

ALL BEAUTIFUL HEART



“The Lord is the light reflected by all. Shining, everything shines after him. There is no one here but the Lord of love. In truth, he alone is.”

— *Mundaka Upanishad*

The Lord of love is opening the way before me. The next step forward that is perfect to be taken is taken through me with ease and with grace. The Lord of love is to the right of me, the left of me, above me, below me, before me, behind me. This is a magnificent practice. It will guide the way; it will light the way to our next step. If we encounter resistance within ourselves or others, this is a beautiful practice to offer. When we see a tree or a flower, we can easily say, “This is a beautiful expression of the all beautiful One.” We have more trouble seeing ourselves or our partners or our friends or our business relationships as expressions of the all beautiful One. The yogic traditions teach us that it’s far better to focus on virtues in others, as that increases the same virtues in ourselves.

When we are aware of resistance, it means there’s some kind of veil, some kind of obstruction or blockage within ourselves. We can meet our error and be with it patiently. What the light loves, it transforms into itself. So all of my ignorance I can hold in the light gently, with clarity, with kindness, letting the light melt it away. As the melting happens, there is heat involved, there is tapas involved, there is austerity involved. And that can lead to physical changes, temporary physical discomfort. It doesn’t mean that there’s something wrong with us. It means that the process of transformation is ongoing, in the way that metals can be melted and combined, and at the end of that process they’re much stronger and the impurities have melted away. That’s the process spiritually that we’re all going through all the time.

We’re recognizing, *I can be human fully and I can be divine fully.* We’re being invited to be fully ourselves. We have our own accents. That’s beautiful and perfect. We have our own stance. That’s beautiful and perfect. We have our own way of living. That’s beautiful and perfect. Every one of us is invited to identify the way the Divine would love to express through us. We’re invited to enjoy every moment of that expressiveness and then to recognize that divinity Itself is sharing itself

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through all of our faculties. And then, instead of being too attached to outer definitions and understandings of beauty, we focus on the inner beauty and come to understand that inner and outer standards of beauty reveal themselves through kindness, joyfulness, playfulness, steadiness, through the ability to be with everyone in our lives. Whatever everyone's walking through, our inner being is eternal, unblemished, untouched, unstained. Nothing can ever mar it or change it.

And so, our inner beauty connects us with the vastness of the universe. The whole universe, that spaciousness, that possibility, that strength, that steadiness, is within the heart of each of us. How magnificent the reaches of outer space, how filled with stars, with dancing constellations! That's nothing compared to the vastness of our inner space which lives within our hearts. We're all invited to be explorers of inner space. Be so at ease within that inner space that no matter what happens in the outer world, we're unshaken, unbroken. We're not shattered because we have contact with that inner grace, that inner purity, that perfection. We're able to hold inner awareness of the all beautiful Oneness that expresses itself as it can right now in every one of us, in every human being on this planet. If we look with that particular vision, the entire world is lit with the Lord of love, the Light of lights. And we are always aware that *there is love to the right of me, the left of me, above me, below me, before me, behind me, surrounding me, filling me. There is love opening the way before me, so that all proceeds with ease and grace. And the next step that loves to be taken through me will be taken through me most joyfully, most magnificently, in purity, in humility, by the Lord of love, by the Light of lights, by the all beautiful Oneness.*

Thank God and God bless us all.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri



MODESTY AND HUMILITY



In our society, modesty is looked upon as a virtue, a social grace, not a spiritual quality. We are taught to be modest in our desires, in our expressions. And that kind of modesty equates with moderation and a sense of decency. A modest person is also someone who is very mindful of being modest or moderate.

The spiritual component or the spiritual reality that transcends modesty is humility. Upon reflecting on humility, it occurred to me that there is a false kind of humility, and then there's true humility. Coleridge, a poet whose work I admire enormously, in speaking of humility says, "The devil's, or the ego's, darling sin is pride because pride goes before the fall." There is no pride greater than to think one is humble.

I was reminded of a prayer by Chaitannya, that great bhakti yogi. In this beautiful prayer, he expresses the thought, "O my mind, be humbler than a blade of grass, be steadfast and forbearing like a tree. Take no honor to thyself, give honor to all. Continually chant the name of the Lord."

