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### **Editorial : Scriptures and Spiritual Life**

**Swami Dayatmananda**

One day Sri Ramakrishna was listening to the reading of the Bhagavata in front of the Vishnu temple. He went into ecstasy and had the vision of Sri Krishna's luminous form. He saw that a beam of light like a cord came out of Sri Krishna's lotus feet and touched the book, whence it touched the Master's heart and remained simultaneously touching all the three of them for some time. There arose from that vision the firm conviction in his mind that, although the three, viz., the scripture, the devotee and the divine Lord, appear as different entities, they are one and the same thing; in other words, they are manifestations of the same Reality.

Thenceforward Sri Ramakrishna used to chant everyday: "Bhagavata, Bhakta; Bhagavan, meaning "The three - the Bhagavata (the scripture), the Bhakta (the devotee) and the Bhagavan (the divine Lord) - are One and the One is the three." (Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master)

#### **Scriptures and religions**

The foundation and life-breath of every religion is scriptures or holy books. They play a most significant role in society in general and among spiritual aspirants in particular. They mould the lives of spiritual seekers, inspiring, guiding and exhorting them until they reach the goal of life, i.e. God-realisation. The moment these scriptures are taken away religions simply cease to exist, and without religion society slumps into chaos. This is the reason why some religions even worship a scripture as the highest form of God.

**What is a scripture?**

The scriptures are not human constructs. They are the records of the experiences of sages and saints who had direct realisation of the Ultimate Reality. Only the scriptures can reveal the truth about God, after-life, and other worlds; for these truths are unavailable to the ordinary sense organs. Hence we have no option but to put our faith in the scriptures.

It is a psychological fact that we can only desire what we know. So how can we desire spiritual life without knowing about it? And without desiring the highest, life becomes joyless and barren. That is why we are advised to study scriptures daily.

### **Scriptures and faith**

The scriptures contain nothing but truth. They only speak of God and the after-life. Hence regular and devout study of the scriptures fosters faith, and faith inspires us to lead a pure and holy life. Negligence of the study of scriptures slowly but surely erodes our faith in God, moral life and ultimate justice. Without deep faith one cannot pursue spiritual life. Any one can verify the truth of this statement. Stop reading the scriptures for a few days and you will discover that gradually your faith also becomes weak.

### **Saints and scriptures**

When asked by Swami Shivananda, the then President of the Ramakrishna Order, what he was doing, a monk informed him that he was reading the Upanishads. In reply the Swami said: "What will you gain by reading the Upanishads? Study our lives." The Swami, of course, is not denigrating the study of the scriptures. He is merely indicating that the life of a saint is a living and moving scripture.

Scriptures contain essentials and non-essentials. It is easy to confuse one with the other. Also the scriptures contain seemingly contradictory statements. This is because they have to speak to different types of aspirants. Inability to understand this may lead to confusion and harm. Misinterpretation of the scriptures can also lead to fanaticism and evil. But if one can learn scriptures from a spiritual person one can get the essence. That is why one is advised to seek and study scriptures under a competent spiritual teacher.

### **Scriptures as the best form of holy company**

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that a spiritual aspirant must cultivate holy company. One of the best ways to cultivate holy company is a daily study of the scriptures with devotion. Especially these days when genuine spiritual persons are rare to come by, the best way is to keep holy books nearby. And holy books are available in millions.

The Taittiriya Upanishad repeatedly warns its students not to neglect regular study of the scriptures. The Upanishad equates the study of scriptures with austerity and exhorts the students not to neglect scriptural studies no less than thirteen times!!

### **What do the scriptures teach?**

Every scripture must teach these following five truths: the nature of God, the nature of the individual soul, the goal of life, the way to the attainment of this goal, the various obstructions that bar us from reaching it and ways of overcoming them.

### **The way to study scriptures**

It is unwise to read scriptures in any way one likes. They must be read for Truth and guidance, and not for intellectual stimulation. In fact, the intellect can never grasp the Truth of Reality. When a spiritual aspirant practises spiritual disciplines sincerely and with devotion a special capacity called Medha, which enables him to understand spiritual truths, arises in

him. So one of the Vedic Peace Chants says: “May what we both study reveal the Truth!”

The Imitation of Christ also advises us: “Look for truth in the Bible; not eloquence. Every verse should be read in the spirit with which it was written. If you want to make your Scripture reading worthwhile, read with humility, simplicity, and faith.”

### **Can we get along without scriptures?**

If one is pure and endowed with intense yearning for God-realisation it is not necessary to read scriptures. Sri Ramakrishna is an example. Otherwise there is a great danger in pursuing spiritual life without the guidance and instructions of the scriptures. So Sri Krishna warns us in the Bhagavad Gita: “He who, setting aside the ordinance of the scriptures, acts under impulses of desire, attains neither perfection nor happiness nor the supreme goal. So let the scriptures be your authority for ascertaining what ought to be done and ought not to be done.”

### **Benefits of reading scriptures**

Swami Shivananda says: “The scriptures, the devotee and the Lord - these three are identical. It is excellent to study the scriptures as a matter of daily duty; for it constitutes a form of spiritual exercise.”

The scriptures inspire us in many ways to go ahead. When we come across people who have realized the supreme goal of life and have thereby become a blessing unto themselves and unto humanity at large, we are also inspired to go that way.

The scriptures instruct us in the various ways of realizing God. They also warn of the dangers and pitfalls. Scriptures do not talk about God alone. They also give us knowledge of the deeper layers of the mind and its functions. We get insight into our own and other minds. Thus they help us avoid many a problem in life. Scriptures inspire us with faith, devotion, dispassion and detachment from the world.

## **Conversations With Swami Turiyananda**

### **Swami Raghavananda**

#### **December 5**

Swami Turiyananda: “When I used to meditate in Sri Ramakrishna’s presence, I experienced a sensation in my spine and would feel an energy rising. The body was like a desert land. The guru gave the holy name of God, and through its power the desert was transformed into a beautiful flower garden. Life was aimless. Since the guru touched me I have had an ideal to live for.

“As long as your mind dwells on anything other than God, you cannot become a knower of Brahman. ‘Realize that pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat - all are one and the same. Then go into battle. Do this, and you cannot commit sin.’ Do you know why people

commit sin? A worldly man won't stop at anything in order to gain some selfish end. But when a man becomes selfless, he remains unchanged in pleasure and in pain. If we can renounce the sense of ego, then only do we overcome misery. Blessed is he who is happy in his renunciation. He finds joy in doing things for others.

“The householder also has to renounce eventually. ‘By renunciation alone immortality is attained.’ The object of passing through married life is gradually to learn self-control, and then to renounce altogether.

“Sri Ramakrishna used to pray: ‘Mother, may these children of mine surpass me in spirituality.’ There is a saying: ‘Welcome defeat at the hands of the son or disciple.’

“When I was twelve or thirteen years old I saw Sri Ramakrishna, my future guru and Chosen Ideal, getting down from a carriage. He was reeling with divine intoxication. He reminded me of what I had read about Sukadeva - how some worshipped him with flowers and he was smiling, while others threw stones at him and he was smiling.

“When I was practicing austerities at Langal, I became very ill. I was suffering from the last stage of anemia. But I was not anxious whether the body would survive or not. My mind was so absorbed in God that I did not care. Through the Lord's grace I experienced many spiritual truths. Now, it seems, they are hidden.

