wheel, however, which it took me six months all but six days to finish, its rim was not crooked. It was faultless, without any defect. So were the spokes and hub. Because of the even, faultless nature of rim, spokes and hub, the wheel, once set rolling, continued to roll as long as the impetus imparted to it lasted. When it stood still, you might have thought fixed to its axle.’

In whatever monk or nun the crookedness of body, speech and thought, is not given up, such a one falls away from the Path, just like the wheel that was finished in six days.

In whatever monk or nun, the crookedness of body, speech and thought is given up, such a one is firmly established in the Path, just like the wheel that was finished in six months all but six days.

Wherefore, monks, thus should you train yourselves:—

Say to yourselves:— ‘We will give up the crookedness, the faults

and defects of the body. We will give up the crookedness, faults and defects of speech and thought.' — Thus should you train yourselves, monks!"



Hakuin's Song of Meditation

*All sentient beings are from the very beginning the Buddhas;
It is like ice and water;
Apart from water no ice can exist,
Outside sentient beings, where do we seek the Buddha?
Not knowing how near the Truth is,
People seek It far away,—what a pity.
They are like him who, in the midst of water,
Cries in thirst so imploringly;
They are like the son of a rich man
Who wandered away among the poor.
The reason why we transmigrate through the six worlds,
Is because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance;
Going astray further and further in the darkness,
When are we able to get away from birth-and-death?*

*As regards the Meditation practised in the Mahayana,
We have no words to praise it fully,
The Virtues of Perfection such as charity and morality,
And the invocation of the Buddha's name, confession, and
ascetic discipline,
And many other good deeds of merit,—
All these issue from the practice of Meditation.
Even those who have attained it even for one sitting,
Will see all evil Karma wiped clean;
Nowhere they find the evil paths,
But the Pure be near at hand.
With a reverential heart, let them to this Truth
Listen even for once,
And let them praise it and gladly embrace it,
And they will surely be blessed most infinitely.*

*For such as, reflecting within themselves,
Testify to the Truth of Self-Nature,
To the Truth that Self-Nature is no-nature,
They have really gone beyond the ken of sophistry.
For them opens the gate of the oneness of cause and effect,
And straight runs the path of non-duality and non-trinity.*

*Abiding with the Not-particular in particulars,
 Whether going or returning they remain forever unmoved;
 Taking hold of the Not-thought in thoughts,
 In every act of theirs they hear the voice of Truth.
 How boundless is the sky of Samadhi unfettered!
 How transparent the perfect moon-light of the Fourfold
 Wisdom!*

*At that moment what do they lack?
 As the Truth eternally calm reveals itself to them,
 This very earth is the Lotus Land of Purity,
 And this body is the body of the Buddha!*



A Sermon of Yang-Shan Hui-chi

Yang-Shan Hui-chi gave the following sermon: "You all, turning back your light look within; do not try to memorise my words. Since the beginningless past you have turned your backs to your light, throwing yourselves into darkness. The root of false thinking goes down deeply into the ground, it is hard to pull it out. The many contrivances and practices are meant for the destruction of coarser imaginations. They are like the yellow leaves given to a child to stop its crying. They are in themselves of no value whatever. Again, it is like a shop where all sorts of goods are sold together with genuine golden wares. The goods, light and heavy, are delivered to suit the requirements of the customers. So I say, Shih-tou keeps a shop dealing in solid gold only, but mine handles a variety of wares. If a man comes for a rat's droppings, let him have them. If he wants solid gold, I also meet his wish."

A monk came forward and said, "I do not wish a rat's droppings, but give me, O Master, a piece of solid gold."

Yang-Shan said, "One who tries to open his mouth while biting the point of an arrow is forever unable to understand."

The monk made no reply. The Master continued, "When sought out and called for, there is an exchange of goods; but with no seeking, no calling, there will be no exchange of any sort. When I demonstrate Zen in its genuine form, no one is able to accompany me, however much they may desire; but when I talk this way and that, they crowd into my room and vie with one another to pick up whatever leavings there are. It is like a child that we cheat with an empty palm; in truth there is nothing real. I now tell you most dis-

tinctly where the Holy Man's abode is. Do not attempt to work out your various imaginations on the matter. Only sincerely and steadily discipline yourselves so as to be in the ocean of your original nature. The sciences and miracles are not at all needed. Why? Because such are but the fringes of Reality. When you want to know Mind, penetrate into the very source of things. Attain the source and the rest need not bother you; some day you will come to a realisation and know what I mean here. But so long as you are kept away from the source, nothing else will be of any value to you; with all your learning and knowledge, you are not there yet. Has not Wei-shan, the master, told us this? When all your imaginations, holy and worldly, are exhausted, Reality presents Itself, true and eternal in the Unity of the One and Many, and this is where the Buddha of Suchness abides."



All Beings are Mothers and Fathers

by Dharmakaya

*All sentient beings in transmigration travel through
the six gates,
Like unto a wheel revolving without beginning and end,
Becoming in turn fathers and mothers, men and women:
Generations and generations, each owes something to
others.
Ye should then regard all beings as fathers and mothers;
Though this truth is too hidden to be recognised without
the aid of Holy Knowledge,
All men are your fathers,
All women are your mothers.*



The Enlightened Mind

by Kobo Daishi

*From the beginning
That which I sought
Lay in my hands.
How stupid I was
To have thought it an echo
Floating to me
From beyond!*

*Now enlightened, back I look,
 And lo! this new mind of mine —
 What is it, but that very one
 Which formerly was covered o'er
 With clouds?
 Think not that the light appears
 With the clearing of the clouds;
 The moon has been there all the while
 Shining in the sky,
 For ages past.
 So does the mind
 Eternally abide in me.*



Hymn to the Supreme Omniscience

by the Buddha

Aum! Salutation to Thee, O Thou Perfect Omniscience, the Unconditioned, the Infinite! As Thou art of the form devoid of all defects, so Thou art visible to those only who are free from all taints.

He who sees Thee with his inward eye, who like the sky, art free from all taints and attachments and art beyond all illusions of diversity and beyond all words [i.e., inexpressible]—he sees truly the Tathagata.

The good see no difference between Thee, the Source of all excellent virtues, and the Buddha or the Enlightened, the teacher of the Universe, just as there is no difference between the moon and the moon-light.

O Thou Lover of Thy devotees [Bhaktas], taking refuge in Thee, the Enlightener of the path of perfection in wisdom, the merciful-hearted, easily attain to immeasurable greatness.

He, who rightly comprehends Thee but once in his pure heart, surely attains to eternal perfection; for verily is Thy vision fruitful of indestructible results.

Thou art the special creatrix and affectionate mother of all those true heroes who are engaged in doing good to others.

All such who having attained the Buddhahood [enlightenment] become the Teachers of the world and compassionate to all beings, are indeed Thy children. And for this reason, O Blessed One,

Thou art also the grandmother of all beings.

O Thou unblemished One, Thou art followed by all the other Perfections, even as the streaks of the moon are followed by the stars.

(Besides Perfection in Wisdom there are five other Perfections, like Perfection in Charity, etc., etc. But Prajñāparamita [Perfection in Wisdom] is said to govern and regulate the other Perfections.)

Though one, Thou hast various forms. So the Enlightened Ones worship Thee under various names, according to the temperament of disciples at different places.

As the dew-drops vanish helplessly before the rays of the shining sun, so do all the fallacies and argumentation of the disputants by attaining Thee.

To the ignorant, Thy form appears terrible indeed, and Thou producest terror; to the wise, Thou art charming in appearance and breathest inspiring confidence.

He, who having obtained Thee, cares not for attachment to Thee even, how can he, O Mother, feel any desire or aversion elsewhere, i.e., for things of this world?

Thou dost not come from any place, nor goest Thou anywhere; verily in no *space* art Thou realised by the wise.

It is passing strange that those too who do not see Thee thus, but take refuge in Thee with their heart and soul, are freed from re-birth.

Thou art the source of wonder, as Thy ways are inscrutable. Thou art profound, being wrapped up in the veil of mystery. The universe proclaims Thy glory. Thou art incomprehensible, and like Maya. Thou art seen and also not seen [i.e., the man of wisdom knows Thee and the ignorant one does not]. It is certain that Thou alone art the way to salvation and there is no other.

For the enlightenment of the embodied souls, the Lords of men out of compassion for them, speak of Thee from the relative standpoint; but in reality Thou canst not be spoken of, being beyond all expression.

Who can praise Thee in song? — Thou, who art beyond all causation, devoid of all taints of duality, beyond all expression by means of words and without any support.

O Thou Supreme Omniscience, though Thou art beyond all praises, yet by offering Thee praises in such terms as these— and thereby covering Thee effectively, we are extremely happy.

By the merit that may have been accumulated by me in singing this hymn in praise of the Supreme Omniscience, may the whole universe be soon blest with Perfection in Wisdom.



From the Psalms of the Sisters

*The Buddha's will be done ! See that ye do
His will. And ye have done it, never more
Need ye repent the deed. Wash, then, in haste
Your feet and sit ye down aloof, alone.*

*Hast thou not seen sorrow and ill in all
The springs of life? Come thou not back to birth!
Cast out the passionate desire again to be.
So shalt thou go thy ways calm and serene.*

*Upward from sole of foot, O mother dear,
Downward from crown of hair this body see.
Is it not impure, the evil-smelling thing?
This have I pondered, meditating still,
Till every throb of lust is rooted out.
Expunged is all the fever of desire.
Cool am I now and calm — Nibbana's peace.*

*I, even I, have seen, inside and out,
This body as in truth it really is,
Who sought to know the "what" and "why" of it,
With zeal unfaltering and ardour fired.
Now for the body care I never more,
And all my consciousness is passion-free.
Keen with unfettered zeal, detached,
Calm and serene, I taste Nibbana's peace.*



The Way to the Divine

[Notes of Class-Talks on the *Bhagavad-Gita*]
by Swami Yatiswarananda

"Like the sharp edge of a razor is the Path of Self-Realisation, so the wise say, difficult to cross and hard to tread."

—Katha Upanishad—

Moral life: a stepping-stone to Self-Realisation

The Vedantin says, "It is not enough if you do selfless acts and lead a moral life. It is not enough if you scrupulously perform your duties. Something more is needed. You must attain to the Highest Divine Knowledge and thereby realise the Highest Goal yourself."

Selfless acts and moral practices are only a means and stepping-stones for bringing about the necessary purification of the mind and understanding, without which the Highest Knowledge cannot be attainable by anybody.

Every aspirant must follow the path of knowledge that removes all ignorance and his false sense of personality and I-ness. This ultimately makes him realise the highest Truth himself.

A strictly moral life and selfless acts as well as daily studies and spiritual practices are needed to remove all the impurities lying hidden in our mind. We should all walk in such a way that we may ultimately attain the highest illumination.

The ways of the man of Knowledge

At present we identify ourselves with the body, whereas the man of knowledge knows that the body is only a temporary dwelling place, not his true Self.

It is true that he, too, acts and performs what we call *duties*, but he is ever the witness of his acts. He is at all times fully conscious of his non-identity with the body. He never believes himself to be a man or a woman, a youth or an old man. He knows himself to be different from and eternally beyond the mind even. He is the Self.

He may have the feeling that he acts, but this feeling is not like our feeling, but is only a highly attenuated one in which there is no trace of real Identification. His ego is like a shadow that cannot bind him at all.

Unless we have achieved perfect control of ourselves, it is not possible for us to understand the man of realisation. First we should become perfectly non-attached to everybody and to everything and have perfect control over our body and mind. We must attain outer and inner purity. Then alone would the highest knowledge dawn in us, and then alone can we come to understand the ways of the man of knowledge. Not before.

Test of true Knowledge

He alone can realise the “actionless Self”—the True Being— as the only Reality, who has purified his body and mind through perfect ethical culture. Otherwise any self-deluded man can pretend to be “actionless” and thereby simply muddle up his impure chaotic brain. Merely claiming to have attained same-sightedness will not do. A man must be put to the test and must be able to pass the test also.

“With the heart concentrated by Yoga, with the eye of evenness for all things, he beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.”—(Bhagavad-Gita)—

When anybody claims to be a man of knowledge and at the same time passionately seeks different forms of sense-enjoyment and different worldly distractions, rejoices or grieves through attachment, there is something seriously wrong with his so-called knowledge. The perfected soul does not care to run after the will-o'-the-wisp of transient human relationships and momentary enjoyment. His undimmed vision of the Truth prevents him from even turning to what is false and illusory.

That is why the aspirant who is on the Path should prevent his mind from running after all human attachments and all the other vanities of the world, although in his case this may mean a terrible tug-of-war between himself and his lower animal propensities, for many a year to come. So Christ says:

“Everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting.”—(St. Matthew XIX 29)—

We should never light-heartedly and thoughtlessly pass over the teachings of the Great Divine Personalities, but should rather ponder over them deeply and consistently and then put their instruction into practice.

Face the truth

Let us not cover unpleasant realities with fragrant flowers. We must learn to face facts as they are and see them dispassionately. The body is a very dirty thing after all. So let us get disgusted with it and all its enjoyments. We should not feel pained to think like this. An unpleasant truth is better than a pleasant falsehood. The body is full of filthy secretions and subject to decay. So let us give up all

attachment and clinging to our body, to our own as well as to that of others. Once we realise the true nature of the body, all desire to come in touch with other bodies, however beautiful their outward form, will go in no time. The body, however, is to be taken care of by all means and used as an instrument for promoting our true well-being as well as that of others.

Everything becomes simple the moment we become simple. And everything becomes difficult, the moment we become or remain complex. Realisation is an easy thing for him who is properly trained and qualified. The aspirant can come face to face with Truth as It is. It can be directly perceived. It is not like an ideal which cannot be realised, which always eludes our grasp. The spiritual ideal should be made real and living so that it ceases to be an ideal.

Seek God first

At the period of our spiritual practice we should think only of God and ourselves. We should forget everything else. We should try to rid ourselves of all attachments, even of that to our nearest and dearest. So Christ says,

“If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple!” —(St. Luke XIV, 26–27)—

Let us not worry too much about anything other than God. We should live with the Divine idea alone. This, it is true, is not the ultimate stage to be reached, but it is a very necessary stepping-stone to its attainment. Ultimately we must realise the same Divine Being in all, and love all because of Him and through Him only.

First we must learn to see the Cosmic Being at the back of the personal, and then we may come to see the Absolute at the back of the Cosmic. The Holy Personality, the Incarnation or the Personal God takes us, as it were, by the hand and reveals to us step by step the higher knowledge. The realisation of the Absolute — the Transcendental — lies always through the realisation of the Immanent Divine Principle. No one can take a long jump and reach the Absolute without the necessary preparation, however great may be its appeal to the intellect.

The more we succeed in creating within ourselves a *Cosmic* outlook, the more we feel that there is neither man nor woman, neither subject nor object, but that all is the One manifesting Itself through different names and forms.

We must learn to see Him alone even in all awful, terrible things, too, without ever allowing the awful, the terrible, to overpower our mind. He is even in the gross, the impure, awful, vulgar things, but all gross, impure, awful, vulgar things must never be permitted to affect our mind or to take possession of it. Darkness becomes visible because of the light it reflects.

To the extent in which we succeed in seeing the One alone, we forget all limitations and pairs of opposites; we forget the whole play of the phenomenal world. And we can do this if we see that everything else but God is insignificant and fleeting, of secondary importance, a mere shadowy unsubstantial, passing show. God is the only Reality at the back of everything.

Be always watchful

If we be really watchful and really try to lead the life of a sincere aspirant, we notice all the movements of our mind, all the thoughts and impulses that rise in it.

Ordinarily we are so dull and so careless about all this that we only become aware of the perilous state we are in after the horse of our mind has thrown us into the ditch. But before reaching it, it has gone all the way to the ditch quite unperceived, because of our carelessness and lack of right striving.

Hold the reins tight. All accidents in the Path are due to carelessness. Be on your guard. Be always careful. Be always watchful. Never leave your mind unwatched, not even a single minute. This is the general rule for all aspirants, whatever be the path they may follow.

Pray for Divine guidance

There is a fine prayer that says: "O Lord, do Thou take charge of the helm. My six boatmen [the passions] are very turbulent. Take my boat to the other shore. Do Thou become my ferryman."

