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Divine Wisdom

MASTER (to Girish) : "One can realize God through intense renunciation. But the soul must be restless for Him, as restless as one feels for a breath of air when one's head is pressed under water.

"A man can see God if he unites in himself the force of these three attractions: the attraction of worldly possessions for the worldly man, the husband's attraction for the chaste wife, and the child's attraction for its mother. If you can unite these three forms of love and give it all to God, then you can see Him at once.

"If a devotee prays to God with real longing, God cannot help revealing Himself to him.

"The other day I told you the meaning of bhakti. It is to adore God with body, mind, and words. 'With body' means to serve and worship God with one's hands, go to holy places with one's feet, hear the chanting of the name and glories of God with one's ears, and behold the divine image with one's eyes. 'With mind' means to contemplate and meditate on God constantly and to remember and think of His lilā. 'With words' means to sing hymns to Him and chant His name and glories.

"Devotion as described by Nārada is suited to the Kaliyuga. It means to chant constantly the name and glories of God. Let those who have no leisure worship God at least morning and evening by whole-heartedly chanting His name and clapping their hands.

"The 'ego of a devotee' begets no pride; it does not create ignorance. On the contrary, it helps one realize God. This ego is no more like the ordinary ego than hinché is like ordinary greens. One generally, becomes indisposed by eating greens; but hinché removes excessive bile; it does one good. Sugar candy is not like ordinary sweets. Sweets are generally harmful, but sugar candy removes acidity.

"Nishthā leads to bhakti; bhakti, when mature, becomes bhāva; bhāva, when concentrated, becomes mahābhāva; and last of all is prema. Prema is like a cord: by prema God is bound to the devotee; He can no longer run away. An ordinary man can at best achieve bhāva. None but an lśvarakoti attains mahābhāva and prema. Chaitanyadeva attained them."

Editorial Saucha or Purity

Sri Krishna describes saucha or purity as one of the divine treasures. Purity is not merely a virtue but the culmination of all spiritual practices.

The sine qua non of spiritual life is purity of heart. The vision of God, a glimpse of the beyond, never comes until the soul is pure. It is to those who are true in heart, pure in deed, whose senses are controlled, that this Self manifests itself.

Swami Brahmananda says: "God is manifest in the hearts of his devotees, his children. Therefore we must be pure in heart. The pure mind receives a clear reflection of God. If the mirror is covered with dirt it does not reflect, so also the Lord's reflection does not fall upon an unclean mind."

Purity is among the five observances which form one of the eight limbs of yoga. According to the commentator Vyasa, it includes both external and internal purity. While internal purity or the purity of mind is definitely more important, external purity is also recommended in all religious systems.

Purity is stressed in every religion. There cannot be any form of spiritual life without purity in some form or the other. It is the very heart of all spiritual endeavour.

The entire essence of all religions, has been put into that one sentence: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." No other virtue but purity has been mentioned as the precedent for the realization of God. The vision of God, which is the culmination of all spiritual practice, is reserved for the pure in spirit.

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Swami Vivekananda said: "In that one sentence lies the gist of all religions...It alone could save the world were all other scriptures lost. A vision of God, a glimpse of the beyond, never comes until the soul is pure.

"All these forms and ceremonies, these prayers and pilgrimages, these books, bells, candles, and priests, are preparations; they take off the impurities of the soul; and when the soul becomes pure it naturally wants to get to the mine of purity, God Himself."

These were not mere words. Swami Vivekananda was an embodiment of purity. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that there was nothing on earth or heaven which could pollute Narendra.

Once Swami Vivekananda was asked by his Western disciples whether he had exercised some yogic power while uttering the now famous words, "Sisters and Brothers of America," at the inaugural session of the Parliament of Religions which had such a mesmerizing effect upon the audience. In reply the Swami said that "It was the power of purity." He had, in his life, never even once thought an impure thought.

What is purity? Purity is a state of knowing and being oneself, it is abiding in one's real nature. It is hard to describe what purity is, yet we can recognize it when we encounter it. When we see a baby we know what innocence, purity, simplicity is. We do not detect self-deception and hypocrisy in a baby. Being pure in heart a baby also does not see evil or impurity in others. Similarly a

saint also, being pure in heart, sees God only everywhere and in everything.

The Gita tells us that only through austerity alone can we become pure in thought, word, and deed.

"The worship of gods, holy people, the guru, and the wise; purity, honesty, celibacy, and non-violence; these are said to be the austerity of deed. (17.14)

"Speech that is not offensive, truthful, pleasant, beneficial, and is used for the regular reading of scriptures is called the austerity of word. (17.15)

"Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-restraint, and the cultivation of pure motives; these are called the austerity of thought. (17.16)"

Various techniques have been adopted in various spiritual paths for the purification of mind. Karma yoga is, of course, the standard method advocated for purification of the mind. It involves performance of prescribed duties without hankering for their fruits, or by surrendering the fruits and actions to God.

The Atman by nature is pure, immortal, and ever blissful. The best way to attain purity is to assert one's eternally pure nature, and to be established in it is the goal of life.

Prayer, japa, meditation, holy company, selfless service, and diligent practice of spiritual disciplines as directed by one's teacher, now and then retiring into solitude; these are some of the means indicated in the scriptures for the attainment of purity.

Hindu scriptures also caution us about taking impure food. "Pure food makes our heart pure. Pure heart results in constant recollectedness of God. Constant recollectedness of God brings union with God."

Food does not mean merely what we eat, but what we gather through all our senses. How do we gather pure food through our senses? We must learn to see God everywhere. Wherever the senses go, let us be conscious of the presence of God.

Through diligent spiritual practice the mind gradually becomes pure and becomes blessed with the vision of God.

Swami Dayatmananda

In the Hours of Silence

Translated from the Ashtavakra Samhita.

Disciple

MASTER, teach me how I may attain spiritual illumination; teach me how I may find liberation from the bondages of life and death; teach me how I may escape from the mire of worldliness.

Sage Ashtavakra:

He who aspires after liberation, my child, must shun like poison the pleasures of the world, and seek like nectar the virtues of forgiveness, sincerity, kindness, contentment and truthfulness.

Detach yourself from the flesh, my son, for the flesh is of the earth, earthy, and you are not of the earth. Know the Self as pure intelligence, the eternal witness. Dwell in the Spirit that you are. Thus shall you, even now, escape from the mire of worldliness; thus shall you be happy and tranquil.

Free indeed you are! Good and evil, pleasure and pain belong to the nature of the mind. You

are the spirit, and to the spirit neither good nor evil can ever be attached. You are the Self in all, the witness of all, the one Seer, and for ever free. You experience bondage because you see yourself, the Seer, as other than the Self.

Now you are bitten by the venomous cobra of an ego; drink the nectar of faith, and know yourself to be the "seer" and not the "doer" of deeds. Thus shall you be happy and tranquil. Set fire to the wilderness of ignorance with the knowledge that you are pure consciousness - one without a second, and go beyond grief. Thus shall you be happy and tranquil.

"I am pure consciousness, one without a second!" Verily this pure consciousness is bliss, supreme bliss. And you are that bliss. Know your Self. Thus shall you be happy and tranquil. Popular yet very true is that saying, "As you think so you become." Therefore, think yourself free, and free you are! Think yourself bound and bound you remain.

Do not identify yourself with the attributes of the body and the modifications of the mind. Shun the false ego. Meditate on the true nature of the Self, the unchangeable reality, and know that you are free.

My child, long have you been caught in the noose of ignorance by identifying yourself with the body. Sever this noose with the sword of knowledge. Know that you are pure intelligence; thus shall you be happy and tranquil.

Meditate on the true nature of yourself: nothing can attach itself to you; no karma can bind you; no blemish can taint you; you are self-luminous; you are pure intelligence. You exist as the Self in all beings, and all exist in you. My son, stoop not to littleness!

You are free, one with the unchangeable reality, formless. The heat of passions cannot reach you; you are the ocean of intelligence and forever tranquil. Meditate upon this pure intelligence alone.

