

ENERGY OF THE GURU



The guru is the energy of the heart, of eternal love, of eternal devotion. Think of when you are at your best, the ease with which it is possible to respond to anything that comes your way with the energy of unconditional love and kindness and supportiveness. That's the energy of the guru, who swallows darkness. Strengthen yourselves in that energy. Be devoted to that energy.

In yogic teachings, the feet of the teacher are revered. The classic saying is, "Hold fast to the feet of the guru." The teacher stands on the ground of truth, steady and strong in that divine light. The guru is there to remind us, *You can all do this*. Let go of the passing distractions and the things that pull us away from direct contact with the Divine.

The energy of the guru works with us gracefully and graciously according to our capacity to receive and to share. If what we have the capacity to carry is just as big as a bowl, then a bowl's worth is what we're able to carry away from the ocean of bliss and share. Then we can go back and get more. We gradually build muscles and pretty soon we're carrying a swimming pool to the ocean of bliss and then carrying it back to share.

The quicker we share the water we receive, the quicker we can go back and fill up again from the ocean of bliss. Share everything. Don't hold back. Every blessing you can possibly share, every smile you can possibly give, every helpfulness, every grace, every bit of healing inspiration, let it flow through you because your being expands as it goes through you and then more can come your way.

Let go of images. They are static. Always see God in fresh ways. The great teachers, Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Quan Yin, any teacher with whom you resonate, are always telling us, "Don't be distracted by whatever you think you see in me. Of mine own self, I can do nothing. It's all divine grace. Know God for yourself." They're here to serve as an arrow, pointing to God, saying, "You might think you like whatever you see. But what you really long for is that which is beyond anything you can see or experience."

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All of these beautiful beings are a bridge or a pole vault into the Divine. Ask them to help you catapult yourself into the field of the Infinite, to connect with the Source from which they draw their inspiration, so that you can be continually transformed, with greater ability to reflect that light and be of more service in this realm.

The guru shares great healing with us. There's a traditional teaching that says, "I was on fire. The guru poured cool water on me." Any pain you have, the guru is the healing salve. The guru is inviting us to continually open to the light. It's a partnership. We step forward saying, *I'm willing to breathe through the discomfort of opening my heart again and again and again. I allow more divine light to share through me.* That's the balm, that's the transformation. Our heart becomes a divine crucible. Everything becomes transformed into more light, more love, more purity, more gladness. Thus the guru swallows darkness.

We are invited to witness and serve grace always as much as we possibly can and to dedicate ourselves to the highest good we're capable of. We ask, *Divine Grace, help us be our highest selves, transform us continuously to allow us to be of more service, to let our hands be strong and kind in the work they do, to let our mind be calm and clear and pure and still so that it is able to reflect more of the light of the Infinite.*

This is what we're lovingly doing together. We help one another to be able to stand steady in the light, to be able to continually open the heart, to open and calm the mind, to offer our hands and our feet and our entire lives to be of service. It doesn't matter who we are, where we come from, what we've done or haven't done. We are loved. We are welcomed. There are no conditions, no strings, no expectations. The light loves and rejoices in us. The light that leads us from darkness to light is our eternal nature, what we are forever.

Thank God and God bless us all.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

BEING ONE WITH THE TAO



Being one with the Tao, seeking they find. This takes us back to the most powerful law regarding success in any endeavor: First you have to become it. Be one with the Tao. Usually it is said, "Seek and you shall find God." The Tao approaches it from being already done in consciousness. This is exactly what Jesus taught: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

That has to be primary. When we follow the way of the world, which includes the way of the mind, the intellect, and the ego, everything is about struggle.

When youngsters are trained to compete, they are taught to assert the ego, not manifest their divinity. There is constant fear of losing and anxiety and worry about succeeding. It is the same in the business world. If you don't struggle to succeed, you're not considered worth your salt and the more competitive you are, the more you prove your metal. It's not the way of the Tao. It's not the Christ way. It's not the Krishna-consciousness way.

