



Vedanta

1938

Publisher's Note

We are pleased to share with you this reprint of the second 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, following the hostilities that broke out 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).

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Published as a service by:
John Manetta
Beles 28
117 41 Athens, Greece
Phone:[+30] 210 923 4682
E-mail: jmanveda@otenet.gr

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in Central Europe 1933-39**

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

Follow the Path of Self -Realisation

The Infinite is Bliss. There is no bliss in what is finite. The Infinite alone is Bliss. One should wish to realise the Infinite.

The Self which is free from evil and decay, free from death and misery, free from hunger and thirst, which has true wishes and true determination,— that is what is to be sought after, what is to be understood.

All that is perceived is verily the One All-Pervading Being. Calmly meditate on That from whom the universe has sprung up, in whom it gets merged, and by whom it is sustained.

The Self should be realised, should be heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. By the realisation of the Self, through hearing, reflection and meditation, everything is known.

Having taken the mighty bow which is to be found in the Upanishads, place on it the arrow rendered sharp by constant worship. Having drawn it with the mind absorbed in His thought, hit that mark, the Imperishable All-Pervading Being.

OM —the Divine Symbol— is the bow; the individualised Self is the arrow, and the Eternal Infinite Being is the target. That target is to be hit with care. One has to become absorbed in Him like the arrow in the target.

As is oil in the sesamum, butter in the curd, water in the flowing stream and fire in the wood, so is the Self to be discovered in oneself by a person who searches after It through Truth and concentration.

Like butter hidden in milk, the Pure Consciousness resides in every being; That ought to be constantly churned by the churning rod of the mind.

Subdue the senses, do acts of charity, be compassionate.

Practise these three virtues — sense-control, charity and compassion.

Speak the truth. Follow the path of righteousness. Swerve not from the study of the Scriptures. Do not deviate from what is beneficial. Do not deviate from what promotes real welfare.

Realise that One Self only, by whom heaven, earth and sky, the mind and vital powers are permeated. Give up all vain talks. This is the way to Immortality.

In manifold ways He dwells within the heart, where all the arteries meet like the spokes in the nave of the wheel. Meditate upon the Indwelling Self as “OM”. Godspeed to you in your journey beyond the darkness of ignorance.

—The Upanishads—

Viewing alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, conquest and defeat, engage thyself in battle. Thou wilt thus incur no sin.

Work with mental poise, having freed thyself from all attachment and anxiety regarding success and failure. This evenness of mind is known as Yoga.

Surrender all actions to the Divine, fixing the thoughts on the Immanent Self, and abandoning all longings and selfishness, fight without fear and excitement.

Even if thou art the most sinful amongst the sinful, yet by the raft of Knowledge thou shalt go across all sins.

As a blazing fire reduces fuel into ashes, so does the fire of Knowledge reduce all Karma to ashes.

He who has renounced all actions by surrendering them to the Divine, whose doubts have been rent asunder by Knowledge, and who is established in the Self — is not bound by actions.

Therefore, cut asunder with the sword of Knowledge all doubts about the Self, take refuge in Yoga. Arise.

Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest in worship, whatever thou givest away in charity, whatever thou practisest by way of control, do thou as an offering unto the Divine.

The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them to revolve by His Divine Power as if they were mounted on a machine.

Take refuge in Him with all thy heart; by His grace shalt thou attain Supreme Peace and the Eternal State of Self-Realisation.

—*Bhagavad-Gita*—



The Reality of Religion

[Substance of the address given at the
Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Parliament of Religions,
Calcutta, 1937 — by Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore]

If I have accepted the honour to address this distinguished gathering, it is only out of respect to the memory of the great saint with whose Centenary the present Parliament is associated. I venerate Paramahansa Deva [Sri Ramakrishna] because he, in an arid age of religious nihilism, proved the truth of our spiritual heritage by realising it, because the largeness of his spirit could comprehend seemingly antagonistic modes of Sadhana [spiritual practice], and because the simplicity of his soul shames for all time the pomp and pedantry of pontiffs and pundits.

I have nothing new to tell you, no esoteric truth to propound to you. I am a mere poet, a lover of men and of creation. But since love gives a certain insight, I may perhaps claim to have sometimes caught the hushed voice of humanity and felt its suppressed longing for the Infinite. I hope I do not belong to those who, born in a prison-house, never have the good luck to know that it is a prison, who are blissfully unaware that the costliness of their furniture and profuseness of the provisions for their comfort act as invisible walls in a castle of vanity that not only rob them of their freedom but even of the desire for it.

The degree of this freedom is measured according to our realization of the Infinite whether in the outer world, or in the inner life. In a narrow room we may have as much space as is necessary for living and for the exercise of our muscles; the food may be more than sufficient, it may even be sumptuous; yet our inborn craving for what we may call the more, the unattained, if not altogether

killed, remains unsatisfied. We are deprived of the Infinite, which is freedom of range, both in the outer world as well as in the ceaseless variety of the world of our experience.

But a more profoundly intimate conception of the Infinite lies in that intensity of our consciousness, which we can only attain when we realize ultimate value in some ideal of perfection, when in the realization of some fact of our life we become aware of an indefinable truth that immensely transcends it. We, in our human nature, have a hunger for Bhuma, for immensity, for something a great deal more than what we need immediately for the purposes of life. Men all through their history have been struggling to realize this truth according to the unfolding of their idea of the boundless, and have been gradually changing their methods and plans of existence, constantly meeting failures, but never owning final defeat.

We find that animals have their evolution along the line of the race. They have their individual life which ends with their death. But even in them there is a touch of the Infinite which urges them to outlive their own life in the life of the race, accepting sufferings and making sacrifices for its sake. The spirit of sacrifice in the parents is this touch of the Infinite,— the motive power which makes the race-life possible, which helps to develop those faculties in them that will enable their descendants to find better opportunity for food and shelter.

But in human beings has been further evolved a sense of the Infinite that goes far beyond the struggle for physical life which merely occupies extended time and extended space. Man has realized that a life of perfection is not merely a life of extension, but one which has its selfless enjoyment of the great and the beautiful.

After we have evolved this sense of the beautiful, of the good, of something that we call truth,— which is deeper and larger than any number of facts,— we have come into an altogether different atmosphere from that wherein the animals and trees have their existence. But we have come into this higher realm only very lately.

Ages and ages have passed, dominated by the life of what we call the self, which is intent upon seeking food and shelter, and upon the perpetuation of the race. But there is a mysterious region waiting for its full recognition, which does not entirely acknowledge loyalty to physical claims. Its mystery constantly troubles us and we are not yet fully at ease in this region. We call it *spiritual*. That

word is vague, only because we have not yet been able to realize its meaning completely.

We are groping in the dark, not yet clear in our idea of the ultimate meaning at the centre of this world. Nevertheless, through the dim light which reaches us across the barriers of our physical existence, we seem to have a stronger faith in this spiritual life than in the physical. For even those who do not believe in the truth which we cannot define, but call by the name of spirit,— even they are obliged to behave as though they did believe it to be true, or, at any rate, truer than the world which is evident to our senses. And so even they are often willing to accept death,— the termination of this physical life,— for the sake of the true, the good and the beautiful. This fact expresses man's deeper urge for freedom, for liberation of itself in the realm of the limitless where he realizes his relationship with the truth which relates him to the universe in a disinterested spirit of love.

When Buddha preached Maitri — the relationship of harmony — not only with human beings but with all creation, did he not have this truth in his mind that our treatment of the world is wrong when we solely treat it as a fact which can be known and used for our own personal needs? Did he not feel that the true meaning of creation can be understood only through love because it is an eternal expression of love which waits for its answer from our soul emancipated from the bondage of self? This emancipation cannot be negative in character, for love can never lead to negation. The perfect freedom is in a perfect harmony of relationship and not in a mere severance of bondage. Freedom has no content, and therefore no meaning, where it has nothing but itself. The soul's emancipation is in the fulfilment of its relation to the central truth of everything that there is, which is impossible to define because it comes at the end of all definitions.

The distinctive feature of materialism is the measurability of its outward expression, which is the same thing as the finiteness of its boundaries, And the disputes, civil and criminal, which have raged in the history of man, have mostly been over these same boundaries. To increase one's own bounds, one has necessarily to encroach upon those of others. So, because the pride of Power is the pride of Quantity, pride of the mere number of its recruits and victims, the most powerful telescope when pointed in the direction of

Power, fails to reveal the shore of peace across the sea of blood.

Such is the tragedy that so often besets our history when this love of power, which is really the love of self, domineers over the religious life of man, for then the only means by which man could hope to set his spirit free, itself becomes the worst enemy of that freedom. Of all fetters those that falsely assume spiritual designations are the most difficult to break, and of all dungeons the most terrible are those invisible ones where men's souls are imprisoned in self-delusion bred by vanity. For, the undisguised pursuit of self has safety in its openness, like filth exposed to the sun and air. But the self-magnification, with its consequent thwarting of the best in man, that goes on unashamed when religion deadens into sectarianism is a perverse form of worldliness under the mask of religion; it constricts the heart into narrowness much more effectively than the cult of the world based upon material interests can ever do.

Let me try to answer the question as to what this *Spirit* is, for the winning of which all the great religions were brought into being.

The evening sky is revealed to us in its serene aspect of beauty though we know that from the fiery whirlpools which are the stars, chaotic outbursts clash against one another in a conflict of implacable fury. But *Ishavasyam idam sarvam*,— over and through it all, there is spread a mysterious spirit of harmony, constantly modulating rebellious elements into creative unity, evolving ineffable peace and beauty out of the incoherently battling combatants perpetually struggling to elbow out their neighbours into a turmoil of dissolution

And this great harmony, this everlasting Yea — this is Truth, that bridges the dark abysses of time and space, reconciles contradictions, imparts perfect balance to the unstable. This all-pervading mystery is what we call spiritual in its essence. It is the human aspect of this truth which all great personalities have made their own in their lives and have offered to their fellow-beings in the name of various religions as means of peace and good-will,— as vehicles of beauty in behaviour, heroism in character, noble aspiration and achievement in all great civilizations.

But when these very religions travel far from their sacred sources, they lose their original dynamic vigour, and degenerate into the arrogance of piety, into an utter emptiness crammed with irrational habits and mechanical practices; then is their spiritual inspiration bogged in the turbidity of sectarianism, then do they become the

most obstinate obstruction that darkens our vision of human unity, piling up out of their accretions and refuse dead-weights of unreason across our path of progress,— till at length civilised life is compelled to free its education from the stifling coils of religious creeds. Such fratricidal aberrations in the guise of spiritual excellence, have brought upon the name of God, whom they profess to glorify, uglier discredit than honest and defiant atheism could ever have done.

The reason is, because sectarianism, like some voracious parasite, feeds upon the religion whose colour it assumes, exhausting it so that it knows not when its spirit is sucked dry. It utilizes the dead skin for its habitation, as a stronghold for its unholy instinct of fight, its pious vaingloriousness, fiercely contemptuous of its neighbours' articles of faith.

Sectarian votaries of a particular religion, when taken to task for the iniquitous dealings with their brethren which so deeply injure and insult humanity, immediately try to divert attention by glibly quoting noble texts from their own scriptures which preach love, justice, righteousness and the divinity immanent in man,— ludicrously unconscious of the fact that those constitute the most damaging incrimination of their usual attitude of mind. In taking up the guardianship of their religion they allow, on the one hand, physical materialism to invade it by falsely giving eternal value to external practices, often of primitive origin, and moral materialism on the other, by invoking sacred sanction for their forms of worship within the rigid enclosure of special privileges founded upon accident of birth, or conformity, irrespective of moral justification. Such debasement does not belong to any particular religion, but more or less to all religions, the records of whose impious activities are written in brothers' blood, and sealed with the indignities heaped upon them.

All through the course of human history it has become tragically evident that religions, whose mission is liberation of soul, have in some form or other ever been instrumental in shackling freedom of mind and even moral rights. The desecration of truth in unworthy hands, the truth which was meant to raise humanity morally and materially out of the dusky region of animality, is moreover followed by condign punishment, and thus we find that religious perversity is causing more blindness of reason and deadness of moral sensibility than any other deficiency in our education; just as the truth rep-

resented by science, when used for ignoble traffic, threatens us with annihilation. It has been the saddest experience of man to witness such violation of the highest products of civilization, to find the guardians of religion blessing the mailed fist of temporal power in its campaign of wholesale massacre and consolidation of slavery, and science joining hands with the same relentless power in its murderous career of exploitation.

When we come to believe that we are in possession of our God because we belong to some particular sect, it gives us a complete sense of comfort to feel that God is no longer needed, except for breaking with the greater unction the skulls of people whose idea of God, fortunately or unfortunately, differs from our own in theoretical details. Having thus made provision for our God in some shadow-land of creed, we feel free to reserve all the space in the world of reality for ourselves, ridding it of the wonder of the Infinite, making it as trivial as our own household furniture. Such unmitigated vulgarity only becomes possible when we have no doubt in our minds that we believe in God while our life ignores Him.

Great souls, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, have a comprehensive vision of Truth, they have the power to grasp the significance of each different form of the Reality that is one in all,— but the masses of believers are unable to reconcile the conflict of codes and commands. Their timid and shrunken imagination, instead of being liberated by the vision of the Infinite in religion, is held captive in bigotry and is tortured and exploited by priests and fanatics for uses hardly anticipated by those who originally received it.

Unfortunately, great teachers most often are surrounded by persons whose minds, lacking transparency of atmosphere, obscure and distort the ideas originating from the higher source. They feel smug satisfaction when the picture of their master which they offer shows features made somewhat in the pattern of their own personality. Consciously and unconsciously they reshape profound messages of wisdom in the mould of their own tortuous understanding, carefully modifying them into conventional platitudes in which they themselves find comfort and which satisfy the habit-ridden mentality of their own community. Lacking the sensitiveness of mind which is necessary for the enjoyment of truth in its unadulterated purity, they exaggerate it in an attempt at megalomaniac enlargement ac-

according to their own insensate standard, which is as absurdly needless for its real appraisal as it is derogatory to the dignity of its original messengers. The history of great men, because of their very greatness, ever runs the risk of being projected on to a wrong background of memory where it gets mixed up with elements that are crudely customary and therefore inertly accepted by the multitude.

I say to you: that, if you are really lovers of Truth, then dare to seek it in its fulness in all the infinite beauty of its majesty, but never be content to treasure up its vain symbols in miserly seclusion within the stony walls of conventions. Let us revere the great souls in the sublime simplicity of their spiritual altitude which is common to them all, where they meet in universal aspiration to set the spirit of man free from the bondage of his own individual ego, and of the ego of his race and of his creed; but in that lowland of traditions, where religions challenge and refute each other's claim and dogmas, there a wise man must pass them by in doubt and dismay.

I do not mean to advocate a common church for mankind, a universal pattern to which every act of worship and aspiration must conform. The arrogant spirit of sectarianism, which so often uses either active or passive, violent or subtle, methods of persecution on the least provocation or without any, has to be reminded of the fact that religion like poetry, is not a mere idea,— it is expression. The self-expression of God is in the variedness of creation; and our attitude towards the Infinite must in its expression also have a variedness of individuality, ceaseless and unending. When a religion develops the ambition of imposing its doctrine on all mankind, it degrades itself into a tyranny and becomes a form of imperialism. This is why we find ruthless methods of autocracy in religious matters prevailing in most parts of the world, trampling flat the expansion of the spirit of man under its insensitive heels.

The attempt to make the one religion which is their own, dominate all time and space, comes naturally to men addicted to sectarianism. This makes it offensive to them to be told that God is generous in His distribution of love, and His means of communication with men have not been restricted to a blind lane stopping at one narrow point of history. If humanity ever happens to be overwhelmed with the universal flood of a bigoted exclusiveness, then God

will have to make provision for another Noah's Ark to save His creatures from the catastrophe of spiritual desolation.

What I plead for is a living recognition of the neglected truth that the reality of religion has its basis in the truth of Man's nature in its most intense and universal need and so must constantly be tested by it. Where it frustrates that need, and outrages its reason, it repudiates its own justification.

Let me conclude with a few lines from the great mystic poet of mediaeval India, Kabir, whom I regard as one of the greatest spiritual geniuses of our land:

*The jewel is lost in the mud,
and all are seeking for it;
some look for it in the east, and some in the west;
some in the water and some amongst stones.
But the servant Kabir has appraised it at its true value,
and has wrapped it with care
in a corner of the mantle of his own heart.*



HINDUISM

The Importance of Spiritual Practices

[Compiled from M's *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*]

Sri Ramakrishna — If one practises a little Sadhana [spiritual exercises] then the spiritual teacher makes him understand what is what. He then himself learns to distinguish the real from the unreal and knows that God alone is eternal and that this world is ephemeral.

One night a fisherman secretly entered a garden and cast his nets into a tank to steal fish. The owner of the garden came to know of it and surrounded the thief with his men and came with lighted torches to catch him. The thief in the meanwhile smeared his body with ashes and sat like a Sadhu [a monk] under a tree. The men searched in vain for the fisherman; they found only an ascetic covered with ashes, sitting under a tree and deeply absorbed in meditation. Next morning, the word went round that a great sage had come into so-and-so's garden. People poured in with presents of flowers and sweets to pay their respects to him, and a consider-

able amount of silver also began to accumulate before him. At that the fisherman thought, "How wonderful! I am not a real Sadhu, yet they show me such reverence! Assuredly then I'll realise God if I really become a Sadhu!"

If a mere pretence of Sadhana [spiritual exercises] brought such illumination, what to speak of real Sadhana! Then you will surely perceive what is real and what is unreal; you will surely know that God is true and the world false.

A devotee says to himself, "The world is unreal and the fisherman of the story also gave up the world. What then will be the fate of those awakened ones that are living in the world? Must they renounce it?"

The Master says immediately, "If a clerk is sent to jail, he no doubt serves his term, but when he is released, should he go dancing madly along the streets? He seeks out another employment and goes on working as before. Even so, *after* attaining Divine Wisdom through the grace of the Guru [spiritual teacher], man can live in the world as Jivan-mukta [liberated in life]."

Sadhana and its reward

In the beginning, you must be up and doing, and then Sadhana becomes easier afterwards. For the man must be alert at the helm so long as he steers his craft along tortuous water-courses and through agitated waves and storm and rain. But once he has passed them, he can sit comfortably at the helm and spread his sail in the favourable wind and prepare his pipe. Even so, when the raging blasts of Lust and Greed have blown over, it is all peace and calm.

Some have the sign of the Yogi manifested in their person; they should yet be on their guard. For Lust and Greed are *the* impediments to Yoga, and if the desire arises in a person's mind to enjoy them, he falls and is dragged down into the world; and he can turn back towards God and regain his former exalted state of spirituality only when he has satisfied those desires.

The value of scriptural studies in the scheme of Sadhana

Scriptures have to be studied in the beginning. It is in the early stages that one reasons out and discusses. "O My Mind, install the Beloved Mother in the heart. May I and you alone see Her, let none else pry into it."

In the course of Sadhana one has to learn all the Scriptures. But when the Mother has been realised, there is no lack of knowledge,— She Herself provides an unfailing supply.

Man has to spell the words when he first learns to write, but afterwards he can write fluently.

Mere study of the Scriptures is of no help. If you live amidst “Woman and Gold”, you are not able to comprehend the true significance of Scriptures. Attachment to the world takes away knowledge. “With wistful hope I learnt many a sweet poetic thing, but, alas, I fell in love with a deaf man, and all was marred.”

Preparations for the inevitable hour

Know that all will walk down the same path one day. It is only a two days’ stay in this world. The world is the place of action, where you have been brought in to work, even as a man comes on business from his country-home to Calcutta.

You must take some pains by way of Sadhana [spiritual exercises]; the karmas must be speedily worked out. When the smiths melt gold, they blow with bellows, fan and pipe all together to make the fire blaze high, and only when the gold has been dissolved do they ask for a smoke. All this time they have been sweating on the brow, but they can get a chance to smoke only after they have done.

You must be very firm in your determination if you want to practise Sadhana,— you must make a strong resolve!

The seed of His Holy Name is very powerful. It destroys ignorance. The seed is so soft, and its sprout is so tender, yet it shoots up through the hard earth.

The mind becomes completely distracted if you live long among “Woman (Man) and Gold”. The man of the world, living among “Woman (Man) and Gold”, may set his mind on the Lord sometimes, but it is also attracted by them, just as a fly that sits on sweetmeats turns again to sores and filth. Keep your mind ever fixed on the Lord. In the beginning you must struggle a little, afterwards you will enjoy your pension.

The time-factor and spiritual discipline

Knowledge cannot be communicated all at once. Its attainment is a question of time. Suppose a fever is of a severe type. The doc-

tor cannot give quinine under such circumstances. He knows that such a remedy would do no good. The fever must first leave the patient, which depends upon time, and then the quinine would be useful. Sometimes the fever would go off without your having to give the patient quinine or any other medicine. Precisely the same is the case with a man who seeks for knowledge. To him spiritual precepts often prove useless so long as he is immersed in worldliness. Allow him a certain period for the enjoyment of the things of the world; his attachment to the world will gradually wear off. This is exactly the time for the success of any spiritual instructions that may be given to him. Till then they would be as good as entirely thrown away.

Many come to me; and I have observed how some of them are anxious to listen to my words. But one or two of the company appear to be restless and impatient in my presence. They say to their friends in whispers, "Let us go, let us go! Well, if you mean to stay, we had better get into the boat and wait for you."

It is difficult to drive nails into a strong brick wall. It will break the head of the nails sooner than make any impression upon the wall.

It is idle to strike the crocodile with the sword. The chances are that the sword will not make a cut.

Therefore I say that the element of time is an important factor in all these matters.

Spiritual awakening is very much a question of time. The teacher is a mere help.

The fact is, a great deal of all this desire for knowledge or for freedom depends upon one's Karma in one's previous incarnations.

A Devotee — Yes, Sir, it is so difficult to understand one's self. We see the self only as it appears to us. Behind it there might be a hundred previous incarnations. We walk upon the floor of a house but we never stop to see how it is made and what various things are beneath it.



The Necessary Qualifications for Spiritual Life

by Swami Vivekananda

“Verily, these three are rare to obtain and come only through the grace of God: human birth, desire to obtain Moksha [liberation] and the company of the great-souled ones.”

The first thing needed is Manushyatvam, human birth, because it only is favourable to the attainment of Mukti [emancipation]. The next is Mumukshutvam. Though our means of realisation vary according to the difference in sects and individuals—though different individuals can lay claim to their special rights and means to gain knowledge, which vary according to their different stations in life,—yet it can be said in general without fear of contradiction that without Mumukshuta nothing can be achieved. What is Mumukshutvam? It is the strong desire for Moksha [liberation]—the earnest yearning to get out of the sphere of pain and pleasure—utter disgust for the world. When that intense burning desire to see God comes, then you should know that you are entitled to the realisation of the Supreme.

Then another thing is necessary and that is the coming in direct contact with the Mahapurushas, the great-souled ones, and thus moulding our lives in accordance with those of the great-souled ones who have reached the goal. Even utter disgust for the world and an intense burning desire for God are not sufficient. Initiation by a Guru [spiritual teacher] is necessary. Why? Because it is the bringing of yourself into connection with that great source of power which has been handed down through generations, from one Guru to another, in uninterrupted succession. The devotee must seek and accept the spiritual preceptor as his counsellor, philosopher, friend and guide. In short, the Guru is the *sine qua non* of progress in the path of spirituality. Whom then shall I accept as my Guru? *“He who is versed in the Scriptures, without taint, unhurt by desire, he who is the best of the knowers of Brahman.”* He who is not only learned in the Scriptures but who knows their subtle secrets, who has realised their true import in his life. Mere book-learning is of no avail. Nowadays, everyone wants to be a Guru. Even a poor beggar wants to make a gift of a lakh of rupees! Then, the Guru must be without a touch of taint; and he must be unhurt by any desire,—he should have no other motive except that of purely doing good to

others, he should be an ocean of mercy-without-reason and not impart religious teaching with a view to gain name or fame, or anything pertaining to selfish interest. And he must be the intense knower of Brahman.. Such is the Guru, says the Scripture. When spiritual union is established with such a Guru, then comes realisation of God,— then God-vision becomes easy of attainment.

There should be in the aspirant after Truth, Abhyasa or earnest and repeated attempt at practical application of the Truth by prescribed means of constant meditation upon the Chosen Ideal. Even if you have a burning thirst for God, or have gained the teacher, unless you have along with it, Abhyasa, unless you practise what you have been taught, you cannot get realisation. When all these are firmly established in you, then you will reach the Goal.

Do not forget the great ideal of our religion,— which is to go beyond this phenomenal world,— not only to renounce the world, but to give up heaven too; aye, not only to give up evil but to give up good too; and thus to go beyond all, beyond this phenomenal existence and ultimately realise the “Sat-Chit-Anandam Brahman” — the Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, which is Brahman.



Real Worship

by Swami Vivekananda

It is in love that religion exists and not in ceremony; in the pure and sincere love in the heart. Unless a man is pure in body and mind, his coming into a temple and worshipping God [Siva] is useless. The prayers of those that are pure in mind and body will be answered by God and those that are impure and yet try to teach religion to others, will fail in the end. External worship is only a symbol of internal worship, but internal worship and purity are the real things. Without them, external worship would be of no avail. Therefore, you must all try to remember this. People have become so degraded in this Kali-Yuga [Iron Age] that they think they can do anything and then can go to a holy place and their sins will be forgiven. If a man goes with an impure mind into a temple, he adds to the sins that he had already and goes home a worse man than when he left it. A place of pilgrimage is a place which is full of holy things and holy men. But if holy people live in a certain place, and if there is no temple, even that is a place of pilgrimage. If unholy people

live in a place where there may be a hundred temples, the holiness has vanished from that place. And it is most difficult to live in a place of pilgrimage, for if sin is committed in any ordinary place it can easily be removed, but sin committed in a place of pilgrimage cannot be removed. This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees God [Siva] in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased, really worships God [Siva]. And if he sees God [Siva] only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man, seeing God [Siva] in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him God [Siva] is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.

A rich man had a garden and two gardeners. One of these gardeners was very lazy and did not work; but when the owner came to the garden the lazy man would get up and fold his arms and say, "How beautiful is the face of my master," and dance before him. The other gardener would not talk much, but would work hard and produce all sorts of fruits and vegetables which he would carry on his head to his master who lived a long way off. Of these two gardeners, which would be the more beloved of his master? God [Siva] is that master and this world is His garden and there are two sorts of gardeners here—the one who is lazy, hypocritical and does nothing, only talking about Siva's beautiful eyes and nose and other features, and the other, who is taking care of God's [Siva's] children, all those that are poor and weak, all animals and all His Creation. Which of these would be the more beloved of Siva? Certainly he that serves His children. He who wants to serve the father must serve the children first. He who wants to serve God [Siva] must serve His children, must serve all creatures in the world **first**. It is said in the Scripture that those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants. So you will bear this in mind. Let me tell you again that you must be pure and help any one who comes to you as much as lies in your power. And this is good Karma. By the power of this, the heart becomes pure, and then Siva [God], who is residing in every one, will become manifest. He is always in the heart of every one. If there is dirt and dust on a mirror, we cannot see our image. So ignorance and wickedness are the dirt and dust that are on the mirror of our hearts. Selfishness is the chief sin, thinking of ourselves first. He who thinks "I will eat first, I will have more money than others and I will possess everything"; he

who thinks, "I will get to heaven before others, I will get freedom before others," is the selfish man. The unselfish man says, "I will be last, I do not care to go to heaven, I will even go to hell if by doing so I can help my brothers." This unselfishness is the test of religion. He who has more of this unselfishness is more spiritual and nearer to God (Siva) than anybody else, whether he knows it or not. And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off from God (Siva).

—Compiled from *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*—



The Cup

by Swami Vivekananda

*This is your cup — the cup assigned to you
from the beginning.*

*Nay, My child, I know how much of that dark drink
is your own brew*

*Of fault and passion, ages long ago,
In the deep years of yesterday, I know.*

*This is your road — a painful road and drear.
I made the stones that never give you rest.
I set your friend in pleasant ways and clear,
And he shall come, like you, unto My breast.
But you, My child, must travel here.*

*This is your task. It has no joy or grace,
But is not meant for any other hand,
And in My universe hath measured place.
Take it. I do not bid you understand.
I bid you close your eyes to see My face.*



God is the Reality, the world of phenomena is illusion. The whole Universe serves one as his body, when he feels the Universal Soul as his very Self.

You have to keep yourself all the time upon the rock of renunciation; and taking your stand firmly upon that vantage ground, giving yourself up entirely to any work that presents itself, you will not be tired, you will be equal to any duty.

Cultivate peace of mind, fill your mind with pure thoughts and nobody can set himself against you. That is the law.

—*Swami Ram Tirath*—



From the *Abhangas* of Namadeva

We should always think of death, in whatever pursuit we may be engaged,—as when a thief is being carried to the hanging place, death is approaching him at every step,—as when a man is plying his axe at the root of a tree, its life is diminishing every moment; similarly, whatever we may be doing, we must suppose that death is always approaching us. All objects of sense should be as indifferent to us as either a serpent or a beautiful maiden is to a man who has gone to sleep. We should regard dung and gold, or a jewel or a stone, as of equal value. Let the sky come and envelop us, or let cinders be poured on our head, we should not allow our life in Atman [the Self] to be disturbed. Whether we are praised or censured, we should always live in the joy of God. People forget their miseries are due to the sins they have committed. Nobody should expect a sweet fruit when he sows a sour seed. A pestle can never be bent to the form of an arrow. A person may pound stones as he pleases, but never will any juice come out of them. We should not grow wroth with our fate. We should ask ourselves what we have done.

When we have once seen God, it matters little to what place we go. As soon as we remember God, God shall be near us. We shall forget our hunger and thirst in the pleasure of God's Name; God who is the source of Immortality, is in the heart of Namadeva. And Namadeva, therefore enjoys continued bliss. There is only one favour that we may ask of God: that we should always think of Him in our heart; that we should always utter His Name by our mouth; that we should always see Him with our eyes; that our hands should worship only Him; that our head be placed always at His feet; that our ears should only hear of God's exploits; that He should show Himself always to our right and to our left, in front and behind and at the end of our life. God's form can be seen even by a blind man, and a dumb man can communicate even in a deaf man's ear the knowledge of God.



Two Songs of Namadeva

*Who Vasudev [God] in all can see,
Cleansed from the thought of "I",
Know that a saint indeed is he;
The rest in bondage lie.*

*Wealth to his eyes is only dust;
Jewels as stones he sees;
Gone from his heart is rage and lust;
Pardon dwells there,— and peace.*

*He will not for an instant rest
— Hear, what I, Nama, say —,
But God's sweet name — of all the best —
He utters night and day.*

*One fast asleep can never know
That to his chamber crawling in
There comes a snake,— and heedless so
Am I to lure of sense or sin,
Since inward vision I bestow,
My Kesav [God] has so gracious been.*

*Alike are gold and dross to me;
Jewel and common stone the same.
Now ne'er my soul can harmed be,
Walk I in heaven or in the flame.
Since one with final bliss are we,
Then what is either praise or blame?*



From the *Bhagavata* of Ekanatha

If the mind is pure, then verily even enemies become friends. Then neither tigers nor serpents can hurt a person in any way. Poison may become nectar. A blow may become a help. What ought not to be done, may itself open for one the path of moral action. Sorrow will be the cause of happiness and the flames of fire will become cool. All these things will happen when one knows that there is the same Immanent Being in the hearts of all.

He whose mind is purified by the conscientious discharge of duty and by constant prayer to God, feels non-attachment to worldly objects. He then learns to discriminate truly the **Real** from

the unreal. This discrimination is knowledge. It is by this that the wise know that the true Self is not the body but the self-effulgent Atman, who gives life to the physical and subtle body. See through how many processes the sugar-cane has to pass before it can assume the pure form of a sugar-doll. First, the sugar-cane has to be squeezed in the juice-mill, thus producing a liquid juice. Thereupon, the juice is purified by heat and exposed to cold to be congealed into a thick cake of sugar. But it has to be melted again before it can be moulded into the form of a sugar-doll. Similarly, the discriminating first realise the unreality of the apparently solid physical body, then destroy the subtle body; while finally they annihilate egoism and become Brahman themselves.

The highest duty consists in relinquishing one's affection for one's belongings and dedicating them all—wife, children, home, or even one's life—to the service of God. The mind should always meditate on Him. The ear should always listen to the discussions of His greatness and mercy. The tongue should always be active in uttering His Holy Name. The hands should worship His image and the feet should walk towards the holy temple in which His image is installed. As the bubbles on the watery wave are all the while playing on the water, so the Bhakta [the lover of God] is in all his actions and at all times engaged in worshipping his Chosen Ideal.



Control of the Mind

[Some Instructions of Sri Ramana Maharshi]

"Mind only is the cause of bondage and freedom of man."

—Amritabindu Upanishad—

Aspirant —I have not yet been able to control my mind and I intend to have Ekantavasam [life in solitude] in the North and want Sri Bhagavan's grace.

Sri Ramana Maharshi — You have come all the way to Tiruvannamalai for Ekantavasam and that in the immediate presence and vicinity of Ramana Bhagavan [God pervading the Holy Mountain and also being worshipped in the temple], yet you do not appear to have obtained that mental quiet; you now want to go elsewhere and from there you will desire to go to' some other place. At this rate there could be no end to your travels. You do not realise that it is your mind that drives you in this manner. Control that **first** and

you will be happy **wherever** you are. I do not know if you have read Vivekananda's lectures. It is my impression that he has somewhere narrated the story of a man trying to bury his shadow and finding that over every sod of earth he had put in the grave dug for burying his shadow, it only appeared over the new earth that had been thrown into the grave. In this manner, the shadow could never be buried. Similar is the case of a person trying to "bury" his thoughts. One must, therefore, attempt to get at the very bottom from which thought springs, and root out thought, mind and desire.

Aspirant — If I spent an hour or two on the hill yonder I sometimes found more peace than here, which suggested that a solitary place is after all more conducive to mind-control.

Sri Ramana Maharshi — True, but if you had stayed there for an hour longer you would have found that place, too, not giving you that calmness of which you now boast. Control the mind, and even Hell would be Heaven to you. All other talk of solitude, living in the forest, etc., etc., is all mere prattle.

Aspirant — If solitude and residence away from home were not required, where then was the necessity for Sri Bhagavan to go over here in his seventeenth year?

Ramana Maharshi — If the same force that brought this [meaning himself] here should take you also out of your home, by all means let it be so, but there is no use your deserting your home by an effort of your own. Our duty lies in **practice, practice continuous practice** of self-enquiry.

Holy company

Aspirant — Is it not necessary for one to seek the company of the saints and sages?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Yes, but the best holy company is inhering in your "Self". This is also the real living in the cave. Dwelling in the cave is retiring into your "Self". Association with the wise and holy will help a great deal, certainly.

Aspirant — I appear to get the same stillness of thought by tracing the root of the Mantra [sound-symbol] which I repeat as I would if I put the "Who am I" inquiry also. Is there any harm in my continuing the Mantra in this manner, or is it essential I should only put the bare "Who am I" enquiry?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — No, you can trace the root of **any**

thought or Mantra and continue to do so till you have an answer to your query.

Aspirant — What is the effects of japas and mantras?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Diversion. Mind is a channel, a swift current of thoughts, and Mantra is a “bund”, a dam put up in the way of this current for diverting the water to the selected land as required.

Aspirant — Some time after the stillness of thought intervenes, I am accustomed to hear, firstly, some sound resembling that which one would hear if he were in the midst of or near a rolling mill, and, secondly, a little later, a sound like that of a steam-engine whistle. This was only during the course of meditation when I was at home, but now, here, the sound I hear is heard all the time, irrespective of the fact that I am before you or walking round the Ashram.

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Ask **who** hears the sound. Repeat this question now and then.



A Psalm of Dadu

*Thou alone art; and all is Thine;
Neither I nor Mine have any being;
Yet man calleth them, I and Mine.*

*Thou alone art; and the Universe is Thy sport;
Yet fools shout out, I and Mine.*

*Thou alone art; and the Universe is Thine;
Yet man in his conceit saith, I and Mine.*

*Thou alone art; and death cannot kill Thee;
But I and Mine will presently die.*

*Thou alone art; Thou fillest all;
But I and Mine will soon dissolve.*

*Thou alone art; Thou dwellest within Thyself;
But I and Mine will soon dissolve.*

*Thou alone art; Thou art Thine Own Self;
But I and Mine are nowhere.*

*Thou alone art; and Thine alone will cross this ocean.
Dadu has found this truth by meditation.*



A Verse by Kabir

*At enmity with God, the world perishes from
moment to moment.*

*Those saints alone live who keep their minds fixed on Him;
Who are absorbed in the Self within; and are ever
inspired by His name.*

Kabir drank the elixir of God's name and became immortal.



Hymn to Sri Ramakrishna

*I surrender myself to my Guru [spiritual Teacher], the physi-
cian for the malady of relative existence, who is as it were a
wave rising in the ocean of Shakti [Power], who has shown
various sports of Love Divine and who is the weapon to de-
stroy the demon of doubt.*

*I surrender myself to my Guru, the Man-God, the physician
for the malady of this relative existence, whose mind ever
dwelt on the non-dualistic Truth, whose personality was cov-
ered by the cloth of Supreme Devotion, who was ever active
for the good of humanity and whose actions were all
super-human. May His name be ever victorious!*

—Swami Vivekananda—

(Sri Ramakrishna's birthday fell this year on March 4th.)



Some Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna

He is born to no purpose who, having the rare privilege of being born a man, is unable to realise God in this life.

God is in all men, but all men are not in God, that is the reason why they suffer.

Why do I love young men so much? Because they are masters of the whole [16 annas] of their minds, which get divided and subdivided as they grow up. One half of the mind of a married man goes to his wife. When a child is born it takes one fourth and the remaining one fourth is scattered over parents, worldly honours, dress,

etc. Therefore, a young mind can easily know God. It is very difficult for old people to do so.

So long as the mind is fickle and unsteady it availeth nothing, even though a man has got a good Guru [spiritual teacher] and the company of holy men.

This temple of the body should not be kept in darkness; the lamp of knowledge must be lighted in it. "Lighting the lamp of knowledge in your room, look upon the face of the Mother Divine." Everyone can attain to knowledge. There is the individualised self and there is the higher Self. Every individual is connected with the higher Self. There is a gas connection in every house and gas can be had from the Gas company. Only make the application in the proper quarter and the supply will be arranged. Then you will have gas-light in your room.

The society of pious men is like water in which rice has been washed. Just as the intoxication caused by wine is dissipated by rice-water, similarly the only way to dissipate the intoxication caused by the wine of desire is the society of the pious.

As many warm themselves in the fire kindled by someone else who has taken the trouble of collecting the firewood and other necessary things, similarly, many fix their mind on the Lord by associating with and following the instruction of holy men who have come to know the Lord after many a hard penance.

When going through spiritual exercises do not associate with those who never concern themselves with matters spiritual. Keep yourself aloof from them.



CHINESE WISDOM

Sayings of Confucius

Make conscientiousness and sincerity your grand object. Have no friends not equal to yourself. If you have done wrong, be not ashamed to make amends.

Observe a man's actions; scrutinise his motives; take note of the things that give him pleasure. How then can he hide from you what he really is?

Men's faults are characteristic. It is by observing a man's faults

that one may come to know his virtues.

When you see a good man, think of emulating him; when you see a bad man; examine your own heart.

Who can go out of a house except by the door? In life, why not pass likewise through the door of virtue?

You may speak of higher subjects to those who rise above the average level of mankind, but not to those who fall below it,

Words of just admonition cannot fail to command a ready assent. But practical reformation is the thing that really matters. Words of kindly advice cannot fail to please the listener. But subsequent meditation on them is the thing that really matters. I can make nothing of the man who is pleased with advice, but will not meditate on it, who assents to admonition but does not reform.

Hopeless indeed is the case of those who can herd together all day long without once letting their conversation reach a higher plane, but are content to bandy smart and shallow wit.

Only two classes of men never change: the wisest of the wise and the dullest of the dull.

Love of goodness without the will to learn casts the shadow called foolishness, Love of knowledge without the will to learn casts the shadow called instability. Love of truth without the will to learn casts the shadow called insensibility. Love of candour without the will to learn casts the shadow called rudeness. Love of firmness without the will to learn casts the shadow called eccentricity.

At home, a young man should show the qualities of a son, abroad, those of a younger brother. He should be circumspect, but truthful. He should have charity in his heart for all men, but associate only with the virtuous. After thus regulating his conduct, his surplus energy should be devoted to literary culture.

In the matter of food and lodging, the nobler type of man does not seek mere repletion and comfort. He is earnest in his affairs and cautious in his speech and frequents virtuous company for his own improvement. He may be called truly bent on the study of virtue.

The higher type of man is one who acts before he speaks, and professes only what he practises.

Only he who has the spirit of goodness within him is really and

fully able to love or to hate.

It is the spirit of charity which makes a locality good to dwell in. He who selects a neighbourhood without regard to this quality cannot be considered wise.

The princely man can never for a single instance quit the path of virtue, in times of storm and stress he remains in it as fast as ever.

The nobler sort of man in his progress through the world has neither narrow predilections nor obstinate antipathies. What he follows is the line of duty.

The nobler sort of man is proficient in the knowledge of his duty; the inferior man is proficient only in money-making.

Better than one who knows what is right is one who is fond of what is right; and better than one who is fond of what is right is one who delights in what is right.

The man of knowledge finds pleasure in the sea, the man of virtue finds pleasure in the mountains. For the man of knowledge is restless and the man of virtue is calm.

That virtue is perfect which adheres to a constant mean. It has long been rare amongst men.

The man of moral virtue, wishing to stand firm himself, will lend firmness unto others; wishing himself to be illumined, he will illuminate others. To be able to do to others as we would be done by—this is the true domain of moral virtue.

The higher type of man is calm and serene; the inferior man is constantly agitated and worried.

The man of wisdom does not vacillate; the man of natural goodness does not fret; the man of valour does not fear.

The subdual of the self and reversion to the Natural Laws governing conduct—this is true goodness. If a man can for the space of one day subdue his selfishness and revert to the Natural Laws, the whole world will call him good. True goodness springs from a man's own heart. How can it depend on other men? Do not use your eyes, your ears, your power of speech or your faculty of movement without obeying the inner law of self-control.

Can true love be anything but exacting? How can our sense of duty allow us to abstain from admonition?

The higher type of man seeks all that he wants in himself; the in-

ferior man seeks all that he wants from others.

Tsu Kung asked:—"Has the nobler sort of man any hatreds?" The Master replied: "He has: He hates those who publish the faults of others; he hates men of low condition that vilify those above them; he hates those whose courage is unaccompanied by self-restraint; he hates those who are audacious but narrow-minded."

As an arbiter in litigation I am no better than other men. But surely the grand object to achieve is that there shall be no litigation at all.

Shall I tell you what true knowledge is? When you know, to know that you know, and when you do not know, to know that you do not know — that is true knowledge.