“Try to surrender yourselves to God, and He will do everything for you. God and man - there is a separation. Let your tears wipe out that separation. He will take you to himself. He is like a magnet drawing iron filings. Man does not feel God's attraction because of his evil deeds. ‘How hard to break through is this My Maya, made of the gunas. But he who takes refuge in Me only shall pass beyond Maya.’ So you see, everybody can take refuge in God and attain supreme illumination. Then why don't people do it? ‘The evil-doers turn not toward Me. These are deluded...’

“What is samadhi? It is to raise the vital energy upward.

“There are some great souls who are not concerned with their own happiness or suffering, but keep themselves busy doing good to others.

“Meditation has to become natural. This means that the presence of the Lord is immediately felt in the mind, and He appears living, speaking.

“Swamiji was an example of loyalty to his guru. There was power in Swamiji's words because his heart and lips were one. He always held firmly to the truth.

“Craving for enjoyment has to be fulfilled, otherwise seeds of desire remain.”

The spiritual conversations which follow were given for the greatest part in the ashrama at Almora in the Himalayas, in the year 1915. Although Swami Turiyananda addressed them to monks, who used to come to him for informal gatherings, these talks on the religious life will be of interest to all spiritual seekers, who may recognize in them the inspiration which stems from personal realization of the Divine.

## **December 15**

Swami Turiyananda: “Don't fritter your days away without an ideal. Always keep your ideal before your mind's eye and analyze how far you are progressing towards it.”

## **December 16**

Swami Turiyananda: "I never depend on any man. My only refuge is the Lord. If I were to depend on anyone, I would have to be afraid of him. I would rather put a knife to my throat than be afraid of a man. But the Lord always protects me; He does not let me depend on anyone but Himself.

"How to reach union with God? It becomes possible if for some time one can keep the mind absorbed in him. That is to say, your mind has to be raised to the plane where God dwells; then you will see Him. Don't let your mind think of anything but God. If you don't talk, don't study any books, but keep your mind continuously in the Lord, then very soon you will be united with Him. But every individual's spiritual realizations are limited by his capacity. He can go so far in one life and no farther."

The Swami mentioned a boy whom he had seen only for a short time, and said that it would not be possible for him to progress any more in this life.

Swami Turiyananda: "It is not so easy to become a holy man. The ego must be annihilated. When it comes to receiving, be the last; but when it comes to giving, be the first."

### **December 20**

Swami Turiyananda: "You must love the Lord. You may say, I don't know how to love Him. But surely we know how to love! We love objects; we love riches; we love honor - all these things we know how to love.

"If your mind dwells in God, He dwells in your mind. If you are indifferent to Him, He also will be indifferent to you. If you call on Him, He will remove all the obstacles in your path.

"Devotees do not pray for the vision of God. They only ask for devotion; they want to love Him. Whether He reveals himself or not they leave to his sweet will. Arjuna prayed to Sri Krishna: 'If you find me worthy of that vision, then reveal to me, O Master of yogis, your changeless Atman.'

"Do we really want God? We may think so, but our minds are somewhere else. Yet sometimes God awakens that desire for Him in us. Have you ever become absorbed in meditation, forgetful of everything else, even of yourself? As long as you are not able to become absorbed in God, find out what the obstacles or distractions are. Struggle against them, and no matter where your mind wanders, keep watch over it. Do we really want God? You have renounced the world, no doubt. But why? Because you felt that there was suffering in the world. We are just seeking our own comfort. Where is that yearning? 'If my mind does not become absorbed in the lotus feet of the guru, life itself is in vain.'"

### **December (date unknown)**

Swami Turiyananda: "There is a type of nondualism which does not believe that the creation is real. According to this school of thought the universe never has existed, does not now exist, and never will exist. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that this kind of philosophy can only be practiced in a mountain cave. It is to meditate on the true nature of the Atman.

"Sri Ramakrishna did not allow everybody to practice the nondual aspect of meditation. What good is it to proclaim that you are one with the Absolute unless the universe has vanished from your consciousness? Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'You may say that there is no thorn, but put your hand out - the thorn will prick, and your hand will bleed.' But with regard to Swamiji, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'If Naren says that there is no thorn, there is no thorn; and if he puts out his hand no thorn would prick it, because he has experienced his unity with Brahman.' When Swamiji used to say, 'I am He,' he said so from his direct perception of the Absolute. His mind was not identified with his physical self.

“Generally, people are fully convinced of the reality of this world; only with their lips they assert that it is unreal. The owner and his garden, the Creator and his creation - thus should they look upon God and his universe with the attitude of devotees.

“But there are some individuals who practice the ideal of union with Brahman and don’t talk about it. A gentleman does not go about announcing that he is a gentleman.

“There is a state of attainment which we find mentioned in the Gita: ‘He knows bliss in the Atman and wants nothing else.’ How can there be any pride when one has experienced the illumined knowledge of God? A spiritual aspirant should try to feel that he is already liberated.

“‘I have no other refuge but God.’ This must be our attitude. But how difficult it is! The rascal ego keeps cropping up. Only when we have received blow after blow, the ego perhaps loses its hold on us.

“The control of the passions is a necessary practice of austerity, but genuine control does not come until one has the knowledge of God. When one has attained union with Him the mind no longer runs after flesh; the craving has completely disappeared. ‘The abstinents run away from what they desire. They carry their desires with them. When a man enters Reality, he leaves his desires behind him.’

“The root of religion is to have firm faith that there is a Reality behind this world of appearance. As long as a man is in ignorance and still asserts that he is one with the Absolute, he actually identifies himself with his own ego, not with Brahman. He does not know that there is a Reality beyond his little self. He is really a sort of atheist.

“In spiritual life, through the practice of meditation and prayer there comes first a feeling of the presence of God. Then arises the struggle to reach him.

“All men are slaves to nature. Some have a natural tendency toward inertia, others toward activity. Nature makes us helpless, and helplessly under her rule we sometimes act, sometimes become silent and lazy, and sometimes go to sleep. Nature controls us instead of we controlling nature. It is just as if a minister had usurped the king’s throne. I used to weep and pray that I would not remain under the control of nature. First be a witness to the workings of nature. Then try to realize the Reality that is beyond nature.

“From my boyhood on I used to feel that a power was always protecting me, just as a child, learning to walk, is protected by its mother. I felt that I would fall if it were not for that protection behind me.

“What people call conscience or the voice of God is the power of the guru. As a general rule, people make the mistake of killing their conscience, otherwise this power would guide everybody.

“Be true to yourself, then you will attain everything. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘Make your lips and your heart the same.’ That is to say, be sincere in every way. It is difficult to be sincere, but people think it is very easy.”

## January 21

Swami Turiyananda: “There are three steps to spiritual realization: hearing the truth, reasoning upon the truth, and meditating on the truth. What is hearing the truth like? It is like listening to music as the deer does, fascinated by it. He is completely unaware of the hunter aiming at him. To meditate on the truth is to become absorbed - like the legendary cockroach, which gives up its own nature and becomes a caterpillar by constantly thinking of

a caterpillar.

“Meditate! Meditate, and you will reach spiritual heights. You see, we (the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna) have attained our state through meditation. Constant meditation is going on within us; this means that the current of our minds and our will is in Him. While I am talking to you, the meditation continues. Each one of us is bound to Him. We have no life apart from the Lord. He who is earnest is sure to become united with Him.