This is why meditation has to come first. First seek that sacred place of meditation in the heart where you become aware of the presence of your own magnificent, glorious, inexhaustible, omniscient Self. It's by uniting with that. I have no words for it. I can only attempt to rejoice in that truth that this is the quantum leap in consciousness that the mystics experienced eons ago: Whatever you want to achieve, you have to be it.

How do you become one with it? We have to feel our way into the reality of that which we want to be. This does not take any physical effort. It all has to do with a movement in consciousness to merge with the ideal in consciousness. It is the movement within consciousness from becoming to being. This is the secret of success in any endeavor. If we leave this out, then it's always striving for, or the desire for something, and the focus on not having it, or not yet being there, or "what if" or doubting. It's that consciousness.

— Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri



CREATING “CREATING”

When we greet one another we typically ask, “How are you?”—a perfectly normal and certainly well-established way of greeting one another in our culture. If we will step back for a moment and consider precisely what that question invites, we may want to find further questions to ask which can help us to move into a more expansive, more joyful space, a space of greater possibility for ourselves and our friend.

In ordinary parlance, a response to, “How are you?” would likely be a report on one’s conditions and circumstances, what’s going on in one’s life and how they are feeling about it. That is a great way to engage with a person. Certainly, such a report offers us an opportunity to connect, to relate, to listen, and to share. Great stuff! The thing about reporting, though, is that it is and can only be related to the past. Nothing wrong with the past! And yet, the past is such a pale shadow of what is available to us. There is so, so much more possible for us in this sweet, precious, sacred time that we get to be together.

A potential challenge of reporting on the past is that it may be easy to slip into missing the reality that, in each and every moment, we are creating for ourselves our experience of the conditions and circumstances of our lives. A much more powerful question than “How are you?” that we can ask (of ourselves or) of another might be, “What experience are you creating for yourself in this moment?” Now, to be sure, this is not your ordinary “ice-breaker” question and we probably want to be very discerning about who we greet in this way. Still, for those with whom we have a spiritual partnership and with whom we have established a foundation of trust and collaboration, this question can be extraordinarily empowering and expansive, opening up a whole world of possibility. Living in the understanding that we always create our experience, we now have available another question: “What experience would I like to create for myself in this moment?” Fantastic! Now, when two or more of us are well established in this consciousness, we have available to us an opportunity to create a possibility of creating together, which hitherto had not been available: “What would you and I like to create together in this moment?” This is my question for us right now. What would we like to create together?

— Achariya Premadas



UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

We do not have to wait for God realization to realize God.

But, we may say, “I have this to learn, I have that to overcome, I have bridges to cross and healing to do, atonements to make. I have so much to learn, therefore I have so many lessons left in order to earn my way out of ignorance.”

Then tell me this: If we wait to realize that we are God, who are we in the meantime? If we think we have to do all this work to realize God, is this God to be found at the end of a struggle or a work schedule? Who is making up the work schedule, we ourselves or God? If we think there is a finish line, what happens on the other side of the finish line?

What if we start saying and recognizing this:

I am God right here and now, unfolding ever greater levels of perception and manifestation of my Godhood. I am God-realization now, ever expanding into new awarenesses of that God-realization.

Since we are God, naught else but God, why not start with what we are instead of what we are not and then struggling to become what we already are and ever will be? If we want to make a cake, do we go to the store for flour, turn around and go back for eggs, back again for butter, and yet another trip for sweetening? Is it not better to get all the ingredients at once, then come home and make the cake? In other words, why not go straight for the recognition of who and what we are instead of parceling out lessons and learning and karma and struggle and more trips and more learning?

I am where I am going.

Isn't life a grand adventure?

— Srimati Shanti Mataji

O SADHU PRACTISE THAT WORD

Receive that Word from which the Universe springeth!

That word is the Guru;

I have heard it, and become the disciple.

How many are there who know the meaning of that word?

O Sadhu! Practice that Word!

The Vedas and the Puranas proclaim it,

The world is established in it, The Rishis and devotees speak of it:

But none knows the mystery of the Word.

The householder leaves his house when he hears it,

The ascetic comes back to love when he hears it,

The Six Philosophies expound it,

The Spirit of Renunciation points to that Word,

From that Word the world-form has sprung,

That Word reveals all.