Even as upon a mirror images may be reflected, yet the mirror alone exists within the reflection as well as outside of it; even so does the supreme Lord, upon whom is reflected the body, alone exist within and outside of it.

As ether pervades the inside and the outside of a jar, even so the eternal Brahman pervades all beings and things. Meditate upon this truth.

(Reprinted from Vedanta and the West, Jan-Feb 1942)

"Peace on Earth, Goodwill Towards Men" **Swami Gnaneswarananda**

May I change the biblical phrase and make it "good will to all," which conforms more closely to the Hindu ideal? From time immemorial, the watchword and slogan of the Hindu view of life has always been, "for the good of all, for the gain of all." Consequently, the success and achievement of every activity of life is considered from the highest utilitarian standard, as to how much good it brings for all, instead of for the doer alone. The utilitarian standard of ethics which we discuss in the present age had its origin in human history in remote Hindu times. It was understood in a much broader sense including all beings within its scope and was carried to such an extreme by the early Hindus that the standard was applied even in the matter of cooking food. If the food was cooked only for an individual person or family, it was considered impure. The custom of compulsory ritual has always been to set apart a portion of the food to be distributed to the five great worlds from whom we have been receiving so much benefit for our daily existence. These great benefactors are:

(1) The world of the unseen Devas, or the gods and higher beings who are supposed to have some control over human welfare. (2) The world of the Rishis, or the seers of truth, from whom we have inherited all ancient knowledge and wisdom. (3) The world of the Pitris or the

departed forefathers whose name we bear, and whose prestige, honour, and dignity we inherit. (4) The human world. (5) The animal, vegetable and mineral kingdom.

If you were the only human being on this earth what kind of a life could you live under that circumstance? You could become no better than a cave-man or a savage forest dweller. So we owe a heavy debt of obligation to the world at large and daily we should pay our homage of reverence and appreciation to all.

Therefore in doing any action, one ought to consider how much benefit it does to all. If an act of piety, religious exercise, or spiritual practice brings benefit only to the agent, it is considered selfish, and for that matter it is no longer spiritual. On the other hand, any endeavour which brings benefit to many, whatever may be the nature of the act, has always been considered spiritual. According to that standard of cosmic utility, even one's religious practice should be performed in such a form and spirit that the results can be shared by all beings. In India at the conclusion of any spiritual practice or religious ceremony a special ritual is always performed, which sends the fruits of the action to all directions in the universe, so that all creatures may derive benefit from the good act.

Even after going through all the different steps in the time-honoured procedure of one's meditation, the concluding process must be a renunciation of the fruits of the exercise. The Yogi does not want any personal benefit from the practice of his meditation. If any benefit is to be derived let it go for the advancement, happiness, peace and prosperity of all.

Those people who believe in a personal God or who meditate on the form of any special deity, offer the fruits of their meditation to God with the words: "Oh, God, Thou art the Soul and the basic reality of every being that is, was, or will be. By offering the fruits of my meditation to Thee, I offer them to all. May it please Thee to grant peace, prosperity, purity, goodness, and truth to all beings in the universe."

Those of a philosophic bent of mind, not caring about a personal ideal, and considering themselves as the fountain-head of all good thoughts, meditate on the idea that from their cosmic consciousness, constant streams of good thoughts are pouring all around on the visible and the invisible universe, creating a strong vibration of truth, goodness and beauty in the hearts of all beings. Under all circumstances we must renounce all expectation of results from our practice of meditation. If any are to come, let them be shared by all beings.

Moreover, when we act for others it always helps us to manifest our inner spiritual perfection in a more distinct and pronounced way. When we give, we are great spiritually; whereas, when we beg, no matter what it is, we always become small. The ocean of our spiritual perfection dwindles down to a mere drop at the very idea of begging.

Suppose, because of poverty, a self-respecting person has gone down into a state of extreme hunger and suffering. I doubt if any of us could approach the door of a rich person to ask for our own food. There would always be a sense of terrible shock and hesitation for any self-respecting person even to think of begging for himself. But suppose he finds another, almost at the point of death by starvation. Under the spiritual inspiration of saving another person's life, that very same man can go to any person to beg for food, without feeling humiliated at all. On the other hand, a great spiritual strength and power will be manifested in his personality with the realization that in this case he is giving. He could inspire or even compel someone with the force of his sympathy and feeling, to come forward to render necessary help.

Comparing these two events, we can easily convince ourselves of the truth that whatever we do for our own benefit undermines our spiritual strength. In a very subtle way it makes us feel small and humiliated. But whatever we do for the benefit of others at once kindles the spirit of universality, goodness and spiritual strength within us.

Therefore, if our meditation and spiritual practices are done only for our own benefit, in the last analysis we do not gain much. But if they are performed with the intention of helping or serving others, the little drop of our spirituality multiplies into an ocean.

There is a common saying that a labourer is only worthy of his hire. He cannot expect more than a few pennies for his work. A very beautiful story is told to illustrate this point. Some day-labourers were working for the king. After strenuous work, they received their hard-earned wage. At the end of the day they used to stand in line and receive their money thrown at them with spiteful negligence. In that group of workers there happened to be one who

worked only to help the labourers, and to see that the work was well done. It was his pleasure to do the work. He did not work for any wage; therefore, whatever he did was done with an attitude of love, to help the workers, and to construct something of beauty and utility. It did not take long for the higher officials to discover that the best worker in the field was not on the pay-roll and did not seem to care at all for his wages. That attracted the attention of the superintendents. Gradually it became known to the king who watched him and finally discovered that he was not a day-labourer, but a lover of humanity, utility and beauty. Loving all the workers, he was never too tired to help them; loving the king he wanted to see that the king's work was done with utmost perfection, beauty and utility, since to create was his particular joy. That drew the attention of the king more and more, until he became one of the dearest friends of the king. So much so, that the king would not do anything without his advice and guidance. In fact, he became the "right hand" of the king. This little story shows that if we care for our daily wages only, it will be thrown at us, hurting the dignity of the inner Spiritual self. Whereas, if we can resist the temptation of receiving a daily wage, can develop a spirit of love for all, as well as a love for and utility through our actions, it will draw the attention of the "king," who is the source of all power and strength, and eventually make us realize our unity with the fountain-head of all power and absolute perfection.

It is absolutely necessary to develop an altruistic attitude regarding our meditation. Do not look forward for any results, as how much progress you have made in the course of the few months or years that you have been practising, what you received, and how much more there is to come. This spirit of impatience for results has been compared to the attitude of a foolish planter, who after transplanting a small tree, would uproot it every morning to see how far the roots had spread. If we always keep a part of our mind engaged in the calculation of our gain and loss in the trade of our meditation, it can at best be a business enterprise not a method of spiritual unfoldment. For that reason it is absolutely necessary for a student of spirituality to forget all about results.

It has been my unshakeable conviction that the greatest amount and degree of service that one can render to the universe can be only in the realm of thought. There is a common saying that "thoughts are things." In my estimation, thoughts are even more potent, substantial, and permanent than mere things. If you give a coin or a car to another it will be spent, lost, exhausted, or worn out before long. But if you can give your genuine good thoughts to him, beyond any doubt and contradiction, it brings more benefit than anything else. Owing to our gross and materialistic impatience, we fail to appreciate the value of thoughts. But with higher unfoldment we come to understand that we can help the world more by creating spiritual vibrations of thought, than by offering material things.

Very often we come in contact with people who need help. It is not possible for us, no matter how rich or affluent we may be, to supply the material want of all needy persons whom we meet. Because of this condition, a spiritual person always feels some disturbance in his mind. That disturbance hampers the progress of his spiritual unfoldment. As a remedy for the disturbances that arise out of the sufferings of others, this special exercise should be practised. Raise a very potent and powerful thought vibration during every meditation sending out a current of love, peace, and good for all beings. In the first place, you will find that at least the worry which you used to feel from the sufferings of others will be gone. You yourself will enjoy a more calm and peaceful state of mind regarding the sufferings of the world. Secondly, viewing the matter from an objective angle, it can be established that those needy persons actually get the help which you send to them in the form of your good thoughts.