“I have met some holy men in my life who are very learned, but they never show their learning. Outwardly they live like ignorant men.

“When a monk goes out for alms, he has to show some of his learning and power, like a prostitute. To live on alms is a sort of profession. And you have to accept alms as if you were like anybody else.

“How to live the life of a monk is beautifully explained by Manu in the sixth chapter of his book. One is charmed by his teachings: ‘A holy man should live outside of a village. He should only go out for alms in the afternoon. He should always chant the name of the Lord. While walking, his mind should be absorbed in a spiritual mood. He should not speak with anyone. After receiving alms he should return to his hut.’

“A holy man is he who does not keep his senses engaged in objects; he has transcended them.

“We are much indebted to Gopal Da (Swami Advaitananda), because we learned the secret of work from him. He was organized and concentrated in everything he did. And he was very methodical in his habits. Until his last day he regularly practiced meditation.”

(to be continued)

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## Inheritance

John Phillips

This is a translation of a poem by the great German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

No being can decay to nought!

The Eternal continues in all things.

Keep yourself blessed just by being!

Being is eternal: laws

Preserve the living treasure,

With which the whole is but bedecked.

The Truth long ago was found,  
Reached with noble spirit bound;  
Seize upon that old truth!  
Give thanks, O son of earth, to the wise men  
Who showed the way to circle the sun  
And all your fellow beings.

Look straight away within yourself  
There you will the Centre find,  
Of which no noble man may doubt.  
You will not miss any rule therein:  
For your very conscience is  
The sun for all your morals.

You then have but to trust your thought;  
It will not look for long at fault,  
If your mind keeps you alert,  
With a fresh look gladly notice  
And wander onward safe and sound  
Through meadows of this world!

Enjoy moderate plenty and blessings.  
Reason is everywhere present,  
Where life enjoys life!  
For the past is dead.  
The future yet to be lived and  
The present moment is eternity.

And if you finally succeed,  
And if you with the feeling full:  
That which is fruitful, that alone is true -  
You feel it then the golden rule,  
That all things that way will go;  
Let the herd go their way!

And as from times of yore in quietness  
The philosopher and poet created  
A work of love according to their will,  
So will you attain the finest blessing:  
To feel with such great noble souls  
Is well to be desired.

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## Pathways of Realization (continued)

**Clement James Knott**

### **Concentration and Meditation**

The seeker who desires to pursue the divine quest needs to practice the spiritual practices appropriate to the chosen path of realization of the several parts of his beingness. This preparation for the ideal can be started at a young age. However, at that tender age of inexperience, few of us have had the good fortune and the opportunity to get started on the quest. It needs parents and teachers who have themselves trodden the path. The western system of secular education is not geared to offering this sort of choice. When the individual discovers later in life that there are in fact many more choices opening to him, then he may have a problem. How and where to get back on the right track ?

The individual may find that his life experience has squeezed his true self almost out of existence and he has not led the sort of life that he would have chosen. His personality and character have been shaped to suit his career, his family and his social life. He has sacrificed himself knowingly or unknowingly, or perhaps his true self has been sacrificed by others with

or without his consent. Sooner or later he finds that he has a choice to make: To go along with the crowd or to get away from the crowd or just to give up on seeking a better life for himself and for others. It is never too late to start to tread the spiritual path but the later it is in life, the more difficult it is to get started.

The new aspirant may be faced with a bewildering choice. He may well ask: "But where do I begin?" The practice of Yoga as a physical and mental discipline is not a substitute for religion. It is a preparation for it. It opens up the way to various paths of realization and the aspirant can choose the path that is best suited to his personality and temperament to enable him to attain the realization of his true self.

The aspirant who seeks realization needs to achieve understanding of the true nature of his mind: What it is, what it can do and how it functions. Without a sound basic understanding he will find it hard going and he will be prone to underestimating the scope and the powers of his own mind. If he is seeking to transform his modes of thought and to redirect them to his ideal, then what is the bridge between his undisciplined thinking and directed meditation?

Concentration is the link between thought and meditation. For all of us, concentration is the way of obtaining any type of knowledge that we need. It is an act of the will; of decision and self-direction. There is internalized concentration into thoughts, ideas, memories and mental images. There is externalized concentration into external objects, persons and actions, through perceptions of the senses. There is also concentration on the mind. This is the cognitive aspect of the mind directing awareness into the receptive aspect. This is not a node of the mind, (i.e. rooted in the subconscious). It is a preparatory step before proceeding onto other forms of practice. It is turning one's mind into the mind. This is a state of becoming subsumed into the stillness, peace and serenity of the inner self, Atman. It is the self-aware mind turning in on itself at will; no thoughts, no feelings, mental images or symbols. It opens the way to expansion of the scope and potential of the individual human intelligence. This is not a mental process. It is the mind focusing on the mind through the self. The self is a static force, having the qualities of a static and the powers of a force.

Trying to turn a secularized sort of ego-mind in on itself would be fruitless because it starts from a limited viewpoint, being unaware of the universal Self. Exclusive preoccupation with meditation without awareness of the inner self cannot bring about any realization of the powers of the mind. It can only bring about more materialism. This tendency in the hands of secular governments can have a negative effect on the religious freedom of us all if there are no effective safeguards against the illiberal excesses of politicians which corrode traditional moral values for everyone.

Sri Shankara has told us that perception occurs by transmission of the vibrations which first come to the external instruments of the senses, then through the internal organs (nerve centres) and so to the mind: then from the mind to the Buddhi and from the Buddhi or intellect to the Atman. Hence it is necessary to understand the mind not only on a mental level, but also on the level of feelings, sensations and spiritually relative to the four Yogas.

For the practice of directing awareness of the mind, it is necessary to postulate a position for centering the attention. This is generally the Agnya chakra in the head behind the eyes. The Agnya is also the centre of co-ordination and integration of the physical senses, and is sometimes referred to figuratively as the "mind's eye." The attention can be centred in the chakra toward the physical manifestation point in the middle of the forehead (with the eyes closed). If one perceives a luminous blue light or moving points of blue and violet light, then that is blue Bindi indicating that the chakra is flowing, the energy that is flowing up through the channels of the subtle body. For the purpose of practice in directing awareness, it can be limited to a few minutes only to begin with. The objective, through regular practice, is to achieve the ability of "one-pointedness" so that one may call on it at any time to focus one's attention wherever one wishes without distractions.

Hence there are three fundamental elements for the practice of concentration in preparation for advancing in meditation. They are the ability to direct the attention and awareness at will, detachment from distractions and determining the appropriate duration of the period of concentration. Thus realization is attainable by each aspirant for himself by his own efforts with the advantage of the guidance and experience of the many others before him who have trodden the pathway.

After practicing a period of internalization into the mind through concentration, one can then direct the attention outwards to perceive whatever is in one's exterior field of perception in tranquility without reaction, thought or feeling; just perceiving things as they are, in their own place and in their own space; perceiving clearly but staying detached from them. This also requires detachment from the cognitive mind. It is the self perceiving through the clear mind directly; perceiving through the mind, not with it.

Sri Patanjali has said that if we can make the mind take the form of one object for a period of time, then that will destroy any obstacles in the path of realization of the self. This means holding the mind on one particular form for a little while and practicing every day so the mind becomes steady. The mind stuff is by its nature formless and it is capable of taking the form of the objects that we choose to perceive, just as water takes the shape of any vessel into which it is placed.