Sri Krishna has nothing to say to the thoughtless, to the idler, to the lukewarm and half-hearted, none of whom are willing to pay the full price for that which they want. Real spirituality is dynamic, not passive. So Sri Krishna's message is full of true manliness, virility

and strength. And without these, coupled with strict ethical culture and steady spiritual practice, there cannot be anything that can be called religion.

There is nothing as precious as discrimination and dispassion and an intense yearning for God. So Sri Ramakrishna says, "You must ever discriminate the Real from the unreal, ever reason that He alone is Real and that everything else is transient. Always pray to Him with a yearning heart."

In the Bhagavad-Gita the Lord does not take part in the fight, but He is the friend and counsellor of Arjuna—the fighter. Let not the Lord Himself fight, but let Him give us the incentive and strength to fight, always. And let Him be our friend and charioteer as He was to Arjuna.

True freedom

Only the perfectly non-attached and pure can be real workers, for they alone do not work like slaves driven by their personal affections and aversions, and they alone do not bring bondage and delusion and attachment to others.

Real freedom consists in freedom from love and hate, affection and aversion, and in perfect sense-control and mental control. As soon as our body and mind are really controlled, we feel even physically that life is worth living, because it is then that we cease to be slaves and puppets of personal love and of our desires, and are able to rise to the true stature of a human being.

If the aspirant steadily tries to feel the Divine Presence within, and to forget everything else but God, no great dangers will arise from people or objects, and temptations will slowly drop off until they leave him for good.

The Divine more real than the world

We should closely examine ourselves and find out whether we really want God. If we desire the love and affection of other persons, or the things of the world, we can do without Him. And if we feel quite happy and satisfied when these are granted to us, it is a sure sign that we do not want God. In such a case, we only deserve it if we do not get Him. So every aspirant should ask himself now and then whether it is really God that he wants and not something else. And if it is really God, he can be sure that he will come to Him, for God always comes to the devotee who really seeks Him

and Him alone. Says Sri Ramakrishna, "If the devotee moves towards God one step, He comes towards him ten steps."

The whole point is that we cannot take all this dream of the phenomenal to be absolutely real and, at the same time, think of God. This cinema-show we see here is not the Reality.

Christ says, "*He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it.*"—(St. Matthew X, 38–39)—

The way to Divine Realisation lies through self-effort and striving. Immortality can be attained only by one who becomes dead to all worldly attachments, even while living in the body.

Our whole trouble is that we believe this phenomenal world, and all the people we see in it, to be intensely real, and two realities cannot find room in us. So, first of all, a void is to be created in the heart of every aspirant, and, once this is done, he can fill this void with the Divine.

The true sages and men of knowledge do not trouble themselves about the multiplicity of the world. They see the One alone in the many, and they think of and care for the One alone. They find their greatest pleasure in Him, a pleasure never to be had through personal affection or sense-enjoyment. And the cessation of all desires means the realisation of Divine Consciousness. When all attachments and loves fall away and die, the soul realises its own eternal Divine Glory.

"With the heart concentrated by Yoga, with the eye of evenness for all things, he beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.

"He who sees Me in all things and sees all things in Me, he never become separated from Me nor do I, the Divine, become separated from him.

"He who worships Me dwelling in all beings, being established in unity, whatever his mode of life, that Yogi abides in Me."

—Bhagavad-Gita VI. 29-31)—



PRAYERS

*Thou art both gross and subtle, most terrible and powerful.
Thou containest all things, Thou removest even the greatest*

sins, O Mother, I bow to Thee.

Thou dwellest in the hearts of devotees, Thou verily art the Supreme Brahman. Thou art also the Supreme Sovereign and Mother of the universe. I bow to Thee.

O Divine Mother, Thine energy pervades this entire universe. Thou embodiest the powers of diverse presiding deities. Thou art the object of worship to all the gods and sages. Do Thou bestow on us what is auspicious. We bow down to Thee in devotion.

Thou art the Supreme Being, the Witness, unattached and formless. Thou art Primal Matter and Soul and Thou art the Primal Cause of them both.

Thou art everything. Thou art the controller of all powers and the source of all powers. Thou art devoid of desires. Thou verily art the Self-luminous, All-blissful Eternal Being.

Thou art the past, present and future. Thou art All-in-all. Thou art the mighty Revealer of religion. Thou alone didst create all diverse things, moving and non-moving. Thou again art their Preserver during dissolution.



O Lord! Thou art the One, the Over-Soul, the Indwelling Spirit, the Ancient One. Thou art the Truth, self-effulgent, infinite and primal. Thou art eternal, imperishable and of the nature of bliss everlasting, and untainted. Thou art perfect, without a second, absolute and immortal.



I take refuge in the Self-created Being in Whom the universe rests, from Whom it has sprung, by Whom it has been brought into being, Who Himself doth constitute it, and Who is at the same time distinct from both the cause and effects.



*May the world be peaceful.
 May the wicked become gentle.
 May all creatures think of mutual welfare.
 May their minds be engaged with what is auspicious.
 And may our hearts be immersed in selfless love for the
 Lord!*



VEDANTA

A Quarterly Journal Published by
Swami Yatiswarananda in Switzerland

Vol.1 No.4 — 1937, Fourth Quarter

Truth is one, but sages call It by various names. — Rig-Veda

THE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE OF RELIGIONS

*Brahman abides, enveloping all things;
All things appear, illumined by Its Light. —UPANISHAD—*

*In varying ways the sages have described
The same unvarying and essential truths;
There is no real conflict twixt them all;
The knowers know the way to reconcile.— BHAGAVATAM—*

*To but One Goal are marching everywhere,
All human beings, though they seem to walk
On paths divergent; and that Goal is I,
The Universal Self, Self-Consciousness—BHAGAVAD-GITA—*

*I am the Self abiding in all hearts;
I am the beginning, middle, end of all.— BHAGAVAD-GITA—*

*Thou the One Goal of all the many paths
Men follow as they variously incline,
As of the countless streams the one vast sea!
—SHIVA-MAHIMNA-STUTI—*

Find the Tao in yourself and you know everything else. The holy man recognises unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity. The One is eternally unchangeable.— KWAN-YIN-TSE

All things are made of one essence, yet things are different according to the forms they assume under different impressions.—
BUDDHA

There is an unborn, not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded.

If there were not this that is unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, there could not be made any escape from what is born, become, made and compounded.— *BUDDHA*

It is not non-existent nor existent. It is not thus nor otherwise. It takes not birth, nor grows, decays, nor dies. It has no stain to purify away. It is the Ever-Pure—such is the mark. It cannot be suppressed nor brought to birth, nor is It slayable nor everlasting. It means not any one thing nor yet many. It cometh not nor ever doth It go.— *NAGARJUNA*

I am God and there is None-Else.— *ISAIAH*

I am that I am. I am hath sent me unto you.— *EXODUS*

I and my Father are one.— *CHRIST*

Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. He that has seen Me has seen the Father.— *CHRIST*

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?—*NEW TESTAMENT*

In Him we live, and move, and have our being.— *NEW TESTAMENT*

I am in you but, blind, ye see Me not.— *KORAN*

I, verily the I, the Self, am God; none other than the Supreme Self is God. — *KORAN*

He is the First, He is the last also,
He is the Outer, He the Inner too,
The Manifest and yet Unmanifest.
The Lord and the Ordainer of all things.— *KORAN*

7He hath no name, and yet whatever name Ye may call out, He lifts an answering head.— *SUFI*

Allah surroundeth and encloseth all; His light illumineth all heaven and earth.— *KORAN*



RAMAKRISHNA — A COSMIC HUMANIST IN RELIGION

Substance of the inaugural address by Dr. Sir Brajendra Nath Seal, to the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Parliament of Religions, Calcutta, 1937.

Ramakrishna's religious practices

Ramakrishna sought to experience each religion in its entirety in Sadhana or spiritual discipline. Now he would be a Moslem Fakir with appropriate rituals, attitudes, and garb, and now a Christian neophyte, stricken with a sense of sin and crying for salvation. There was nothing of mere pose or mere imagination in all this. In the same way, Vaishnava Sankirtan and music were added to his religious exercises.

Early personal influences on Ramakrishna

(1) Among early personal influences on Ramakrishna is to be noted that of Saint Dayananda Saraswati, founder of the Arya-Samaj. Dayananda took his stand on the Vedas as teaching the One Universal Religion and fought all idolatry in a militant mood, but his influence on Ramakrishna could not be lasting or deep. Ramakrishna's genuineness led him to revolt against Hindu practices; he would repudiate caste and even serve the *mehtar* [sweeper] which could hardly have been pleasing to the orthodox Vedic brotherhood. He felt himself drawn to Totapuri and other saints, and these manifold experiences prepared him for his mission in life. It was Totapuri who initiated him into Sannyasa, the life of the monk.

(2) He came under the influence of the Brahmo-Samaj also. The New Dispensation as preached by Brahmananda Keshabchandra gave him a keen sense of certain social evils and immoralities which had corrupted latter-day Hindu religion and religious practices.

Ramakrishna's central contribution to religious life

(1) Ramakrishna was a composite personality. In contemplating Truth from the absolute point of view [*Nirupadhī*] he negated all conditions and modes [*Upadhis*], but from the relative or conditional point of view [*Sopadhī*] he worshipped Kali, the Divine Mother, as well as other modes and embodiments of the deity. He worshipped the one in all and the all in one and he saw no contradiction but only a fuller reality in this. So also he reconciled *Sakar*

and *Nirakar Upasana* [worship of God with and without form]. For him there was nothing in the material form of the deity but God manifesting Himself. The antagonism between matter and spirit did not exist for him.

(2) He refused to delude himself with the idea that he was above all conditions and all infirmities of the flesh. But in his trances [*Samadhi*] he developed ecstasia in its purest form, such as has been rarely witnessed in the West in the religious world since the days of Eckhart and Tauler.

(3) Like most Hindu Saints he had an inexhaustible store of homely sayings, adages, metaphors, allegories, parables which could bring spiritual truths home to the meanest understanding and even to the child.

Rammohun, Keshabchandra and Ramakrishna

Rammohun Roy, in a very real sense the father of modern India, sought the Universal Religion, the common basis of the Hindu, Moslem, Christian and other faiths. He found that each of these great religions was based on this common faith with a certain distinctive historical and cultural embodiment. It is fundamental to note that Rammohun played two roles in his own person. First, he was a profound universalist and in this capacity he formulated the creed of what has been called Neo-theo-philanthropy—a new love of God and man—on positive and constructive lines.

In the second place, Rammohun was a Nationalist Reformer and functioned in three different ways.

a. As a Hindu Reformer he gave a Unitarian redaction of the Hindu *Shastras* from the *Vedanta* and *Mahanirvana Tantra*.

b. As a Moslem defender of the faith he wrote the *Tuhfatul-Muwahhidin* and *Manazaratul Adiyen* which were polemical works.

c. As a Christian he gave a Unitarian version of the entire body of the scriptures, old and new, in his controversies with the Christian missionaries.

Rammohun was thus in himself a universalist and three nationalists all in one.

Maharishi Devendranath organised the creed, rituals and *Anushthanas* [practices] in the Adi-Brahmo-Samaj on a Hindu Upanishadic basis.

The work of formulating a Universal Religion free from Hindu or Christian theology fell on Brahmananda Keshabchandra Sen, who attempted this on an eclectic basis and thus organised rituals and modes of worship. In his earlier days Keshabchandra made Christianity the central religion, but in later life he was drawn more and more to Vaishnavism for emotional and religious exercises. This was selective eclecticism. He thus variegated and fulfilled religious experiences as well as concepts, rituals and worship in a way never attempted before. Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Vaishnavism, not to mention other religions, each contributed its essence and substance to Keshabchandra's Religion of the New Dispensation, and what was new was the eclectic cult and culture.

The next step—and it was indeed a fundamental innovation—was taken by Paramahansa Ramakrishna. The Paramahansa would experience each cult and religion in its TOTALITY as one WHOLE experience.

How Ramakrishna differed from Keshabchandra

Keshabchandra would emphasise the central essence of each religion and acknowledge its truth. In this sense, Keshabchandra would say, "It is not that every religion contains truths but every religion is true." But as there are different religions, it follows that they convey different aspects of truth. They transcribe not a part but the whole of life, each from one fundamental standpoint. But the religions contend with one another. Each claims that its positive standpoint is the only true standpoint and all other standpoints are erroneous. But Keshabchandra differed. He viewed life from all these different standpoints eclectically. He selected from each religion what he considered its essence, both theoretical and practical. He formulated a collation of all these partial aspects in the Brahmo faith and more especially in the New Dispensation creed. Put more briefly, Keshabchandra's view is that every religion as represented by its central essence is true. But it does not contain the WHOLE truth which can be viewed only from an eclectic standpoint.

The new Dispensation would select the "distinctive" central essence from each religion and make a collection, a "bouquet" of flowers, as it were.

Here it was that Ramakrishna differed from Keshabchandra. Indeed, he differed from his predecessors in two essential respects.

- First, he maintained that the practices, rituals and disciplines of a religion are more really and vitally its essence than are its dogmas and creeds.
- Secondly, it was Ramakrishna's conviction that it is not by selective eclecticism but by syncretism and the whole-hearted acceptance of a religion that its full value and worth could be realised and experienced.

Ramakrishna held that selective extracts would kill the vital element in each religion. He would be a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem and a Christian with the Christian in order to experience the whole truth and efficacy of each of these religions. But he would not practise different religious disciplines or hold different creeds at one and the same time. The observances, practices, and rituals of each religion are organic to it. He would tentatively accept the whole creed and ritual of the Moslem or of the Christian Catholic in order to experience its religious efficacy and truth. In all these there might be temptations and pitfalls but one must be as an innocent child or babe and pass unscathed through fire. It was thus that the Paramahansa passed successively through Christian and Moslem experiences. Such was the Paramahansa's Syncretism.

Modernism in religion

Ramakrishna was thus a cosmic humanist in Religion and not a mere nationalist. He gave the impulse and initiative, and this must be completed in our age. Humanism has now various new phases and developments. Leaving out Comte's positivistic humanism with its worship of the "grand-*être*" and Bahaimism with its later offshoot "Babism", the religion of human brotherhood [*bhai*], we may turn to later phases such as the new concepts of religion without a God [as in Julian Huxley]. This is not all. Impersonal ideals of Truth, Beauty or Goodness have sometimes replaced the old faith in a personal God. And it is not merely the religious sentiment which claims its own pabulum in our day. A passion for science, for philosophy or for scientific philosophy, a passion for art or for *rasa* [aesthetic sentiment] in general is the badge of modernism in our culture and seeks to displace much of the old religious sentiment.

Parliament of Religions

Our present quest is for a Parliament of Religions, a quest which

we seek to voice in this Assembly. But, this is only a stepping-stone to a Parliament of Man or a Federation of World Cultures.

Articles of faith, creeds and dogmas divide man from man but we seek in religion a meeting-ground of humanity. What we want is not merely universal religion in its quintessence, as Rammohun sought it in his earlier days, not merely an eclectic religion by compounding the distinctive essences, theoretical as well as practical, of the different religions, as Keshabchandra sought it, but experience as a WHOLE as it has unfolded itself in the history of man. And this can be realised by us, as Ramakrishna taught, by the syncretistic practice of religion by being a Hindu with the Hindu, a Moslem with the Moslem, and a Christian with the Christian, as preparatory to the ultimate realisation of God in Man and Man in God.

Religion in a broader sense is to be distinguished from the religions in the concrete. As such it is a force that organises life and life's activities. All cultures and, in fact, all concepts are dominated by the idea of Religion. Food, sex-relations, the family, tribal life and warfare are all regulated by the religious ideal. Empirical science and folk life are grouped round the central idea of religion. And, in the course of progress, the higher religions are evolved. The Parliament of Religions is thus to be conceived as but the apex of this ascending course of religious revolution.

Religious expression, however, is not the only expression of the ultimate experience. We have also science, philosophy, or [better] scientific philosophy, art or the aesthetic sensibility, *rasa* [sentiment] or *rasanubhuti*, or again mystical experience, all these being phases of humanism. And the consummation is to be found in cosmic humanism which frees mankind from its limitations of outlook by finding man in the universe and the universe in man. And we must seek it to be free not of this or that state but of the solar system and stellar systems and beyond, in one word, of the universe.