Chaitannya uses the images in nature as a wonderful way to illustrate humility. There's a profound wisdom in that saying, because human consciousness has evolved beyond the blade of grass. But the blade of grass is a teacher to the ego-consciousness that has not yet evolved into divine consciousness. It is able to bend without being crushed. If you are humbler than a blade of grass, no one can break your spirit. When we are arrogant or entertain false humility, we're always crushed.

So if someone reacts to you and you refuse to react by being humbler than the blade of grass, it really means you bow in your spirit and offer yourself to Mother Earth. Another indication of humility is being able to admit, *I can never be separated from the love of God, the love that is God, the love that says I Am love forever and ever.*

God bless us.

— Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri



IMAGINE

Imagine a love so absolute, so full, and so vast that you simply cannot contain it. It is simply too big for this little one, which we may have come to believe ourselves to be, to hold. If we are willing to sit in the presence and fullness of such a brilliant light as this love and, even more so if we are willing to lose control to, surrender to, allow ourselves to be taken over by and even consumed by this pure love, this essence of our eternal being, we will awaken to that of ourselves that is the very source and wellspring of Absolute Love.

Such a love is, indeed, uncontainable by the limited self, the ego, the personality. If we are closely identified with this limited aspect, when approaching or coming into contact with omnipresence, the infinite, we may experience fear. This is a fear born of false conditioning, misunderstanding, and wrong views about who we truly are. It may feel like we are dying as we watch our false self, in which we have invested so much, fall away, melt away, dissolve like the mirage that it is. From the perspective of the survival function and seemingly infinite mechanisms of the ego, the prospect of dying to our limited self may feel to be unappealing at best and torturous at worst.

The Masters, who have themselves traversed this path, many of whom we know of in our lineage and through teachings we adore and explore, and some of whom we are so fortunate to have known and to know personally in our lifetime, have devoted their lives to our own transformation, our own awakening, our own realizing and abiding in that which can, indeed, hold and contain and IS Absolute Love. A living Master in our lives, as is our Swamiji, is a blessed and essential gift—one who always reminds us of who we truly are when we cannot see clearly for ourselves; who sees, speaks to and calls forth the best in us; who provides us understanding as well as tools and practices to support us in unraveling the knot of misunderstanding; and who holds us in and with such love and caring that it feels natural and safe to let go of our lesser self for the sake of knowing our greater Self. This Absolute Love is available to each and every one of us here and now. May all beings awaken to it. Imagine!

— Achariya Premadas



JUST LOVE ME

O Lord, my mind is restless today. I want so much to meditate deeply, but I observe that my mind is rehearsing the dozens of things I have to do today. I don't want to give energy to these tasks, but the thought of them, the planning needed to get them done, keeps twirling through my brain. And I don't want to forget all that I have to accomplish today.

*Love Me, and let the rest go.
And anyway, who has to do all these things?*

O my Beloved, even when I let go of these scampering thoughts about what I have to get done, now something even deeper comes to the surface. There is an old memory of something that was distressing to me at the time. Even though that time has long passed by, the memory still has a little kick to it. I don't want to go there, but that thought wants to come here. Even when I bypass that particular thought, more recent memories may come. Some of them are very pleasant, and these insinuate themselves into the mind, like a garden pest that finds a tiny opening into the much larger space of the house I live in.

Love Me, and offer all your wandering thoughts to Me.

O Beloved, now I see. I only have to lift my mind, my thoughts, all this busyness of the mind into the place where you dwell within me. And to love thee and thee alone. I see now how all else falls away like fluff from a dandelion puff, to be carried away in the breezes of love. There is no struggle involved when I simply lift my focus to thee. It's like sinking into a cozy chair: I just let myself go and fall into the lap of thy love. How much struggle is there in relaxing into a comfortable chair?

*Love Me, and you will feel My presence within you as a steady flow of
My love for you and your love for others.*

— Srimati Shanti Mataji

I HAVE JOINED MY HEART TO THEE

I have joined my heart to Thee: all that exists art Thou;

Thee only have I found, for Thou art all that exists.