— *Songs of Kabîr*

Translated by Rabindranath Tagore

CHINTAMANI

Love of Truth

Devotion to truth is the highest virtue and the supreme excellence of righteousness. We must love truth above everything else, especially in our spiritual life. Spiritual life is complete self-dedication to the truth of God. Truth alone is our ideal.

Life is a gradual progress toward the complete and perfect realization of truth. Art, literature, music, science, philosophy, religion, and all other branches of knowledge and enlightenment are constantly endeavoring to bring into full revelation the beauty, beneficence, and glory of truth. We are devotees of truth first and above everything else. What is it that we want through our enlightenment and understanding? The revelation of truth. In our love we seek to realize the truth of happiness and the reality of joy. In our spiritual life we search for the truth of our soul as well as for the truth of God.

But what is truth? Truth is reality: the infinite, eternal, and universal reality; the reality that is not limited by time, space, and personality; the ultimate reality that transcends all duality; the reality that can be perceived and cognized, revealed and realized by each and all of us; the reality that embodies wisdom, life, and love.

Truth is wisdom wherein knowledge has reached its perfection; life that is immutable, indestructible, immortal, and everlasting; love that unites in absolute oneness, that transports into supreme happiness and profound peace. Truth is consciousness, the light of cosmic intelligence; existence, the substance of all-pervasive life; bliss, the essence of perfect love. It is absolute because it is unconditioned. Truth is God, and we are lovers of truth.

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*



REVELATIONS OF A COSMIC TRAVELER

Let us rejoice! My hands are not my own—they are gifts of the Spirit, here to share help and healing. My heart is not my own—it is a gift of pure Love, here to share light and kindness. My mind is not my own—it is a divine instrument, here to share inspiration and encouragement. My life is not my own—it is a gift of the Infinite, here to share blessings and grace. Let us rejoice that we are ever more clearly Oneness in action!

When we come into contact with our true nature, our true name, we find oceans of inspiration, energy, delight, unity. When we come into contact with our eternal being, we find ourselves naturally able to be helpful, to share thoughtfulness and kindness, consideration and encouragement. When we come into contact with our oneness, we reach out to help another as effortlessly as we breathe. Let every breath be Divine Love in action.

Lord of light and life and pure love and healing laughter, I offer you myself. Having crossed oceans and climbed mountains to find you, I turn within and discover you right here, and offer you myself. Having raged and stormed and wept and longed, I realize you have been all the energy that has ever expressed through me, and I offer you myself. In all the world, there is only God and me, merging in unity.

— In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri



WAKING FROM THE DREAM ME

Imagine Dudley's superpower allows him to communicate with the dream version of himself during sleep. So sleeping Dudley is observing dream Dudley at work preparing to speak to an audience of three thousand. Dream Dudley can't find his presentation. He spills coffee all over his new suit at the same moment his boss announces the presentation is being televised live.

If you are the real Dudley watching dream Dudley have an awful dream day, what are you going to do to help him? Are you going to offer dream Dudley an elaborate self-help program to manage his anxiety? Are you going to give dream Dudley positive affirmations to boost his self-esteem? Will you ask dream Dudley to cultivate compassion for himself?

Or will you simply help dream Dudley to see that he is dreaming? Will you help him wake up and see the reality beyond the story he feels trapped in?

Dudley's situation is ours too. We all entered a dream state when we falsely learned that we are a separate somebody called "me." The dream state is the conditioning that creates this false sense of division from the undivided One we call God.

Strategies to improve the dream "me" or make a more comfortable dream state are not right or wrong. They simply do not get to the root of the suffering. We can never truly relax in the world until we realize the reality beneath the surface of life. Awakening is waking up to the unity beneath the seeming diversity and realizing our identity as the Infinite One. Realizing is not about earning it or becoming it! Realizing implies realizing what is true about ourselves right here, now and forever.