Our immediate objective to-day is a Parliament of Religions. But in my view, this is only a prelude to a larger Parliament, the Parliament of Man, voicing the federation of world cultures, as I have said, and what this will seek to establish is a synthetic view of life conceived not statically, but dynamically as a progressive evolution of humanity.



HINDUISM

Walk ye together on the Path of Life, and speak ye all with voice unanimous, and may your minds all know the Self-Same Truth. — VEDA

The One and the Many

He is the All-Pervading Being manifest as all beings. He has innumerable heads, eyes and feet. It is He that has encompassed the whole universe, and it is He again who transcends it.

That Universal Being has become this whole cosmos. He is all that was and all that will be. He manifests Himself in the form of the universe. He is also the Lord and the Giver of Immortality.

So vast is His Glory; but He, the Universal Being, is greater than all that. The manifested world forms but a small portion of His being. In the main He remains unmanifest and immortal.

—(Rig-Veda 10.90.1–3)—

The All-Pervading Reality, though one, is regarded as many. He is the Self of all beings. He is the innermost Self of all that exists. He is seated in the hearts of all. He is the Ruler of all. All beings become one in Him.

Infinite, the Immutable, the Omniscient, the Self, the Lord of Creation, the Origin of all that is good, He shines in the hearts of all beings.

—(Taittiriya Aranyaka 3.2.1–2, 10.11.6)—

That Infinite, Effulgent Being is inconceivable by nature. He is subtler than the subtlest, farther than the farthest and is ever here within the body. He is realised by the seers as residing within the heart.

—(Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.7)—

As the spider produces the thread and absorbs it again, as herbs grow on earth, as hairs come out from a living man,—even so does the universe spring forth from the Imperishable.

—(Mundaka Upanishad 1.1.7)—

This is the truth,—As from a blazing fire, there shoot out, by thousands, sparks of the same appearance, so do the various beings originate from that Imperishable, and unto It, verily, they go back again.

—(Brihadaranyaka Up. 2.1.20)—

Immanent in the light of intelligence dwells the stainless, transcendental, infinite Being that is pure by nature, that is the Light of all lights. It is That which is realised by the knowers of the Self.

There the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor the lightning, much less the fire. He shining, everything shines after Him. By His Light is everything lighted.

That Supreme Being, who is infinite, eternal, and immortal, is in front, is behind, is on the left and on the right, is above and below.

—(Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.9–11)—

That Imperishable Being is neither coarse nor fine, neither short nor long, neither red like fire nor fluid like water. It is without shadow, without darkness, without air, without ether, without attachment, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without the vocal organ or mind, without material light, without the vital force or speech without measure, without interior or exterior.

—(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.8.8)—

Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else—that is the Infinite. Where, however, one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else—that is the finite. That which is Infinite is immortal, that which is finite is mortal.

He is the Self free from all sins, free from old age, free from death and misery, free from hunger and thirst. His desire and His will are always effective and blemishless.

—(Chhandogya Upanishad 7.24.1, 8.1.5)—



The Essential Unity of All Religions

[Compiled from M's *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*¹
and from the Bengali Edition]

Sri Ramakrishna — Each religion is a path leading to God. All religions are true from that standpoint. One can go to a place by

1. The first English version, written by M. himself, published in 1911. Presently available as *The Condensed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. [Ed.]

many ways. Religion is not God. It is a means. People can reach God by following different religions.

Rivers come from different directions but all of them fall into the ocean. There they are all one.

One can reach the terrace by many means. The staircase made of brick and mortar, wooden stairs, spiral stairs, or even a rope, —each of them leads to the terrace. But at the time of going up, a person must follow one of these. By putting one's feet on different stairs at the same time, one can never reach the terrace. After having gone there once, one may go up and down by any of these.

For this reason, a person should take recourse to a particular religion. After having realised God, he can move along any religious path. Such a person is taken to be a Hindu when he mixes with the Hindus, is considered a Mahommedan when he is amongst Mahommedans, or he is looked upon as a Christian when he sits in the company of Christians.

The followers of all religions are calling on the same Divine Being. Some call Him the Lord, some Rama, some Hari, some Allah, some Brahman. Names are different but the Substance is the same.

A tank has four Ghats or landing places with steps. The Hindus drink water at one Ghat and call it "jal". The Mahommedans drink it at another and call it "pani". The Christians drink it at a third and call it "water". Those who are at another Ghat call it "aqua". Water is the one Substance but it has got various names. What then is the necessity of a quarrel? All are calling on the same God and all will come to Him in time.

A Devotee (to Sri Ramakrishna) — But if there are errors in another's religion?

Sri Ramakrishna — Well, which religion is absolutely free from error? Everybody says, "My watch alone goes correctly". But no watch is absolutely correct in its movement. All watches are to be regulated according to the movement of the sun.

Which religion is free from error? In spite of that, if a devotee is sincere and calls on the Lord with a yearning heart, God is sure to hear him.

Take an instance: A father has many children, big and small. All are not able to address him as "baba" or "papa". Some call him "baba" or "papa", some only "ba", some only "pa". Will the father

get angry with those who cannot call him “baba” or “papa”? No, the father loves them all alike.

People think, “My religion alone is right. I alone have known what God is, but not the others. I am calling on Him in the proper way, but not they! So He will bless me but not them.” Such persons do not know that God is the father and mother of all. He will shower His grace on all who are sincere.

(To a devotee) One should not cherish hatred for any religion. Those who hold God to be formless as well as those who attribute form to Him,—all are moving towards Him.

A Devotee — How does one know that all paths are true?

Sri Ramakrishna — By following a path properly one reaches the Lord. Then he can know all about the other paths also.

Through the grace of God, a devotee can know all that. If you could come to realise Him, you would know everything. First come to meet the wealthy man somehow or other, make his acquaintance, and then he himself will tell you how many gardens, tanks and securities he possesses.

If you ask which form of the Lord you should meditate on, I say, meditate upon any form you like, but know that all are one. Never be intolerant of any of the Divine forms. They are all merely manifestations of the One; and blessed indeed is he who has known all as one.

To say that one’s own religion alone is true and that others are false is dogmatism. And it is a bad attitude. For various are the ways that lead unto the Lord.

Some again maintain that God has form—that He cannot be formless. And they quarrel about it. A Vaishnava quarrels with an Advaitin.

One can speak of Him with authority only when he has seen Him. And he who has seen Him well knows that He is both with and without form, and very much more than can be expressed in words.

Once some blind men happened to come upon what they were told was an elephant. They were asked what they thought it was like. So they began to feel the animal with their hands, and one of them said it was like a pillar,—he had felt only a leg. “It is like a winnowing fan”, said another, for he had felt one of its ears only. And

others again, who had felt its trunk or stomach, spoke of it in different ways. Even so he who has seen the Lord knows only of that aspect of Him that he has seen and he thinks, "Such is God and nothing else!"

Once a man came to his friends and said, "Hallo, I saw a beautiful red chameleon under that tree." "Why red?" exclaimed one of them. "I myself was there before you; I found it green." Then rejoined another, "I know full well it is neither red nor green. I was there before you both and saw with my own eyes that it is blue." At that some others asserted that it was yellow or brown, and so on till they fell out and everyone insisted that he alone was right. Some one came by and enquired what the quarrel was about. When the cause of their dispute was told him, he said, "Lo! I myself live under that tree and I know the animal well. All of you are right. It is indeed sometimes red, sometimes green, at other times blue and so on. And I have found that sometimes it has no colour at all!"

So how can you say that He is only "Sakara" [with form]? True, He incarnates Himself in a human body as Sri Krishna and He appears before His devotees in various forms. But it is also true that He is "Nirakara" [formless] Akhanda Satchidananda. The Vedas have declared that He is both with and without form, both with and without attributes.

Do you know what it is like? The Absolute may be compared to an infinite ocean; and as extreme cold freezes the waters of the ocean into ice and sets it afloat in masses of various forms, so under the cooling influence, so to say, of Bhakti [Divine Love], the Infinite reduces Himself to the finite and appears before His devotees as a Being with form. The Bhakta loves to see Him with form. Again, when the sun of knowledge shines forth, these divine forms like masses of ice melt away and nothing but water remains,—water above, below, around, water everywhere as before. Hence there is this prayer of the Srimad Bhagavatam, "*Thou art, O Lord, both Sakara and Nirakara. Thou art indeed appearing before us as a man, but the Vedas have declared Thee as beyond speech and mind.*" But, then, you may truly say that for some He is eternally Sakara [with form]. There are places where the ice never melts,—it becomes crystal. God; indeed, is beyond both Sakara [with form] and Nirakara [without form]. Of Him, none can find any end.

I find all men quarrelling in the name of religion. Hindus, Mus-

salmans, Brahmos, Shaktas Vaishnavas, Shaivas,—all are quarrelling with one another. They never think that He who is called Krishna is also called Shiva, that He Himself is named Adyashakti [the Primal Energy], Jesus or Allah! “One Rama having a thousand names.” The Substance is one, only It has different names. And everyone is seeking the same Substance; there is only the variance due to climate, temperament and name.

If some were to argue that the substance is not “jal” but “pani”, or not “pani” but “water”, or that it is not “water” but “jal”, it would be very ridiculous indeed. Therefore; sectarianism, misunderstanding, disputation, fighting or bloodshed in the name of religion is not desirable. Everyone is following His path and if he is sincere and yearns to know Him, then certainly he will realise Him. (To Mani) Now, note what I say.

The Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, all Scriptures are trying to know Him only, none else. Their quest is the same one Satchidananda Brahman,—even He, according to the Tantras, is the Satchidananda Shiva; and Him, again, the Puranas have declared as the Satchidananda Krishna.



The Necessity of Spiritual Striving

[Compiled from the *Reminiscences of the Holy Mother*
published in the *Vedanta-Kesari*]

—*Sri Saradamani Devi, otherwise known as the Holy Mother, was the consort of Sri Ramakrishna. She was wife, nun and disciple at the same time. Though possessed of great spiritual attainments and respected and worshipped as a Divine Personality by the devotees of the Master, she was always unassuming in her life and ways. She gave spiritual instructions and was the Guru to many monks and householders. In the reminiscences of this great woman of modern India the reader gets intimate glimpses of a glorious type of womanhood.—*

A monk came and prostrated before the Holy Mother. He said, “Mother, why does the mind become so restless every now and then? Why is it that I cannot constantly meditate on the Divine? Many worthless thoughts disturb my mind. Useless things we can

easily obtain if we simply want them. Shall I never realise God? Mother, please tell me how I shall obtain peace. Nowadays I seldom have visions. It is rather better to die than to lead such a worthless life.”

Mother — “What are you talking of my child? Do not even think of such things. Can one have vision of God every day? Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘Does an angler catch a big carp every day, the moment he sits with his rod? Arranging everything about him, he sits with his rod and concentrates. Once in a while a big carp swallows the hook. Many a time he is disappointed.’ Do not for that reason relax the practice. Increase the Japam [repetition of the name of God or the Ishtam].”

(An elderly lady-devotee) — “Yes, that is true. The name is identical with Brahman. Even if the mind be not concentrated at the outset, you will succeed ultimately.”

A lady-disciple came, saluted the Mother, and sat near her.

Mother (addressing the devotee) — “My child, you have been extremely fortunate to get this human birth. Pray intensely to God. One must work hard. How can one achieve anything without effort? You must make some time for prayer, even in the midst of the busiest hours of the day. How shall I describe to you, my child, my own life? At that time, at Dakshineswar, I used to get up at 3 o’clock in the morning and sit for meditation. I would be totally lost in meditation. Once, on a moonlit night, I was performing my Japam near the steps of the Nahavat [concert-room]. Everything was quiet. I did not know that Sri Ramakrishna passed that way. On other occasions, I would hear the sound of his shoes, but on this occasion I was totally absorbed in meditation. At that time I looked differently. I had ornaments and a cloth with a red border. The wind had made the cloth slip from my body. I was unconscious of it. Young Yogin came there to give the water-jug to Sri Ramakrishna, and saw me in that condition. Ah! The ecstasy of those days! On a moonlit night I would look at the moon and pray with folded hands, ‘May my heart be as pure as the rays of yonder moon.’ If you are steady in meditation and prayer, you will clearly see the Lord in your heart and hear His voice. The moment an idea flashes in your mind, it will be fulfilled then and there. You will be bathed in peace, Ah! What a mind I had at that time! Brinde, the maid-servant, once dropped a metal plate in front of me with a bang. The sound pene-

trated into my heart. [The Holy Mother was then meditating in the Nahavat and felt the sound like a clap of thunder, and she burst into tears]. In the course of your spiritual realisation, you will find that He who resides in my heart exists in your heart as well. He is in the heart of everyone, the oppressed, the persecuted, the un-touchable and the outcast. This realisation makes one truly humble.”

A young monk asked the Mother, “Mother, how shall I lead my life?”

Mother — “Do just as you are doing now. Pray to God sincerely. Always keep Him in your mind.”

Disciple — “Mother, I become frightened to see even great souls falling from the ideal.”

Mother — “If you constantly live in the atmosphere of enjoyments, the objects of enjoyment will naturally come to you. My child, do not look at objects of temptation—not even at their representations in wood. Do not go near them.”

Disciple — “Man cannot do anything. He, our inner guide, gives us the inspiration to work.”

Mother — “Yes, it is true that we are like puppets and He has the string in His hand. But are we conscious of it? Infatuated by our vanity, we think that we are doing everything. We do not at all depend upon God. He who depends upon God is saved from all troubles by His grace.”

Referring to a Swami, the Mother said, “Sri Ramakrishna used to warn the spiritual people by saying, ‘O Holy Man, be always alert and careful. A holy man must be always vigilant. He must always be careful. He walks on a slippery road and one who does so, must always walk on his toes. Is it an easy thing to be a monk? He must never look at objects of temptation.’”

“It is the natural tendency of the mind to run after evil things. It refuses to think of noble ideas. Many years ago, I used to meditate regularly at three o’clock in the morning. One day I did not feel well, and through sheer laziness did not practise my meditation. For this reason I neglected meditation for some days. Therefore, one must have tremendous sincerity and make unrelenting efforts to do good things. While I was staying in the Nahavat at Dakshineswar, I would at night look at the reflection of the moon in the calm water

of the Ganges and would weep and pray to God, 'O God, there are dark spots even in the moon. May there be no stain in my mind.'

Disciple — "Is it, Mother, desirable to practise posture and breathing exercises?"

Mother — "One gets psychic powers from them, and these powers deviate one from the path of truth."

Disciple — "Is it desirable for a monk to visit holy places?"

Mother — "If the mind be peaceful at one place, then what is the necessity of pilgrimage?"

Disciple — "I cannot meditate, Mother. Please awaken my Kundalini."

Mother — "Oh yes, the Kundalini will no doubt be awakened. Practise a little meditation and Japam, and you will feel it. Can one ever awaken the Kundalini without any effort? Practise meditation and Japam and you will feel the result. While practising meditation, your mind will be so concentrated on the ideal that you will never care to give up the meditation. But if one day the mind refuses to meditate, you need not force it to do so. Simply salute the Lord and then do your other duties. But you will find that on some days meditation becomes spontaneous."

Disciple — "Mother, why can't I control my mind? When I try to think of God, the mind is distracted by so many objects."

Mother — "If by 'objects' you mean money, wife or children, then no doubt it is bad. But it is quite natural for the mind to remember our various works and duties. If you cannot meditate, practise Japam. One gets realisation by simply repeating the name of God, as the old saying goes. Yes, by mere repetition of His name, one realises God. If you can meditate, well and good; otherwise do not force your mind to do so."

Disciple — "Is it good to practise spiritual disciplines in our monastery at Benares, or should one retire into complete solitude for that purpose?"

Mother — "At first one should mature the mind by spiritual practices in a solitary place like Hrishikesh. Then when the mind has become pure and strong, wherever one lives or whatever company one keeps, it never becomes agitated. A tender young plant should be protected by putting a hedge around it. But when it grows into a

tree, neither the cow nor the goat can do it any harm. It is absolutely necessary to practise spiritual disciplines in solitude. Whenever any idea crops up into your mind, whenever you want to know anything, go to a lonely place, weep before the Lord and pray to Him. He, the all-compassionate God, will remove the impurities of your mind, destroy all your difficulties and explain everything to you.”