The adept who has become "one-pointed" through regular practice of concentration can then learn to store away his energy in the nerve centres and in the spine and in the brain. There is only one energy and it manifests in specific intensities from the finest such as the subtle body and the energy of thought to the most gross in solid form. After saving that energy it is possible to transmute the physical forces into spiritual powers. These techniques can be learned through Raja Yoga. The realized mind can also influence the self, the subtle body, and prana, the cosmic energy.

Detaching the awareness from the external world and focusing it on the internal is, as it were, holding up the mirror of the self to see oneself, "As I am," perceiving one's true nature through the self as the watcher and the witness in stillness and serenity. This also enables clearer perception of the external when the attention is exteriorised.

### **Intuitive Knowledge**

How far can meditation take us? There are limits beyond which meditation based on our normal human concepts cannot go. So what is beyond meditation? Where is all this effort by our own puny minds leading us?

It is leading us to a higher level of sublime knowledge which originates from other sources beyond ourselves. When the aspirant has attained a realization of the nature of his mind then he becomes aware that there is a source of universal intuitive knowledge that is available to him or her. It is not a source that we can easily identify but we can observe its effects. It is not the immediate result of our own efforts nor of our mental thoughts. It comes to us as a gift when our awareness and sensitivity have been enhanced and made ready to receive it. In the field of artistic endeavour, intuition is welcomed as inspiration appropriate to one's skill and expertise.

Intuition can come to us in various forms including the following:

Spiritual knowledge concerning the nature of beingness and of reality, coming from acknowledged sources.

Personal guidance (including clairvoyance) concerning future actions, sometimes through the “inner voice.”

Inspiration in an accredited field of artistic endeavour or mental research in the context of the skill and expertise of the individual who has devoted himself to that particular form of study, expression and communication.

Information (or misinformation) from psychic sources that have not been credibly identified.

True intuition is not to be confused with various psychic communications which have not been invoked in a religious or creative context but have been induced by other means and for other purposes. On the other hand, many people will have received valid intuitions without recognizing them because they were unaware of the source: “Perhaps it was just my mind wandering in it’s idle moments,” or “Perhaps it was only a dream.” So the guidance of the “inner voice” is sometimes ignored, for lack of a means of discernment.

We are here looking at intuition as a direct source of spiritual knowledge to advance our quest for the enhancement and realization of the individual mind. If intuitive knowledge comes to us spontaneously and unexpectedly, then it is necessary to discern it from the innumerable sources of information or misinformation that we are all subjected to in this era of indiscriminate mass communication. True intuitive knowledge is self-protective. The devotee who is able to discern it is able to respond to it to determine if it is from a real spiritual source or from some emotional or unwanted psychic intervention. This dialogue through the self is heuristic in nature, serving to aid further communication from self to Source. For instance, the adept may enquire, “Is this the one true Spirit that is flowing through me?”

Swami Vivekananda has sanctioned the validity of intuitive spiritual knowledge as follows, “Instinct, reason and intuition are the three instruments of knowledge. Reason develops into inspiration and therefore, intuition does not contradict reason but fulfils it.”

### **The Universal Intelligence**

Advaita Vedanta upholds the principle that all knowledge pre-exists in the Universal Mind. All knowledge of the mind, reality, beingness and creativity is in the cosmic mind and is manifested through the Universal Intelligence, of which the individual mind is a part. Since the inner self, Atman, is of the same substance as the cosmic self, Brahman, the pure mind is of the same substance as the universal intelligence. The realized mind in the superconscious mode is in communication with the cosmic mind and is sustained by it. The universal intelligence is sustained among humankind by the numberless pure minds that have attained enlightenment. The nature of spiritual knowledge is eternal; everlasting. It cannot be destroyed or terminated by anyone as long as there are sensitive devotees who can receive it. We all therefore need to devote ourselves to purifying and expanding our minds in readiness for receiving the higher knowledge of the divine Life that will be gifted to us if we are ready for it.

(to be continued)

## The Conquest of Mind and Senses

### Swami Ramakrishnananda

When a man who has understood the Truth intellectually is struggling to realize it, even his senses sometimes become so unruly that they run away with him and drag him down to the material universe. So it should be our duty to learn to rule them. What are these senses? They are nothing in themselves; it is we who have given them these powers, but they have had them for ages, so they take them as their own. Now when we would conquer them, they rise up and make us slaves.

This, however, is really the fault of man himself. When he is able to understand clearly that the senses are the cause of his misery, of all his unhappiness, then he can very easily put them down. But that realization does not come without struggle. Man continues to linger here expecting something good, something great from this world, and so long as he thinks in this way, he will not realize that through the senses no true happiness can come. He must first learn to discriminate the real from the unreal, good from bad, and then take only the good. Thus he will gradually rise above the senses.

When you can bring your senses under control, they can be made to lead you to God. These very energies which have led you away from the Lord, may now take you to Him. But the senses are very delusive. Even the highest man is sometimes dragged down by them to the lowest plane of sensuality. For this reason you must wage an incessant war against them. There is no other way. For the man who wants to realize the Truth, the first duty should be to put down the senses, and fixing his mind on the Lord, to regard Him as the highest.

“Fixing his mind on Me, regarding Me as the highest, one should remain steady controlling all his senses.” (Gita: II, 61.) Here Krishna gives a very fine method of concentration; the best that can be given. In one word he tells you how to attain concentration - regard God as the highest. Why do you turn to the senses? Because you want to go where you will always be happy, and you think that your senses will lead you there. You imagine that one place or one thing will make you happier, and you start out at once to go to it. When this idea comes and you run towards the object of your desire, nothing then can check you. Why? Because you regard that to be the highest and the senses, you believe, will help you get it. The senses, however, merely obey you. They are not to blame. You yourself are at fault. Krishna now comes and says: “My dear friend, you have seen all these things in the universe, and the universe is a place of infinite variety. Of all that is to be found here, the highest and most desirable thing is the Lord.” When you can understand this very clearly by means of comparison, that He is the highest and best, at that moment all your sense energies will rush towards Him.

The mind always aspires after the biggest, the highest, the greatest. If you put down a ten-rupee note, and besides it a hundred-rupee note, it will take the hundred rupees. If beside the hundred-rupee note you place a thousand-rupee note, it will take the thousand rupees. If some one tells you that great wealth is to be found in a certain place, at once you will give up your present modest income and run there. In the same way, when you realize that nothing is so beautiful as God, nothing is so great as God, nothing is so good or kind as God; when you grasp this as you do the value of the thousand rupees, over the ten and hundred rupees, you will rush towards God. Then you will say: “Do I desire wisdom? God is my wisdom. Do I want wealth? God is my wealth. Do I want learning? God is my learning. Do I seek a home where I shall be at rest? Then God shall be my home, my place of rest.”

The moment you feel this in your heart of hearts, then even if you are a little child like Dhruva, you will be able to do great things. Because his mother told him that God was in the jungle, he entered into it without doubt or fear, for a little child never doubts his mother's word. When he saw the lions and tigers, he was not afraid. He only thought that God was playing with him by coming in such strange forms, so he began to talk to them and because he was not afraid, they did not harm him. So it is with you. If you understand clearly that the Lord is the highest, then nothing will frighten or discourage you, all your senses will run in the direction of the Supreme and both your mind and your senses will help you reach Him.