Many people raise the objection that by sending out a good thought for a hungry person you might solve your own problem. You might feel calm and peaceful yourself, but does the hungry person get that piece of bread which he needs so badly? With all the emphasis at my command, I will insist that in bringing the much needed material relief as well, such thought vibrations are far more potent than a few material things. It is my strongest conviction that even a hungry man does not suffer so much from the want of a piece of bread, as he does from the lack of a spiritual state of consciousness, which, if he could have, would place him above all sufferings. This consciousness he undoubtedly receives from the sincere good

thoughts of a spiritual benefactor. Moreover, it has been found that the powerful good thoughts of a spiritual person are caught or contacted by others having the material resources, who feel the urge to supply the material need. The "good will" of the Yogis and spiritually advanced people are contacted imperceptibly by the wealthy people of the country, inducing them to help the poor and needy.

However, the subjective benefit is to be considered the most important of all. I do not know if in the future history of the world a time will ever come when objectively, all needs, sufferings, and sorrows will be abolished. They will remain as long as creation lasts. But any person can go out of the consciousness of suffering by means of his higher spiritual understanding. The remedy always will be a subjective one. So if we can rise above the consciousness of suffering subjectively, and help others do the same we shall be solving the deepest problem of the world.

It reminds me of a very beautiful instance recorded in the life of the great American, Abraham Lincoln. The story is told that he was one day marching at the head of an army. Looking ahead on the road he found a little insect lying on its back, trying very hard to get on its feet again. Hearing the sound of the horses' hoofs, the helpless insect became all the more excited in trying to get away from the road, and in its desperate effort, only became more exhausted and almost gave up in a terrible frenzy. Lincoln saw this and at once stopped the army, got down from his horse, took the little creature on his hand, and put it away from the road, setting it in a safe place on its feet again. He mounted his horse, feeling very happy, and was about to start, when he was asked, "What was the meaning of doing that?" With a smile Lincoln answered, "Now I feel very much better."

This is the real spiritual benefit which one derives from service of any kind. One feels much better, subjectively.

Whatever we give without hope for return comes back to us multiplied a thousand-fold. I do not want to say that we should send our good will to the universe with the hope of getting it back a thousand-fold, because that would be begging again. When one performs any good act only because one cannot help it, never thinking about the returns, it brings very rich results for the advancement of one's peace, happiness and spirituality. For that reason, let it be definitely understood that we should not look forward for any result whatsoever from our spiritual practices.

Psychologically speaking, such an attitude of looking forward for results, makes a person impatient and irritable very easily. I have seen people who for some reason or other could not quite rise above the expectation of getting results from their practice of meditation. With all enthusiasm they started, and practised for a considerably long period. The time was almost ripe for them to attain that special state of unfoldment when they could enjoy a rich harvest of wonderful peace, bliss and spiritual power. But suddenly they grew impatient and irritated, gave up their practice, turned reactionaries, and denounced the whole science, saying, "I have seen it all; I have practised hard and long enough, but it is all nonsense. Nothing comes of it." I have seen some of these rebellious souls turning back to Yoga again with regret and repentance. By starting their practice over again they eventually attained the desired state of unfoldment.

It is a very hopeful fact, that whatever we attain at any time of our life in the field of spiritual advancement is never lost. It is permanently credited to our spiritual account. As soon as we turn back, we get the full benefit of whatever was attained, either in this or previous lives.

In order to maintain patience, cheerfulness, and ardour of practice, one should consider one's practice as its own benefit. Instead of considering the practice as a means to an end, one ought to consider it as the end in itself.

Of course, those who practise for the attainment of results do attain them. Some psychic phenomena or power of performing a few miracles manifests in them. But as soon as they get interested in unusual phenomena they fall down from the height of their spiritual consciousness, and running after phenomena, they lose all excellence of character. Eventually, even the so-called power which they attained, leaves them and they find themselves in a very deplorable and utterly mean and degraded condition.

A student of Yoga must banish from his heart the idea of gaining power or proficiency in any

material realm whatsoever. In the course of practice certain phenomena of a supernatural type may appear, like the power of hearing unusual sounds, seeing unusual things, or the power of healing, but when one stops there to make use of them, all further progress is deterred. Unusual phenomena, if they appear, should be considered as so many mile-stones by the side of the highway of progress. A traveller speeding by, looks at them and realizes that he is making good progress. But if he stops, fusses around it or embraces it as a great achievement, it becomes absolutely impossible for him to proceed further. These phenomena are good since they signify progress along the line of spirituality. Don't stop! Don't show off! Don't be vain! Don't talk about your unusual experiences, but cheerfully advance forward until the highest goal is achieved.

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It was from Me

The following is a translation of the Spiritual Testament of the Russian monk Seraphim Vyritski.

John Phillips

Have you ever thought that everything that affects you, affects Me? Because, when it affects you, it affects My dearest one. In My eyes you are dear to Me, and I love you, and for that reason it is a special joy for Me to look after you. If temptation arises in you and the enemy approaches like a rushing torrent, I want you to know that It was from Me.

That your weakness needs My strength and that your security is to be found in your giving Me the possibility of fighting for you. If you are in difficult circumstances, among people who do not understand you, who do not take into consideration the things you like, who push you aside, It was from Me.

I am your God, who arranges circumstances. It is not by chance that you are in your place: it is the very place that I assigned to you. Did you not ask Me to teach you humility - so just look, I put you in that place, in that school, where this lesson is learned. Your circumstances and those living with you are only fulfilling My will. If you are in financial difficulties, if it is hard for you to make ends meet, then know that It was from Me.

For it is I who arrange your material means. I want you to run to Me and depend on Me. My resources are inexhaustible. I want you to be sure of My faithfulness and My promises. Let it not be that one can say of your need: "You did not trust in the Lord your God." Are you experiencing a night of sorrow? Have You become separated from those close to you and to your heart? It was from Me.

I am the Man of Sorrows, who has experienced pains, I permitted this so that you would turn to Me and might find eternal comfort in Me. Were you disappointed in your friend, in someone to whom you opened your heart? It was from Me.

I permitted this disappointment to affect you, so that you might know, that your best friend is the Lord. I want you to bring everything to Me and speak to Me. Did someone slander you? Tell Me about it, and cling to Me, your refuge and your soul, to shelter from "wrangling tongues." I shall bring out, like the light, your truth and your fate, like the noonday. If your plans have been ruined, if your soul is grieved and tired; It was from Me.

You made your plans and brought them to Me, so that I might bless them. But I want you to let me arrange the circumstances of your life, and then the responsibility for everything will

rest with Me, because this would be too heavy for you, and you alone cannot cope with them, because you are only an instrument and not the operator. If some unexpected unsuccessful event came to you and depression seized your heart, know It was from Me.

For I want your heart and soul to be ever aflame before My eyes, and with My name to drive away all faint-heartedness. If you have not received any news from those near and dear to you and due to your faint-heartedness you are falling into despair and grumbling, know It was from Me.

For with this languishing of your spirit I am testing the fortress of your faith in the immutable promises, in the strength of your ardent prayer for those near you. For did you not entrust them to the protection of the veil of My Most Pure Mother? Did you not once commend their care to My love? If serious illness visited you, whether temporary or incurable, and you were riveted to your bed, It was from Me.

For I want you to call on me even more deeply in your physical weakness and not grumble at the test sent down to you, not try to penetrate my plans of salvation for the souls of man by different paths, but uncomplainingly and humbly bow your neck under My grace towards you. If you dreamed of creating something special for Me and instead lay on a bed of sickness and weakness, It was from Me.