O Lord, Beloved of my heart! Thou art the Home of all;

Where indeed is the heart in which Thou dost not dwell?

Thou hast entered every heart: all that exists art Thou.

Whether sage or fool, whether Hindu or Mussalman,

Thou makest them as Thou wilt: all that exists art Thou.

Thy presence is everywhere, whether in heaven or in Kaaba;

Before Thee all must bow, for Thou art all that exists.

From earth below to the highest heaven, from heaven
to deepest earth,

I see Thee wherever I look: all that exists art Thou.

Pondering, I have understood; I have seen it beyond a doubt;

I find not a single thing that may be compared to Thee.

To Jafar it has been revealed that Thou art all that exists.

— Quoted from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*
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CHINTAMANI

Within this ever changing body resides the eternal Brahman, God, Consciousness-Existence-Bliss Absolute. Realization of the indwelling nearness of, in truth, the inseparable oneness with Brahman awakens man to the conscious cognition of the illimitable power of his wisdom, will and love. He gains the illumination that he is above all conditions of duality, and secures that transcendental self-assurance of moral and spiritual strength which inspires and enables him to live by righteousness and truth amidst all the adversities and perplexities of life.

The source of man's divine qualities is the infinite perfection of God. But man cuts himself off, though not completely, from this spiritual reservoir by his own thought of self-separateness and consequently of self-limitation.

"Man thinking himself separate from Brahman, revolves on the wheel of birth and death." *

Man, in his soul, is omnipotent. By divine benediction he possesses the power to liberate himself from the thralldom of bondage by realizing his identity with God.

"In the realization of Brahman is the severance of all bondage of self-limitation." *

**Svetasvatara Upanishad*

— Sri Swami Premananda Giri

REVELATIONS OF A COSMIC TRAVELER

Let us realize the peace that passeth understanding, the peace that we find within, the peace that flows forth from prayer and meditation and Self-realization, the peace that allows us to truly be of service, knowing that the Divine is the only doer. When we come into contact with that peace, we inherit the earth. We are one with all that is. We realize that there is only one will, ever—divine will—and that divine will expresses fully and freely in earth as in heaven. When we are one with divine will, one with divine love, then there is no separation between earth and heaven. There is no human-created wall, border, or boundary that can withstand eternal Love. There is only Love.

Letting go of judgment, anger, and attachment, letting go of grasping and aversion, we may enter into the court of righteousness, joy, and freedom. We may dance and sing and make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Letting go of hunger for temporary satisfactions, we may be filled eternally with that grace which satisfies every hunger—first on an inner level, and then guiding us to whatever outer nourishment will best nourish and strengthen the body-temple. Let us ask ourselves, *For what am I truly hungry? Am I pursuing righteousness, which satisfies lasting hunger? Or am I allowing myself to be distracted by passing treats or fancies?* Let us allow ourselves to be filled with the plenitude of Oneness, the abundance of pure love and light, which brings lasting joy and clarity.

— *In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri*

QUOTES FROM RABINDRANATH TAGORE

“Patriotism cannot be our final spiritual shelter; my refuge is humanity. I will not buy glass for the price of diamonds, and I will never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity as long as I live.”



“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, where knowledge is free. Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls. Where words come out from the depth of truth, where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection. Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit. Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action. Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake!”



“There is a moral law in this world which has its application both to individuals and organized bodies of men. You cannot go on violating these laws in the name of your nation, yet enjoy their advantage as individuals.”



“I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.”



“The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”



“If you cry because the sun has gone out of your life, your tears will prevent you from seeing the stars.”

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS

“Cheerfulness gives us an inner strength. It gives us access to inner sunshine that we can draw forth always, at any moment. When we have contact with this inner sense of cheerfulness, we have contact with an inner sense of resiliency, possibility, vitality, and dynamic inspiration. If you ever find you’re not in cheerfulness, take a breath, let it go, and say, ‘It’s a new beginning right now, and right now, and moving forward, I choose to create cheerfulness.’ Do it 20,000 times a day if you need to. And in that way, you create a pathway to cheerfulness. You’re actually laying down tracks of cheerfulness. Let it be fun, keep a sense of humor, celebrate everything, gather the blessings in every moment. There are spiritual bouquets of blessings that are being showered down upon us in every moment. And the more that we open ourselves to them, the more we’re able to receive.”