— *Murali*

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS

“If we find ourselves seeing a problem, that means we’re actually working on the level of problem consciousness. We’re working on the level of limitation. If we notice what seems to be a problem, it’s an invitation to pole vault into the consciousness of supreme love, the consciousness of pure light. That consciousness never sees a problem. That consciousness is the kingdom of heaven, it’s nirvana, it’s moksha, it’s bliss, it’s blessing, it’s whatever your name for it is, and it sees no problems ever. Go first to that and the consciousness of limitation will melt away. Go first to the kingdom of heaven, and you will know if you need to go back and make a stop at the mall, if you need to talk to the matchmaker, if you need to know which healing practitioners to consult. Whatever the need, go straight to the solution. Go directly to Oneness. Go straight to God and then all else will be added unto you. This is the teaching Jesus gives. It is the truth. Go to God first.”

— *Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*



“Humanity regards the manifestations as the important proof of God’s grace and existence. The illumined Self-consciousness perceives Self-realization as the great demonstration. Let one ascend in consciousness until one enters into divine oneness, divine love, divine perfection. Then one realizes that the divine Self appears as food, as employment, as health, as companionship, as joy, as achievement, as fulfillment.”

— *Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri*



“Ineffable joy overfills the heart when the inner peace is attained. Abiding happiness is the fruit of inner peace. Like the entrancing fragrance of a sweet blossom, all the tender qualities of love and devotion exalt with ecstasy the heart that is graced with inner peace. Peace orients our whole nervous system to that state of poise and composure at which all our physical, mental, and spiritual faculties can be manifested fully and with joy. Inner peace vitalizes the nervous system, brings tranquility to the mind, and establishes joy in the heart. In peace is realized the bliss of soul.”

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*



ZIPLINING INTO SELF-EXPRESSION

“You are indeed the light of the world...let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify our Father in heaven.” — *Matthew 5:14, 16*

“Just who do you think you are?” “You’re making a fool of yourself!” “What makes you think others want to hear what you have to say?” The gremlins of our mind, spouting negative messages born of the ego, try their best to convince us to take the cautious route, to play it safe, to keep our light hidden under a bushel. How do we dance as if no one is watching when we’re self-conscious and afraid of looking stupid?

It takes courage to ignore the voices of those rascally gremlins. It takes courage to listen and respond to the song of Soul. But how are we serving God if we hold back from sharing the fullness of our being? If we stifle our self-expression, we are not doing what we came here to do—which is to allow the Divine to express through us, each in our own unique way.

We are all artists, free to decorate the canvas of life however we choose. We select our subject, our palette, our materials. Do we paint by the numbers, or do we color outside the lines? No matter what we’ve painted in the past, the canvas of our future is blank, waiting for our creativity to spill forth.

We grow when we challenge ourselves to step outside our comfort zone. Last summer, I had the opportunity to zipline across a waterfall that’s higher than Niagara Falls. I’m not a fan of heights, but I was drawn to the experience. Fully strapped in, I hesitated at the launch point before the operator opened the gate, and nudged me off the platform. Zooming 300 feet above the water, I whooped in delight and exhilaration!

Sometimes we need a gentle push to help us let go of solid ground, and fly across the abyss. To live fully, we must ask ourselves—what do I have to offer the world? How can I best use my talents to honor God? Our self-expression doesn’t have to be grand. Simply being authentic is our highest form of self-expression.

— *Karuna*

JOY OF THE INFINITE

- When we choose to wake up, we dwell in the happiness of the present moment and we abide in the sweetness of all that is.
- The matrix of awakesness is within you. The matrix of awakesness is within all beings. Focusing on awakesness within ourselves or within all beings helps us very quickly wake up, helps us instantly remember, I am awakesness. I am aliveness. I am joy. I am beingness. I am grace. I am blessing. I am bliss. And that I Am is the I Am that can never die. That is the I Am that knows no misery, no pain, no limitation, no suffering. That is the I Am that cannot experience trauma. It is that within us which shines, and shining, illumines all.
- The awakesness within us is already present. There is nothing we can do to earn it. There is no one who can give it to us. It also can never be lost or stolen. It can never be tainted or marred. It can never be insulted or confused. Look within yourself. Find the awakesness within yourself. Allow it to come forth. Allow it to rise up within you. There is no difference and no distance between the awake one, who gets called the Buddha, and all the rest of us. The awake one has just realized this truth.
- We are here to remind ourselves, *I am divine sweetness, eternally, forever*. Everyone on the planet is divine sweetness, eternally, always. We're inviting ourselves to be in touch with that reality and to wake up to the truth, to allow ourselves to be awake to our light, to our wisdom, to our heart.
- *Divine Grace, I give you my permission to help me wake up. I give you my permission to help me be in contact with the aliveness of divine wisdom within me. I give you my permission to wake up my heart.* If you keep offering these intentions, the Divine responds instantly and you will feel the effects unfold over the next days, weeks, and months. It will allow you to come into contact with exactly what has been screening your light. This is both ecstatically sweet and extremely painful because you will get to see everything that you have been doing to cause pain and limitation and obstruction to yourself and to others.
- We are so much more than what anyone can see with their outer eyes.