Continuing, the Mother said, “He is looking after you. Why should you fear anything? Always do Sri Ramakrishna’s work and also practise meditation and prayer. It is desirable to be engaged in activities. That keeps away useless thoughts from our mind. If you are always alone without any work, then you give idle thoughts the opportunity to disturb your mind.”

Disciple — “How should one practise spiritual exercises?”

Mother — “Spiritual exercises mean constantly to remember the lotus feet of God and to devote the mind to thoughts of Him. Always repeat His name.”

Disciple — “What is the use of mere repetition of name unless one has devotion for God?”

Mother — “Whether you willingly jump into the water or you are pushed into it, it is all the same. Your cloth will be drenched in either case. Meditate regularly every day. Your mind is not yet matured. Through meditation it will gradually become quiet. Always discriminate. If the mind goes to any external object, think of it as non-permanent and then devote yourself to God. Once a man was angling. A procession with bridegroom and music passed by his side, but his mind was fixed only on the float.”

Disciple — “What is the goal of life?”

Mother — “To realise God and to be constantly absorbed in His meditation. Is it possible to think of God always? Sometimes go out for a little walk, and at other times think of Him. You are a monk and belong to Him. Certainly He is looking after you, both here and hereafter. Why should you be worried then?”



Extracts from Letters of Swami Vivekananda

Work bravely with selflessness and infinite Love

My master used to say that these names as “Hindu”, “Christian”, etc., etc., stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must try to break them down first. They have lost all their good powers and now only stand as baneful influences under whose black magic even the best of us behave like demons. Well, we have to work hard and must succeed.

One must work as the dictate comes from within, and then it is right and good. Society is bound to veer round, perhaps centuries after one is dead and gone. We must plunge in, heart and soul and body, into the work. And until we be ready to sacrifice everything to ONE Idea and to ONE alone, we never, NEVER will see the Light.

Those who want to help mankind must take their own pleasure and pain, name and fame, and all sorts of interests, and make a bundle of them and throw them into the sea, and then come to the Lord. This is what all the masters said and DID!

My IDEA and all my life with it,—and to God for help; to NONE else! Be a heart-whole man. Strictly moral, brave unto desperation. Don't bother your head with religious theories! Cowards only sin, brave men never; no, not even in mind. Try to love anybody and everybody. Be a MAN, and try to make those immediately under your care brave, moral and sympathising. No religion for you, my children, but morality and bravery. No cowardice, no sin, no crime, no weakness; the rest will come of itself.

I have heard that if one does not see the evil around him, he can not do good work,—he lapses into a sort of fatalism. I do not see that. On the other hand, my power of work is immensely increasing and becoming immensely effective. Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless everyone, everything, love and embrace everything and I do see that evil is a delusion. I am in one of these moods now, and am actually shedding tears of joy at the thought of you and of X-----'s kindness to me. I bless the day I was born. I have had so much of kindness and love here, and that love Infinite that brought me into being has guarded every one of my actions, good or bad (don't be frightened), for what am I, what was I ever but a tool in His hands—for whose service I have given up everything, my beloved ones, my joys, my life! He is my playful dar-

ling. I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the universe! What reason binds Him? He, the Playful One, is playing these tears and laughters over all parts of the play!

It is a funny world, and the funniest chap you ever saw is He, the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children, get out to play in this play-ground of the world! Isn't it? Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play. They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason; but this time He won't find me napping.

I have learnt a thing or two: Beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the "Love", the "Beloved". Aye, "Sakê! — fill up the cup and we will be mad!"



Brahman and Differentiation— Personal Realisation of Oneness

Conversations with Swami Vivekananda

[From *Conversations and Dialogues* — C.W.Vol. V.]

Question — Pray, Swamiji, if the One Brahman is the only Reality, then why all this differentiation in the world?

Swami Vivekananda — Are you not considering this question from the point of view of phenomenal existence? Looking from the phenomenal side of existence one can, through reasoning and discrimination, gradually arrive at the very root of Unity. But if you were firmly established in that Unity, how from that standpoint, tell me, could you see this differentiation?

Question — True, if I had existed in the Unity, how should I be able to raise this question of "why"? As I put this question, it is already taken for granted that I do so by seeing this diversity.

Swami Vivekananda— Very well. To enquire the root of oneness through the diversity of phenomenal existence, is said to be in the Shastra as *Vyatireki* reasoning, or the process of arguing by the indirect method, i.e., first taking for granted something that is non-existent or unreal as existing or real and then showing through the course of reasoning, that that is not a substance existing or real. You are talking of the process of arriving at the truth through assuming that which is not-true as true,—are you not?

Question — To my mind, the state of the existing or the seen seems to be self-evident, and hence true, and that which is opposed to it seems, on the other hand, to be unreal.

Swami Vivekananda — But the Vedas say, “*One only without a second*”. And if in reality there is the One only that exists—the Brahman—then your differentiation is false. Look here, a time comes when what you call differentiation vanishes and we cannot perceive it at all. ***I have experienced that state in my own life.***

This knowledge of Oneness is what the Shastras speak of as realisation of the Brahman, by knowing which one gets rid of fear, and the shackles of birth and death break for ever. Having once realised that supreme bliss, one is no more overwhelmed by the pleasure and pain of this world. Men being fettered by base lust-and-wealth cannot enjoy that Bliss of Brahman.

Question — If it is so, and if we are really of the essence of the Supreme Brahman, then why do we not exert ourselves to gain that Bliss? Why do we again and again run into the jaws of death, being decoyed by this worthless snare of lust-and-wealth?

Swami Vivekananda — You speak as if man did not desire to have that Bliss! Ponder over it and you will see that whatever anyone is doing, he is doing it in the hope of gaining that Supreme Bliss. Only not all of them are conscious of it and so cannot understand it. That Supreme Bliss fully exists in all, from Brahma down to a blade of grass. You are also that undivided Brahman. This very moment you can realise It if you think yourself truly and absolutely to be so. It is all mere want of direct perception. That you have taken such hard work and service for the sake of your wife also shows that the aim of it is ultimately to attain to that Supreme Bliss of Brahman. Being again and again hard hit by sorrows and afflictions, the eye will turn of itself to one’s own real nature, the Inner Self; it is owing to the presence of this desire for bliss in the heart that man, getting hard shocks one after another, turns his eye inwards,— to his own Self. A time is sure to come to everyone without exception when he will do so,—to one it may be in this life, to another, after thousands and thousands of incarnations.

Question — It all depends upon the blessings of the Guru [spiritual teacher] and the grace of the Lord!

Swami Vivekananda — The wind of the grace of the Lord is

blowing on, for ever and ever. Do you spread your sail. Whenever you do anything, do it with your whole heart concentrated on it. Think, day and night,—“I am of the essence of that Supreme Existence-Knowledge-Bliss,—what fear and anxiety have I? This body, mind and intellect are all transient, and THAT which is beyond these, is myself.”



Way to Self-Realisation and Freedom

[Compiled from the *Jñāneswari* of Jñānadeva]

Everyone must do his duty so that he can secure the ultimate goal of life, liberation, in the form of the highest accomplishment. This is the reward for the trouble which he will have taken. Even in a time of great difficulty and anxiety one must never stop one's spiritual practices nor lose sight of the Mantram that one has tested, and a man who has launched out on the ocean must not abandon the boat. A Patient must never let go the Divine Medicine, so one must hold on to one's duty. Then the Almighty brings unto one the consciousness that the world and even heaven are deadly poisons, and He brings about the fitness for the accomplishment of true renunciation and dispassion. When a man has traversed that stage of Vairagya [dis-passion], that stage of renunciation, he becomes fit for still higher things.

Just as wind moving about here and there through the net of a fisherman cannot be tied, so such a man is not caught in the bonds of the world arising from the body, the mind, etc., etc. Just as a ripe fruit cannot hold on to the branch of a tree, nor a branch hold on to it, so his interest in worldly affairs weakens. For him, the feeling of possession goes with reference to his son, wealth, wife, etc., etc., even if they are all with him in the same way as before, as no one wants to acknowledge the ownership of a vessel of poison. In short, just as a man withdraws his hand instantaneously on touching a red-hot article, so his intelligence, being withdrawn from the objects of sense, is absorbed in the contemplation of the Self. Just as a maid-servant out of fear of the master does not go counter to his behests, so his mind does not wander after external objects, and holding his intelligence in the firm grip of identification, he gets it absorbed in thoughts of the Self. In this way, like smoke which spontaneously disappears when the fire is covered with ashes, his

desire for objects of worldly enjoyment automatically goes away. When the mind is controlled, desire spontaneously disappears. All the errors and mistaken ideas of such a man then go, and true wisdom only remains.

Accumulated water, when used every day, becomes less and less in quantity. So the impetus of the actions which he has begun is gradually exhausted as they are being gone through and, owing to the absence of egoism, no new actions are contracted. When all actions become in this way attenuated, he gets spontaneously a teacher. After the four parts of the night are gone, darkness goes away and the sun becomes visible. When the fruits come on a plantain tree, it grows no more. In this way, with the favour of the Divine Guru, all activities in the matter of action and obligations on the part of the seeker, stop. On night of full moon, there is nothing wanting in the moon. So in obtaining the favour of the Divine Guru, no further desideratum remains for the seeker and all ignorance is destroyed through His kindness. With the night, darkness goes away, so with the disappearance of ignorance, the trinity, viz., action, the doer and performance of action, also go. When a pregnant woman is killed, it is not necessary to kill separately the child in her womb. When the root of action, i.e., ignorance, is destroyed, the seeker finds everywhere his own form. When a man arises from sleep, will he attempt to save himself, still believing in the illusion which he got in his dream, that he had fallen into a well?

Similarly, the bad dream of the belief that "I understand", "I shall now try to understand", is destroyed and the distinction of the knower and the known is bridged. He becomes pure knowledge or Chidakash. When the looking glass with the reflection in it is taken away, what remains is the seer without the sight. In the same way, when ignorance goes, it also takes knowledge with it and the balance is the pure inactive form of knowledge. There is nothing but one's own form, which on account of ignorance and illusion got into the idea of false existence from which, when the notion of false existence is eliminated, nothing but true existence remains. In the same way, as waves which arose in the water by reason of wind, when the wind is destroyed find unity with the water itself automatically. When the Ganges joins the ocean, it loses its name. When gold is being purified, pure gold is sixteen annas, i.e., 100% pure, and this, therefore, postulates that the end has come of the activity

of purification. Thus, the condition of that Jñana by which our ignorance is destroyed and with which Jñana itself is destroyed, leaves nothing higher to reach.

When a man who is asleep is awakened, not only is his sleep destroyed, but also all the illusive dreams which he was dreaming, and he reaches his own original condition. Also, who can say that any worldly activities remain to him whose whole inclinations—on hearing the teaching of the Guru, and destroying within himself the feeling of separateness—have been turned to the form of the Self? Has the sky to move from here to there? Similarly, such a man has really no obligations, but this condition is not reached by everybody, i.e., to become Brahman as soon as he hears the teaching of the Guru. Even if he has first burnt away Rajas and Tamas with the fuel of desire and prohibited actions in the fire of the performance of his own proper duty, even if he has first secured full control over the desire for wealth and the joys of heaven, even if he has caused his senses, which had become sinful by wandering round unrestrained in the objects of enjoyment, to have a purifying bath in the Holy Place in the form of self-control, and has reached the condition of unalterable renunciation by offering to God all fruits in the form of entire performance of duty and has thus brought together all the equipment which should lead to his securing the elevated condition of Jñana ending in the realisation of the Self, and if at that time he has come across a great Guru who favours him in every respect, even under all these conditions, it may still be asked, does a man regain health the very moment he takes medicine? Is it noon-day the moment the sun rises?

Even if the field is excellent and the soul is wet, and by sowing the proper seeds an extra crop can be raised, still it takes time. If the way is known and if there are trusty companions, one can reach one's destination, no doubt, but the necessary time must elapse. He who has acquired renunciation and dispassion, who has obtained a Guru and in whose heart there is a growing feeling of discrimination, arrives at the firm belief that Brahman is the only Reality and everything else is illusion. Before that Brahman, all-pervading and all-powerful, the notion of even liberation does not survive.

The true seeker has both his mind and his outside senses entirely under control. He does not allow his impulses even to reach

the threshold of the mind. He has brought under his power the heaven of contemplation after conquering the body, the speech and the mind. He has realised the true form of the Self through his understanding of the teachings of the Guru in the same way as we can see our form in a mirror. He finds himself in the trinity formed by the man who contemplates, by the activity of contemplation and by the object of contemplation to be reached through that activity, and he goes on contemplating till the trinity of the contemplator, contemplating and the contemplated becomes one.



TAOISM

Sayings of Lao-Tse

The Tao which can be expressed in words is not the eternal Tao. The name which can be uttered is not its eternal name. Without a name, it is the Beginning of Heaven and Earth. With a name, it is the Mother of all things. Only one who is eternally free from all earthly passions can apprehend its spiritual essence; he who is ever clogged by passions can see no more than its outer form. These two things, the spiritual and the material, though we call them by different names, in their origin are one and the same. This sameness is a mystery,—the mystery of mysteries. It is the gate of all spirituality. How unfathomable is Tao! It seems to be the ancestral progenitor of all things. How pure and clear is Tao! It would seem to be everlasting. I know not of whom it is the offspring. It appears to have been anterior to any Sovereign Power.

Tao eludes the sense of sight and is therefore called colourless. It eludes the sense of hearing, and is therefore called soundless. It eludes the sense of touch and is therefore called incorporeal. These three qualities cannot be apprehended and hence they may be blended into unity

We may call it the form of the formless, the image of the imageless, the fleeting and the indeterminable. Would you go before it you cannot see its face. Would you go behind it, you cannot see its back.

The mightiest manifestations of active force flow solely from Tao. Tao itself is vague, impalpable,—how impalpable, how vague! Yet within it there is Form. How vague, how impalpable,—yet within it there is Substance. How profound, how obscure! Yet within it,

there is a Vital Principle. This Principle is the quintessence of Reality, and out of it comes Truth.

From of old until now, its name has never passed away. It watches over the beginnings of all things. How do I know this about the beginning of things? Through Tao.

All-pervading is the great Tao. It can be at once on the right hand and on the left hand. All things depend on it for life and it rejects them not. Its task is accomplished. It takes no credit. It loves and nourishes all things, but does not act as master. It is ever free from desire. We may call it small. All things return to it, yet it does not act as master. We may call it great. The whole world will flock to him who holds the mighty form of Tao. They will come and receive no hurt, but find rest, peace and tranquillity

He who acts in accordance with Tao, becomes one with Tao. He who treads the path of virtue, becomes one with virtue. He who pursues a course of vice, becomes one with vice. The man who is one with Tao, Tao is also glad to receive. The man who is one with virtue, virtue is also glad to receive. The man who is one with vice, vice is also glad to receive.

He who is self-approving does not shine. He who boasts has no merit. He who exalts himself does not rise high. Judged according to Tao, he is like the remnants of food or a tumour on the body, —an object of universal disgust. Therefore, one who has Tao will not consort with such.

Perfect virtue acquires nothing; therefore it obtains everything. Perfect virtue does nothing, yet there is nothing which it does not effect. Perfect charity operates without the need of anything to evoke it.

With music and dainties we may detain the passing guest. But if we open our mouth to speak of Tao, he finds it tasteless and insipid. Not visible to the sight, not audible to the ear, in its effect it is inexhaustible.

Who is there that can make muddy water clear? But if allowed to remain still, it will gradually become clear of itself. Who is there that can secure a state of absolute repose? But let time go on, and the state of repose will gradually arise.

Activity conquers cold, but stillness conquers heat. Purity and stillness are the correct principles for mankind.

Without going out of doors, one may know the whole world; without looking out of the window, one may see the Way of Heaven. The further one travels, the less one may know. Thus it is that without moving you shall know; without looking you shall see; without doing you shall achieve.

Only he who does nothing for his life's sake can truly be said to value his life.

He who knows is clever, but he who knows himself is enlightened. He who overcomes others is strong, but he who overcomes himself is mightier still.