If the ruler cherishes the principle of self-control, the people will be docile to his commands.

There are three points on which I daily examine myself:— Have I been conscientious in working for others? Have I been truthful in my intercourse with friends? Have I practised what I preach?



Some Teachings of Meng K'o [Mencius]

Before a man can do things there must be things he will not do.

Nothing can be said to that man who wrongs himself; nothing can be done for the man that throws himself away. To flout good form and right in your speech is to wrong yourself. To say, "I cannot dwell in Love or follow the Way," is to throw yourself away. Love is man's peaceful home. Right is man's true road. To abandon the peaceful home and not dwell in it, to forsake the true road and not follow it, is sad indeed!

The great man is he who does not lose the child heart.

If you love men and they are unfriendly, look into your love; if you rule men and they are unruly, look into your wisdom; if you are courteous to them and they do not respond, look into your respect. If what you do is vain, always seek within. If our life is straight, all below heaven turn to us.

The Way is near, and we seek it afar; the work is light, and we seek the hard.

Love conquers want of love as water conquers fire. Men's deeds of love to-day are like taking one cup of water to save a cartload of

wood on fire. When the fire is not put out, they say, "Water does not conquer fire!" And this again so encourages their want of love that at last all of it is gone.

If to seek is to get, and to let go is to lose: then to seek helps us to get, and the thing sought is within us.

From the sunlight within them, men of worth have shed sunlight on men. From the dusk and murk within them, men to-day shed sunlight on men!

To speak of the near and point afar is good speech. To hold to main lines, but give them a wide range, is the good way.

No food is better for the heart than few desires. Men of few desires may lose their heart, but few are they that do: and men of many desires may keep their heart, but few are they that do so.

He that goes to the bottom of his own heart knows his own nature; and knowing his own nature he knows Heaven. By keeping his heart and feeding his nature he serves Heaven. Long life or early death are one to him. By mending his life whilst he waits, he carries out the Bidding. Thus, he that knows the Bidding does not stand beneath a tottering wall. To end our way and then die is our true Bidding. To die shackled and fettered is not our true Bidding.

There is a way to make life true. Without light on what is good, life cannot be true. Thus, to be true is the way of Heaven, to seek to be true is the way of man. The truth cannot fail to stir man, want of truth never stirred anyone.

By going deep into the Way, a gentleman wishes to make it his own. When he has made it his own, he dwells in it in peace. Dwelling in it in peace, his trust in it deepens; and as his trust deepens, he comes upon its rudiments, right and left, in whatever he takes up. This is why a gentleman wishes to make the Way his own.



CHRISTIANITY

The Yoke of the Lord

by Diego de San Cristobal-Estella

[From *Tratado de la vanidad del mundo*]

My yoke Is sweet and my burden light, says the Lord, and the yoke of Christ is sweet to those who sincerely love Him, heavy to

the half-hearted, bitter to the proud, light to the meek, and loveable to the humble. Every virtue is accompanied by its own reward and fills him who practises it with great joy.

The burden of the holy yoke of the Lord does not make a man lazy, but diligent, does not make him sad, heavy or burdened, but joyful, good-humoured and light. Those who subject themselves to it are not prisoners, for by subjecting oneself to the sweet yoke of Christ one gains true freedom and mastery of the spirit.

Far sweeter are the tears of those who pray than the laughter and merriment of the worldlings. Far more delightful is one drop of the sweetness of the spirit than all the delights and consolations of the world. Far better food does the least heavenly solace give to a soul than all the pleasures the world can procure it. The delights which the aspirants receive are flowers born under thorns but beautiful, radiant flowers. The worldlings judge wrongly of the yoke of the Lord and hold the spiritual path to be troublesome and full of pain. They bear testimony to what they know not and condemn the path they never trod. The blind man is a bad judge of colours. All the saints showed us and left witness in their books that serving the Lord is a sweet and delightful work. Those who bear the yoke of Christ deserve greater faith than those who never bore it. No one ever bore it without speaking well of it, and no one ever held it to be bitter who really and sincerely took it on his shoulders.

Those who serve the world and the worldlings are deprived of much good. They neither know nor realise what they lose and so they despise it. Not having tasted God, they taste all the vanities of this world. However sparingly thou mightest feed thyself with the Divine Food, it would suffice to make thee hold all those things which now appear sweet to be bitter and nauseating and revolting. If the sweet yoke of Christ and His Holy Law be not sweet and soft to thee, this is due to thy wearing it inside out. A garment of sack-cloth lined with marten or ermine appears rough when the sack-cloth is put next to the skin, but if thou turnest it and putteth the marten or the ermine inside, it becomes soft and pleasing to the skin. Similarly, the law of God is not sweet to thee because thou putteth the rough side towards thyself, and dost not consider reason, but thy flesh and its appetites. When God's Law commands the rich man to give alms to thee who art poor, thou sayest, it is a good law; but when thou, being rich, art told to give alms to the

poor, thou sayest that the law is bitter, whereas it is most sweet. Thou takest it to be bitter because thou puttest the law next to thy covetousness and to thy flesh and its cravings. If thou offend someone, thou wishest to be forgiven. But when thou art offended, thou dost not want to forgive. Thou consultest thy appetite and not reason.

The burden of the Lord weighs little, and if thou feel this burden to be heavy, this is due to thy craving and to thy carrying thy passions on thy shoulders, and to thy clinging to them.

Even if there be no Hell which torments, nor beatitude which can be lost through sin, sin as such means pain and torture. He who takes part in tiltings, even if there be no prize or punishment for couching the lance well or badly, feels pain through the mere fact of not couching it well and breaking it. And not sin alone is painful, but the sinner himself is pain. Wherever there be the prick of conscience there can be no rest nor respite, and there can be no sin without the sword-thrust of repentance. If this be the way in which the world tortures its servants, turn round to God, for thereby thou livest in rest and perpetual peace and blessedness.



Of the Setting of Man's Life

by Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole

So that a man may be righteously directed to the worship of God and to his own profit and the profit of his neighbour, four things are to be said.

First : what is it that defiles a man? There are three sins, or three kinds of sin; that is to say: of thought, of mouth and of work. A man sins in thought when he thinks aught against God. If he occupies his heart not with praise and loving of God, but suffers it to be stirred with divers thoughts, and to go void in the world. In mouth: he sins when he lies, when he defends a wrong, when he uses fond speech or foul speech, or brings forth vain things or idle. In deed he sins many wise: by lechery, touching sinfully or kissing, defiling himself wilfully; or, without great cause, procuring or sustaining occasions by which he trows he might be defiled; in robbing, stealing, beguiling, smiting, and other such.

Secondly : which are they that cleanse a man? And they are three, against the three aforesaid, that is to say: Contrition of

thought and pulling out of desires that belong not to the praise or worship of God and love of Him. Confession of mouth that ought to be timely, bare and whole. Satisfaction of deed that has three parts, that is to say: Fasting, because he has sinned against himself; prayer, because he has sinned against God; alms, because he has sinned against his neighbour. Yet I say not he should do alms of other men's goods, but he should restore; for sin is not forgiven unless that is withdrawn, be restored.

Third : which things keep cleanness of heart? And they are three: quick [lively] thought of God that there be no time in which thou thinkest not of God except in sleep that is common to all; busy keeping of thine outward wits that tasting, savouring, hearing and seeing, they may wisely be restrained under the bridle of governance. The third is honest occupation, as reading of holy writ, speaking of God, writing, or some other good deed doing.

There are three things also that save [preserve] cleanness of mouth: avisedness of speech; to eschew mickle speech; and to hate lying.

Also three things help cleanness of working: moderation in meat; fleeing ill company; and oft to mind of death.

The fourth : which things are they that allure us to conform us to God's will? And there are three. First, the example of creatures, that is had by consideration; the godliness of God, that is gotten by meditation and prayer, and mirth of the heavenly kingdom, that is felt in a manner by contemplation.

The man of God set to live in this wise shall be as a tree that is set by running waters—that is the flowing of grace—so that he shall always be green in virtue and never be dry by sin; and shall give fruit in time; that is, he shall give good works as an example and good words to the worship of God, and these he shall not sell for vain glory.

He prays wisely who says: *Bonitatem et disciplinam et scientiam doce me*, that is to say: goodness, discipline and knowledge teach me. What is discipline but the setting of, or correcting, of manners? First, therefore, we are taught righteousness, and corrected of ill by discipline; and after that we know what we should do or what we should eschew. At the last we savour not fleshly things, but everlasting heavenly and godly.

And when a man with all busyness has dressed himself to the will of his Maker and grown in virtue, and has passed another that peradventure went before, in steadfastness of living and desire of Christ, he ought not thereof to joy nor give praise to himself, nor throw himself better than others—although they be low—but rather hold himself as the foulest and most wretched.

In meat and drink be thou scarce and wise. Whilst thou eatest or drinkest let not the memory of God that feeds thee pass from thy mind but praise, bless, glorify Him in ilka morsel, so that thy heart be more in God's praising than in thy meat, that thy soul be not parted from God at any hour. Thus doing, before Christ Jesu thou shalt be worthy a crown, and the temptations of the fiend, that in meat and drink awaits most men and beguiles them, thou shalt eschew. Either soothly by unmannerly taking of food they are cast down from the height of virtue, or by too mickle abstinence they break down that virtue.

Abstinence by itself is not holiness, but if it be discreet, it greatly helps us to be holy. If it be indiscreet it lets holiness, because it destroys discipline, without which virtues are turned to vice. If a man would be singular in abstinence, he ought to eschew the sight of men and their praising, that he be not proud for nought and so lose all: for men truly ween they be holiest that they see most abstinent, when in truth oftentimes they are the worst.

He certain that has truly tasted the sweetness of endless love shall never deem himself to pass any man in abstinence, but the lower he supposes himself in abstinence anent himself, the more he shall be hold marvellous anent men. The best thing, and as I suppose pleasing to God, is to conform thyself in meat and drink to the time and place and estate of them with whom thou art, so that thou seem not to be wilful, nor a feigner of religion.

Be thou therefore steadfast in all thy ways and dress thy life after the rule shown to thee, and if thou may not get that thou desirest in the beginning, mistrust not, but abide; for by long use and time thou shalt come to perfection.

If thou be a pilgrim and rest by the way, whatsoever thou dost in this life, to God ever have an eye. Let not thy thought go from Him; think that time lost in which thou thinkest not of God. In the night praise Him and desire His love, that sleep may not find thee in any other wise occupied than praying or thinking of God. See that thou

flow not with vain thoughts, nor give thyself to many charges, but study to get and hold this steadfastness of mind so that thou dread not the wretchedness of this world nor desire the good thereof unmannerly. He that dreads to suffer adversity knows not yet how it behoves us to despise the world; and he that joys in earthly things is far from everlasting things.

To the virtue of strength truly belong all adversities and prosperities; and also to despise death for endless life. And charity is to desire only heavenly things. A perfect lover forsooth joys to die, and suffers life meekly. To which perfection if thou ascend by the gift of Christ, yet shalt thou not be without tribulation and temptation.



Some Pages from Walter Hilton's "Scale of Perfection"

How and in what things should a contemplative man be occupied

Thou shalt ever seek by great business in prayers that thou mayest come to the ghostly feeling of God; and that thou mayest know wisdom of God, the endless might of Him, the great goodness of Him in Himself and in His creatures; for this is contemplation. Thus saith Saint Paul:— Be ye rooted and grounded in charity that ye may know, he saith, neither sound of the ear nor sweet savour in the mouth, nor any such bodily thing, but that ye may know and feel with all hallows, which is the length of the endless being of God, the height of the almighty majesty of Him and the groundless deepness of the wisdom of God. In knowing; and in ghostly feeling of these should be the occupation of a contemplative man, for in these may be understood the full knowing of all ghostly things. This occupation is that one thing which Saint Paul coveted, saying thus: One thing is best for me to covet and that is that I might forget all things which are behindward or backward, and I shall stretch out mine heart ever forward, to feel and to grip the sovereign meed of the endless bliss. Hindward are all bodily things, forward are ghostly things; and therefore Saint Paul would forget all bodily things, and his own body also, that he may see ghostly things.

How the ground of lechery should be destroyed
with ghostly travail and not with bodily

The travail against the ground of lechery shall be ghostly, as by prayers and ghostly virtues and not by bodily penance. For wit thou

well that if thou fast and wake and scourge thyself, and do all that thou canst, thou shalt never have cleanness and chastity without the gift of God and the grace of meekness. Thou shouldst sooner slay thyself than thou shouldst slay fleshly stirrings and feelings of lust and lechery, either in thine heart or in thy flesh, by any bodily penance. But by the grace of Jesus in a meek soul the ground may be much stopped and destroyed, and the spring may be much dried, and that is very chastity in body and in soul. In the same manner may be said of pride and of covetousness and of such other, for thou mightest live if thou wert not proud nor covetous; and therefore shalt thou destroy all the feelings of them as much as thou mayest. But in gluttony thou shalt rise and smite away the unskillful stirrings and save the ground whole.

What thing helpeth most a man's knowing and getteth him that
which he lacketh and most destroyeth sin in him

Wit thou well that in all stirrings of pride, vainglory, envy, or any other, as soon as thou perceivest it and with displeasure of thy will and of thy reason withstandest it, thou slayest it, though it be so that it cleave still upon thy heart against thy will, and will not lightly pass away. Tread it not; for it letteth thy soul from peace, but it defileth not thy soul. Right so upon the same wise shalt thou do against all evil stirrings of covetousness, accide [sloth], gluttony, and lechery, that thou be always ready with thy reason and thy will to reprove them and despise them. And that mayest thou do the better and the more readily if thou be busy to set thine heart most upon one thing. And that thing is naught else but a ghostly desire to God, to please Him, to love Him, to know Him, to see Him, and to have Him by grace here in a little feeling and in the bliss of heaven in a full being. This desire, if thou keep it, shall well tell thee which is sin and which is not, and which is good and which is better good. And if thou wilt fasten thy thought thereto, it shall teach thee all that thou wantest. And therefore, when thou shalt rise against the ground of sin in general, or else in any special sin, hang fast upon this desire and set the point of thy thought more upon God whom thou desirest than upon the sin which thou reprovest. For if thou do so, then God fighteth for thee, and He shall destroy sin in thee. Thou shalt much sooner come to thy purpose if thou do so, than if thou leave thy meek desire to God principally, and will set thine heart only against the stirring of sin, as though thou wouldest destroy it by mastery of thyself. Thou shalt never so bring it about.

ISLAMIC SUFISM**The Mind**

by Al-Ghazzali

The mind is like a mirror which reflects images. But just as the mirror, the image and the mode of reflection are three different things, so mind, objects and the way of knowing are also distinct. There are five reasons which may prevent the object from being reflected in the mirror.

- (1) There may be something wrong with the mirror.
- (2) Something other than the mirror may prevent the reflection.
- (3) The object may not be in front of it.
- (4) Something may come between the mirror and the object.
- (5) The position of the object may not be known, so that the mirror may not be properly placed.

Similarly for five reasons the mind fails to receive knowledge.

- (1) The mind may be imperfect like the child's.
- (2) Sin and guilt may bedim the mind and throw a veil over it.

(3) The mind may be diverted from the real object. For example, a man may be obedient and good, but, instead of rising higher to the acquisition of truth and contemplation of God, is contented with bodily devotions and acquirement of means of living. Such a mind, though pure, will not reflect the Divine Image, for his objects of thought are other than this. If this is the condition of such a mind, think what will be the state of those minds which are absorbed in the gratification of their inordinate passions.

(4) An external screen may, as it were, come before the objects. Sometimes a man who has subjugated his passions, still through blind imitation or prejudice, fails to know the truth. Even many virtuous men fall a prey to it and blindly stick to their dogmas.

(5) There may be ignorance of the means for the acquisition of truth. Thus for an illustration: A man wants to see his back in a mirror. If he places the mirror before his eyes, he fails to see his back; if he keeps it facing his back, it will be out of sight. Let him then take another mirror and place one before his eyes and the other facing his back in such a position that the image of the latter

is reflected in the former. Thus he will be able to see his back. Similarly, the knowledge of the proper means and technique is a key to the knowledge of the Unknown from the known.



The Parable of the King

by Al-Ghazzali

A certain king sent a horse, a robe of honour and travelling expenses to one of his suzerains in a distant land. Although the king had no need of his services, the royal gift was a favour shown to his suzerain, so that he might come to the king's court and be happy in his presence. If the suzerain understands the king's intention from the nature of the gift and fully utilizes it with a grateful and devoted heart, he will wait on the king and live happily, but if he misuses the gift or takes no heed of it, he will prove an ungrateful wretch.

It is thus that the boundless mercy of the omnipotent and omniscient God bestowed on us the gift of life, providing us with bodily organs, mental and moral faculties, so that we uplift ourselves by utilizing them properly, and be worthy of being admitted into his holy presence. If we misuse them or pay no regard to them, surely we shall be ungrateful wretches, unmindful of the blessings bestowed on us for our good, and thus be doomed to unhappiness.



Some Stories and Parables of the Early Sufi Saints

Hasan Basri (d. 728)

Hasan Basri used to say, "I have been startled by the sayings of four persons:— (1) a drunkard, (2) a debauchee, (3) a child, (4) a woman.

(1) One day I saw a drunkard staggering in the midst of the mire. I said to him, 'Try and walk so as not to stumble.'— 'O Hasan,' the drunkard replied, 'in spite of all your efforts, do *you* walk firmly in the way of God? Tell me, yes or no. If I fall in the mire no great harm is done. I can get rid of it by washing, but if you fall into the pit of self-conceit, you will never emerge clean and your eternal welfare will be entirely ruined.' These words pierced me to the heart.

(2) Again, as I passed once close to a man of infamous charac-

ter, I drew my robes close about me lest they should touch him. 'O Hasan,' he said, 'why draw thy robes away from contact with me? Only the Most High knows what will be the end of each.'

(3) Another time I saw a child coming towards me holding a lighted torch in his hand. 'Where have you brought this light from?' I asked him. He immediately blew it out and said to me, 'O Hasan, tell me where it is gone, and I will tell you whence I fetched it.'

(4) One day a beautiful woman with her face unveiled, came to me. She had just been quarrelling with her husband, and no sooner had she met me than she began reporting his words. 'O woman,' I said, 'first cover thy face and then speak.' 'O Hasan,' she answered, 'in my excitement I lost reason and I did not even know that my face was uncovered. If you had not told me, I should have gone thus into the bazar. But you who with so great zeal cultivate the friendship of the Most High, ought you not to curb your eye so as not to see whether my face was uncovered or not?' Her words sank deeply into my heart."

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An Arab visiting Hasan Basri asked for a definition of patience. Hasan answered, "There are two kinds of patience; one kind consists in bearing afflictions and calamities bravely and in abstaining from what the Most High has forbidden, the other kind consists in never lending an ear to the suggestions of the Evil One." "As for me," said the Arab, "I have never seen anyone more retiring from the world and more patient than thy self." "Alas," answered Hasan, "my renouncement of the world and my patience count as nothing." "Why dost thou say so?" exclaimed the Arab. "Because if I practise renouncement, it is only from dread of punishment, and if I keep patient, it is only because I hope to get my reward. Now that man alone deserves to be taken into account who, without self-regarding motives, practises patience for the sake of the Most High, and whose renouncement of the world has not any reward for its object, but only the desire to please God. Such a way of acting is a manifest sign of sincerity of heart."

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Hasan Basri once asked the great Sufi saint Rabi'a if she ever thought of marrying. She answered, "The marriage contract can be entered into by those who have possession of their free-will. As for

me, I have no will to dispose of. I belong to the Lord, and I rest in the shadow of His commandment, counting myself as nothing.” “But,” said Hasan, “how have you arrived at such a degree of piety?” “By annihilating myself completely.”



Rabi'a, the Woman Saint

Someone asked Rabi'a one day, “Whence comest thou?” “From the other world,” was her reply. “And whither goest thou?” “Into the other world.” “And what doest thou in this world?” “I jest with it by eating its bread and doing the works of the other world in it.”

“O Rabi'a,” said another to her, “dost thou love the Lord?” “Truly”, she replied, “I love Him.” “And dost thou regard the Evil One as an enemy?” “I love the Lord so much”, she answered, “that I do not trouble myself about the enmity of the Evil One.”

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On one occasion when Malik Dinar, Hasan Basri and Shaqiq were with Rabi'a, the conversation turned on sincerity of heart towards God. Hasan Basri said, “He has not sincere love for God who does not bear with constancy the afflictions which the Most High sends Him.” “That remark savours of self-conceit”, said Rabi'a. Shaqiq observed, “He is not sincere who does not render thanks for afflictions.” “There is a higher degree of sincerity than that”, said Rabi'a. Malik Dinar suggested, “He is not sincere who does not find delight in the afflictions which the Most High sends.” “That is not the purest sincerity”, she remarked. Then they asked her to define sincerity. Rabi'a said, “He is not sincere who does not forget the pain of affliction through his absorption in God.”



Ibrahim Ben Adham (d. 875)

One night when Ibrahim Ben Adham was in bed he heard a sound of footsteps in the roof of his palace. “Who are you on the roof?” he cried out. An answer came, “I have lost a camel, and I am looking for it on this roof.” “Well,” he said, “you must be a fool for your pains, to look for a camel on a roof!” “And thou witless man,” returned the voice, “is it while seated on a throne of gold that thou expectest to find the Most High? That is madder than to seek a camel on a roof!” At these words fear seized the heart of Ibrahim, who spent the rest of the night in prayer till the early dawn. The

next morning he took his seat upon his throne, round which were ranged all the grandees of his kingdom and his guards, according to their rank, in the usual manner. All of a sudden Ibrahim perceived in the midst of the crowd a majestic figure, who advanced towards him unseen by the rest. When he had come near, Ibrahim asked him, "Who art thou and what hast thou come to seek here?" "I am a stranger", he answered, "and I wish to stay at this inn." "But this is not an inn, it is my own palace," replied Ibrahim. "To whom did it belong before thee?" inquired the stranger calmly. "To my father." "And before thy father, to whom did it belong?" "To my grandfather." "And where are thy ancestors now?" "They are dead." "Well, then, is this house anything but an inn, where the coming guest succeeds to the departing one?" So saying the stranger began to withdraw. Ibrahim rose, ran toward him and said, "I adjure thee to stop, in the name of the Most High." The stranger paused. "Who art thou," cried Ibrahim, "who hast lit this fire in my Soul?" "I am Khizr, O Ibrahim. It is time for thee to awake." So saying, he disappeared. Ibrahim, pierced with sorrow, awoke from his trance and felt a keen disdain for all earthly grandeur and pleasures.



Bayazid Bastami (d. 874)

"After having endured the rigours of asceticism for forty years, one night I found myself before the doors and curtains which hide the throne of God. 'For pity's sake,' I exclaimed, 'let me pass.' 'O Bayazid,' cried a Voice, 'you still possess a pitcher and an old cloak; you cannot pass.' Then I cast away the pitcher and the cloak, and I heard the Voice again address me, 'O Bayazid, go and say to those who do not know:— Behold for forty years I have practised rigorous asceticism. Well, till I cast away my broken pitcher and torn cloak, I could not find access to God; and **you**, who are entangled in the ties of worldly loves and interests, how shall **you** discover the way to Him?"

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Once being asked how old he was, Bayazid replied, "I am four years old." "How is that, Shaikh?" they said. "For seventy years", he answered, "I have been enveloped in the veils of this dull world; it is only four years since I disentangled myself from them and **see** God."

“When from hatred to the world I fled to the Lord, His love so filled my heart that I hated myself. There are those among the servants of the Most High who would utter groans and wailings like the doomed in Hell if one put them in possession of the eight paradises without Him.— Whoso has the knowledge of the Lord receives from Him intuitional wisdom in such a manner that he needs not to have recourse to anyone to learn anything.— Sufism consists in giving up repose, and accepting suffering.

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How to Attain Self-Realisation

[Notes of Class-Talks]

By Swami Yatiswarananda

Why we are hunting after sense-objects

In every one there is a yearning for life, knowledge and happiness. All of us want to live and that consciously and happily. These:—Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute are the very essence of our soul, our true nature. And when we analyse the outside world, too, we find the same thing standing at the back of all phenomena. Everything, sentient, living and non-living, stands before us as an object that exists. Something there IS. And every thing has the capacity to force itself on our consciousness, possesses a sort of luminosity that shines in both the sentient and the insentient. There is no difference of kind but of degree. So in the inside world and in the outside world we find this abiding sense of existence and consciousness, and thus a glimpse of the Reality. All things, more or less, fulfil the want of every individual. We all run after the sense-object, the outside thing, in search of some particular sense-pleasure which we think we shall derive from the possession of that thing, whatever its nature may be. The desire for happiness is always there. Sense-objects only draw our mind because of the idea that we are going to derive some enjoyment from them. It is because of this that we feel tempted, not because of the intrinsic value of that particular object. Thus, not merely in ourselves, but also in all outside objects, sentient and insentient, we get a glimpse of what may be called Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Name and form hide the face of Truth in ourselves and in the outside ob-

jects, but all names and forms reflect dimly the glory of the Reality at their back. In us there is always a subconscious feeling with regard to this Reality. It may be very vague, very indefinite, but still it is there. The task of all spiritual life is to make the indefinite consciousness definite, if we really want to come face to face with Truth. First we should begin with ourselves, find out that which exists in ourselves at the back of our ego.

False identifications

So long as there is false identification and false sense of personality, Brahman—the Truth—can never be realised. There is this false identification in us, and during the time of this identification we see we are shifting the centre of our consciousness continually. There is such a thing as having one's consciousness rooted in the Transcendental even while working or living on the phenomenal plane, but this can never be done so long as all this wrong identification with our body and our mind lasts. Sometimes we identify ourselves with the body: "Oh, I am hurt, I feel such physical pain."— Sometimes again there is identification with the mind: "Oh, So-and-So was awfully rude to me. I feel so worried, I feel so sorry."— All this is wrong identification, but the common factor in this identification is —"I", "I", "I"—always this "I", that comes in different forms. And so long as this "I" lasts, we cannot even get a glimpse of Brahman. But there is one point to note:— Even at the time of this wrong identification we have the consciousness of something that abides. At the back of this wrong "I", there is something that does not change. And it is the task of the spiritual man to find out what that really is.— What is this "I"? No thought of the finite is ever possible without the thought of the Infinite, however indefinite it may be. Positing one we posit the other too. We cannot formulate the Infinite, Pure Consciousness, the Atman; but although It can never be formulated, It can be realised.

"The Truth can be realised by Him whom It chooses and to whom It reveals Itself." From the Monistic standpoint, you are yourself your own Chooser, as this Self, this Truth, is not something distinct from you—and if you go and choose yourself to be the knower of this Truth, and really strive for It, you *become* It. Spiritual realisation is *Self*-realisation.

"Be bold and face the Truth." There must be merciless self-analysis. First of all, try to find and regain your own soul. Your soul is

practically lost to you, and only after you have found it again, the question of this higher Realisation will arise.

Spiritual life begins with the recognition of the fact that we are neither bodies nor masses of emotions, neither men nor women; we are spiritual entities. And it is necessary to have this ideal as the very basis of all our activities.

Freedom

It is essential for us to have a true conception of freedom. Do we want freedom *for* the senses, do we want license, or do we want freedom *from* the senses? Which is the right idea of freedom? Is it freedom to allow the mind to run after enjoyment, to be the slave of the senses? Is it freedom thus to dig our own graves? Or is it freedom to control all desires, to master all desires and become free from the senses and their cravings? This alone is what is called attaining to the freedom of the Atman, and the freedom of license is no freedom at all. So long as we go on clinging to our slave-mentality and allow ourselves to be driven like slaves by our senses, we cannot progress. Only the life of sense-control and purity leads to real freedom, and nothing else. There is no romance and no place for romance in spiritual life, neither materially nor mentally. It is a hard life, a life of struggle and strain. We want freedom and fearlessness. We want to break the limitations of the body and the mind and be *free*, and this we can never attain so long as we cling to our different desires and passions and animal cravings. Self-Realisation cannot be obtained without the renunciation of all our clinging to body and mind, to our own bodies and minds, as well as to those of others.

Our great Sage Sankaracharya says, “*A human birth, desire for emancipation and contact with great holy men, these three are very rare and are attained only through the grace of the Lord.*” But then even these three advantages do not suffice. We must be eager to profit by them and willing to sacrifice everything for the higher life. Without paying the full price, we cannot become free and fearless. And without freedom and fearlessness there is no happiness for us, neither in this nor in any future life. We must be eager to realize the Truth. We must be prepared to sacrifice all our petty sentiments and personal desires for the Highest, then alone, one day, the Highest will be ours. Struggle, struggle, struggle. This is the only way. Let us bear in mind that salvation is to be attained

in this very human birth.

Renunciation

Spiritual practice can never be successfully performed without true renunciation and dispassion, without giving up all old associations with reference to things and people. Only to the extent to which we are prepared to renounce our desires and passions and our clinging to others through attachment or through aversion, can spiritual practices be performed with profit and can any progress be made. Let us never allow our mind to delude us on this point. The mind always tries to bring forward some plausible reason or other—why we cannot renounce this or that thing, why we should be in the company of such and such a person, why it is our duty to talk to him or her, etc., etc. Never believe your mind in such cases. It is always out to deceive you and to become the spokesman for your subconscious or half-conscious desires. So we need, not only Japam [Repetition of the Holy Name thinking of the Divine] and prayer and meditation and other spiritual practices, but also renunciation and non-attachment, and only to the extent to which we succeed in having more and more of true renunciation and non-attachment, can all our strivings have any real, appreciable effect. When these two are combined—the practices and renunciation—it becomes possible for us to control the mind and begin with the cleansing of all its dirty nooks and crannies where we have allowed all kinds of filth to accumulate for ages and ages through countless births. Things or persons, whom we love passionately, affect the mind, bring attachment, hatred and aversion. Attachment and aversion are only the obverse and reverse of the self-same coin. Never make any mistake as to this. They come under the same category. Hatred or aversion is love or attachment turned upside down. It is not something essentially different. We must get rid of all forms of attachment and of all forms of fear, by becoming dispassionate and free from personal likes and dislikes. We must be kind, without ever becoming too personal, and there should never be any personal or selfish claim on anybody or anybody's love, nor should we under any circumstances ever allow anybody to have any personal claim on us or on our affection. Christ says, "*He who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,*" and there is nothing truer than this. But he who allows any other person to love him more than the Divine is not worthy of the Divine either, and will

never attain the Divine, however hard he may try. We only get what we sow, and so long as we go on sowing all these petty affections and hatreds, these likes and dislikes, fettering ourselves and others with chains of so-called love, etc., etc., we shall remain bond-slaves eternally, bringing misery on ourselves and on others. Misery will always come. In some cases it comes soon, in others late, but all have to pay for their folly.

And this is the secret which all who desire to lead a spiritual life should know. There is both love and hatred, and we cannot get rid of them all at once. So what to do? We may keep our love and our hatred, but we should consciously direct our love only to the Highest, to the Divine, never primarily to any person or thing. Our hatred should be directed towards everything that prevents us from realising our true nature, towards all obstacles, everything that stands in the way of our progress.

Stepping-stones leading to the ideal

Without a working ideal, spiritual life cannot begin at all. If we put this working ideal too high nothing can be achieved, but, at the same time, we should never lower the ideal as such, but rise to it step by step by taking higher and higher working ideals. There should be faith in the words of the seers, teachers and prophets, faith in one's own potentiality and strength and purity. But mere faith is not enough. We must strive our utmost. Ethical culture means: chastity, continence, purity in thought word and deed, purity in food, purity in one's company and associations, purity in what one hears and listens to. And chastity, purity, is more important than the external forms of religion.

First comes physical purity. Then the mind must be tackled and controlled. The control of speech, too, is most essential. We should never listen to anything that is not perfectly pure and should behave in such a manner that others will not dare to discuss anything impure in our presence. We ought to maintain the steady flow of the undercurrent of pure thought, to keep our mind fixed on the goal. The undercurrent always protects us and creates in us an atmosphere that does not allow others to become immorally intimate with us. Bad thoughts vitiate the air, and we must purify ourselves by good thoughts and purify each other by good thoughts also.

After that, a new attitude has to be developed with regard to all things or objects that tempt us in any way, till perfect indifference

with reference to them all is reached. So we should keep strict watch over all the movements of our mind, so as to become more and more conscious, more and more definite in everything. There should not be any unconscious movement in our life so long as we remain awake.

This is very essential, because in the first period of spiritual life—and the first period may extend over many many years—body-consciousness becomes stronger, and the mind tends to wander more than it used to do before any practices were taken up. At the same time, affections and aversions become more prominent and dangerous if we do not scrupulously avoid coming in touch with their objects, either mentally or physically, or both.

For a time the body becomes in a special way the centre of consciousness in the beginner, as soon as he begins to try to draw the mind away. So we should not allow ourselves to be hoodwinked by the subtle desires that may crop up and try to drag us away to their particular objects. The aspirant can never be careful enough in his associations and in the company he keeps during the first years of his training for the higher life. Many do not realise this and then come to grief. So we should learn to be conscious, to be aware of our motives, to stop all forms of drifting, to prevent all expressions of a merely instinctive life.

Wholesome daily habits

There is one point which is very essential in the course of one's spiritual striving. We all must learn how to take rest after strenuous work. It is very good to have a short break in our activity after dinner, i.e., in the middle of the day, if we can afford it. This is very efficacious, but very difficult for many to practise. For many it is so hard to have just a little nap or break of consciousness, or even just a little break in the hectic and feverish activities of their mind, filling it again with the Divine Name and Thought, and harmonising vibrations of the holy sound.

We should also make it a point never to read anything worldly: worldly novels, fiction or stories, before going to bed or before falling asleep, but to have some holy thought and some holy sound to dwell on, to think with great intensity that we are going to sleep in the lap of God, or some such idea, to fill our whole being before falling asleep with the Divine Idea and the feeling of the Divine. If we permit ourselves to read something worldly, this goes on work-

ing in our subconscious mind during the hours of sleep and has very bad effects. In the evening we should be very careful as to what we allow our mind to busy itself with or as to how we get our mind absorbed in holy thoughts. There should be concentrated and peaceful dwelling on the Divine, either the Divine form, or the Divine name, or the Divine idea—or on all the three combined, which is the most efficacious way. Only thus can we in time succeed in transforming the contents of our subconscious mind. As already said, it is very harmful to read worldly books before falling asleep, but we generally do not realise the extent of the harm we do to ourselves by being careless in this. The workings of the subconscious during the time of our sleep are very important and should not be lost sight of.

There is one more point which should be mentioned. If you awake at night, at once begin doing your Japam, in a quiet, peaceful way, without any unnecessary strain. Let this bring relaxation to your body and mind. Then go to sleep again if there is time. Again, during the time of your practices, Japam and sleep should never become connected. This is very bad. Before going to bed, do Japam a certain number of times, fill yourself with the holy sound and thought and make it a point never to stop doing Japam before having reached the number you intended to do as a form of discipline.

Good habits are to be formed and strengthened. Then spiritual life becomes easier and loses much of its initial strain. Strictly preserve your fixed hours. Then meditation slowly becomes possible even when the mind tends to be very restless. There should be perfect regularity in the hours of your spiritual practices, because only thus does the mind grow accustomed to them. And under all circumstances a certain minimum is to be kept up in one's daily practices. The time of the practices should be slowly and steadily increased in the case of the beginner and also in the case of the advanced student, and only later on can one make use of the undercurrent in one's mind, which enables one to keep part of the mind busy with the practices at all times, whatever one happens to do outwardly. Before that state is reached, the greatest regularity concerning the hours and the minimum amount of spiritual practices which are to be done is absolutely necessary in the case of *all* aspirants.

Know how to die!

We should always act in such a way that we may equip ourselves fully to be able to meet death with a smile. It should become the gateway to Immortality, to be welcomed, never to be feared. This life is nothing but a passing show, a phase, a life in a world of unrealities and shadows. Our future depends on what we think in this life, on what we are, never on what we appear or pretend to be.

Bear in mind:— Whatever be the Truth, let us face It undauntedly! An unpleasant truth is always infinitely better than a pleasant falsehood, even if this truth breaks our heart, even if it shatters once and for all our fondest hopes and illusions. Let the true light come to us under all circumstances, no matter, whether the heart breaks or not. Do not care so much for the shattering of hopes and the breaking of hearts as for the coming of Truth and Light. Nothing is truer than the fact that some day the body will fall off. And we should so conduct ourselves that we have no occasion to repent for having wasted our precious time, our precious human birth and Divine possibilities.

The great poet Tulsidas sings: "*When I was born, I cried and others laughed. Let me act in such a way that when I die, I laugh and others cry.*" This is the real task of our life. So we have a proverb in Bengal that says, "*Do whatever spiritual practices you like, but you must know how to die.*"

Death is always of the body, never of the Spirit or the SELF. So why fear death? Death should neither be courted nor be feared; neither should life be so. The bier is quite as real as the cradle, the burning-ground as real as the nursery, but we rejoice at the one and recoil from the other. Why? We should neither cling to life nor be afraid of death, because the SELF is something infinitely greater than this shadow of life, the phenomenal existence. We cling to our bodies and to those of others, to our own minds and to those of others, and think we have got hold of life. We have **not**. We have got hold of the mirage, the reflection of the reflection of the reflection, and nothing more than that, and go on hugging it to our breast. What an inordinate attachment to all that is **not** Life! The **true** aspirant, he who has **true** spiritual yearning, neither clings to life, nor does he ever yearn for death, because, to him, neither of them has any true reality. The world is the training-ground. We

should act in the right way, so as to make the very best use of the short span of life given to us. We need not be afraid of death, neither of our own nor that of anybody else's, if we just minimise the attachments of life and our personal relationships with the phantoms of others, with the men-phantoms and women-phantoms, of which none has any ultimate reality. Relationships based on the mirage always prove to be nothing but a mirage in the end. You cannot have real relationship with what is unreal and which has no ultimate being,

The death of our Great Ones has taught us great lessons. How wonderful was that of Swamis Ramakrishnananda, Premananda, Brahmananda, Turiyananda—the great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna! The worldly-minded and those who cling to their personal attachments alone are afraid of death. The spiritual do not lose anything. It is just like passing from one room to another, from a grosser plane of existence to a subtler one. It is the body that dies, not the SELF. We must be prepared to die for a righteous cause without any hesitation, and we must be fully prepared to see others, too, die for it. So our motto is: *“To work for our own salvation as well as for the salvation of others.”* This is what Swami Vivekananda wanted us to do and this is the guiding motto of the Order.

All these glorious lives are before us, show us how to live and how to die. We have only to mould ourselves according to the pattern they have placed before us again and again. Even if we fall in this battle of life, through newer and newer lives we shall work with renewed vigour. Step by step, and stage by stage we shall move onwards until we attain to our life's only goal.

The conception of the SELF

Generally we ourselves create all the obstacles that stand in the way of our spiritual progress or Self-Realisation. We think of ourselves in terms of the body and of the mind and do the same with reference to others, Then we go and take up direct relations with them as men or as women, and then all the rest naturally follows in due course. On what does this whole life of the body and of the mind depend? On consciousness, and not on my man-form or my woman-form or child-form etc., etc. The moment the SELF leaves the body, the body becomes lifeless. All its charm vanishes. Nobody feels attracted by a dead form, be it ever so beautiful, but what really attracts us in the man-form or in the woman-form is

consciousness which we mistakenly identify with that particular body or mind. There is such a lot of blind infatuation in the world owing to this superimposition on the Reality. Without undermining all these wrong notions and conceptions, all our body-bound and mind-bound likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, we shall never be able to make any spiritual progress. If I love the life of the body so greatly, why do I not look to that on which it depends for its very existence? We should learn to love the SELF all the more, because only owing to Its presence is there any life in the body and in the mind at all. The cause is greater than the effect, and the cause of the life of my body and mind and that of all others is the SELF alone, not any name and form. If I want Life and Love permanent and unchanging, I must look to the SELF and *never* to any of the limiting adjuncts. But it takes people many, many lives to see this and realize their Himalayan mistake.

Our task is to go somehow or other beyond this Maya, this phenomenal world, and reach the Reality. And this can never be done without chastity in thought, word and deed. Unity, ultimate oneness, cannot be reached so long as one remains physically and mentally tied to duality. There are some spiritual aspirants who say:— “Lord, I am Thine.” Others say:— “Lord, I am Thyself.”— There is a difference in expression, but the ultimate goal is one and the same, when we clearly understand the standpoint from which both are said. In both cases, only the Lord remains as the sole actor and agent. The ego disappears. And this should be our aim and should be attained by us all.

Reincarnation is in no way the most vital point. What is of greater importance is to try to get full illumination in this very life. None is forced to follow the spiritual path, but all those who have decided to do so should do it with great enthusiasm and perseverance, never swerving from their path, not even an inch. We should learn to be tremendously sincere and one-pointed and not allow ourselves to be swayed by indecision and doubt.

Tat Tvam Asi

This great Vedantic dictum really speaking means that that which is at the back of the outside world and that which is at the back of myself is one and the same, the One Indivisible, eternally Undivided, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. We see something in the outside world, but we always see it coloured by the red flower

behind it. The individualised soul in its real nature and the outside world in its real nature are eternally one and the same.

Even our mind which creates all differentiation is Maya and nothing but Maya,— a part of the phenomena. And there comes a time for all sincere aspirants when this mind ceases to be, and there remains only the Thing-in-itself, the Pure Being. But what this Maya is, none has ever been able to express in words. Sankara says:— *“We cannot say it is Sat or Asat, existence or non-existence, or even a combination of both.”*

Maya, or phenomenal existence, is to be understood as something that exists during ignorance, but that ceases to be on the dawn of true knowledge. But till then, it is a fact of our consciousness. It is not nothing. Personal Maya is related to cosmic Maya as a tree to a forest, as a wave to the ocean. Maya, Avidya, is not merely negative. It is not merely ignorance in the negative sense, but something positive, the nature of which cannot be described. Maya is a “statement of fact”, as Swami Vivekananda put it. At one time it exists, at another time it ceases to be, but while we are in Maya we can never ask the question what Maya is. And when we are out of it, the question does not arise. We have to take Maya as a fact at a certain time, and find ways and means to get out of it. Neither existence nor non-existence can be predicated of it. It is all beyond human comprehension and can never be grasped by the intellect:

But although we cannot know the nature of the Maya, we can, however, transcend it and attain to the Self,— the Reality. May we be able to say with Swami Vivekananda:

*“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’.”*



The Story of Alvan

There lived in Kuram, a village near Kanchi, a Brahmin named Sri Vatsanka, who, from his great wealth and noble qualities of heart, was generally recognised as the Lord of Kuram [Kuranatha]. He was known far and wide for his open hospitality and great kindness towards the poor and oppressed, and from morning to night he welcomed guests of every description and entertained them with the very best that he could find. His heart was ever open to the appeals of charity and his hand was never closed against the poor and the needy.