— In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri

SWAMI SHANKARANANDA'S PEARLS

- Healing is about experiencing wholeness—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually and living in harmony with yourself.
- “Your faith has made you whole,” Jesus said on several occasions. Faith comes from within. It’s the realization, or the recognition, that it is possible for us to live in a state of wholeness, of total well-being, of subjective freedom, of joy, of blissfulness.
- When you discover the kingdom of God truly is within you, you are free of the illusion that it is outside of you. You are free of the illusion that there is a power outside of you that can do anything for you or to you.
- For any healing to take place, we have to understand what God’s will is for each of us. I know the will of my Beloved Father-Mother God is that everyone manifest the nature of God and the qualities of God—love, beauty, joy, harmony, freedom, abundance, ecstasy, blissfulness, wholeness, exaltation, and growth. These constitute God’s will for us!
- Anything you fight you keep in your experience. Whatever you hold in your consciousness, you keep within your experience.
- The spirit of wholeness is within all of us, but it will not be active unless we identify with it. To identify with it, you have to fall in love with it. Say, *I’m in love with the healing consciousness within me. I love this healing power coursing through my veins, making me feel gloriously alive and eager to participate in this wonderful journey called life. I love to live. I love to share the beauty, the light, the magnificence, the gift of life that I am and have to share. And I’m going to love every part of me that I have neglected into a state of lovingness. I’m going to love any part of me that is disconnected from the source of well-being back into the stream of well-being.*
- Contemplate this truth, this reality: “I and the Source are one, streaming forth that which is of the Source.” There can be no separation from your good, your healing, your well-being, your progress, your enlightenment.

— *In Love, Swami Shankarananda Giri*

GARLAND OF TRUTHS

“Enlightenment comes quickly to one who has faith in the guru.”

— *Swami Brahmananda*



“You ask, how can I attain Self-realization? One does not attain Self-realization. Realization is nothing to be gained afresh; it is already there. All that is necessary is to get rid of the thought ‘I have not realized.’ Realization is for everyone; realization makes no difference between aspirants. This very doubt, whether you can realize, and the notion ‘I have not realized’ are themselves the obstacles. Be free from these obstacles also.”

— *Ramana Maharshi*



“Have faith in the words of the guru and practice hard. Restlessness arises because of the outgoing tendency of the mind. As the mind becomes more and more indrawn, more and more concentrated, the wild roamings of the mind will cease and you will experience inner joy and ineffable bliss. Let your heart overflow with pure love for God and you will gain that by which man becomes immortal in this very life.”

— *Swami Saradananda*



“Don’t let yourself forget that God’s grace rewards not only those who never slip, but also those who bend and fall. So sing! The song of rejoicing softens hard hearts. It makes tears of godly sorrow flow from them. Singing summons the Holy Spirit. Happy praises offered in simplicity and love lead the faithful to complete harmony, without discord. Don’t stop singing!”

— *Hildegard of Bingen*



“Are you courageous? Then prove it to me with your unparalleled happiness.”

— *Sri Chinmoy*

QUOTES FROM KABIR

“The Beloved is inside you and also inside me. You know the tree is hidden inside the seed. Let your arrogance go. None of us has gone far. Inside love there is more power than we realize.”

“All know that the drop merges into the ocean but few know that the ocean merges into the drop.”