For when you were immersed in your business, I could not attract your thoughts to Me, and I want to teach you the deepest thoughts, that you are in My service, I want to teach you to admit that you are nothing. Some of the best of My workers are those who are cut off from life's activities, so that they can learn to master the instrument of incessant prayer. If you are unexpectedly called to occupy a difficult and responsible position, go, rely on Me. I will entrust you with these difficulties, for the Lord God blesses you in all your concerns, in all your paths, in all that will be done with your hands. This day I give you this vessel of holy oil. Make free use of it, My child. Every difficulty arising, every word insulting you, every mocking laugh about your work, which could give rise to a feeling of annoyance and disappointment, every revelation of your weakness and incapability - let them be annointed with this oil - It was from Me.

Remember that each mocking laugh is an admonition of God, and therefore keep in your heart the words, which I have revealed to you today: It was from Me.

Keep them, know and remember always, that every sting becomes blunted when you learn to see Me in everything. Everything is sent by Me for the perfection of your soul. It was from Me.

A God-Loving and God-Beloved Mind **Swami Balaramananda**

Every grown-up person understands to some extent what love is. With its abode in the lover's heart, this undying and bewitching spirit often possesses him and directs all his physical and mental faculties to the object of his love. Hardly is there anyone bereft of love. Even a brute who mercilessly kills men, women and children, is found to have lent his heart to someone. From time immemorial, this alluring theme of love has always provided food for the imagination of poets and writers, and given birth to numerous poems, songs and novels. Moreover, many a heart has been broken, brain deranged, and life led astray or lost, in this dangerous game of love. That is why those who have had their nerves shattered while playing it, are scared at the very mention of its name. Still there are always some lucky souls in this world, who succeed in achieving the object of their love; and they say that those who lost it are unskilled in the art, and are pessimists. But they too sooner or later realize that 'love is

lame at fifty years'; that the 'joy of love is too short, and the sorrow thereof, and what cometh thereof, dureth over long.'¹ A blow received through mundane love has at times served as an eye-opener to some. For instance, saints like Bhartrihari, Bilvamangal and Tulasidas were first caught in the snares of worldly love, and later on a thunder-stroke resulting from it awakened their conscience and turned their love Godwards. Rightly has Alfred, Lord Tennyson said:

God gives us love. Something to love
He lends us; but, when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.²

Such is the fate of all worldly love because both the lover and the beloved are constantly changing in body and mind, and are transitory existences. When a man is convinced of its vanity by his own experience and observation, there is the possibility of his mind becoming God-loving. At least an opportunity is open for him to utilize this powerful faculty of love for his own salvation by directing it to God.

A God-Loving Mind:

In St. Antony's opinion: "All rational Beings, whether they be men or women, have an organ of love, by which they can embrace both the Divine and the human. Men of God love what is of God; men of the flesh love what is of the flesh. Men who love what is of God, purify their hearts from all impurities and the affairs of this transient world,..."³ But in order to have such a God-loving mind an aspirant should have a firm understanding that "vanity of vanities; all is vanity, except to love God and serve Him alone."⁴ Real love for God does not fall from heaven all of a sudden without preparing the proper ground for it. That is why the Indian sage Narada prescribes some preliminary disciplines to fertilize the soil of the heart. In the first place he asks the aspirant to renounce all worldly objects physically, and attachment to them mentally; and to do uninterrupted loving service to God, by hearing and singing His glory, even while engaged in the ordinary activities of life.⁵ Such a discipline is necessary for a beginner because all the divine qualities in man are governed by his will, and the will is in turn controlled by what it loves. Therefore, unless an aspirant is convinced of the futility of worldly treasures and the utility of loving God, his mind cannot turn Godwards. It is well said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."⁶ Unless and until God becomes our sole treasure, how can our hearts pant for Him? Love for God is, therefore, the last emotion of the human heart. It won't take root in man until he has finished his playing with mud pies, and the worldly emotions cease to overcome him.

Some saints are of the opinion that this wonder-child of Divine love is born only when the Holy Spirit descends in the heart, and no human can give life to it.⁷ St. Antony also says, "A mind cleaving to God by love is an invisible blessing, given by God to the worthy for their good life."⁸ And although Narada prescribes disciplines for the manifestation of Divine. Love to beginners, he too is of the opinion that such devotion is "attainable by the grace of God and godmen alone;"⁹ but he says that spiritual disciplines make an aspirant worthy of such grace, as purity is the necessary condition. Narada has emphasized this point saying: "Devotion, nevertheless, manifests itself in one - whoever it be - when one has made oneself fit for such manifestation by spiritual disciplines."¹⁰

The disciplines help the aspirant to strip his heart of all worldly passions, and make his mind God-loving. St. Antony corroborates this fact saying: "A God-loving mind is found among the chaste, the just, the righteous, the good and pure, the merciful and devout. The presence of [such a] mind is the support of man in his relationship with God." He further says, "A God-loving mind is the light of the soul. He whose mind loves God is enlightened in heart and sees God with his mind."¹¹ All these teachings of the saints leave no doubt that Divine love can never manifest in one's heart without grace which in turn descends only in the heart purged of all worldly passions.

God-Loving Saints:

Swami Vivekananda has rightly pointed out that "holiness, purity and charity are not the

exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character."¹² His statement is perfectly true, because genuinely dispassionate and God-loving minds are found amongst the followers of all religions. For instance: Christianity has produced great souls like St. Thomas a Kempis, St. Francis de Sales, Brother Lawrence, St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Rose of Mary, and many others; amongst the Sufis are God-lovers like Abil Hashim, Dhu'l-Nun-al-Misri, Rabi'a of Basra, Mansur al-Halláj, Jallálu'd-Din Rumi and others; and in its brilliant galaxy of God-loving minds Hinduism includes numerous stars like the Gopis (cowherd women) of Vrindavan, Sri Caitanya, Mirabai, Andal, Tukaram, Jñanesvar, Sri Ramakrishna and others. Jalálu'd-Din Rúmi goes to the extent of saying: "The sect of lovers [of God] is distinct from all others. Lovers have a religion and faith of their own."¹³ Truly, if we study the lives of these God-lovers, we find many common characteristics in them. For instance, like Mirabai, (a Hindu), Rabi'a (a Sufi) and St. Rose of Mary (a Christian) did not believe in earthly marriage. Although Mirabai was married to a Prince of Rajasthan (India), she said in her song: "Mine is Giridhara Gopal alone and none else; He, on whose head is a crown of peacock feathers, is my husband." While Rabi'a said, "The bonds of wedlock have descended upon me. I am not my own, but my Lord's, and must not be unfaithful to Him."¹⁴ Needless to say, all God-lovers do not take Him as their husband, but one common point in all of them is that they give all their heart and all their soul to Him, and to none else. Furthermore, all of them may not take God in His personal aspect but in His impersonal aspect as well. Some, like the Gopis of Vrindavan, love the impersonal through the personal. This is evident from their statement made when Lord Krishna disappeared during the Rasa-play at Vrindavan. In their song they said, "Surely You are not merely a son of a cowherd woman (Yasoda), but the Witness of the mind of all embodied beings [i.e. the Atman]."¹⁵ This clearly reveals the attitude of the Gopis to Lord Krishna. And whatever be the attitude (personal or impersonal), a God-loving mind completely melts in God as a result of its intense love for Him. Saint Jalalu'd-Din Rúmi narrates his experience in his song as follows:

Lovers and beloved
Have both perished
And not themselves only,
But their love as well.
'Tis God alone who agitates
These nonentities,
Making one nonentity
Fall in love with another.¹⁶

This phenomenon of Divine love has been well explained by Swami Vivekananda in his lectures on Bhakti Yoga, as follows: "We all have to begin as dualists in the religion of love. God is to us a separate Being, and we feel ourselves to be separate beings also. Love then comes in the middle, and man begins to approach God, and God also comes nearer to man... At last, however, comes the full blaze of light, in which this little self is seen to have become one with the Infinite. Man himself is transfigured in the presence of this Light of Love, and he realizes at last the beautiful and inspiring truth that Love, the Lover and the Beloved are One."¹⁷

