

THE VOICE from BEYOND THE VOID



Message from Guruji

There is only one message at all times from my Guru, i.e. keep your mind always glued to the God whether you are cooking or whether you are going to office. Here, always only means to the extent it possible in a day. It may be only once, it does not matter. But slowly slowly, thinking of the glories of the God, our mind will automatically go to Him again and again. During advance practice of this sadhana, God will see that both your interests in the mundane life as also your spiritual aspirations flourish and prosper. A question of five years of intense sadhana is itself sufficient to take you further nearer to the goal. If you are an officer or a surgeon or an industrialist, etc. you keep a big paper written with “Remember” under a glass sheet on your table. Then from time to time whenever you see that atleast once in about two hours, lay down your pen and think of God for a few minutes. This you do without fail everyday. This alone will take you to your goal. May all of us reach our goal of immense bliss.

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God does not show his grace or existence openly. He makes the ray of grace being deflected through a Guru. Hence, Guru’s grace and God’s grace are one and the same. Whatever the Lord does for us, is only to benefit us ultimately. The purification of gold by putting it directly into the fire is like the pouring of Guru’s grace on the disciple. Guru is a device through which an imaginary exit door is made to come out of the hell of samsara [phenomenal world].

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The views expressed in the various articles in this newsletter do not necessarily represent Swamiji’s views. The views are authors’ own.

Fear of Death

Swami Shantananda Puri

Oh death! Where are your threatening fangs that even sages are afraid of? Who is there in this world who is not afraid of death, from a child to an old man? Even a small child of six months is thrown in the air in play gets scared to death. It is told of Samuel Johnson, the first compiler of an English dictionary that during his last days, he was quivering from head to foot as he was scared of death. He was catching hold of the hands of his friend Boswell firmly and asking him again and again as to where he and his talents will go after death. Boswell asked Johnson whether he would like to have a doctor called who stays that side. With his irreprehensible natural humour quipped back saying, "No thanks Boswell. I can easily die without a doctor." Now the question arises as to wherefrom this fear of death arises even from childhood and how best to remedy or prevent it.