I have three precious things which I hold fast and praise. The first is gentleness; the second frugality; the third humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others, and you can become a leader among men.

But in the present day men cast off gentleness, and are all for being bold; they spurn frugality, and retain only extravagance; they discard humility, and aim only at being first. Therefore, they shall surely perish.

The best soldiers are not warlike; the best fighters do not lose their temper. The greatest conquerors are those who overcome their enemies without strife. The greatest directors of men are those who yield place to others.

He who embraces unity of soul by subordinating animal instincts to reason will be able to escape dissolution. He who strives his utmost after tenderness can become even as a little child.

The Sage attends to the inner and not to the outer; he puts away the objective and holds to the subjective.



Some Teachings of Lieh-Tsu

The source of life is death; but that which produces life never comes to an end. The origin of form is matter; but that which imparts form has no material existence. The genesis of sound lies in the sense of hearing; but that which causes sound is never audible to the ear. The source of colour is vision; but that which produces colour never manifests itself to the eye. The origin of taste lies in the palate; but that which causes taste is never perceived by that

sense. All these phenomena are functions of the Principle.

On his journey to Wei, the Master Lieh-Tsu took a meal by the roadside. His followers espied a skull, and pulled aside the undergrowth to show it to him. Turning to his disciple Po Feng, the Master said, "That skull and I both know that there is no such thing as absolute life or death."

Tsu Kung was tired of philosophy and confided his feelings to Confucius saying, "I yearn for rest." Confucius replied, "In life there is no rest." "Is rest then, nowhere to be found?" "Oh yes," replied Confucius, "look at all the graves in the wilds, all the vaults, all the tombs, all the funeral urns and you may know where rest is to be found." "Great indeed, is Death!" exclaimed Tsu Kung. "It gives rest to the noble-hearted, and causes the base to cower." "You are right," said Confucius. "Men feel the joy of life, but do not realise its bitterness. They feel the weariness of old age, but not its peacefulness. They think of the evils of death, but not of the repose which it confers."

The Ancients spoke of the dead as "kuei-jen",—men who have returned. But if the dead are men who have returned, the living are men on a journey. Those who are on a journey and think not of returning have cut themselves off from their home. Should any one man cut himself off from his home, he would incur universal reprobation. But all mankind being homeless, there is none to see the error. Imagine one who leaves his native village, separates himself from all his kith and kin, dissipates his patrimony and wanders away to the four corners of the earth, never to return,—what manner of man is this? The world will surely set him down as a profligate and a vagabond. On the other hand, imagine one who clings to respectability and the things of this life, holds cleverness and capacity in high esteem, builds up a reputation for himself and plays the braggart among his fellow men without knowing where to stop,—what manner of man, once more, is this? The world will surely look upon him as a gentleman of great wisdom and counsel. Both of these men have lost their way, yet the world will consort with the one and not with the other. Only the Sage knows with whom to consort and from whom to hold aloof. He consorts with those who regard life and death merely as waking and sleeping, and holds aloof from those who are steeped in forgetfulness of their return.

Lieh-Tsu learned archery and, when he was able to hit the target, he asked the opinion of Kuan Yin Tsu on his shooting. "Do you know WHY you hit the target?" said Kuan Yin Tsu. "No, I do not", was the reply. "Then you are not good enough yet", rejoined Kuan Yin Tsu. Lieh Tsu withdrew and practised for three years, after which he again presented himself. Kuan Yin Tsu asked as before, "Do you know WHY you hit the target?" "Yes", said Lieh Tsu, "I do." "In that case, all is well. Hold that knowledge and do not let it slip."

Mental and bodily equilibrium are to be sought within oneself. Once you know the causal process which makes you hit the target, you will be able to determine the operations of Destiny beforehand, and, when the critical moment comes, you will have left nothing undone,



B U D D H I S M

Nibbana, the End of Woe

"There is, brethren a condition wherein there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor the sphere of infinite space, nor the sphere of infinite consciousness, nor the sphere of the void, nor the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception: where there is no 'this world' and no 'world' beyond': where there is no moon and no sun. That condition, brethren, do I call neither a coming nor a going nor a standing still nor a falling away nor a rising up: but it is without fixity, without mobility, without basis.—That is the end of woe."

Hard to behold the Selfless, so 'tis called.

Not easy is it to perceive the Truth.

But craving is pierced through by one who knows.

He who sees all clings not to anything.

And again on that occasion, the Exalted One uttered these solemn words:

"There is, brethren, an unborn, a not-become, a not made, a not-compounded. If there were not, brethren, this that is unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, there could not be made any escape from what is born, become, made and compounded.

"But since, brethren, there is this unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, therefore is there made known an escape from what is born, become, made and compounded."

And again on that occasion, the Exalted One uttered these solemn words:

“In him who depends on others, there is wavering. In him who is independent, there is no wavering. Where there is no wavering, there is tranquillity. Where there is tranquillity, there is no passionate delight. Where there is no passionate delight, there is no coming and going in rebirth. Where there is no coming and going in rebirth, there is no falling from one state to another: Where there is no falling from one state to another, there is no ‘here’, no ‘beyond’, no ‘here and yonder’. That is the end of woe.” —Udana—



Affection

[From the XVIIth Chapter of the *Dhammapadam*]

Do not attach yourself to what is dear or to what is not-dear. Absence of the dear, just as presence of the not-dear brings sorrow.

Therefore, do not endear yourself to anyone. Why? Separation from the dear is ill. To one to whom there is nothing dear or not-dear,—to such there are no fetters.

What is dear brings forth sorrow; what is dear brings forth fear. To one who is free from such thoughts, there is no sorrow. Where then is fear?

Affection brings forth sorrow; affection brings forth fear. To one who is free from affection, there is no sorrow. Where then is fear?

Lust gives rise to sorrow; lust gives rise to fear; to one who is free from lust, there is no sorrow. Where then is fear?

From sense-desire is born sorrow; sense-desire gives rise to fear; to one who is free from sense-desire, there is no sorrow. Where then is fear?

Craving gives rise to sorrow; craving gives rise to fear; to one who is free from craving, there is no sorrow. Where then is fear?

That man who is perfect in conduct and outlook, who is righteous and speaks the truth, who looks after his own good, him the people hold dear.

One whose mind longs for Nibbana, whose mind is firmly based thereon, whose mind is freed from all desires, is likened to one who swims against the stream.

When a person who has been long absent in a far-away country returns home, well and safely, his kith and kin and friends welcome him home with joy.

In like manner, one who has done merit, going from this world to the next, is welcomed there by his own good deeds as by kith and kin.



The Gold-Refiner

[From the *Anguttara Nikaya*]

Monks, there are gross impurities in gold such as dust and sand, gravel and grit. The dirt-washer or his apprentice heaps it into a trough and washes it, washes it up and down and runs the dirt out. When this process is abandoned and ended, there still remain moderate impurities in gold, such as fine grit and coarse sand. The dirt-washer or his man repeats the process. When this is abandoned and ended, there still remain trifling impurities such as fine sand and black dust. The dirt-washer or his man repeats the process. Thereafter the gold-dust alone remains.

Then the goldsmith or his man heaps that sterling gold into a crucible and blows it till it melts, melts it together, but does not run it out of the crucible. That sterling gold is then blown till it melts: it is molten but not flawless, it is not done with yet, its impurities are not yet strained off. It is not pliable nor workable nor glistening. It is brittle, not capable of perfect workmanship.

But a time comes, monks, when that goldsmith or his man blows that gold till it melts, melts it down and runs it out of the crucible. Then that sterling gold is melted, molten, flawless, done with, its impurities strained off. It is pliable, workable, glistening, no longer brittle; it is capable of perfect workmanship. For whatsoever sort of ornament one wishes, be it a gold plate or a ring or a necklace or a golden chain, it can be made use of for that purpose.

Just in the same way there are gross impurities of deed, word and thought in a monk who is given to developing the higher consciousness. This fault the thoughtful, able monk abandons, keeps in check; he makes an end of it, he makes it not recur.

When these faults are done with and made an end of, there are still in that monk who is given to developing the higher consciousness certain moderately gross impurities which cling to him, such

as sensual reflections, malicious and cruel reflections. These faults he abandons, keeps in check, makes an end of.

When those faults are done with and made an end of, there are still, in that monk who is given to developing the higher consciousness, certain minute impurities which cling to him, such as reflections about his relatives, his district, reflections about his reputation. Such a fault the thoughtful, able monk abandons, keeps in check: he makes an end of it, makes it not recur.

When that is done with and made an end of, there still remain reflections about mind-states. Now this sort of concentration is neither calm nor lofty, nor has it got tranquillity nor reached one-pointedness; but it is a state dependent on painful habitual restraint. Yet there comes a time when that mind of his becomes inwardly well established, settles down, is one-pointed, becomes concentrated. Such concentration is calm, lofty, has got tranquillity, has reached one-pointedness, is not a state dependent on painful habitual restraint; and to whatsoever branch of special knowledge he may direct his mind for the realisation thereof, he attains the power to realise such personally, whatever his range may be.

Now, monks, if a monk who is given to developing the higher consciousness gives exclusive attention to the characteristics of concentration, it is probable that his mind will be liable to indolence. Should he give exclusive attention to the characteristic of energetic application, it is probable that his mind will be liable to distraction. Should he give exclusive attention to the characteristic of equanimity, it is probable that his mind will not be perfectly poised for the destruction of the Asavas [Asavas = sensual desire, desire for existence in the world of change, and ignorance, which tend to rebirth]. But if he give attention to these three characteristics from time to time, then his mind becomes pliable, workable, radiant, not stubborn, but perfectly poised for the destruction of the Asavas.

Suppose, monks, a goldsmith or his man sets up his furnace, having done so puts fire to the receptacle, and taking up sterling gold with pincers casts it into the crucible and from time to time blows on it, from time to time sprinkles it with water, from time to time examines it closely. Now, monks, if the goldsmith or his man were to blow continuously on that gold, it is probable that he would burn it up. If he kept sprinkling it with water, he would make it cold. If he kept examining it always, it is probable that the sterling gold

would not come to full perfection. But, if he does these things from time to time, occasionally, then that sterling gold becomes pliable, workable, lustrous, not brittle; it becomes capable of perfect workmanship. For whatever sort of ornament one wishes, be it a gold plate or a ring or a necklace or a golden chain, it can be made use of for that purpose.

In the same way are these three characteristics to be attended to from time to time by a monk who is devoted to developing the higher consciousness.



The Practice of Meditation

[Attributed to Pai-chang]

Meditation is the road leading to peace and happiness. The reason why there are so many people who grow ill, is because they do not know how to prepare themselves duly for the exercise. If they well understand the directions, they will, without straining themselves too much, acquire not only the necessary lightness of the body but the briskness of spirit, which finally brings about the clarification of the consciousness. The understanding of the Dharma will nourish the spirit and make the practiser enjoy the pure bliss of tranquillity,

If he has already a realisation within himself, his practice of meditation will be like a dragon getting into water or a tiger crouching against a hill-side. In case he has yet nothing of self-realisation, the practice will be like fanning up the fire with the wind, not much effort is needed, he will soon get enlightened. Only let him not too easily be deceived as to what he may regard as self-realisation.

When there is an enhanced spiritual quality, there is much susceptibility to the Evil One's temptation which comes in every possible form, both agreeable and disagreeable. Therefore, the practiser must have his consciousness rightly adjusted and well in balance; then nothing will prevent his advancement in meditation.

When the practiser wants to rise from meditation, let him slowly and gently shake his body and quietly rise from the seat; never let him attempt to rise suddenly. After the rising let him always contrive to retain whatever mental power he has gained by meditation, as if he were watching over a baby; for this will help him in maturing the power of concentration.

In the study of Buddhism the practice of meditation comes foremost. When the mind is not sufficiently brought under control, no tranquillity obtains in it, and the practiser will be at a loss how to cope with a critical moment that may arise. When looking for a gem, the water must not be disturbed; the waves make it difficult to get hold of the gem. Let the waters of meditation be clear and undisturbed, and the spiritual gem will shine forth all by itself. Therefore, we read in the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment that "*Prajña [Enlightenment], pure and flawless, is produced by meditation*"; in the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law: "*Retire into a solitary place and have your mind under full discipline and let it be as steady and immovable as Mount Sumeru*". We thus know that the sure way to realise saintliness which goes beyond worldly trivialities is attained by means of a quiet and silent life. It is all through the power of concentration, indeed, that some of the old masters have passed away into eternity, even while sitting cross-legged or standing upright. There are many chances of interruption and failure, even when one is devoting one's whole life to the realisation of truth; how much more if illness gains the hold of you! How can you resist the assault of Karma? So says an ancient teacher, "If you have not acquired a strong enough power of concentration to destroy the camp of Death, you will have to come back to this world with your eyes blindfolded and with nothing achieved. Your life will thus be utterly wasted!"

Good friends of Zen be pleased to read these words repeatedly and whatever benefit that accrues from the practice of meditation will not only be yours but others', too, for you will thus all finally attain enlightenment.



The Koan Exercise

[From the Writings of Hakuin]

—Koan plays a great part in the training of the spiritual aspirant in Zen. It means a question or theme given him for meditation and solution.—

If you want to get at the unadulterated truth of egolessness, you must once for all let go your hold and fall over the precipice, when you will rise again newly awakened and in full possession of the four virtues of eternity, bliss, freedom and purity which belong to

the real "I". What does it mean to let go of your hold on the precipice? Suppose a man has wandered out among remote mountains where no one else has ever ventured. He comes to the edge of a precipice unfathomably deep, the rugged rock covered with moss is extremely slippery, giving him no sure foothold; he can neither advance nor retreat, death is looking him in the face. His only hope lies in holding to the vine which his hand has grasped; his very life depends on his holding on to it. If he should by carelessness let go his hold, his body would be thrown down to the abyss and crushed to pieces, bones and all. It is the same with the student of Zen. When he grapples with a Koan single-handedly, he will come to see that he has reached the limit of his mental tension and he is brought to a standstill. Like the man hanging over the precipice, he is completely at a loss what to do next. Except for occasional feelings of uneasiness and despair, it is like death itself. All of a sudden he finds his mind and body wiped out of existence, together with the Koan. This is what is known as "letting go your hold". As you become awakened from the stupor and regain your breath, it is like drinking water and knowing yourself that it is cold. It will be a joy inexpressible.



THE OLD TESTAMENT

Wisdom

Passages taken from *Ecclesiastes*
[of Jesus ben Sirach]

Wisdom exalteth Her children, and layeth hold of them that seek Her.

He that loveth Her loveth Life; and they that seek to Her early shall be filled with joy.

He that holdeth Her fast shall inherit glory; and wheresoever She entereth, the Lord will bless.

They that serve Her shall minister to the Holy One: and them that love Her the Lord doth love.

Whoso giveth ear unto Her shall judge the nations: And he that attendeth unto Her shall dwell securely.

If a man commit himself unto Her, he shall inherit Her; and his

generation shall hold Her in possession.

For at the first She will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him,

And torment him with Her discipline, until She may trust his soul, and try him by Her laws.

Then will She return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and shew him Her secrets.

But if he go wrong, She will forsake him, and give him over to his own ruin.

Observe the opportunity and beware of evil; and be not ashamed when it concerns thy soul.

For there is a shame that bringeth sin; and there is a shame which is glory and grace.

Accept no person against thy soul and let not the reverence of any man cause thee to fall.

And refrain not to speak, when there is occasion to do good, and hide not thy wisdom for the sake of fair-seeming.

For by speech Wisdom shall be known: and learning by the word of the tongue.

In no wise speak against the truth; but be abashed of the error of thine ignorance.

Be not ashamed to confess thy sins; and force not the course of the river.

Make not thyself an underling to a foolish man; neither accept the person of the mighty.

Strive for truth unto death, and the Lord shall fight for thee.

My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.

Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make no haste in time of trouble.

Cleave unto Him, and depart not away, that thou mayest be increased at thy last end.

Whatsoever is brought upon thee take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to low estate.

For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of

adversity.

Believe in Him and He will help thee. Order thy way aright and trust in Him.

Ye that fear the Lord wait for His mercy; and go not aside lest ye fall.