A God-Beloved Mind:

In the above statement Swamiji has pointed out that as a devotee approaches God more and more through love, "God also comes nearer to man." This means that a God-loving mind is loved in turn by God. In the Gita Lord Krishna clearly tells Arjuna as to whom He loves most: "Of them, the wise man, ever steadfast, (and fired) with devotion to the One [namely God] excels; for supremely dear am I to the wise and he is dear to Me."¹⁸ The Lord has further elucidated this point to Arjuna later in the following words:

"He who hates no creature, and is friendly and compassionate towards all, who is free from the feelings of 'I and mine,' even-minded in pain and forbearing, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled, and possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect fixed on Me, he who is thus devoted to Me is dear to Me. He by whom the world is not agitated and

who cannot be agitated by the world, who is freed from joy, envy, fear and anxiety, he is dear to Me. He who is free from dependence, who is pure, prompt, unconcerned, untroubled, renouncing every undertaking, he who is thus devoted to Me, is dear to Me. He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion, he is dear to Me. He who is the same to friend and foe, and also in honour and dishonour; who is the same in heat and cold, and in pleasure and pain; who is free from attachment; to whom censure and praise are equal; who is silent, content with anything, homeless, steady-minded, full of devotion; that man is dear to Me. And they who follow this Immortal Dharma, as described above, endued with Sraddha (faith) regarding Me as the Supreme Goal and devoted; they are exceedingly dear to Me."¹⁹

Hereby, Lord Krishna has pointed out in clear terms the characteristics of a God-beloved mind. God loves those who are pure and who love Him and Him alone.

God - A Jealous Lover:

In worldly life, a lover may tolerate his beloved loving his or her relatives, but "God," says a Christian mystic, "is a jealous lover. He is at work in your spirit and will tolerate no meddlers."²⁰ St. Thomas à Kempis also tells us the same thing in his Imitation of Christ. He says, "Your Beloved [God] is of such a nature that He will not share your love with another; He desires your heart for Himself alone, and to reign there as a King on His throne."²¹ In Hindu mysticism such one-pointed devotion to God is known as Ananya-bhakti, or Eka-bhakti, or Aavyahicarini-bhakti. Leaving mysticism apart, even according to the earthly standard "love is not love when it is mingled;" "love is not love which alters." It is pure unadulterated love that everyone expects. So God is not to be blamed for His expectation.

According to the Hindus, God cannot tolerate the separate individuality of a loving mind. It is said in the Bhagavatam that when the Gopis became proud of themselves as being the only fortunate consorts of the Lord during the Rasa-play, Lord Krishna disappeared from the scene "to curb their vanity, and in order to shower His Grace on them"²² This shows that God wants a mind to lose itself completely in Him.

Some devotees may feel at times that God never responds to their love in spite of their devotion at His feet and sincere spiritual struggle. But it is not true, because Lord Krishna tells His beloved Gopis about His own love for His devotees. He says: "I, for my part, O friends, do not [visibly] reciprocate the love of even those individuals who love Me, in order that they could ever think of Me in the same way as a penniless person would, on a treasure found by him being lost...Indeed, in order to ensure thus your constant devotion to Me, O fair ones, I remain out of sight [for some time], though loving you invisibly...you who have for My sake ignored all worldly decorum as well as the Vedas and deserted your own people."²³ If we have faith in these words of the Lord, we shall never feel despondent while leading the spiritual life. Lord Krishna has assured us that He loves His devotees invisibly and waits till the devotees' love becomes one-pointed. In the Gita Lord Krishna has told Arjuna that all His devotees: arta, the distressed, jijñāsu, the seeker of knowledge, artharathi, the seeker of enjoyment, and jñāni, the wise, are noble indeed, "but the wise man I regard as My very Self; for with the mind steadfast, he is established in Me alone, as the Supreme Goal."²⁴ From this we can safely conclude that God loves all His devotees in general, but the wise one in particular.

The Ultimate Gain:

And what does a God-loving mind gain ultimately? What is the utility of loving God? The answer has been given by Narada in the following words: "Gaining that [love for God], man realizes his perfection, and becomes immortal and thoroughly contented. Attaining that, man no more desires anything; nor grieves; nor hates anyone; nor relishes anything [of this world]; nor exerts himself for attaining anything earthly. Realizing that, man becomes intoxicated and fascinated, as it were, because he is completely immersed in the enjoyment of the Bliss of the Atman, the truest and highest Self."²⁵ Whatever a man seeks in this world and never gets, is attained ultimately by a God-loving and God-beloved mind. The treasure he wins in the end is the highest.

Foot-notes

1. Sir Thomas Malory. *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Book X, ch. 56.
2. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'To J. S.', IV.
3. Early, *Fathers from the Philokalia*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1973, (hereafter *Early Fathers*), pp. 47-48.
4. Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Le Sherley-Price, Middlesex : Penguin Books Ltd., 1968, (hereafter *Imitation*), p. 27.
5. See Narada-Bhakti-Sutras, (hereafter *Narada*), 111. 35-37.
6. Matthew 6 : 21.
7. See St. Francis de Sales, *The Love of God*, trans. Vincent Kern, London : Burns & Oats. 1962, Book 1, ch. vi.
8. *Early Fathers*, p. 28.
9. *Narada*, 111. 40.
10. *Narada*, IV. 53.
11. *Early Fathers*, p. 35.
12. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama*, (hereafter *Complete Works*), 1, 1970, p. 24.
13. F. Hadland Davis. *The Persian Mystics, I*, London: John Murray, 1912, (hereafter *Per. Mys.*), p. 73.
14. *Per. Mys.*, p. 15.
15. *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, (hereafter *Bhagavatam*), X, xxxi, 4
16. *Per. Mys.*, p. 80..
17. *Complete Works*, III, 1970, p.100.
18. *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita*, (hereafter *Gita*).VII, 17.
19. *Gita*, XII. 13-20.
20. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. William Johnston, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1973, (hereafter *Cloud*). p, 47.
21. *Imitation* p. 76.
22. *Bhagavatam*. X. xxix. 48.
23. *Bhagavatam*, X. xxxii. 20-21.
24. *Gita* VII. 18.
25. *Narada*, 1. 4-6.

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Conversations with Swami Turiyananda (continued)

Swami Raghavananda

July 9, 1915. Swami Turiyananda: "The personal God, that is to say, God with attributes, through his maya (power) first created Brahma. From this first-begotten son down to the stone, all are within maya, although the expression of power differs. The personal God and the impersonal Brahman are not two but present different aspects of one and the same Reality, just as a snake presents different aspects when lying still or crawling. "Some Vedantists consider the personal God also within maya. They do not believe in worshipping him or in his saving power. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that those who accept only the impersonal aspect are very one-sided."

Disciple: "My concept of God is very vague."

Swami Turiyananda: "It is not possible to have a clear conception of God all at once. Listen to our words. Reflect on them. Then one day in a flash of illumination you will realize for yourself the truth you have been hearing about. We also had to pass through some doubts regarding our ideas of God. Studying the scriptures, we became more confused. Then Sri Ramakrishna taught us the truth which we later experienced for ourselves in a burst of realization. Now we are established in it.

"When we studied the scriptures we thought that the attainment of nirvana was the supreme ideal. Afterwards, when we came to Sri Ramakrishna, I was struck dumb when I heard the Master chastise us for holding this ideal. He called it low. But I had great faith in his words. So I proceeded and later realized the truth of his teaching.

"The love of God that comes after samadhi, after realizing God's true nature, is devotion mixed with knowledge. There is a higher state than this in which pure devotion and true faith arise spontaneously. This state is beyond the faculty of reasoning."