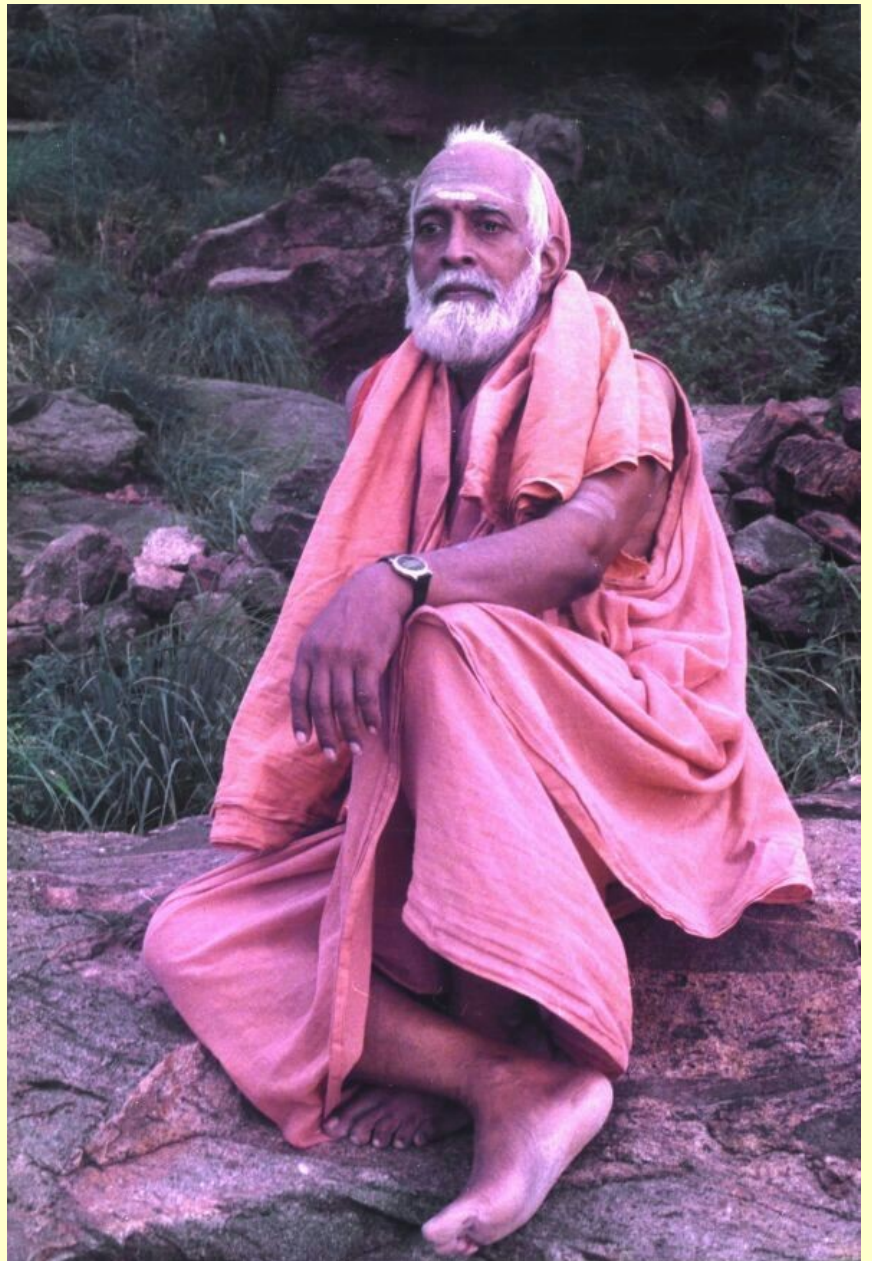
The fear of death is a latent tendency [vasana] from our previous births. From time memorial, from birth to birth, we got accustomed to an unknown fear of death. So it has to be treated like other vasanas, the vasanas like smoking a cigarette, etc.

1. The one method to get rid of the vasanas is by daily giving auto suggestions like, "Why should I be afraid of death. Every night during sleep, I die and revive in the morning." So death is also a similar experience of the cessation of our external consciousness for a longer period. There is a book called, "Durvasa Vasana Pratikara Shatakam" where in detail it is given as to how each type of vasana can be quelled. Even according to the modern psychologists, if a man has got a phobia of fear of dogs, he is advised daily to stand before the mirror, imagine that he is standing before several dogs and saying, "I am not afraid of dogs at all. Why should I be? After all they are beings like me? I am brave. I am not afraid of any dogs in this world," like that. In the same way, the vasana of the fear of death can be annihilated.
2. Secondly, everyday for an hour or so, with one pointed concentration, "Oh Lord my almighty, when you are there always by my side to protect me, why should I be scared of death. Please get rid of my fear of death." A poet sings, "Oh my Lord, please come and be before me at this last moment. Please attract me with your fascinating melody of a flute. Oh Krishna [one of the Gods], why should I be afraid when you are there tending me with the love of a dear mother."
3. Thirdly, love God so intensely that your mind always thinks of the Lord so that there will be no scope of any thought of either of life or death. He will be able to harness the thought of the Lord in the mind and there is no space in the mind for anything else.
4. You give the complete irrevocable power of attorney to the almighty and tell him, "Lord, I surrender myself unto you completely without any reservation. Do whatever you want and I will not be concerned about it any longer. Thy will be done."
5. Calling a priest of our convention in whose holiness we have faith and allow him to pray to the

Lord on our behalf. The intonation of the scriptural voice produces a sort of a dizzy half unconsciousness where the mind gets glued to the Lord to whom the priest prays sonorously.

How is it that the thoughts of God in the last minute will remove the fear of death?