Where is God? He is where the world is not. When after studying the universe you realize that it has come out of a great universal Poet, our idea of an all-wise Being, then you think, "I must go to Him and get a little of that wisdom."

And to go to Him you must go away from the universe. Whether He is extra-cosmic or intra-cosmic it makes no difference, for in either case you will have to go out of the universe. You cannot take two things. You must take the one or the other. If you wish to go to God, you will have to turn your back on the world.

These senses when outgoing, lead you to creation, but you wish to go to God, therefore you must indraw your senses. They must be controlled and turned in the opposite direction. He is seated in the heart, so all your sense energies, all your mental energies must converge on that one point and take you there. But this can only be done when you realize that He is the best, the highest in the whole universe. "Thou art my Father, Thou art my Mother; Thou art my Friend, Thou art my Companion; Thou art my learning; Thou art my wealth; Thou art my all in all, my one Lord."

God's Egotism, God's Spirit, God's Self are one and the same; for they are all infinite and there cannot be two infinities. Our Self and our ego are diametrically opposed because one is infinite and the other is finite. For this reason God is called the Supreme Self. If you would control your senses and your mind, you must look upon Him as this Supreme Self and love Him with all your heart and soul. The perverse tendency of the senses will be controlled at that moment and instead of leading you to the outside creation and to death, they will lead you inward to God. So you see that when you regard God as the highest, you can easily learn to control the senses; when you have controlled your senses, you know who you are; and when you know who you are, you realize that the universe rests in you, that it has no basis except in you and that you are beyond birth and death.

How does attachment come? How do the senses become outgoing? That man who makes much of sensual enjoyment, who thinks that out of sounds, forms and touches alone enjoyment can come naturally becomes attached to these. A man thinks, "I want to be happy only in this world; nowhere else can I be happy." Out of this belief attachment for the world springs up. So long as these feelings hold him, he will be tied to the world by a strong cord of attachment and he will not be able to get away from it. As a result of this attachment desires come into existence. Then when something appears in the way and prevents the fulfilling of these desires, he grows angry. When a man becomes angry, he loses the power of discrimination between right and wrong, and his egotism may increase so much that he thinks nothing of insulting his superiors or even the Guru to whom he owes so much. Thus egotism, which is such a puny thing, under the influence of anger becomes so greatly inflated. There is no worse delusion than this. At that time a man perpetrates the worst kind of evil without any compunction whatever. Then, when that unnatural condition leaves him, he himself will have to repent. So man is the cause of his own death. But since this destruction comes through attachment, we should give it up.

How are we to do this? We should neither like nor dislike anything. When the senses have been freed from liking and disliking, then with their help, if man enjoys the world they will never bring evil to him. Rather he will have a certain power, a certain satisfaction in his

mind. He who has been able to bring his mind under his control by the above method, such a man will be able to realize within himself perfect peace and contentment. And what will be the result of that peace and contentment? In that contented condition he will never commit a blunder. When the mind is restless it cannot think properly and man commits all sorts of mistakes. But not so the other man. His intellectual faculties are very clear; he sees all, he knows the true nature of things, what he should leave and what he should accept, and he realizes the Truth.

This can be done only if we can free the senses from undue likings and dislikings. It is because control of the mind and of the senses will bring us peace and contentment, and through these we shall attain to the realization of the Truth, that Sri Krishna tells us in the Gita, that our discriminative faculty must be clear. We commit blunders, and mistake one thing for another because our intellect is confused, the mind is covered with dross. If a man wishes to achieve success in any walk of life, his intellectual faculties must be clear. A man who has no control over his body, no control over his mind, such a man is very dull, his intellectual faculties are clouded and he confuses everything, taking a friend for a foe, the wrong for right. He cannot think relevantly on any one subject for a minute. How can such a dull, uncontrolled man be peaceful? How can such a restless mind be happy?

Whenever you fully enjoy any sort of pleasure, even sensual pleasure, for the time being restlessness leaves the mind and you are happy. So long as the mind is restless, it is unhappy. When there is rest, there is happiness. We must not let the mind and senses rule over us. We must rule over them. Otherwise we can never be happy, and we shall make all those about us unhappy too. Just as the pilot who is at the mercy of the wind is lost, so the man who is at the mercy of the senses is lost. The senses steal away all peace from a man, as the wind steals away the boat from the shore and sinks it in mid-ocean.

The more you can take your mind and senses away from the world and fix them on God, the more will you find peace and happiness. And this can most easily be done by realizing through discrimination and experience that God is the highest and most desirable thing in this universe.

(Reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata, August 1908)

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## **Leaves of an Ashrama 28: Divestment Results in Gain**

### **Swami Vidyatmananda**

I have been an aspirant for years now, but the meaning of renunciation has continued to escape me. If renunciation means divesting myself of decent things and living a physically deprived life, I am afraid that I shall never measure up. Of course the gross dissipations of “woman and gold” have been put aside. But I still find modest creature comforts necessary. Beauty continues to attract me. Intellectual stimulation seems necessary. Am I wrong in holding on to these? Do monks who possess nothing, who live all together in one dormitory room, and who draw their clothing from a common stock, benefit therefrom? Does mendicancy afford spiritual advantage? If so, how can I ever qualify?

In questioning myself thus I chanced to recall what I had heard a hundred times but had never really grasped: that it's my sense of individual value that I have to throw out; my proud

defense of myself as worthy of esteem and consideration; my feeling that I am somebody special and should be treated accordingly; the painful jealousies and envies I experience when I am disregarded or bypassed. Real renunciation is of the ego, and that means somehow not caring if I should be undervalued or valued not at all.

But this is too terrifying. I am my ego, by it nurtured, developed, protected. The very thought of being divested of my ego propels me to the edge of panic. What would I be deprived of this primordial I-ness?

Thus I know nothing about renunciation at all, either external or internal.

Thinking thus, and feeling miserable, I chanced upon a few words in a letter of Swami Vivekananda which gave promise of helping me. Written to Mrs. George Hale from Ridgely Manor on October 5, 1899, the letter contains in a single line a promising answer to the problem: "The wisdom is therefore in renunciation, that is, to make the Lord our all in all."

This, I see, is the positive way. To grow so passionately eager to know Him that I abandon interest in everything else, particularly myself. From a constant vigil to preserve the integrity of my I-ness, my attention shifts, to focus on this new identification: "Let me let myself go. I don't care for anything else. I want You. This is all I desire, to make You my all in all."

And thus physical comforts present or absent become of little importance. And the persistent "I" gets neglected as the result of the new interest. The hart panting after the water-brook, the gopi rushing out to join Krishna, cares nothing about appearances. I should like to be self-forgetful like them. "Make me frenzied to know You."

This positive way is the only kind of renunciation of which I think I might be capable. And I suppose that when the Lord becomes your all in all, what has started out as giving up turns into gain. There's no divestment at all, but instead the letting go of a small thing in exchange for something of much greater worth.

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## The Inner Meaning of the Beatitudes (continued)

### Swami Prabhavananda

Just as we can stir up our hunger for sense pleasures, so can we stir up our hunger for God. Swami Turiyananda once asked Sri Ramakrishna: "Sir, how can I overcome lust?" To his amazement his teacher answered: "Why should you overcome lust? Increase it!" What does this mean? Lust is a passion, natural to man. It is an urge for fulfillment. But experience shows that lust fulfilled in sexual union asserts itself again, and, furthermore, does not bring the real and lasting satisfaction that it promises. Also, it dissipates man's energy. Of course, Ramakrishna did not wish his disciple to increase his physical lust. He wanted to emphasize this point - that the energy we know as lust, instead of being expressed as such and building frustration, should be conserved and through spiritual practice transmitted into love of God. It is this love of God that Ramakrishna wanted his disciple to intensify so that hunger for union with the Divine would arise in his heart. Man's desires find eternal fulfillment only in union with God, in the state which the Gita calls "the peace beyond passion."