July 18, 1915. During the reading of a lecture by Swamiji I was watching Swami Turiyananda. Tears of ecstasy were rolling down his cheeks. After a while he began to talk: "You are all highly educated boys. You have renounced the world. But what are you doing? Days, months, and years pass by, while you are idling away your time. Where is that yearning for God? Don't you remember how Sri Ramakrishna used to weep, 'O Mother, another day is gone and still I have not seen you?' You have become dry! You have lost your spirit! 'Who is dead-while-living? He who does not long for the truth of God.' Swamiji once said 'At the age of twenty-nine I finished everything.'

"But why should I blame you? You follow our example. We are not struggling hard. We say that we have become old and diabetic. Nonsense! These are our excuses. What we have seen in Swamiji! During his last days, when he was hardly able to breathe, he would still roar: 'Arise! Awake!' But we are giving excuses.

"The body will surely die. Let it die while working for the good of mankind. What is the truth? Rousing the divinity within yourselves and in others. Knowing that to be true, wake up, struggle, forget everything else! Struggle now or never! But I can see that you have a desire for name and fame. That won't do. Because you have university degrees you want to be somebody in the Order. You have not yet learned to be instruments in the hands of the Lord. Do you think everybody can be a Vivekananda?"

July 24, 1915. Swami Turiyananda: "C. is restless. Why doesn't he go to Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) in Bhadrak It seems he is waiting for Maharaj's return to the monastery. Maharaj hides his spiritual power. He won't let himself be caught easily. But if you surrender yourself completely to him, surely he will reveal God to you. He has that power. He is the embodiment of devotion. Since his boyhood his life was moulded by Sri Ramakrishna himself. He is his eternal companion. You have read that, in M.'s Gospel. C. should go to Maharaj and open his heart to him. Then Maharaj would be interested in him. But C. stays away. What can anybody do about it? If he really longs for the truth of God, let him have the benefit of Maharaj's holy company for some time. Then he may go wherever he pleases and pray and meditate."

Disciple: "C. wanted to know if he should go and practise austerities in Uttarkasi."

Swami Turiyananda: "Yes, that's good! I give him permission. If you wish, you also may go. Live by the bank of the Ganges and weep for the Divine Mother. Pray to her: 'Mother, I don't want anything but you.' Prepare your mind now to live a contemplative life. Work and preaching will come later."

July 25, 1915. Swami Turiyananda: "Has it been revealed to you what the purpose of this human birth is Sri Ramakrishna's life is an example for us. The Master had the vision of the living Mother of the Universe and entered into an intimate relationship with her. He surrendered himself to her. But once the Master told us, like a child, that he did not always obey her.

"If you want to catch fish, first you must throw bait into the water. Then you will see the tail of a fish, the fish will swallow the bait, and gradually you will haul it in. Afterwards you make fish curry, eat, and are satisfied.

"D. has written that he is unhappy. You see, he wants to be somebody. He doesn't want to

work under another's direction. But let him first be worthy of leadership. Why is he unhappy? It's his own fault. Why doesn't he struggle to follow the ideal? He has read the teachings. Let him practise them! What else? What is spiritual attainment - growing two horns and a tail? No, no! We understand the whole situation. He is unhappy because he does not want to work under somebody else."

Disciple: "No, sir, he is just asking your help because he has not had any spiritual experiences."

Swami Turiyananda: "What kind of help does he want? There must be self-effort. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Struggle a little! Then the guru will help you further.' From our own experience we can confirm that if you move one step towards God, he will take ten steps towards you."

Disciple: "But if the Master wished couldn't he transform and elevate anyone's consciousness?"

Swami Turiyananda: "Yes, he could, but only of those who had some substance in them. The Master used to say about some people, 'They won't achieve much in this life.' Unless there is self-effort, nothing can be accomplished. The illumined souls show us the path. Isn't that a great help? But we have to walk it. If you open your hearts to us we can show you the path, because we have walked the path."

Disciple: "We don't understand our own minds."

Swami Turiyananda: "We can help you there. But you must have the desire to control your minds."

"Once a king came to a holy man and said: 'Holy sir, please help me control my mind. I am so immersed in worldliness!' The holy man replied: 'Know this world to be ephemeral. See its worthlessness, and your mind will become detached from it.' Then the holy man held on to a pillar and asked the king to release him. The king answered: 'Why don't you just let it go?' Then he understood."

"The plate of food is set before you, but you keep your mouth closed. Do we have to force the food down your throats? This lethargy is a disease of the mind! You may ask, 'Does not the Lord do everything for his devotee?' The point is, first become a devotee, then he will do everything for you. But devotion is not to be had so easily. You have to surrender yourself completely to him. If you can't do that, weep before him and say, 'Lord, I have no devotion. I have not found you.' Men shed jugfuls of tears for riches. Learn to weep for him! Unless you do, why should God do anything for you? He does not care if you don't care. If you can feel restless for God, know that he is very near. Then you don't have to wait long for his vision. Analyze your mind! Find out if you really want him!"

"E. has some self-control. He controls his lust. But he does not spend his time in prayer and meditation. He does not direct his mind towards God. Therefore his passions found expression in other channels."

"Sri Ramakrishna once told me to increase my lust. I was shocked. The Master explained: 'What is lust? It is the desire for fulfilment. Desire fulfilment in Him and intensify that desire!' Then the lust for flesh left me."

"F. did not practise meditation or japam. He believed only in work. Yes, he gave me personal service. But what of that? You may be sure that through the Lord's grace I can take care of myself. I don't need anyone to serve me. But what could I do? Kedar Baba left him with me. I often told F.: 'Why do you live like this? Work, any servant can do for four rupees a month!' At first I tried my best to bring him out, but I failed. He did not open his heart to me and continued to live within his own shell."

"Generally, the tendency of man is to try to display his good side and to hide his shortcomings. He who can confess his faults openly before others overcomes them quickly. But it is not so easy to admit one's defects. Know that he who does so has some substance in him. G. was very frank. He used to speak openly of his faults and so got rid of them."

"Try to make everyone your own, and they will be your own. Be like a little child. If someone tells a child that a certain person is his brother, he will believe it. The more you approach the Lord, the more sincere and open-hearted you will be. Our Master was the embodiment of frankness."

Swami Turiyananda wrote to the boy who had complained that he was unhappy. The substance of his letter follows: "If you are unhappy because you have not found God, then the

more you intensify this unhappiness the more grace you will find descending upon you. But if you are sad for any other reason, shun that unhappiness with great care because it will be an obstacle in your path."

Swami Turiyananda: "He who worships the Lord only in a picture is just an ordinary devotee. But he who sees him in all beings is the best of devotees.

"Sri Ramakrishna once told Swami Abhedananda: 'There is a class of holy men who meditate in a cave. When they have realized their true nature, they give up their bodies. But that kind of ideal is not of this place. Such holy men consider everything as maya and completely renounce it, even the vidyamaya (that which leads towards God).' He who has realized the personal God can also realize the impersonal if he chooses. For him also the 'knots of the heart are rent asunder' and he knows the true nature of the Atman. But the devotees of the personal God do not want nirvana. They are not afraid of living in the world for the good of others."

July 29, 1915. Swami Turiyananda: "Why should you not attain God? Surely you will, else why did you come here? Weep before him! Don't let him rest! Pray to him: 'You are the Inner Ruler, and you know my heart. Don't you see that I want you? Reveal yourself to me!' But how many can do that?"

July 30, 1915. Swami Turiyananda: "One day Sri Ramakrishna talked about his disease. He was asked if he felt pain in his throat. The Master answered: 'What foolishness! The body does not become spiritual! It is the mind that becomes holy!'

"A man may have Spartan fortitude, be able to bear physical suffering patiently, and may hide his suffering. That is nothing. But when a man knows that his pain is of the body not of the Atman, 'then he keeps his mind detached from disease and suffering and he lives immersed in the consciousness of God.'" (to be continued)

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The Life and Teachings of Dattatreya Avadhuta Swami Chetanananda

Every religion has three parts: philosophy, ritual, and mythology. Philosophy is the foundation on which ritual builds the superstructure, and this in turn is decorated by mythology. In ancient times mythology was highly valued by men, because these collections of stories embodied their traditional, cultural, and religious views. Modern men, on the other hand, view mythology with scepticism. They feel myths are fables, concocted stories, unhistorical traditions, and, above all, they have no practical application in human life. In fact, fascinating mythology holds the spirit of religion for the masses of the world. The seeker of Truth, however, must possess an alert mind and clear judgment; otherwise he might simply enjoy these myths as charming tales and miss their teachings.