When we love God in the transcendental way, there can no more be two people, the lover and the beloved separately. The lovers lane is so narrow that two cannot pass through it. In other words, the lover and the beloved, i.e. the God and the devotee get merged into one. In other words, 'I' disappear and the Lord alone remains. In such a case, how can there be a fear of death and to whom? This is actually a state of surrender. Hence, the complete power of attorney lies in the hands of God and if at all so long as the 'I' thought remains, we remain a mute witness and remain unaffected by the prospects of death.



Pingala

By Geetha Ravichandran, Commissioner of Income Tax, Bangalore

Pingala

“Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outside walls so costly gay” -William Shakespeare
[Sonnet 146]

The story of Pingala appears in the Eleventh skanda in the Bhagavatam. Pingala lived in the city of Videha. She sold her body for a living. One evening she sat outside her home, soliciting prospective customers. She was beautiful and had adorned herself seductively. She was waiting for a handsome and rich man to satisfy her lust and give her some money. For some reason, that night nobody cast her a sideward glance. Her annoyance increased. To console herself she criticised the men who did not stop, as pathetic and miserly. However her longing for a man did not cease. The night's darkness deepened. Pingala's hopes gave way to frustration. She became restless. She paced about the house anxiously hoping for a customer. She then realised that the entire city of Videha was sound asleep. No one was concerned about her.

The Avadhoota Dattatreya passed by her house just then. Pingala is described as one of his gurus from whom he learnt the lesson of detachment. Pingala consumed by anxiety and frustrated by her unfulfilled desires was anything but detached. But when Pingala realised the futility of her situation, realization dawned on her. It is said that the trigger for realization was actually the Avadhoota's presence in the neighbourhood. He was totally unattached, without a care in the world. The breeze that wafted from his body, happened to touch her. As a human being is permeable to all influences, Pingala's heart at the mere touch of that breeze was seized by the same spirit of detachment.

Pingala now sang her eloquent “ Song of dispassion.” Being thoroughly disappointed, Pingala had become parched and withered. But in a fraction of a second, instant awareness possessed her. She realised that the bodies she lusted for were a mere frame of bones upholstered by skin, covered with hair and nails, foul smelling, filled with waste which oozes out through nine orifices. She understood that the identification with the body and seeking gratification through the body, which is prone to decay and disease is sheer folly.

Pingala acknowledged that but for her miseries; the feeling of disgust with the world would not have arisen. She had thus paradoxically had the good fortune to be miserable. Only the loss of hope had enabled her to snap the fetters of hope.

The knowledge that her beloved lives within her heart conferred on her a sense of liberation. Pingala

is described as having found “a strange peace of mind as she slept happily in her own bed.”

The symbolism of the story is too obvious to be missed. Hankering after money and sex, man puts himself at the mercy of the capricious world. The promise of limitless satisfaction being, is but a receding mirage. The source of happiness is within oneself and not in the objects of the senses. Knowing this is all that is required. Maybe it was the loss of sleep, which is a state of happiness that transformed her.

Ramana Maharishi has often said that in the state of deep sleep or sushupti where even the sense of possessing a body does not remain, we are closest to the reality of our own being. The world, ego and its troubles do not exist in this state. This state is proof of the fact that happiness is our inherent state, independent of external causes.



Pingala was a woman shunned by the society which exploited her. Her engagement with life was at the grossest level. Yet the subtlest of truths touched her and transformed her. This transformation was so dramatic that she came to be regarded as a Guru by the already liberated Avadhoota.

“Dehabhimanapaasena chiram baddhosi putraka

Bodham jnanaKhadgena tannishkrtya sukheebhava”(1-14)

My son, you have been bound since a long time by your attachment to the body. Cut off that attachment with the sword “I am pure awareness” and be blissful forever. (Source –Ashtavakra Geeta by Swami Shantananda Puri).

Pingala’s disgust with the body and its insatiable demands and her understanding that the source of all happiness was within her own heart ensured that she, a daughter of Videha, could rightfully claim the legacy of the supreme wisdom imparted to Janaka the King of Videha, by the sage Ashtavakra. She became a living example of that immortal wisdom.