“He is the real Guru who can reveal the form of the formless before your eyes; who teaches the simple path, without rites or ceremonies; who does not make you close your doors, and hold your breath, and renounce the world; who makes you perceive the Supreme Spirit whenever the mind attaches itself; who teaches you to be still in the midst of all your activities. Fearless, always immersed in bliss, he keeps the spirit of yoga in the midst of enjoyments.”

“I laugh when I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty. I laugh when I hear that people go on pilgrimage to find God.”

“Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat. My shoulder is against yours. You will not find me in the stupas, not in Indian shrine rooms, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals: not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding around your own neck, nor in eating nothing but vegetables. When you really look for me, you will see me instantly — you will find me in the tiniest house of time. Kabir says, ‘Student, tell me, what is God? He is the breath inside the breath.’”

“But if a mirror ever makes you sad, you should know that it does not know you.”

“I talk to my inner lover, and I say, why such rush? We sense that there is some sort of spirit that loves birds and animals and the ants—perhaps the same one who gave a radiance to you in your mother’s womb. Is it logical you would be walking around entirely orphaned now? The truth is you turned away yourself, and decided to go into the dark alone. Now you are tangled up in others, and have forgotten what you once knew, and that’s why everything you do has some weird sense of failure in it.”

GRATITUDE IN BLOOM



— Art by Devarati

SPIRITUAL READINGS

The Essential Sri Anandamayi Ma
Life and Teachings of a 20th Century Indian Saint
by Alexander Lipski

Anandamayi Ma (1896-1982) was an Indian spiritual leader renowned for her perpetual state of divine joy. Indeed, the name *Anandamayi* given to her by her devotees in the 1920s can be translated as “joy-permeated.” She had no formal religious education and attended only a few years of primary school, but her profound understanding of spiritual philosophies made her beloved by people of many different faiths.

She was born Nirmala Sundari Devi in Kheora, a tiny village in east Bengal (now Bangladesh). At the age of 13, her parents married her to an older man. He received a physical shock when he touched her and the marriage was never consummated. Though women were considered lower than men in Hindu society, he became one of her followers. While in her early 20s, Nirmala received the inspiration to enact the role of a guru and disciple simultaneously. She spontaneously chanted the *bija* mantra (seed mantra; mantra of initiation) with the realization that guru, disciple, and mantra were one. There is no other known instance of self-initiation.

As Anandamayi Ma explained in retrospect: “Let me tell you that what I am, I have been from my infancy. But when the different stages of *sadhana* (spiritual training) were being manifested through this body there was something like superimposition of *ajnana* (ignorance). But what sort of *ajnana* was that? It was really *jnana* (knowledge) masquerading as *ajnana* ...”

The Kindle version of the book has many lovely photos of the saint, but also numerous errors in punctuation and spacing. I found the transcriptions of Anandamayi Ma’s teachings the most illuminating.

Question: Is it difficult to know which is the true path?

Mataji: If you sit with all doors and windows closed, how can you see the path? Open the door and step out; the path will become visible. Once on the way, you will meet other wayfarers, who will advise and guide you as to the path. Your job is to muster whatever strength you have to get underway—thereafter help is assured.

— *Ananda*

HEALING PSALMS

Commentary on Psalm 91

There is no evil as a power, because evil does not have the power of God behind it. God is spoken of as the Almighty, meaning omnipotence, and omnipotence cannot have other potencies or potestates beside it. You cannot have anything beyond oneness. This is our spiritual philosophy, our heritage from India—Advaita Vedanta, non-dualism. Remember, when Jesus used the term *evil*, he did not use it in the same way as the religionists of his time used it. He prayed, for himself and for all of us—he included himself, he never excluded himself. He includes all in his love of the truth. Remember that. A lover of truth includes all in her love of the truth, his love of the truth.

Spirituality is inclusive; it is religion that often is exclusive. He prayed, *Our Father, our common source and origin, deliver us from evil*. In translation, what was lost is the full implication of that phrase. Deliver us from what? You're calling on your inner being, the truth within you, the one power within you, the wisdom within you, to deliver you. Deliver each of us from the concept of duality. Deliver us from the consciousness of separation. Deliver us from worldly mindedness. Deliver us from negativity, because there is no evil. It's impossible for a power of evil to exist.

