

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.
- **Seva Saturday for April** will fall on the 14th. Please note that date — it's the 2nd Saturday of the month, as usual — please join us sometime between 10am and 2pm. This is a fine way to show your dedication to the Center and its success.
- **Next Sunday's talk** is about the three phases of spiritual attainment that can result from the practice of contemplation, concentration, and meditation. We will define and discuss **Self discovery, Self actualization, and Self realization.**

CHANT • POEM • WELCOME • TOPIC

Our Need for Thee

by St. Francis of Assisi

In our ever present need for thee,
Beloved, let us know your peace.

Let us be your instruments that break every
shackle, for do not the caged ones weep.

And give us our inheritance of divine love
so that we can forgive like you.

And let us be wise, so that we do not wed
another's madness and then make them
in debt to us for the deep gash their
helpless raging lance will cause.

Darkness is an unlit wick;
it just needs your touch, Beloved,
to become a sacred flame.

And what sadness in this world could
endure if it looked into your eyes?

God is like a honey bee, He doesn't mind me
calling Him that; for when you are kind—sweet—
He nears, and can draw you into Himself.

What is there to understand of each other:
if a wand turned the sun into the moon
would not the moon mourn the
ecstatic effulgence it once was.

We are all in mourning for the experience
of our essence we knew and now miss.

Light is the cure, all else a placebo.

Yes, I will console any creature before me
that is not laughing or full of passion for their
art or life; for laughing and passion—

beauty and joy—is our heart’s truth,
all else is labor and foreign to the soul.

I have stood in His rain and now
fill granaries as do the fertile plains;
giving is as natural to love
as sound from the mouth.

There is a courageous dying,
it is called effacement.

That holy death unfurls our spirit’s wings
and allows us to embrace God
even as we stand on the earth.

*From Love Poems From God:
Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West
by Daniel Ladinsky*

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

Principles of the Baal Shem Tov

“Neither thinking about the day of one's death nor the fear of punishment in hell will arouse a person's heart to serve God. But yearning to cling to the source of life and goodness will do so. And neither fasting nor afflicting oneself will be of any help. But forgetting oneself out of the depth of one's yearning will do so.” — the Baal Shem Tov

This Jewish saint's mystical wisdom is familiar to us. Sri Ramakrishna also taught that yearning can draw you into an intimate relationship with the Personal God or Goddess (“the source of life and goodness”).

Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), which means “master of the good name,” was founder of the 18th century *chassidic* movement in Eastern Europe. He helped revolutionize Jewish thought, and gave new hope to an embattled people.

During the late 17th century, European Jewry was still recovering from the pogroms of 1648 & 1649.

Those massacres killed tens of thousands of Jews; survivors struggled to rebuild their broken lives and communities.

The transformative power of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings are still felt today — by his followers, the *chassidim*, and by other rabbis and observant Jews, who experience the uplifting effects of the saint's legacy.

This morning we will hear and discuss more of the Baal Shem Tov's principles, relating his wisdom to what we study as Karma Yoga.

Translator Yaacov Dovid Shulman wrote:

Following are some of the principles that the Baal Shem Tov taught his holy students. This precious text was found in the possession of a grandson of the Baal Shem Tov in Hamburg.

- Everything that happens in the world, no matter how insignificant, comes from God. And so do not concern yourself with whether or not what has occurred is in accordance with your will.
- The entire Torah and the entire world contain nothing but the light of the Infinite One (blessed be He) concealed within them. All the verses that speak of this, such as "there is no other than He" and "I fill the heavens and the earth," are to be taken literally.

There is no act, word or thought in which the essence of divinity is not constricted and hiding.

(Moha [limitation] — Sw Vivekananda — Maya, Shakti, Personal God nothing but Brahman with name and form!)

And so when you look and see with your mind's eye, you will see the inner, life-force aspect of everything, not just its outer, superficial layer. You will see nothing but the divine power inside all things that is giving them life, being and existence at every moment.

And when you listen carefully to the inner voice within any physical sound that you hear, you will hear only the voice of God as, at that moment, it is literally giving life and existence to the sound that you are hearing.

- The "exile of God's Presence" refers to the life-force and divine power that gives a person life and existence even at the moment that he is transgressing God's will.

“What is there to understand of each other: if a wand turned the sun into the moon would not the moon mourn the ecstatic effulgence it once was. We are all in mourning for the experience of our essence we knew and now miss. Light is the cure, all else a placebo.” — St Francis

- Neither thinking about the day of one's death nor the fear of punishment in hell will arouse a person's heart to serve God. But yearning to cling to the source of life and goodness will do so. And neither fasting nor afflicting oneself will be of any help. But forgetting oneself out of the depth of one's yearning will do so.

There is a courageous dying, it is called effacement. That holy death unfurls our spirit's wings and allows us to embrace God even as we stand on the earth. St F

- Every person in his own right is [essentially] a complete spiritual Torah (*Tat tvam asi*). If he goes in God's path, that [Torah] is absorbed into his being, according to his level (*a knower of Brahman becomes Brahman*).
- God's Providence extends to all created beings, even to inanimate objects and plants. There is nothing that is not viewed from above in every detail. Everything was made with a particular intent. And a word to the wise is sufficient.

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- "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Why? Because every human being has a root in the Unity, and to reject the minutest particle of the Unity is to reject it all.

- Your fellow man is your mirror. If your own face is clean, the image you perceive will also be flawless. But should you look upon your fellow man and see a blemish, it is your own imperfection that you are encountering — you are being shown what it is that you must correct within yourself. (*Goethe: “A man sees in the world what he carries in his heart.”*)
- The ideal of man is to be a revelation himself, clearly to recognize himself as a manifestation of God.
- Whenever feeling downcast, each person should vitally remember, "For my sake, the entire world was created." (*Blake: We should think of ourselves as highly as immortals ought to think.*)
- Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption.
- Everybody is unique. Compare not yourself with anybody else lest you spoil God's curriculum.
- See to it that every day you do some act of goodness and kindness – in fact, you should eagerly anticipate, perhaps G-d will arrange such a good happenstance.
- There was once a king who was a magician, and so he invited people to have a relationship –

a personal connection with him – but as one entered the palace grounds, there were millions of gold coins for the taking.

Most people came and took some money – some came beyond the palace grounds to the interior, and there they found even greater riches, and so it was chamber after chamber... However the King's son ignored all (that) and went straight to the King.

- Take no pride in the good you do (have done) – imagine, that it was God.
- “I G-d have not changed”, it is only that G-d conceals Himself in the miraculous repetitiveness of nature – however, once man is aware that everything is G-d – one of the fundamental secrets – there is no more separation / concealments.
- **For any of us to come to the understanding that we are common and unlearned is the accomplishment of a lifetime.**

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS

Regular Closing prayer