Stories of Mahabharata – the Victorious Pandavas

Swami Shantananda Puri

At the end of the Mahabharata war, which raged for 18 days, all the Pandavas returned back to their respective tents jubilantly and victoriously. The usual custom was when thus a king returns from war, it is the driver of the chariot who gets down first, gives his hand to the rider and gets him down. Similarly, keeping up the tradition, Dharmaputra, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva got down being guided by their charioteers. In the case of Arjuna alone, Arjuna was internally jubilant that a similar courtesy will be offered by Krishna, his driver. Krishna very casually but sternly turned towards Arjuna and told him, “Aye, what are you waiting for. Get down.” Arjuna felt humiliated but he did not show it in his face. He knew that Krishna was not an ordinary friend or driver but the almighty himself in his fullest form. Arjuna got down, then Krishna got down and immediately, the entire chariot burst into a flame of fire and was consumed in it within minutes. Krishna derisively told Arjuna, “Arjuna, do you see what would have happened to you if I were to get down first like all other drivers. So many great warriors of might [called ‘maharathas’] have thrown such divine weapons empowered by great mantras on this chariot and the chariot was already in all readiness to burn and to burst in flames. But because of my presence, the chariot was holding on till now awaiting for my permanent separation from the chariot.” Then Arjuna realised his folly and fell at his feet begging pardon for his egoistic thoughts and consequently getting enraged against Krishna.

When great people and holy people do something, and however humiliating or deleterious it may be, one should accept it unconditionally as you can never judge the reasons behind the actions of holy men and God. One should never even for a moment and whatever be the circumstances think ill of his Guru or think of disobeying him.

Lord’s decisions need not ever conform to the traditions and conventions. He is the arbiter of all events and incidents in life of people and has the freedom to do what he wants.

This only shows that we should have implicit faith in our elders and Gurudev and God and do their commands without any questions. They may not like to reveal the purpose for which a very humiliating command may be given. Later on you will find that it saved your own life.



A rare saint from America

Anecdote on Swami Sadasivananda, by Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj

Swami Sadasivananda was born in 1950 and was barely 18 years old or so when he was doing his post-graduation in Comparative Religions in a college in USA. He is an American. In the hostel, he had a roommate who used to spend his time in gambling, drinking, etc. as a result of some bad company. His father was an Army Doctor who got an idea that Swami Sadasivananda was responsible for his son going on the wrong track. He thought of taking his revenge on him.

Suddenly one day, Swami Sadasivananda [whose earlier name I do not recollect] was feeling so unwell that he had to go to the doctor and after several tests, was found to have a high degree of diabetes. Even the doctor was astonished to find such a young person develop this ailment.

With the Vietnam War in full swing, all these students in educational institutions [except those who had got the first five ranks] were to be compulsorily inducted into the army and sent to Vietnam to fight for their country. According to the procedure, the boys selected were to be first examined by a board of medical officers regarding their fitness and then the selected ones were sent to the field in Vietnam. Even though Swamiji was within the first four ranks, the father of his roommate who was a top medical officer in-charge of the entire process managed to get a letter issued to him that he should immediately report himself to the medical board for induction into the army to be sent to Vietnam.

The Swamiji got a certificate from his doctor regarding his high degree of diabetes and went to the medical board as all the doctors have been specifically instructed that this Swamiji should not be medically examined but directly sent to Vietnam but none of the doctors bothered to look into the paper or certificate he was holding in his hand. He was directly taken to the last stage where the medical officer was to put his final stamp whereby he would be transported to be sent to Vietnam. That doctor in that room happened to be a new chap and so he asked Swamiji what the paper he was holding in his hand was about. When he went through that certificate he was shocked how he was allowed by all other medical officers. He just put a stamp 'not selected' and asked him to get out by a side door.

Thus, he was saved by this diabetes from being sent to Vietnam War.