One night, the Divine Mother at Kanchi heard a great clanging of metal coming from a distance, and curious to ascertain what it was that gave rise to such an unusual noise so late in the night, when sleep and darkness reigned over the world and kept it enwrapped in stupor. She said to Her Lord, "Whence comes this strange disturbance?" "But, my Dear, this is neither strange nor unusual, I hear it every day after nightfall and it is pleasant to my ears, for it is the closing for the night of the huge brazen gates of the dining-hall of a great food-giver and lover of men in a village not far from hence."

"Indeed? How is it then that you have not thought of bringing him to see Me? And you have all along kept him to yourself, selfishly, as it would seem."

Varada turned to Kanchi Purna, who was in attendance upon them, and directed him to bring Kuranatha to them. Nambi waited upon the great man the next morning and communicated to him the will of the Lord. Sri Vatsanka meditated for a moment and then said sadly, "I am known as a great food-giver and lover of men, am I! I have unconsciously but all the more assiduously intensified the spirit of I-ness in me, so far as to attract the notice of the Giver of all. What am I, the worst of sinners, the self-conceited worm, that I should pollute the Holy Sanctuary of the Divine Pair! What do I not owe them, for their kindly awakening me to a sense of my own unworthiness and evil ways! Humbly submit to the Lord from me that I am as yet quite unworthy to stand in His Presence."

He then distributed his vast wealth among the poor and set out for Kanchi. His wife, a model of purity and devotion, followed him at a distance unperceived. They were passing through a dense forest, dark and lonely, when she ventured to address her lord, saying,

“Lord, I am afraid!”

Sri Vatsanka started at the sound of a voice and looked back. He saw his wife and asked in amazement, “And who advised you to leave your house, people, friends and comforts to follow me, a homeless wanderer on the path to God?”

“My heart, Lord of my life, my whole world is centred in you. All my hopes here and hereafter are founded on you. When was it otherwise?”

“Let that be. Have you brought away anything valuable?”

“Yes, my Lord, this gem-studded goblet I have reserved for my Lord to drink from.”

Alvan laughed and said kindly, “Thou innocent and faithful heart! When was a beggar ever known to drink from a gem-studded golden goblet? Hand it over to me. He flung it far, far away from him, and said with a smile, “Now your fear, too, is far, far away from you.”

They then proceeded to Kanchi and lived a humble self-sacrificing life of chastity and renunciation,— he, with his whole soul centred in the Lord alone, and she drawing her life and inspiration from his example. But the keen eyes of the Master, Sri Ramanuja, found him out, and he invited him to his monastery, received him there with open arms and admitted him as his disciple. Alvan became the holiest and the most learned of all those that sought refuge and illumination with Sri Ramanuja, and the Master had the utmost regard and respect for so sincere and self-forgetting a disciple, and Alvan was next to his heart and never allowed a worldly thought or a thought of the past to ruffle the limpid waters of his mind which, as the years rolled on, became one of the most perfect temples and dwelling places of the Lord.



Pravacana-sara

That happiness which is dependent, connected with detriment, interrupted, cause of bondage, unequal, acquired by means of the senses is misery.

Manifold bondage arises for the soul which is evolved through infatuation, attachment and aversion; therefore these must be destroyed.

If anyone has delusion in regard to the body, etc., etc., even to the extent of an ultimate atom, he does not attain perfection, though knowing the Scripture completely.

Nothing anywhere is imperceptible to him who is rich in all qualities of the sense-organs, who always surpasses the realm of the senses and who himself has become one with knowledge.

As the sun is by itself a light, and is warm, and a god in the sky, so is the Perfected knowledge, joy and a god in this world.

When the eye of a person destroys darkness, then there is no use for a lamp; similarly the self itself is pleasure, what avail the sense-objects therefor?

Know misery to be innate in those who find satisfaction with sense-objects; for, if this were not their innate nature, their activity for the sake of sense-objects would not be.

—**Pravacana-sara** of Kunda-kunda Acharya—



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

The Path leading to Self-Realisation

Making one's vision full of spiritual Wisdom, one should look upon the world as full of Brahman. That vision is very noble.

Where there is Truth alone, there is no non-truth possible. Where there is non-truth alone, there is no Truth possible.

—Tejobindu Upanishad—

Courage, fortitude, the control of the body and the senses, honesty, purity of mind and of body, control of the inner organs, shame, knowledge, truth, absence of anger, — these ten are the characteristics of Dharma [Righteousness]. One who does not look back with pleasure upon past enjoyments, nor forward into the future, and one who does not rejoice in the present, is fit to become a spiritual man.

Roam through the world with vision ever directed inwards, with purity, with mind under control, with a mind that is full of Brahman and all desires for non-Brahman given up within.

The Self that is the atom of atoms and the greatest of the great, is in the cave of the heart of all creatures. One without the thought of objects and without grief, knows the Self capable of neither increase nor decrease through the grace of God [Iswara] or through the non-attraction to the objects of the senses.

This Brahman is neither internal nor external consciousness, is neither gross, nor Jñāna [knowledge], nor Ajñāna [ignorance]; nor is It the state between the waking and the dream-states. It cannot be cognised by the organs; is not subject to proof; is within. He who knows that which is by Itself alone is an emancipated person.

—Naradaparivrajaka-Upanishad—

All souls are immersed in happiness and sorrow through the snare of Maya. Kaivalya, the Supreme Seat, is the path which gives them emancipation, which rends asunder the snare of Maya, which is the destroyer of birth, old age, and disease, and which enables one to overcome death. There are no other paths to salvation.

Whatever the aspirant sees, let him consider as the Self. Whatever he hears with his ears, let him consider as the Self. Whatever he smells with his nose, let him consider as the Self. Whatever he sees with his eyes, let him consider as the Self. Whatever he tastes with his tongue, let him consider as the Self. Whatever he touches with the skin, let him consider as the Self.

—Yogatattva-Upanishad—

Passion, anger, avarice, delusion, pride and malice are the six kinds of foes.

—Varaha-Upanishad—

As the world appears dark to the blind and bright to those having good eyes, so this world full of manifold miseries to the ignorant is full of happiness to the wise. In Me, the Divine, who am infinite, and the Bliss of Absolute Consciousness, if there is the conception of Non-Dualism, where then is bondage? And who is the one to be emancipated? The real nature of all embodied objects is Absolute Consciousness. Like the pot seen by the eyes, the body and its aggregates do not possess any ultimate reality. Knowing, as the Self, all the locomotive and the fixed worlds that appear as other than the Self, meditate upon them as "It I am". Such a person then enjoys his real nature. There is no other to be enjoyed than one-Self.

One who is perfect in the knowledge of Brahman, though he always sees this established universe, does not see it other than his Self. By cognising clearly My, the Divine's form, one is not trammelled by Karma. He is an undaunted person who, by his own experience, cognises as his own real nature all the universe and Brahman.

—Varaha-Upanishad—



HINDUISM

Words of Sri Ramakrishna

If a single dive into the sea do not bring to you the pearl, do not conclude that the sea is without pearls. Countless are the pearls hidden in the sea. So if you fail to see God directly when you have finished a few devotional exercises, do not lose heart. Go on patiently with your exercises and you are sure to obtain Divine Grace at the proper time.

What should a man do if he be informed that large fishes abound in a certain pond? Were he first to visit those who had fished in it and enquire of them if his information were correct, and if so, what would be the most suitable bait, and were he to spend his time in collecting information of like nature, he would never be fishing. What he should do is to go to the pond, throw his line and wait with patience. Presently he will find the fishes nibbling at the bait and in due course he will succeed in hooking a large fish. Even so with matters spiritual. One should put implicit trust in what holy men and devotees say, and having thrown the bait of devotion, one should wait with the rod and line of patience.

A certain person said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Sir, I have gone through a long course of devotional exercises but everything is as dark as before. They are of no use to persons of my kind." Sri Ramakrishna gave him a slight smile and said, "Look here; the hereditary farmer does not leave off tilling the soil though it may not rain for twelve consecutive years, while those who do not strictly belong to that class but take to agriculture in the hope of making large profits are discouraged by one season of drought. The true believer does not give up repeating His Holy Name and proclaiming His Glory, if even with his life-long devotion he fails to see God."

Long must you struggle in the water before you learn to swim; similarly, many a struggle must you pass through before you can hope to swim on the ocean of Divine Bliss.

The tender bamboo can be easily bent, but the full-grown bamboo breaks when an attempt is made to bend it. It is easy to bend young hearts towards God, but the heart of the old escapes the hold when so drawn.

A wet match does not ignite, even by repeated rubbing, it will

simply break into small pieces. But a dry match ignites at once, even with the slightest rubbing. A guileless, honest and pure heart, untainted by worldly desires, is like a dry match. The slightest mention of the name of the Lord kindles the fire of Love in such a heart, but the mind of the worldly man, soaked in lust and wealth, is like the moist match. Though God may be preached a hundred times, the fire of love can never be kindled in him.

If there is a small hole in the bottom of a jar of water, the whole water flows out by and by, similarly, if there be the slightest tinge of worldliness in the aspirant, all his exertions come to naught.

Soft clay admits of forms, but the burnt clay does not. So those whose hearts are burnt with the fire of worldly desires cannot be impressed with spiritual ideas.

Paper rubbed over with oil cannot be written on. So, the soul spoiled by the oil of sense-enjoyment [Lust and Gold] is unfit for devotional exercises. But as oiled paper rubbed over with chalk can be written upon, so if the soul be chalked over with renunciation, again it becomes fit for devotional exercises.

When going through spiritual exercises [Sadhana] do not associate with those who never concern themselves with matters spiritual. Such people scoff at those who worship God and meditate upon Him and they ridicule piety and the pious. Keep yourself far, far aloof from them.

If one wishes to drink water from a shallow pond, one should gently take the water from the surface and not disturb it. If it is disturbed, the sediment will rise up from the bottom and make the water muddy. Similarly, if you desire to know God, have faith in your Guru [Spiritual guide] and steadily go on with devotional practices. Do not waste your energies over useless scriptural discussions and disputations. The little brain, you know, easily gets muddled.

Let there be harmony between your thought and speech; that is the right form of spiritual exercise. Otherwise, if you say, "O Lord, Thou art my all-in-all", while you are thoroughly convinced that the world is your all-in-all, all your devotional exercises are bound to be fruitless.

None can enter the Kingdom of Heaven if there be the least trace of desire in him, just as a thread can never enter the eye of a needle if there be any slight detached fibre at its end. When the

mind ceases to be moved by desire and thus becomes pure, then it is that one can realize the Absolute.

The aspirant for the Kingdom of Heaven must on no account be attached to Lust and Gold. It is impossible that one should ever become perfect [siddha] if there be the least attachment of the kind. Of the grains of paddy which are fried in a pan containing sand, those few that leap out of the pan and burst outside do not bear any mark of burn. The rest of the grains, which are in the pan itself, are all charred by the hot sand in some spot or other.

Just as an object cannot be reflected by water if it be agitated by the wind, so God cannot be reflected by the mental lake if it be agitated by the wind of desires. The human mind becomes ruffled by the process of breathing; hence it is that the Yogi first concentrates his mind by regulating his breath before he begins meditating upon God.

Every Sannyasin [a person who has renounced the world] and every lover of God should regard womankind, whether chaste or the reverse, as the manifestation of the Divine Mother.

He alone possesses the spirit of true renunciation who on meeting a young woman in a lonely place turns away from her, saluting her in his mind as his own mother. But he who acts in this way in the public gaze, merely for the sake of show, cannot be said to be a genuine tyagi [a person without worldly attachment].

At the beginning one should try to concentrate one's mind in a lonely place, otherwise the mind may be distracted by many things. If we keep milk and water together, they are sure to get mixed; but if the milk be churned into butter, the butter, instead of getting itself mixed with water, will float upon it. So, when by long practice a man has brought his mind under his control, he can constantly meditate upon God, whether he be in a lonely place or not.

How could you expect to get rid of a serious illness without rest and solitude? It is the typhoid that the worldly man is suffering from, and you keep a large jar of water and savoury pickles in the patient's room! An object of lust is like a pickle, and the desire to enjoy worldly things is like a jar of water. How could you expect to shake off your illness under the circumstances? One should retire into solitude for some time and practise devotional exercises. There is nothing to be afraid of if one returns home after one has made a

thorough recovery by adopting the above remedy.

In the first stage of one's spiritual life one should try to concentrate one's mind by going into solitude to meditate upon Him; when, by constant practice, the mind has been brought under control, one can meditate anywhere one chooses. A young plant requires to be protected with care by a fence, or else goats and cows will come and eat it up; but when the same plant grows into a large tree with a stout stem, the cows or goats tied to it will not injure it.

A certain young disciple asked Sri Ramakrishna, "Lord, how can one conquer lust?" Sri Ramakrishna smiled and said, "Look upon all women as your own mother; never look at the face of a woman but look towards her feet. All evil thoughts will then fly away."

The insect which appears in the rainy season rushes towards a flame and would rather die in the flame than return to darkness. Similarly, the devotee hastens to where holy men live and converse about God. He keeps himself aloof from the worthless attractions of the world and spends his time in devotional exercises.

He is born to no purpose who, having the rare privilege of being born a man, is unable to realise God in this life.

Words of Shankaracharya

The knowers of the Self discover, by their wisdom, that the individual soul, besmeared by illusion, is only a ray of the omnipotent Supreme Self reflected in the ocean of consciousness. This Brahman is variously reflected in accordance with the form and measure of the medium reflecting It, in the same way that the face is variously reflected corresponding to the mirror in the hand; but it is at all times what it ever is.



Just as a mother, in order to pacify her child that has been weeping for a very long time, places before it a grape, a date, a mango, or a good plantain fruit, so has the Upanishad, by various teaching expedients, enlightened the utterly ignorant mind that wanders restlessly in consequence of the faculty of delusion acquired in numerous lives.



Questions and Answers

Conversations with Swami Vivekananda

Q.— How can Vedanta be realised?

Swami Vivekananda — By “*hearing, reflection and meditation.*” Hearing must take place from a Sat-Guru [a fully qualified spiritual teacher]. Even if one is not a regular disciple, but is a fit aspirant and hears the Sat-Guru’s words, he is liberated.

Q — Who is a Sat-Guru?

Swami Vivekananda — A Sat-Guru is one on whom the spiritual power has descended by Guru-parampara or an unbroken chain of discipleship.

To play the role of a spiritual teacher is a very difficult thing. One has to take on oneself the sins of others. There is every chance of a fall in less advanced men. If merely physical pain ensues, then he should consider himself fortunate.

Q — Cannot the spiritual teacher make the aspirant fit?

Swami Vivekananda — An incarnation can. Not an ordinary Guru.

Q — Is there no easy way to liberation?

Swami Vivekananda — “There is no royal road to Geometry,” —except for those who have been fortunate enough to come in contact with an Incarnation. Paramahansa Deva [Sri Ramakrishna] used to say, “One who is having his last birth shall somehow or other see me.”

Q — Is not Yoga an easy path to that?

Swami Vivekananda — (jokingly): You have said well, I see! —Yoga an easy path! If your mind be not pure and you try to follow Yoga, you will perhaps attain some supernatural powers, but that will be a hindrance. Therefore purity of mind is the first thing necessary.

Q — How can this be attained?

Swami Vivekananda — By good work. Good work is of two kinds, positive and negative. “Do not steal” — that is a negative mandate, and “Do good to others” — is a positive one.

Q — Should not doing good to others be performed in a higher stage, for if performed in a lower stage it may bind one to the world?

Swami Vivekananda — It should be performed in the first stage. One who has any desire, at first, gets deluded and becomes bound but not others. Gradually it will become very natural.

Q — What is the means of realisation?

Swami Vivekananda: The Guru [spiritual teacher] is the means of realisation. “There is no knowledge without a spiritual teacher [Guru].”

Q — Some say that there is no necessity of practising meditation in a worship-room. How far is this true?

Swami Vivekananda — Those who have already realised the Lord’s presence may not require it, but for others it is necessary. One, however, should go beyond the form and meditate on the impersonal aspect of God, for no form can grant liberation.

Q — What is the meaning of “Even a moment’s association with the holy ones serves to take one beyond this relative existence”?

Swami Vivekananda — A *fit* person coming in contact with a *true* Sadhu [holy man] attains to liberation. True Sadhus are very rare, but their influence is such that a great writer has said, “Hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue”. But Avatars, Incarnations, are Kapalamochanas, that is, they can alter the doom of people. They can stir the whole world. The least dangerous and best form of worship is worshipping the God in man. One who has got the idea of Brahman in a man, has realised it in the whole universe.

Q — Where should one meditate — inside the body or outside? Should the mind be withdrawn inside or held outside?

Swami Vivekananda — We should try to meditate inside. As for the mind being here or there, it will take a long time before we reach the mental plane. Now our struggle is with the body. When one acquires perfect steadiness in posture, then and then alone, one begins to struggle with the mind. Asana [posture] being conquered, one’s limbs remain motionless, and one can sit as long as one pleases.

Q — Sometimes one gets tired of Japam [repetition of the holy sound-symbol or the Divine Name]; should one continue it or read some good book instead?

Swami Vivekananda — One gets tired of Japam for two reasons. Sometimes one’s brain is fatigued, sometimes it is the result

of idleness. If the former, then one should give up Japam for the time being, for persistence in it at that time results in seeing hallucinations, or in lunacy, etc. But if the latter, the mind should be forced to continue Japam.

Q — Sometimes sitting at Japam one gets joy first, but then one seems to be disinclined to continue the Japam owing to that joy. Should it be continued then?

Swami Vivekananda — Yes, that joy is a great hindrance to spiritual practice, its name being Rasaswadana [tasting of sweetness]. One must rise above that.

Q — Is it good to practise Japam for a long time though the mind may be wandering?

Swami Vivekananda — Yes. As some people break in a wild horse by always keeping their seat on his back.

Q — You have written in your "*Bhakti-Yoga*" that if a weak-bodied man tries to practise Yoga, a tremendous reaction comes. Then what to do?

Swami Vivekananda — What fear if you die in the attempt to realise the Self? Man is not afraid of dying for the sake of learning and many other things, and why should you fear to die for religion?

Q — Can Jiva-seva [service to living beings] alone give Mukti [liberation]?

Swami Vivekananda — Jiva-seva can give mukti, not directly but indirectly, through the purification of the mind. But if you wish to do a thing properly, you must, for the time being, think that that is all-sufficient. There must be constancy [Nishtha] or there will be no growth. At present it has become necessary to lay stress on Karma [selfless work].

Q — What should be our motive in work—compassion or any other motive?

Swami Vivekananda — Doing good to others out of compassion is good, but service of all beings in the spirit of the Lord is better.

Q — What is the efficacy of prayer?

Swami Vivekananda — By prayer one's subtle powers are easily roused and, if consciously done, all desires may be fulfilled by it; but done unconsciously, one perhaps in ten are fulfilled. Such prayer, however, is low and selfish and should therefore be dis-

carded.

Q — How to recognise God when He has assumed a human form?

Swami Vivekananda — One who can alter the doom of people is the Lord. No holy man [Sadhu], however advanced, can claim this unique position. To realise anybody as God and yet be attached to the world is inconsistent.



The Restraining of the Passions

[Compiled from the *Bhagavatam* Sk.7.Adh.15]

A person should conquer desire by shunning the wish or determination to gratify it, and conquer the passion of anger by eschewing Kama [desire to gain particular objects], and covetousness by seeing the evil in all worldly things sought after, and fear by a thorough perception of Truth. He should get rid of grief and attachment through a distinct knowledge of what is Atman and An-atman [Self and non-self], and of hypocrisy by service at the feet of the great and association with them, and the interruptions of Yoga [concentration] by the force of silence, and avoid harm to other creatures by cherishing no love to the body and all its belongings.

He should get over the troubles arising from other beings through kindness and mercy, and those caused by the gods through contemplation of the gods, and those arising in his own body and mind by strength of Yoga practices [Pranayama and the like], and sleep by using Sattvic food and the like. He should conquer Rajas and Tamas by means of the Sattva element and also Sattva by complete withdrawal from activity; and he may have all this conquest assured to him through his intense devotion to the Guru [spiritual teacher].

All the rules restricting the conduct and habits of man have but **one** purpose, viz., to serve restraining the six passions; and they would be only a source of mere labour and pain if they do not lead to contemplation and concentration.

He who is resolved on conquering his mind should rid himself of all associations and give up all his belongings, should be alone and live in a secluded place, eating but very little.

The wise man should slowly and gradually confine the mind to

the heart by bringing it back from the several objects to which it has gone out, wandering under the force of passions. And the mind of the ascetic, who is thus day and night given to the exercise of control, becomes in a short time peaceful, undisturbed by passions, like fire without fuel to feed it. Then the mind, unassailed by desire and other passions and divested of all activity, rises to the experience of the blissful realisation of Brahman and would never again turn towards the Samsara [phenomenal world].



The Way to true Devotion

[Compiled from the *Bhagavatam* Sk.II. Adh.19]

“I shall again tell thee of the most efficacious way to devotion to Me: Sincere solicitude to listen to My nectar-like stories, the constant singing of Me, a steady application to My worship, to sing hymns in praise of Me, enthusiasm in doing service to Me and bowing to Me, great attention to worshipping My devotee, to think that I am present in all beings, every movement of every limb taking place only in doing acts dedicated to Me; to sing only My qualities, to resign the mind to Me, to shun all desires, and for My sake to eschew money that does not point to My devotion, to abandon all enjoyments and comforts and to perform sacrificial acts, gifts, oblations, repetition of Mantras [holy sound-symbols] and the vows and tapas [austerity] dedicated to Me.

“Those men, O Uddhava, who possess the aforesaid virtues and resign themselves to Me, develop devotion towards Me. What other purpose yet remains for them to secure? When the mind is full of Sattva [calmness serenity and balance] and thoroughly serene is resigned unto Me, the man naturally gains merit of righteousness, wisdom and renunciation and attains to the state of Iswara [God with attributes]. The mind that is set on anything different from Myself, that is on any phenomenal object, runs astray with the senses, then it becomes very impure with Rajas [passionate activity] attached to bad things, and thus it becomes perverse and unrighteous.

“Whatever promotes devotion to Me is Dharma [Righteousness], and to realise the oneness of Atman [Self] is Jñana or wisdom; to be without attachment to the three Gunas and their products is renunciation.”

Uddhava said, “O Slayer of enemies, how many are the Yamas laid down as such? Niyamas, how many? What is Sama? What is Dama? O Krishna, what is forbearance or fortitude, O Lord? What is gift? What is Tapas? What is heroism, truthfulness, correct understanding? What is liberality? What is wealth or sacrificial act? What is Yajña and what is Dakshina? What is the good strength of man? What is fortune or gain? What is the highest form of modesty, what is Sri, what happiness, what misery? Who is a scholar? Who is a fool? What is the way and what is the wrong way? What is heaven and what is hell? Who is a relation and what is a house? Who is rich and who is poor? Who is helpless? And who is Iswara, O Lord of the righteous? May Thou be pleased to explain to me these points of enquiry as well as the contrary ideas.”

Sri Krishna said, “To refrain from harming others, to be truthful, not to appropriate others’ wealth even in thought, to be free from attachments, to avoid company, to shrink from evil courses, not to be storing or collecting wealth, belief in Dharma [righteousness], celibacy, cleanliness of body and purity of heart, continence, firmness, forbearance, fear of God, to repeat the Mantras, Tapas [austerity], enthusiasm in being righteous, hospitality, worshipping Me, pilgrimages to holy places and waters, working for the benefit of others, contentment, service to the Guru [teacher]—these are the Yamas and Niyamas. When practised, these virtues lead to all that men desire.

“Sama is to settle the mind devoutly on Me; Dama is the control of the senses, forbearance is to put up quietly with afflictions, fortitude is complete control of the senses, of sexual passion and of taste. To refrain from harming other creatures is the highest gift. To abandon desires is admitted to be Tapas. Control over natural tendencies is heroism, and truthfulness is to think of Brahman. Correct understanding is speech both sweet and truthful; absence of attachment to the course of Karma is cleanliness, and to be rid of the notions of “I” and “Mine” is Tyaga. The desired wealth of men is righteousness. Yajña [sacrifice] is Myself, the most Glorious One. Dakshina is precept leading to wisdom. Pranayama, or control of breath, is the greatest strength. Fortune is the state of Iswara, having the six attributes, the highest gain is devotion to Me. Learning is the erasure of difference in Me. Sri is shrinking from prohibited action.

“Absence of desire and other good qualities are the ornament, happiness is to be insensible to pain and pleasure, misery is the craving for pleasure to be derived from the fulfilment of desires. He is a scholar who has true Knowledge of bondage and release. The fool is he who thinks that the body and its belongings are the Self. The way is that which directs one towards Me. The wrong way is distraction of the mind. Heaven is the predominance of Sattva [the element of harmony and balance]. Hell is the predominance of Tamas [the element of indolence, lethargy and dullness]. The relation is the Guru [Spiritual Teacher], Myself, O friend. The house is the human body. The rich man is he who is full of excellent qualities. He is poor who is discontented. He is helpless who has not controlled his senses. He is Iswara who is not attached to the Gunas. And one attached to the Gunas is the slave.”



Some Psalms of the Vaishnava Mystics

I

Ye slaves of men, you are not of us. Only you that hunger for the freedom of your souls, come unto us and join our choir eternal. We have been for generations a stainless, glorious band of men, ever devoted to the service of the Lord.

Despair not. There is yet escape from the cold clutches of Death. Ere the mists gather round your eyes, ere you feel the death-rattle, ere your kith and kin crowd round you slyly whispering and asking for your hidden treasure, ere words struggle and stick in your throat, build in your heart a temple for the Lord and for ever worship Him. Offer at His altar your humble flowers of love and service.

At Thy touch all that is harsh and dissonant melts into one sweet harmony. I see Thy Kingdom gleam through the mists of time and the gloom of Death. I am bathed in a flood of light ineffable

—*Perialvar*—

II

To be unwearied in the service of the Lord that dwells in me, is the work I am born for. And what calling is nobler than this? In it I find my all.

The Lord rescues us from death and delusion of Life. In His will is our peace. And dead is the heart that is lost in the morass of the narrow meaningless rituals of life.

Close all the doors of the senses and kindle within the torch of wisdom. Luminous as a long, unbroken trail of light, there gleams upon your vision a path to the hidden temple of our Lord, the bolts and bars of whose gates yield only to the magic touch of Love.

—*Thirumazhisai Alvar*—

III

Hungering for Thee, many a strange web of life have I woven for ages. Now do I feel Thy mercy. And when I gaze across the melancholy waste of years that have vainly flown into the hushed sea of silence, my heart is filled with unutterable woe. I seek Thy refuge. Save me,—my Lord, save me.

Thou hast set Thy seal and stamp on me. Thou hast made me Thy liveried servant. Thou hast closed many a rift in the reed of my life. I feel a strange thrill at Thy presence in the mansion of my heart. At Thy wondrous touch, I break into endless melodies.

Sin not against your sacred Self. Cast off your allegiance to man and no more a bondman be. Come out of your cobwebs of useless learning and shatter the outworn creeds in which you have been suckled and cradled so long. I have known the measureless and unsearchable One, whom the sages worship in the silent shrine of their being. Come and sing with me unto His Glory.

What profiteth our eyes if they drink not in Thy radiance? What profiteth our ears if they feed not on Thy gospel? What profiteth our hands if they fold not in prayer? What profiteth our harps and timbrels if they throb and thrill not with Thy glory? What profiteth our heart if it turns not to Thee?

Ah, to be cooped and caged for my transgressions within the clammy cells of a mother's womb! The very thought of it makes me dumb with despair. I feel like one on board a sinking vessel caught in a crashing gale.

I have pined and pined in grief forlorn over this frail vessel of strifes and sorrows. I have grown weary of the bewitching wiles of beauteous women in whose fair arms I oft revelled. I have, guided by the lone voice of reason, searched within myself and sought the great light of Truth. I have found in Thee the very balm and bliss of

my life.

Age cannot wither, nor time leave its furrows on the birthless One, out of whom flows, in ceaseless measure, a stream of joy past words. In Him there is neither **was** nor **is** nor **will be**; but all throbs with the one voice of eternity. Into that vast sea of the unknown I have dived, the fitful fever of life passing away.

My wife and children are but a broken reed. Leaving them, I followed Thee. And with the flashing sword of Thy grace, I have cut asunder the tangled web of life and emerged from the folly and snare of my senses. And now, far, far away from the harassing hounds of life's troubles, I dwell secure.

Shut out from the beacon-light of Thy wisdom, without a rudder or compass, floundering amidst shoals and sandbanks, I, in the darkness of my soul, drifted across the perilous, uncharted seas of many a birth and death. Battered and decayed, my life has found at last its moorings in the haven of Thy grace.

—*Thirumangaimannan*—



Sayings of Tulsidas

If you want light within and without, place the glowing diamond of the Lord's name as a lamp on the threshold of your tongue.

Evil ways, futile discussions, bad demeanour, deceit, arrogance, and humbug—characteristics of this Kali Yuga [Iron Age]—are but fuel that can easily be reduced to ashes by the burning fire of the Lord's names.

Fullness of joy is the bower, hearing the Lord's praises, the garden, forgetfulness of the world, the forest, in which the bird of happiness enjoys itself. The garden is the sincere heart which the eyes water with the tears of love.

It is said by wise men and also confirmed by all the holy Scriptures that one who conceals things from his Guru [spiritual teacher] is never able to acquire pure wisdom.

He who does not listen and act according to the naturally beneficial advice of his Guru [spiritual teacher], master and friend, is sorely smitten with repentance; for he is destined to suffer for ignoring it.

Is there any cure for a man who has been overwhelmed by ma-

lignant stars, smitten with wind, stung by a scorpion and then intoxicated with wine?

Lust, anger, and greed are three inveterate enemies of man. They disturb the tranquillity of the minds of even great and holy sages. The weapons of *Greed* are desire and deceit; the weapon of *Lust* is Woman (or Man), and the weapons of *Anger* are harsh words. Do not burn yourself away like a moth attached to the body of woman (or man), which is like the flame of a burning lamp. Give up lust and inebriety, have recourse always to the society of noble and good men and devote yourself wholly to God. Lust, anger, pride, greed,— all these are the paths to hell. Give up all and devote yourself to the service of the Lord. This is what all Scriptures teach.

Now it is bright, now it is dark, by the appearance or disappearance of the sun. Even so wisdom shines or disappears by good or bad associations.

Just as worms and reptiles, born of the rainy season, disappear at the outset of autumn, even so all doubts and misunderstandings disappear on getting a true spiritual teacher.

Give up pride with its many thorny roots in worldly attachment and devote yourself to the Lord who is the limitless ocean of mercy.

There is no happiness for man—no peace even in dream— so long as he does not give up desire, the root of all misery, and devote himself to the Lord.

Moths burn themselves in ignorance before the flame of a lamp, and asses bear burdens. O Fool, understand they are not called brave warriors!

The world is a formidable and relentless foe. What soldier is there who can conquer it? O Friend, hear, only one who is riding in the adamantine car of Dharma [righteousness] can conquer it.

The pure lead to salvation, the impure and lustful to hell. It is a truism declared by all great men, poets and scholars, and laid down in the Vedas, Puranas and holy Scriptures.

Infinitely varied are the effects of Maya [ignorance], good and bad, but the wise do not observe them. They who are attracted by them, are unwise.

None has an opportunity to hear holy discourses about the Lord

without the company of saintly persons. Without hearing these discourses, there is no destruction of ignorance, and without this, there can be no firm devotion to the feet of the Lord.

The terrible forces of Maya [ignorance] are overwhelming the whole world. The soldiers in this campaign are lust and greed, and the generals are pride, deceit and hypocrisy.

Verily the fools imprisoned in the house of suffering and afflicted with lust, anger, pride, and greed, and sunk in the deep pit of darkness and ignorance, do not know the Lord.

The Lord says, "I always dwell in the lotus of the heart of one who, having wiped off all desires, devotes himself to Me in thought, word and deed."

The formless aspect of the Lord is easy to comprehend, but the Incarnation aspect is very difficult to understand. In the latter there is a display of various acts, comprehensible and incomprehensible, causing mental confusion even in holy sages.

No matter whether one is a man, a woman, a eunuch or any other movable or immovable being, if he gives up all deceit and loves the Lord with all his heart, he becomes most dear to Him.

There is no feeling of anger without Dualism and lack of self-restraint and there is no Dualism without ignorance. The Jiva [individual soul] being encrusted with Maya [ignorance] is extremely weak and dull. How can it be like the Lord? Although the Jiva is like the Lord, it has become weak and dull, being enveloped by Maya [ignorance].

The men who are dispassionate and firm-minded can dissociate themselves from sex, but those who are devoted to flesh and overmastered by passions and not devoted to the Lord, alone cannot do so. Dissociation from worldly passions is the shield and knowledge, the sword, with which holy men having annihilated the enemies—lust, greed and attachment—have obtained the victory of the Lord's devotion.

So long as man does not surrender himself to the Lord, having given up all deceit in thought, word and deed, he never gets happiness even in dream, though he may devise thousands of means to attain it.

He who has achieved victory over covetousness, attachment, pride of learning and all pleasures of the senses which are our ene-

mies, is a true devotee.

No age like the Kali-Yuga [the present Iron Age] will come if you believe me, because in this age a man can cross the ocean of the world without effort by repeating the names of God.

The good and bad things made out of Maya cannot disappear without the repetition of God's [Hari's] name. Therefore, thinking of this, give up all desire and worship God [Rama].



Self-Realisation

[Instructions of Sri Ramana Maharshi]

Q — Can I get knowledge of the “Self”, that is, can I experience direct realisation of the “Self”?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Why? Who is there without a knowledge of the “Self”? Everyone has experience of the “Self”.

Q — But I do not realise it.

Sri Ramana Maharshi — The fact is, that all the while you **do** know the “Self”. How can the self **not** know the “Self”? Only you, the self, have got into the habit of thinking that you are this, you are that, and you are a third thing. It is the wrong notion that produces or constitutes *Viparita Bhavana* [wrong, contrary thinking] of the self at present, and that is why you say you do not know the “Self”. What you have to do is to get rid of that wrong notion of the “Self”. That then clears up the self-knowledge or self-realisation.

Q — How to get rid of that wrong thinking [*Viparita Bhavana*]? Can any ordinary man get rid of it? If so, how?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Yes. That is possible and is being done. So many ways: Bhakti, Jñana, Karma Yoga, etc., etc., are being adopted—all for the removal of *Viparita Bhavana*. But the main way is simple.

Q — But I am ignorant of the method and of the “Self”.

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Who is ignorant of what? Ask the question and pursue the enquiry as to **who** it is that is said to be ignorant. Once you put the question, trying to probe into the “I”, the “I” disappears. Then what survives is Self-knowledge or Self-realisation.

Q — But how to get at that? Is not a Guru's [spiritual teacher's]

help needed? Is not God's help needed?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Why? In practice, all this is adopted. But on ultimate enquiry, i.e., after reaching the goal, the method and means adopted are found to be the goal themselves. The Guru turns out ultimately to be God, and God turns out to be your own real "Self".

Q — But is not the Guru's grace or God's grace necessary for one's progress in the Vichara [enquiry]?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Yes. But the Vichara that you are making *is* the Guru's grace or God's grace itself.

Q — I would request you to bless me with your grace.

Sri Ramana Maharshi remains silent for a while — showing that his very silent presence, in perpetual Samadhi, is an ever-present help, which it is for the thirsty questioner to quaff to appease his spiritual thirst with. Then he says:— Continue with your enquiry.

Q — How? I do not know how to proceed.

Sri Ramana Maharshi — *Who* does not know? You say "I" and yet you say you do not know "I". Can anyone be ignorant of himself? Is not that ludicrously impossible? If there is something else to be attained or to know, then you may feel difficulty in attaining or knowing that. But in the case of the ever present inescapable "I", how can you be ignorant? You have constantly to fight out and get rid of your false notion of "I", one after another. Do that.

Q — In that, is not a Guru's help necessary and useful?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Yes. To start you on the enquiry. ***But you must yourself pursue the enquiry.***

Q — To what extent can I rely on the Guru's grace in this? Up to what point is the enquiry itself to be carried on?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — You must carry on this demolition of wrong ideas by enquiry till your last wrong notion is demolished,— till the 'Self' is realised.

Q — How can I help others?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Who is there for you to help? Who is the "I" that is to help others? First clear that point and then everything settles itself.

Q — As for Iswara's [God's] help in my effort, is not that to be

secured by prayer, worship, etc., etc.? Will not that be helpful?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Iswara's [God's] grace and worship for it, etc., are all **intermediate** steps adopted and necessary, to be adopted so long as the goal is not reached. When it is reached, God is the "Self".

Q — What particular steps will be helpful?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — That depends on the circumstances of each.

Q — Which path is best suited to me? Will not all help be provided by God?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Bhakti, Karma, Jñana and Yoga all these paths are all one. **You cannot love God without knowing Him, nor know Him without loving Him. Love manifests itself in every thing you do and that is Karma** [work]. The adoption of mental perception [Yoga] is the necessary preliminary before you can know or love God in the proper way.

Q — Can I go on thinking "I am God"? Is that right practice?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Why **think** that? In fact, you **are** God. But who goes on saying or thinking, "I am a man", "I am a male"? If any contrary thought, for instance, that one was a beast had to be put down, then, of course, you might say, "I am a man". To the extent of crushing down the wrong notion that one is this or that according to one's erroneous fancies, to that extent the idea that one is not these but God or the "Self" may be indulged in, as a matter of practice, but when practice is over, the result is not any thought at all [such as "I am God"] but mere Self-Realisation. That is beyond conceptual thought.

Q — Does not that all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God provide all that is needed for a man's evolution?

(The enquirer's inner thought was — "Should we always depend upon the whims and fancies of a Guru, however great he may be? If so, where is freedom of the 'Self' and self-reliance?" — Quick and straight as an arrow came the answer from Sri Ramana Maharshi, as if he understood his inner trouble better than himself.)

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Do not think that this corpse is the Guru (pointing to his body).

Q — I fear that Self-realisation is no easy thing to reach.

Sri Ramana Maharshi — Why stultify yourself by anticipating failure of your course? Push on. There you are. Self-realisation will come to an earnest and sincere seeker in a trice.



Fearlessness

by Mahatma Gandhi

Every reader of the Gita knows that fearlessness heads the list of the Divine Attributes enumerated in the 16th chapter. Whether this is merely due to the exigencies of metre, or whether pride of place has been deliberately yielded to fearlessness, is more than I can say. In my opinion, however, fearlessness richly deserves the first rank assigned to it. For it is indispensable for the growth of the other noble qualities. How can one seek Truth or cherish Love without fearlessness? As it is said, "The path of Hari [the Lord] is the path of the brave, not of cowards." Hari here means Truth, and the brave are those armed with fearlessness, not with the sword, the rifle and the like. These are taken up only by those who are possessed by fear.

Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear,— fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on. One who overcomes the fear of death does not surmount all other fears, as is commonly but erroneously supposed. Some of us do not fear death, but flee from minor ills of life. Some are ready to die themselves, but cannot bear their beloved ones being taken away from them. Some misers will put up with all this, will part even with their lives, but not their property; others will do any number of black deeds in order to uphold their supposed prestige. Some will swerve from the strait and narrow path, which lies clear before them, simply because they are afraid of incurring the world's odium. The seeker after Truth must conquer all these fears. He should be ready to sacrifice his all in the quest of Truth.

Perfect fearlessness can be attained only by him who has realised the Supreme, as it implies freedom from delusions. One can always progress towards this goal by determined and constant endeavour and by cultivating self-confidence.

As I have stated at the very outset, we must give up all external

fears. But the *internal* foes we must always fear. We are rightly afraid of animal passion, anger and the like. External fears cease of their own accord when once we have conquered these traitors within the camp. All such fears revolve round the body as the centre, and will therefore disappear as soon as one gets rid of attachment for the body. We thus find that all external fear is the baseless fabric of our own vision, ***Fear has no place in our hearts when we have shaken off attachment for wealth, for family, and for the body.*** “*Enjoy the things of the earth by renouncing them*” is a noble precept. Wealth, family, and body will be there, just the same; we have only to change our attitude towards them. All these are not ours, but God’s. Nothing whatever in this world is ours. Even if we ourselves are His. Why then should we entertain any fears? The Upanishad therefore directs us to give up attachment for things while we enjoy them. That is to say, we must be interested in them, not as proprietors, but only as trustees. He, on whose behalf we hold them, will give us the strength and the weapons requisite for defending them against all usurpers. When we thus cease to be masters, and reduce ourselves to the rank of servants, humbler than the very dust under our feet; all fears will roll away like mists; we shall attain ineffable peace, and see Satyanarayan [the God of Truth] face to face.



BUDDHISM

Refuge

[From the “*Light of Asia*”]

*I take my refuge in thy name and thee!
 I take my refuge in thy law of Good!
 I take my refuge in thy Order! OM!
 The Dew is on the lotus ! — Rise, Great Sun!
 And lift my leaf and mix me with the wave.
 Om Mani Padme Hum, the Sunrise comes!
 The Dewdrop slips into the shining sea!*

—Sir Edwin Arnold—



Topsy-Turvy

[From the *Anguttara Nikaya*]

Monks, there are three persons found existing in the world. What three?

The topsy-turvy-brained, the scatter-brained and the man of comprehensive brain.

And of what sort, Monks, is the topsy-turvy-brained?

Herein a certain person frequents the monastery to hear Dhamma from the lips of the monks. The monks teach him Dhamma that is lovely in the beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely in the ending, both in spirit and letter. They make plain the holy life perfectly lived and fulfilled in all its purity.

But as he sits there he pays no heed to that talk in its beginning, pays no heed to its middle, pays no heed to its ending. Also when he has risen from his seat he pays no heed thereto. Just as when a pot is turned upside down, the water poured thereon runs off and does not stay in the pot, even so in this case a certain person frequents the monastery but pays no heed to that talk. Also when he rises from his seat he pays no heed thereto. This one is called "the topsy-turvy-brained".

And of what sort, Monks, is the scatter-brained?

In this case a certain person frequents the monastery to hear Dhamma from the lips of the monks. As he sits there he pays heed to that talk in its beginning, its middle, and its end, but when he has risen from his seat he pays no heed thereto. Just as when in a man's lap divers kinds of food are placed, such as sesamum, rice, sweet-meats and jujube-fruits, when he rises from his seat he scatters all abroad through absent-mindedness; even so, Monks, in this case a certain person frequents the monastery, but when he has risen he pays no heed thereto. This one is called "scatter-brained".

And of what sort, Monks, is the man of comprehensive mind?

In this case a certain person frequents the monastery to hear Dhamma from the lips of the monks. As he sits there he pays heed to that talk in its beginning, its middle, and its ending. Also when he rises from his seat he still bears it in mind. Just as when a pot is set upright, the water poured therein accumulates and does not run away, even so in this case a certain person pays heed to that talk

and bears it in mind when he has risen from his seat. This one, Monks, is called “the man of comprehensive mind”.

Such, Monks, are the three persons found existing in the world.