Psychologically speaking, one gigantic thought-wave must be raised in the mind, in which all the other cravings which distract us from our Ideal are swallowed up. When the mind is thus

one-pointed and is concentrated upon God, He becomes revealed.

Whenever we are attracted to someone we are really attracted to God dwelling in that person. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yagnavalkya explains to his wife Maitreyi: “It is not for the sake of the husband, my beloved, that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self. It is not for the sake of the wife, my beloved, that the wife is dear, but for the sake of the Self. ... It is not for the sake of itself, my beloved, that anything whatever is esteemed, but for the sake of the Self.” We must learn consciously and intensely to direct all our thoughts, all our energy, toward that Self, which is God, then we shall be filled with righteousness.

A disciple asked his teacher, “Sir, how can I realize God?” “Come along,” said the teacher, “I shall show you.” He took the disciple to a river, and both plunged in. Suddenly the teacher reached over and pressed the disciple’s head under the water. A few moments later he released him and asked: “Well, how did you feel?” “Oh, I thought I should die for a breath of air!” gasped the disciple. Then the teacher said: “When you feel that intensely for God, you won’t have to wait long for his vision.”

What does Christ mean by being filled with righteousness? It is not what we ordinarily think of as moral virtues or good qualities, but the essence of righteousness itself. In Sanskrit it is called “the-goodness-itself;” in other words, God. The word God is derived from that which is goodness itself, not relative good as opposed to evil, or relative virtue as opposed to vice. Christ himself reproached the one who called him “good master:” “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.” So the hunger and thirst after righteousness is a hunger and thirst after God himself.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” There is an aphorism in the Patanjali yoga sutras which corresponds to this teaching: “Undisturbed calmness of the mind is attained by cultivating friendliness toward the happy, mercy and compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous, and indifference towards the wicked.” So, to be merciful is one of the conditions necessary for purification of the heart. Envy, jealousy, hatred - these are some of the universal weaknesses inborn in man. They are linked with our ego-sense which stems from ignorance. How are we to overcome them? By raising the opposite wave of thought. When somebody is happy, we should not be jealous of him; we should try to realize our friendship and be happy with him. When someone is unhappy, we should not be glad; we should feel sympathy and be merciful. When a man is good, do not be envious. When he is bad, do not hate him. Be indifferent to the wicked. Any thought of hate, even so-called “righteous hatred” will upset our own minds and increase our ignorance and restlessness so that we cannot think of the Lord or love Him until this thought-wave has subsided.

Compassion is one of the greatest of virtues. Peter came to Christ and asked: “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” Jesus saith unto him, “I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven.” In other words, if we want to find God, we have to become God-like in mercy.

Swami Brahmananda taught me this truth: “What is the difference between man and God? Man, if you but hurt him once, will forget all your kindnesses to him and remember the one time you failed. But you may forget God and sin against him hundreds of times, he will forgive all your faults and remember the one time that you may have sincerely prayed to him. Sin exists only in man’s eyes; God does not look to man’s sins.”

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” This Beatitude epitomizes the means by which the ideal of life, the perfection in God, is attained. We must attain purity before God reveals himself to us. But what is this purity?

We all know of people whom we would describe as pure in an ethical sense, but they

have not seen God. What is the reason? Ethical life is needed as a preparation for spiritual life and therefore is taught in every religion. But it does not enable us to see God. It is like the foundation of a house; it is not the superstructure.

What is the test of purity? Just try to think of God. What happens? The thought of his presence flashes through your mind for a moment. Then all kinds of distractions begin. You are thinking of everything else but God. These distractions show that the mind is still impure, and such a mind cannot see God as Christ intended. These impurities are the many kinds of impressions gathered by the mind from birth to birth. In turn, these impressions, which are the sum-total of all our thoughts and actions, whether good or bad, form our character. They have to be removed completely so that the mind may be purified. St. Paul said: "Be ye transformed by the renewal of your mind."

One definition of yoga, or union with God, is the complete control of the mind-waves. The mind may be compared to a lake in which the water is muddy and lashed into waves. In such a lake the sun is only dimly reflected. The waves must subside before the sun is perfectly reflected in the water. It is the same with the mind. We must calm the thought-waves in order that the mind may clearly reflect the divinity or perfection within us.

To remove the mind-waves, we have to know their cause. Yoga psychology defines five root causes of all our impressions. First is ignorance, in a universal sense, of our divine nature. God dwells in and around us, but we are not conscious of this truth. Instead of God we see the universe of many names and forms which we believe to be real. Secondly, there is the sense of ego, projected by this ignorance, which separates us from one another and from God. It makes us think of ourselves as individual beings, and say: I am Mr. so-and-so. From the sense of ego we develop attachment and aversion. We are attracted to one thing and hate another. Both desire and hatred are obstacles in the path to God. The final cause of mental impurity is clinging to life: our fear of death, which is natural to all, good and bad alike. Buddha calls it thirst for life. Christ refers to it when he says: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it." Only the illumined soul has no sense of ego, no attachment, no hatred, and no fear of death; they have all vanished.

Even if God were to stand before us this moment and to offer us spiritual enlightenment, we would refuse it. Even if we have been seeking God, at the time we are about to have his vision we would draw back in fear. We instinctively cling to our surface life and consciousness. We are afraid to give them up, even though doing so means that we pass into that infinite consciousness, in comparison with which our normal perceptions are, as the Gita says, "like a thick night and a sleep."

A great saint like St. Augustine used to pray: "Lord, free me from lust." Then from his heart would arise the wish: "But not yet!"

Swami Vivekananda, although he was a pure soul longing for God, experienced that same fear. When he first came to Sri Ramakrishna, the Master gave him a touch, and his spiritual vision began to open. Then Vivekananda cried out: "What are you doing to me? I have my parents at home!" And Sri Ramakrishna said: "Oh, you too!" He saw that even this great soul was subject to the universal clinging to the surface life before letting himself pass into that infinite consciousness.

There are many ways to purify our hearts. Christ teaches them in the course of the Sermon on the Mount. The main principle in all the methods is to be devoted to God. The more we learn to think of God, the purer our hearts will become. One way to grow in purity is to try to feel that we are already pure and divine. This is not delusion; purity and divinity are basically our nature since God is dwelling within us. If we cry all our lives that we are sinners, we only weaken ourselves. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "By repeating a hundred times, 'I am a sinner' one really becomes a sinner. One should have such faith as to be able to say, 'I have

taken the name of God; how can I be a sinner?' God is our Father and Mother. Tell him, O Lord, I have committed sins, but I won't repeat them.' Chant his name and purify your body, mind, and tongue. ... The more you move toward the light, the farther you will be from darkness."

