

GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **We will celebrate July 4th** — a Monday this year — starting with Arati at 7pm in our Chapel. This will be followed by a short talk about Swami Vivekananda, then by short readings and songs from congregation members. All of this will be available on Zoom, using our regular evening Arati link. Sometime between 8 and 8:30, we will move to the monastery, where our traditional July 4th potluck meal will be shared. The Zoom link will close at this time. Our potluck supper will wind up at dusk, when we'll go to the parking lot for some fun with fireworks.
- **Reminder: Your Center will be closed during August:** there will be no classes and no Sunday talks. Evening Arati will continue as usual, and the Chandi hymns will be chanted in Sanskrit and in English.

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

June is a month for study of Bhakti Yoga. A bhakti yogi (bhakta) establishes a devotional relationship with God through study, prayer, ritual, and worship. This often begins with a feeling of reverence or awe, which may slowly grow into a conviction that everything, without exception, manifests God's glory and grace.

As a bhakta, you practice giving every action, thought, emotion, perception and tendency “a Godward turn.” All your energies and attributes, both positive and negative, are offered to the Divine Presence. Your prayer is for self-surrender and, ultimately, union with your Belovèd.

“A Godward Turn?”

CAVEAT

We'll hear a lot from Sri Ramakrishna this morning .. his words and others': the difference between a cannon and a cap-pistol! For example —

“When the mind is freed from 'woman and gold', it can be directed to God and become absorbed in Him. It is the bound alone who can be freed. **The moment the mind turns away from God, it is bound.** When does the lower needle of a pair of scales move away from the upper one? When one pan is pressed down by a weight. 'Woman and gold' is the weight.” — *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Vol 2 Ch 6, With Various Devotees*

Q: “Master Wu Hsin, I feel that I am changing, improving, closer to my goal. What can I do to give more speed to this?”

A: “Can you fold the sky?”

Do not be homesick for a home you never left.

Abiding in Being Conscious is more than mere intellectual accomplishment. The seeker must dissolve.”

As we discussed last week, Consciousness, Divine Presence, the Self, Existence, God, the life you live, all are one and the same. Which leads directly to the logic of Swami Prabhavananda’s instruction, “Give *everything* a Godward turn.”

This morning we will explore more fully what this instruction means to a devotee of the bhakti (devotional) path, and how the practice of this teaching can, over time, cause the seeker to dissolve into what has been sought..

From the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Ch. 5, “The Master and Keshab”

The Brahma devotees looked wistfully at the Master. Gradually he came back to sense consciousness; but the divine intoxication still lingered. He said to himself in a whisper: "Mother, why have You brought me here? They are hedged around and not free. Can I free them?" Did the Master find that the people assembled there were locked within the prison walls of the world? Did their helplessness make the Master address these words to the Divine Mother?

Sri Ramakrishna was gradually becoming conscious of the outside world. (Two) devotee(s) were talking about Pavhari Baba. Another Brahma devotee said to the Master: "Sir, these gentlemen visited Pavhari Baba. He lives in Ghazipur. He is a holy man like yourself."

The Master could hardly talk; he only smiled. The devotee continued, "Sir, Pavhari Baba keeps your photograph in his room." Pointing to his body the Master said with a smile, "Just a pillow-case."

The Master continued: "But you should remember that the heart of the devotee is the abode of God. He dwells, no doubt, in all beings, but He especially manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee.

A landlord may at one time or another visit all parts of his estate, but people say he is generally to be found in a particular drawing-room. The heart of the devotee is the drawing-room of God.

"He who is called Brahman by the jnanis is known as Atman by the yogis and as Bhagavan by the bhaktas. The same brahmin is called priest, when worshipping in the temple, and cook, when preparing a meal in the kitchen.

The jnani, sticking to the path of knowledge, always reasons about the Reality, saying, 'Not this, not this'. Brahman is neither 'this' nor 'that'; It is neither the universe nor its living beings. Reasoning in this way, the mind becomes steady. Then it disappears and the aspirant goes into samadhi. This is the Knowledge of Brahman. It is the unwavering conviction of the jnani that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory. All these names and forms are illusory, like a dream.

What Brahman is cannot be described. One cannot even say that Brahman is a Person. This is the opinion of the jnanis, the followers of Vedanta philosophy.

"But the bhaktas accept all the states of consciousness. They take the waking state to be real also. They don't think the world to be illusory, like a dream. They say that the universe is a manifestation of God's power and glory. God has created all these — sky, stars, moon, sun, mountains, ocean, men, animals. They constitute His glory. He is within us, in our hearts. Again, He is outside. The most advanced devotees say that He Himself has become all this — the twenty-four cosmic principles, the universe, and all living beings. The devotee of God wants to eat sugar, not to become sugar. (*All laugh.*)

"Do you know how a lover of God feels? His attitude is: 'O God, Thou art the Master, and I am Thy servant. Thou art the Mother, and I am Thy child.' Or again: 'Thou art my Father and Mother. Thou art the Whole, and I am a part.' He doesn't like to say, 'I am Brahman.' ...

"But the Reality is one and the same. The difference is only in name. He who is Brahman is verily Atman, and again. He is the Bhagavan. He is Brahman to the followers of the path of knowledge, ... and Bhagavan to the lovers of God."

The steamer had been going toward Calcutta; but the passengers, with their eyes fixed on the Master and their ears given to his nectar-like words, were oblivious of its motion. Dakshineswar, with its temples and gardens, was left behind. The paddles of the boat churned the waters of the Ganges with a murmuring sound. But the devotees were indifferent to all this. Spellbound, they looked on a great yogi, his face lighted with a divine smile, his countenance radiating love, his eyes

sparkling with joy — a man who had renounced all for God and who knew nothing but God. Unceasing words of wisdom flowed from his lips.

MASTER: "The jnanis, who adhere to the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta, say that the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, the universe itself and all its living beings, are the manifestations of Sakti, the Divine Power. (Known as maya in the Vedanta philosophy.) If you reason it out, you will realize that all these are as illusory as a dream. Brahman alone is the Reality, and all else is unreal. Even this very Sakti is unsubstantial, like a dream.

"But though you reason all your life, unless you are established in samadhi, you cannot go beyond the jurisdiction of Sakti. Even when you say, 'I am meditating', or 'I am contemplating', still you are moving in the realm of Sakti, within Its power.

"Thus Brahman and Sakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see the fire, you must recognize its power to burn also. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without fire. You cannot conceive of the sun's rays without the sun, nor can you conceive of the sun without its rays."

...

"Thus one cannot think of Brahman without Sakti, or of Sakti without Brahman. One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, or of the Relative without the Absolute.

... It is one and the same Reality. When we think of It as inactive, that is to say, not engaged in the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, then we call It Brahman. But when It engages in these activities, then we call It Kali or Sakti. The Reality is one and the same; the difference is in name and form ..."

And so the bhakta thinks of all names and forms as the Divine Being. By doing that, she gives them all "A Godward Turn."

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS

Regular Closing prayer