The next day he went to his own doctor when all the tests were conducted again only for the doctor to find that Swamiji's blood sugar was normal and the diabetes has disappeared without leaving any signs. When the Lord has already decided that Swamiji was to be inducted into the spiritual army, who could stand in the way of it?

Even though Swami Sadasivananda is now about 63 years old, he never once had diabetes recur. Swamiji became a professor for a short while in Comparative Religions in a college somewhere near California. Sometime in 1974 or so, he told his mother, "Mother I have to go to India and become an Indian monk. In the last birth I was born in India and became a monk for a short while but due to some reason, I was born in USA this time." His grandfather tempted him with a huge fortune if only he was to become a Christian monk in USA. Swamiji was adamant, came to India, and got the first initiation from Ma Anandamayi, an Avatar. Later on at her bidding, he took sanyas from an American sanyasi in India.

Swami Sadasivanandaji is an excellent monk who is completely devoted to the Supreme Lord, and a good friend of mine too. After a major operation in UK, he has recently returned to India and I wish him a long life.



Swami Shantananda along with Swami Sadasivananda in Tiruvannamalai

The glory of Rām Nām

By N

Rām Nām is the essence of two of the greatest Maha Mantras of the Vedas Proper. They are:

Om Namō Nārāyanāya

and

Om Nama Sivaya

From the mantra, Om Namō Nārāyanāya, if the syllable 'RA' is removed, it reads, Om Namō Nāyanāya. Ayana is the final refuge - moksha. So, by chanting the mantra without the syllable 'RA', one prays not to attain moksha.

Similarly, in the mantra Om Namā Sivaya, if the syllable 'MA' is removed, it reads Om Na Sivāya. Siva means welfare or mangal. Om Na Sivaya is the opposite of Siva. Therefore, by chanting the mantra, excluding the syllable 'MA', the chanter does not wish the welfare of people.

Both these great mantras become absolutely useless if the syllables 'RA' and 'MA' are removed from them. So, the essence of the two Maha Mantras combined together forms the word 'RĀMA'. These two syllables are considered to be huge ENERGY CAPSULES.

'RA' is called AGNI BEEJA (seed of fire). The pronunciation of the syllable 'RA' produces friction, which creates such a heat, that it burns and completely destroys all the impurities and impediments that prevent one from overcoming past obstacles and ultimately reaching the Lord.

The Lamas of Tibet, in winter time, were made to sit outdoors, in a pit and were covered in snow till their neck. They were asked to get out of the snow, without any physical effort, by concentrating on RĀ. While doing so, such a heat emanated from them, that the snow around the Lamas melted within a few minutes.

'MA' is called AMRITA BEEJA (seed of nectar). It is the rejuvenating drink of nectar. The pronunciation of the syllable 'MA' shakes out all the dirt from within and creates an eternal state of peace and love and makes a person live long. It builds a beautiful city of love, light and congruence, by demolishing all the unwanted buildings built on hatred, envy and jealousy.

For example, to build a house on a hill, the construction process cannot start right away. The land is highly uneven and completely filled with boulders and trees. So, the first step is to clear and level the land. A bulldozer is used to clear out all the unwanted elements and then a beautiful house is constructed. Similarly, 'RA' removes all the impediments from within and 'MA' helps in the construction

of the beautiful temple of love and peace.