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." It is only when we have attained the vision of God that we really are his children and peacemakers. Of course, it is true that we are always children of God, even in ignorance. But until we have known Him, we cannot bring peace. In our state of ignorance, our sense of ego makes us feel separate from God. For the illumined soul in the state of union with God, the ego disappears. When he returns to a lower plane of consciousness after this experience he again has a sense of ego, but it is a ripe ego that does not create any bondage. In illustration of this ripe ego the Hindu scriptures speak of a burnt rope; it has the appearance of a rope, but it cannot tie anything. Without such an ego it would not be possible for a Christ to live in a human form and teach. Swami Brahmananda once said to me: "There are times when it becomes impossible for me to teach. No matter where I look I see only God, wearing so many masks, playing in so many forms. Who is the teacher then? Who is to be taught? But when my mind comes down from that plane, then I see your faults and weaknesses and try to remove them."

There is a passage in the Bhagavatam which reads: "He in whose heart God has become manifested brings peace, cheer, and delight everywhere he goes." He is the peacemaker Christ speaks of in the Beatitudes. I have seen such a life; the life of my master, Swami Brahmananda. Whoever came into his presence would feel a joyous upliftment. And wherever he went he brought with him an atmosphere of festivity.

In one of our monasteries there were a number of young monks, not yet trained, fresh from school. When they had been together a short time, their old tendencies began to assert themselves, and the boys formed cliques and quarreled. A senior swami of the Order went to investigate the affair. He wrote to Swami Brahmananda that the ringleaders were unfitted for monastic life and should be expelled. My master answered: "Don't do anything about it. I am coming myself." When he arrived at the monastery, he did not question anyone. He made no distinction between individuals, good or bad. He just started living there. He only insisted on one thing: that all the boys should meditate in his presence regularly every day. The boys soon forgot their quarrels. The whole atmosphere of the place became uplifted. By the time Swami Brahmananda left two or three months later, perfect harmony had been established in the monastery. No one had to be expelled. Their minds and hearts were transformed.

When I first came to Belur Math, two young boys quarreled and came to blows. Swami Premananda, the abbot of this monastery, saw this and reported the incident to his brother-disciple Swami Brahmananda, by whom I was seated. He asked that my master send these boys away. My master calmly answered: "Brother, they did not come here as perfect souls. They have come to you to attain that perfection. Do something for them!" Swami Premananda said: "You are right!" He called all the monks as well as us boys together and brought us to Swami Brahmananda. With folded hands he asked his brother-disciple to bless us all. Swami Brahmananda raised his hand over our heads and one by one we prostrated before him. In everyone there came an inner exaltation which could be felt but not described. This is how a real peacemaker affects us. He uplifts men's hearts by his presence and engages their minds in the love of God.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Before we can understand this passage, we must consider the difference between spiritual aspirants and people of the world. As a general rule, men of the world try to hide their faults

and weaknesses instead of trying to overcome them. They enjoy criticizing others and gossiping. It is like chutney to them. At the expense of others, their own egos become puffed up. Also, they pretend sympathy when they do not feel it. People with daggers in their hearts smile at each other as if they were the best of friends. These attitudes are natural to man. But a spiritual aspirant must completely change his tendencies. If he is hypocritical, he cannot grow spiritually.

Once I asked Swami Turiyananda for a definition of religion. He answered: "Religion is to make the heart and the lips the same." Frankness and sincerity are the very foundation of spiritual life. Of course, this does not give us the right to hurt others in the name of frankness. A truly spiritual soul speaks the truth, but always a beneficial truth. Frankness and sympathy must go together. Moreover, a holy man does not try to hide his faults and does not make compromises in order to impress others. Whether people mock or revile him, or try to do him an injury, his mind is fixed in God, he feels the unity, he sees the ignorance, he is merciful. He pleases only his Lord.

There is a story of a young monk who was traveling. When he got tired, he lay down in the shade of a tree. Having no pillow, he got a few bricks and rested his head on them. Some women were going along the road to fetch water from the river. When they saw this monk lying there, they said to each other: "Look; this young monk can't renounce the luxury of a pillow!" When they had passed, the monk thought to himself: "These women were quite right to criticize me." And he threw the bricks away. When the women returned, they saw the monk lying with his head on the ground. They remarked contemptuously: "What kind of a monk is this! He feels insulted just because we made fun of his pillow!" Then the young monk thought: "If I have a pillow, people criticize me; if I don't have a pillow, they criticize me. Let me try to please my God!"

We find throughout the history of religion that prophets and illumined souls, and even a divine incarnation like Christ, are reviled and persecuted. Worldly people, with their preconceived ideas of holiness, cannot accept or understand true spirituality. Normally, when someone speaks ill of us or hurts us, we instinctively want to retaliate. But if we do, in addition to hurting someone else we hurt ourselves, because when we are angry or resentful, we cut ourselves off from the thought of God. Sri Ramakrishna, like Christ, taught, not to react, but to pray for those who revile and persecute us. Of course, this teaching of non-resistance is the highest ideal. Before a man is ready to turn the other cheek he must be spiritually evolved. Purity of heart must be attained before non-resistance can really be practiced, otherwise not resisting evil is merely hypocrisy or cowardice. Non-resistance means to see God in all beings, and because of this realization, to maintain tranquility, patience, and forbearance in the midst of the conflicts and contradictions of life.

In the Bhagavatam the attitude of such a realized soul, who perceives the one Reality everywhere, is described in philosophical terms: "Even if thou dost think another person is causing thee unhappiness or misery, thou art really neither happy nor wretched, for thou art the Atman, the changeless spirit; thy sense of happiness and misery is due to a false identification of thy Self with the body, which alone is subject to changes. Thy Self is the real Self in all. With whom shouldst thou be angry for causing pain if accidentally thou dost bite thy tongue with thy teeth?"

Christ exemplified the ideal of non-resistance when he prayed on the Cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

In Sri Ramakrishna's life we find another example of non-resistance. In this case this holy man actually held himself responsible for the injury that was done him. A priest in the temple where Sri Ramakrishna was living became jealous because Mathur Babu, the head of the temple estate, was fond of Ramakrishna and would go to any trouble to see to his comfort. This priest thought that Sri Ramakrishna had cast a magic spell on Mathur Babu to bring him

under his control. Again and again he begged Sri Ramakrishna to reveal to him the secret formula of his success. The Master told him repeatedly that he had used no occult powers, but the priest did not believe him. One day, while Sri Ramakrishna was alone in his room absorbed in the consciousness of God, the priest entered unobserved and kicked and beat him until he was bleeding. Sri Ramakrishna did not mention the incident to anyone until much later, after the priest had been asked to leave the temple for another reason. When he told Mathur Babu about it, the latter exclaimed: "Father, why didn't you let me know! I would have gotten rid of this fellow immediately!" Sri Ramakrishna replied: "It was not his fault. He sincerely believed that I controlled you by a magic spell. I am to blame because I could not make him understand."

"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven." The reward for those who are persecuted for God's sake is heaven. And so the reward of the illumined soul, who does not react to any injury done him, is immediate, because heaven is always within him. How is he rewarded? Although men may think that he is suffering, he is immersed in divine bliss, because his love of God raises his mind beyond the physical consciousness. Absorbed in God, he overcomes the world, even in this life. The Gita describes such a man of enlightenment:

He who regards  
With an eye that is equal  
Friends and comrades,  
The foe and the kinsman,  
The vile, the wicked,  
The men who judge him,  
And those who belong  
To neither faction:  
He is the greatest....  
His mind is dead To the touch of the external: It is alive  
To the bliss of the Atman.  
Because his heart knows Brahman  
His happiness is for ever.

