

GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Mark your calendar for a weekend Retreat** at the end of April. **Swami Nirakaranandji** of the St. Louis center will be here from Friday evening Apr 26th till Sunday morning on the 28th, offering us his wisdom about Raja Yoga.

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

March is a month for study of Karma Yoga, a spiritual path leading to the abandonment of selfishness. As a karma yogi, you practice offering your actions and their results, as well as your perceptions, thoughts, and feelings to the Divine Presence.

Even before fully knowing this Presence, you hold firmly to the belief that the Presence *is within* each person or other living being that you interact with or serve. Working and abiding in this spirit, you are increasingly able to release attachment to your activities and their results. This yields the freedom and contentment promised by Karma Yoga.

“Even a little practice of this yoga will save you from the terrible wheel of rebirth and death ...” — Sri Krishna, Bhagavad Gita, Ch. 2

“There is no limit to the power of the human mind,” wrote Swami Vivekananda in his introduction to Raja Yoga, the swami’s translation of and commentary on *Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras*. That infinite power is our birthright, Vivekananda says — yet most of us have very little control of it. Why is that? According to the teachings of Vedanta, it is because we yield our attention to the overlay of time, space, and causation (*maya*) that spontaneously arises when the Divine Power — OM — becomes manifest.

Maya dissipates our power. It fragments the eternal, the changeless, into an ever-renewing succession of good and bad experiences. Life becomes a hall of mirrors — discontinuous, fundamentally illogical, often frightening. Is it any wonder that we grasp at anything that seems to offer some security, or ease our pain?

“There must be some way out of here,” sang Bob Dylan ... “There’s too much confusion, I can’t get no relief ...”

Don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian spiritual master, offered his student Carlos Castaneda a years-long series of lessons on a “way out of here.” He called the technique “stopping the world.” Castaneda

chronicled Don Juan's instructions in his book, "Journey to Ixtlan."

This morning we will explore and discuss several chapters of the book, and compare what Don Juan taught with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the sage Patanjali.

But first let's talk a little about OM, and why it appears in the title of today's talk —

Mind Your OM Business

The shortest of the Upanishads — the Mandukya — starts this way:

The syllable OM, which is the imperishable Brahman, is the universe. Whatsoever has existed, whatsoever exists, whatsoever shall exist hereafter, is OM. And whatsoever transcends past, present, and future, that also is OM.

All this that we see without is Brahman. This Self that is within is Brahman. This Self ... is one with OM ...

So, according to the Mandukya, OM — clearly and unavoidably — **is** our business.

How mindful we are of that, how aware we are of it from moment to moment — and why we may not be — that is another matter.

Mandukya means frog. A frog has four stages of existence: egg, tadpole, adult, and dead. When Sri Ramakrishna met Keshab Sen, the head of the Brahma Samaj, the Master used this frog metaphor to describe Keshab's stage of development.

Ramakrishna said, "He has dropped his tail ... ," meaning that Keshab was spiritually mature. A tadpole drops its tail when it becomes an adult. An adult frog is an amphibian, capable of living both in the water where it was born AND in the "higher world" outside its pond. It may sometimes be "in" the world of its birth, but it's no longer "of" it.

How can we become like Keshab Sen? Let's hear a little from Swami Vivekananda. This is from "Raja Yoga," Swamiji's translation of and commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras:

(Our) good and bad deeds are not the direct causes in the transformations of nature, but they act as breakers of obstacles to the evolutions of nature: as a farmer breaks the obstacles to the course of water, which then runs down by its own nature. The water for irrigation of fields is already in the canal, only shut in by gates. The farmer opens these gates, and the water flows in by itself, by the law of gravitation.

So all progress and power are already in every man; perfection is man's nature, only it is barred in and prevented from taking its proper course. If anyone can take the bar off, in rushes nature. Then the man attains the powers which are his already.

Those we call wicked become saints, as soon as the bar is broken and nature rushes in. It is nature that is driving us towards perfection, and eventually she will bring everyone there. All these practices and struggles to become religious are only negative work, to take off the bars, and open the doors to that perfection which is our birthright, our nature ...

... the great ancient evolutionist, Patanjali, declares that the true secret of evolution is the manifestation of the perfection which is already in every being; that this perfection has been barred and the infinite tide behind is struggling to express itself. These struggles ... are but the results of our ignorance, because we do not know the proper way to unlock the gate and let the water in. This infinite tide behind must express itself; it is the cause of all manifestation.

... this perfect nature behind will make us go forward until everyone has become perfect ...

In the animal the man was suppressed, but as soon as the door was opened, out rushed man. So in man there is the potential god, kept in by the locks and bars of ignorance. When knowledge breaks these bars, the god becomes manifest.

Swamiji confidently asserts that in each of us there is a god, enchained there by the locks and bars of ignorance. What can we do to break those locks and bars of ignorance?

Let me introduce Don Juan Matus, an indigenous spiritual master. A Yaqui Indian by birth, **he tells us we can learn to “stop the world!”** Don Juan’s student, Carlos Castaneda, wrote about his benefactor’s teachings in several books. The material we’ll discuss today is from Castaneda’s “Journey to Ixtlan.”

(Introduce Don Juan)

Don Juan’s Lessons on Stopping the world

Erasing Personal History

Losing Self-Importance

Death Is an Advisor

Assuming Responsibility

Becoming a Hunter

Being Inaccessible

Disrupting the Routines of Life

...

Becoming Accessible to Power

From Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes,
the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself
and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also,
but I shall not let it...

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much?
have you reckon'd the earth much?
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at
the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall
possess the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun,
(there are millions of suns left,)
You shall no longer take things at second or third
hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead,
nor feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either,
nor take things from me,

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from
your self ...

Trippers and askers surround me,
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life
or the ward and city I live in, or the nation,
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies,
authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks,
compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man
or woman I love,
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself,
or ill-doing or loss or lack of money,
or depressions or exaltations,
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war,
the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events;
These come to me days and nights
and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling
stands what I am,
Stands amused, complacent,
compassionating, idle, unitary,
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an
impalpable certain rest,

Looking with side-curved head
curious what will come next,
Both in and out of the game and
watching and wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated
through fog with linguists and contenders,
I have no mockings or arguments,
I witness and wait.

Q&A & Commentary

CLOSING CHANT