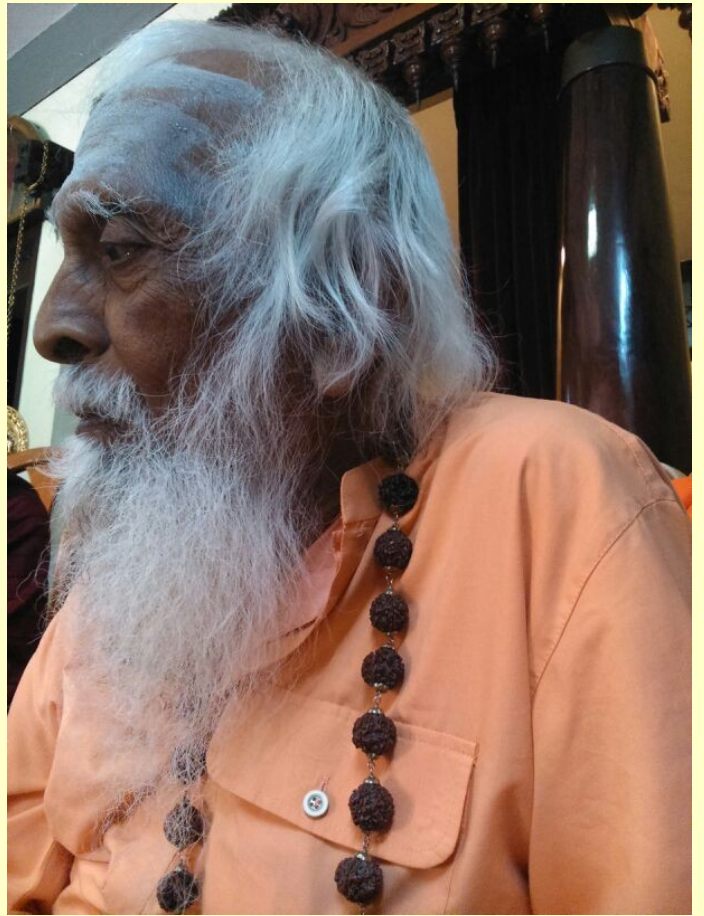
The infinite cannot be brought into a plate. The only way to bring the holy waters of the vast Ganges is to bring it in a finite container. RĀM is the smallest container, from which the great, compassionate and infinite Lord, protects, sanctifies and purifies one, not only from the present dangers, but from future calamities as well. It also provides protection from the ultimate danger of life and death.

Writing Rām Nām is more effective than chanting it out loud. It is called the 'Likhitha Japa'. It is sufficient to write 108 Rām Nāms a day. By doing so, the impossible becomes possible. Those who write Rām Nām everyday, with faith and belief receive spectacular benefits, especially in times of need. It is a talisman and the best way to attain the highest moksha.

OM SRI RĀM
HARI OM



Memories with Gurudev - At Pondicherry and Tiruvannamalai



Questions and Answers

Question from devotee: When once a liberated soul has destroyed his mind once for all, how then will he be able to deal with the world later by calling people by their right names, etc.?

Response from Guruji: We are all consciousness. The mind is a non existing shadow emanating out of that consciousness. What all lies buried in the archives of the mind, have all been imprinted in the consciousness too. For instance, if Syndicate bank has got thousands of branches. Each branch will have a small computer containing the transactions of their customers only. But simultaneously when a transaction is recorded in one branch, it is simultaneously recorded in the mega computer kept in their head quarters at Manipal. So even if all the small computers of all the branches fail to work, the master computer and the head quarters alone can retrieve the transactions.

Question from devotee: Guruji, whatever you say, I don't experience. So the only option I have is to blindly believe or have faith? Should one have a blind belief in something where one is unsure where it is headed to?

Response from Guruji: If the one who has tasted and has been in the experience is talking or the one with faith is talking, it will induce faith in you. Else whatever he will talk in English, you will hear it and leave it. Until such time a person takes the sugar and puts in his mouth, he has to merely take on faith that sugar is sweet.

Experience of the Ultimate Truth is a thing which is beyond the indriyas. You cannot use for sensing that which is beyond the scope of indriyas . For that you have to believe in vedas. Now why is it called Vedas – because it is beyond the scope of indriyas. Vedas contains direct experience of so many mahatmas and rishis, if you have faith it helps. In due course direct experience comes and then the faith is not required. Faith implies that it is blind always. And when you see or experience that, it becomes fact, there cannot be a factual faith. In other words, if you have already seen or experienced, it is not called faith.

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