The Avadhuta Gita, one of the most celebrated and important books of Vedanta, is reported to have been written by the sage Dattatreya. There are several anecdotes concerning Dattatreya in the Mahabharata, Bhagavatam, and Vishnu Purana, as well as the Markandeya Purana which contains a short biographical sketch. The story goes like this:

There once lived an old brahmin who was a leper. His wife, known far and wide for her wonderful chastity, was very dutiful and loving to her husband, nursing him with great devotion and steadfastness.

One night, while carrying her invalid husband along a road, she passed by a tree under which

a hermit was meditating. Since it was a very dark night, the wife did not see the hermit and, as she walked by, the feet of her husband accidentally brushed against the body of the meditating hermit. The hermit was furious and cursed her husband, saying, "He who has kicked me and disturbed my meditation shall die at sunrise tomorrow."

Naturally the wife was very upset. But calming herself, she replied, "From tomorrow there will be no sunrise." Since what is uttered by a chaste woman must come true, the sun did not rise the next day; the world was filled with darkness, and chaos prevailed.

The gods went to Brahma, the creator, for a solution. He said: "Only power can overwhelm power, and only tapasya (spiritual practice) can surmount tapasya. The power of a chaste woman has stopped the sunrise, so we must seek the help of another chaste woman who can counteract her power and restore the sunrise."

At Brahma's suggestion the gods sought out Anasuya, the pure and virtuous wife of the sage Atri. They told her the whole story and asked for her help. Moved by their pleas, Anasuya approached the brahmin's wife with sweet words, saying: "The power of your word has stopped the sunrise and, as a result, the whole creation is in a chaotic condition. I have come to see if we can reach an amicable agreement. If you withdraw your command and ask the sun to rise again, I shall restore life to your dead husband with my power of chastity." The brahmin's wife agreed, the sun rose, and Anasuya kept her promise. The gods, extremely pleased, offered Anasuya a boon. In reply she asked that Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva be born as her sons - a wish that was granted; and in due course Brahma was born as Soma, Vishnu as Dattatreya, and Shiva as Durvasa.

Dattatreya, an incarnation of Vishnu, was a great sage and yogi who practised various kinds of austerities and many forms of yoga. He had a magnetic personality which attracted young sages so much that they followed him wherever he went. Dattatreya, however, wanted to be alone, since solitude is more conducive to the practice of yoga. In order to free himself from the distraction of these young followers, he submerged himself in a lake, remaining on the bottom for a long time. Still they would not go away. They stayed on the shore of the lake waiting for him to reappear.

Dattatreya then hit upon another plan to avoid the crowd. He arose from the bottom of the lake in the company of a beautiful woman who was none other than his consort, the goddess Lakshmi. Dattatreya thought that the students, not knowing who the woman was, would think that he had fallen from his high state of yoga and, disillusioned, they would then leave him. But the young sages were not deceived. They knew that Dattatreya was an incarnation of Vishnu and a great yogi, that he was beyond good and evil, and that his outward behaviour was a mere show. Consequently, nothing could contaminate him. As a lotus leaf cannot be moistened by the water on which it floats, so the mind of a yogi cannot be touched by worldliness. The young sages reasoned in this manner and remained with their revered teacher, Dattatreya.

At another time there was a war between the gods and the demons. The gods fought valiantly but were defeated and banished from heaven by the demons. In desperation they went for counsel to Brihaspati, their guru, who sent them to Dattatreya. But when Dattatreya was approached by the gods for help, he said: "Why do you come to me? I eat defiled food and live with a woman. Do you think such a person can help you conquer your enemies?"

"O venerable Lord," the gods replied, "you are always sinless. Be gracious unto us. You are a yogi. Your mind shines with the knowledge of Brahman and no ignorance dares come near. This woman is the Mother of the Universe and ever pure, the very embodiment of purity, so her company cannot make you impure."

Dattatreya was pleased and said: "All right. If you have such unwavering faith in me then challenge the demons and lure them here before me. Through my spiritual force I shall reduce their power, and then you may attack."

Following Dattatreya's command, the gods challenged the demons, who immediately gave chase, pursuing the gods to Dattatreya's hermitage. There the demons found Lakshmi seated beside Dattatreya, who was immersed in meditation. Completely overcome by her charm and beauty, they seized Lakshmi and carried her away on their heads. At this, Dattatreya laughed and said to the gods: "Victory is yours, for it is a sinful act to touch another's wife. By doing so they have weakened their physical power, and at the same time their unleashed passion has

driven them out of their minds. Now attack and conquer."

The gods followed his command. Destroying the demons, they rescued Mother Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, and returned her to the side of Dattatreya. Once more the gods were happy.

The greatness of Dattatreya has been recounted in many scriptures. At times he is portrayed as an ascetic and a yogi who grants lavish boons. Again, he is described as being worldly, luxury-loving, and carefree. This second side of him, of course, was his maya, which he displayed before ordinary people, hoping that they would become filled with disgust and leave him alone. But the wise saw his real nature and stayed in his company, receiving his blessings and boons.

The beauty of Indian mythology lies in the fact that by means of vivid and unforgettable stories, devoid of philosophical argument, practical lessons are presented to ordinary people for their edification and inspiration. Thus, the legend of Dattatreya keeps us mindful of the supreme goal of human life: Seek God if you want peace and bliss. If you allow yourself to be hypnotized by maya, then, like the demons, you will be destroyed.

Only a yogi has the right to teach the yogas. As an incarnation of Vishnu, Dattatreya was literally a born yogi. Consequently he had many disciples whom he initiated into the yogic mysteries.

Here are some examples of his illuminating instructions:

My children, let me tell you one thing: If you want to attain perfection in tapasya (austerity), in japam (chanting the name of the Lord), or in yoga, you need tremendous perseverance. If you have this indispensable first qualification, you can attain anything you choose; be it enlightenment, be it the state of a god, or be it the highest position in heaven or on earth. For those who have controlled their minds and senses and who persevere with great energy, there is nothing unknowable nor is there anything unattainable anywhere. A tiny ant, if it crawls persistently, can travel thousands of miles; on the other hand, Garuda, the king of birds and the carrier of Vishnu, cannot cross over even a small ditch if he does not make the effort to fly.

My children, if you want to practise yoga, you must remove all attachment from your hearts. If you cannot do this, then keep the company of holy men, for holy company is the panacea for the disease of worldliness. Give up all desires. But if you cannot do this then cultivate a desire for liberation. The desire for liberation destroys all other desires.

He who forsakes the immortal, indivisible, immutable, ever-free Atman, and becomes involved in sense-pleasure is like a vile crow whose attention is always fixed on filth. Shun carnality in thought, word, and deed. If your mind delights in sensual pleasure, you will miss heaven and liberation.

Sensuality leads to misery and bondage, while spirituality leads to happiness and liberation. Fools enjoy contact with the body of another, which is filled with filth, and made of flesh, blood, bones, marrow, fat, phlegm, and other impure elements. The wise shun such contact. Know this: There are three kinds of intoxicants, made from molasses, honey, and corn. But there is a fourth, the wine of carnality, which intoxicates the whole world. The wise should transcend worldly desires and concentrate on the Supreme Reality.

The essential ingredients of the human body are controlled by the moods of the mind. When the mind is troubled and unbalanced, its moods become correspondingly unbalanced and devour it. Therefore the mind should be protected by every possible means. Discrimination is possible only when the mind is calm.