— *Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*



“What joy and jubilation, what exaltation of mind and heart pervade us when we behold the Soul in all its array of beauty, holiness, sweetness, tranquility, love and peace! Our whole being responds with shouts of “Hosanna.” Our body receives the impress of the Divine. Our senses are uplifted in devotion. Our eyes are bathed in the light of the all-pervading presence, purity and beauty. Our mind is saturated with blissful calmness and made iridescent by the light of purity. When man recognizes his true nature as first reflected in another who has attained the realization of God, he intuitively knows that this is his own nature and that he has the potential of showing it forth on earth.”

— *Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri*



“We all possess love. We can increase this imperishable wealth by sharing it with all beings, unconditionally. Love unfolds from within us the realization of our oneness with God and with all creation.”

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*

WE ARE NOT THE BODY

We are not the body. Thank God we are infinitely more than the body!

Our bodies deserve our utmost respect and loving attention. They are earth suits that allow us to live in this beautiful world. It is our sacred duty to nurture and honor our human garment.

At some point, however, we all experience physical discomfort—perhaps even a significant health challenge. When we find ourselves in that situation, how do we move forward in grace and with ease? How do we inhabit this physical self, yet not overly identify with it? How do we maintain spiritual equilibrium when our body is demanding attention?

Acknowledging that every experience is an invitation for spiritual growth, we can greet a physical difficulty as an opportunity to go deeper, to discover what is unalterable about ourselves. We can ask the Divine, “What can I learn from this experience? What would you have me know?” We ask the question, and then, with joyful expectation, wait for the answers to unfold.

Great Masters who have come before provide inspiration and guidance. They understood the relationship between the inevitable limitations of the physical body and the limitless nature of the soul.

Jesus, on the cross, expressed love and forgiveness for those who crucified him. Ramakrishna comforted his wife before he died, saying, “Why do you cry? Because the one who is, is not going to die.” Many of us were blessed to witness the light of our beloved Swami Shankarananda shine ever more brightly even as his physical body neared its time of transition. These enlightened beings demonstrated full realization of our eternal nature. Physical pain or discomfort could not shake their identification with the Divine.

May each of us be so firmly aligned with our true nature that experiencing every aspect of our physicality only serves to strengthen our spiritual understanding. Thank God we are infinitely more than our precious bodies!

— *Karuna*

JOY OF THE INFINITE

- All life is sacred. All life that comes into expression in this particular realm comes from the Oneness. All the many-ness that we ever experience in this realm is only the One choosing to share Itself in the world of time, in the world of space, so that we may have the invitation to focus on the Oneness in the midst of everything.
- Wherever we may be called to walk, we will always be at home, in the midst of the most impossible challenges. Grace is possible in the midst of it all.
- If you ever find yourself wanting to smile, you can actually place a divine smile on your face and know that you're giving yourself the invitation to grow into that smile, even if you're not feeling it completely on the inside right now.
- Focus not on the injustice, focus on the bringing of justice. Focus not on the darkness, focus on the bringing of light. Focus not on the pain, focus on the bringing of healing. What we focus on, we actually create for ourselves. What we focus on, we actually bring into our lives. As we focus on pure love, what gets brought into our lives is pure love. As we focus on healing, what gets brought into our lives is healing.
- If you ever have that feeling of isolation or the feeling of being cut off, that's precisely the invitation to call on Oneness and say, "I know One without a second is all there is. God the good is all there is. Divine Grace is all there is. So right now, I am with Divine Grace."
- We can ask ourselves, "What pain and what limitation and what attachment am I ready to release?" Even if humanly it doesn't feel like we're ready to release it, we can turn to Grace and we can say, "Heavenly Light, thank you for sweeping through me and washing away limitation, blockage, pain and attachment. Thank you, Heavenly Light, for washing it away, melting it away, transmuting anything in me that is not the light, so all of me is integrated and lifted up into the light."