There is a belief in a power called evil. According to our belief it is done to us, by the law of attraction. This infallible law simply says that what is like unto itself is drawn unto itself by itself. I cannot attract something for which I do not have the consciousness, and I cannot lose something for which I have the consciousness. Got it, everybody? Now you understand the truth. Now you can sleep in peace for the rest of eternity.

—Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri





THE TIME OF OUR LIVES

“Always be ready to have the time of your life.”

—*Shannon Martin*

Swami Shankarananda used to say that whatever we focus on in the first fifteen minutes after waking up sets the tone for our day and encouraged us to set our intentions accordingly. This came to mind during a recent service when Swami Nityananda emphasized the importance of always going to God first, of connecting with the Divine Presence and stepping into the ever flowing stream of loving wisdom and guidance.

Activating our intentions and bringing our desires for wisdom, guidance, relief, and fulfillment into our communion with the Divine go hand in hand. Our intentions telegraph our commitment to remember and act from our divinity. Asking the Divine for resolution of our perceived needs and desires acknowledges that we are in the presence of our omniscient, omnipresent, all blissful Reality. Both arise from a foundation of trust and expectation that the Divine always responds, and that response always provides for the highest good of all concerned.

What an adventure! No need to ever feel bored or restless! By actively engaging in this divine interplay of call and response, we realize that indeed, all things are made new, and we actually can delight in the time of our lives as we witness the Divine’s loving hand in every unfolding moment. And, delighting in our own dance with the Divine, by the law of oneness, we make it vibrationally available to all who seek and are open to receive it, increasing our own joy and spreading its radiance to all.

Of course, this sounds like great fun when any desired outcome manifests quickly and easily. But what if what is happening is not at all what we’re consciously desiring, such as the loss of a loved one or a serious medical diagnosis? If we find ourselves feeling anxious or upset in any situation, let us return to our breath, return to the Divine Presence, and rest in the assurance that whatever is happening is opening the way into our perfect next step. And then we continue having the time of our life, knowing the Divine, loving us beyond measure, walks with us every perfect step of our way Home.

— *Padma*

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: How can we help freedom manifest in our lives?

Answer: Thomas Jefferson said, “Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.” We are encouraged to be active and engaged with the principles of all sacred teachings. We must always give our attention to the highest and best. We never get to be lazy, we’re never passive about our love, about our spiritual beliefs. We live them actively. And, as yogis will remind us in a heartbeat, we are also never reactive. Neither passive, sloughing into despondency, nor reactive, getting riled up, frantic, or anxious, we take the path of choosing active love, active light. We then come into contact with what is unchanging, what is eternally strong and calm within us and from that we find inspiration, vigor, vitality, and opportunities that would otherwise never come to us because we would be closing ourselves off by holding onto the way things were in the past. Swimmers often choose to swim in a bay where the currents are flowing and renewing the water. That’s where we want to let ourselves be, very calmly choosing that renewal. The principle of life, of healing, is constant renewal, constant movement.

Being neither passive nor reactive, we observe. We decide that, in all circumstances, we will adapt. We’ll be as creative and as flexible and as good humored as we can manage to be, with even the minor things. Washing dishes will never be the same twice. If we allow ourselves to wash dishes without labels, without judgments, and without predisposing ourselves to feel one particular way or another, we will encounter brilliant freedom in the flowing water, in the dishes, in the soap. By noticing how miraculous our daily life is, we encounter it all as a beautiful miracle, a beautiful expression of dynamic freedom in action.

Spiritual teachers from all traditions tell us that the quality of our spiritual attention is one of the most precious tools that we have for self-transformation and for moving forward in the world. The vigilance of our attention, the quality, focus, calm, and clarity of our own inner light lets us do both our inner and our outer work. One of the best gifts we can give ourselves is to honor and cultivate that attention. Most of us wouldn’t fling a handful of money around, but that’s what we do with our attention much of the time. So learn to take care of it. Each of us has an attention bank. Meditation is one of the best ways

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Q & A (Continued)

to make deposits in the divine attention bank. Then we have an inner reservoir of light, love, strength, focus, steadiness, kindness, and forgiveness to draw on all the time. We're not ruffled by others' upsets and dismissals. We're never done with cultivating our attention and with choosing wisely where to place it. We keep choosing not to dissipate or scatter our energy.