Ye that fear the Lord hope for good, and for everlasting joy and mercy.

Look at the generation of old, and see; did ever any trust the Lord, and was confounded?

Or did any abide in His fear and was forsaken? Or whom did He ever despise that called upon Him?

For the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and very pitiful, and forgiveth sins,

And saveth in time of affliction. Woe be to fearful hearts, and faint hands.

And the sinner that goeth two ways! Woe unto him that is faint-hearted! for he believeth not;

Therefore shall he not be defended. Woe unto you that have lost patience.

And what will ye do when the Lord shall visit you? They that fear the Lord will not disobey His word;

And they that love Him will keep His ways. They that fear the Lord will seek that which is well-pleasing unto Him;

And they that love Him shall be filled with the Law. They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts,

And humble their souls in His sight, saying, We will fall into the hands of the Lord,

And not into the hands of men: for as His majesty is, so is His mercy.

Better is he that hideth his folly than a man that hideth his wisdom.

Necessary patience in seeking the Lord is better than he that leadeth his life without a guide.

My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more, but ask pardon for

thy former sins.

Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent: for if thou comest too near it, it will bite thee!

The teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men.

All iniquity is as a two-edged sword, the wounds thereof cannot be healed.

There is a wisdom which multiplieth bitterness. The knowledge of a wise man shall abound like a flood:

And his counsel is like a pure fountain of life. The inner parts of a fool are like a broken vessel,

And he will hold no knowledge as long as he liveth. If a skilful man hear a wise word,

He will commend it and add unto: but as soon as one of no understanding heareth it, it displeaseth him,

And he casteth it behind his back. The talking of a fool is like a burden in the way;

But grace shall be found on the lips of the wise. As is a house that is destroyed, so is wisdom to a fool:

And the knowledge of the unwise is as talk without sense. Blessed is the man that doth meditate good things in wisdom,

And that reasoneth of holy things by his understanding. He that considereth Her ways in his heart

Shall also have understanding in Her secrets. He shall find joy and a crown of gladness,

And She shall cause him to inherit an everlasting name. But foolish men, shall not attain unto Her,

And sinners shall not see Her. For She is far from pride, and men that are liars cannot remember Her.

Let your soul rejoice in His mercy, and be not ashamed of His praise.

Work your work betimes, and in His time He will give you your reward.



CHRISTIANITY

Et Incarnatus est...

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of man. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

—St. John 1.1—



When at Christmas Christ Was Born

[About 16th Century]

*When at Christmas
 Christ was born
 In far Palestine,
 All observed that solemn day
 With a joy Divine.
 There was neither churl nor king
 Who did not a present bring,
 And who offered ever
 With their best endeavour.*

*There was one who gave a lamb
 With his heart and soul,
 And another brought some milk
 In a little bowl.*

One, beneath his smock, 'tis said,
 Brought a humble gift of bread
 For the Mother Holy
 And for Joseph lowly,
 There was not a single wight
 But he came to see;
 Even from far Moorish lands
 Journeyed monarchs three.
 These good princes from the East
 Gave with prayers that never ceased
 The incense and myrrh
 And gold which all admire.
 May it please this Child Divine
 Now to give as grace;
 That in His abode above
 We may find a place.



The One Religion

[From *Some Fruits of Solitude* by William Penn]

The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask, they will know one another; though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers. They that have one end, can hardly disagree when they meet.



Concerning the One

[From *The Divine Names* of Dionysius the Areopagite]

The Divine Science attributes all qualities to the Creator and attributes them all together, and speaks of Him as One. Now such a Being is perfect: not only in the sense that It is Absolute Perfection and possesses in Itself and from Itself distinctive Uniformity of Its existence, and that It is wholly perfect in Its whole Essence, but also in the sense that, in Its transcendence, It is beyond Perfection; and that, while giving definite form or limit to all that is indefinite, It is yet in Its simple Unity raised above all limitation and is not contained or comprehended by anything, but penetrates to all things and beyond them at the same time in Its unfailing bounties and

never ending activities. Moreover the title “perfect” means that It cannot be increased and cannot be diminished, and that It contains all things beforehand in Itself and overflows in one ceaseless, identical, abundant and inexhaustible supply, whereby It perfects all perfect things and fills them with Its own Perfection.

And the title “One” implies that It is all things under the form of Unity through the Transcendence of Its single Oneness, and is the Cause of all things without departing from that Unity. For there is nothing in the world without a share in the One; and, just as all number participates in unity,—even so everything and each part of everything participates in the One, and on the existence of the One all other existences are based, and the One Cause of all things is not one of the many things in the world, but is before all Unity and Multiplicity, and gives to all Unity and Multiplicity their definite bounds. For no multiplicity can exist except by some participation in the One: that which is many in its parts is one in its entirety; that which is many in its accidental qualities is one in its substance; that which is many in number or faculties is one in species; that which is many in its emanating activities is one in its originating essence.

There is naught in the world without some participation in the One, the Which in Its all-embracing Unity contains all things beforehand and all things conjointly, combining even opposites under the form of oneness. And without the One there can be no Multiplicity; yet contrariwise the One can exist without the Multiplicity just as the Unit exists before all multiplied Number. And if all things be conceived as being ultimately unified with each other, then all things as a whole are One. If you take away the One, there will remain neither whole nor part nor anything else in the world; for all things are contained beforehand and embraced by the One as a Unity in Itself. Hence all things are rightly referred to and attributed unto It, since by It and in It and unto It all things possess their existence, co-ordination, permanence, cohesion, fulfilment and innate tendency. And you will not find anything in the world but derives from the One—which in a super-essential sense, is the name of the whole Godhead—both its individual existence and the process that perfects and preserves it. And we also must, in the power of the Divine Unity, turn from the Many to the One and declare the Unity of the whole single Godhead, which is the One Cause of all things; before all distinctions of One and Many, Part and Whole, Definiteness and

Indefiniteness, Finitude and Infinitude, giving definite shape to all things that have Being and to Being Itself; the Cause of everything and of all together—a Cause both co-existent and pre-existent and transcendent, and all these things at one and the same time; yea, beyond existent Unity itself and giving shape to existent Unity itself.



A Chapter From *The Dialogue of Divine Love*

by Saint Catherine of Genoa

The Soul:—Thy Love has shown me a Light whereby I saw that all other love was but self-love, and that all other workings which seemed so full of love for Thee were all soiled by myself, passing through me and secretly having been appropriated by me. Under Thy shadow they remained hidden in me, so that I felt quiet. But having seen Thy Love, pure, simple, sincere and ardent in all its workings, I came out of myself and was drowned therein, and all other loves appeared to me more than selfish. O Divine Love, shall I ever be able to say more of Thee? I find myself drowned in love, and do not know love. I feel the working of this love within me, but I do not understand it. I feel my heart burning in love, but the flame and fire of love I do not see. O my Lord, I cannot cease from seeking the sign of this love, and in spite of being wholly overcome by the new light which Thou hast shown me, I do not despair to know more of this love which contains everything desirable in heaven and on earth, which satisfies man without satiating him, and even makes his hunger increase; so sweet and pleasurable is this simple, pure love, so fitted to the heart of man, that everyone who has but enjoyed a spark of it, would never again cease from following it, even if he had to renounce his physical life a thousand times.

But what is this love which overcomes and conquers all? Much hast Thou told me about it, O Lord, but I understand it less and less. And as Thou Thyself hast awakened this yearning in me to investigate it further, I believe it will not be in vain. Thou hast promised to give me some satisfaction in this respect which, up to now, I have not yet felt. Thou hast shown me one spark of Thy simple, pure love which has kindled such a fire in my heart that I am being consumed. I no longer find any resting place on earth but that. Wholly beside myself, I stand in perplexity. I do not know where I am. Inwardly I am so busy, so rapt, almost wounded to death, and only wait for Thy care which satisfies all desire tending to salvation,

The Lord:— O My Dear Soul, thou triest to know that which thou canst not know. Thy instinct and thy desire are, in so far as thou art a man in flesh, supernatural. But with reference to the spirit in thee and to the goal for which thou art created, they are natural. For love, having been thy beginning and thy middle, must also be thine end. Thou canst not live without love; love being thy life in this and, in the other world. Therefore, kindled by desire, thou wouldst like to know what this love is, but thou canst not grasp it, neither through the intellect nor through thy mind, nor through all the love which thou mayest possess. Nay even those who are already in their heavenly home, do not know it, except by the measure of grace and charity which they had in this life, for love am I God, Who cannot be understood, except by the many effects of great love which I have shown and still continue to show, which can never be appreciated highly enough, and can never be imagined. And when I show the soul but one spark of My simple and pure love, it is forced to turn this same love to Me Who has such power over it that it is forced to do all it can and knows for Me, and not even to suffer one death but, if this were possible, a thousand deaths with infinite tortures. From the effects produced by My love in men, it can be shown and realised how much love is infused into their hearts. But I see, my Soul, that thou dost not try to discover this operating love by its success, but seekest that sweet drop which I put in the hearts of My Chosen, which liquifies their souls, mind and corporeal feelings, so that they are no longer able to move. The soul remains immersed in that sweetness of love through that drop. It cannot undertake anything. It remains lost in itself and alienated from all creatures. It is satisfied in the depths of its heart,—peaceful towards all. It has nothing to do. It is occupied with that drop of love which satisfies without food.

The Soul:— O Food without taste! O Taste without pleasure! O Pleasure without food! O Food of Love wherewith are fed the angels, saints and men! O Blessed Food! Whoever does, not taste Thee, does not know the treasure Thou art! O True Food, which appeases our hunger, which extinguishes all other appetites! Whoever tastes of this Food believes himself to be blessed, even in this very life, where God does but show a tiny drop. Were He to show more of it, man would die of this tender but penetrating love, and his mind would become so inflamed that the weak body would be consumed. O Divine Love. O Love Divine. Thou hast closed my

mouth. I am not able to speak, nor do I know, nor do I wish to seek further what cannot be found. I am left overcome and conquered.



In God There Is Neither Henry Nor Conrad

by Meister Eckhart

When I am united to God, where all things, past, present and future, are present, they are all equally near and in the same manner ONE, are all in God and all in me. Then there is no need to think of Henry or Conrad. If one prays for anything else but God alone, I can only call this idolatry, an insult to God. But those who pray in spirit and in truth, pray rightly. When I pray for someone, for Henry or Conrad, my prayers are at their lowest; but when I pray for no one, my prayers are at their best,— and when I do not desire anything and do not pray for anything, I am most essentially myself, for God is neither Henry nor Conrad. If one asks God for anything else but God, that is not the right thing. It is a sign of imperfection and disbelief. For then one would be placing—as I have already said the other day—a thing next to God, or making a nothing of God and God of a nothing.

God Is the Negation of Negation

by Meister Eckhart

The Divine One is a negating negation and a desiring desire. What does “one” signify? Something to which nothing has been added. Now, the soul seizes the Godhead where it is absolutely self-contained, where nothing has been added to it, where there no longer is anything to be thought of. The One is a negation of negation. All creatures carry a negation within themselves. One negates that it is the other; an angel negates that he is another creature. But God has a negation of negation. He is One and negates everything else for there really is nothing at all except God alone.

The Parable of the Loadstone and the Needles

by Meister Eckhart

The question has been raised as to how it can really be a fact that the senses have to obey reason.

To this Meister Eckhart answers and says, “If reason adheres wholly to God and persists in its attitude, all the senses must be obedient to reason. It is as if someone hung a needle on a

loadstone and on this needle a second needle, in which manner one might well hang four needles on the loadstone. Now, so long as the first needle adheres to it, the others, too, continue to adhere to the loadstone, but when the first needle detaches itself from it, the others, too, detach themselves. Similarly, so long as reason firmly adheres to God, all the senses must be obedient to it; but when reason separates itself from God, then all the senses get beyond its control, so that they become disobedient to it.”



Detachment and Prayer

[Compiled from the *Sermons* of Johannes Tauler]

Dear Child, detach thy mind from all the places in which it has left pledges, from all love and inclination and goodwill for creatures. For if God is to enter, the creature must needs be thrown out. Make thy barrel empty, and keep thyself free from vain anxieties, for never was it so natural to fire to rise upwards, nor to a bird so easy to fly, as it is to a right mind to get merged in God. Therefore, know truly: if we are ever to reach the Basis of God and the Innermost of God, we must at least first come to our own foundations and our own innermost self, and this must be done in all humility; the soul must lift itself up completely with all its faults and all its sins and lie down before the Gate of the Great Worthiness of God, where God melts away in compassion, and whatever of goodness and virtues it finds in itself by the grace of God, with that it must sit at God's Gate, where God melts away in ways of goodness and in unspeakable love.

If thou detachest thyself and hast detached thyself from love and anxiety for creatures and lifted thyself up, then it may so happen that the images of things become a further hindrance to thee, and that thou canst not defend thyself successfully against them. Dear Child, do thou take even this as a good discipline and exercise, and surrender thyself to God therein, remaining constant in inner recollectedness and not running away, but put up with it though you are dissatisfied with thyself, and say in great humility, “Dear Lord, have compassion on me.”

The true essence of prayer is the rising of the mind to God, as holy teachers tell us. Therefore every good man, when he wishes to pray, ought to collect his outer senses into himself, and look into

his mind to see whether it be really turned to God. He who wishes that his prayers may be truly heard, must keep himself turned away from all temporal and external things and all that is not Divine, whether it be friend or delight, and from all vanities, whether they be clothes or ornaments, and from everything of which God is not the true beginning and ending, and from everything that does not belong to Him. He must cut away his words and his conduct, his manners and his demeanour, from all irregularity, inward and outward. Dream not that such can ever be a true prayer which a man only babbles outwardly with his mouth, or when he reads many Psalms, gabbling them rapidly and hastily while his mind wanders this way and that, backwards and forwards. Rather must true prayer be as St. Peter tells us, “one-minded”, that is the mind must cleave to God alone, and a man must cleave to God alone, and a man must look with the face of his soul turned directly towards God, with a gentle, willing dependence on Him.



Of Intimate Union with God

[From the *Adhearendo Deo* of Albertus Magnus]

It has come to my mind, in so far as this is possible during the long days of this exile and pilgrimage, to write once more at the end of my career and to try to treat of the most complete detachment to be attained in this life, and of the pure, tranquil and strong union with God of a soul thus detached. All the more, as Christian perfection itself has no other end but that charity which unites one to God. Everyone is obliged to seek, for reasons of salvation, that union with God through charity, which is brought about by strict fulfilment of precepts and conformity with the Divine Will: this strict fulfilment of precepts removes all that is opposed to the essence and virtue of charity, as are e.g., the deadly sins.

“God is Truth and those who pray to Him must do so in Spirit and in Truth”, which means through knowledge and through love, with the intelligence and will bared of all sensible representations and pictures.

That is why in St. Matthew chapter VI, it is also said, “When thou shalt pray, enter into thy Chamber”, i.e., into the innermost of thy heart, “shut the door”—i.e., the door of thy senses—and there, with a pure heart, a good conscience and an unfeigned faith, “pray

in spirit and in truth to thy Father which is in secret.”

That is what really happens when a man has wholly detached himself from and emptied himself of everything, and has entirely withdrawn himself into his very innermost, in the exclusion and oblivion of all universals and particulars in the presence of Jesus Christ, the soul alone without uttering a word, unfolding in confidence and full security its desires before the Lord, its God, melting and merging into Him with all the strength of its heart and love, down to the very marrow of all its powers, in limitless sincerity and plenitude, dilating itself and becoming inflamed and dissolved in Him.

But if anyone really desires to reach such a state, this is what is necessary:— Under all circumstances his eyes and his senses must be closed to everything outside; there must not be anything to embarrass, trouble, preoccupy or disquiet him, but he must to that end entirely detach himself from all things as being useless, harmful and pernicious.

Having done so, he must recollect himself completely and he must not hold anything else before the eyes of his mind than Jesus, endeavouring with all his strength and care to penetrate into Him through him, i.e., through him as man into Him as God; through the wounds of his humanity to the most intimate sanctuary of His Divinity.