Ananda

[From the *Anguttara Nikaya*]

The venerable Ananda went to visit the Exalted One. On coming to Him he saluted Him and sat down at one side. As he thus sat the venerable Ananda said to the Exalted One :

“May it be, Lord, that a monk can acquire such concentration that in this body, together with its consciousness, he has no notion of “I” or “mine” or any tendency to vain conceit: that likewise in all external objects he has no such notion or tendency: may it be that he can so abide in the attainment of release of the heart, the release by insight, that he has no such notion or tendency?”

“It may be so, Ananda, he can so abide.”

“But, Lord, by what process can it be?”

“In this matter, Ananda, a monk has this idea: This is the calm, this is the excellent state, to wit,— rest from all activities, the forsaking of all substrate of rebirth, the destruction of craving, passionlessness, making to cease, Nibbana. That is how a monk can acquire such concentration that he abides in the attainment of the heart’s release, the release by insight.

“Moreover, Ananda, in this connection I thus spoke in the Chapter on the Goal in the sutta called ‘The Question of Punnaka’:—

*By searching in the world things high and low,
He who has nought to stir him in the world,
Calm and unclouded, cheerful, freed of longing,
He has crossed over birth and old, I say.”*



Causes

[From the *Anguttara Nikaya*]

Monks, there are these three originating causes of action. What three? Lust, malice and delusion.

An act performed in lust, born of lust, originating in lust, arising from lust, has its fruit—wherever one’s personal self is reborn.

Wherever that act comes to fruition, there one experiences the fruit thereof, whether it come into bearing in this very life or in some other phase of existence.

An act performed in malice and an act performed in delusion has its fruit in like manner.

Just as seeds that are unbroken, not rotten, unspoiled by wind and heat, capable of sprouting and well embedded in a good field, planted in properly prepared soil,—if the sky rain down steadily those seeds come to growth, increase, even so, Monks, whatsoever act is performed in lust, malice and under delusion, one experiences the fruit thereof, whether it come into bearing in this very life or in some other phase of existence.

Monks, there are these three originating causes of action. Which three? Freedom from lust, malice and delusion.

An act not performed in lust, not born of lust, not originating in lust, not arising from lust,— since lust has vanished, that act is abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, unable to come again, of a nature not to arise again in future time.

An act not performed in malice and not performed under delusion is cut off at the root, of a nature not to arise again in future time.

Suppose seeds that are unbroken, not rotten, unspoiled by wind and heat, capable of sprouting, well embedded, and a man burns them with fire, and having done so reduces them to ashes. Having done that, he winnows the ashes in a strong wind or lets them be carried off by a swiftly flowing stream,— those seeds, Monks, would be cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made unable to become again, of a nature not to arise again in future time.

Just so, Monks, an act not performed in lust not performed in malice, not performed under delusion, is of a nature not to arise again in future time.

These, indeed, Monks, are the originating causes of action.



The Saint

[From the *Dhammapadam*]

To one who has come to Samsara's end and has arrived at freedom from sorrow, from all shackles made free,— to such a one

there is no sorrow.

The mindful strive in meditation. They do not cling to desires. They, like the swans, who fly away leaving their lake behind, give up all their loves and homes.

Those who are not acquisitive, who are discriminate in good, whose abode is the void, unconditioned Emancipation, like the path of the birds in the sky, it is difficult to trace their path.

Those whose contaminations have disappeared, and who are indifferent to nourishment; whose abode is the void, unconditioned Emancipation, whose goal is Nibbana,— it is impossible to trace their footsteps, like unto the flight of the birds of the air.

He whose senses are under control, like the steed held in check by the driver, whose pride has disappeared; whose lust, love of life and delusion have ended, no more shaken by the world's storms, — the sight of such a one even the gods welcome.

Like the earth or the entrance-gate to a city, balanced and steady, whose mind is clear like a lake purged of mud and silt, no more does such a one roam about in Samsara [round of births and deaths].

He who has freed himself by perfect knowledge is unperturbed by mundane matters; such a one's mind is calm. So are his words and deeds.

The man who believes what he has himself realised to be true, who has seen Nibbana, who has cut off the mundane fetters and destroyed rebirth, who has given up all desires, such a one indeed is the greatest of men.

Be it a village, be it a forest, be it a valley, be it a hill, wherever saints dwell, that place is delightful.

Delightful are forests where the ordinary people do not find delight. There those who are free from contaminations will take delight, because they have abandoned the pursuit of the senses.



As the fierce wind fans the fire, till all the fuel be spent and the fire expires; of all unrighteous things in the world, there is nothing worse than the domain of the five desires.

—*The Buddha*—



Craving

[From the *Dhammapadam*]

In a man who is indolent, craving grows like the Maluwa creeper, and he is like a monkey in the jungle seeking fruits, jumping from birth to birth.

Whoso in the world is under the influence of this degrading craving, like the Birana grass wet by rain, his sorrows grow.

In this world, he who holds in check this degrading craving, his sorrows disappear, like a drop of water on a lotus leaf.

Like the digger of the sweet Birana root, likewise dig up the root of craving. Let not the King of Death again and again belabour you, like the flood a bamboo bush.

When the root is unharmed and vigorous, the tree-stumps grow again and again. In like manner, so long as the propensity for craving is not uprooted, this sorrow will spring up again and again.

That foolish man who is caught in the thirty-six streams of desire, his thoughts being centred on passion, and craving being strong, as if by waves, is carried along to hell.

Everywhere the rivers of craving spread. The creepers of craving having risen, cling to everything. When you see this creeper of craving, cut out its root with wisdom.

Fleeting and whimsical are men's desires. Their minds seek enjoyment and they search after pleasures and happiness. And such men consequently suffer old age and death.

Beings surrounded by craving, bound like unto a hunted hare, tremble with fear. They come to sorrow again and again, being thus bound by various ties, for a long time.

Beings surrounded by craving, bound like unto a hunted hare, tremble with fear. Therefore, the monk who seeks for Nibbana for himself should abandon craving.

One, who having given up craving, clings to craving; one, who having released himself from the forest of desire, runs back to the same forest; behold that man who, freed from one trammel, runs after another.

The wise do not say that the bond made of metal or wood or grass is a strong trammel. One who clings closely to precious jewels and ornaments, or attaches himself to wife and children, that is

a real bond.

The wise say that this bond is strong which, though loose, drags men to low estate. This loose bond is hard to untie. Those who, not clinging to lust, renounce the world and its pleasures, win freedom from desire.

Those who are intoxicated by desire are caught in it, like the spider who is caught in the web of his own making. The wise man by loosening this bond, gives up all and goes Nibbanawards.

Free thyself from the past, free thyself from the future; free thyself from the present; cross to the other shore; your mind being free, you will no more see birth and age.

To the man moved by the threefold passions, whose mind is full of lust, who sees the beautiful in evil, and whom doubt drags this way and that, in him much craving grows.

If one should cling to the stilling of doubts, and always mindfully meditate on the unpleasing, that person kills the desire for existence and cuts off the bond that binds him to the King of Death.

One who has reached a permanent standing place, being unafraid, free from desire, having rid himself of all lusts, cutting off all the thorns of existence, comes to the last birth.

Done with craving, not clinging to anything, having realised the Teaching, in the spirit and the letter, knowing the composition of words in both ways, he bears this mortal frame for the last time, he is said to be a great wise man, a great being.

I have conquered all, I know all, not clinging to anything, and abandoning everything, free through the destruction of craving, by myself having attained to supernatural wisdom, whom shall I call my teacher?

All gifts the gift of Truth excels; all tastes the taste of Truth excels. All joys the joy of Truth excels; Sainthood conquers all sorrow.

Wealth kills the foolish; they seek not Nibbana. The foolish one with desire for wealth slays himself, as if he were slaying others.

The weeds are the blight of fields; likewise lust is the bane of beings. Therefore anything given to those free from lust and craving bears great fruit.

Weeds are the blight of fields; likewise hatred is the bane of be-

ings. Therefore a gift to those free from hatred and aversion bears great fruit.

Weeds are the blight of fields; ignorance is the bane of beings. Therefore a gift free from ignorance bears great fruit.

Weeds are the blight of fields; self-seeking is the bane of beings. Therefore a gift to those free from self-seeking bears great fruit.



The Land of Bliss

Queen Vaidehi, chief consort of King Bimbisara, grieved beyond endurance by the conduct of her unnatural son who has imprisoned his father, comes to the Buddha on the Vulture Peak and speaks as follows:

“My only prayer, World-honoured one, is this: tell me of a world where there is no sorrow and pain, whither I may flee from this world of evil where the wicked abound. Let me not hear, I pray Thee, the voice of the wicked any more, let me not set eyes upon them. May the Sun-like Buddha enlighten me.”

Then the World-honoured One flashed from his brow a golden ray and illuminated the innumerable worlds of the ten regions, resplendent and lovely, that the queen might take her choice. She chose the realm of the Buddha Amitayus, the Land of Bliss, Sukhavati.

“O Vaidehi,” said the World-honoured One, “knowest thou not that Amitayus is not far from thee? Do thou apply thy mind to such as have wrought out the good deeds that lead to rebirth in his Paradise. They who would go thither must cultivate a threefold goodness. First, they must act with filial piety and support their parents; they must serve and respect their teachers and elders; of compassionate mind let them harm none, but keep the ten precepts. Second, let them observe the vows, taking refuge in the Three Jewels [The Buddha, the Teaching and the Sangha]; let them honour all moral precepts, and act with dignity in the ceremonial of worship. Third, let them give their whole mind to the attainment of Perfect-Wisdom, put steadfast faith in causality, study and recite Mahayana Scriptures, and lead others to join them.”

—From the *Amitayur-Dhyana-Sutra*—



Dropped off!

“When Dogen, the founder of the Soto-School of Zen, was studying Zen in China under Ju-ching, the master used to tell him:

“Mind and body dropped off; dropped-off mind and body!”

Later Dogen used to repeat the idea in his sermons, saying, “Dropped off! Dropped off! This state must be experienced by you all. It is like piling fruit into a basket without a bottom. It is like pouring water into a vessel with a pierced hole. However much you may pile or pour you cannot fill it up. When this is realised, we say that the pail-bottom is broken through. As long as there is a trace of consciousness which makes you say, ‘I have this understanding or that realisation’, you are still far from the goal and playing with unrealities.”



A Poem

by Tung-shan

*Beware of seeking the Truth from others,
Further and further it retreats from you,
Alone I go now all by myself,
And I meet IT everywhere I turn;
When this is understood,
I am face to face with Tathata [Suchness].*



M a y a

[From the *Astasahasrika*]

The Buddha asked Subhuti, “O Subhuti, do you think Maya to be different from form [Rupam] and form from Maya? Do you think, again, Maya to be different from sensation [Vedana], thought [Samjñā], conformation [samskara] and consciousness [Vijñāna], and all these from Maya?”

Subhuti said, “No Blessed One, they are not different. If form is different from Maya, it is not form. If Maya is different from form, it is not Maya. Maya is form and form is Maya. The same can be said of the others.”

The Buddha, “O Subhuti, do you think the five clinging Skandhas [aggregates] constitute Bodhisattvahood or not?”

Subhuti, "O Blessed One, they do."

The Buddha, "O Subhuti, you should know that these five clinging Skandhas [aggregates] are no more than Maya itself. Why? Because form is Maya, and these five clinging Skandhas and the six senses are what constitute Bodhisattvahood along with sensation, thought, Samskara and consciousness, and therefore, the Bodhisattva, too, is like Maya. Those who wish to discipline themselves in the Prajñāparamita [highest transcendental wisdom] should do so as if disciplining themselves in Maya.

"Form has no ultimate solidity. It is full of cracks and holes. It is like a bubble. Sensation is like a boil, it is like an arrow quickly rising and quickly disappearing. It is like foam, deceiving and fleeting. It takes its rise when there is a triple combination of conditions. Thought is like a mirage, there are no real fountains in it. Because of the thirst of desire it rises, and expresses itself in words, though there is nothing substantial in it. Samskara is like a plantain tree; when each leaf is peeled off, nothing remains. Consciousness [Vijñāna] is like a Maya creation. It is there when causes and conditions are variously combined. It is a provisional construction. The magically created soldiers are seen marching through the streets. Though they look real, they are in fact without any substantiality.

"Wherever there is a form of duality, this is attainability. Wherever there is no duality in whatever form, this is non-attainability. When the eye stands against form, when the mind stands against ideas, there is duality. When there is what is known as supreme enlightenment set against the Buddha, who is regarded as having attained it, this is again a duality. Any teaching that is based on dualism is incorrect. It belongs to the realm of Maya, to the realm of attainables.

"Let the duality of eye and form, ear and sound, mind and thought, be altogether done away with. Likewise with that of enlightenment and the enlightened. Let us have nothing to do, and then there will be a state of non-duality, free from all false teachings and illegitimate speculations. The unattainable is thus attained."

Subhuti, "Is it the unattainable because of depending on the attainable? Or because of depending on the unattainable?"

The Buddha, "It is the unattainable because of depending on neither the attainable nor the unattainable. It is termed 'unattain-

able' when the attainable and the unattainable are regarded as one. The discipline of the Bodhisattva in the Prajñā-paramita consists in realising this oneness of the attainable and the unattainable. Let him be freed from both, from the idea of the attainable and that of the unattainable. He will then be free from all faulty entanglements."



Emancipation

Sudhana asked : "How does one come face to face with this emancipation? How does one get this realisation?"

Sucandra answered : "A man comes face to face with this emancipation when his mind is awakened to Prajñāparamita [Highest wisdom] and stands in a most intimate relationship to it; for then he attains self-realisation in all that he perceives and understands."

Sudhana : "Does one attain self-realisation by listening to the talks and discourses on Prajñāparamita?"

Sucandra : "That is not so. Why? Because Prajñāparamita sees intimately into the truth and reality of all things."

Sudhana : "Is it not that thinking comes from hearing and that by thinking and reasoning one comes to perceive what Suchness is? And is this not self-realisation?"

Sucandra : "That is not so. Self-realisation never comes from mere listening and thinking. I will illustrate the matter by analogy. Listen! In a great desert there are no springs or wells; in the spring-time or in the summer when it is warm, a traveller comes from the West going eastward; he meets a man coming from the East and asks him: 'I am terribly thirsty; pray tell me where I can find a spring and a cool refreshing shade where I may drink, bathe, rest and get thoroughly revived?'

"The man from the East gives the traveller, as desired, all the information in detail saying, 'When you go further East the road divides itself into two, right and left. You take the right one, and going steadily further you will surely come to a fine spring and a refreshing shade.' Now, do you think that the thirsty traveller from the West, listening to the talk about the spring and the shady trees and thinking of going to that place as quickly as possible, can be relieved of thirst and heat and get refreshed?"

Sudhana : "No, he cannot; because he is relieved of thirst and

heat and gets refreshed only when, as directed by the other, he actually reaches the fountain and drinks of it and bathes in it.”

Sucandra : “Even so with the Bodhisattva. By merely listening to it, thinking of it, and intellectually understanding it, you will never come to the realisation of any truth. The ‘desert’ means birth and death; the man from the West means all sentient beings; the heat means all forms of delusion and confusion; thirst is greed and lust; the man from the East who knows the Way is the Buddha or the Bodhisattva who, abiding in all-knowledge, has penetrated into the true nature of all things and into the reality of sameness; to quench the thirst and to be relieved of the heat by drinking of the refreshing fountain means the realisation of the truth by oneself.”



A Sermon

by Szu-hsin of Huang-lung (1044–1115)

O Brethren, to be born as a human being is a rare event, and so is the opportunity to listen to discourses on Buddhism. If you fail to achieve emancipation in this life, when do you again expect to achieve it? While still alive, be therefore assiduous in practising meditation. The practices consists in abandonments, “The abandonment of what?”— you may ask. Abandon your four elements [bhuta], abandon your five aggregates [skandha], abandon all the workings of your relative consciousness [karmavijñāna], which you have been cherishing since eternity; retire within your inner being and see into the reason of it. As your self-reflection grows deeper and deeper, the moment will surely come upon you when the spiritual flower will suddenly burst into bloom, illuminating the entire universe. The experience is incommunicable, though you yourselves know perfectly well what it is. This is the moment when you can transform this great earth into solid gold, and the great rivers into an ocean of milk. What satisfaction then this is to your daily life? Being so, do not waste your time with words and phrases or by searching for the truth of Zen in books; for the truth is not to be found there. Even if you memorise the whole Tripitaka [The Buddhist Canon] as well as all the ancient classics, they are mere idle words which are of no use whatever to you at the moment of your death.



Sayings of the Buddha

Like covering over with a false surface a hole full of fire, slipping through which, the body is burnt; so is the fire of covetous desire; the wise man meddles not with it.

Know that the province [indulgence] of the five desires is avowed an enemy of the spiritual man.

Strength results alone from the mind's intention. If you remove from conduct the purpose of the mind, the bodily act is but as rotten wood; wherefore regulate the mind and then the body will spontaneously go right. You should exert your strength without lagging or weariness.

Walking in the path of true wisdom, letting go both extremes, we reach ultimate perfection.



OLD TESTAMENT

Psalm 139

O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

Wisdom

[From *Proverbs*, Chapters 1-5]

A wise man will hear and will increase learning; and a man of

understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.

The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

He keepeth the paths of judgment and preserveth his saints.

Then shalt thou understand righteousness and judgment and equity; yea every good path.

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.

To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;

Who leave the path of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord and depart from evil.

It shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Her ways are of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her and happy is every one that retaineth her.

The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of thy mouth.

Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she

shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

My son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them and health to all their flesh.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

Turn not to the right nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.



JEWISH MYSTICISM

The Nature of God

[From *Dalalat al-Hairin* of Maimonides]

He is everlasting, constant and in no way subject to change, immutable in His Essence, and as He consists of naught but His Essence, He is mutable in no way whatever, not mutable in His relation to other things; for there is no relation whatever existing be-

tween Him and any other being, and therefore no change as regards such relations can take place in Him. He is immutable in every respect, as He expressly declares, "I, the Lord, do not change," i.e. in Me there is not any change whatever.

God exists without having the attribute of existence, and He is one, without having the attribute of Unity.



The Vision of Truth

[From *Dalalat al-Hairin* of Maimonides]

At times truth shines so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day. Our nature and habit then draw a veil over our perception, and we return to darkness almost as dense as before. We are like those who, though beholding frequent flashes of lightning, still find themselves in the thickest darkness of the night. On some the lightning flashes in rapid succession, and they seem to be in continuous light, and their night is as clear as the day. This was the degree of prophetic excellence attained by the greatest of prophets, to whom God said, "But as for thee, stand thou here by Me." (Deut.V.31) and of whom it is written: "the skin of his face shone," etc. (Exod.XXXIV.29) Some perceive the prophetic flash at long intervals; this is the degree of most prophets. By others only once during the whole night is a flash of lightening perceived. This is the case with those of whom we are informed, "They prophesied and did not prophesy again."—(Num. XI.25) There are some to whom the flashes of lightning appear with varying intervals; others are in the condition of men, whose darkness is illumined not by lightning but by some kind of crystal or similar stone, or other substances that possess the property of shining during the night; and to them even this small amount of light is not continuous, but now it shines, and now it vanishes, as if it were "the flame of the rotating sword".

The degrees in the perfection of men vary according to these distinctions. Concerning those who never beheld the light even for one day, but walk in continual darkness, it is written, "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness." (Ps.LXXXII.5) Truth, in spite of all its powerful manifestations, is completely withheld from them, and the following words of the Scripture may be applied to them, "And now men see not the light which is bright in the skies." (Job XXXVII.21). They are the multi-

tude of ordinary men; there is no need to notice them here.



CHRISTIANITY

Jesus said: Except ye fast toward the world, ye shall not find the Kingdom of God; And unless ye sanctify the whole week, ye shall not see the Father.

—*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*—



Naught ever can be known in God: One and Alone
Is He. To know Him, Knower must be one with Known.
If thou hast still for God a yearning and desire,
Then doth He not embrace thee yet, whole and entire.

—*Angelus Silesius*—



How to begin the Spiritual Life

[Notes of Class-Talks]

by Swami Yatiswarananda

Choose wisely

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “We should not ask God for the things of the world. Suppose He grants them. The material things may bring troubles to us.” When we approach this great Boon-Giver, we should never ask Him for worldly things connected with personal wishes and desires. We may approach the Lord just for saving our souls from getting drowned in the ocean of worldliness and infatuation for material things. Ordinarily, if we feel unhappy, we would rather adjust ourselves to our unhappiness and cling to our desires and fancies than change our ways and come to Truth and Bliss. We are so body-bound that we stress physical enjoyment more than anything else and are not prepared to renounce it. Rather we go on clinging desperately to its different forms although we get nothing but kicks and blows again and again. Such is the tremendous power of Maya or ignorance.

The Great Father or the Great Mother is witnessing the children at play, It is only when a child gets disgusted with its toys and childish occupations that the Lord really comes to it and draws it away

from the play-field of illusion. Children play with sweets, with dolls, with toy-soldiers, with toy-houses and cars, and nothing can be done by the Lord until they get tired of these and turn away from them in utter disgust. God takes it as great fun. And then, one day, the child has become a little grown-up and cries, "What have I done with my life?" and the Lord says, "Yes, what have you done my child? Who asked you to do it? Who asked you to go on playing indefinitely in such a foolish way? Who asked you to get hurt and entangled in your toys? Who? Who did it all?" And then very often it is already too late and the child sits on the ruins of its shattered life and wails.

We all have many an opportunity to follow saner and better ways, but we cling to our particular toys and do not let go our hold. So we have to suffer, and shall have to suffer until we learn the great lesson life teaches us again and again, in innumerable ways, and come to act wisely. Just as most people try to achieve their worldly ambition and ideal, we should strive for spiritual life and illumination, but this most people won't do. And it depends solely on our own choice, whether we take up the worldly life or the spiritual life, whether we lead a life of slavery and fear or that of freedom and fearlessness.

We must strive to achieve something that is higher, that is not subject to change and decay. But we very often choose the path of Avidya [ignorance] willfully and deliberately, because we cling to our phantoms of physical and emotional enjoyment which, after all, we shall have to give up sooner or later. We all, one day, must let go the hold, and if we do not do this of our own free will, the toy will be torn away from us and this will mean great sorrow and, in many cases, a broken heart. For most people this is the only way in which they can be made to learn their lessons, but it is very painful and usually takes many lives. We should try to live a spiritual life, knowingly, consciously, deliberately, in a spirit of dedication and singleness of purpose. This will of ours may be directed towards the higher channels of life or towards the lower ones, just as we please.

There is such a great void in the human heart. People try to fill it with some beautiful doll, a male doll or a female doll. One day, the doll breaks, and then they turn round to find some substitute for that old doll. In some rare cases, the heart may even break with the

passing of the doll. This void can be filled only by the Divine, by our own true spiritual Self, and not by anything else. No satisfaction can be found in the doll in the long run, for, one day, even the smallest child becomes a grown-up person having no more a real interest in the mere playthings of life.

We are just like cows tied to a post with a very long rope. The cows could graze and have a certain amount of freedom in their movements, but the silly animals just turn round and round the post till the whole rope has become wound up and makes it impossible for them even to reach the grass at their feet. God gives a very long rope to man, but only in rare cases does man make the proper use of that rope. Mostly he entangles himself hopelessly in it, till he can scarcely move one way or the other. That is not God's fault though. Learn to take the whole responsibility always on your own shoulders. It is a great mistake to hold God responsible for all that happens to you. You forget everything else for a moment's pleasure and do not care to listen to what God has been telling man through all the ages.

Says Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita: "*The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings. Take refuge in Him with all thy heart, by His grace shalt thou attain Supreme peace and the eternal abode. Thus has wisdom more profound than all profundities been declared to thee by Me. Reflecting over it fully, act as thou likest.*"

Use and misuse of will-power

Spiritual life, if it means sublimation and purification of our feelings, means at the same time developing our will-power, forcing the mind to take to the higher path. This will must be wholly directed towards the higher life. We find in the world tremendous will-power and concentration, but both are given a wrong direction and thus lead man into deeper and deeper darkness and ignorance. If all the will-power you find in the world were directed along the right channels, this world of ours would immediately become a heaven.

We must set the spiritual goal very, very clearly before ourselves. If we are able to rouse tremendous enthusiasm in ourselves for the goal to be attained, then only shall we have the necessary energy to strive for it and do our utmost. In the world of the spirit you very often find people with a chaotic brain. They do not care to follow any definite system and like to drift on the bottomless

sea of their emotions and impulses. So they attain practically nothing, in fact, just as little as the out-and-out worldly-minded people. No person with a muddled brain can have any success in the world, and much less so in the spiritual world. Settle once for all what you really want. Very often we want to attain peace, but follow a path that can only end in restlessness and trouble.

The Kingdom of Heaven is within you

God alone is the repository of all peace and blessedness. We should try to look within and find Him seated within our own heart. This body of ours is the living temple of God. This is a conception we find stressed again and again in all the Scriptures. The best temples of the Divine are the greatest prophets and seers. That is why they exert the greatest influence. Those who have realised the Truth in their own souls can alone teach others the way to realisation. The Lord is always at the back of our mind, at the back of our whole personality, and only if we can pray with a fervent heart, will the prayer be heard, otherwise not. We should never think in terms of happiness while praying. Happiness by itself is no real index for spiritual life, no proof whatever of spiritual progress or realisation.

The lover, when dreaming of his beloved, imagines things that have no reality. The madman, too, imagines things that do not exist at all. All hallucinations are to be avoided in spiritual life. We must try to get a glimpse of the Truth by following a systematic course of spiritual practice. If such a glimpse comes unawares, and if we are not properly prepared for it through long and regular training, the reaction may be tremendous and may even unsettle us for life. We must first learn how to become fit for such glimpses so that we can then make them our own for good. Spiritual evolution at first brings great pain to the aspirant, not happiness. In the intermediate stage his life becomes very difficult. Then he has no longer any real interest in what he has in the world and cannot yet obtain self-realisation. It is still beyond his reach. It is just like hanging in mid-air, without being able to get either up or down.

Very often when we get a thing, we find that we never really wanted it. We may have been seeking it, but when we get it we may actually find that the desire has vanished and some other desire has taken its place. Many people mistake the true nature of their yearnings and give them some worldly direction, whereas in reality no human yearning can ever find satisfaction in anything

that is not permanent and unchanging, however people may try to deceive themselves on this point. The old void haunts them again and again and mostly in a more terrible and relentless form than before. People seek happiness outside, in attributes, in forms, in the phenomenon, whereas it lies in themselves from all time and can never be lost. Whatever we can lose in any way can never mean true happiness to us. We commit the mistake of looking at a certain span of time instead of looking at the whole. Temporary happiness there is, no doubt, in worldly things and worldly relations, in human love and human affections, but temporary happiness can never mean real happiness, rather it is the opposite of it. Let us have the desire to know our true nature, to know our real Self. In Self-realisation alone there lies real blessedness.

The test of Truth is this: Whereas in the case of worldly things and worldly relations you can never get any ultimate satisfaction, in the case of spirituality and spiritual life you can get that perfect satisfaction which is not dependent upon anything external. So the great sage Narada says, *“Realising THAT, one attains to one’s heart’s desire. And thus only does one become immortal. Thus only does one become full of Bliss.”*

Love thy neighbour as thy Self

First you must find your real Self and then only can you really love others. Do not try to love others indiscriminately before you have found your real Self, because such love will be blind and will do harm to you and to them. Such love is a fatal mistake which many people are inclined to make, even with the very best of intentions. And this at once bars all spiritual progress. Before you attain to the realisation of your own Self, all love for others is mere imagination, if not something worse. It is always a case of self-deception. It is not LOVE. Real LOVE comes only with the vision of Truth. Everything before that may be done as a discipline. Try to serve others to the best of your ability. Try to make yourself eligible for LOVE by becoming selfless, but do not flatter yourself that by trying to do this you have come to know what LOVE really is. LOVE can only find satisfaction when it begins to love the true SELF. So the Vedanta says — Love thy neighbour not only as thyself but as thy very Self. It is all one Self appearing as the many. Here alone we find the final reason why we should love our neighbours and all others.

And, above all, do not sacrifice your ideal for anyone, whatever happens. The moment your ideal is involved, you must become as hard as adamant and as relentless as the thunderbolt. Never sacrifice your ideal for anyone, not for anything that belongs to the world of manifestation. If my parents, my wife, my children, etc., etc., want me to take the wrong course; let their hearts break, because I should under no circumstance sacrifice Truth to their and my selfish interests and selfish love. I do not want to give them or myself the wrong happiness, by following their, as well as my false wishes, and increase their, as also my delusion all the more. If any people make a demand because of which you would have to give up your spiritual life altogether, never satisfy them. To-day there may still be the question of your striving to be pleasant to others connected with you by worldly ties. Later on, the day will come when others will have to accept your ideas or agree to differ from your ideas, or come to reject them altogether, causing thereby a definite breach. "Call none your father upon earth: for one is your father who is in heaven," as Christ said.

What is our Reality?

It is often very difficult to have a yearning heart in the beginning and the reason is that God does not seem a reality to us. With most of us this body is our soul and it is for the enjoyment of this body on the material plane — it need not necessarily be a very gross form of enjoyment — that we are most anxious. Religion to most of us is something highly amateurish, a kind of fashion, just like so many other fashions. But if some day through our spiritual striving God comes to be a reality, we feel that our whole being responds to that reality and longs for it alone. If the world is real to us, it absorbs our entire attention. If something else is real, that, too, does the same. That which we take to be real for the time being affects us, calls up our feelings, draws out our will, as it occupies our whole intellect. In fact, our whole being responds to this reality. If we carefully study our own lives and those of the saints, we find a great difference. It is the "reality" that affects the minds of both, but the reality is something different to the saint from what it is to us ordinary people. To us this world is real: to them the spiritual world alone is real. Their whole life is busy with this one idea, how to realise the Divine, how to make Him a living reality instead of an intellectual and rather vague concept. If we are able to appre-

ciate what the saint calls reality, we can also appreciate why he is ever ready to lay down his life for the sake of Self-realisation.

When we study the life of a Buddha, a Christ, a Sri Chaitanya, a Ramakrishna, we find that God to them all is the highest reality. The Divine is the central object of their lives and everything else is subordinate to it.

You may take up any aspect of God that appeals to you most: as mother, father, child, friend, comrade, play-fellow or lover. Only make Him somehow your nearest and dearest. So there is a prayer that says, *“Thou art our Mother, Thou art our Father, Thou art our Friend, Thou art our Comrade, Thou art our Knowledge, Thou art our Wealth, Thou art our All in All.”*

The ideal is to establish a close relationship with the Divine And we should clearly note that this God is not merely personal, but impersonal too.

As already said, whatever we take to be real, whatever we call real, draws our whole being, absorbs our whole mind, attracts our whole feeling. And according to Vedanta nothing is ultimately real which does not remain unchanged under all circumstances. Real is that alone which was in the past, is in the present, and will be in future, without ever undergoing any change. Everything that changes or decays, undergoes evolution or involution, belongs to the category of the unreal.

Sri Ramakrishna has said, “When the mind becomes pure and is freed from worldly attachments and longings, one comes to have true yearning for the Divine and then alone will one’s prayers reach Him. No message can be sent if the telegraph-wire be broken or if there be any other interruption.” With a yearning heart he used to cry to the Lord in solitude. He used to become unconscious to the world and lose himself in God. How to have connection with the Divine? Is it possible to get it if there be a break in the wire of the mind? The mind must be completely free from all worldly attachments, so that Divine communion may become an accomplished fact.

Sri Ramakrishna adds, “One comes to have the vision of God when there is this threefold attraction: the love that a chaste wife has for her husband, the love that a mother bears for her child, the love that a rich man has for his riches.”

It is enough if one has sincere and single-hearted yearning, if one has true love for the Divine. He is the indwelling spirit. He looks to the yearning of the heart.

Until the mind is perfectly pure we can not know Him. It is only when we conquer lust, anger and greed that the Lord's mercy falls on us and then comes the vision.

Begin as beginners!

Many people want to begin their spiritual life from the topmost rung of the ladder, but that cannot be done. There are no shortcuts to spiritual realisations, neither can anything be achieved without first finding out where one really stands. High philosophical flights and wonderful metaphysical dreams, however useful and necessary they may be, do not mean actual experience. By themselves they do not lead to realisation, but only to abstract and superfine speculations that have no connection at all with real spiritual life. We should know where we stand and then proceed from there. We must begin as beginners and go on step by step. As an ideal, Monism, or rather non-dualism, may be all right for us, but when we come to the practical aspects, we find that we are dualists and may have to remain so for a long time to come. It is amusing to hear people talking in high-sounding terms about the "Absolute", the "Principle", etc., because in most cases all these are nothing but empty speculations and frothy words and do not even mean that that particular person is fit for the monistic path. Nobody who stands in dualism, in whatever way it may be, is a Monist, whether Monism appeals to Him or not.

Very often the mind of the modern man revolts at the idea of any particular discipline. It says: "Why should we busy ourselves with that? Haven't we got enough drudgery in the world? We want the Absolute, so what is the use of Japam [repetition of the Divine Name], meditation on Divine attributes and forms? Let us reach the Absolute. Let us worship the Divine 'in spirit and in truth!'" All this, no doubt, sounds very grand and highly spiritual, but as soon as we come down to the realities of life, we find out it does not mean anything at all. Mostly such people are convinced dualists as far as their own actions in daily life go. To worship God "in spirit and in truth" is all right. But where is the beginner who can do so? This is the point. For most people, it means just vagueness, hazy feelings, confused thinking and thoughtless actions — all done in a way that

has no connection at all with the Divine or spiritual.

How to begin?— that is the point. How to get the necessary mental training?— that is the problem before us. Different thoughts constantly keep cropping up in our mind. When we wish to make the mind calm, it becomes more disturbed. It revolts the very moment we try to practise concentration. It suddenly takes the form of a tempestuous ocean in which we are in danger of getting completely lost. The whole mind is disturbed by mighty thought-waves, and the more we try to calm them, the mightier do they become. So meditation becomes a very tiresome process in the beginning instead of bringing light and peace to our soul, as it should .

As in the case of a horse-trainer who has to take great trouble in following a systematic course for breaking in the horse, similarly, with a view to break the mind, we must follow a certain definite system of discipline from which we should not deviate, taking care at the same time not to become mechanical in any way. In our spiritual discipline there must be great definiteness regarding all points. It won't do for us to put two legs in two different boats. We must learn to follow one course definitely, without vacillation, and to proceed step by step, consciously intelligently and patiently. And that is the way to attain the goal of spiritual life in due course.



STORIES

Stories from the Life of the Buddha

1. The Wild Geese

One day, as Prince Siddhartha was going through the royal gardens on his way to the river, a flock of wild geese, beautifully outlined against the sky, passed overhead. Devadatta, the Prince's cousin, seeing the geese, shot an arrow into their midst and one of them fell, wounded, just in front of Siddhartha. He felt a tender compassion for the poor bird that lay bleeding at his feet. Lifting it up, he drew out the arrow very carefully, bound up the wound and took the bird with Him. Presently a messenger came to claim the bird, sent by Devadatta, but Siddhartha refused to give it up saying that it belonged to him who had saved its life, not to him who had tried to kill it.

2. The Buddha and the Wealthy Brahmin

One day a wealthy Brahmin was holding his harvest-home, when the Buddha came and stood by with the begging bowl in his hands. The Brahmin got very angry and said, "I plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat. It would be better if you were in like manner to plough and to sow, and then you would have food enough to eat without begging."

"O Brahmin, do not get incensed at my begging," the Buddha answered, "I too, plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat."

"You say, you are a husbandman, but I see no signs of it," replied the Brahmin, "Where are your bullocks and the seed and the plough?"

Then the Buddha answered, "Faith is the seed I sow and good works are the rain that fertilises it. Wisdom and good works are the parts of the plough, and my mind is the guiding rein. I lay hold of the handle of the Law; earnestness is the goad I use and diligence is my daughter. Thus my ploughing is done, destroying the weeds of delusion. The harvest that it yields is the ambrosia-fruit of Nirvana, and by this ploughing all sorrow ends."

3. The Sacrifice of the Brahmin

A certain Brahmin had made preparations for a great sacrifice in honour of one of the ancient gods of the Hindus. Whole herds of sheep and goats had been driven together, ready to be slaughtered when the day of sacrifice should arrive. Now, it came to pass that the Buddha visited this Brahmin, and as they sat together, discussing many things, the Buddha spoke of the sacredness of all life, whether of men or animals, of the pure heart and upright ways which are of far higher value than a sacrifice necessitating the shedding of blood. For nothing but his own unbroken efforts after right doing and right thinking can avail a man; he cannot rid himself of his sins and delusions by making innocent creatures suffer. As the Brahmin listened; the Buddha's words sank deep into his soul. He was convinced of their truth. Determined to spare the lives of all those animals that had been driven together for the day of sacrifice, the Brahmin ordered that they should be given their freedom. So instead of being slaughtered, they were turned loose on the hill-side where they could roam at will, choose their own pasture,

drink the clear water of the mountain streams and scent the cool and refreshing breezes that blew on the upland.

4. Angulimala

Journeying in Kosala, the Buddha was warned not to pass through a certain forest, for here, in the deep recesses of the jungle, was the den of a famous robber chief, Angulimala. He was the terror of the whole country-side, for he lived by plundering unwary travellers and had committed many murders. He feared no one, and from the very palace of the king the cries of his victims had been heard many a time. All attempts to capture this desperate man had failed. So he continued his ravages unpunished.

The people of Kosala now besought the Buddha not to expose himself to the dangers of the robber's territory. But Gautama knew no fear and heedless of all warnings, he made his way straight to the den of the robber. Angulimala, enraged at this boldness, determined to slay the intruder. But when he saw the Buddha, calm and self-possessed, and heard his words of kindness, the robber hesitated. His arm uplifted to kill, hung helpless by his side and his wrath cooled like the embers of a dying fire. As the Buddha reasoned with him, he changed his purpose and, before long, had confessed all his sins and declared his faith in the Doctrine. When the people saw the new disciple following his Master, they were amazed and could scarcely believe that this was the same man who had been the terror of their land for so many years. Angulimala became a monk and was renowned for his holiness.



Two Stories from the Life of St. Francis

1. The Sermon on the Corpse

One day, St. Francis complained to his brothers in the following way saying, "There is scarcely a monk on earth who observes perfect obedience towards his superior."

Then his companions said to him, "Tell us, Father, what is perfect and supreme obedience?"

He answered, describing him who is truly and perfectly obedient under the figure of a corpse.

"Take a dead body and put it wherever you will. You will see that

it shows no resistance, does not change its place, will not demand from you the things it left. If you put it in a chair, it will not look up but down. If you dress it in purple, it will but look paler than before. Thus he who is perfectly obedient does not ask why he is removed, does not care where he is placed, does not insist on being put elsewhere. He who is raised to some high office retains his ordinary humility. The higher he rises in honours, the more does he consider himself to be unworthy of them.”

St. Francis considered that to be perfect obedience which is attained spontaneously without asking for it. And he took that for supreme obedience wherein neither the flesh nor the blood has any part.

2. The Immodest Eyes

Among those virtues which he preferred and desired to find in the brothers after the foundation of holy humility, St. Francis liked above all the beauty and purity of pure-mindedness.

Therefore, endeavouring to train the brothers to keep their eyes modest, he used to describe the immodest eyes by the following parable.

“There was a pious and mighty king who sent two messengers, one after the other, to the queen. On coming back, the first one spoke about the message only in words without mentioning the queen, for he had guarded his eyes wisely in his head and not lifted them up to the queen under any circumstances. When the second returned he began, after having said a few words about the message, to weave a long story round the beauty of the queen. “Truly,” he said, “O Lord, I saw the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Fortunate, indeed, is he who possesses one like unto her.” The king replied to him, “Thou faithless servant hast lifted up thy immodest eyes to my spouse, and it is clear that thou wishest secretly to possess what thou hast seen.” Thereupon he ordered the other servant to be brought back to him and said, “What dost thou think of the queen?” “She seemed most excellent,” he said, “for she listened to me willingly and with great patience.” And the king turned again to him and asked, “But has she no beauty at all?” “That is for you to see, my Lord,” he replied, “My duty was to deliver the message.” Then the king passed judgment and said, “Because thou hast kept thy eyes chaste, stay with me in my own room because of the chastity of the body and enjoy my delights.

But that shameless fellow must leave my palace in order that he bring not dishonour to my house.”

—From the *Specchio di perfezione* by Brother Leone—



St.Moritz, Manin Sur, Engadin.

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

The Effects of Self-Realisation

Having realised That which is without sound, without touch, without form, without destruction, and also without taste and smell, eternal, without beginning or end, and beyond all manifestation — one is liberated from the jaws of Death.

The knots of the heart are cut asunder, all doubts are dispelled, the results of all accumulated deeds are destroyed, when a person realises that One who is manifest as everything, high and low.

When all the desires of the heart are destroyed, then the mortal becomes immortal and, while living in the world, here itself, attains the Infinite Being.

When all the knots of the heart are rent asunder, the mortal becomes immortal,— this is the end of all spiritual instructions.

When the seer realises that effulgent Supreme Being, the Creator, Lord and Source of Cosmic Existence, then having shaken off all merits and demerits, the wise man attains to the supreme, stainless Unity.

To those wise men who perceive the One Supreme Ruler, the Self of all beings, who though One, appears as manifold in form, as existing in their own soul, belongs eternal happiness and to none else.

To those wise men who perceive Him, the Eternal among non-eternals, the Intelligence in the intelligent, who, though One, fulfills the desires of many, as existing in their own soul, belongs eternal peace and to none else.

He who knows the bliss of that Infinite Principle of Exis-

tence, whence all speech turns back with the mind, failing to reach It, he has no cause of fear.

The wise one who perceives all objects as existing in the Self, and the Self as existing in every being, hates none.

When to the seer of Truth all things appear as nothing but the Self, then what delusion, what sorrow can come to that sage who beholds Oneness?

The wise man relinquishes both pain and pleasure, having realised, by means of meditation on the Inner Self, the Ancient Effulgent one, hard to be seen, subtle, immanent, seated in the heart and residing within the body.

The wise one does not grieve, having known the bodiless, all-pervading, Supreme Self that dwells in the impermanent body.

He who knows the Infinite Being to be the All and seated in the cavity of the heart, cuts asunder the knot of ignorance even while living.

The knower of the Infinite Self attains the Supreme. He who knows that Infinite Existence hidden in the heart of all beings, realises all his desires.

He who is without desires, who is free from desires, the objects of whose desires have been attained and to whom all objects of desire are but the Self — having thus realised the Infinite Self, he merges in the Self.

He who knows the Self as such becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, enduring and concentrated, and sees the Self within his own body; he sees all as Self. Evil does not overtake him; he transcends all evil. Evil does not trouble him; he consumes all evil. He becomes free from all taints and impurities, free from doubts, a real Knower of Brahman — Existence-Intelligence-Bliss Absolute.