— *In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri*

SWAMI SHANKARANANDA'S PEARLS

- The nature of true love is that it always aspires to reveal to you the best that is within you and in others and in all of life. One who embraces that kind of love meets with that kind of love everywhere. One who doubts the reality of that love meets doubt everywhere.
- We all came into this world endowed with the spiritual qualities we would need to live fruitfully and joyfully. I trust that every day you devote more time to focusing on your spiritual treasures, your divine wealth. I cannot stress the importance of that enough, because it is so easy for us to focus on what we lack, thinking that it would make us happy if we had it.
- Of what value is all the spiritual wealth—or any wealth in life including so-called material wealth—if it is not shared? One who clings out of fear to any possession is a slave to that possession.
- You see, beloved ones, the moment we react, we are committing injury. Yes, the truth is enlightening and liberating. The moment we react, we are committing self-injury. We harm our own well-being when we react. Our spiritual discernment becomes clouded.
- What I came to realize about both Buddha and Jesus is what they had to do to maintain noble silence in the face of antagonism and resistance: they had to shift their focus from what was going on around them. They chose to rest in the pure awareness of being. Be still and know that nothing and no one can invade the sanctity of your heart, your still point, the sacred place of the most high.
- Noninjury is that state of nonreaction experienced when you choose to focus, to immerse, to absorb your attention in that center of stillness, of peace, of harmony, of clarity, of pure consciousness. You focus there simply by choosing to direct all of your energy to that sacred place. Then whatever hailstones come, they cannot touch you.
- Let's say you're confronted with someone who's argumentative or hostile. If you look at the person, you're going to react. If you look at the person's spiritual eye, you will not be able to react. It's nothing you do with your physical eyes; it's all an act of consciousness.

— *In Love, Swami Shankarananda Giri*

GARLAND OF TRUTHS

“The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences. When love and hate are both absent, everything becomes clear and undisguised. Make the smallest distinction, however, and heaven and earth are set infinitely apart. If you wish to see the truth, then hold no opinions for or against anything. To set up what you like against what you dislike is the disease of the mind. When the deep meaning of things is not understood, the mind’s essential peace is disturbed to no avail.”

— *Chien-chih Seng-ts’an*



“When we look upon everything as the *lila* [play] of God, we have no question left to be answered. Everything is as it should be. We see things as they are, as planned by the divine will.”

— *Swami Ramdas*



“There is no greater mystery than this, that we keep seeking reality though, in fact, we *are* reality. We think that there is something hiding our reality and that this must be destroyed before reality is gained. How ridiculous! A day will dawn when you will laugh at all your past efforts. That which will be on the day you laugh is also here and now.”

— *Ramana Maharshi*



“Astonishing! Everything is intelligent!”

— *Pythagorus*



STORYTIME

A woman grew up in Kansas, smack dab in the middle of waves of grain shimmering in the breeze. But she had never seen water waves, as she had never been to the ocean. True, she had seen pictures of the ocean, advertisements for beautiful places with crystal clear waters or surfers riding gigantic waves.

She had swum in a local lake and knew the feel of fresh water on the skin, but she could not imagine how salty water would feel, nor could she anticipate the mighty power of ocean waves breaking near the shore.

One day as a young adult she had the opportunity to visit a beach along the Delaware coast. She was amazed to see the vastness before her eyes, to hear the swish and roar of waves continuously rolling in, day and night.

Finally, after a night of sleep, she awoke ready to take her first dip in the ocean. And doing so, she now knew what the energy of waves felt like, how salty water felt on the skin, and experienced the delight of playing in the waves.



Although the one world ocean laps the shores of all the continents and has tens of thousands of miles of coastlines, she did not have to travel to every continent in order to enter the ocean and find out what the ocean was like.

Similarly, God is everywhere, manifesting Itself as the ocean and the ant, as the human and the star, as the ear of corn and the mighty waterfall. This omnipresent God is known as Love divine, as wisdom, as peace, as healing, and all the other equivalences for that one Reality that could be named. To realize the experience of God firsthand in everything, we do not have to separately realize God as the ant and God as the stars, any more than the woman had to enter the ocean in thousands of different places. And that one portal to the realization of God has been specially designed individually for each and every one of us. And that is our own Self, entering which we know the expansiveness and beauty of the All.