ISLAMIC SUFISM

**From the *Secret Rose-Garden* of
Sa'd Uddin Mahmud Shabistari**

“I am the Truth”

*In the empty heart, void of self
Can be heard the echoing cry
“I am the Truth!”
Thus is man one with the Eternal,
Travelling, travel and traveller have become one.
Rise above time and space,
Pass by the world, and be yourself your own world.
Real prayer can only be yours*

*When you have staked and gambled yourself away
And your essence is pure.
Then "a joy of the eyes" are your prayers
And no separation remains,
For knower and known are one and the same.*

"I" and "You"

"I" and "you" are but lattices in the niches of a lamp, through which the One Light shines. "I" and "you" are the veil between heaven and earth; lift this veil and you will see no longer the bond of sects and creeds. When "I" and "you" do not exist, what is mosque, what is synagogue? What is the Temple of Fire.

Far and near

If He sheds His light on you, you become near to Him, and far from your own existence. For by nearness to Him you become far from yourself. What profit is there to you in your non-existent existence?

The "One Name"

Each creature has its being from the One Name, from which it comes forth and to which it returns with praises unending.

The coming of the beloved

Cast away your existence entirely, for it is nothing but weeds and refuse. Go, clear out the chamber of your heart, arrange it as the abiding place of the Beloved. When you go forth, He will come in, and to you, with your self discarded, He will unveil His beauty.

The unchanging Light of Truth

You imagine the world is permanent of itself and endures because of its own nature, but really it is a ray of light from the Truth and within it the Truth is concealed. And this light does not alter nor vary and is void of change or degree. If the sun tarried always in one spot and ever shone in the same degree, none would know that the light comes from him.

Idol-worship

The real being of the idol is not vain because it is God who created it, and all things coming from Him are good. Being is pure good, if it contains evil, that comes from the "other". Truth is idol-worship, if the Mussulman only knew; but he sees in idols only the visible creature, not the Truth hidden in the idol. Idol-worship is uni-

fication, since all things are but the symbols of Being. By counting beads, repeating prayers and reading the Holy Koran, the heathen does not become a Mussulman. The man to whom true infidelity becomes revealed becomes disgusted with pretended faith. A soul is hidden within every body, and true faith conceals infidelity. Who adorned the face of the idol with such beauty? And who could become an idol-worshipper unless God willed it? In all things see but One, say One, know One.

Reason is blind

As the man blind from birth does not believe nor understand your description of colours, even if you show him proofs for a century, so blind reason cannot see the future state. But beyond reason man has a certain knowledge which God has placed in his soul and body whereby he perceives hidden mysteries. And like the fire in flint and steel when these are struck together, the two worlds are lit up in a flash for him.

The mirage of phenomenal existence

The world is an imaginary figure, a diffused shadow of the Infinite; one breath created the worlds of command and all living things. As they appear to come forth, so they appear to go. Though, there is no real coming and going. For what is going but coming? All are one, both the visible and the invisible. God most High, the Eternal One, creates and destroys both worlds. The varied forms you see are but phantoms of your own imagination, and by revolving quickly in a circle appear as one. The imagination produces phenomenal objects which have no real existence, so this whole world has no substantial reality, but exists as a shadowy pageant or a play. All is pervaded by Absolute Being in its utter perfection. There are many numbers, but only One is counted. When the house is left empty save for the Truth, the world has passed away in a moment; then you, rid of your self, fly upwards and are united to the Beloved. Union is yours when this dream-world fades away. You are plurality transformed into Unity, and Unity passing into plurality. This mystery is understood when man leaves the part and merges in the Whole.

Reflecting

Reflecting is passing from the false to the true and seeing the Absolute Whole in the part. When the idea enters the mind, it is a

reminiscence of a former state and passes on to interpretation. He who sees by illumination, discerns God in everything, but he who sees by logic only, is bewildered and sometimes travels backward in a circle, or is imprisoned in a chain of proofs. Fool! He seeks the dazzling sun by the dim light of a candle in the desert!

The two steps of the journey'

The journey of the pilgrims is two steps and no more:— One is the passing out of selfhood and one towards mystical union with the Friend and Beloved.

The forsaking

See, your companions have gone; will you not too make a start? If you desire to take wing as a bird, then leave the vultures this carion world. Forsake your relations, for your real Friend must be sought. He who is drowning in the Sea of Not-Being must cast aside all relationships. What are father and mother, sister and brother? Your very son may be your enemy, yet, a stranger may be your kinsman; even your fellow-travellers on the mystic path must be renounced. All relations are a bond, a spell, a fairy dream, an absolute illusion. Omit not the duties of the law to them, but have regard to yourself.



From the *Lawa'ih* of Jami

Union with the Divine

It is of the first importance to develop the quality of detaching thyself from mundane relations and emancipating thyself from attention to contingent forms; and this is possible only through hard striving and earnest endeavour to expel vain thoughts and imaginations from thy mind. The more those thoughts are cast out and these suggestions checked, the stronger and closer this relation becomes. It is, then, necessary to use every endeavour to force these thoughts to encamp outside the enclosure of thy breast, and the Truth most glorious may cast Its beams into thy heart, and deliver thee from thyself, and save thee from the trouble of entertaining its rivals in thy heart. Then there will abide with thee neither consciousness of thyself, nor even consciousness of such absence of consciousness—nay, there will abide nothing save the One God alone.

The Sea Of Being

*Being's a sea in constant billows rolled,
'Tis but these billows that we men behold;
Sped from within, they rest upon the sea,
And like a veil its actual form enfold:
Being's the essence of the Lord of all.
And things exist in Him and He in all;
This is the meaning of the Gnostic phrase
"All things are comprehended in the All".*

From the *Baharistan*

*For THEE we have hastened across land and sea,
Have passed over plains, and mountains climbed,
Have turned away from whatever we met
Until we found the way to the sanctuary of Union with THEE.*

**From the *Jawhar Al-Dhat of Attar***

The omnipresence of God

Thou art Fire, but Thy fire is veiled, for in all to which Thou hast joined Thyself, Thou art under a veil. Thou art the Breath of Life in both body and soul, Thou art the Water of Life to be found in every place. In every form Thou dost manifest Thyself according to Thy will; even in the dust are Thy Mysteries shown forth. Thou art the mine and dost show Thyself forth in its jewels. Thou, the Creator, art seen in the creatures, Spirit shining through gross matter, Thou art God in Absolute Unity, and Thou dwellest here in body and soul, for Thou art the Divine Essence dwelling in the midst of each one of us. O Lord Most High, how glorious is the manifestation of Thy Light! Thou art the Sought and the Seeker; what remains to be said? Give me, I pray Thee, to drink from the cup of Immortality. For Thou art the Cup and the Wine and the Cup-bearer. Since I am myself part of the Mystery of the Unity, happy will be that moment when soul shall be free from body and return into its home.

God is the Light of both body and soul, and it is He Who has hidden the soul within the body, and He Who has created both earth and heaven from His Light. He has made the vault of heaven His pavilion in the firmament beyond Infinity. Moon and sun are His worshippers, making supplication before Him. Human reason is be-

wildered before Him for it can teach naught concerning His Essence, but all things, didst thou but know it, can give thee sight of the Friend.

The heaven itself revolves in silence consumed by its yearning to look upon Him. The sun, as it goes on its orbit, is seeking to solve the mystery; the moon and the stars, as they wax and wane, are craving for union with him. When the flames of the fire rise heavenwards, it is from their longing to meet with Him. The water rushing by in even stream, seeks to find its rest in Him. For His sake the mountain is cleft into range upon range so that in every spot it may keep its watch for Him. The wind, without foot or pinion, mounts aloft in its search for Him. Even the sea, when thou seest it raging so furiously, is seething with yearning for the Friend.

God the sole Existence

There is naught but Thee in the whole world. Everywhere in the Universe it is Thy Face that we see. In whatsoever direction I turn my eyes, there art Thou, and without Thee there is nothing that is. O Thou, Who art the Essence of all that abides, in what that subsists art Thou not? O Thou, Whose Essence is independent of seeking and striving, he whose eye beholds on the Way Thy Beauty, he whose intellect beholds the image of Thy Perfection, though all the glories of the world were displayed before him to dazzle his eyes, yet would he see clearly in the Light which comes of Union with Thee.

The struggle

The truly wise man is he who is grateful for the gifts of God and who knows at the same time how to rule his own soul. Whoever knows how to control his passions will be among those who have secured freedom in this world. Although poverty is hard to endure, yet there is nothing better worth having. The man who reduces his rebellious soul to obedience will earn a good name for himself among the wise. Take heed and discipline your lower soul, lest it bring you into dire misfortune. He who seeks for salvation in truth must turn his face away from all created things. Know that all mankind are sunk in sleep; he alone is truly awake who has departed from this world.



True Love of God

[Compiled from the Teachings of Harith b. Asad Al-Muhasibi]

The love of God, in its essence, is really the illumination of the heart by joy, because of its nearness to the Beloved; and when the heart is filled with that radiant joy, it finds its delight in being alone with the recollection of its Beloved, for love, in solitude, rises up triumphant and the Heart of the lover is possessed by the sense of fellowship with Him; and when solitude is combined with secret intercourse with the Beloved, the joy of that intercourse overwhelms the mind, so that it is no longer concerned with the world and what is therein.

He who desires to enter into the glory of love to God must separate himself from those he loves and enter into that sanctuary where he is alone with the Lord of lords.

If you desire to be the friend of God and to be amongst His lovers, turn your back on this world and the next and do not covet either, but rather free yourself from both, and concern yourself with God alone, and He will concern Himself with you and bestow His loving kindness upon you.

Love to God is intensity of longing, because longing, in its essence, is the heart's remembrance of the contemplation of the one longed for. Longing is a lamp kindled from the light of original love, but greater than the light of original love. When God lights that lamp in the heart of one of His servants there is no radiance kindled in the heart, which is not derived from it, and that lamp is not extinguished except by looking upon one's actions with the eye of self-confidence which turns the lover aside from the love of God.



SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE AND ACHIEVEMENT

[Notes of Class-talks]
by Swami Yatiswarananda

Tenacity needed in spiritual life

True Religion is only for the chosen few. We should look upon it as a great fortune that for some reason or other our mind possesses an attraction for the higher and eternal things. And so we

should see that we gradually and steadily proceed along the higher path, never flagging till we reach the goal. Our spiritual fervour is to be maintained with great care. But very often we run the risk of becoming slack. This, to many, means the end of spiritual striving after they have taken to the Spiritual Life for a certain time. Their minds are too restless and too outgoing to keep up the spiritual fervour and intensity for a long time, and to go on steadily and persistently with their practices, daily readings and studies. So we should be on our guard.

He is the only One that is stainless, sinless, changeless and unnameable, and that is pure and Divine. There is no second. Whoever knows Him becomes He Himself.

But how to know Him, that is the point. He cannot be known in a day just after a little spiritual practice done in a haphazard, slovenly way. Let us not die the death of a miserable slave, being slaves to our impulses and senses till the very end of our life. The one task of our life is to assert the potential Divinity in us, to come face to face with the Reality that is. Generally it is not the Truth that we love. We just love ourselves. We are in love with an idea because it is **our** idea, not because it represents the Truth at all.

To the true and steady devotee, the Lord reveals His glory. And the devotee's task is to be in tune with the Divine, with the Infinite, to attune his heart and soul to the Truth. Truth cannot be realised with the help of one's vain speech or impure mind. Truth cannot be seen with these physical human eyes. We can know the highest Truth with the help of a pure heart and a purified mind. The highest Truth can be realised only by those who have the vision to see the subtle, whose mind is calm and one-pointed, whose heart is purified. The spiritual man finds the ultimate solution of the problems of life by diving into the very depths of his own being, by coming in touch with Truth, by coming face to face with Truth, not by simply arguing about it. There is within us something that is the eternal witness of whatever takes place outside and inside our mind. And unless we realise this permanent element within ourselves, it is not possible for us to have even a glimpse of the permanent element outside ourselves.

Japam or repetition of the Divine Name

The great task is:— How to know the Knower? How can that be known by which everything else is known? This is the great ques-

tion of the Upanishad. In order to be in touch with the perennial source of all waters we must begin digging in our own ground, not in that of our neighbour. And we need not dig up the whole earth; it is enough if we bore a deep channel in ourselves.

Faith is most essential before taking up Japam. It does not matter if, at first, it becomes mechanical to some extent. The beginner finds that his centre of consciousness is continually shifting, going up, coming down, and so on. This is a most difficult situation for every aspirant. With infinite patience he should go on with his practices at regular hours, whatever be the result at the beginning. This is the only way to attain to success in due course.

You must never allow yourselves to get into a drowsy state during your attempts at meditation or your Japam. This is most dangerous. Sleep, drowsiness, and meditation should never be connected in any way. If you feel very drowsy, just get up and pass to and fro in the room, while you are doing your Japam, till this drowsiness leaves you. When the mind is awfully restless and outgoing, we should tenaciously persist in our Japam—even do it mechanically—without giving in to this restlessness. In that way, part of our mind at least, would be engaged in Japam. Thus the whole mind cannot become or remain restless.

Imagine that along with each repetition of the name of your Ishtam [the chosen object of meditation] or of your Mantram [the mystic sound symbol of the Divine] your whole body, mind and the senses are becoming purified. This faith must be made very firm because, in a way, this is the idea underlying Japam. The Ishtam's name soothes one's nerves, calms the mind, brings about helpful changes in the body. When the mind is in a state of great tension or depression, begin at once humming the name and thinking of the Divine. Imagine that this is bringing about a balanced state, a new rhythm in the body and in the mind. Actually you will feel how it soothes the whole nervous system, how it stops the outgoing tendency of the mind more and more. Rhythmic, regular breath brings about calmness, a certain balance in the nervous system, and this again facilitates your spiritual practices. The Holy thought also brings about a certain harmony in and between the body and the mind. Think that, with each repetition of the name of your Ishtam or of your Mantram, you are becoming purer and purer. You cannot know the effects at once, but if you go on for some time, steadily

and persistently, you will feel it, and then after some years you will be astonished to find what a great change has come over you. There is a great scope for experiment. This body is to be polarised and made rhythmic, at least to some extent, and the nerves, too, are to be polarised and made rhythmic. Through practice, we must make the body, the senses, the mind, the breath, all of them, rhythmic. Then only can we come to have the proper mood for spiritual practices and meditation, and can do them in right earnest and in the proper way. Everything else belongs to the preliminary steps.

While doing your breathing exercises, try to give some strong suggestions to your mind: I am breathing in purity, breathing out all impurity. I am breathing in strength, breathing out all weakness. I am breathing in calmness, breathing out all restlessness. I am breathing in freedom, breathing out all bondage.— These suggestions may be given even while doing your Japam. They are very helpful in preparing the ground for the real practices.

Hints for meditation

Everything is difficult on this path. Visualisation is difficult, control of the mind is difficult, meditation is difficult. Japam, too, is difficult, if done properly, but a little less so. So a new strength must be gained. And for this the suggestions mentioned are very helpful. Make use of the great power of sound and sound-symbols. You must try to feel that the Holy Name, the Holy Mantram, is purifying and elevating you. In due course you yourself will see that the rhythmic repetition of the name of the Ishtam has a great elevating effect and is one of the most essential practices in the life of the beginner.

Here are given certain hints for meditation:—

(1) Immediately after having sat down for meditation, let the devotee say with folded hands, "*Whether impure or pure, under all conditions, whoever remembers the Lord, becomes purified inwardly and outwardly*", and **feel** purity in body and mind.

(2) He may next imagine the individualised soul rising from the lower centres of the body to the centre in the head and becoming united with the Universal Spirit there.

(3) Let him further think that both the gross and subtle bodies and all things physical and mental have become merged into the Absolute, and he has become one with It.

(4) Next let him come down to the centre of consciousness in the heart and think that there have emerged out of the One Ocean of Light, the effulgent Divine Form—the object of worship and meditation—and also the worshipper's own spiritualised form freed of all impurities.

(5) Let the aspirant now worship and meditate on the Divine and also do Japam for some time, thinking of the formless which permeates both the holy Form and his own form.

(6) Let him feel the Divine Presence both inside and outside.

(7) Finally let him pray:—

Being subject to the impulses of the Vital Energy, intellect and the body, whatever sin has been committed by me in the state of waking, dream and deep sleep, in thought, word and deed, by means of the different organs of sense, may all that be offered to Brahman. I surrender myself with all that is mine at the Feet of the Lord.