—The Upanishads—



HINDUISM

Self-effort, Divine Grace and Realisation

[Compiled from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna]

Householder Devotee — Sir, we have heard that you have seen

God. If this be true, please make us see Him also.

Sri Ramakrishna — Everything depends upon the will of the Lord. What can man do? One may repeat His Holy Name, but sometimes tears flow and sometimes not. At the time of meditation, one day you may have perfect concentration, and another day you will not be able to fix your mind at all.

Work necessary for God-vision

Sri Ramakrishna — Work is necessary for God-vision. Once I was passing by a pool, the surface of which was covered by a thick scum. I saw a poor man pushing the scum to one side to look at the water. This showed me that if you wish to see the water, you must push aside the scum. That act of pushing is like the work which removes all the impurities of the heart. Then God is visible. Concentration, meditation, repetition of the Name of the Lord, charitable works, self-sacrifice, these will remove the scum of ignorance which covers the water of Divinity in the pool of the heart.

Mahima who joined the group of devotees exclaimed, “Oh yes, Sir, such works are absolutely necessary. Tireless labour is needed to attain great results. How much we must study! Innumerable are the sciences, Scriptures and philosophies.”

[Mahima was the first name of a Brahmin Zemindar and a scholar who was known as Mahima Charan Chuckravarti. He lived the life of a pure and spiritual householder and regarded Sri Ramakrishna as the greatest Hindu sage of the age.]

Sri Ramakrishna — How much can you study? What results can you get by mere reasoning? First try to realise God. Have faith in the words of your Guru [spiritual teacher], and perform some good work. If you have not found a Guru, a true spiritual master, earnestly pray to God. He will show you what He is like. What can you know by reading books? Before you enter a market-place you can hear only a loud confused uproar; but when you go near, all confusion will vanish and you will distinguish what each one is calling. Before you reach the shore, you hear the roar of the waves; but when you come near, you see vessels, sea-gulls, birds, and you can count the waves.

Book-knowledge and Realisation

Sri Ramakrishna — One cannot realise Divinity by reading books. There is a vast difference between book-knowledge and realisa-

tion. After realisation, all books, sciences and Scriptures seem to be like worthless straw. It is necessary first to make acquaintance with the landlord. Why are you so anxious to know beforehand how many houses, how many gardens, how many stocks and bonds he possesses? If you ask the servants, they will not tell you, nor will they notice you. But if you can once become acquainted with the landlord, by whatever means, you will learn about his possessions in a moment and the servants then will bow down to you and honour you.

A Devotee — Sir, how can one make acquaintance with the landlord?

Sri Ramakrishna — For that, I say, work is necessary. What is the use of sitting quietly and saying, "God exists"? If you merely sit on the shore of a lake and say, "There are fish in this lake," will you catch any? Go and get the things necessary for fishing, get a rod and line and bait and throw some lure in the water. Then from the deep water the fish will rise and come nearer and you will be able to see and catch them. You wish me to show you God while you sit quietly by, without making the least effort. How unreasonable! You would have me set the curds, churn the butter and hold it before your mouths! You ask me to catch the fish and place it in your hands. How unreasonable! If a man desires to see the King in his palace, he will have to go to the palace and pass through all the gates; but if he, after entering the outermost gate, exclaims, "Where is the King?" he will not find him. He must go through the seven gates, then he will see the King.

Mahima — Sir, by what kind of work can God be attained?

Sri Ramakrishna — There is no difference in work. Do not think that *this* work will lead to God and *that* will not. Everything depends upon His Grace.

Work and Grace

Sri Ramakrishna — Whatever work you perform with sincerity and earnest longing will attract His Grace and help towards realisation. Through His Grace the conditions for realisation will become perfect. These conditions are: association with the holy, right discrimination of the Real from the unreal, and the finding of the real Guru or true spiritual master. If your family depends upon you, perhaps your brother will assume its responsibility for you. Perhaps

your wife will not hinder you in your spiritual life, but will rather help you; or perhaps you will not marry at all and will not be attached to the world in any way. When such conditions become absolutely favourable, the realisation of God becomes easy.

When God is attained, worldly attachment vanishes

Sri Ramakrishna — Worldly people say that it is impossible to be free from attachment to worldliness. But when God is attained, all worldly attachment vanishes. After realising the absolute bliss of God-consciousness one cannot enjoy sense-pleasures or run after fame, honour or any worldly object. Moths after once seeing the light do not return to the darkness. As much as one thinks of God and meditates on Him, by so much will one lose one's taste for worldly pleasures. As much as one's love and devotion for God increases, by so much will diminish worldly desires and care for the body. Then one will look upon every woman as mother, upon his own wife as a spiritual helpmate; all animal passions will disappear; Divine Spirituality will come, and non-attachment to the world; then one will become absolutely emancipated, even in this life.

The Kingdom of God is everywhere

Mahima — Sir, can the world exist for the mind which is fixed on God?

Sri Ramakrishna — Of course it will exist, otherwise where will it go? I see that wherever I remain, I am in the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, this world is the Kingdom of God. Ramachandra, the Divine Incarnation and the Hero of the epic Ramayana, said to his father that he would renounce the world and go to a spiritual Guru in order to attain spiritual wisdom. The father summoned the great sage Vashishta to reason with his son. Vashishta saw that Rama had intense dispassion for the world; he then said to him, "O Rama, first discriminate with me, then renounce the world." By right discrimination Rama realised that God manifests Himself in the form of Jiva or the individual soul and the world. Everything lives and exists in and through His Being. Then Rama kept silent. Some time ago Vaishnava Charan said that perfect knowledge of God is attained when one perceives Him in all human beings. I have now come to a stage of realisation in which I see that God is walking in every human form and manifesting Himself alike through the sage

and the sinner, the virtuous and the vicious. Therefore, when I meet different people, I say to myself, “God in the form of the saint, God in the form of the sinner, God in the form of the unrighteous, God in the form of the righteous.” He who has attained to such realisation goes beyond good and evil, above virtue and vice, and realises that the Divine Will is working everywhere.



Spiritual Striving and Self-Realisation

[Different instructions culled from
the Reminiscences of the Holy Mother]

[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.]

Devotee — How is it that Japam [Repetition of the Divine Name dwelling on the meaning] does not lead me into deep God-absorption?

.Holy Mother — It will, by and by. But do not give up Japam even if the mind is unwilling and unsteady. You must go on with the repetition. And you will find that the mind gets gradually steadier — like a flame in calm air. Any movement in the air disturbs the steady burning of the flame; even so, the presence of any thought or desire makes the mind unsteady. A single utterance of the Lord’s name is as effective as a million repetitions of it, if you do so with a steady, concentrated mind. What is the use of repeating a million times with an absent mind? You must do this whole-heartedly. Then only can you deserve the Divine Grace.

Devotee — It is said that the Lord grants man His vision if he calls on Him sincerely for two or three days. I have been calling on Him for so many days. Why do I not see Him ?

Holy Mother — Yes, you will see Him. Sri Ramakrishna said to one of his devotees, “Those who have money should practise char-

ity. Those who have not, take His name.” If you cannot do even this, then surrender yourself to Him. It is enough if you only remember that you have someone — God — who is your father and mother, to look after you.

If the mind is pure, why should one not get concentration? Why should one not see God-visions? After practising Japam — repetition of the Divine name — dwelling on the meaning — for some time, you will find that as you sit for meditation, the Holy Name will rise from within spontaneously, without any effort. One must repeat the name at least fifteen to twenty thousand times a day, then only will one get some results. One is sure to get it. One must practise first before one says that one is not progressing. But then one must practise Japam with a little attention. People do not practise and simply say — “Why am I not progressing spiritually?”

The mind gets purified after hard spiritual practice. Without regular practice, nothing can be attained. Both purity and impurity are in the mind. When a man sees defects in others, his mind gets polluted. What does he gain by finding faults in others? He hurts himself by that. From my childhood I could not find faults in others. That one thing I have never learnt in life. Forgiveness itself is a great spiritual practice. Remember one thing. If you want peace of mind, then give up fault-finding. If you find fault at all, find out your own faults and shortcomings. Learn to treat everyone as your own. No one is alien to you; the whole world is yours.

Disciple — What part of the day is suited for meditation?

Holy Mother — Early morning and evening, i.e., when night passes into day and day into night. These are the best hours for meditation. One should meditate regularly at fixed hours, for who knows when the auspicious moment will come, when one will have a vision of the Divine. Such a moment comes suddenly without a premonition. So one should keep to the routine however much one’s mind may be disturbed.

Disciple — But then there are the worries of work and the question of health. Again the mind is sometimes calm and sometimes very ruffled.

Holy Mother — Of course, if you get ill, you cannot help it; but if you are troubled too much by work on any particular day, then it is enough if you just remember the Lord and make salutations to

Him. As regards the mind getting ruffled now and then, it is quite natural, for it is with Nature and as such it has its own ebb and flow.

Through spiritual disciplines the bonds of past Karma are cut asunder. But realisation of God cannot be achieved without ecstatic love for Him. Do you know the significance of Japam and other spiritual practices? By these, the power of the sense-organs is subdued.

Disciple — How can one feel yearning for God without seeing the manifestation of His love?

Holy Mother — Yes, you can do so. There lies the grace of God.

Disciple — Mother, one may get spiritual realisation at any time if the grace of God descends upon one. Then one does not have to wait for the right time.

Holy Mother — That is true; but can the mango which ripens out of season, be as sweet as the one which ripens in the proper season? This is also true of the efforts that lead to God-realisation. Perhaps you practise Japam and austerities in this life; in the next life you may intensify the spiritual mood and in the following life you advance farther. It is like that .

Disciple — Mother, if there exists someone called God, why is there so much suffering and misery in the world? Does He not see it? Has He not the power to remove it?

Holy Mother — Creation itself is full of misery and happiness. Could anyone appreciate happiness if misery did not exist? Besides, how is it possible for *all* persons to be happy? Sita once said to Rama, “Why don’t you remove the suffering and unhappiness of your subjects? Please make all the inhabitants of your kingdom happy. If you only will, you can easily do so.” Rama said, “Is it ever possible for all persons to be happy at the same time?” “Why not?”, asked Sita, “please supply from the royal treasury the means of satisfying everyone’s wants.” “All right,” said Rama, “your will shall be carried out.” Rama sent for Lakshmana and said to him, “Go and notify everyone in my empire that whatever he wants he may get from the royal treasury.” At this the subjects of Rama came to the palace and told their wants. The royal treasury began to flow without stint. When everyone was spending his days joyously, through the Maya of Rama, the roof of the palace in which Rama

and Sita lived started to leak. Workmen were sent for to repair the building. But where were they? There was not a labourer in the kingdom. In the absence of masons, carpenters and artisans, all buildings got out of repair and work was at a stand-still. The subjects of Rama informed their king of their difficulties. Finding no other help Sita said to Rama, "It is no longer possible to bear the discomfort of the leaking roof. Please arrange things as they were before. Then we shall be able to procure workmen. Now I realise that it is not possible for all persons to be happy at the same time." "Let it be so", said Rama. Instantaneously all things were as before, and workmen could once more be procured. Sita said to Rama, "Lord, this creation is your wonderful sport."

No one can suffer for all time. No one will spend all his days on this earth in suffering. Every action brings its own result, and one gets one's opportunities accordingly.

Disciple — Is everything due to Karma ?

Holy Mother — If not, to what else? Don't you see the scavenger carrying the tub on his head?

Disciple — Where does one first get the propensity which leads to an action, good or bad? You may say, as an explanation of the propensities of *this* life, that they are due to the actions of the previous life and the propensities of *that* life due to the preceding one. But where is the beginning?

Holy Mother — Nothing can happen without the will of God. Not even a straw can move. When a man passes into a favourable time, he gets the desire to contemplate God, but when the time is unfavourable he gets all the facilities for doing evil actions. Everything happens in time according to the will of God. It is God alone who expresses His will through the actions of man. Could Naren [Swami Vivekananda] by himself have accomplished all those things? He was able to succeed because God worked through Him. The Master has predetermined what He is going to accomplish. If anyone surrenders himself totally at His feet, then the Master will see that His purpose is accomplished. One must bear with everything because all our facilities are determined by actions. Again, actions can be cancelled by actions.

Disciple — Can action ever cancel action?

Holy Mother — Why not? If you do a good action, that will coun-

teract your past evil action. Past sins can be effaced by meditation, Japam, and spiritual thoughts.

Every action produces its results. It is not good to use harsh words towards others or be responsible for their suffering.

Holy Mother — In the final stage there is not even the idea of a personal God. After attaining wisdom, one sees that gods and deities are all Maya. Everything comes into existence in time and also disappears in time.

Holy Mother — Once Naren [Swami Vivekananda] said to me, “Mother for some days everything has been vanishing from me. Really I find everything is disappearing.” I said to him, “But see to it, my child, that you do not drive me away.” Naren said in reply, “Mother, where would I be if I drove you away? The knowledge that destroys the lotus feet of the Guru is merely ignorance, Where does knowledge stay if the Lotus feet of the Guru were to vanish?”

Holy Mother — Personal God and such things really disappear on the dawn of knowledge. The aspirant then realises that the Divine Being alone pervades the entire universe. All then become one. That is the simple Truth.



Sadhanas or Preparations to Higher Life

by Swami Vivekananda

If atavism gains, you go down; if evolution gains, you go on. Therefore we must not allow atavism to take place. Here, in my own body, is the first work of the study. We are too busy trying to mend the ways of our neighbours, that is the difficulty. We must begin with our own bodies. The heart, the liver, etc., etc., are all atavistic; bring them back into consciousness, control them, so that they will obey your commands and act up to your wishes. There was a time when we had control of the liver; we could shake our whole skin, as can the cow. I have seen many people bring the control back by sheer hard practice. Once an impress is made, it is there. Bring back all the submerged activities, the vast ocean of action. This is the first part of the great study and is absolutely neces-

sary for our social well-being. On the other hand, only the consciousness need not be studied all the time.

Then there is the other part of the study which is not so necessary in our social life as tending to liberation. Its direct action is to free the soul to take the torch into the gloom, to clean out what is behind, to shake it up, or even defy it, and to make us march onward, piercing the gloom. That is the goal,— the superconscious. Then, when that state is reached, this very man becomes divine, becomes free. And to the mind thus trained to transcend all, gradually this universe will begin to give up its secrets; the book of Nature will be read, chapter after chapter, till the goal is attained, and we pass from this value of life and death to that One, where death and life do not exist, and we know the Real and become the Real.

The first thing necessary is a quiet and peaceable life. If I have to go about the world the whole day to make a living, it is hard for me to attain to anything very high in this life. Perhaps in another life I shall be born under more propitious circumstances. But if I am earnest enough, these very circumstances will change even in this birth. Was there anything you did not get which you really wanted? It could not be. For it is the want that creates the body. It is the light that has bored the holes, as it were, in your head, called the eyes. If the light had not existed you would have had no eyes. It is sound that has made the ears. The object of perception existed first, before you made the organ. In a few hundred thousand years or earlier, we may, have other organs to perceive electricity and other things. There is no desire for a peaceful mind. Desire will not come unless there is something outside to fulfil it. The outside something just bores a hole in the body, as it were, and tries to get into the mind. So, when the desire shall arise to have a peaceful quiet life, where everything shall be propitious for the development of the mind, that *shall* come,— you may take that as my experience. It may come in thousands of lives but it must come. Hold on to that, the desire. You cannot have the strong desire if its object was not outside for you already. Of course, you must understand, there is a difference between desire and desire. The master said, "My child if you desire after God, God shall come to you." The disciple did not understand his master fully. One day both went to bathe in a river and the master said, "Plunge in," and the boy did so. In a moment the master was upon him, holding him down. He would not let the

boy come up. When the boy struggled and was exhausted, he let him go. "Yes, my child, how did you feel there?" "Oh, the desire for a breath of air!" "Do you have that kind of desire for God?" "No, Sir." "Have that kind of desire for God and you shall have God."

That without which we cannot live must come to us. If it did not come to us, life would not go on.

If you want to be a Yogi, you must be free and place yourself in circumstances where you are alone and free from all anxiety. He who desires a comfortable and nice life and at the same time wants to realise the Self, is like the fool who, wanting to cross the river, caught hold of a crocodile mistaking it for a log of wood. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Unto him comes everything who does not care for anything. Fortune is like a flirt. She cares not for him who wants her, but she is at the feet of him who does not care for her. Money comes and showers itself upon one who does not care for it, so does fame come in abundance—until it is a trouble and a burden. They always come to the master. The slave never gets anything. The master is he who can live in spite of them, whose life does not depend upon the little foolish things of the world. Live for an ideal and that one ideal alone. Let it be so great, so strong, that there may be nothing else in the mind; no place for anything else, no time for anything else.

How some people give all their energies, time, brain, body, and everything, to become rich! They have no time for breakfast! Early in the morning they are out and at work! They die in the attempts—ninety percent of them—and the rest, when they make money, cannot enjoy it. That is grand! I do not say it is bad to try to be rich. It is marvellous, wonderful! Why, what does it show? It shows that one can have the same amount of energy and struggle for freedom, as one has for money. We know we have to give up money and all other things when we die and yet, see the amount of energy we can put forth for them! But we, the same human beings, should we not put forth a thousandfold more strength and energy to acquire that which never fades, which remains to us for ever? For this is the one great friend, our own good deeds, our own spiritual excellence, that follows us beyond the grave. Everything else is left behind here with the body.

That is the one great first step,— the real desire for the ideal.

Everything comes easy after that. That the Indian mind found out. There, in India, men go to any length to find truth. But here, in the West, the difficulty is that everything is made so easy. It is not truth, but development that is the great aim. The struggle is the great lesson. Mind you, the great benefit in this life is struggle. It is through that we pass,— if there is any road to Heaven, it is through hell. Through hell to Heaven is always the way. When the soul has wrestled with circumstance, and has met death a thousand times on the way, but nothing daunted has struggled forward again and again, and yet again —then the soul comes out as a giant and laughs at the ideal he has been struggling for, because he finds how much greater is he than the ideal. I am the end, my own Self, and nothing else, for what is there to compare to my own Self? Can a bag of gold be the ideal of my soul? Certainly not! My soul is the highest ideal that I had. Realising my own real nature is the one goal of my life.

There is nothing that is absolutely evil. The devil has a place here, as well as God, else he would not be here. Just as I told you, it is through hell that we pass to Heaven. Our mistakes have places here. Go on! Do not look back if you think you have done something that is not right. Now, do you believe you could be what you are today, had you not made those mistakes before? Bless your mistakes then. They have been angels unawares. Blessed be torture! Blessed be happiness! Do not care what be your lot! Hold on to the ideal! March on, do not look back upon little mistakes and things! In this battle-field of ours the dust of mistakes must be raised. Those who are so thin-skinned that they cannot bear the dust, let them get out of the ranks.

So, then, this tremendous determination to struggle, a hundred-fold more determination than that which you put forth to gain anything which belongs to this life, is the first great preparation.

And then along with it there must be meditation. Meditation is the one thing. Meditate! The greatest thing is meditation. It is the nearest approach to spiritual life—the mind meditating. It is the one moment in our daily life when we are not at all material,— the Soul thinking of Itself, free from all matter,— this marvellous touch of the Soul!

The body is our enemy, and yet is our friend. Which of you can bear the sight of misery? And which of you cannot do so when you

see it only as a painting? Because it is unreal, we do not identify ourselves with it; we know it is only a painting; it cannot bless us, it cannot hurt us. The most terrible misery painted upon a piece of canvas we may even enjoy; we praise the technique of the artist, we wonder at his marvellous genius, even though the scene he paints is most horrible. That is the secret. That non-attachment. Be the Witness.

No breathing, no physical training of Yoga, nothing is of any use until you reach the idea of "I am the Witness". Say, when the tyrant hand is on your neck, "I am the Witness! I am the Witness!" Say, "I am the Spirit!", "Nothing External can touch me!" When evil thoughts arise, repeat that, give that sledge-hammer blow on their heads, "I am the Spirit, I am the Witness, the Ever-Blessed! I have no reason to do, no reason to suffer. I have finished with everything. I am the Witness. I am in my picture-gallery,— this universe is my museum. I am looking at these successive paintings. They are all beautiful, whether good or evil. I see the marvellous skill but it is all one. Infinite flames of the Great Painter!" Really speaking, there is naught, — neither volition nor desire. He is all. He, She, the Mother, is playing and we are like dolls, Her helpers in this play! Here She puts on now the garb of a beggar, another moment the garb of a king, the next moment the garb of a saint and again the garb of a devil. We are putting on different garbs to help the Mother-Spirit in Her Play!

When the baby is at play, she would not come, even if called by her mother. But when she finishes her play, she will rush to her mother and will have no nay. So there come moments in our life, when our toil here will be of no value; men, women, and children,—wealth, name and fame, joys and glories of life, punishments and successes will be no more, and the whole life will seem like a show. We shall only see the infinite rhythm going on, endless and purposeless, going we do not know where. Only this much shall we say: our play is done.



The True Foundations of Yoga

[Quotations from Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*]

It is not possible to make a foundation in Yoga if the mind is restless. The first thing needed is quiet in the mind. Also to merge the personal consciousness is not the first aim of the Yoga: the first

aim is to open it to a higher spiritual consciousness and for this also a quiet mind is the first need.

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The first thing to do in the sadhana is to get a settled peace and silence in the mind. Otherwise, you may have experiences, but nothing will be permanent. It is in the silent mind that the true consciousness can be built.

Passivity of the mind is good, but take care to be passive only to the Truth and to the touch of the Divine Shakti [Energy]. If you are passive to the suggestions and influences of the lower nature, you will not be able to progress or else you will expose yourself to adverse forces which may take you far away from the true path of Yoga.

Aspire to the Mother for this settled quietness and calm of the mind and constant sense of the inner being in you standing back from the external nature and turned to the Light and Truth.

The forces that stand in the way of sadhana are the forces of the lower mental, vital, and physical nature. Behind them are adverse powers of the mental, vital and subtle physical worlds. These can be dealt with only after the mind and heart have become one-pointed and concentrated in the single aspiration to the Divine.

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Silence. is always good; but I do not mean by quietness of mind entire silence. I mean a mind free from disturbance and trouble, steady, light and glad so as to open to the Force that will change the nature. The important thing is to get rid of the habit of the invasion of troubling thoughts, wrong feelings, confusion of ideas, unhappy movements. These disturb the nature and cloud it and make it difficult for the Force to work; when the mind is quiet and at peace, the Force can work more easily. It should be possible to see things that have to be changed in you without being upset or depressed; the change is the more easily done.

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The first step is a quiet mind — silence is a further step, but quietude must be there; and by a quiet mind I mean a mental consciousness within, which sees thoughts to arrive to it and move about but does not itself feel that it is thinking or identifying itself with the thoughts or call them its own. Thoughts, mental movements, may pass through it as wayfarers appear and pass from

elsewhere through a silent country — the quiet mind observes them or does not care to observe them, but, in either case, does not become active or lose its quietude. Silence is more than quietude; it can be gained by banishing thought altogether from the inner mind, keeping it voiceless or quite outside; but more easily it is established by a descent from above — one feels it coming down, entering or occupying or surrounding the personal consciousness which then tends to merge itself in the vast, impersonal silence.

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Experience in the sadhana is bound to begin with the mental plane,— all that is necessary is that the experience should be sound and genuine. The pressure of understanding and will in the mind and the Godward emotional urge in the heart are the two first agents of Yoga, and peace, purity and calm (with a lulling of the lower unrest) are precisely the first basis that has to be laid; to get that is much more important in the beginning than to get a glimpse of the supraphysical worlds or to have visions, voices and powers. Purification and calm are the first needs of Yoga. One may have a great wealth of experiences of that kind (worlds, visions, voices, etc.) without them, but these experiences occurring in an unpurified and troubled consciousness are usually full of disorder and mixture.

At first peace and calm are not continuous, they come and go, and it usually takes a long time to get them settled in the nature. It is better therefore to avoid impatience and to go on steadily with what is being done. If you wish to have something beyond the peace and calm, let it be the full opening of the inner being and the consciousness of the Divine Power working in you. Aspire for that sincerely and with a great intensity but without impatience and it will come.

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At last you have the true foundation of the sadhana, This calm, peace and surrender are the right atmosphere for all the rest to come—knowledge, strength, Ananda. Let it become complete.

It does not remain when engaged in work because it is still confined to the mind proper which has only just received the gift of silence. When the new consciousness is fully formed and has taken entire possession of the vital nature and the physical being (the vi-

tal as yet is only touched or dominated by the silence, not possessed by it), then this defect will disappear.

The quiet consciousness of peace you now have in the mind must become not only calm but wide. You must feel it everywhere, yourself in it and all in it. This also will help to bring the calm as a basis into the action.

The wider your consciousness becomes, the more you will be able to receive from above. The Shakti will be able to descend and bring strength and light as well as peace into the system. What you feel as narrow and limited in you is the physical mind; it can only widen if this wider consciousness and the light come down and possess the nature.

The physical inertia from which you suffer is likely to lessen and disappear only when strength from above descends into the system.

Remain quiet, open yourself and call the divine Shakti to confirm the calm and peace, to widen the consciousness and to bring into it as much light and power as it can at present receive and assimilate.

Take care not to be over-eager, as this may disturb again such quiet and balance as has been already established in the vital nature.

Have confidence in the final result and give time for the Power to do its work.

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Aspire, concentrate in the right spirit and, whatever the difficulties, you are sure to attain the aim you have put before you.

It is in the peace behind and that "something truer" in you that you must learn to live and feel it to be yourself. You must regard the rest as not your real self, but only a flux of changing or recurring movements on the surface which are sure to go as the true self emerges.

Peace is the true remedy; distraction by hard work is only a temporary relief — although a certain amount of work is necessary for the proper balance of the different parts of the being. To feel the peace above and about your head is a first step; you have to get connected with it and it must descend into you and fill your mind

and life and body and surround you so that you live in it — for this peace is the one sign of the Divine's presence with you, and once you have it, all the rest will begin to come.

Truth in speech and truth in thought are very important. The more you can feel falsehood as being not part of yourself, as coming on you from outside, the easier it will be to reject and refuse it.

Persevere and what is still crooked will be made straight, and you will know and feel constantly the truth of the Divine's presence and your faith will be justified by direct experience.



BUDDHISM

The Training of the Monk

[From *Samannaphala*]

The moral rules

How is a monk accomplished in morality?

Herein a monk abandons the killing of living things and refrains from killing; laying aside the use of a stick or a knife, he dwells modest, full of kindliness, and compassionate for the welfare of all living things. This is his behaviour in morality.

Abandoning the taking of what is not given, he refrains from taking what is not given, he takes and expects only what is given, he dwells purely and without stealing.

Abandoning incontinence, he practises continence and lives apart avoiding the village practice of intercourse.

Abandoning falsehood, he refrains from falsehood; he speaks truth, he is truthful, trustworthy and reliable, not deceiving people

Abandoning slanderous speech, he refrains from slanderous speech; what he has heard from one place he does not tell in another to cause dissension. He is even a healer of dissensions and a producer of union, delighting and rejoicing in concord, eager for concord and an utterer of speech that produces concord.

Abandoning harsh speech, he refrains from frivolous speech; he speaks of the good, the real, the profitable, of the doctrine and the discipline, he is an utterer of speech worth hoarding, with timely reasons and purpose and meaning.

He refrains from injuring seeds and plants.

He eats only within one meal time, abstaining from food at night and avoiding untimely food.

He refrains from seeing dancing, singing, music and shows.

He refrains from the use of garlands, scents, unguents and objects of adornment; from a high or large bed; from accepting gold and silver; from accepting raw grain and raw meat.

He refrains from accepting women, goats and rams, fowls and pigs, elephants, oxen, horses and farmlands.

He refrains from going on messages and errands; from buying and selling; from practices of cheating, trickery, deception and fraud; from cutting, killing, binding, robbery, pillage and violence.

Guarding the senses

And how does the monk have the door of his senses guarded? In this case a monk, when with his eyes he sees objects, does not occupy himself with their characteristics or minor features. Whatever bad or evil thoughts might flow into him on account of his not being restrained in the use of the organ of sight, towards all that he exercises restraint, he guards his organ of sight and applies restraint. When with his senses of hearing, smelling, taste, touch, when with his mind he perceives internal impressions, he does not occupy himself with their characteristics or minor features. Endowed with this noble restraint of the senses, he experiences internally unimpaired happiness. Thus a monk has the door of his senses guarded.

Mindfulness and self-possession

And how is a monk endowed with mindfulness and self-possession? In this case a monk is self-possessed in advancing or withdrawing, in looking forward or looking round, in bending or stretching his limbs, in wearing his inner and outer robes and bowl, in eating, drinking, masticating and tasting, in answering the calls of nature, in walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking and keeping silence. Thus a monk is endowed with mindfulness and self-possession.

Acquiring contentment

And how is a monk content? In this case a monk is content with a robe to protect his body and alms to keep him alive. Wherever he

goes he takes them with him. Thus is a monk content.

Getting rid of the five hindrances

Endowed with this noble group of moral rules, with this noble restraint of the senses, with this noble mindfulness and self-possession, and with this noble contentment, he resorts to a secluded cave, a cemetery, a jungle, or a heap of straw, a forest, the root of a tree, a hill, a grotto or a mountain, in the open air. After his meal when he has returned from collecting alms, he sits down cross-legged and upright, setting mindfulness before him.

Dispelling longing for the world, he abides with his mind free from longing and purifies his mind from longing.

Dispelling malice, he abides with his mind free from malice, having compassion for all living things and purifies his mind from malice.

Dispelling sloth and torpor, he dwells free from sloth and torpor, with clear sight, mindful and self-possessed, and purifies his mind from sloth and torpor.

Dispelling distraction and agitation, he dwells without excitement, with mind internally calmed, and purifies his mind from distraction and agitation.

Dispelling doubt, he dwells free from doubt, without uncertainty about good thoughts, and purifies his mind from doubt.

Thus, like one getting rid of a debt, sickness, prison, slavery, or a path in a wilderness, a monk gets rid of these five hindrances and contemplates himself.

Concentration

When these five hindrances are dispelled and he contemplates himself, exultation arises; as he exults, joy arises, as his mind feels joy, his body becomes serene, as his body becomes serene he feels pleasure, when he feels pleasure his mind is concentrated. Free from sensual desires, free from evil thoughts, he attains and abides in the first trance of joy and pleasure, which is accompanied with reasoning and investigation and arises from seclusion. He suffuses, pervades, fills, and permeates his body with the pleasure and joy arising from seclusion, and there is nothing at all in his body untouched by the pleasure and joy arising from seclusion

Again, the monk. with the ceasing of reasoning and investiga-

tion, in a state of internal serenity, with his mind fixed on one point, attains and abides in the second trance of joy and pleasure arising from concentration, and free from reasoning and investigation. He suffuses, pervades, fills and permeates his body with the pleasure and joy arising from concentration, and there is nothing at all in his body untouched by the pleasure and joy arising from concentration.

Again, the monk, with indifference towards joy, abides with equanimity, mindful and self-possessed, and with his body experiences the pleasure and joy that the noble ones call “dwelling with equanimity, mindful, and happy”, and attains and abides in the third trance. He suffuses, pervades, fills and permeates his body with pleasure without joy, and there is nothing at all in his body untouched by this pleasure without joy.

Again, the monk, with the dispelling of pleasure and pain, and even before the disappearance of elation and depression, attains and abides in the fourth trance which is without pain and pleasure and with the purity of equanimity and mindfulness. He sits, permeating his body with mind purified and cleansed, and there is nothing at all in his body untouched by his mind purified and cleansed.

Meditation on the body

With his mind thus concentrated, purified and cleansed, without lust, free from the depravities, supple, ready to act, firm and impassible, he turns and directs his mind to knowledge and insight.

He thus understands, “This is my body, having shape, formed of the four elements, produced by a mother and father, a collection of milk and gruel, subject to rubbing, pounding, breaking, and dissolution; and this is my consciousness, on this body it rests, to this it is bound.”

With his mind thus concentrated, he turns and directs his mind to the production of a mind-formed body; with his material body he produces another body, having shape, mind-formed, possessing all its limbs and not lacking any faculty.

The divine ear

With his mind thus concentrated, he turns and directs his mind to divine hearing. With purified divine hearing, far surpassing human hearing, he hears the two kinds of sounds, the divine and the human, and both distant and near.

Divine vision

With his mind thus concentrated, he turns and directs his mind to the passing away and rebirth of beings. With his divine vision, purified and superhuman, he sees beings pass away and being reborn, low and high, of good and bad colour, in happy or miserable existences, according to their Karma. He understands that those beings who are given to evil conduct in deed, word and thought, who are revilers of the noble ones, who are of false views, at the dissolution of the body after death have been reborn in a miserable existence in hell. But those beings who are given to good conduct in deed, word and thought, who are not revilers of the noble ones, who are of right views, who acquire the Karma of their right views, at the dissolution of the body after death have been reborn in a happy existence in the world of heaven.

Knowledge of the truths and destruction of the
Asavas [Sensual desire, desire for existence, ignorance]

With his mind thus concentrated, purified and cleansed, without lust, free from the depravities, subtle, ready to act, firm and impassible, he turns and directs his mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the Asavas. He duly understands, "This is pain", he duly understands, "This is the cause of pain"; he duly understands, "This is the cessation of pain"; he duly understands, "This is the path that leads to the cessation of pain"; he duly understands, "These are the Asavas"; he duly understands, "This is the cause of the Asavas"; he duly understands, "This is the path that leads to the destruction of the Asavas." As he thus knows and thus perceives, his mind is released from the Asava of sensual desire, from the Asava of desire for existence, from the Asava of ignorance. In the released is the knowledge of his release; ignorance is destroyed, the religious life has been led, done is what was to be done, there is nothing further for this world.



The birth of a Buddha is happy indeed.

*The preaching of that Law of Righteousness is
happy indeed.*

Happy is the unity of the Sangha [monkhood].

Happy is the ascetic practice of those that live in concord.

—Dhammapadam—



The Importance of Realisation

Fu, of T'ai-yuan, the monk, was first a Buddhist scholar. When he was lecturing on the Paranirvana Sutra while in Yang-chou, a Zen monk happened to stay in his temple and attended the lecture. Fu began discoursing on the Dharmakaya, which incidentally evoked the Zen monk's laughter. Afterwards Fu invited the monk to tea and asked, "My scholarship does not go very far, but I know I have faithfully expounded the meaning in accordance with the literary sense. Having seen you laugh at my lecture, I realise that there must have been something wrong. Be pleased to give me your kind instruction in this."

The Zen monk said, "I simply could not help laughing at the time, because your discourse on the Dharmakaya was not at all to the point."

Fu asked, "Where am I wrong?"

The monk told him to repeat his lecture, whereupon Fu began thus, "The Dharmakaya is like vacuity of space. It reaches the limits of time. It extends to the ten quarters. It fills up the eight points of the compass. It embraces the two extremes, heaven and earth. It functions according to the conditions, responds to all stimulations, and there is no place where it is not in evidence."

The monk said, "I would not say your exposition is all wrong, but it is no more than a talk about the Dharmakaya. As to the thing Itself, you have no knowledge."

Fu, "If this be the case tell me what it is."

Monk, "Would you believe me?"

Fu, "Why not?"

Monk, "If you really do, you quit your lecturing for a while, retire into your room for about ten days and, sitting up straight and quietly, collect all your thoughts, abandon all your discrimination as regards good and bad, and see into your inner world."

Fu followed this advice whole-heartedly, spending all the night absorbed in deep meditation. In the small hours of the morning he happened to hear a flute which suddenly opened his mind to a state of Satori [spiritual illumination]. He ran to the quarters where the monk was staying and knocked at the door.

The monk asked, "Who are you?"

Fu, "Myself."

The monk burst out into a terrible scolding, "I wanted you to have an insight into the Dharma so that you could be a bearer and transmitter of it. Why do you get drunk and snore away the night in the street?"

Fu replied, "O Zen monk, listen. Hitherto all my lectures have been carried on with the mouth given by my parents, but from now on there will be no more of them."

—The ultimate truth of Mahayana teaching is to be experienced and not to be made mere subject of intellectual analysis and discrimination—



JEWISH MYSTICISM

The Two Natures of Man

by Moses of Coucy

It is because man is half angel, half brute, that his inner life witnesses such bitter war between such dissimilar natures. The brute in him clamours for sensual joy and things in which there is only vanity; but the angel resists and strives to make him know that meat, drink, sleep are but means whereby the body may be made efficient for the study of the truths and the doing of the will of God. Not until the very hour of death can it be certain or known to what measure the victory has been won. He who is but a novice in the fear of God will do well to say audibly each day, as he rises, "This day I will be a faithful servant of the Almighty. I will be on my guard against wrath, falsehood, hatred and quarrelsomeness and will forgive those who wound me." For whoso forgives is forgiven in his turn. Hard-heartedness and a temper that will not make up quarrels are a heavy burden of sin, and unworthy.



The City of God

by Philo-Judaeus

Do not seek for the City of God on earth for it is not built of wood or stone; but seek it in the soul of the man who is at peace with himself and is a lover of true wisdom.

If a man practises ablutions of the body, but defiles his mind,— if he offers hecatombs, founds a temple, adorns a shrine, and does nothing for making his soul beautiful — let him not be called religious. He has wandered far from real religion, mistaking ritual for holiness; attempting, as it were, to bribe the Incorruptible and to flatter Him Whom none can flatter. God welcomes the genuine service of a soul, the sacrifice of Truth; but from display of wealth He turns away.

Will any man with an impure soul and with no intention to repent, dare to approach the Most High God? The grateful soul of the wise man is the true altar of God.

Vanity of Human Pleasure

by ??????

A fox was eyeing longingly some luscious fruit in a very fine garden, but there was no way for him to enter. At last he espied an opening through which, he thought, he might possibly get in, but soon found the hole too small to admit his body. "True," he said, "the hole is small, but if I fast three days my body will become sufficiently reduced to admit me." He did so, and to his joy, he now feasted to his heart's content upon the grapes and all the other good things in the orchard. But, lo! when he desired to escape before the master of the garden came upon him, he saw, to his great consternation that the opening had again become too small for him. He had to fast three days a second time and having made good his escape, he cast a farewell glance upon the scene of his late revels saying, "O garden, charming art thou and exquisite are thy fruits! But of what avail hast thou been unto me? What have I now for all my labour and cunning?"

It is even so with man. Naked he comes into the world, naked he must leave it. Of all his toil therein he carries nothing away with him save the fruits of his good deeds.



CHRISTIANITY

**I it am that is highest; I it am that is lowest;
I it am that is all.**

[From the *Revelations of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich]

I saw that two contrary things should never be together in one

place. The most contrary that are, is the highest bliss and the deepest pain. The highest bliss that is, is to have Him in clarity of endless life, Him verily seeing, Him sweetly feeling, all-perfectly having in fullness of joy. And thus was the blissful Cheer of our Lord shewed in Pity: in which Shewing I saw that sin is most contrary,— so far forth that as long as we be meddling with any part of sin, we shall never see clearly the Blissful Cheer of our Lord. And the more horrible and grievous that our sins be, the deeper art we for that time from this blissful sight. And therefore it seemeth to us oftentimes as we were in peril of death, in a part of hell, for the sorrow and pain that the sin is to us. And thus we are dead for the time from the very sight of our blissful life. But in all this I saw soothfastly that we be not dead in the sight of God, nor He passeth never from us. But He shall never have His full bliss in us till we have our full bliss in Him, verily seeing His fair blissful Cheer. For we are ordained thereto in nature, and get thereto by grace. Thus I saw how sin is deadly for a short time in the blessed creatures of endless life.

And ever the more clearly that the soul seeth this blissful Cheer by grace of loving, the more it longeth to see it in fullness. For notwithstanding that our Lord God dwelleth in us and is here with us, and albeit He claspeth us and encloseth us for tender love that He may never leave us, and is more dear to us than tongue can tell or heart can think, yet we may never stint of moaning nor of weeping nor of longing till when we see Him clearly in His blissful Countenance. For in that precious blissful sight there may no woe abide nor any weal fail.

And in this I saw matter of mirth and matter of moaning. Matter of mirth: for our Lord, our Maker, is so eager and so near to us, and in us, and we in Him, by sureness of keeping through His great goodness; matter of moaning: for our ghostly eye is so blind and we be so borne down by weight of our mortal flesh and darkness of sin, that we may not see our Lord God clearly in His fair blissful Cheer. No; and because of this dimness scarcely we can believe and trust His great love and our sureness of keeping. And therefore it is that I say we may never stint of moaning nor of weeping. This “weeping” meaneth pouring out of tears by our bodily eye, but also hath more ghostly understanding. For the kindly desire of our soul is so great and so immeasurable, that if there were given us

for our solace and for our comfort all the noble things that ever God made in heaven and in earth, and we saw not the fair blissful Cheer of Himself, yet we should not stint of moaning nor ghostly weeping, that is to say, of painful longing, till when we should see verily the fair blissful Cheer of our Maker. And if we were in all the pain that heart can think and tongue may tell, if we might in that time see His fair blissful Cheer, all this pain would not aggrive us.

This is that blissful Sight, the end of all manner of pain to the loving soul, and the fulfilling of all manner of joy and bliss. And that shewed He in the high marvellous words where He said, "I it am that is highest; I it am that is lowest; I it am that is all."



The Control of the Senses and the Perfection of Poverty of the Spirit

[Compiled from the Sermons of Tauler]

The highest perfection of poverty of spirit is in being entirely devoted to God so completely that a man does not perceive the actions and faults of outside creatures, so that God can finish His perfect work, which makes eternal bliss. Concerning this Christ also said, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all thou hast and give it to the poor." Jesus does not mean that all men without any temporal goods are perfect. He only means that to be really perfect, a man must have no property, and only give attention that God works directly on the soul. Thus a poor life leads to highest perfection, and poverty is the only condition that allows man to forget all creatures and to hear God alone. As a master gives the first place to his disciple, and expects him to give only attention to him and not to another, so also is poverty the highest place that God can give to His friends in order that they can better approach Him. But whosoever, being poor, interests himself in external things has a poverty more damaging than perfect. God has directed Him to an inward life, and only to give attention to Him; but when he gives his attention to outward attractions, he fails in duty to God and does not live in the true road of humility of spirit. He who wishes to serve man must have material goods. But whosoever wishes to serve God must not seek gain but seek God alone. Therefore Jesus also directed Mary Magdalene that she should cast away all valuable objects that she might the more easily be able to direct herself away from creatures

and look at Him without obstruction. Therefore He also says, "She has chosen the better part," that is, she left the service of creatures, for she left all the temporal gains and turned towards God, where the best part is to be found. But whosoever possesses temporal things must give attention to creatures, serving them according to the will of God, for through this devotion they reach God. But those who are free from property have only God in view, and that is their best means of reaching God. All temporal things are by nature heavy, therefore they drag down the mind which is occupied with them. But whosoever is free from them has a tendency which draws Him to God, and thus true freedom is to be found in the absence of all material goods.