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**Book Review**

**Elsie Mack**

## How to Live with God; In the Company of Ramakrishna.

Author: Swami Chetanananda

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The nectar of your story, the praise of poet-seers,

Elixir to parched souls, delight of listening ears,

The cleanser out of sin, is grand and glorious;

They who spread it wide on earth are generous.

(Srimad Bhagavatam X xxxi 9)

This invocation to be found at the beginning of M's The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, could well be the introduction to Swami Chetanananda's new publication How to Live with God in the company of Ramakrishna. The book is about Ramakrishna; more about Ramakrishna and yet even more about Ramakrishna; hence the delight of the reading eyes of his devotees.

In fact, the author analyses this whole verse in the thirteenth chapter of his book entitled: 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.' It seems that the Swami has taken all the references to Sri Ramakrishna he could find and combined them in this book with his own thoughts and inferences. Much of the book has been based on The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by M and The Great Master by Swami Saradananda which the Swami has painstakingly retranslated and published with the title of Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play. Swami Chetanananda has done so much work prior to his compiling this book. Over the years he has produced a large number of books, many about Ramakrishna's devotees, both lay and monastic. Thirteen of his works are listed on the book's dust cover. In his own words: "This book has its roots in my 35 years of in-depth study, research, and meditation on Ramakrishna." (page 9)

The Swami clearly states in his Preface: "The goal of this book is to create God-intoxication in the mind of the reader.... to remove spiritual boredom and despondency and to create excitement and inspiration, hope, and imagination, love and devotion, in the minds of spiritual aspirants."

This is a real "How to ..." book if your aim is to live with God in the company of Ramakrishna, because the whole work can be regarded as a meditation on an Incarnation.

In Chapter 1 the author truly states: "Innumerable people now regard Ramakrishna as their Chosen Deity and object of meditation."

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, an aspirant is encouraged to practice drawing in the mind and making it one-pointed on some object. One recommendation is to focus on an ishta-devata, a Chosen Ideal. This leads to love for God which helps to keep the mind concentrated. Sri

Ramakrishna himself said that the way for most people today is the way of Divine Love as taught by Narada (see page 103). Narada teaches that holy company - contact with a great soul - exerts an influence which is “subtle, incomprehensible, and unerringly infallible in its effect.” This process of knowing God then loving Him, leads to keeping company with God “24/7” as they say.

So, first of all, in the Preface, the Swami seeks to convince the reader of the necessity for communion with God, in order to have a happy life free from anxiety, uncertainty and fear. He explains how love and knowledge go together - one cannot love something or somebody one does not know. He immediately raises the question, “How, can we love God or an Avatar?” thus paving the way to the subject of the book: God in man’s form, an Incarnation, Sri Ramakrishna an avatar par excellence. Having accepted this equation of Ramakrishna and God, the reader may enjoy the book which is virtually a long-drawn-out meditation on Sri Ramakrishna.

It is a bulky book - 584 pages - not to be taken lightly. Each chapter (28 with two Appendices) has a message of its own, the whole taking the shape of a chronological biography, continuing after the death of Sri Ramakrishna to the beginning of the Ramakrishna Order of monks and its development through the young disciples with a contemplation of the Order at present and a speculation on future developments.

The Preface forms an introduction to the book as well as acknowledgements for editorial assistance, etc. The first chapter is entitled ‘Various Forms of Ramakrishna’ and we are taken from descriptions of Ramakrishna’s physical appearance through all his spiritual practices when he was adopting the characteristics of many gods and goddesses and holy personages. The chapter ends with a comprehensive discussion on meditating on the form of Sri Ramakrishna. The first chapter covers ninety pages, so one can see it goes into minute detail.

Chapter 2 goes into detail about repetition of God’s name including the ritual of spiritual initiation by a guru. It also mentions different mantras used by Ramakrishna.

Chapter 3 has the title of ‘How to understand Ramakrishna’ and recounts how various people looked upon Him. The following chapter concerns the desires felt by Ramakrishna and his need to fulfil them. The chapter concludes with suggestions for dealing with one’s own desires.

Chapter 5 starts with a description of rural Bengal in Ramakrishna’s time and contrasts it with the Westernised outlook of Calcutta folk. It goes on to tell how Ramakrishna spoke to various people living in the city and how he strove to give them spiritual uplift.

Chapter 6 deals with the history of the Dakshineswar temple, followed in the next chapter by considering the place as an object of meditation.

Chapter 8 entitled ‘Christmas Vacation with Ramakrishna’ refers to December 1883 when M., the author of The Gospel of Ramakrishna, spent twenty-three days at Dakshineswar in Ramakrishna’s company.

Chapter 9 dwells on other scenes of Ramakrishna’s presence during his life-time. The first part looks at his days in Kamarpukur, his home village; then his pilgrimages to Varanasi, Vrindavan and other places are contemplated; followed by his travelling in Calcutta and his boat trip on the Ganges.

Chapter 10 deals with the story of Rasik, a low-caste man who was a sweeper at the Dakshineswar temple and how Ramakrishna befriended him.

Chapter 11 entitled ‘Ramakrishna and the Bohemians’ seems to be using an American or

Indian euphemism. In the UK we might call them 'drop-outs'. Certainly it deals with people using unconventional behaviour. Girish Ghosh, for example, became a famous devotee, but the chapter tells about others who do not appear in M.'s Gospel, such as Manmatha, who was a famous gymnast and wrestler.

Chapter 12 tells about the wish-fulfilling tree and the occasion when Ramakrishna liberally gave spiritual experience to all those around Him. Most of the chapter consists of an imaginary story told by an imaginary story-teller, albeit connected to actual events.

Chapters 13 to 22 deal with accounts of different people of what they knew of Ramakrishna, keeping to strict chronological order, so that out of five Gospels of Ramakrishna M's Gospel comes fourth only. Quite a lot of these versions have not previously been available in English, and each is subtly different according to the outlook of the viewer.

Chapter 23 tells about the disciples of Ramakrishna who travelled to Europe and America, brought his message here, and started religious centres.

Chapter 24 is entitled 'Ramakrishna and the Renaissance of Art;' 25 is 'Ramakrishna and Monasticism; 26 is 'If Ramakrishna Were Alive Today;' 27 is called 'The Second Coming of Ramakrishna' and the concluding chapter 28 is 'Some Glimpses of Ramakrishna.'

Two appendices follow, the first being the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission, and the other, 'The Ramakrishna Order & Sources of Inspiration,' being quotations from leading members of the Institution.

Swami Chetanananda is a senior Swami of the Ramakrishna Order presiding for many years over the Centre based in St. Louis, in the USA. In spite of all his work translating from Bengali into English, there are still many more books in Bengali only, awaiting translation into English.

We look forward in anticipation to the pleasure of hearing still more about the Great Master.

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Heaven should never be our ideal, not only because it is too small a goal to strive for but also because it holds no promise of further attainment. The constant pursuit of celestial pleasures crowds out all spiritual effort. In heaven there is no leisure; in hell there is no leisure; only here in this middle plane where the two meet is there leisure in which the soul can try to realize God. If a God (Deva) wishes to attain salvation, he must come down and be born as a man. Heaven is only a place of continual festivities and enjoyment, but the Scriptures tell us that we must be absolutely detached from enjoyments of this world and from enjoyments of the next world.

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