Always discriminate. When you can distinguish between the Atman and the non-Atman you have reached the culmination of yoga. As this discrimination grows in the mind of a yogi, he reasons thus: I am not this body, which is composed of earth, water, fire, air, and space; and yet, clinging to this body, I desire happiness. Pleasure and pain alike come and go in the body. Since I am not the body and since in my true nature there is no ebb and flow, I am always the same; serene, peaceful, unmoved by outer events. Likewise, enjoyment and misery have their beginning and end in the mind. Since I am not the mind and since my true nature has neither beginning nor end, I am always the same; serene, peaceful, unmoved by inner events. Let pleasure and pain, enjoyment and misery, remain in the body or the mind; it matters nothing to me, for I am the Atman Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

Why should I care for virtue if I have no body? Of what use to me is wealth if I have no hands or feet or head? Therefore, in reality I have no foe or friend, misery or happiness, home or wealth. And if this is true for me then it is true for all. Space (akasha) is one but it takes form according to its container, and so there appear to be pot-space, jar-space, room-space, and so on. Similarly, the Atman is one but it seems to be many, living in many bodies.

My dear children, I have told you briefly about discrimination between the Atman and the non-Atman. Only a man of same-sightedness, he who sees nothing but the Atman in all things, everywhere and at all times, can attain to this lofty state. Those who see duality are always submerged in an ocean of grief. The mind of man fastens itself to various material objects hoping to find enjoyment in them. Instead it gathers only misery.

If your pet bird is killed by a cat you feel bad. On the other hand, if the same cat kills a mouse it does not bother you at all. So it is attachment that brings misery; in non-attachment lies true happiness.

Again, happiness and misery depend on the distribution of the gunas (qualities). If there is a preponderance of sattva (tranquillity) a man is happy, and if tamas (inertia) or rajas (restlessness) prevails he is unhappy.

Here is a simile: A man's ignorance is like a tree. The ego is its sprout from which springs up the trunk of attachment, with house and properties as its branches. Wife, children, and relatives are the twigs on which grow the leaves of wealth and crops. Virtue and vice are the flowers; happiness and misery are the fruits. And this tree, which has grown vigorously throughout untold centuries and now blocks the path to liberation, has been watered and nourished by the hypnotic spell of delusion. Desire for sense-objects is like a cloud of wild bees swarming around the tree. Their humming lulls those weary souls, engrossed in worldly enjoyment, who take rest in its shade; so there is no hope for their liberation.

On the other hand, those who have sharpened the axe of knowledge on the whetstone of holy company can chop down this tree of ignorance and enter into the quiet, serene park of Brahman, where there is freedom from the thorny plants of craving and the blinding dust of desire. Here all mental waves cease to function, and one attains illumination.

We are not the result of elements combined with senses. We are the Atman and beyond maya. As a fish lives in water yet is different from it, so the Atman lives in the body but is different from it.

A man, through constant practice of yoga, frees himself from ignorance and attains unitive knowledge. This is called liberation, or mukti. Liberation originates from yoga, and yoga from discriminatory knowledge, discriminatory knowledge from misery, and misery from attachment. Thus the man who seeks liberation must shun all forms of attachment. Non-attachment begets happiness. And as non-attachment arises from discrimination, so the life-stream of unitive knowledge is non-attachment.

Listen, here is the way to realize the Supreme Self. Purify all sense-organs through pranayama (breath control), all sense objects through pratyahara (withdrawal of the mind), all mental evils through dharana (concentration), and finally, burn all three gunas through dhyana (meditation). As fire purifies metal, so tapasya (spiritual discipline) purifies the body, the senses, and the mind.

As to posture, sit in a comfortable way. There are many postures, but select that one which helps you to sit without moving for a long time. The upper teeth and the lower teeth should not touch. Keep the eyes slightly open, just enough to see the tip of the nose. First conquer tamas by rajas, then conquer rajas by sattva, and finally be absorbed in pure Brahman.

As a tortoise withdraws its limbs into its shell, so a yogi withdraws his mind and senses from worldly objects and concentrates on the Atman. This is the way one can realize the Supreme Self. There are ten points of concentration. First, the navel, then gradually progressing upwards to the heart, the breast, throat, mouth, tip of the nose, eyes, between the eyebrows, the forehead, and last of all on the Supreme Brahman. When a person reaches perfection in these ten concentrations he becomes one with Brahman. This is the final stage of yoga.

A few words of caution: Do not practise yoga when you are hungry, tired, or worried. Avoid meditation in a place of extreme cold or heat. Do not practise yoga near fire or water, in a crowded place, in a dirty pasture, at the junction of four roads, among dry leaves, in a

palace, in a cremation ground, or in any place that may engender fear. Environment plays a vital role in the practice of yoga.

Shun evil company mercilessly. Later, when your mind is filled with God-consciousness, neither space nor time nor company will be able to disturb you. Yoga can be very effective. If you feel hot, meditate on snow; if you are cold, concentrate on fire. If you find that your mind is restless, think that you are a vast motionless mountain and that nothing can shake you.

Some of the signs of a yogi are: his body is free from disease, and a beautiful fragrance emanates from it. His mind is calm and free from cruelty. His face is serene, his voice sweet; his entire complexion is bright. His body excretes little. People love to praise him in his absence. He fears no one nor is he feared by any.

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Leaves of an Ashrama 25: Everything is Never Enough Swami Vidyatmananda

I have been reading with satisfaction - indeed it may be said with self-satisfaction - a recent book by one of America's foremost social scientists, Robert O. Hirschman of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. The work is called *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action*.

A memorable quote from the book comes from the Russian historian, W. M. Karamzin: "Give a man everything he desires and yet at this very moment he will feel that this everything is not everything." And Bernard Shaw's observation: "There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it."

Marshalling evidence from past history and recent research, Hirschman describes man as intrinsically unsatisfied, insatiable. He wants things, he gets them, his tastes refine, his expectations increase; again deception sets in. Getting seems to solve nothing, and produces boredom. One of the root motives of human action is the need to do something; which translates itself into the need to do anything. It is said that citizens in the Third World find incomprehensible the actions of those Western 'enragés' who, although enjoying countless consumer goods, are nevertheless prone to organize protest manifestations for what seem to be slender reasons.

After a time the man whose desires have been fulfilled but who still feels deceived will turn to what Hirschman terms public satisfactions - humanitarian activities, political action, participation in movements, religious enterprises, perhaps even a try at monastic life - in order to experience in a new realm the satisfactions he yearned for but did not find in the private sphere. But in time the same phenomenon appears. Publicization now turns sour as did privatization before. Here also unexpected deceptions spoil the anticipated benefits. So the individual returns to the quest for private satisfactions, perhaps with a modified approach or goal, to find that the same result repeats itself once more. Hence, says Hirschman, human existence may be seen as an oscillation between the two processes of privatization and publicization, each containing in itself the causes of its own eventual rejection.

Not only do the performances of individuals oscillate in this fashion; a similar phenomenon seems to apply in human affairs in general, as any keen observer will have noticed who has tried to understand the spasmodic movements, fads, upheavals, and conflicts occurring during

his own lifetime.

Of course, it doesn't take an impeccably researched and carefully reasoned book to point out such truths to the admirer of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The Vedantist has known it all, all along. Yet it is salutary to have such evidences from what are regarded as respectable and scientific sources. Just as in physics the most advanced findings confirm Vedanta's proposition that all is spirit or something closely resembling spirit, so now the social sciences announce that all is desire and boredom, fulfilment turning into deception. Not a bad definition for what others have called samsara!¹

Give up vain strivings and turn to Me. This is the Vedantist's answer to: There must be something more. He knows that there is something more, and that that something is the Something which motivates the relentless search, rejection, search. As a result of sufficient boredom, privatization and publicization are both rejected in favour of what has been immemorially admired as interiorization.

When social scientists become as fundamentalist as priests, and specialists in the physical sciences as visionary as rishis², then the Vedantist is justified in being satisfied, if not even a tiny bit amused.

1. Samsara: Cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
2. Rishi: Ancient sage, in Hinduism.