

THE VOICE from BEYOND THE VOID

Words of Guruji

Japa and thought free state

All the paths will finally converge to the point of “Thought Free State” – continuous Japa or thinking of the Lord also has to take us there. Those who do not like the word God or Self or Japa or Yoga, they can try directly to become thoughtless. However, it is not so easy. The prerequisite to thought-free state is – all vasanas and desires and attachments should go. In Japa, the vibrations of the sound syllables and nama of Lord have the power to annihilate them and purify. So without the preparation, unless it has been done in previous births, it is not possible directly to go to the thought-free state. During sadhana process if you focus all your attention with entire mind on any name, mantra or statement, i.e. a single idea or thought, all thoughts including the current thought disappear and the result is only One. When mind [thoughts] disappears, only the totality exists—from there the ‘Realisation’ is not far off.

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Issue 8:

01 April 2015

You cannot become immortal. The statement “LEAD ME FROM DEATH TO IMMORTALITY” means to lead me from ‘time’ to ‘timelessness’. Timelessness is pure consciousness. Time is a circle – which has a circumference. Go inside to the centre – a point has no dimension – i.e. Infinite time.

Disclaimer:

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

Questions asked by some Foreigners to Swami Shantananda

From handwritten notes by Swamiji in January 2004

Question 1: I have all these days been striving and now removed all the impurities. What is the further thing to be done and how to do it?

Answer by Swamiji: The very fact of your saying that I have now purified myself shows that the basic impurity is still there fully alive. The basic impurity or sin is the belief that 'I' am this BODY-MIND complex; this body called 'X' or 'Y' (Harry, Dick etc.) is myself. So long as the conviction that I am an individual with body, mind, senses etc. is not erased, all the other so called impurities – desire, lust, anger, greed and pride etc. stem out of that sense of identification with one's body. So, if only the I (ego) which proclaims 'I have purified myself' is eliminated once for all, then we are already in the realm of MOKSHA (liberation) and nothing more requires to be done.

Secondly, by our true nature, WE ARE NEVER IMPURE. We are all the PUREST CONSCIOUSNESS. In a dream if Tom, a millionaire sees himself as a beggar, is he actually a beggar or a millionaire? The waking state is also a second dream where you see yourself as impure or imperfect. So long as you are dreaming and see a tiger and a forest, everything looks real. Only when you wake up you knew it was a dream and neither the forest nor the tiger was real. Similarly the waking state (which is also another dream) looks real. Only when you wake up you will know that it was also a dream, perhaps a longer one.

The word 'I' translated in any language (more so in Sanskrit – as 'AHAM') is very powerful and creates powerful vibrations when pronounced even mentally. It links you with the Supreme Consciousness, whose dream figure, we all are. So at this stage you should stick to this word 'I' in one of the following ways –

1. YOU KNOW 'I AM' i.e. you are i.e. you exist. Just live in the feeling of "amness" (your being). Do not use your mind and think 'I am'. A small child just born has no vocabulary. So, it cannot think in words. It happily lives in the consciousness or awareness of its mere 'existence'. It knows "I AM" – it is a direct knowledge acquired through the medium of the body, senses or mind. Similarly you focus your conscious attention on 'I AM'. Do not add 'I am a man', 'I am 46 years old', 'I am Harry, Tom or Dick', 'I am an engineer', etc. Do NOT qualify that 'amness'. Remain in the awareness of 'I AM'. This is only a different version of 'Who am I' recommended by Bhagawan Ramana.

2. Enquire 'Who am I!' Do not supply any reply yourself like 'I am not the body, I am consciousness etc.' Do not also repeat 'Who am I'. Simply remain attentive and be with the quest in the enquiring attitude of 'Who am I'. Remain in the expectant attitude. You will never get the answer. The 'I' that is

you, the questioning individual will disappear along with the question. The real 'I' – the Supreme Infinite Consciousness alone will remain. That is God realization. The Individuality which was the cause of all sorrow, sufferings, tension, and anxiety disappears.

3. The third method is that while walking, talking, at all times you go on focusing attention on 'I', 'I', 'I'. I is the most potent word which links you with the highest Supreme Consciousness. It is the common factor in all the three methods. You may follow whatever suits you.

The second method of enquiring 'Who am I' is meant for those who are spiritually mature. That is the question of 'Who AM I' can arise sincerely only in him who is convinced that he is not the BODY MIND COMPLEX but something else. Otherwise when you sit with the enquiry, your mind will laugh at you and come up with a comment, "Why man, don't you know that since birth you have been called Harry. Ask your parents or wife. Why this sudden doubt! Are you mad or what"?

Even though 'WHO AM I' enquiry can be done for one or two hours daily, strictly speaking, it is for all 24 hours and for all 365 days in a year. Supposing while travelling in a bus, you dozed off for half an hour and when you woke up you were unable to remember who you are. Will you ask your brain only for one hour and then cease to bother about it? You WILL NOT REST TILL YOU RECOLLECT WHO YOU ARE. So is the case here.