— *Love, Srimati Shanti Mataji*

SPRING BLOSSOMS



— Art by Devarati

SPIRITUAL READINGS

You Are the Universe:

Discovering Your Cosmic Self and Why It Matters

By Deepak Chopra, M.D. and Menas Kafatos, Ph.D.

I had the good fortune to hear these two distinguished authors give a talk about their new book at the ashram I was visiting in February. The book presents nine big questions and tries to answer them with the authors' combined knowledge of yoga philosophy and quantum physics:

(1) What came before the Big Bang? (2) Why does the universe fit together so perfectly? (3) Where did time come from? (4) What is the universe made of? (5) Is there design in the universe? (6) Is the quantum world linked to everyday life? (7) Do we live in a conscious universe? (8) How did life first begin? (9) Does the brain create the mind?

While the authors laughingly admitted they really don't know the answers, the book reveals many advances in the field of quantum physics and makes a compelling case for exploring cosmic consciousness when science has reached its limit, which is often.

The chapter entitled "The Power of Personal Reality" introduces the concept of "qualia" or qualities of consciousness that include subjective experience and perception that supersede so-called objective measurement. Its impact is best described here:

"To discover where the evolutionary tidal wave is headed, we need only explore one of the most amazing human traits, shared so far as we know by no other living creature. We are aware of being aware. The next horizon, it turns out, is inside us, and if we want to take the next leap forward in our evolution, the only map is the one we create for ourselves, in our own consciousness."

— Ananda

HEALING PSALMS

Commentary on Psalm 91

Let go of preconceived ideas about the way everything is supposed to develop. There are as many ways as there are beings. I Am the way. That means I Am the many ways there are to self-enlightenment and freedom. There's no such thing as anyone saving you. You will save yourself. Salvation is of the Lord, not of humankind. Remember that? That's scripture. It's right there in the Good Book. Long before they attached a personality to it.

The psalmist acknowledges his understanding of the divine nature, the divine Self. "Thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge," David says, "even the most High, thy habitation." Let's ask ourselves if we have done that. Can you say, "Yes, I have made the most High my dwelling place?" Every day you have fifty to sixty thousand thoughts. It's amazing; I wonder how long it took them to calculate that. No, I really don't wonder about it. One thought is too many. One truth is enough.

Imagine, we're processing fifty to sixty thousand thoughts a day. We're quite amazing. Just think of the capacity, to accommodate fifty to sixty thousand thoughts. Or perhaps our true capacity is to let them pass. We can't hold onto thoughts. Isn't that a blessing! How many thoughts do you have that you want to let go of—and don't know how? This is critical. We have so many useless thoughts, and they tend to be the ones that we experience over and over.

This is a man of faith, to claim that thou—meaning all of us—hast made the Lord thy refuge, even the most High, thy habitation. Because of that, no evil shall come nigh thy dwelling place, and no plague—whatever name a plague is called in our times—would ever come near thee. The moment it does, it gets a message from you—"Ooh, he doesn't like me. Ooh, she's mean. I'm going to find someone else who believes in me."

"I have made the Lord my refuge, my dwelling place." Remember how the Psalm began? "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the protection of the Almighty presence." What's the secret place of the most low? Have you ever thought about that? Let's abide in the one power. All spiritual disciplines are about finding out how we can establish our mind on the presence of God.

—Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri



JA HOYE JAY

Anandamayi Ma, the Indian saint widely recognized as a fully realized embodiment of the Divine Mother, often responded to those who sought her counsel with a favorite aphorism, *ja hoye jay*: whatever comes is welcome.

I can imagine that some, perhaps hoping for a more comforting assurance of relief from their troubles, may not have embraced this guidance with joy and fullness of heart! But for those earnestly seeking how to view the challenges life brings while remaining steadfast in faith, her words pierce through maya and make visible a door to joy that we may not have seen before.