The right kind of prayer should have great intensity, concentration and one-pointedness. Without these, no prayer will be of any great avail.

Always take the help of the sound-symbol, for sound and thought are interrelated. Thoughts manifest themselves in different sounds. Now we find that the Divine Idea finds its expression in different Holy Names, and there is an inseparable connection between the Holy Idea and the sound. That is why we make use of the sound in our spiritual practice. It becomes easier for us to call up the Holy thought with the help of the sound. We should see that we pass from the sound-symbol to the thought-plane, otherwise the sound does not help us. First comes external worship, and the next spiritual practice to be taken up by **every** aspirant is Japam and reciting hymns and thinking of the Divine Glory; then comes mental worship or meditation, and finally the experience of the Divine Being everywhere; **with or even without closing one's eyes**. This is the highest stage, and can only be attained after having passed through all the previous ones step by step.

Even if a great tempest is about to rise in your mind and trying to sweep you off your feet, go on with your Japam. If need be, repeat the Holy Name aloud or at least audibly to you. Very often in a very disturbed state, silent mental repetition is not enough. Try to estab-

lish a definite relationship between the sound-symbol and the Holy thought, so that the thought comes up the very moment you touch the key of the sound-symbol. The same thing happens when you write something on your typewriter. The moment you touch a key, the corresponding letter is printed on the sheet.

So the moment you touch your sound-symbol, the corresponding thought should arise in you and come to your help. But, for this, a very definite association between the two must be established through systematic daily practice.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "Japam is just like a chain. From one link we pass on to the next, and finally we pass on to God." Japam is stressed in all paths of spiritual practice. And you should see that your Japam becomes better and better in quality. You should do your Japam consciously, intelligently, and have more and more of it as days pass. Always think of the chain and try to get hold of the next link. Thus you approach the Divine more and more and prepare yourself for meditation.

Maya and the Absolute

Mind is nothing but matter, and as such we must give a good, steady, relentless severe training to the mind and cease identifying ourselves with it or its modifications. The Self is the Witness of all that is going on in the mind, but is different from it and is its master. It takes time to be able to control one's mind completely, and it takes more time to be in tune with the Divine. So the aspirant must have infinite patience.

This world is the Absolute seen by the mind through the coloured glasses of time, space and causation. Kant is quite right in saying this but he does not know how this can ever be transcended, whereas the Upanishadic Seers say and know:— "Even this is Maya". If we go beyond Maya, we realise things differently. Time, space and causation are modes of Maya. Phenomenal reality is Maya plus X, or the Reality. Kant does not say that X or the "thing as such" [*ding an sich*] can be realised or known. The Upanishadic Teachers hold that this has to be done by all seekers after Truth.

Maya has two aspects:— One is its veiling power, clouding the understanding of man, and the other is its creative power. Both are clouds. In its lower aspect, Maya clouds the mind and brings about passions and attachments for unreal things; in its higher aspect of

non-attachment, prayer and meditation, Maya helps us to attain Freedom and Illumination. The lower one entangles us more and more, the higher removes our bonds and shows us the way to transcend it and to attain to Self-Realisation.

That which binds us and that which frees us, both belong to the domain of phenomena, to the domain of the same Maya. Neither are real in the absolute sense. Wherever there are pairs of opposites, there is Maya to some extent. Evil exists—from one standpoint—to a greater extent than good, but good and bad are eternally inseparable. If you want to have good, you must take evil also, or you must transcend both and have neither. Just as the holy man exists, so also does the unholy person, the criminal. The two stand and fall together.

Why create barriers? Happiness and misery, pleasure and pain go together. The correlatives exist under all circumstances. So the ideal of the really spiritual man should be one of transcendence, one of indifference to the pairs of opposites. And so long as one is not able to transcend them, one should maintain and foster the spirit of indifference and non-attachment towards evil, cultivate what is good, and avoid what is bad or evil. The way to transcendence lies in first controlling evil by what is good, relatively speaking, and then getting rid of this so-called relative good too. But first we must get complete attachment for good, then only can we rise above it. We can get rid of the evil only by cultivating the good. Our good tendencies must be consciously cultivated but then we must transcend the so-called good too and rise to the plane of Divine Consciousness beyond all relativity. We must be like the expert dancer who, as Sri Ramakrishna says, can never take a false step, although he does not care to follow every rule of dancing with a special effort of the will. Being freed from the conflict between good and evil, we must be able to do what is good and right in a natural, spontaneous way, being established in the glory of the true Self.

Obstacles to Self-Realisation

The highest ideal is to attain the Absolute. Torpidity, distraction, attachment and enjoyment are the four obstacles to the realisation of this Transcendental Consciousness.

Torpidity is the lapse of the mental state into sleep, because of the failure to rest on the Absolute.

Distraction is the resting of the mental state on things other than the Absolute, because of the failure to rest on It.

Attachment is the failure of the mental state to rest in the Absolute, owing to the numbness brought on by impressions due to attachment—even when there is no torpidity or distraction.

Enjoyment is the tasting by the mental state of the bliss of Savikalpa Samadhi [Superconscious State with subject-object relationship], owing to the failure to rest on the Absolute. Or it may mean continuing to taste the bliss of Savikalpa Samadhi while taking up the Nirvikalpa Samadhi [Superconscious State transcending subject-object relationship].

When the mind, free from these four obstacles, rests unmoved like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the wind, as one with Absolute Consciousness, it is called the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Thus it has been said:— When the mind is torpid, rouse it; when it is distracted, bring it back to calmness; when it becomes attached, be aware of it; when it is controlled, do not distract it anymore. Do not linger in the bliss that comes from the Savikalpa Samadhi, but be unattached through discrimination.

—(Vedantasara 210–215)—

The positive method

One should stop all one's brooding over the past, whatever it might have been like. What is done is done for all times and can never be undone. So think of purity, think of what you are going to do in **future**, not of what you did in the **past**. He who thinks he is pure becomes pure. Try to efface all old associations and impressions by bringing in better and purer ones. You cannot become pure by thinking of impurity, you can never get rid of sin by constantly thinking you are a sinner. This is wrong psychology and will always produce just the opposite effect. If you dwell too much on the consciousness of sin and impurity, you lose sight of the fact that you can achieve something with your own spiritual striving. Always try to follow the positive method. Instead of thinking, "Oh, what a sinner I am", "Oh, how impure I am!"—just think, "Purity is my birthright and my true nature, I am free by nature. My very nature is purity and holiness, and so I am going to shed all that is im-

pure and evil by giving up my false identification with the unspiritual and the phenomenal.”

Swami Vivekananda says, “If you have faith in all the gods and goddesses, but no faith in yourself, there is no salvation for you.” The sense of sin can be very good in the case of some temperaments, and that at the very beginning, but only if it serves as a goad to a better life. But a far better means to get rid of all these incrustations of impurity is to think of our eternal pure Nature—the Divinity immanent in us.

We are all our own ancestors, seen from the spiritual standpoint, and only reap what we ourselves have sown. Re-incarnation, however, is not the most vital point. We have to try to get full illumination in this very life.

If our present life is the result of our own past, then only can we change our future. Karma is never identical with fate. The Law of Karma is the law of self-effort, of intelligent, conscious striving, never a teaching of fatalism and lethargy.

Harder than the adamant and softer than the flower

So long as we cling to the false puppets and idols we cherish in our hearts, it is not possible for us to have at the same time a sincere, deep yearning for the Divine, whatever we may pretend to have. It becomes all empty make-believe. But for everybody there would come a time when these puppets, these human dolls, lose all their charm, and then only comes a true and deep yearning for the spiritual life; then the world and all things worldly become “saltless” and insipid.

The whole world is drunk with the wine of ignorance, the wine of “Sex and Gold”, and has become mad. So it does not know what it does and what it should do. Here and there, you just find one who wants a better wine, some different drink that counteracts the effects of this fateful worldly wine. But you will always find that such a person is persecuted because he dares to think for himself, dares to act for himself boldly and freely, dares to mould his life according to standards higher than those followed by the multitude.

At the beginning of one’s spiritual life, God-love seems to be more destructive than constructive. It destroys all the dross and attachments; but though it seems to be destructive, it only fulfills the higher laws of life. The only true, eternal, unchangeable love is that

which makes the heart beat with the eternal rhythm and dispassion of true spirituality, loving nobody with clinging and passion, and at the same time loving all with wonderful sympathy and samesightedness. True love, breathing perfect purity, non-attachment and great intensity, is always spiritual. But **no** love in which there is **any** form of attachment can ever be really spiritual, whatever else it may be, and however beautiful it may seem to our blinded eyes for the time being.

Only see how terribly restless people have become. They run restlessly and thoughtlessly to cinema-shows, to the opera, to the theatre, to the temple or to the church, to lectures of all kinds, to concerts, to anything and everything, sublime or ridiculous, because their centre of gravity is wholly outside themselves—if there is any centre of gravity left at all. “Why just take the trouble of thinking, why fatigue the mind?” This is their attitude, and thus they become more and more slaves to this outgoing tendency of their mind and get more and more entangled in the meshes of ignorance. There are some who may be sincere, but all their sincerity is of no avail, because they have no backbone, because they are too soft. We must cut off the very roots of all meaningless emotionalism and false love. all personal clinging to some man or some woman “meant for us eternally”. Nonsense. All this may be beautiful romance, but never, never the reality. We must become merciless in this. There is no place at all for this kind of softness in spiritual life. The spiritual man must be harder than the adamant and softer than the flower. Some people may call this cruel, but is there anything more egoistic, more cruel and more enslaving, than this so-called love of the worldly-minded, clinging to each other, enslaving each other, just for the sake of the satisfaction of some personal craving of theirs? They do not love the other person; they are really in love with themselves, with their own emotions and desires and their satisfaction. They want to make use of the other person for their personal selfish enjoyment, and nothing more. We must mercilessly strike at the very roots of all such forms of false love and have done with them once for all. Let the heart break, if it breaks. Sometimes such hearts must be broken so that new light may come in, otherwise, for them, there will never be any progress.

So long. as there is any desire for enjoyment, there can be no true spiritual life. Enjoyment, be it gross or subtle, and spiritual life

can never go together. So long as there is any clinging to life or death or to some doll or other, there can be no spiritual life. This is one of the facts and eternal laws to be faced by every sincere aspirant. There is no shirking this question, and we must know whether we are really prepared to pay the full price for spiritual attainment or not. There should be clear thinking. No use muddling up things and just going on drifting or entertaining false hopes. First fix the goal and the means, mercilessly. Without shirking the issue, you must do this, and then relentlessly stick to your chosen path, whatever happens, whether you live or die.

Learn to stand aloof as a witness of your different moods, without identifying yourself with them. Firmly take hold of your Japam, your practices, your readings, whenever there comes an inner or outer stimulus that may awaken the old bad associations in you. Drive away the desire to follow the stimulus, the old associations. Be a master in your own house, and not a slave!

Introspection

Spiritual life begins when we try to stop the outgoing tendencies of our mind and become introspective, and not before. It begins only when we learn to draw our mind away from the objects of the senses, but this means a terrible strain and struggle. There must be tremendous outward control while trying to gain the inner control, and it takes a long time to make this life free and natural. In the beginning, a complex is formed, although a worse one is avoided. But that does not matter, as later on with the disappearance of our false sense of personality, our false "I", the complex disappears along with it, by itself.

A really introspective mind always brings home to us all the facts that are taking place within ourselves. We must become wide awake and fully aware of every thought that rises or wants to rise in our mind. Without getting control over our mind, we cannot advance, and without becoming aware of what is taking place in our mind, we can never be able to control it. So this is one of the very first steps in spiritual life.

Different weapons in the struggle

At present, one part of our mind wants sense-enjoyment and sense-life, while another part does not crave for it any longer. You must try to develop an aversion for all things that attract your

senses or are apt to rouse old associations in you. The moment you get real dispassion for all worldly enjoyments, the problem is solved. Then you come to taste something that is sweeter than these so-called pleasures of the senses which are very insignificant after all. If you feel that temptation in some form or other is trying to sweep you off your feet, consider the evil effects of those bad thoughts or dwell on the life of a Great Soul who is the embodiment of all purity and renunciation. Healthy pride very often helps us in our striving. "I am a devotee of the Lord, I want to follow the spiritual path, so faintheartedness does not become me at all." It is always a sign of weakness and cowardice to give in to one's desires and sense-impulses. If you cannot get control over yourself, then go to some fellow-aspirants, divert your mind, having talks with them on some holy topic or other. Do not allow yourself to be alone and go on brooding over the objects of desire. This only makes matters worse, and then you are almost sure to slip your foot and come to grief. Force yourself, if you can, to read and study something elevating in such a case, whether your mind likes it or not.

At first, if done properly, meditation just stirs the whole subconscious mind, and awful things lying hidden there come up as a matter of course. So the aspirant must never feel afraid. The indrawn mind becomes terribly sensitive, and impressions that seemed to have left no mark in the mind are found to have made deep scars and lines. All such impressions must be completely effaced. And in order to do that one must face them boldly.

Your moral fibre must be strengthened at the same time. Try to take the attitude of the witness. Cease to identify yourself with your desires and cravings and with outside events. Even if your mind goes on raving madly, just watch it and try to dissociate yourself from it. You are eternally the witness of all the mental states. Never identify yourself with your thoughts. For the beginner this is a very difficult step, but after it has been taken, everything becomes more and more natural, less and less strained.

Japam is a great help, so is the meditation on some Holy Personality. The form is the gateway to the Formless, the All-Per-vading Spirit. Pray to a specialised form and try to visualise it. Then, if any undesirable form rises in your mind, you can remove it with the help of the form of your Ishtam; merge it into that.

Never forget to give yourself a good injection of Vedanta. It is very helpful. First of all, think of your own potential Divinity and the potential Divinity of all other forms, even of those that create troubles for you. If we ourselves are pure and holy by nature, we must manifest this even in the flesh, not merely mentally, in this very life. Herein lies the test of all true spiritual struggle. There must be realisation in both physical and mental life. Our spiritual practices must help us in bringing about the needed harmony between the physical and the ideal. Spiritual life means tremendous steadiness and singleness of purpose. With the help of these alone can success be achieved.

Neither the lazy, nor those who solely depend on Destiny can obtain their object. Therefore one should by all means persist in self-effort.

Success in action rests equally on Destiny and on one's efforts. Of these two, Destiny is the expression of the efforts made in a previous life.

As a chariot cannot move on only one wheel, so without personal effort Destiny does not succeed in accomplishing anything.

Surrendering all actions to the Divine, fixing the thoughts on the Immanent Self and abandoning all longings and selfishness, go on with your struggle without fear and excitement.

God-speed to you in your journey beyond the darkness of ignorance.—

PRAYERS

O Thou Lord All-Pervading, do Thou remove my egoism and calm my mind. Do Thou take away from me the illusion of the world. Do Thou increase my love for all beings, and save me from the ocean of worldly existence.



I offer worship unto Thee, O Lord of love, Whom the worldly-minded cannot reach, but Who art to the devotees the wish-yielding tree, and the object of worship to all. Lord of the universe, Thou art formless and yet with forms. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and pray promptly grant me devotion to Thy Lotus-Feet.



Salutations unto Thee, the All-Pervading and the Great Lord. Thou art liberation itself and the Holy Scriptures are Thy embodied form. I worship Thee, the unborn, attributeless and unconditioned One. Thou art without any desire. Intelligence itself is Thy nature, and sky Thy garment.



O Mother, Thou art knowledge supreme. Thou art known through the Vedanta and Thy glory is recited by perfect ones. Thou art the giver of salvation. Thou art the way to salvation but yet dost transcend it. Be propitious unto me. Be pleased to remove my dullness, and endow me with a keen and tranquil understanding.



O Lord, when I identify myself with the body I am Thy Servant. When I consider myself as an individual soul, I am Thy part. And when I look upon myself as the Spirit, I am one with Thee,—this is my firm conviction.



Whether the Highest Being is called Vishnu or Siva, Brahma or Indra, Sun or Moon, Buddha or Mahavir, I always offer my salutations to Him alone Who is free from attachment and hatred, worldliness and ignorance, Who is endowed with compassion towards all creatures, and is possessed of all noble attributes.