Cultivate flexibility and a sense of poise. This is an ideal for all of us to aspire to, this sense of inner balance, this sense of knowing that sometimes the wind will be blowing from that direction, sometimes the wind will be blowing from this direction. Let us not be too startled by the fact that this is what the wind does! Let us enjoy the wind as much as we possibly can, however the wind is blowing. When we have contact with what remains, what is real, lasting, and eternal, then it becomes so much easier to dance with change and to let it be filled with light, to let it be a matter of enjoyment.

The rishis say, meditate on the Divine, be absorbed in the Divine. Wake up from this dream of separateness. There are aspects of every culture that encourage us to jealously guard our separateness, to protect our egos, to be afraid of people who are different. Instead, the Divine delights in the diversity, in the multiplicity.

The rishis also say, know God. No matter what humans are doing with the light, even with the atrocities humans create for each other, the whole universe remains nothing but the dancing of light. Once we are in contact with that, we let go of our armor, judgment, and rigidity that form the boundaries around our sense of separateness. Letting go of pain is the price we pay for bliss.

It is with a very, very light touch that the Divine fills us with so much bliss that, if we allowed ourselves, we would weep uncontrollably with joy. If you've ever seen a butterfly alight on the petal of a flower, that's the way the Divine is constantly embracing us. If you've ever seen an eagle find an updraft and effortlessly soar with its wings outstretched, allowing itself to be carried, that's the way the Divine carries us. This is bliss. This is freedom.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL



During a lesson about our chakras, the children drew totem poles with animals that represented divine qualities associated with each energy center. For example:

- Turtle, root chakra: self-mastery, courage, grounded, connected to mother earth, feeling at home anywhere
- Deer, second chakra: serenity, building on a solid foundation
- Orca, third chakra: fortitude, great inner strength
- Swan, fourth chakra: deep and abiding devotion, compassion
- Bear, fifth chakra: purification, clarity, healing spirit, strength
- Owl, sixth chakra: wisdom, foresight, keeper of sacred knowledge
- Crown, seventh chakra: God-consciousness

DIET AND NUTRITION: No-Bake Strawberry Pie

Total prep time: 20 minutes

Total number of servings: 8

Ingredients for pie:

- 1 teaspoon agar
- 3 cups coconut milk
- 14 Akmack crackers or 40 Crunch Master multigrain gluten-free crackers
- 3/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
- 1/2 cup honey or coconut syrup nectar
- 1/8 cup coconut flour
- 8+ organic strawberries sliced for inside of pie
- 6 organic strawberries whole placed on top of whipped cream

Ingredients for whipped cream:

- 1 cup coconut fat
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 drop vanilla stevia

Directions:

- Place coconut milk in the refrigerator overnight or for several hours. Coconut fat will rise to the top. Separate the fat from the milk and set it aside for the whipped cream.
- Boil half the coconut milk and dissolve the agar completely (approximately 5 minutes) Add the honey and coconut flour into the pot and mix well.
- In a large mixing bowl, add the remaining coconut milk to the boiled coconut milk in the pot and stir.
- Break in the crackers and add the nuts, stir, and press into a pie plate. Chill for 2 hours. Meanwhile, put the reserved coconut fat in a bowl, add honey and stevia and whip until lightly stiff.
- When the pie is firm, slice the strawberries and lay a thick layer of them on the surface of the pie. Add the whipped cream and decorate with the whole strawberries, putting one in the middle surrounded by the other five.

— Labhya



LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS



That (Brahman, the Self) is One. The Self is immutable and self-composed. It is transcendental. It is more subtle than the mind. It is beyond the limits of sense perception. It is serene; yet It is more active than the mind or the sense faculties. Because of Its presence, Prana, the life-force, awakens and sustains the functioning powers of the body.

It creates; yet It is transcendental. It is far; yet It is the nearest of all. It resides within all; yet Its presence surrounds and extends beyond all beings.

— *Isha Upanishad*



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