Have the conviction based on the teachings of scriptures and great masters that you are strictly pure, your link with the Supreme Reality has been forgotten; you are an integral part of the TOTALITY OF THE INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS. The moment you start linking with 'I' by the aforesaid methods, the Highest Supreme Consciousness pulls you toward itself while you push yourself forward towards that with the practice. If we are sincere, we have to reach the goal in a trice. It is a quantum leap into an untrodden realm.

We can do any sadhana. We do not choose the goal. We are chosen and all sadhana is done by the Totality. It is the mind which gives us the illusion of individuality. The zero watt bulb is unhappy that it is fated to be far less brilliant than 60W, 200W or 1000W bulbs. The day it knows that it is not an individual and one undivided electricity with infinite capacity and inhabits all the bulbs which are conditioned to be of different wattage, it is ENLIGHTENMENT.

Question 2: Swamiji when I was in USA, I wanted so much to be in ARUNACHALA, TIRUVANNAMALAI. I came. I was a nun in a convent for a number of years but my mind did not allow me to adjust to those surroundings. So I left. Arunachala helped me a lot in quietening my mind. Now I feel like going back to my country and take up sannyasa. What shall I do?

Answer by Swamiji: It is the mind which plays. When you are in Arunachala, it wants you to go elsewhere. When you go elsewhere, it will prompt you to come to Arunachala or somewhere else. Do not accept the tyranny of the mind. If you decide your goal and cling to it with a credible grip and with prayers to Ramana to supplement it (pray to him for 11 days) you will get guidance.

Becoming a sannyasi is not mere donning of a special robe. It is really coloring the mind, body, all cells and the entire being in the color of the Self in remaining as the Self or Supreme being in practical life. Whether you go to a convent or to your home in USA, whether you become a nun or a doctor or an engineer, you are taking your mind with you, with all its conditioning and pre-determined proclivities. One should be a sannyasi at heart by eliminating the ego (I) by relinquishing the identification with the body in the sheer knowledge that “I am not a doer at all. My body, senses and mind are activated to do various actions by the Supreme consciousness using them as its tools or instruments.” So you should behave in the world as if you are only a witness to all happenings and events.

It looks easier to control the mind in a convent where there is no opportunity for temptations. The moment you come into contact with the outside world, all the temptations will assail you with redoubled vigor. One should practice to remain in the Self and it does not matter whether you are among multitudes or in solitude.

If you dislike to remain in the east, you can't take the east and throw it in the ocean. The more you go on moving towards the west, east will recede automatically.

Wherever you may be, HOLD TIGHT to GOD or Self. Soak yourself night and day in thoughts of God at all times – walking, talking, eating etc. your indecisions regarding preference to places, calling and all problems relating to the world will all disappear in due course.

Do not swim either with the current or against it. Just float. Allow it to take you wherever it will.
LORD, THY WILL BE DONE. NOT MINE.

Commentaries on the Gospel

By Swami Shantananda Puri



Following is a brief commentary of Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj on one of the portions of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. About the glory of the Gospel, Swamiji had once mentioned, "It is only through this Gospel that I am what I am. This is the most wonderful book in the entire world. If this book alone survives and all books of the world are burnt also, this can keep the dharma alive."

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa: "With the realization of Satchidananda one goes into samadhi. Then duties drop away. Suppose I have been talking about the ostad and he arrives. What need is there of talking about him then? How long does the bee buzz around? So long as it isn't sitting on a flower. But it will not do for the sadhaka to renounce duties. He should perform his duties, such as worship, japa, meditation, prayer, and pilgrimage." [Gospel Of Sri Ramakrishna] .

Commentary by Guruji: When the Lord himself has come, will the devotee be doing bhajans? Will you be completely busy with him or do bhajans. Enjoy the Lord. If you extend it, suppose if you are in the presence of Gurudev – don't say I will sing a song, etc. Aye, enjoy his presence. When you get a very evolved Guruji, enjoy his presence. You will not get that easily. Singing can be done any time. On some days you will see the manifestation of the divine. The divinity is trying to break out of the shelter of his body. That day there will be maximum light.

If you see, the duties that has been prescribed by Sri Ramakrishna, it only means japa, dhyana, yoga practices, etc. and not money making.



Commentaries on Srimad Bhagavatam

By Swami Shantananda Puri

Following is an extract from Swamiji's book "Srimad Bhagavatam, Its Message for the Modern Man". After providing his summary on the first four of the twelve Skandhas, Swamiji once again condensed the salient messages and summarised them below. This has been reproduced here.