True freedom consists in an internal life and in perceiving God in it; but if man turns to creatures, he is always bound by them, and this fetter prevents his going back to God in his inner self. Therefore it is good to remain always very much in yourself in order to be unfettered and unhindered by creatures, that we may always find God in the depths of the soul, where His real dwelling is. .

A man should hush his senses and attend to his inner man, because man's best part is within; for it is quite fair that a man should serve the best and should give up evil. But whoso follows the dictates of his senses is like a man who leaves his best friend and gives himself up to the public enemy. For all that is sensual in any way is the enemy of the soul. Whoso serves sense, serves his enemy, and it is quite just that he should receive the reward of his enemy, that is, death.

It is often said that God damns man, but God damns no man. Man damns himself by turning willfully to sensuality and by living in it. If God were to give him life, he could not take it, for he has no place in which he could receive life. All is death that is in him, and death alone is his portion. All that is sensual is impure dung as also St. Paul says, "I have held all things as dung." True Life is the best good that God has. But He gives it to no one who lives deep down in the senses. Let not, therefore, anyone wonder if God does not grant him much grace. He ought not to do so. It does not agree with His order to give Divine good to them that serve sensuality. Therefore, if man wishes to receive grace from God, he must subdue his senses and turn himself inwardly to God. But if man lives in the senses, if he turns away from God, God also will grant him no

grace. For whoso wishes to receive something from another must be with him from whom he receives it. Therefore all that is in man must be inwardly with God, as God is our inner self. Only thus can Divine Grace be received.

Man should draw his senses inward, for as often as he turns outward, the senses receive something impure and bring it with them, which also sullies the soul. Whoso, therefore, wishes to abide always pure, let him keep his senses within. Let him not suffer them to roam outwardly. Then his heart remains pure and in perfect peace. Whoso stirs about too much outwardly, even if it be for good works, never comes to true peace of his heart, for the peace of God surpasseth all sense. Whoso lives on in the senses cannot attain to it. All that is sensual is always all unstable and unquiet. Therefore he who wishes to attain to true rest must go apart from the senses and quietly enter into the depths of his soul where stability is. There alone he finds rest and peace. But let no one hold himself already so free and perfect that he believes it would not harm him if he were to turn to outward works that are not necessary for him. I say to thee, that no one is so holy in time that he can remain pure if he turns himself outwardly. If man, without any necessity, turns outwardly, he turns to creatures as they are found there. But if he turns to his inner self, he turns to God, for He dwells there. But no one can remain as pure with creatures as with God. The creature is all unfruitful, but God is fruitful. He who denies that turning outwardly is hurtful, proves that he has never yet come to true internal recollectedness. Some very small thing causes pain to the eye, and we must take great heed and be provident if it is to remain clear. But a far smaller thing can injure the inner man, and you must take much more heed than with the outer eye if it is to remain always pure. All that is outward is impure, but if the senses turn thither, they take up the impure with themselves. And if they come back again into the interior, they bring this foul thing with them and thereby trouble the heart and sully it. It is therefore meet and right, if man keeps himself always in the interior, that his heart may remain always pure. Internal life belongs to a pure, poor life. Whoso turns himself without goes aside from the way of true poverty, for poverty of spirit is a matter of the inner man, but the external man has it not. Poverty of spirit is a pure, simple being, and whoso is outward cannot be pure. Purity is begotten of God inwardly and not of creature. If, therefore, thou wishest to keep

poverty of spirit, live inwardly and turn thy whole heart to God alone.



**Self-Love is the Mother of All Deception and
Self-denial the Way to True Enlightenment**

by Jan van Ruysbroeck
[From *Van de vier Becoringen*]

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,” that is to all holy Christianity. “He that overcometh,” says the Spirit of our Lord, “shall not be hurt of the second death,” that is, he that overcomes his own flesh, the world and the Enemy, shall not be hurt by eternal death. That man who is more inwardly inclined to the inspiration of God than outwardly to the words of men, who loves to hear the word of God more in order to put it into living practice than merely to know it, and to whom the word of God is a sweet food wherein he relishes God above everything, and who stays in faith and trust with the inner word in perfect simplicity, that man is he who has an ear to hear, for he is fit to understand all truth that God will show him. And it is he that overcomes all sins — this is the first death — and he that does not become hurt by eternal pain.— This is the second death which follows sin.— But the man who is manifold and always turns outward with his knowledge of the Holy Scripture in self-conceit and pride of his art, always wishes to teach others. And those who follow him never reach real Truth, nor does he himself do so along with them. For he turns away his gaze from the single light of Truth that is within him and turns it towards the manifoldness of the Holy Scripture. Thereby, he remains unenlightened by God.

That is why the Apostle says, “He who thinks he stands, let him take care lest he fall.” For if we want to remain standing and to be saved from falling, we must learn to know ourselves and to watch ourselves, to withdraw ourselves into ourselves in singleness, and inwardly remain dwelling with the inspiration of God. There we shall hear and learn real Truth and real Life. And then shall our life conform to the Holy Scripture and all saints. And through love and true humility we shall long to be corrected and taught by the Holy Scriptures and by all men, and we shall always yearn to hear and to see the teaching in its perfection and saintliness of life. Any man that does not mean God nor loves him above himself and all things

is always careless and inattentive regarding the things of God and all true virtues and God Himself, and so he readily succumbs to all manner of temptations. For he is ill and ignorant and can be led astray without his knowing into the manifold wrong path of unconquered nature. And to such men belong all those that live according to the lusts and promptings of the body and the senses, in their seeing, their hearing, their speaking, always following the wishes and cravings of nature. For they are outwardly inclined and live according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit. They are blind and disobedient to Truth and to the movements of the Holy Ghost within them.

Of Detachment

by Jan van Ruysbroeck
[From *Van de XII dogheden*]

I. The conditions

He who wishes to lead a detached life, must dwell in the city of Jerusalem, which is a city of peace. He must not be troubled by deadly sins and must be free from all inordinate affection for creatures, from love and suffering, and lift up his heart and mind unhindered to God, and steadily perceive Him only. He must respond to God's touch and movement and be ceaselessly inclined Godwards.

For a detached life is not only external, but even more so internal. And as the imperfect man must flee from outside things if he is to turn wholly to God — and this with great labour and pain, for the things we possess with love intrude themselves on us whether we want it or not — the perfect man need not flee from outside things, because he possesses none of them with inordinate love or attachment. His turning Godwards has become so natural to him through love and steady practice in the perception of God that he need not use any force in turning to God, even if he finds himself sometimes turned towards useless things; for it is impossible for us to be always uplifted to God so long as we are living in time. But the very moment that the perfect man realises that he is turned to useless things, he hurriedly turns away from them with great contempt for himself for being so unsteady. And because of his looking on all things without any affectionate inclination, he can turn himself away from them without any effort or difficulty. For he turns inward with as great an ease as outward, nay, even with greater ease, be-

ing more inwardly inclined than outwardly.

And you should also know that such a man is far more prepared for steadiness than any other. But even if his struggle against unsteadiness is smaller, that does not mean that he is the holiest, for he who possesses the greatest love for God and perceives God best, and to whom such a perception is all-sufficient, he is the best. It has often happened that those men were far more sedulous and attained much greater perfection of life, who, by nature, were inclined to evil ways and were more unfit than those of a mild nature. For through the earnestness which they cherish for God and their burning love, they see so much evil in their own unsteadiness and turn so much against themselves, and this with so great a contempt, that they can scarcely bear it. They weigh a small fault as heavily as another good man would weigh in guarding themselves against it, which is a great help to them in attaining steadiness. All this they do more for the sake of God and His honour than for themselves. There is no thing in them, however small, that might displease God, but they weigh it more heavily than the greatest loss they themselves might sustain, and the more they practise love more and more, the more fit they become for God and the greater grows their inclination for Him whom they love. The more the inclination they cherish for Him whom they love increases, the more steadily they dwell in His company.

II. Physical and mental detachment

Thus be alone, O Holy Soul, so that thou mayest be His only whom thou hast chosen above everything. Flee from publicity. Flee from all thy friends. Flee from useless company. Flee from all forms of manifoldness. Forget thy people and, at home, thy father. Then the king shall long for thy beauty. And this do not only with thy body, but also with thy heart and mind and with devotion and purpose and with the spirit. For God is a spirit and therefore not only wishes perfect singleness of body, but also that of the heart. It is sometimes of great use to keep ourselves alone in singleness of body. For Christ, who is our example, sometimes went away alone in order to pray; not that He had to do so, but because He wanted to teach us to do likewise.

And just as good company sometimes helps the imperfect man, so bad company sometimes is a hindrance to the perfect man. But more than bodily solitude we need to be alone in our heart and

mind. He is alone who does not brood over things that are worldly and feels no inclination for the things that are present, who despises what many people long for, and who regrets what many people possess with pleasure and gladness, who does not fear being blamed and never feels harmed or dishonoured, and forgets the wrong people have done to him. If this is not so, you are not alone, even if you are alone bodily. But if you fully possess what has been told here, then, you are alone even in the midst of thousands of people.

III. The means

If you really wish to attain singleness of heart and of thought, guard yourself strongly against being curious to enquire into the conduct of men or to pass any judgment lightly thereon, even if you think that you find a fault in your fellow-man. You should rather try to excuse him. But if you cannot excuse that action, see to excuse the intention. And if you cannot do that, think that he has done it in ignorance or imagine that he was deceived, or that such a thing was ordained to happen. But if you cannot hide it or excuse it in any way, ponder in yourself that he was terribly tempted or bewitched and think that you would probably have committed a far greater sin had you been as tempted and bewitched as he, and that you should thank God not to have be brought in so strong a temptation. And you should pray for him in great earnestness and have great compassion for him. Above all, guard yourself against despising your fellow-man, for that is a great hindrance to solitude and detachment. It brings about many bad suspicions which greatly increase unsteadiness. But have a benevolent eye wherewith to look with compassion at the faults of your fellow-man and to give to all things a good interpretation. And have a sharp eye on yourself to despise yourself with, and to weigh a small thing heavily, so that you may feel great pain that you love that thing so inordinately. Then you shall be able to turn away from all things—whenever you wish.

A good man [this “good man” was Eckhart] was asked, That some people withdraw from their fellows and love to be alone and that it was very important for their peace to be in church or quite alone by themselves. Whether this was the best for them? He said, “No.” Now, listen why.

He who is right in truth is also right in all places and with all peo-

ple. And he who is wrong is also wrong in all places and with all people.

Who then is right? He who possesses God in truth. He possesses Him in all places, in all streets and with all people, as well and as rightly as in the church or in his room or in his cell. As our Lord said to the woman near the well that the hour would come that one would not pray to the Father in the temple nor on the hills, but that true worshippers would pray to the Father in spirit and in truth.

And what is praying in spirit and in truth if not cleaving to God in love?

Only he who truly loves God, worships God in spirit and in truth. For one cannot love truly what one does not know. He who loves God truly need not seek Him in this place or that, nor away from people, but he finds Him in himself, for He is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. He is our support and the existence of our existence. If any man possesses God rightly and God alone and all things and himself only for the sake of God, none can be a hindrance to Him. Why? Because to him who always possesses God rightly and only means God and only loves God, all things become Divine! For he finds God in all things. And such a man has God in all his actions and in all places, and all the actions of such a man are done by God. For that which causes an action is that action more truly and is the principle of that action. Thus, if we mean and love God alone in all our actions, then He must be the Principle that does our actions, for it is impossible that anybody should mean and love God alone without God. For man cannot rise above himself with the help of nature alone, nor can he love God only, for that is beyond the working of nature. Nature cannot deny itself by itself. And because such a man means and loves God alone in all his actions, there is no one who can hinder him, neither the multitude of men, nor the places. And as he seeks God and tasted Him in all things, no one can be a hindrance to him.

And here all manifoldness of man is brought to unity. And as manifoldness cannot disturb God, likewise, such a man can no longer be disturbed by manifoldness; he is in the One. He is above the play of forces, where no disturbance can reach. In God all manifoldness is present and unified and has become un-manifold.

Man shall take God, mean God and love God in all things, and train his mind in such a way that he has God present in his mind

and his intention and his love.

See how thou hast God in church or in thy cell. Keep the same state of mind and carry it with thee amongst the crowd and the unrest and diversity of occupations. For as thou wishest to be in prayer and in church, thou must keep thyself also when thou dost not pray. Those things which thou dost with love when thou art not praying will come to thee in thy prayer, whether thou wishest them to or not.

And if equality of work is spoken of, do not think that one should estimate all work equally, neither all places or all people. For that would be very wrong. Praying is better than spinning and the church is a better place than the street. But thou shalt be of equal mind in all thy work and equal in thy faithful love and earnestness for God.

If thou art equal in all places and meanest and lovest God alone in all things, no one can prevent thee from possessing the Presence of God.

And truly he who has not God thus present, but must take Him from outside and seek Him outside, has God not in his mind and heart as soon as he is in unfavourable company, be it in action or in place. And then he is easily hindered, for he has not God present. To him who does not seek and mean God alone in all things, not only bad company is a hindrance but also good company, not only the street, but also the church, for this hindrance is within him. Everything that he loves inordinately hinders him. And to him God has not become present in all things, because he does not yet love and mean and seek God alone in all things. For had he taken God in this way, he would be well and right in all places, at all times, with all people. For then he would possess God, and none could deprive him of Him, nor could anybody hinder his actions.



ISLAMIC SUFISM

Annihilation of Self

by Al-Ghazzali

Prayers have three veils, whereof the first is prayers uttered only by the tongue; the second is when the mind by hard endeavour and by firmest resolve reaches a point at which, being untroubled

by evil suggestions, it is able to concentrate itself on Divine matters; the third veil is when the mind can with difficulty be diverted from dwelling on Divine matters. But the narrow of prayer is seen when He who is invoked by prayer takes possession of the mind of him who prays, and the mind of the latter is absorbed in God whom he addresses, his prayers ceasing and no self-consciousness abiding in him, even to this extent that a mere thought about his prayers appears to him a veil and a hindrance. This state is called “absorption” by the doctors of mystical lore, when a man is so utterly absorbed that he perceives nothing of his bodily members, nothing of what is passing without, nothing of what occurs to his mind — yea, when he is, as it were, absent from all these things, whatsoever, journeying first *to* his Lord then *in* his Lord. But if the thought occurs to him that he is totally absorbed, that is a blot; for only that absorption is worthy of the name which is unconscious of absorption.

I know these words of mine will be called an insipid discourse by narrow theologians, but they are by no means devoid of sense. Why? The condition of which I speak is similar to the condition of the man who loves any other things, e.g., wealth, honour, pleasure, and, just as we see some engrossed by love, we see others overpowered by anger so that they do not hear one who speaks, or see one who passes, and are so absorbed in their overwhelming passion that they are not even conscious of being thus absorbed. For so far as you attend to the absorption of your mind, you must necessarily be diverted from Him who is the cause of your absorption.

And now, being well instructed as to the nature of “absorption”, and casting aside doubts, do not brand as false what you are unable to comprehend. God most high says in the Quran, “*They brand as false what they do not comprehend.*” The meaning of “absorption” having been made clear, you must know that the beginning of the path is the journey *to* God and that the journey *in* God is its goal, for in this latter absorption in God takes place.

At the outset this glides by like a flash, barely striking the eye; but thereafter, becoming habitual, it lifts the mind into a higher world, wherein the most pure essential Reality is manifested, and the human mind is imbued with the form of the spiritual world, whilst the majesty of the Deity evolves and discloses itself. Now, what first appears is the substance of angels, spirits, prophets and

saints, for a while under the veil of I know not what beautiful forms, wherefrom certain particular verities are disclosed; but by degrees, as the way is opened out, the Divine Verity begins to uncover His face. Can anyone, I ask, who attains a glimpse of such visions, wherefrom he returns to the lower world disgusted with the vile-ness of all earthly things, fail to marvel at those who, resting content with the mirage and the deceits of the world, never strive to ascend to sublimer heights?



There is no devotion more effectual than attention to Divine Messages, so that the other-than-God does not absorb you.

—*The Secret of Ana'l Haq*—



Are not all things vain which come not from God? And will not all honours decay but those which He confers?

—*Lebid*—



Steps to Meditation and Self-Realisation

[Notes of Class-Talks]
by Swami Yatiswarananda

What are the conditions for meditation?

For meditation and for all forms of spiritual practice the first point is a steady posture [Asana], usually a sitting posture. So Patañjali says, “*Any posture that is steady and pleasant will do.*” Squatting, no doubt, is very helpful, because the weight of the body is perfectly balanced in that posture, but it must be easy, otherwise it disturbs the mind of the person trying to do spiritual practices. For us, in India, it is natural, but for many Western people, it may take quite a lot of practice and some may not even be able to manage it at all. Anyway, for those who can, it is the best posture for spiritual practice. Those who find it hard or do not care for it, may sit in any way they like, but keeping the chest, neck and head erect without fail.

The right mood is essential for all forms of spiritual practise, and without spiritual practice there never can be anything like spiritual

life. The early Christians knew this perfectly well. So did many of the great mystics of the Middle Ages. But now the whole tradition of spiritual culture almost seems to be lost in the West and must be revived. Without ethical culture and mental purity we can never come in close touch with the Divine. If, after creating a perfect void, we are able to have the right thought, well and good. Then this kind of practice is very useful. But it is very dangerous for the beginner, because he does not usually succeed in having the right thought after creating the void, but just falls asleep or is dominated by his subconscious mind. In the case of such a beginner there is always the great danger of his mind falling below the threshold of consciousness. This is to be avoided under all circumstances.

Some of the virtues to be practised in spiritual life:

1. *Ahimsa* or Non-injury

The spiritual seeker should not harbour any ill-feeling towards others, whether they are good or bad. Realise how these ill-feelings disturb the mind. With a disturbed mind it is not possible to have any form of concentration. It is not possible for us to have a concentrated mind and at the same time to cherish an evil thought against anybody. I am speaking of higher concentration which takes one nearer and nearer to Divine experience.

2. Truthfulness

The spiritual aspirant must try to be truthful in thought, word and deed. One given to lying and hypocrisy can never succeed in spiritual practice.

3. Non-Stealing

This must never be taken in the gross sense only. Anything that we wish to possess at the cost of anybody else, anything that we get by unfair means from another, is stealing.

4. Purity

Physical as well as mental purity is absolutely necessary. Sometimes we commit the mistake of stressing only physical purity, because it is so much more difficult to achieve true mental purity. There are many who satisfy themselves by taking baths or observing outward forms, but do not trouble to have a pure mind. It is, however, impossible to concentrate a dirty mind on higher things.

5. Sense-Control

One who abandons himself to any form of sense-enjoyment cannot have any calmness or peace of mind. So he cannot do his practices well, however hard he may try. And there is this great point to note: before the aspirant takes up the practice of posture, he must already have gone through the whole of this ethical culture. So highly do the teachers of spiritual life value purity and non-attachment.

To sum up

Now let us sum up what we have to do when we begin our spiritual practice.

We must practise a steady posture. We must calm the mind. We should make salutations to all the teachers of the world — or to one particular teacher, if this appeals to us more.

It is always helpful to pray, not only for our own spiritual welfare, but also for that of others. Pray intensely for concentration, for calmness, for singleness of purpose, and for your own spiritual welfare as well as that of other beings, so that they, too, may become pure and calm and concentrated and devoted to the higher life.

Rhythmic breathing

There are some people who find rhythmic breathing very helpful. Mind and breath are always interrelated and always act on each other. But mere breathing exercises is not enough. Along with the breath we must give strong spiritual suggestions to the mind. Inhale purity, fill yourself with purity. Inhale calmness, fill yourself wholly with peace. Inhale dispassion and renunciation. Burn away all attachment, passion and desire. Inhale strength and destroy all weakness and fear. Go on giving these intense suggestions to the mind again and again before coming to your real practice.

The centre of consciousness

After that, the thought of the Divine must be taken up. Where to think of the Divine? Where to have the centre of one's consciousness? Have it either in the head or in the heart. These two centres are safe for everybody. Never should a centre below the heart be taken ordinarily. If we do not consciously raise the nerve-current at least up to the level corresponding more or less to the place of the

physical heart, no spiritual meditation becomes possible. This conscious raising of one's nervous currents leads one beyond all sensual temptations and establishes one firmly in morals and ethical culture. For very dry and over-intellectual people it is advisable to take the heart. For emotional people the heart-centre may be dangerous and so the centre in the head may be advocated. But here instructions can be imparted to individuals only after having considered all their physical and psychic conditions and needs.

Think intensely of the particular centre and imagine it to be a centre of Divine Consciousness. Have the thought that the Divine Consciousness that is within you is also in everyone. Individual consciousness is part and parcel of a consciousness which is undivided and indivisible.

In the beginning you may think of it as light, but really speaking what is meant is the light of intelligence, and this Divine Light which is in you pervades at the same time the whole universe and is one and eternally indivisible. This body of ours is like a temple of the Divine, and, remember, each body is such a temple.

Having done all this, try to merge your consciousness in the Divine Consciousness, as in the case of salt-doll's getting merged in the sea. This body-consciousness stands in the way of our spiritual unfoldment, and as soon as we try to merge it in Divine Consciousness we get the idea that the soul is not the body.

Contents of meditation

Meditation should not be focussed on the void. There should be no creating of a void in the beginner. This is very dangerous. Meditations must have some definite, positive spiritual content. Those who find meditation on the formless too abstract should centre their feelings on some holy personality. This is very effective in two ways: it leads them away from their too personal affections and aversions and, at the same time, intensifies their feelings in a good sense, makes them more definite, and leads them on to the light of the Spirit. If ever any picture of any person you used to love or hate troubles you, set a very vivid picture of the holy form you have chosen as your ideal against that picture, and set the feeling you have for your Ideal against that which you have for that person, be it affection or aversion. Vivid pictures and memories must be counteracted by vivid pictures, worldly feelings by stronger and purer feelings.

Non-anthropomorphic meditations

One or other of these different meditations on non-anthropomorphic symbols may be practised:—

-1-

The aspirant imagines he is a fish swimming in the one undivided and eternally indivisible ocean of Existence, Knowledge, Bliss, without any obstruction whatsoever.

- 2 -

The aspirant imagines he is like a bird flying in the infinite sky of Divine Consciousness without anything to stand in the way anywhere.

-3 -

The aspirant is like a full pot immersed in water. The Divine, like water, is both inside and outside.

-4-

The aspirant is like an empty pot floating in ether. The Divine, like ether, is both inside and outside.

-5 -

The aspirant imagines himself to be a point of self-conscious light immersed in the infinite and indivisible circle or sphere of Light.

You identify yourself with the point of light, then you feel it to be a part of an infinite sphere of light, and after that everything becomes just light, which is everywhere. Nothing but light is left. Either make this point of light expand or get it merged in the Infinite or let it move wherever it pleases, because wherever it goes, there is the one Infinite Light. Try to expand your consciousness during the time of your meditation. Keep your body-consciousness hanging on a peg, as it were, at least for the time being. Raise counter-currents against all your false conceptions and feelings which lie at the root of all your troubles. All such ideas as "I am So-and-So, I am a husband, a wife, a child, a lover, etc., etc.," come from this mistaken identification with what is non-self.

Sublimation

There is too little attempt at sublimation. We must all learn to think in terms of the Spirit. Never stress the body-aspect. Learn not

to think of yourself as a man or a woman. It is very necessary and very helpful to rise above body-consciousness as much as possible. Sublimation is of the greatest importance. Think intensely, "I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am not even a human being. I am the Spirit. I am the Spirit!"

Repeat all these grand passages from Sankara's works. He says:

"I am neither a human being, nor a god nor a demi-god; I am neither a student nor a householder nor a forest-dweller nor a monk. I am the Self, the Infinite Consciousness."

"I am neither the mind nor the intellect, nor the ego, nor the mind-stuff. I am neither the senses of hearing, taste, smell, touch or sight, nor am I earth, fire or air. I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute. I am the Self, I am the Self!"

"I am neither masculine nor feminine nor neuter. I am the Beneficent Being, the Light Supreme."

Just blast the sense of false personality with the thoughts contained in these grand passages from Sankara. Bombard the false ego at the time of meditation. It must be blasted and if it does not at least become attenuated nothing can be achieved. Go on repeating:

"I am neither the body nor the senses, neither the mind nor the ego, neither the vital energy nor the intellect. Husband, wife, child, wealth or property are far away from me. I am the Witness, the Eternal Indwelling Spirit, the Being Beneficent."

"I am the light of the Atman, the light that is inside, the light that is outside, the light that is the inner Self. I am the Supreme Being, the Light of lights, the Light self-existent."

"I am the Being Resplendent, and none else. I am Brahman — the Infinite — I, the Spirit, am not subject to misery. I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute, eternally free by nature."

And then there is the beautiful prayer in the Upanishads:

"May my body become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May I realise myself as the Light Divine. May my mind become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May

I realise myself as the Light Divine. May my soul become pure. May I realise myself as the Light Divine."

Ordinarily in all our human relations, we commit the mistake that we wish to take up direct connections with others. We ourselves, as bubbles, try to come in touch with other bubbles. Two bubbles drifting on the ocean just come close to each other thorough the action of the waves, but they think there should be direct connection between them, and so they cling to each other passionately and commit the worst mistake of their life. The same action that has brought them together will, one day, tear them apart, perhaps never to allow them to meet again. And this always means untold misery, and will always happen again so long as we human fools try to come in direct touch with other bubbles, instead of thinking of the ocean and being in touch with all through the ocean. All bubbles are bound to burst sooner or later. So there can be no stability in any bubble-relation. We should do away with vague romance and childish dreams and see things as they are. We must only have relationship with others through the Divine, and only because we want to have direct relations with others, all this misery comes again and again.

Monism

In all the different schools of Hindu philosophy, especially in the Monistic or rather Non-dualistic school, we find the conception of the Atman or Self as a spiritual Being that is not dependent on anything and that is not created and does not create. God, as Creator, is not the highest ideal in any of our schools of thought. All schools hold that the mind is matter and that the Self or Spirit is separate from and independent of the mind, although associated with it in some form or other. In Vedanta, God is the Self of the self, immanent and transcendent at the same time.

Monism, no doubt, may serve as the background for all, but Monism cannot be reached without passing through the different intermediate stages. One in a million, perhaps, can take the monistic path from the very beginning. "*Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the Unmanifest, for the goal of the Unmanifest is very hard to reach for embodied beings,*" says the Bhagavad-Gita. A good Dualist is infinitely better than a mere intellectual Monist who, at the same time, is nothing but an out-and-out Dualist in daily life. Never deceive yourself on that point. And remember what the Lord

says in the Bhagavad-Gita, *“Those who worship Me, resigning all actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded Yoga, for these whose mind is set on Me, I, verily, become ere long the Saviour out of the ocean of mortal existence.”*

Many try to detach creation from destruction, the God of Creation from the God of Destruction, and stress Creation and Preservation only. It is very wrong to make such an attempt at detaching these three aspects, which are eternally inseparable. If your God creates the world at all, it is He, too, who preserves, and He again who destroys it. A synthetic view is very necessary for the devotee who wishes to make real progress in spiritual life. What the pleasure-seeker in the garb of a devotee really wants is worldly pleasure, infinitely prolonged and made safe against all misfortunes.

We, with our inordinate clinging to life and phenomenal existence, are mortally afraid of the destructive aspect of God. We must go beyond the creative aspect, beyond the aspect of preservation and also beyond that of destruction, if we wish to find true illumination and attain to peace.

No lame excuses!

Because our mind is so full of tension and disturbance, of unsteadiness and different desires and impulses, we need spiritual practice more than anything else. Never say, “Oh, today my mind is so terribly disturbed; to-day I cannot go in for any spiritual practice. I shall have to wait until my mind grows a little calmer, or till there is less disturbance outside.” Such an idea is a fallacy, because if you wait for the day on which there won't be any disturbance for you, you might just as well wait for the day on which there will be no wave on the whole ocean.

Our meditations will in due course soothe the nerves, calm our mind and give us steadiness and joy in all we do. Then only shall we begin really to enjoy the spiritual food we get through our practices. Till then, everything is just drudgery, but we must pass through this drudgery first. Only when we feel a real craving for spiritual food should we know that spiritual life has really begun for us. So long as there is not this strong yearning for spiritual things, it has not yet begun, even if there be a certain liking for it, even if we feel attracted by the spiritual ideal during some of our saner and less sense-bound moments. And once this yearning has really be-

gun, as its result, some day, we shall get a glimpse of the Truth, and this again would create in us a real and lasting taste for spiritual life, so that meditations would become a source of real pleasure to us. Our ideal is to attain to God-Realisation and then to work with this God-Realisation for the welfare of our fellow-beings. Work becomes perfect only then and does not bring with it any danger for ourselves or others. We must first of all fix up our ideal, and then in connection with that we shall have to lead a spiritual life in practice, not only in theory. Devote some time to spiritual practices every day. What the perfected soul does is always done in a perfect and spontaneous way, but we, at present, have to imitate it, doing all this in a more or less strained, artificial way in the beginning. This naturally means great tension and strain for us for a time. We should not place the cart before the horse. The perfect man is able to help others and to work without attachment; but we must first eliminate attachment before we may risk doing this.

Good and Evil : How to transcend them

It is not possible to find a satisfactory explanation for good and evil so long as we remain on the phenomenal plane, the plane of gross and subtle manifestations. But it is possible to transcend them both, to go beyond both good and evil and beyond the whole domain of manifestation and reach Truth as It is. Without strict mental discipline and sense-control in every respect, the problem of good and evil and their why and wherefore can never be solved, and we just go on helplessly groping about in the dark, growing more and more bewildered by what life brings us. That is why Buddha never wanted to give any metaphysical explanations about God, etc., to his disciples. The impure mind can never grasp any truth about the Divine, so it is useless to tell impure minds of the truth which they cannot grasp. Without previous purification, all such discussions are useless and simply serve to while away the time. Our task is to get out of this whirlpool somehow or other, not to go into deep metaphysical speculations about the Ultimate Truth and the origin of good and evil. Both are there. So we have to face them, whether we know their reason or not. And the only way of solving our life's problem is to transcend them both and reach a state where both are not.

There is a time when good and evil exist for the spiritual man, and there is a time when both good and evil no longer exist in any

form, but there can never be a time when good alone exists. You cannot just take one side of a pair of opposites and refuse to take the other also. So long as you try to do this, you will never find a satisfactory solution.

How to colour the mind with the Divine hue?

To the extent to which we are inwardly pure, we feel peace. To the extent to which we are selfless, we feel an expansion of the soul. To the extent to which we are truly dispassionate and non-attached, we become free. To-day our task is to make the good thought go deep into the mind, so that the whole mind may become coloured by it. The whole difficulty for the beginner is to colour the whole mind with the Divine idea.

Really speaking, it is the Divine in us that makes us pray. It is the first cause of our prayer and for our turning to It. Our true Self is eternally within us and we follow Its promptings when we begin to pray sincerely and intensely. It is not that we *choose* to pray. We are *forced* to pray. And the Divine we pray to is ultimately realised as the Self in us, not any of the limiting adjuncts, nothing that belongs to matter or mind.

There is such a thing as evolution of matter, but there is absolutely no such thing as evolution of the Spirit. "*Of that being which is ever unborn, birth is predicated by some, but it is impossible that the unborn and the immortal could ever partake of the mortal. The immortal does not become mortal or vice versa; for in no way is it impossible that a thing can be changed into something quite the opposite,*" (Gaudapada). There is no such thing as evolution seen from the standpoint of the Self. Evolution belongs to the relative plane of Maya or phenomenon alone. I do not **evolve** into my own eternal Self. It is **there all the time**. It neither undergoes evolution nor involution. It imagines Itself to do this, but It never actually does. You are always the witness of your own actions and of your own mentation.

The body has to be made rhythmic. the mind has to be made rhythmic, and the building up of a purer mind is the most difficult task in spiritual life. We must make this body and mind very subtle and sensitive instruments of the Self, make them cleaner and cleaner, so that they can give better reflections of the Truth. Your whole nervous current must change. It must be made to flow upward. Your body must change. Your mind must change. It is not an

easy task at all.

If we depend wholly on the Divine, It comes to our aid, but if we do what we please, we come to grief. Real self-surrender is a very hard thing and cannot be attained without great struggle and perseverance. The inner voice becomes still as soon as we turn deaf ears to it. Many people talk of this "inner voice", but in most cases what they hear is nothing more than the prompting of their own moral sense. The voice of the Divine cannot be heard so easily as these people imagine.

First we must shake off our mental lethargy. We must so train the mind that at least, to some extent, we shall be able always to have the thought of the Divine. One current should constantly be flowing Godward, while the other part of the mind may busy itself with the affairs of the world. Always keep a part of your mind dwelling on the Divine.

We should strictly avoid the company of the evil-minded and all those who do not lead pure lives, whether they be of our own sex or of the other sex. We should seek the company of the good and the holy.

The mind is soiled, has become dirty. There is no doubt about that. There is no doubt about our having led a careless, impulsive life. So, now, the mind can no longer take the colour of the Divine. Try to dye dirty linen. It is impossible. First you must wash it, then alone can you dye it. Set fire to all your worldly desires and then cleanse the mind with the ashes that are formed. It must be a good, perfect cleaning.

The Holy Name and the Holy Thought, as it were, revive the heart that has become soiled and deadened by all the dirt of our worldly desires and inordinate affections which have accumulated there. They bring new hopes in place of the old deceptive ones that are shattered and lost. They bring real love in place of the old impure affections that have become ashes and are gone for ever. They bring real peace in place of the old shadow we wanted to clutch at before, but which always slipped out of our fingers. In place of falsehood, they bring truth. In place of uncertainty and desire, they bring certainty and dispassion, because there is no want in the Divine, and he who has realised It does not lack anything and is satisfied "in the Self attained by the Self".

Let us all struggle day and night that we do not accumulate any new dirt by our carelessness. Let us strictly follow the instructions given to us, for only then can the cleansing process be attained, the mind be given the Divine hue and spiritual life be made a reality—an accomplished fact.



The Roman Monk

[From the *Vitae Patrum*]

At one time there came from the city of Rome a monk that had had a great place in the palace, and he dwelt in Scete near by the church, and he had with him one servant that ministered unto him. And the priest of the church, seeing his infirmity, and knowing that he was a man delicately nurtured, used to send him such things as the Lord gave him or were brought into the church. And when he had spent twenty-five years in Scete, he became a man of contemplation, of prophetic spirit, and notable. And one of the great Egyptian monks, hearing of his fame, came to see him, hoping to find a more austere discipline with him. And when he had come in, he greeted him and they prayed and sat down. But the Egyptian, seeing him softly clad and a bed of reeds and a skin spread under him and a little head-rest under his head, and his feet clean with sandals on them, was inwardly scandalised, because in that place it was not the custom so to live, but rather in stern abstinence. But the old Roman, having discernment and vision, perceived that the Egyptian was scandalised within himself and said to his servant, "Make us good cheer to-day for the sake of the Father who has come." And he cooked a few vegetables that he had, and they rose up at the fitting time and did eat; he had also a little wine, by reason of his infirmity, and they drank it. And when evening was come, they said the twelve psalms and slept, and in like fashion during the night. And rising in the morning the Egyptian said, "Pray for me." And he went away not edified.

And when he had gone a little way, the old Roman desiring to heal his mind, sent after him and called him back. And when he had come, he again welcomed him joyfully and questioned him, saying, "Of what province art thou?" And he answered, "I am an Egyptian." And he said to him, "Of what city?" And he answered, "I

am of no city at all nor have I ever dwelt in any city." And he said to him, "Before thou wert a monk, what didst thou do in the place where thou didst dwell?" And he answered, "I was a herd in the fields." And he said to him, "Where didst thou sleep?" And he answered, "In the field." And he said, "Hadst thou any coverlet?" And he answered, "What should I do with bedding sleeping in the fields?" And he said, "How didst thou sleep?" And he answered, "On the bare ground." And he said, "What didst thou eat in the field, and what kind of wine didst thou drink?" And he answered, "I ate dry bread and any sort of salt fish if I could come by it, and I drank water." And the old man said, "It was hard toil." And he said, "Was there a bath on the estate where thou couldst wash thyself?" And he said, "Nay, but I used to wash in the river when I wished to." And when the old man had drawn all this from his replies and understood the manner of his former life and his toil, being wishful to profit him, he told him of his own past life when he was in the world, saying, "I, this poor man that you see, am of the great city of Rome and held the highest place in the palace beside the Emperor." And when the Egyptian heard him begin to speak, he was struck with compunction and listened eagerly to hear what he would say. And he went on, "So then, I left Rome and came into this solitude." And again he said, "I, whom you see, had great houses and much wealth, and despising them I came to this small cell." And again he said, "I, whom you see, had beds decked with gold and coverlets most precious, and for these God has given me this mattress of papyrus and this skin. And my garments were costly beyond price, and for them I use these poor rags." Again he said, "On the keeping of my table much gold was expended, and for this He gives me these few herbs and a small cup of wine. Many were the slaves who served me, and for these Lo! God had put compassion in this one man's heart to tend me. For a bath I pour a little water on my feet and I wear sandals because of my infirmity. And again for the pipe and lyre and other kinds of music wherein I delighted at my feasts, I say to myself twelve psalms by day and twelve by night. But for those sins of mine that I then sinned, I offer now in quiet this poor and useless service unto God. Wherefore consider, Father, and be not scandalised because of my infirmity." And the Egyptian, hearing these things and turning upon himself said, "Sorrow upon me, that I, out of much tribulation and heavy toil, did rather come to rest and refreshing in the monas-

tic life, and what I had not, I now have, but thou from great worldly delight art come of thine will into tribulation, and from high glory and riches art come into humility and poverty." And he went away mightily profited and became his friend and would often come to him to learn of him, for he was a man of discerning and filled with the fragrance of the Holy Ghost.



A Prayer by Jñanadeva

[From the *Jñaneswari* XVIII]

*And now may God, the Soul of the Universe,
Be pleased with this my offering of words.
And being pleased, may He give me
This favour in return:
That the crookedness of evil men may cease,
And that the love of goodness may grow in them.
May all beings experience from one another
The friendship of the heart.
May the darkness of sin disappear.
May the Universe see the rising of the Sun
of Righteousness.
Whatever is desired, may it be received
By every living being.
May the multitude of those who love God increase
And shower on men all forms of blessings;
May they constantly, on this earth,
Come in touch with its living beings.
May this forest of Walking Wish-trees,
May this city built of living Wish-gems,
May this talking sea of nectar,
May these moons without dark spots,
May these suns without fierce heat,
May all these ever good men,
Be the close kin of mankind.
And now in every form of happiness
May there be enjoyment to the full everywhere,
And may the Supreme Being be worshipped for
ever and ever.*



VEDANTA

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

The Man of Steady Wisdom

When a man completely casts away all desires of the mind and is satisfied in the Self alone by the Self, then is he said to be of steady wisdom.

He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after prosperity, who has become free from attachment, fear and wrath — he indeed is a sage of steady wisdom.

He who is everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil — his wisdom is fixed.

When like the tortoise withdrawing its limbs, he can completely withdraw the senses from their objects, then his wisdom becomes steady.

Objects of desire fall away from the abstinent man, leaving behind the taste for them. But the taste also ceases when he realises the Supreme.

The turbulent senses do violently carry away the mind of even the wise man striving after perfection.

The steadfast, having controlled them all, would sit focusing the mind on the Supreme; his wisdom is steady, whose senses are under control.

The mind which follows in the wake of the wandering senses carries away his discrimination, as wind hurries away from the right course a boat on the waters.

Therefore his knowledge is steady, whose senses are completely restrained from their objects.

As into the ocean, brimful and still, flow the waters, even so into the perfected man enter all desires; it is he, and not

one who clings to desires, that attains peace.

With the heart unattached to external objects, one realises the joy that is in the Self; with the heart devoted to the meditation on the Infinite, one attains undecaying happiness.

In the self-controlled and serene, the Supreme Self is the object of constant realisation, in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, in honour and dishonour.

Whose heart is filled with satisfaction by wisdom and realisation, who is firm and steady, whose senses are conquered, and to whom a lump of earth, stone and gold are the same,— that Yogi is said to be steadfast.

He attains excellence who looks with equal regard upon well-wishers, friends, foes, neutrals and arbiters, upon the hateful, the relatives, the righteous and the unrighteous alike.

Whose happiness is within, whose relaxation is within, whose light is within, the Yogi alone becomes the Infinite and gains absolute freedom.

Free from imperfections and doubts, with senses controlled and engaged in the good of all beings, the sages attain absolute freedom.

—**Bhagavad-Gita 2.55-71**—



HINDUISM

God-Realisation and Its Means

[Compiled from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*]

The heart of the devotee is the temple of the Lord

Sri Ramakrishna (pointing to his body) — A pillow-case! It is nothing but a pillow-case! But there is one thing to be borne in mind: the heart of the devotee is the temple of the Lord. It is indeed a fact that the Lord is more or less manifest in all things, but He is manifest in a special sense in the heart of a devotee [Bhakta]. Thus a Zemindar [landowner] may be met at any of the houses of which he is the owner; yet people will say that he is usually to be seen in some particular drawing-room. The heart of the devotee is the

Lord's drawing-room. If one wishes to meet the Lord, one would better seek an audience in the drawing-room.

Various aspects of the Brahman

The same Being whom the followers of non-dualistic [Advaita] Vedanta call Brahman, the Absolute, is called Atman [Self] by the Yogis and Bhagavan, or the personal God with divine attributes, by the devotees, or Bhaktas [lovers of God]. The high-caste Brahmin is always the same person; but when he worships the Lord, he is called a priest; and when the same man is employed in the kitchen, he is called a cook.

Discrimination of an Advaitin

The follower of the monistic [Advaita] Vedanta who seeks to realise the Absolute Brahman, discriminates, saying: "Not this, not this!" That is, the Absolute is not this, not that, not any finite object, not the individual soul, not the external world. When, as the result of this kind of reasoning, the heart ceases to be moved by desires, when, in fact, the mind is merged in super-consciousness, then Brahma-jñana [realisation of the Absolute] is reached. One who has truly attained to this Brahma-jñana realises that Brahman the Absolute alone is real, and the world is unreal, and that all names and forms are like dreams. What Brahman is cannot be described by word of mouth, nor can one even say that He is personal. Such is the point of view of a non-dualist.

Bhakta's attitude

The dualistic devotees and lovers of the Personal God [Bhaktas], on the contrary, accept all states as real. Unlike the non-dualists, they look upon the waking state as a reality and they do not hold that the external world is like a dream. They say that the external world is the glory of the Lord. The heavens, stars, moon, mountains, ocean, men, birds and beasts, all these He has created. He manifests His glory by these. He is both within and without. He dwells in our hearts. The most advanced Bhaktas say that the Lord Himself manifests as the 24 categories [including the material elements, senses, mind, etc.] of the Samkhya philosophy, that He appears as the individual soul and the external world. A Bhakta wishes to enjoy communion with his Lord and not to become one with Him. His desire is not to become sugar, but to taste of it.