Whatever comes is welcome. It's easy enough to welcome with joy the experiences that immediately expand our hearts with gratitude for desires satisfied, for unexpected beauty, gestures of friendship and glimpses of grace. But what about experiences that trigger fear, pain, anger, grief, or any of the multitude of reactions we would rather not feel? Swami Shankarananda used to remind us that Paul (in Thessalonians) didn't say, "For all things give thanks," but rather, "In all things give thanks." Seen from this perspective, whatever comes can be welcomed—not just endured or grudgingly accepted, but, as Ma emphasized, embraced with openness of heart and mind as a gift from Divine Grace, given not randomly or with intent to cause suffering, but with absolute, unwavering love and wisdom to help us advance on our path of Self-realization.

The practice of welcoming whatever comes dissolves all resistance, allowing us to be fully present in each moment without judgment, observing the passing pageantry of the world and our own circumstances while remaining attuned to the One behind all manifestation. And we can relax, trusting the clear guidance of that still, small voice within that always knows the perfect way forward. May we continue growing with grace and gratitude for whatever comes, seeing the beautiful hand of the Divine at work for the best and highest for all. *Ja hoye jay!*

— Padma

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: Help! I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Answer: Sometimes it feels in embodiment that we are navigating between a rock and a hard place. It is so! We all have the ability to fully inhabit twoness. We can disconnect from the limitless. We also have the ability to connect with the limitless and to be fully present here. Often we toggle back and forth. Anytime we notice, *I'm toggling toward identifying with the dreary and feeling, "Woe is me,"* then we're given the opportunity to say, *I've been given the gift of the toggle.* We're inviting ourselves to consciously claim our gift.

Remember the next time you're in a tense meeting or the next time you feel like yelling at a parent or a child or a friend, your neighbor or your partner, *I can toggle!* Sometimes, humanly, it takes every ounce of our strength. If you ever feel that way, say, *Divine Grace, I give you all of my strength and if it's not enough, then please share all of your strength with me so that kindness and forbearance are shared through me.*

Anytime we say, *I want freedom, kindness, peace, forbearance,* we're actually pulling that to us, as though it's attached to us like a rope that we're pulling on. Anytime we say, *I don't want anger, meanness, violence, frustration,* we are also pulling on that rope. Anytime we turn our attention to what we don't want, we attract it. The next time you find yourself frustrated, impatient, upset, angry, fighting against anything, and this is true within ourselves, within our workplaces, in our relationships, in our world, in our meditations, just ask yourselves, *Am I fighting it? And, in fighting it, am I actually energizing it? And in energizing it, am I actually hauling to me what I don't want?*

Recognize that where we put our attention is vitally important. Choose to dissolve the identification with what we want and don't want, and be free. Ask the Divine, *How would you love to share light through me? How would you love to see this situation through me? How would you love to speak through me? How would you love to be of service through me?* When we do that, magnificence becomes our daily reality.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the voice of wisdom, of pure gladness within us, says, "I am the strength of the strong who is devoid of selfish attachment." Memorize this. Divine strength comes to you every time

Q & A (Continued)

you remember this verse. Divine strength is what we are as soon as we remember, *I am the limitless kind one, not the impatient face I sometimes put on as a mask and pretend to be.* Everyone is invited to God's dance. Knowing that, we treat everyone with honor and respect. Humans have peculiarities. As we keep clarity and let go of judgment, we expand the circle of our kinship. There are no boundaries on the circle that God draws; everyone is part of it.