1. However uninitiated or inexperienced an aspirant may be, even if he were to be totally unaware of the need for a Guru, a competent Guru will come knocking at his door, uninvited, provided the aspirant has a keen, deep and intense longing and yearning to achieve the goal. Two striking illustrations are: Parikshit - Sukadeva and child Dhruva - Sage Narada. The Guru is always internal and he manifests himself externally according to the need, aspiration and yearning of the Sadhaka.
2. External harmony is essential for an aspirant seeking inner harmony and peace. Forgiveness and love must replace hatred and ill-will. Humility is a sine qua non to spiritual progress.
3. Sitting quietly and offering gratitude to the Lord by recollecting again and again those incidents in which He saved us from the verge of utter ruin and disaster is an easy way of meditating on the Lord without the mind getting diverted, Kuntidevi and the Gopikas being the best examples.
4. True dispassion and total detachment (Vairagya) – that is, cutting asunder the deluded attachment to our kith and kin and our possessions - is a "must" for Godrealisation; but this can only come to us with the Lord's Grace. So, repeated prayers to the Lord to help us tide over all our obstacles through His Grace are the only answer. Prayer is thus a potent weapon in the hands of the aspirant.
5. It is not advisable to read books which cater to the baser instincts of man. Aspirants must read only those books which extol the glories and names of the Lord and listen only to such names and glories.
6. No yagas, virtuous deeds, study of scriptures, vedic rituals, etc. will ever take us as easily to the Lord as does Satsanga, the company of holy persons and service to them and to the Lord's devotees.
7. The crux of all Sadhanas is constant remembrance of the Supreme Being or Lord, who is immanent in all beings as the Self. Narrating the glories and chanting the names of the Lord enable us to attain the supreme state of fearlessness and bliss. This Sarvatma-bhava, namely, seeing the Lord in every creature and in everything will by itself help us rid ourselves of our Vasanas (latent tendencies). Sukadeva and Dhruva represent the pinnacle of this Sarvatma-bhava.
8. While the path of Knowledge, i.e. Jnana Marga, requires the aspirant to possess certain essential pre-requisites such as control of the mind, control of the senses, Vairagya (dispassion), Viveka (discrimination), etc., the only thing needed by an aspirant following the path of devotion is the ability to hold on to the feet of the Lord in his mind, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, with a yearning and longing in his mind to have a vision of the Lord.
9. It is a good practice to remember the Lord briefly and take his name before we answer any ques-

tion put to us, even on trivial matters, and also on completion of the answer. When all reading, hearing and talking is only about the Lord and his names and glories, there will be nothing that will distract the mind away from its goal.

10. It is the mind which is responsible for both bondage and liberation. The mind is the steering wheel which, if turned towards worldly things, leads one to bondage and, if turned towards the Lord, leads to liberation.
11. Satsanga, the company of and service to holy persons is the direct gateway to liberation. Thus attachment to Satsanga leads finally to detachment.
12. When we come across a person with absolute forbearance; who is calm and collected; is a friend of all beings; is extremely compassionate; is firmly devoted to the Lord; has renounced his all - family, kith and kin, possessions - exclusively for the sake of the Lord, is willing to undergo any amount of suffering, and spends all his time chanting or listening to the names of the Lord, we can be sure that he is a holy person, a Sadhu, whose company we should cultivate.
13. The sustenance, activities, growth, decay, death, etc. of the body are all pre-programmed and pre - determined by the will of the Lord and so a Sadhaka should not concern himself with his body at all.



Our Gurudev



The Story of Jane

Narrated by Swami Shantananda Puri

There was a five year old girl called Jane. One day in the afternoon when her parents were sleeping she quietly slipped into the kitchen and emptied the piggy bank which contained one and a half dollars. She took a dollar leaving the half dollar in the piggy bank. Jane walked down to the medical shop near her home. The shop owner was busy talking on the phone while Jane waited. There was no one else to assist her. After waiting a long time for the owner Jane became impatient and began tapping the dollar loudly on the table hoping the shop owner would attend to her. The shopkeeper was furious at her for interrupting his important conversation. "I'm talking to my brother whom I haven't spoken with for the last twenty years. And here you waltz in acting all high and mighty. What do you want?" he snapped. Jane said she wanted to know if she could buy a miracle for a dollar. "Get out you mad cap, I have no miracles to sell", shouted the shop owner waiving Jane out of the shop. Just then the shop owner's younger brother walked in. He was a reputed medical doctor specializing in both Neurology and Oncology. He had heard the last part of the conversation between his brother and the little girl as he was walking in. He politely asked Jane what she wanted. She told him she wanted to buy a miracle. The doctor asked her how much money she had brought and she told him she had a dollar but could pay half a dollar more for the miracle which she could get from her house. The doctor asked her why she wanted to buy a miracle. Jane told him how she had overheard her parents talking about the tumor her two month old baby brother had and the surgery would cost 5000-6000 dollars which they didn't afford. They said only a miracle could save the little baby as he would die if the tumor was not removed. Since a miracle was the answer to their problems she decided to buy one from the shop but the shop owner was rude and had asked her to leave. The doctor on hearing this heartbreaking story, asked her to take him to her home. He introduced himself to her parents and examined the baby. He told them he would be happy to treat the baby and that he would send his car the following day and they should bring the baby to his clinic for further evaluation and treatment. Jane stayed home praying to the Lord while her parents took her brother to the clinic the next day. The doctor successfully treated the baby and waived the 5000 dollar fee for the operation. The extremely grateful and relieved parents wondered how this miracle happened and who was responsible for it. Jane who was listening from the other room chuckled to herself because she knew it was she who had bought the miracle for a dollar that saved her brother.

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