The innermost feelings of a Bhakta

Do you know what are the innermost thoughts and feelings of a true devotee? He says, "O Lord Thou art my master, I am Thy servant. Thou art my mother, and I am Thy child!" Or again, "Thou art my child and I am Thy father or Thy mother"; or thus, "Thou art the Whole and I am Thy part." The dualistic devotee does not wish to say, "I am Brahman!"

The Raja-Yogi

A Raja Yogi also seeks to realise the Universal Being. His object is to bring the finite human soul into communion with the Infinite Spirit. He tries first to collect his mind which is scattered in the world of senses, and then seeks to fix it on the Universal Spirit; hence the necessity of meditating on Him in solitude and in a posture which causes no distraction.

Different aspects of God

But all these various ideals are of one and the same Brahman, the difference being only in the names. It is the same Being whom men call by the name of the Absolute [Brahman], the Universal Spirit, the Impersonal God, or the Personal God with Divine attributes.

* * *

Renunciation not necessary for all

Brahmo— Revered Sir, is it true that God cannot be realised without giving up the world?

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling) — Oh no! You do not have to give up everything. You are better off where you are. By living in the world you are enjoying the taste of both the pure crystallized sugar and the molasses with all its impurities. You are indeed better off. Verily I say unto you, you are living in the world, there is no harm in that; but you will have to fix your mind on God, otherwise you cannot realise Him. Work with one hand and hold the feet of the Lord with the other. When you have finished your work, hold His feet to your heart with both your hands.

Power of the mind

Everything is in the mind. Bondage and freedom are in the mind. You can dye the mind with any colour you wish. It is like a piece of clean white linen: dip it in red and it will be red, in blue and it will be blue, in green and it will be green, or in any other colour. Do you

not see that if you study English, English words will come readily to you? Again, if a Pandit [scholar] studies Sanskrit, he will readily quote verses from Sacred Books. If you keep your mind in evil company, your thoughts, ideas and words will be coloured by evil; but keep it in the company of the lovers of God, then your thoughts, ideas and words will be of God. The mind is everything. On one side is the wife, on the other side is the child; it loves the wife in one way and the child in another way, yet the mind is the same.

By the mind one is bound; by the mind one is freed. If I think I am absolutely free, whether I live in the world or in the forest, where is my bondage? I am the child of God, the son of the King of kings: who can bind Me? When bitten by a snake, if you assert with firmness, "There is no venom in me", you will be cured. In the same way, he who asserts with strong conviction, "I am not bound, I am free", becomes free.

Sense of sin

Some one gave me a book of the Christians. I asked him to read it to me. In it there was only one theme—sin and sin—from the beginning to the end. (To Keshab) In your Brahmo-Samaj the main topic is also sin. The fool who repeats again and again "I am bound, I am bound", remains in bondage. He who repeats day and night, "I am a sinner, I am a sinner", becomes a sinner indeed.

Saving power of God's name

It is necessary to have absolute faith in the Name of the Lord. By repeating the Blessed Name of God, man's body, mind and soul become absolutely pure. Why talk of sin and hell-fire? Repeat but once, "I shall never again do the evil deeds that I have committed in the past", and by thy faith in His Hallowed Name thou shalt be freed from all sins.

Thought of freedom brings freedom

It is good for everyone to cherish the idea that he is free. "I am free, I am free"; if a man constantly says this, he is sure to be free. On the other hand, he who always thinks that he is in bondage brings bondage on himself in the end. The weak-minded man who always says, "I am a sinner, I am a sinner", is sure to have a fall. A man should rather say, "I repeat the Holy Name of God; how can there be any sin in me, or bondage of the world?"

Parable of the tiger

Some people think that they are bound, that they will never attain to Divine Wisdom or to Divine Love. But all this fear vanishes from the heart of a true disciple if his Guru, or spiritual guide, be gracious to him.

There was a flock of sheep in the woods; suddenly a tigress jumped into their midst. At that moment she gave birth to a cub and died on the spot. The kind-hearted sheep took care of the cub and brought it up among them. They ate grass, the cub followed their example; they bleated, the cub also learned to bleat. In this manner, the cub grew up not as a young tiger but like a sheep. One day a full-grown tiger came that way and watched with wonder the grass-eating tiger. The real tiger drew nearer, but the cub began to bleat. Then the real tiger dragged it to the edge of a lake and said, "Look here! Compare your face with mine! Is there any difference? You are a tiger like me, grass is not your food; your food is animal flesh." But the grass-eating tiger could not believe it. After a long time the real tiger convinced it that it was of the same species. Then he gave it a piece of flesh to eat, but it would not touch it; it began once more to bleat and to seek for grass. At last, however, the real tiger forced it to eat animal flesh; at once it liked the taste of blood, gave up its grass-eating and bleating and realised that it was not a sheep but a tiger. It then followed the real tiger and became like him.

The human soul is the child of God

The human soul is the child of God, but it does not know it, and therefore it lives like an ordinary mortal [sheep]; but when by the grace of the Guru [spiritual guide], he realises his true nature, he becomes free from all fear and attains to perfection. Therefore I say, know who you are and what you are in reality; you will have to do very little for yourself after you have received that grace. You will then be able to distinguish between the Real and the unreal, and to realise that God is Truth and the world is unreal.

Parable of the wood-cutter

There was a wood-cutter who led a very miserable life with the small means he could procure by daily selling a load of wood brought from a neighbouring forest. Once a Sannyasin [a man of renunciation] who was passing that way, saw him at work and ad-

vised him to go further into the forest saying, "Move onward, my child, move onward!" The wood-cutter obeyed the injunction and proceeded onward until he came to a sandalwood tree, and being much pleased, he took away with him as many sandal logs as he could carry, sold them in the market and derived much profit. Then he began to wonder within himself why the good Sannyasin had not told him anything about the wood of the sandal-tree, but had simply advised him to move onward. So the next day he went on beyond the place of the sandalwood until he came upon a copper-mine, and he took with him all the copper that he could carry, and selling it in the market got more money by it. Next day, without stopping at the copper-mine, he proceeded further still, as the Sadhu [holy man] had advised him to do, and he came upon a silver-mine and took with him as much of it as he could carry, sold it and got even more money, and so daily proceeding further and further, he found gold-mines and diamond-mines. And at last he became exceedingly rich. Such is also the case with the man who aspires after true Knowledge. If he does not stop in his progress after attaining a few extraordinary and supernatural powers, he at last becomes really rich in the eternal knowledge of Truth.

So go on my children, and never lose sight of your ideal! Go onward and never stop until you have reached the goal. Arriving at a particular stage, do not get the idea that you have reached your journey's end. Work is only the first stage of the journey. Bear in mind that doing works unattached is exceedingly difficult, that therefore Bhakti Yoga, the path of love, is better suited to this age, and that work, even if unattached, is not the end of your life, but only a means to an end. So march on and never halt till you have come up to the great Ideal of your life — the realisation of God!



Conversations of Swami Shivananda

(Direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and second President of the RK Order. Affectionately known as Mahapurush Maharaj).

[Compiled from the *Vedanta Kesari*]

A Monk — "Sir, I am going through my spiritual practices to the best of my capacity. But why is it that I am not finding any joy within? I am going through everything in the fashion of a routine work, as it were. This cannot give any satisfaction. Nor do I have

any peace of mind.”

Swami Shivananda said very calmly — “Well, my boy, attainment of peace is not such an easy affair. This path is very difficult. It is a thorny path. *‘Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path (of Self-realisation), difficult to cross and hard to tread, so say the wise.’* These are sayings of the Rishis who visualised the Truth. It is indeed a very strenuous path. It may seem easy from outside, but soon one finds one has to make way through great difficulties. It is, however, true that the aspirant receives His grace if he yearns for Him with a sincere heart. You have surely read in Sri Ramakrishna’s life how even he had to go through strenuous spiritual practices before he was blessed with the vision of the Divine Mother. His was quite a different case, as he did everything to set an example to the world at large. Without devotion to Him, nothing will be of any avail. Sincere devotion is necessary. As the Master used to say, one realises the Lord only if one’s yearning for Him is equal, in its Intensity, to the combination of these three forms of attachment — a devoted woman’s love for her husband, the love of a mother for her children, and a miser’s fondness for his hoarded wealth. Only then is the Lord realised and real peace and bliss attained. Of course, that yearning is not attained in a day, and besides, without His grace it does not come. Therefore one has to practise spiritual disciplines every day, and pray to Him with tears in one’s eyes: ‘O Lord, bestow Thy mercy on me. I am an ordinary human being. If out of mercy Thou dost not reveal Thyself unto me, how will it be possible for me to have the vision of Thee? Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on me, a weakling!’ Pray every day in this way. The more you weep for Him, the more will your mind be washed of its dirt. And in that purified mind the Lord will become revealed.

“Believe this, that the Lord is extremely fond of those who have taken refuge in Him. He protects in every possible way those who take shelter in Him with their body, mind and speech. Giving up your attachment to the objects of senses, you have come here to realise God — to have abiding peace. Spend your days in complete resignation to Him and trust in His protection. He is sure to do good to you and give you peace. Your duty is to obey His commands and lead your life in the way He has shown. Being monks, you should particularly eliminate from you these two: lust and greed.

Purity and sincerity should be the fundamental principles with you. The Master forgives everything, but never duplicity in conduct. He does not allow in this organisation those who take to some other ideal, or practise hypocrisy of any kind. Such, he removes from it. Honest souls alone can get on here.”

Monk — “Please bless me so that I can ever stay on under the Master’s protection. And, Maharaj, many a time the mind becomes agitated in ever so many ways, and consequently I feel great want of peace. Please advise me as to what I should do under the circumstances.”

With great tenderness the Swami said — “Yes, my boy, I shower blessings on you. May you stay under the Master’s protection and gain the goal of human life! As for the troubles of your mind, do not pay much attention to them. Don’t you know that the Master is the greatest embodiment of purity? If you think of His form and take His Holy Name, you will notice that all these mental agitations would be dispelled, and they would never be allowed to gather strength. Whenever you are troubled with any kind of agitation in the mind, you should pray to Him with tears in your eyes, ‘O Lord, I am weak! Do Thou protect me! If Thou dost not save me, who else will do so? I am Thy servant who has taken shelter in Thee.’ In this way you should represent everything to Him. Then surely you will get response to your prayers.”

In a self-absorbed mood, Mahapurushji said, “Meditation and Japam [repetition of God’s Name] should be done every day, with great steadiness; for that purifies the mind. If meditation and Japam are done with steadfastness for some time, a Godward disposition will be permanently awakened in one’s mind and one can get a taste of Divine bliss. One should not go away leaving one’s seat immediately after meditation, as that would not render the spiritual mood strong. After meditation it is better for one to reflect on the subject of one’s meditation for some time at least, keeping to the same seat. After that one should read some select devotional hymns or such other pieces that are favourable to contemplation. The contemplative mood and the Divine joy become deeper and continue for longer by that. Even after leaving one’s seat one should be revolving about God in one’s own mind, without entering into conversation with anybody. As a result one feels as if that exhilarating mood of meditation is still persisting. This not only brings great de-

light in one's own heart, but also greatly helps one to live inspired with high thoughts."

Monk — "Sir, is it not necessary on our part to go out now and then for the practice of austerities and spiritual exercises? Would it not be favourable to the life of the monk to wander in various places and holy spots as a pilgrim or an itinerant ascetic?"

Mahapurushji — "My boy, in ordinary parlance they say, 'A rolling stone gathers no moss.' Can mere gadding about bring religious merit or the realisation of God? However, it is good sometimes to subsist on Madhukari Bhiksha [cooked food sufficient for one, received by monks from several houses as alms, as a honey-bee—Madhukara—gets honey from various flowers without harming them], or live in a solitary place without any arrangement for support, or to travel from place to place for some period in order to destroy one's egotism and arrogance, or to cultivate complete reliance upon the Lord.

"Undoubtedly spiritual welfare results from that. But there is no use of doing so year after year continually. Swami Adbhutananda used to say at times, 'Where will you go wandering about? If you are a child of Sri Ramakrishna, stay in one place.' This is rightly said. One who finds Him here, finds Him outside also. Where shall you wander about and why? He is already in our heart. It is indeed because of this that the Master used to sing almost daily, '*Oh my mind abide within yourself; never go under anybody's roof. Whatever you want, you shall get seated here alone: only you make a search in your inner chambers. That Supreme Treasure is the philosopher's stone, capable of giving whatever you want. Many a jewel lies scattered at the door of the dancing room of that Chintamani [wish-yielding gem].*'"

Mahapurushji sang this song with his sweet voice again and again. After a brief silence, he continued, "Towards the end of the song is taught the great truth about God that many a jewel lies scattered at the door of the dancing room of Chintamani. Everything lies scattered at Her door — enjoyment, freedom, even knowledge of Brahman. My boy, but then you have to search after and ask for it with great eagerness. This search itself is what is called spiritual practice. She bestows Her grace as soon as one prays to Her sincerely. And if out of Her grace She opens the door a little and awakens the Kundalini [latent Divine Power], you can

perceive that everything exists inside. But if one fails to receive Her grace and Kundalini is not awakened, then nothing will be gained.”

A monk of the Math had returned on the previous day after a pilgrimage to Rameswaram, Dwaraka and other places. As soon as this monk entered the room and prostrated, the Swami saluted with folded hands, saying, “Victory unto Rameswar! Victory unto Rameswar! Victory unto Dwaraka nathi!” Addressing him he said, “You should contemplate on such subjects and try to visualise the holy objects you have seen; for the purpose of going out on a pilgrimage is that. Nothing is gained spiritually if one goes to holy places simply as a tourist. The real devotees contemplate on the holy associations of these places to purify their minds. The Divine has become all these; the places of pilgrimage indicate His glory. While revolving in mind about God, one should think of His powers too. One may perceive that He is specially manifest in holy places. He is not indeed confined to our shrine-room only; He is the Lord of the universe and He comprehends everything and exists everywhere. But in sacred places and in the company of holy men and devotees, His special presence is felt.”

The Monk — “By my pilgrimage to various places on this occasion, I have got a firm conviction that there is a special manifestation of the Divine in those spots and that the Lord protects us and leads us by the hand at every step. I spent three days at Kanyakumari [Cape Comorin] and liked the place immensely. Most of the time was spent in meditation and Japam, worship and reading of the scriptures. The place also is so charming that the mind would not like to quit it. By the grace of the Master our stay there was nicely arranged in quite an unpremeditated way.”

Mahapurushji — “Now and then one should go about without anybody’s help to fall back upon. Then only real dependence on the Lord will come. And if real surrender to the Lord does not come, nothing else will avail. Much of the spiritual practices which one has to go through is simply to bring about that spirit of surrender to God. And He undertakes the whole responsibility of one who surrenders himself to Him with an undeviating mind, and protects him in every way. It is for this reason that the Lord makes a declaration in the Gita, *‘But those who meditate on Me, and worship Me and no other, and who are ever devoted to Me — to them I ensure the power to gain the new and preserve the old. One who worships*

Him whole-heartedly surrenders himself to Him, and He bears his burden out of His grace.”



From “*In the Hours of Meditation*”

I find myself standing tired and afraid on the dreary and sandy shore of the ocean of Life. Furious are the waves; the wind is high, yet I must go across. Looking back, I realise that darkness is approaching fast. Am I to perish? No, a heavenly voice assures me there is nothing to fear. Divine power, infinite energy, and endless love are within. My divine self, like a huge boat, will lead me across this turbulent ocean of life. It pacifies all disturbance; it adds new vigour and energy to my consciousness. It fills me with a new hope. It adds a divine radiance to every atom of my body.

— Sw. Gnaneswarananda—

Control of Mind and Destruction of Mind

[Notes from the Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi]

Devotee — When I am engaged in enquiry as to the source from which “I” springs, I arrive at a stage of stillness of mind beyond which I find myself unable to proceed further. I have no thought of any kind and there is an emptiness, a blankness. A mild light pervades, and I am feeling that it is myself bodiless. I have neither cognition nor vision of body and form then. The experience lasts nearly half an hour and is pleasing. Would I be correct in concluding that all that was necessary to secure eternal happiness [i.e., freedom or salvation or whatever one calls it] was to continue the practice till this experience could be maintained for hours, days, months together?

Sri Ramana Maharshi — This does not mean salvation; such a condition is termed “Manolaya” or temporary stillness of thought. Manolaya means concentration, temporarily arresting the movements of thoughts; as soon as this concentration ceases, thoughts, old and new, will rush in as usual and though this temporary stillness of mind lasts even a thousand years, yet it will never lead to total destruction of thought, which is what is called salvation or liberation from birth and death. The practitioner must therefore be ever on the alert and enquire within as to **who** has this experience, **who** realises its pleasantness and, failing this enquiry, he will go

into a long trance or deep sleep [Yoga Nidra] and, due to the absence also of a proper guide at this stage, several spiritual practitioners [Sadhakas] have been deluded and fallen a prey to a false sense of salvation, and only a few have, either by the good acts of merit in their previous births, or by His extreme grace, been enabled to reach the goal safely and correctly.

A Yogi was doing penance [Tapas] for a number of years on the banks of the Ganges. When he had attained a high degree of concentration, he also believed that continuance in that stage, for prolonged periods, constituted salvation, and practised it. One day, before going into deep concentration [Nishtai] he felt a bit thirsty and called upon his disciple to bring a little drinking water from the Ganges, and before his disciple arrived with the water, the sage had actually gone into deep sleep and remained in that state for countless years, during which time much water had flowed under the bridge. When he woke up from this experience the first thing he asked for was water! water! but there was neither his disciple nor the Ganges in sight.

The first thing which he asked for, was “water”, because, before going into deep concentration, the topmost layer of thought in his mind was “water”, and by concentration, however deep and prolonged it might have been, he had only been able temporarily to lull his thoughts and when, therefore, he regained consciousness, this topmost thought flew up with all the speed and force of a flood breaking through the dykes. If this is the case with regard to a thought which took shape immediately before he sat for meditation, there is no doubt that thoughts which have taken deeper roots earlier would still remain unannihilated and if annihilation of thoughts means salvation, can such a man be said to have attained salvation?

Spiritual aspirants do rarely understand the difference between this temporary stillness of mind [Manolaya] and permanent destruction of thoughts [Manonasa]. In Manolaya there is temporary subsidence of thought-waves, though this temporary period may even last for a thousand years. Thoughts, which are so temporarily stilled, rise up as soon as Manolaya ceases. One must, therefore, watch one’s spiritual progress carefully. He must not allow himself to be overtaken by such spells of stillness of thought; the moment one experiences this, one must revive consciousness and enquire

within as to **who** it is who experiences this stillness. While not allowing any thoughts to intrude, he must not, at the same time, be overtaken by deep sleep [Yoga Nidra] or self-hypnotism. Though this is a sign of progress towards the goal, yet it is also the point where the divergence between the road to salvation and deep sleep [Yoga Nidra] takes place. The easy way, the direct way, perhaps the shortest cut to salvation is the "Enquiry-method". By such enquiry you will drive the thought-force deeper, till it reaches its source and merges therein. It is then you will have the response from within and find that you rest there, destroying all thoughts once and for all.

This temporary stillness of thought comes automatically in the usual course of one's practice, and it is a clear sign of one's progress, but the danger of it lies in one often mistaking this as the final goal of spiritual practice and be thus deceived. It is exactly here that a spiritual guide is necessary, and he saves a lot of the spiritual aspirant's time and energy which would otherwise be fruitlessly wasted.



The Basis of Divine Life

[Quotations from Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*]

Mental theories are of no fundamental importance, for the mind forms and accepts the theories that support the turn of the being. What is important is that turn and the call within you.

The knowledge that there is a Supreme Existence, Consciousness and Bliss which is not merely a negative Nirvana or a static and featureless Absolute, but dynamic, the perception that this Divine Consciousness can be realised not only beyond but here, and the consequent acceptance of a divine life as the aim of Yoga, do not belong to the mind. It is not a question of mental theory — even though mentally this outlook can be as well supported as any other, if not better — but of experience, and, before the experience comes, of the soul's faith bringing with it the mind's and life's adhesion. One who is in contact with the higher Light and has the experience can follow this way, however difficult it may be for the lower members to follow; one who is touched by it, without having the experience, but having the call, the conviction, the compulsion of the soul's adherence, can also follow it.

* *

The ways of the Divine are not like those of the human mind or according to our patterns, and it is impossible to judge them or to lay down for Him what He shall or shall not do, for the Divine knows better than we can know. If we admit the Divine at all, both true reason and Bhakti [devotion] seem to me to be at one in demanding implicit faith and surrender

* *

Not to impose one's mind and vital will on the Divine, but to receive the Divine's will and follow it, is the true attitude of sadhana [spiritual practice]. Not to say, "This is my right, want, claim, need, requirement, why do I not get it?" but to give oneself, to surrender and to receive with joy whatever the Divine gives, not grieving or revolting, is the better way. Then what you receive will be the right thing for you.

* *

Faith, reliance upon God, surrender and self-giving to the Divine Power are necessary and indispensable. But reliance upon God must not be made an excuse for indolence, weakness and surrender to the impulses of the lower Nature; it must go along with untiring aspiration and a persistent rejection of all that comes in the way of Divine Truth. The surrender to the Divine must not be turned into an excuse, a cloak or an occasion for surrender to one's own desires and lower movements or to one's ego or to some other Force of the ignorance and darkness that puts on a false appearance of the Divine.

* *

You have only to aspire to keep yourself open to the Mother, to reject all that is contrary to Her will and to let Her work in you — doing also all your work for Her and in the faith that it is through Her force that you can do it. If you remain open in this way, the knowledge and realisation will come to you in due course.

* *

It does not matter what defects you may have in your nature. The one thing that matters is your keeping yourself open to the Force. Nobody can transform himself by his own unaided efforts; it is only the Divine Force that can transform him. If you keep yourself open, all the rest will be done for you.

Hardly anyone is strong enough to overcome by his own unaided aspiration and will the forces of the lower nature; even those who do it get only a certain kind of control, but not a complete mastery. Will and aspiration are needed to bring down the aid of the Divine Force and to keep the being on its side in its dealings with the lower powers. The Divine Force fulfilling the spiritual will and the heart's psychic aspiration can alone bring about the conquest.

* *

To do anything by mental control is always difficult when what is attempted runs contrary to the trend of human nature or of the personal nature. A strong will patiently and perseveringly turned towards its object can effect a change, but usually it takes a long, time and the success at the beginning may be only partial and checkered by many failures

To turn all actions automatically into worship can not be done by thought-control only; there must be a strong aspiration in the heart which will bring about some realisation or feeling of the presence of the One to whom worship is offered, The Bhakta [devotee] does not rely on his own effort alone but on the grace and power of the Divine whom he adores,

All sincere aspiration has its effect; if you are sincere you will grow into the divine life. To be entirely sincere means to desire the divine Truth only, to surrender yourself more and more to the Divine Mother, to reject all personal demand and desire other than this one aspiration, to offer every action in life to the Divine and do it as the work given without bringing in the ego. This is the basis of the divine life.

One cannot become altogether this at once, but if one aspires at all times and calls in always the aid of the Divine Shakti [Power] with a true heart and straightforward will, one grows more and more into this consciousness.

* *

The mechanical movements are always more difficult to stop by the mental will, because they do not in the least depend upon reason or any mental justification but are founded upon association or else a mere mechanical memory and habit.

The practice of rejection prevails in the end; but with personal effort only, it may take a long time. If you can feel the Divine Power

working in you, then it should become easier.

There should be nothing inert or tamasic in the self-giving to the guidance, and it should not be made by any part of the vital into a plea for not rejecting the suggestions of lower impulse and desire.

There are always two ways of doing Yoga — one by the action of a vigilant mind and vital seeing, observing, thinking and deciding what is or is not to be done. Of course it acts with the Divine Force behind it, drawing and calling in that Force—for otherwise nothing much can be done. But still it is the personal effort that is prominent and assumes most of the burden.

The other way is that of the psychic being, the consciousness opening to the Divine, not only opening the psychic and bringing it forward, but opening the mind, the vital and the physical, receiving the Light, perceiving what is to be done, feeling and seeing it done by the Divine Force itself and helping constantly by its own vigilant and conscious assent to and call for the Divine working.

Usually there cannot but be a mixture of these two ways until the consciousness is ready to be entirely open, entirely submitted to the Divine's origination of all its action. It is then that all responsibility disappears and there is no personal burden on the shoulders of the sadhaka [aspirant].



A Hindu song by Soor Das

*O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
Thy name O Lord, is Same-Sightedness,
Make us both the same Brahman!*

*One piece of iron is the knife in the hand of the butcher
And another piece of iron is the image in the temple.
But when they touch the philosophers stone,
Both alike turn to gold!*

*One drop of water is in the sacred Jumna,
And one is foul in a ditch by the roadside.
But when they fall into the Ganges,
Both alike become holy!*

*So, Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
Thy name, O Lord, is Same-Sightedness.
Make us both the same Brahman!*



Tolerance, i.e., Equality of Religions

by Mahatma Gandhi

I do not like the word "tolerance" but could not think of a better one. Tolerance may imply a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one's own, whereas *ahimsa* [non-violence] teaches us to entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as we accord to our own, thus admitting the imperfection of the latter. This admission will be readily made by a seeker of Truth who follows the Law of Love. If we had attained the full vision of Truth, we would no longer be mere seekers, but would have become one with God, for Truth is God. But being only seekers, we prosecute our quest, and are conscious of our imperfection. And if we are imperfect ourselves, religion as conceived by us must also be imperfect. We have not realised religion in its perfection, even as we have not realised God. Religion of our conception, being thus imperfect, is always subject to a process of evolution and reinterpretation. Progress towards Truth, towards God, is possible only because of such evolution. And if all faiths outlined by men are imperfect, the question of comparative merit does not arise. All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect and liable to error. Reverence for other faiths need not blind us to their faults, We must be keenly alive to the defects of our own faith also, yet not leave it on that account, but try to overcome these defects. Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only not hesitate, but would think it our duty, to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths.

The question then arises:— Why should there be so many different faiths? The Soul is one, but the bodies which She animates are many. We cannot reduce the number of bodies; yet we recognise the unity of the Soul. Even as a tree has a single trunk but many branches and leaves, so is there one true and perfect Religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium. The one Religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they can command, and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose interpretation is to be held to be the right one? Everybody is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that everybody is wrong. Hence the necessity for tolerance, which does not mean indifference towards one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerance gives us

spiritual insight which is as far from fanaticism as the north pole from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barrier between faith and faith. Cultivation of tolerance for other faiths will import to us a truer understanding of our own.

Tolerance obviously does not disturb the distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil. The reference here throughout is naturally to the principal faiths of the world. They are all based on common fundamentals. They have all produced great saints.

I would linger yet a while on tolerance. My meaning will perhaps become clearer if I describe here some of my experiences. In Phoenix we had our daily prayers in the same way as in Sabarmati, and Musalmans as well as Christians attended them along with Hindus. The late Sheth Rustomji and his children too frequented the prayer meetings. Rustomji Sheth much liked the Gujurati Bhajan "Mane valun"—"Dear, dear to me is the name of Rama". If my memory serves me right, Mangalal or Kashi was once leading us in singing this hymn, when Rustomji Sheth exclaimed joyously, "Say the name of Hormazd instead of the name of Rama." His suggestion was readily taken up and after that, whenever the Sheth was present and sometimes even when he was not, we put in the name of Hormazd in place of Rama. The late Husain, son of Daud Sheth, often stayed at the Phoenix Ashram and enthusiastically joined our prayers. To the accompaniment of an organ, he used to sing in a very sweet voice the song "Hai bahare bagh"—"The garden of this world has only a momentary bloom". He taught us all this song, which we also sang at prayers. Its inclusion in our Bhajanavali is a tribute to truth-loving Husain's memory. I have never met a young man who practised Truth more devotedly than Husain. Joseph Royeppen often came to Phoenix. He is a Christian and his favourite hymn was "Vaishnava Java"—"He is a Vaishnava [servant of the Lord] who succours people in distress". He loved music and once sang this hymn saying "Christian" in place of "Vaishnava". The others accepted his reading with alacrity, and I observed that this filled Joseph's heart with joy.

When I was turning over the pages of the sacred books of different faiths for my own satisfaction, I became sufficiently familiar for my purpose with Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Hinduism. In reading these texts, I can say that I was equiminded towards all these faiths, although perhaps I was not then conscious of it.

Refreshing my memory of those days, I do not find I ever had the slightest desire to criticise any of those religions merely because they were not my own, but read each sacred book in a spirit of reverence and found the same fundamental morality in each. Some things I did not understand then and do not understand even now, but experience has taught me that it is a mistake hastily to imagine that anything we cannot understand is necessarily wrong. Some things which I did not understand at first have since become as clear as day-light. Equimindedness helps us to solve many difficulties, and even when we criticise anything, we express ourselves with a humility and a courtesy which leave no sting behind them.

The acceptance of the doctrine of Equality of Religions does not abolish the distinction between religion and irreligion. We do not propose to cultivate tolerance for irreligion. That being so, some people might object that there would be no room left for equimindedness if every one took his own decision as to what was religion and what was irreligion. If we follow the Law of Love, we shall not bear any hatred towards the irreligious brother. On the contrary, we shall love him and therefore either we shall bring him to see the error of his ways, or he will point out our error, or, each will tolerate the other's difference of opinion. If the other party does not observe the Law of Love, he may be violent to us. If however we cherish real love for him, it will overcome his bitterness in the end. All obstacles in our path will vanish if only we observe the golden rule that we must not be impatient with those whom we may consider to be in error, but must be prepared, if need be, to suffer in our own person.



A Song to the Divine Mother

My sleep has been broken. I am not going to sleep any more.

*Having got Thee, O sleep of communion, O Mother,
Into sleep have I lulled sleep for ever.*

An excellent theme have I got to think upon.

*From the land where there is no night,
Has come unto me a citizen with that theme.*

*Worship at stated hours by day or by night has for ever
become barren unto me.*



BUDDHISM

The Ignorant

[From the *Dhammapada*]

*To the sleepless the night is long;
Long is the league to the weary traveller;
Long is the circle of births and deaths to those
ignorant of the Dhamma.*

If searching for a good friend, you do not get one nobler than yourself or one your equal, then walk alone fearlessly, for there is no companionship with the ignorant.

*"I have sons", "I have wealth":
Thinking thus the ignorant is troubled.
When even oneself does not belong to one,
Why speak of sons? or of wealth?*

The fool who knows his folly is wise to that extent.
But the fool who thinks he is a wise man is rightly called a fool.

Should a fool all his life long keep the company of a wise man, he will not understand the Dhamma, just as the spoon does not know the taste of the soup.

Now if a wise man even for a moment keeps the company of a wise man, he grasps the Dhamma, immediately, just as the tongue knows the savour of the soup.

The ignorant fools live their lives like enemies to themselves, doing evil, which surely will bring evil in its train.

It is not good to do such deeds as bring regrets, or whose results the doer, with tear-stained face and lamenting, shall have to endure.

It is good to do such deeds as do not bring regrets, and whose results the doer enjoys with glad and pleasant face.

The foolish one thinks it honey so long as the evil does not mature. But on the day it matures, the ignorant one comes to sorrow.

Even though a foolish man should eat his food from month to month with the end of a Kusa grass stem, he will not be worth so much as the sixteenth part of one who has understood the Truth.

An evil deed like the fresh drawn milk does not immediately curdle, but like the spark beneath the ashes, consuming it pursues the ignorant one.

Only to his ruin does the knowledge of the foolish lead. For when that knowledge comes to an end, his head gets broken and his fortune is at an end.

If the foolish one should desire praise for himself, while not deserving any, seeking honour from among the monks, chief place in monasteries, and offerings from strangers; thinking that both laity and the cleric should believe that all the things in the Vihara were done by him, and they should follow him in things great and small, to the fool thoughts like these arise. Thereby both greed and pride grow in him.

One is the path to gain; another is the path to Nibbana. Let the monk who is a disciple of the Buddha, well realising this fact, not take pleasure in empty honour and respect, but cultivate solitude.



The Pith of the Matter

[From the *Majjhima Nikaya*]

Suppose, brethren, a man in need of sound timber, in quest of sound timber, going about searching for sound timber, should come upon a mighty tree, upstanding, all sound timber and pass it by, but should cut away the outer wood and bark and take that along with him, thinking it to be sound timber.

Then a discerning man might say thus, "This fellow surely cannot tell the difference between sound timber and outer wood and bark, branch-wood and twigs, but being in need of sound timber he passes it by and goes off with the outer wood and bark thinking it to be sound timber. Now such a way of dealing with sound timber will never serve his need."

Thus, brethren, the essentials of the holy life do not consist in the profits of gain, honour, and good name, nor yet in the profits of observing moral rules, nor yet in the profits of knowledge and insight, but the sure heart's release, brethren,— that, brethren, is the meaning, that is the essence, that is the goal of living the holy life.



The Two Paths

[From the *Samyutta Nikaya*]

At Savatthi in the Park:—

Now at that time the venerable Tissa, nephew to the Exalted One's father, thus spoke to a number of brethren :

"Truly, friends, my body has become as if drugged: the four quarters are become dim to my eyes, and the teachings are no longer clear to me. Sloth and torpor possess my heart, joyless to me is the righteous life, and I waver in the teachings."

Thereupon a number of brethren went to the Exalted One, saluted Him and sat down at one side.

So seated, those brethren said to the Exalted One, "Lord, the venerable Tissa, nephew to the Exalted One's father, speaks thus to a number of brethren: 'Truly, friends, my body is become as if drugged. The four quarters are dim to my eyes, and the teachings are no longer clear to me. Sloth and torpor possess my heart, joyless to me is the righteous life, and I waver in the teachings.'"

At that, the Exalted One called to a certain brother.

"Come thou, brother, and in my name bid hither brother Tissa, saying: 'Friend Tissa, the Master would speak with you.'"

"Even so, Lord," said that brother in reply to the Exalted One, and went to the venerable Tissa and said to him: "Friend Tissa, the Master would speak with you."

"Even so, brother," said the venerable Tissa in reply to that brother, and came to the Exalted One, saluted Him and sat down at one side.

As he thus sat, the Exalted One thus spake unto the venerable Tissa: "Is it true, as they say, Tissa, that you said this to a number of brethren: 'Truly, friends, my body is become as if drugged. The four quarters are dim to my eyes, and the teachings are no longer clear to me. Sloth and torpor possess my heart, joyless to me is the righteous life, and I waver in the teachings.'?"

"True Lord!"

"Now as to that, what think you, Tissa? In a body that is not rid of lust, rid of desire, of love, of thirst, of fever, and craving,— in such a body do there arise states of change and instability? Do sorrow, grief, woe, lamentation and despair arise?"

"Yes, Lord!"

"Well said! Well said, Tissa! And is it so likewise with feeling, with perception, with the activities, and with consciousness?"

“Yes, Lord!”

“Well said! Well said, Tissa! it is likewise with consciousness that is not rid of lust, of desire, of love, of thirst, craving and fever: in such consciousness there do arise sorrow, grief, woe, lamentation and despair. Now what think you, Tissa? In a body that is rid of all these, in such a body do there arise sorrow and grief, woe, lamentation and despair?”

“Surely not, Lord!”

“Well said! Well said, Tissa! So also with feeling, perception, the activities, do they arise?”

“Surely not, Lord!”

“Well said! Well said, Tissa! So it is with consciousness that is rid of lust. Now what think you, Tissa? Is body permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, Lord!”

“Is feeling, is perception, the activities,— is consciousness permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, Lord!”

“Wherefore, he who sees this is repelled by body, is repelled by feeling, by perception, by the activities. He is repelled by consciousness; being repelled by it, he lusts not after it; not lusting he is set free; in this freedom comes insight that it is a being-free. Thus he realises: ‘Rebirth is destroyed, lived is the righteous life, done is my task, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.’

“Suppose now, Tissa, there be two men, one unskilled and the other skilled in wayfaring. And the one who is unskilled asks the way of the other who is skilled in that way. And that other replies, ‘Yes this is the way, good man. Go on for a while and you will see the road divide into two. Leave the path to the left and take the right-hand path. Go on for a little and you will see a thick forest. Go on for a little and you will see a great marshy swamp. Go on for a little and you will see a steep precipice. Go on for a little and you will see a delightful stretch of ground.’

“Such is my parable, Tissa, to show my meaning, and this is the meaning thereof. By ‘the man who is skilled in the way’ is meant a Tathagata, an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened One. By ‘the man who is unskilled in the way’ is meant the many-folk. By the ‘divided

way', Tissa, is meant the 'state of wavering'. The left-hand-path is a name for this false eightfold path to wit: —the path of wrong views, wrong intention and so forth. The right-hand-path, Tissa, is a name for this Ariyan eightfold path, to wit:— right views and so forth. The 'thick forest', Tissa, is a name for ignorance. The 'great marshy swamp' is a name for the feeling-desires. The 'steep precipice', Tissa, is a name for vexation and despair. The 'delightful stretch of level ground', Tissa, is a name for Nibbana — perfect freedom or salvation.

"Be of good cheer, Tissa, be of good cheer! I to counsel! I to uphold! I to teach!"



Pai Le-T'ien of T'ang

Pai Le-T'ien was a great poet of T'ang. When he was officiating as governor in a certain district there was a Zen-Master within his jurisdiction popularly known as Niao-k'e, "the Bird's Nest", for he used to practise his meditation on a seat made of the thickly-growing branches of a tree. The governor-poet once visited him and said, "What a dangerous seat you have up in the tree?" "But yours is far worse," replied the master.

"I am the governor of this district and I do not see what danger there is in it."

"Then you do not know yourself! When your passions and desires burn and your mind is unsteady, what is more dangerous than that?"

The governor then asked, "What is the teaching of Buddhism?"

Niao-k'e recited this famous stanza:

*"Not to commit evils,
But to practise all good,
And to keep the heart pure—
This is the teaching of the Buddhas."*

Pai, however, protested, "But any child of three years knows that!"

"Any child three years old may know it, but even an old man of eighty finds it difficult to practise!"

Thus concluded the Zen-Master up in the tree.



The Song of Mahamati

[From the *Lankavatara-Sutra*]

When thou reviewest the world with thy wisdom and compassion, it is to thee like the ethereal flower, and of which we cannot say whether it is created or vanishing, as the categories of being and non-being are inapplicable to it.

When thou reviewest all things with thy wisdom and compassion, they are like visions, they are beyond the reach of mind and consciousness, as the categories of being and non-being are inapplicable to them.

When thou reviewest the world with thy wisdom and compassion, it is eternally like a dream, of which we cannot say whether it is permanent or it is subject to destruction, as the categories of being and non-being are inapplicable to it.

The Dharmakaya whose self-nature is a vision and a dream, what is there to praise? Real existence is where rises no thought of nature or no-nature.

He whose appearance is beyond the senses and sense-objects and is not to be seen by them or in them — how could praise or blame be predicated of Him, O Sage?

With thy wisdom and compassion, which really defy all qualifications, thou comprehendest the ego-less nature of things and persons and art eternally clean of the evil passions and of the hindrance of knowledge.

Thou dost not vanish in Nirvana, nor does Nirvana abide in thee; for it transcends the dualism of the enlightened and enlightenment as well as the alternatives of being and non-being.

Those who see the sage so serene and beyond birth, are detached from cravings and remain stainless in this life and after.



A Sermon of Wutsu (Goso)

If people ask me what Zen is like, I will say that it is like learning the art of burglary. The son of a burglar saw his father growing older and thought, "If he is unable to carry out his profession, who will be the bread-winner of this family, except myself? I must learn the trade."

He intimated the idea to his father, who approved of it. One night his father took the son to a big house, broke through the fence, entered the house, and opening one of the large chests, told the son to go in and pick out the clothings. As soon as he got into it the lid was dropped and the lock securely applied. The father now came out to the courtyard, and loudly knocking at the door woke up the whole family, whereas he himself quietly slipped away from the former hole in the fence. The residents got excited and lighted candles, but found that the burglars had already gone. The son, who remained all the time in the chest securely confined, thought of his cruel father. He was greatly mortified, when an idea flashed upon him. He made a noise which sounded like the gnawing of a rat. The family told the maid to take a candle and examine the chest. When the lid was unlocked, out came the prisoner, who blew out the light, pushed away the maid, and fled. The people ran after him. Noticing a well by the road, he picked up a large stone and threw it into the water. The pursuers ail gathered around the well trying to find the burglar drowning himself in the dark hole.

In the meantime he was safely back in his father's house. He blamed him very much for his narrow escape. But the father said, "My son, don't be offended. Just tell me how you got off." When the son told him all about his adventures, the father remarked, "There you are, now you have learned the art!"



JEWISH MYSTICISM

A Prayer from the *Kether-Malahut*

by Solomon b. Gabirol

Thou art one, the beginning of all numbers and the foundation of all edifices. Thou art one and in the secret of Thy unity the wisest men got bewildered and lost, because they do not know it. Thou art one and Thy unity never decreases or increases, nor does it suffer any change. Thou art one, but not like one in arithmetic, for Thy unity never admits of multiplication, nor of change, nor of form. Thou art one on whom none of my imaginations can put any limit or of whom it can give a definition. That is why I shall watch my conduct, guarding myself against committing mistakes by my tongue. Thou art one whose excellence is so high that it cannot fall, in whatever manner it be, and not like one who can ever cease to be.

Thou existest, but the understanding and the sight of mortals cannot reach Thy existence nor put in Thee the where, how and why. Thou existest, but in Thyself, for no other can ever exist in Thee. Thou existest before the beginning of time and without place. Thou existest, and Thy existence is so hidden and so deep that no one can discover or penetrate its secret.

Thou livest, but not since a fixed and known point of time. Thou livest, but not through a spirit or soul, for Thou art the Soul of all souls. Thou livest, but not like the lives of mortals that are compared with a breath and whose end shall be the food of worms. Thou livest, and he who can attain Thy mysteries shall enjoy eternal bliss and live for ever.

Thou art great, and near Thy greatness all this greatness is humbled and bows down, and all that is most excellent becomes defective. Thou art great beyond all imagination, and Thou risest above all celestial hierarchies. Thou art great above all greatness, and Thou art exalted above all praise. Thou art strong, and not one of all Thy creatures will ever perform the works Thou performest, nor will its force ever be comparable to Thine. Thou art strong, and it is to Thee that belongs this invincible force which never changes and never undergoes any transformations. Thou art strong, and through Thy magnanimity Thou pardonest even at the time of Thy most ardent wrath, and showest Thyself patient towards the sinners. Thou art strong, and Thy mercy, which has existed at all times, extends itself over all Thy creatures. Thou art eternal light which the pure souls shall see, and which the cloud of sins shall hide before the eyes of sinners. Thou art the light, which is hidden in this world and visible in the other, where the glory of the Lord shines forth. Thou art sovereign, and the eyes of the mind which desire to behold Thee are quite surprised only to be able to attain a part and never the whole. Thou art the God of gods, witness of all Thy creatures, and in honour of that great name they must all worship Thee. Thou art God, and all that are created are Thy servants and Thy worshippers. Thy glory is not dimmed even if others are adored, for it is their intention, too, to address themselves to Thee. They are like the blind whose intention it is to follow the high-road, but who get lost. One of them gets drowned in a well, another falls into a ditch. All generally believe to have gained their desires, and, notwithstanding, they have striven in vain. But Thy servants are

like clairvoyants who walk in a safe path and who do not go astray either to the right nor to the left, and finally enter the court of the king. Thou art God, who supportest by Thy Godhead all beings, and who assistest through Thy unity all creatures. Thou art God, and there is no difference between Thy Godhead, Thy unity, Thy eternity and Thy existence, for all is the same mystery, and although names vary, everything comes to the same. Thou art wise, and this wisdom, which is the source of life, emanates from Thyself. Compared with Thy wisdom all the wisest men are but fools. Thou art wise and the Ancient of ancients, and all wisdom has always fed itself from Thee. Thou art wise and Thou hast not learned Thy wisdom from anybody, nor hast Thou acquired it from anybody, but from Thyself.