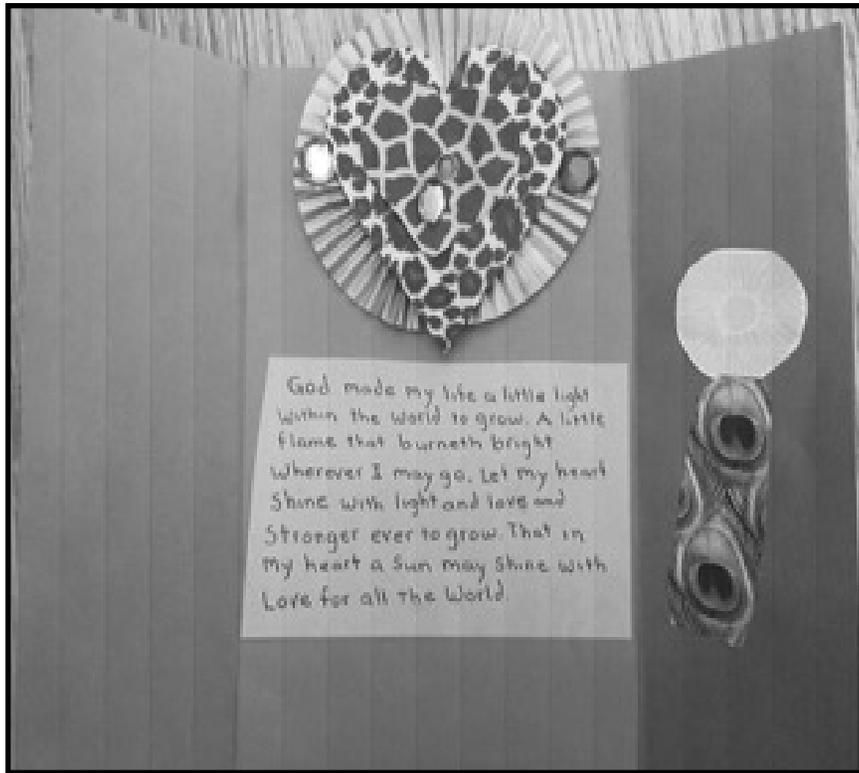
Let our mind connect with the infinite Self which is already everywhere and already has the wisdom. Say to the infinite Self, *Let me be aligned with you. I'm ready to receive the gifts that you're ready to share with me.* Be open to receiving energy, blocks of information, images, bursts of insight. As you call on the Infinite to be infinite through you, you are opening a doorway in your awareness and then, there are no more rocks, no more hard places.

Thank God and God bless us all.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri



FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL



During a recent class, the teacher shared a technique offered by Swami Nityananda to place our hands over our hearts and tune in to our feelings. Connecting with the divine love that is always present within each of us can serve as a compass to help guide us in choosing love, light and kindness in all our thoughts, words, and actions. The children used art supplies to create a personal shrine to serve as a daily reminder to check in with their hearts and dedicate their day to sharing God's love.

DIET AND NUTRITION: ALMOND AND SWEET POTATO STEW

Humans evolved on a diet very different from today's eating habits. The Paleo diet is an effort to eat like our ancient ancestors did. This means any food that our ancient ancestors could hunt or find such as meats, fish, nuts, leafy greens, regional veggies, fruits and seeds. The ideal of the Paleo diet is to nurture vibrant health while in harmony with the way of Mother Earth. The stew recipe below is a delicious example!

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 fresh jalapeños, seeded and minced
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- A pinch crushed red pepper
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 28 ounces can diced tomatoes
- 1 pound fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into thirds
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- ¼ cup unsweetened natural almond butter

Directions:

- In a large soup pot or Dutch oven, heat oil over medium heat.
- Add onion, jalapeños, ginger, garlic and spices. Cook for 5 minutes. Season with freshly ground black pepper.
- Add sweet potatoes and cook 5 minutes more.
- Add tomatoes, green beans, vegetable broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork. (This usually takes longer!)
- Stir in the unsweetened almond butter and simmer until heated through.

Serve immediately. Namaste!

— Recipe from Swami Nityananda; information organized by Ruci



LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS



Creation follows the law of self-perfection. There are two ways of life: one is the path of the senses, and the other is the path of the Self, mystically called the southern passage and the northern passage, respectively. Those who follow the path of the senses, after their departure from this plane of consciousness, enter into another plane of relative existence. But they inevitably return to the sensory world. This is the law of the path of the senses.

Those who follow the path of the Self, aspiring to realize the Self by purity, faith and self-enlightenment, attain to the state of supreme illumination in self-effulgent, absolute pure-consciousness. Absolute pure-consciousness is the state of highest perfection. It is immortality and bliss. It is the ultimate destiny of all beings. None ever returns from this state of highest perfection. This is the supreme goal.

— *Prashna Upanishad*



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