CHRISTIANITY

The Birth of Christ

[St. Luke II, 1 – 21]

And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David).

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you

good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.



Ihesu that Died on the Rood for the Love of Me

by Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole

*Ihesu that died on the rood for the love of me,
And bought me with thy precious blood, thou have
mercy of me.*

*What me lets of any thing for to love thee,
Be it me lief, he it me loth, do it away from me.*



New Testament

Epistle of Paul — To the Hebrews (1.1)

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.



In Excelsis Gloria!

A Christmas-Carol (About 1500)

*When Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem, in that fair citie,
Angels sang there with mirth and glee,
In Excelsis Gloria!*

*Herdsmen beheld these angels bright,
To them appearing with great light,
Who said, "God's Son is born this night,"
In Excelsis Gloria!*

This King is come to save mankind,

*As in Scripture truths we find,
Therefore this song have we in mind,
In Excelsis Gloria!*

*Then dear Lord, for Thy great grace,
Grant us the bliss to see Thy face,
That we may sing to Thy solace,
In Excelsis Gloria!*



Of Prayer

[From the *Emendatio Vitae*]
by Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole

In the midst of temptation or tribulation have recourse at once to prayer. If thou prayest fervently thou shalt have help. Distractions sometimes come and waverings of heart; and thoughts of different kinds fill the mind to hinder it from the praise of God. At such times it is good to meditate upon holiness, and so shall thy prayers become effectual.

If any have left all worldly occupations for the love of God and are continually given to holy prayer and meditation, within a short time, by the grace of God, they will find their heart established in love and prayer. No longer will they waver between this and that, but remain in endless peace. It is a source of great strength to have a steadfast heart occupied in frequent prayer and the singing of psalms. By diligent prayer we overcome the devil and weaken his attacks and provocations. He is enfeebled and without power, so long as we continue unwearied in strong prayer.

Those men who have made it their custom to pray for a long time, sometimes find even greater sweetness and a more fervent desire of prayer. While that sweetness last, it is good not to cease from prayer. When they cease — as sometimes happens because the flesh is weak — they should turn to the reading of Holy Scripture or do some other profitable thing so that they do not allow their thoughts to wander from God; and that when they turn to prayer again, they may be more alert than they were before.

We pray well when we think of nothing else, but have all our thoughts turned to heaven, and our soul inflamed with the fire of the Holy Ghost. In this way a wonderful fulness of God's goodness will be found in us; for from the innermost depths of our heart the

love of God shall rise, and all our prayer will be fervent and effectual, so that we shall not hurry over the words, but with great crying and urgency offer every syllable to the Lord. Our heart being thus kindled with the fire of love, our prayer will also be kindled and offered by our lips with great sweetness in the sight of God, so that it becomes a joy to pray. When this great sweetness is given to one who prays, his very prayer becomes praise.

Some are foolish that pay more heed to meditation than to prayer, not knowing God's speech is a consuming fire so that with it the wickedness of sin is burnt up and the mind inflamed with love. They say that they will first meditate and so establish their hearts; but they are established the later since they are not strengthened by prayer.

Although we cannot practise recollection as we should like, we should not cease from trying; little by little we should seek to grow in prayer so that Jesus Christ may establish us at the last. To which end meditation is a help if it be not over-indulged in length or method.



Of Reading

[From the *Emendatio Vitae*]
by Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole

If thou wilt experience the love of God and art afire for the joys of Heaven, and if thou wouldest learn to despise earthly things, be not negligent in meditating and reading the Holy Scriptures; and chiefly in those parts where they teach conduct and how to escape the wiles of the devil; and where they speak of the love of God and of the contemplative life. Hard sayings may be left to arguers and to wise men well trained in doctrine.

Reading of the Holy Scriptures helps us much to acquire habits of holiness. By it we learn our faults and our good deeds, where we sin and where we escape, what we should do and what we should avoid, and the most subtle deceits of our enemies are laid open before us. The Holy Scriptures kindle within us the fire of love and move us to penitence. If we delight in them as in all manner of riches, they spread before us a veritable banquet of delights. .

Let not desire of the honour, favour or praise of men incite us to the study of Holy Scripture, but the pure intention to please God; so

that we may know how to love Him, and to teach our neighbours the same. We ought not to be reputed wise by the people; but should hide our knowledge rather than exhibit it for praise; as it is written, "I have hid thy words in my heart — that I should not sin against thee," that is, in empty or vain boasting.

The sole cause of our speaking should be the praise of God and the edification of our neighbours that the saying may be fulfilled in us, "His praise shall ever be in my mouth." That is so when we seek not our own honour and speak not against His praise.



The Effect of Contemplation

[From *The Cloud of Unknowing*]

Look that no man think it presumption that he that is the wretchedest sinner of this life dare take upon him after the time be that he have lawfully amended him, and after that he have felt him stirred to that life that is called contemplative, by the assent of his counsel and his conscience for to prefer a meek stirring love to his God, privily pressing upon the cloud of unknowing betwixt him and his God. When our Lord said to Mary, in person of all sinners that be called to contemplative life, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," it was not for her great sorrow, nor for the remembering of her sins, nor yet for her meekness that she had in the beholding of her wretchedness only. But why then? Surely because she loved much.

Lo! here may men see what a privy pressing of love may purchase of our Lord, before all other works that man may think. And yet I grant well, that she had full much sorrow and wept full sore for her sins, and full much she was meeked in remembrance of her wretchedness. And so should we too, that have been wretches and accustomed sinners all our lifetime, make hideous and wonderful sorrow for our sins, and full much be meeked in remembrance of our wretchedness.

But how? Surely as Mary did. She, although she might not feel the deep hearty sorrow of her sins — for why, all her lifetime she had them with her whereso she went, as it were, in a burthen bounden together and laid up full privily in the hole of her heart, in manner never to be forgotten — nevertheless yet, it may be said and affirmed by Scripture that she had a more hearty sorrow a more doleful desire, and a more deep sighing, and more she lan-

guished, yea! almost to the death, for lacking of love, although she had full much love (and have no wonder thereof, for it is the condition of a true lover that ever the more he loveth, the more he longeth for to love), than she had for any remembrance of her sins.

And yet she wist well, and felt well in herself in a sad soothfastness, that she was a wretch most foul of all other, and that her sins had made a division betwixt her and her God that she loved so much, and also that they were in great part cause of her languishing sickness for lacking of love. But what thereof? Came she therefore down from the height of desire into the deepness of her sinful life, and searched in the foul stinking fen and dunghill of her sins, searching them up by one and by one, with all the circumstances of them, and sorrowed and wept so upon them each one by itself? Nay, surely she did not so. And why? Because God let her wit by His grace within her soul, she should never so bring it about. For so might she sooner have raised herself an ableness to have oft sinned, than to have purchased by that work any plain forgiveness of all her sins.

And therefore she hung up her love and her longing desire in this cloud of unknowing, and learned her to love a thing the which she might not see clearly in this life, by light of understanding in her reason, nor yet verily feel in sweetness of love in her affection. In-somuch, that she had oftentimes little special remembrance, whether that ever she had been a sinner or none. Yea, and full oftentimes I hope that she was so deeply disposed to the move of His Godhead that she had but right little special beholding unto the beauty of His precious and His blessed body, in the which He sat full lovely speaking and preaching before her; nor yet to anything else, bodily or ghostly. That this be sooth, it seemeth by the gospel.

In the gospel of St. Luke it is written that when our Lord was in the house of Martha her sister, all the time that Martha made her busy about the sighting of His meat, Mary her sister sat at His feet. And in hearing of His word she beheld not to the business of her sister, although her business was full good and full holy, for truly it is the first part of active life; nor yet to the preciousness of His blessed body, nor to the sweet voice and the words of His manhood, although it better and holier, for it is the second part of active life and the first of contemplative life.

But to the sovereignest wisdom of His Godhead, lapped in the

dark words of His manhood, thither beheld she with all the love of her heart. For from thence she would not remove, for nothing that she saw nor heard spoken nor done about her; but sat full still in her body with many a sweet privy and a listy love pressed upon that high cloud of unknowing betwixt her and her God. For one thing I tell thee, that there was never yet pure creature in this life, nor never yet shall be, so high ravished in contemplation and love of the Godhead, that there is not ever more a high and wonderful cloud of unknowing betwixt him and his God. In this cloud it was that Mary was occupied with many a privy love pressed. And why? Because it was the best and holiest part of contemplation that may be in this life, and from this part her list not remove for nothing. In-somuch that when her sister Martha complained to our Lord of her, and bade Him bid her sister rise and help her and let her not so work and travail by herself, she sat full still and answered not with one word nor shewed not as much as a grumbling against her sister for any plaint that she could make. And no wonder: for why, she had another work to do that Martha wist not of. And therefore she had no leisure to listen to her, nor to answer her at her plaint.

Lo! friend all these works, these words, and these gestures, that were shewed betwixt our Lord and these two sisters, be set an example of all actives and all contemplatives that have been since in Holy Church, and shall be to the day of doom. For by Mary is understood all contemplatives; for they should conform their living after hers. And by Martha, actives in the same manner; and for the same reason in likeness.

And right as Martha complained then on Mary her sister, right so yet unto this day all actives complain of contemplatives. For an there be a man or a woman in any company of this world, what company soever it be, religious or seculars — I out-take none—the which man or woman, whichever that it be, feeleth him stirred through grace and by counsel to forsake all outward business, and for to set him fully for to live contemplative life after their cunning and their conscience, their counsel according; as fast as their own brethren and their sister and all their next friends wit many other that know not their stirrings nor that manner of living that they set them to, with a great complaining spirit shall rise upon them, and say sharply unto them that it is nought that they do. And as fast as they will reckon up many false tales, and many true also, of falling

men and women that have given them to such life before: and never a good tale of them that stood.

I grant that many fall and have fallen of them that have in likeness forsaken the world. And where they should have become God's servants and His contemplatives, because that they would rule them by true ghostly counsel they have become the devil's servants and his contemplatives; and turned either to hypocrites or to heretics, or fallen into frenzies and many other mischiefs.



Spiritual Instructions

by Juan de Avila

[Culled from his letters]

If you wish to tread the beautiful paths of God, do not weigh yourself down with the earth and what is earthly, for the more you abandon and renounce for the sake of God, the more He shall give you out of His grace, and the greater the grace, the quicker you will be able to progress. The quicker you progress, the greater grows your yearning to renounce all in order to be able to advance still faster. If he who finds a hidden treasure in a field can go and sell everything in order to buy that field, what will he do who meets the infinite sweetness of God? Will he not abstain from all earthly food and fast and say from the very bottom of his heart, "*Deus cordis mei et pars mea Deus in aeternum*" ["God of my heart and God my part in eternity"]. Oh, rich part! Oh, part which is the whole! Oh, part compared with which everything else is but a tiny crumb! And where is he who would not be satisfied with Thee alone and would not wish to stand single and empty of all things, so that Thou mightest become his garment? Poor, so that Thou mightest become his riches? And even if people would make fun of him because of his having sold all his possessions in order to be able to buy that field, he will only feel pity and compassion for them and be glad to have entered into this bargain and to have renounced many burdens and offices in order to be able to follow God in a better way, to have bought a pearl which, taken by itself, is already worth more than everything he left, and of infinitely greater value than the whole world. . . .

Alas! that God has become so distant to us that we do not even feel Him any longer! David has said, "How could I give sleep to my

eyes and rest to my eye-lids before having found a house for the Lord?" And this house are we ourselves as soon as we do not lose ourselves in the manifoldness of things and do not become divided, but go and collect ourselves in one-pointed yearning and in the love of God. Then we find that we are of God, and are it too. I think the reason for our half-heartedness is, as somebody once said, that he who has not yet tasted God, neither knows what hunger means, nor what it means to have appeased one's hunger. That is why we feel no hunger for Him and have not yet become tired of creatures, being neither this nor that, neither hither nor thither, full of laziness and powerlessness and without joy in the things of God. It is nauseating, because He does not want any half-heartedness or half-hearted servants! but men who burn like fire! As He wishes that we burn, and has burnt himself and has been burnt on the Cross for that very reason!, so that we too may kindle our own fire with this Cross and return to so great and infinite a lover at least something, by understanding how right it is that we are hurt, as he himself was not only hurt, but died out of love. . .

.
 For the time being your principal practice should consist of asking others to help you with their criticisms and to go and collect yourself every evening and meditate, and this a little time before the "Ave Maria", confessing at the same time your own faults to the Lord.

Think with great attention and as strongly and intensively as possible, of death, as if you were dead already. Imagine yourself lying on the bed with burning candles and everything else; how after the departure of the soul the body remains lying there, is carried away and buried. Pay also great attention to the wailings and weeping of the others and to everything else that happens in the case of death. Imagine very definitely how your body is put under the earth, how it is being perforated by animals, how its bones are being gnawed, how they walk about on it and in it. And as all this is bound to happen, imagine it to have happened already and believe yourself to be dead in this world and dead to it from to-day onwards. Turn your back really to it and really expel every creature and ambition, every fear or shame, mercilessly from your heart. Live here as something unchangeable in the midst of all mutability and change, holding fast to the thought that everything is already past, and that you and all who see you, have been forgotten long

ago, and everything has come to an end, like water that has run away in joyful splashing. Above all, put away any thought relating to the body!

With this meditation you must keep yourself busy day by day from nightfall, for three or four hours, and then you must go and take a very light supper. Supper must be scanty and light, so that nothing heavy may hinder you in your practices under any circumstances afterwards. I urgently request you not to speak during the meal, but to keep perfect silence from nightfall till morning. After having taken a few mouthfuls, you should pray a little aloud, then read for some time and study deeply something that is helpful to you in your devotion to God and in sharpening your intellect. By that time it will be about half past ten. After that go and prepare yourself for sleep, and do this in such a way as others would prepare themselves for death. Gather your whole soul together in meditation, surrender it into the hands of the Lord and sleep a sleep as one sleeps in death. Begin with your sleep at eleven and sleep till six or half past six. After that meditate on some event in the life of the Lord, taking every day another one, so that your thought becomes fixed in its direction and can no longer roam about freely. Then occupy yourself for some time with prayer. After that study till meal-time, thus some hours, lifting your heart up to the Lord, while you are reading the text without any commentary whatever, pondering it yourself in case you do not feel any doubts.

After the meal rest your brain a little, for even if the millstone may appear to be doing nothing when it does not grind, there happens nevertheless quite a lot while it is being prepared for grinding. If your head needs a little sleep, give it a little, and afterwards make use of your afternoon by visiting the sick and dying, as this will be of very great profit to you.

Always listen to what you are being told by an experienced person in whom God dwells, and always do it dutifully. Then many things will become clear and definite to you in meditation and become clearly manifest to your mind. . . .

.
If the terrible illness of halfheartedness lasts for a long time, it is very dangerous. In case it has ever been your guest, never allow it to stay on for long. Every halfheartedness is a woman that goes on spending and spending and spending and never earning anything

and thus eats up the acquired fortune in no time, leaving the master in poverty. That is why he is much poorer in that case than he was before, and that God always in this case allows Him to fall into some deadly sin. If anybody fully realises the great harm of this terrible illness, he feels fear if it is only mentioned, and such fear that he goes and closes all the doors and windows very tightly and never lets her into his house under any circumstances.

The special means against this illness, as far as they concern prayer, meditation and contemplation, seem to me to be the following:— One should mix with all occupations the constant remembrance of God and of His presence which helps one in thinking of God. When you speak to somebody that he should renounce sin or do this or that what he should, be with him outwardly, but inwardly only with God. When you go along the street, do the same. And once you have developed one-pointed vision and only seek God in all occupations, you will find it very easy to collect yourself for meditation, without taking the pictures of things that occupy you, with you into it.

You can imagine a person sentenced to death, already having the knife at his throat, with what a burning longing he would implore his judge for grace!

It is also very helpful if you imagine yourself to be dying that very moment or already dead.

Further you should, before gathering yourself together, read a spiritual book and go through some other practices.

Also you should utter a few words aloud out of the love of your heart, which may tend to waken some good feeling in you, for this prayer uttered aloud is better, if it be intense and glowing, than lukewarm mental prayer.



A Song

by Simon Dach

*Wouldst thou inherit life with Christ on high?
Then count the cost and know that here on earth below
Thou needs must suffer with thy Lord and die.
We reach that gain to which all else is loss, but through
the cross.*

*Oh think what sorrows Christ Himself has known!
The scorn and anguish sore, the bitter death He bore,
Ere He ascended to His heavenly throne;
And deemest thou, thou canst with right complain,
whate'er thy pain?*

*Not e'en the sharpest sorrows we can feel,
Nor keenest pangs, we dare with that great bliss compare
When God His glory shall in us reveal,
That shall endure when our brief woes are over for
evermore!*



Sayings of Richard Rolle

A contemplative man is turned towards the unseen Light with so great a longing that men often consider him a fool, or mad, because his heart is so on fire with the love of Christ. Even his bodily appearance is changed and is so far removed from other men that it seems as if God's child were a lunatic.

**

There is no soul on earth, but either loves creatures or the Creator. If it loves the creature, it loses God and goes with the creature it loves to death.



ISLAMIC SUFISM

Purification

by Al-Hujwiri
from the *Kashf Al-Mahjub*

Purification is of two kinds: outward and inward. Thus prayer requires purification of the body and divine knowledge requires purification of the heart. As, in the former case, the water must be clean, so in the latter case unification must be pure and belief undefiled. The Sufis are always engaged in purification outwardly and in unification inwardly. The Apostle said to one of his companions: "Be constant in ablution, that thy two guardian angels may love thee," and God hath said: "God loves those who often repent and those who purify themselves." (Quran II, 222). And the Apostle used to say in his invocations: "O God, purify my heart from hypocrisy."

Even consciousness of the miraculous grace vouchsafed to him, he regarded as an affirmation of other than God, for in unification it is hypocrisy to affirm other than God. So long as a disciple's eye is obscured by a single atom of the miracles of the Shaykhs [spiritual teachers], from the standpoint of perfection that atom is a potential veil between him and God. Hence Abu Yazid said: "The hypocrisy of men of divine knowledge is better than the sincerity of disciples," that is, that which is a "station" to the novice is a veil to the adept. The novice desires to gain miracles, but the adept desires to gain the Giver of miracles. In short, the affirmation of miracles, or of anything that involves the sight of other than God, appears hypocrisy to the people of the Truth [Sufis]. Accordingly, what is noxious to the friends of God is a means of deliverance for all sinners, and what is noxious to sinners is a means of salvation for all infidels, because if infidels knew, as sinners know, that their sins are displeasing to God, they would all be saved from infidelity; and if sinners knew, as the friends of God know, that all their actions are defective, they would all be saved from sin and purged of contamination. Therefore, outward and inward purification must go together, that is, when a man washes his hands he must wash his heart clean of all worldliness, and when he puts water in his mouth he must purify his mouth from the mention of other than God, and when he washes his face he must turn away from all familiar objects and turn towards God, and when he wipes his head he must resign his affairs to God, and when he washes his feet he must not form the intention of taking his stand on anything except according to the command of God. Thus he will be doubly purified. In all religious ordinances the external is combined with the internal; for example, in faith, the tongue's profession with the heart's belief. The method of spiritual purification is to reflect and to meditate on the evil of this world and to perceive that it is false and fleeting and to make the heart empty of it. This result can be attained only by much self-mortification, and the most important act of mortification is to observe the external rules of discipline assiduously in all circumstances. It is related that Ibrahim Khawwas said: "I desire God to give me an everlasting life in this world in order that while mankind are engrossed in the pleasures of the world and forget God, I may observe the rules of religion amidst the affliction of the world and remember God." And it is related that Abu Tahir Harami lived forty years at Mecca and went outside of the sacred territory when-

ever he purified himself, because he would not pour the water which he had used for that purpose on ground that God had called His.

When Ibrahim Khawwas was ill of dysentery in the mosque at Rayy, he performed sixty complete ablutions in the course of a day and night, and he died in the water.

Abu All Rudbari was for some time afflicted with distracting thoughts in purification, "One day," he said, "I went into the sea at dawn and stayed there till sunrise. During that interval my mind was troubled. I cried out:— 'O God, restore me to spiritual health!'— A voice answered from the sea:— 'Health consists in knowledge!'"

It is related that when Sufyan Thawri was dying, he purified himself sixty times for one prayer and said:— "I shall at least be clean when I leave this world."

They relate of Shibli that one day he purified himself with the intention of entering the mosque. He heard a voice cry:— "Thou hast washed thy outward self, but where is thy inward purity?" He turned back and gave away all that he possessed, and during a year he put on no more clothes than were necessary for praying. Then he came to Jubayd, who said to him:— "O Abu Bakr, that was a very beneficial purification which you have performed; may God always keep you purified!" After that, Shibli engaged in continual purification.

When he was dying and could no longer purify himself, he made a sign to one of his disciples that he should purify him. The disciple did so, but forgot to let the water flow through his beard. Shibli was unable to speak. He seized his disciple's hand and pointed to the beard, whereupon the rite was duly performed. And it is also related of him that he said:— "Whenever I have neglected any rule of purification, some vain conceit has always arisen in my heart."

And Abu Yazid said:— "Whenever a thought of this world occurs to my mind, I perform a purification; and whenever a thought of the next world occurs to me, I perform a complete ablution." Because this world is non-eternal, and the result of thinking of it is legal impurity, whereas the next world is the place of absence and repose, and the result of thinking of it is pollution: hence legal impurity involves purification and pollution involves total ablution.

One day: Shibli purified himself. When he came to the door of

the mosque a voice whispered in his heart:— “Art thou so pure that thou enterest My House with this boldness?” He turned back, but the voice asked:— “Dost thou turn back from My door? Whither wilt thou go?” He uttered a loud cry. The voice said:— “Dost thou revile Me?” He stood silent. The voice said:— “Dost thou pretend to endure My affliction?” Shibli exclaimed:— “O God, I implore Thee to help me against Thyself!”

The Sufi Shaykhs have fully discussed the true meaning of purification, and have commanded their disciples not to cease from purifying themselves both outwardly and inwardly. He who would really serve God must purify himself outwardly with water, and he who would come nigh unto God must purify himself inwardly with repentance.



Whoever is wise esteems this mortal coil the obstacle to union with God. This life is the death of dervishes [spiritual men]; look on the world of Reality as a friend. —Azizi—



A King said to a holy man, “Dost thou ever remember me?” “Yes,” he answered, “whenever I forget my God.” —Saadi—



Some of the saints are without a mark and without an attribute, and the perfection of a state and the utmost degree to which saints may attain is to be without an attribute and without a mark. It is said, “He who has no mark, his mark are WE.” —Jami—



Like the azure heavens, a sage never dies. The intellectual principle is free from storms and from all that is perishable.
—The Dabistan—



God created all things good and evil; but evil is non-existence, a departure from the only Absolute Existence. In relation to God, evil is naught. —Anon.—



The Task and the End of Spiritual Life

[Notes of Class-Talks]
by Swami Yatiswarananda

An old story

Do you know the story of the monk who was molested by rats? There was a monk who was continually troubled by rats. So some kind people, meaning well, brought him a cat to catch or drive away the rats. Now, naturally, the poor monk had to feed the cat and needed milk, and as it was rather difficult for him to get it always, he decided on getting a cow. He did so, but another difficulty offered itself to him. The cow had to be fed. So people told him: Why not have a field? Finding this advice very reasonable he bought a field, but after a short time he found out that the field had to be tilled for raising fodder for the cow. And this meant quite a lot of work which he could not do alone. So he had to engage servants, etc. Thus in due course, he became an out-and-out worldly man. One desire just breeds another, till in the end they have become innumerable and can no longer be controlled.

How to pacify the mind

Filling the brain with all sorts of useless and impure thoughts, making the mind a chaos instead of making it pure and systematic, we have lost all capacity to think in a dispassionate and consistent manner without considering our own selfish interest. We have very many ideas, even good ideas, but we have not the capacity of thinking them in a definite order and in a detached and dispassionate way. Very often we go on thinking and thinking the same thought time and again in a mechanical way, but all this is useless. If you want the mind to be pacified, you must go through a series of meditations in a definite way. At the beginning, have fixed hours and manage to have some quiet time every day. Do not mix with worldly people too much. First rid yourself of the too many different thought-currents which are warring against one another in your mind. Otherwise you can never maintain a balanced and dispassionate mood. Dispassion, true dispassion, is so very necessary for all spiritual progress, for facing the problems of life as they are, not as we would wish them to be, and for finding solutions for them. The whole thought-structure must be overhauled and reformed. We have been living on empty dreams, created by our desires, and

when the whole edifice comes toppling down, we are left standing in the road without any help.

Through meditation, the mind becomes stronger and clearer. It comes to regard the Spirit as more real than the world, and slowly develops a kind of very strong non-attachment to everything. The will is also to be strengthened systematically. Intelligence is to be developed, the mind must be purified and our sentiments and feelings must be chastened. We must have a definite system of spiritual culture, whereas most people have nothing of the kind to follow. They just drift through life on their emotions and impulses. In spiritual life everything has to be systematised. One must maintain the true spirit without becoming mechanical.

“Gurus may be had by hundreds of thousands but it is very hard to find a disciple.” Very few care to follow the Path. A few are really sincere. Scarcely any one wishes to be on his guard and avoid contact with impure people, which is harmful. We even find pleasure in such contact, instead of avoiding it. So for most of us there can be no real spiritual life. Out of thousands of people there may be one or two who really care to lead the higher life. It does not matter whether we attain to the goal in this life or not. The principal thing is to struggle, to become a man, to sacrifice everything if need be for the sake of realising our goal.

“Without doubt, the mind is restless and difficult to control, but through practice and renunciation it may be brought under restraint. Yoga is hard to be attained by one of uncontrolled self. Such is My conviction, but the self-controlled man, striving by right means, attains it.” —Bhagavad-Gita—

How to minimise doubt

If we really desire to live the higher life we should take the help of those who are leading it, not of moth-eaten books merely. Hence we are asked, time and again, to follow in their footsteps. *“This Atman cannot be realised through the study of the Scriptures, neither through the intellect, nor through mere talks,”* proclaim the Upanishads.

Doubt is a very great danger and can obstruct all progress in spiritual life, because doubt comes to all beginners at certain times. Doubt means a lack of faith in oneself and also a lack of faith in the Divine Being, but we cannot rid ourselves completely of doubt be-

fore having attained to realisation. Doubt will crop up again and again, but it should never be allowed to overpower us or to make us waver in our decision to live the spiritual life. And here too, in the case of doubt, holy company is very essential. By seeing the way such people live, by seeing their life and their actions, doubt becomes minimised.

How is this Atman to be realised? *“You must hear of It, you must think deeply on It, and then you must meditate on It,”* says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

“This Atman is to be realised by following the Path of Truth, by leading a greatly disciplined life, through right knowledge and perfect chastity.”

External and internal solitude

Our ideal should be not so much external solitude, but the inward solitude that we must be able to create in our mind wherever we are. This inward solitude is of great importance in spiritual life. Make the mind more and more indrawn, give it a glimpse of the real solitude and make it practise that at all times, at least to some extent.

Prepare the mind through great purity of thought, word and deed, and then begin to lead an intense spiritual life. Solitude is not something negative, neither is dispassion or renunciation. We want to be left alone with God and not with anybody else. We wish to be not in the company of other beings, but in the company of the Divine at the time of meditation and spiritual practice. Merge yourself in God, and then there will only be one, wherever you be.

Danger of concentration

In a way we make the mind concentrated, but then we do not know how to manipulate it. This concentrated mind may run after sensual enjoyment and all sorts of worldly distractions and objects with all the greater intensity for having become concentrated. So if we do not know how to manipulate it in the right way, it becomes a great danger. It is better not to have concentration if one does not attain an amount of mental purification at the same time. Therefore, the aspect of purity, of non-attachment and chastity in thought, word and deed has to be stressed so much. There should not be any misunderstanding as to this fact. Without sublimation of all our desires and feelings we cannot progress in the spiritual path, and if

we do not follow a strict code of ethics and morals, we should never even make an attempt at concentration. The concentrated mind that is not purified becomes a veritable demon. The fulfilment of all these ethical and moral conditions is absolutely necessary, and without it all forms of spiritual practice become extremely dangerous and harmful and may lead to a nervous collapse. If you do not follow this code strictly and go in for spiritual practice in spite of that, you may also go mad. Therefore, never underrate the danger. If certain attachments and associations are not resolutely given up once and for all with an effort of the will, no spiritual practice can bring any illumination worth the name.

The general rule is: If you have some worldly desire to fulfil, never pray for its fulfilment after you have begun your spiritual practices and meditation. First the desire must be renounced through discrimination. Then spiritual practice can be begun. It is very troublesome to have a concentrated mind and not to be able to make proper use of it. It is good to have a devil's strength and will-power, but it is not good to use these as a devil. We must know how to manipulate the concentrated mind. I do not even wish people to practise concentration before they have already attained to a certain purification of the body and the mind. It is so very dangerous and very often people just play with fire. They turn deaf ears to what they are told and then suffer the consequences.

Sufferings and spiritual life

There is a very fine Bengali song by one of the greatest poets which purports to say :

Lord grant me the strength to bear Thy standard since Thou hast been pleased to give it to me. Give me the devotion to bear the great pain that is unavoidable in Thy service.

I do not want even to get rid of this gift of suffering that Thou art giving me with Thine own hands. This misery will be my crest-jewel if with it Thou givest me also devotion to Thee. Give me work as much as Thou likest if Thou dost not allow me to forget Thee, nor allow my heart to get itself caught in the entanglements of the world.

If Thou wishest, do Thou bind me as much as Thou likest, but keep my heart open to Thee. Do Thou not allow me to forget Thee on any account.

Everyone has to pass through the fire of suffering. It is neces-

sary as a training. The will is to be subjugated, to be controlled, to be burnt, as it were, in the furnace. If you are prepared to do this, then take to spiritual life. If you are not, if there is the very least idea of bargaining in you, if you do not wish to make any sacrifice for the sake of the ideal, do not go even near it, but do and live as you please. There is no half-way house in higher spiritual life. For a time you will have to be between the anvil and the hammer. When the iron has become crooked, it is to be softened in the furnace and then hammered on the anvil. Only then can it take the right shape. The general rule is:— Let us be bold and never cowardly. Let us have troubles. Let us have untold miseries. Let us have unspeakable sufferings, but let us face all these boldly, remain unaffected and move towards the goal.

There is another beautiful song speaking in the following strain:—

O Lord, if the door of my heart be kept closed to Thee, do Thou break it open and come to me. Pray do not go away from me.

If any day the strings of my heart do not vibrate with Thy sweet Name, pray, wait standing, but do not go away from me.

If any day I place someone else on Thy seat in my heart, O Thou, my eternal King, do not go away from me.

If any day my sleep does not break at Thy call, do Thou awake me with the blast and pain of the thunderbolt, but pray, do not go away from me.

Passages for Meditation

“The Atman is one. It is absolutely motionless, yet swifter than the mind in its movements. It transcends all and hence the senses cannot reach it. It is perfectly steady and still. It outstrips all that run. In It does the vital energy sustain all the activity of living beings. It is ever moving and yet immutable. It is far and It is at the same time near. It dwells within all and yet It exists also outside everything. The wise one who perceives all objects as existing in the Atman, his own SELF, and the Atman in every being, does not hate anyone for this reason. When to the seer all things appear as nothing but the Atman, then what delusion, what sorrow can come to the

sage who sees that Oneness?”

“The SELF is all-pervading, self-resplendent, formless, scatheless, muscleless, pure, unaffected by ignorance. He is the real Knower, Omniscient, Transcendent and Uncreated.”

This SELF — our true Divine Being — is to be realised. We have forgotten It through ignorance. So this ignorance is to be removed through meditations and prayers.

“Under the cover of a golden brilliance the face of Truth lies hidden. Do Thou, O Protector, remove this cover so that I who am devoted to Truth may realise It.”

—Upanishads—

Divine Discontent

We must rouse a tremendous Divine discontent, the discontent the mystics of all ages speak of. Unless we are able to rouse in the soul this Divine discontent that drives us towards God, spiritual life cannot begin. This discontent destroys all our attachments to worldly things and desires.

There can never be any real peace in the world, though we must play our part in it as well as we can. There must never be any kind of slackness in our striving, nor any kind of satisfaction with our state of bondage. Such forms of satisfaction are very dangerous for all spiritual aspirations. We must consciously keep up the fire of hankering and yearning for the Higher Life. We must never waste our energies for anything lower. We must never prefer the peace of lethargy to this restlessness for spiritual achievement.

There can be no security unless we have already proceeded very far towards the ultimate goal. Any devotee may come to grief, or have a nasty fall at any moment before he has attained to self-realisation. So we should never risk too much relying on our own strength before having advanced considerably.

Spiritual practice and prayer are needed. Constant prayer, day and night, constant meditation, constant thinking of higher thoughts, if we can do so. The mind of the beginner must be kept constantly busy with the Divine idea so as to create the habit. After having created the right habit, the path becomes smoother and there is less strain in the life of the spiritual aspirant.

The only ultimate proof for everything is direct perception. If there be a God at all, He must be seen. He must be felt. Mere the-

orizing will never do. We have to believe in the words of those who have seen Him, we have to follow in their footsteps and then verify their experience in our own lives. Mere faith won't do, although it is necessary in the beginning. And, as Swami Vivekananda used to say, if anybody tells you, "I have seen God, but **you** cannot do so," never believe such a person. All can see Him, although it may take years and years, lives after lives, till we get the vision of God.

"O Lord, when will Thy Name cause streams of tears to flow from my eyes and my voice be choked with Thy Divine Love!

"One moment to me is like an age, my eyes are flooded with tears, the whole world is a void to me,— all this because of the separation from Thee."

The task of Yoga

In Gaudapada's Karika on the *Mandukya-Upanishad* we find:—

As belief in the unreal attaches the mind to the unreal, knowledge of absolute non-evolution frees it from relativity and turns it away from the unreal. (IV, 79) .

In SAT, Being, there can be no question of evolution or involution at all, and becoming is only true on the relative plane, and even then all becoming must have an end somewhere, and it must one day end in Being. Seen from the highest standpoint, evolution is a myth, but the idea of evolution serves its purpose for a time on the relative plane. Our great thinkers were very thoroughgoing in everything they taught. They were not afraid of Truth and what it implies.

The Vedantin of the Advaita [Non-dualistic] school knows there is no evolution in reality. What is real cannot evolve. What is permanent and unchanging cannot evolve. So Being alone is real, and nothing that pertains to change or to evolution is real. There is never a break in the soul's consciousness, although the soul's consciousness may be clouded by Avidya [ignorance] and caught in all kinds of untruths.

The state of spiritual experience is not unconsciousness. It is something positive. It must have a positive content. It must never be negative, and it is the very opposite of inertness. Falling below the level of consciousness to the subliminal plane is not spiritual experience. Very often this point is misunderstood and hopelessly distorted, especially by persons of a certain class who do not know

what they are talking about.

In the state of spiritual experience, the SELF becomes conscious of Itself as It is. At other times It is identified with all the different modifications of the mind. And it is the task in Yoga to separate one's true SELF from these modifications. The SELF is something that is utterly distinct from the body and the mind, and the SELF, as such, knows neither evolution nor involution, nor any becoming, nor development. It is very wrong to say that that which is real can evolve, because evolution means change, and anything that can undergo any change can never be real.

What we have to attain is Brahman-Consciousness [Absolute Consciousness] as distinct from Jiva-Consciousness [individualised Consciousness]. But in the spiritual path there are some dangers which we have to meet, and one of them is to identify ourselves with the causal state of our personality or with the Anandamaya-Kosa, the sheath of bliss, as it is called, which is not the ultimate reality, but which makes us feel happy and elated.

“Brahman is the self-conscious Principle that animates everything. It is the ear of the ear, the eye of the eye, the mind of the mind, the source of all vital energy. Knowing thus, the wise give up all false identification of the SELF with the senses and the mind, etc., etc., and become immortal.”

“It is never perceived by the eye, nor by speech, nor by the mind. We know It not, nor do we see It. How to teach one about It? It is different from all that are manifest and known, and is beyond even all that are Unmanifest and unknown. Thus have we heard from the ancient seers who explained this to us.”

“What none can comprehend by the mind, but by which the mind can be comprehended, what none can see with the eyes, but by which the function of the eye can be seen, know that alone as Brahman and not that which people worship here.”

— (Upanishads)—

People who have many attachments, who are not comparatively free from them, cannot really care for the teachings of Vedanta, nor for the teachings of Christ. Such people do not like any spiritual teaching at all, because all the Great Ones have preached non-at-

tachment and stressed sacrifice for the sake of the Ideal as the only way. For people who do not lead a moral, pure, controlled and non-attached life, the teachings of Christ as well as of Vedanta are absolutely useless. Such persons can never realise the spiritual goal. They have to go away sad at heart, like the youth who came to Christ to ask Him what he should do. The young man was asked to leave the way of the world and follow the path of God. He was not able to do that. And so he could not follow the words of Christ and had to go away in sadness.

IN but not OF the world

For spiritual culture the most essential thing is a healthy mind, a pure mind, that has not become perverted, that still has the capacity to strive after realisation.

It is not possible for us to take up each individual desire and rid ourselves of it. No, a general, pitiless massacre is necessary. When we turn to the Divine, allow Him to light the Divine Light in us, all darkness will vanish at once. Then He Himself appears on the battlefield and fights for us. The Lord does His work, but we must also do our part so long as we have our individuality or are still conscious of being individuals. We have to give up all bodily and worldly desires. We have to renounce all attachments and all activities concerning these attachments.

That is the only way by which you can rid yourself of the troubles and miseries of life and the darkness that is shrouding you from the light. Allow Him to bring about your transformation, to give you the capacity to follow the Higher Life. Pay no more heed to the world than is absolutely necessary. You are always in the world, whether you live in the monastery or outside the monastery. You cannot run away from the world. But you must never allow the world to absorb your whole attention and energy.

The energy at your disposal, physical as well as mental, is so very limited that you have to use it for spiritual purposes and not waste it away in the world and for the world. This, no doubt, means a tremendous struggle, but you have to pass through it. There is no comfortable short-cut. Try to be in tune with the Cosmic Power, and then this Cosmic Power works through you. This process is to be a conscious one, not an unconscious one as it usually is.

The mental world is infinitely vaster than this gross world. When

we catch a glimpse of the glory of this inner world of thoughts, the external world and all its attachments lose all charm for us. But first of all we must prepare ourselves thoroughly in order to get access into this inner world of ours.

The three Gunas — The Bhagavad-Gita (XIV, 5-8) says :

Sattva, Rajas and Tamas,— these Gunas, born of Prakriti [Nature], bind fast in the body the indestructible embodied one.

Of these, Sattva, from its stainlessness, luminous and free from evil, binds by attachment to happiness and by attachment to knowledge.

Know Rajas to be of the nature of passion, giving rise to thirst and attachment; it binds fast the embodied one by attachment to action.

And know Tamas to be born of ignorance, stupefying all embodied beings; it binds fast by miscomprehension, indolence and sleep.

Ordinarily we are the creatures of our moods. But if we sincerely wish to follow the spiritual path, we must stop being creatures of our moods. We must gain perfect mastery over them.

“Guna” means “rope” or that which binds the soul. The soul is caught in the meshes of these Gunas.

The state beyond Gunas

Spiritual life should not be something abstract; neither should it be egocentric. We should try to be cosmocentric. We should be conscious not of the point only, but of the whole circle in which “we live, and move, and have our being.” (Acts 17.28)

The task of the spiritual aspirant should be to attain the balanced state and, at the same time, to have his eye on that which is beyond the balanced state.

The secret lies in making ourselves cosmocentric. We are all parts or expressions of the Infinite Being and Consciousness. We must hold on to the anchor of our Being. If we do not, we shall be tossed again and again by the waves of delusion. If we do, then in the very depths of our mind there will always be a real calmness and balance. The storms and battling waves can only touch the uppermost layers of our mind, but never again disturb it completely.

If we are not able to bring about a transformation in the whole organism, even Sattvika [pure] food is of no use to us. The body of Sri Ramakrishna was too Sattvika to be able to assimilate any impure food. But mere physical food will never transform us. If the food I take through my eyes, my ears, my touch etc., etc., be not pure, the purity of the material physical food I eat will be of little use. Spiritual life is not to be found in the kitchen-pot, nor in mere eating and drinking.

Our goal is to attain the transcendental state of consciousness beyond the Gunas or relativity. We should first know it theoretically, but once having known it thus, we should busy ourselves with the path and not so much with speculation as to the wonderful nature of Truth. If it is to have any effect, Vedanta must be made practical. Theories, wonderful thought-structures, as such, have no value in life. They just form one more of the innumerable delusions we cherish so much in the world.

The Gunas, standing for dullness, restlessness and balance, are like rungs of a ladder leading to the terrace. The indolent person must become active, the active person must become pure and balanced. And Sattva, purity, is the topmost rung of the ladder leading to the Truth, but not Truth as It is. Our purity must lead us to God-realisation. Attaining to the Divine means going beyond all the Gunas. Our goal should be to realise the Divine within ourselves and then to realise Him in all others also. The ideal man is he who is not bound by any of the Gunas, who has known God, who remains always indifferent to all actions of the Gunas. Then, by getting rid of the evil tendencies with the help of purer thoughts, the spiritual seeker is able to get a glimpse of Truth, transcending even Sattva, and then later on comes down, he can come down only to the topmost rung of the ladder, and not to the lower ones. There he remains in the state of Sattva or purity, thinking and doing what is pure, and contributes to the welfare of all.

The sum and end of life is freedom of the soul from the ever-recurring bondage of births and deaths, freedom from the useless toils and troubles of the world, and the ultimate and final attainment of peace. The realisation of the SELF is the only way to perfect freedom. At the very end of the journey, the spiritual seeker attains peace — peace “*that passeth understanding*”. One who is “freed in this very life” promotes the welfare of the world by his living exam-

ple, both in activity and silence.



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



**We wish all our readers a happy Christmas
 and a bright and prosperous New Year.**

Manin Sur, St.Moritz (Engadine), Switzerland.