

INNER GATEWAY

Light always streams down and lifts us up when we put forth our own effort. In this beautiful process of self-effort blending with Divine Grace, we rise up. Holding fast to a mystic rope of light we know, *This rope of light has me*. In the same way that hearing a beautiful voice helps us sing better, the light shares itself ever more brightly through us and, in turn, everyone that we come in contact with can silently attune themselves to that same light.

We do everything we possibly can to be prepared. We give ourselves one hundred percent to what we think is the next step. And then we offer it up and say, "If that's not helpful, then please show me what is." Divine Grace does not waste time. Thanksgiving is every day. When you feel that way you move in a stream of blessing. If you feel you have many people who love you, then you are indeed rich. If not, then take a clear look at the challenging relationships in your life and ask, "Have I had any part in creating this?" It may have felt like various challenges happened to you. Ask yourself with clarity and kindness, "What role have I played in creating the life that I've lived?" As you then make different choices, you start to straighten out your life.

If you truly do the inner work you clear yourself and free yourself so that you can, without expectation, say, "I love you. I'm sorry. Forgive me. I helped create this. I would not do it the same way now." Then you are inwardly free. No matter what the response is or is not from a particular person, the Divine will always send you encounters with others who respond with love and supportiveness. You will have transformed your energy. You will be living a different life. It takes a while but don't let up. Do it totally free from expectation. You will realize you were in bondage until you set yourself free. This is the power of taking responsibility for your own feelings of today. Move through your inner gateway to kneel in devotion and humility and reverence at the divine wellspring. Drink directly from the waters of love, bliss, all satisfaction, all peace, all fulfillment, all magnificence, all healing, all creativity, all inspiration, all connection, all honor. Everything we could possibly want comes from those waters.

Another key realization that comes from healing and sharing love with others is learning not to get tangled up in other people's stuff.

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Many of us feel the energy arrows that are being directed at us. We think, *What did I do? I must have done something wrong.* This lowers our vibration and lets us be less helpful. Remember, *I'm a vehicle of light.* Whatever it is, if you ever have a question, just give it to the light. The light will take care of it. Center yourself in the light when someone close to you is grabbing at you. Notice that and love and honor them at the same time. Choose to focus on the light in them, and choose not to identify them or yourself with any sticky messes. In this way we can be steady. We can be compassionate, caring, respectful. We can be responsive. And we're actually infinitely more of service if we do this. Swami Shankarananda said, "If you want to be up you cannot let another take you down."

We have a divine urgency to stay steady in the light, to care for the light, to honor the light, to salute the light, to recognize the light, to acknowledge that the light is all there is. Continue tuning into that and on an outer level the light becomes more and more present. It becomes more and more visible in our relationships and the difference is palpable. At first we think there's an inner gateway we must enter into in order to have contact with the light. And then at a certain point the difference between inner and outer actually dissolves. It merges and everything is light, and there's no difference anymore between the nonphysical and the physical. We can see that all of this, even the crazy human stuff you look at and say, "What are we thinking, my people!" All of it is the light experiencing itself, learning, "What happens if I make that choice? What happens if I make a different choice?"

With great love and clarity and kindness, let's help ourselves make wise choices. And let's remember that there is no us that is separate from the light. And that's true for everyone else on the planet as well. There is no separateness from the light. The light is everywhere, always.

Thank God and God bless us all.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Supply always exceeds demand because supply is infinite, whereas demand is limited, no matter how much one may demand and desire. Therefore, each one can experience the fulfillment of their dream, passion, or desire, regardless of what it is because, by the power of resonance, we must draw into our experience the result of the energy and vision we put forth.

It is equally true that the more I give or share, the more I receive. As Shakespeare put in the mouth of Juliet, "Thy bounty is as boundless as the sea and thy love as deep. The more I give the more I have for both are infinite."

It is inversely true that the more I believe I lack, the more my experiences will reflect my consciousness of lack until I change my belief and, in the midst of seeming lack or relative lack, start focusing on remembering what I actually do have.

If I claim I have little and I long to experience more, then I must practice gratitude for what I have, because the more gratitude I experience or feel, the more my consciousness changes, and the more I am drawn into a universe filled with love, abundance, and grace, all eager to shower me with their blessings.

It is not that the universe has withheld these blessings from me while I was in the consciousness of lack, but that I lacked the consciousness of abundance and gratitude to let myself be receptive or to be a conduit for blessings abounding.

Indeed, whatsoever we think in our heart is reflected in our experience.

— Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri



PURE LOVE

Darkness can never be brought out of darkness by darkness; only light can do that. If we see darkness, bring light, not more darkness. If we see the darkness of egoic delusion or attachment, let us resist not, judge not; but rather, bring light, bring love. Do not flatter the ego, but do not insult it or attack it either.

Pure love practices neither indulgence nor scolding, though the ego may interpret it as such. To the threatened ego, even pure love feels like an affront. Be not distracted by volatility, reactivity. Even when falsely accused, pure love shines on. There is no self-righteousness in pure love; no being right, no victor, but only absolute devotion to the light, to Oneness, to the realization of Oneness. There is no arrogance in pure love, only deep understanding and compassion born of knowing that “You are my very Self.”

Pure love is not self-aggrandizing. Pure love is true humility. There is no timidity, no fear, no shying away in pure love. Pure love does not stand idly by, nor does it react. Pure love is calm, equipoised, at peace even in the face of accusation, blame, anger, or retaliation. Pure love continues radiating no matter what; pure love returns love for anger. Pure love is not determined by outer conditions; it is uncaused, unconditioned. Pure love has no point to prove, no position to defend; pure love has no agenda. Pure love takes a stand for authentic, abiding peace. Pure love sees and advocates for the dignity of every being. Pure love is fully able to keep its seat, to remain still and silent; pure love is infinitely patient. Pure love does not attempt control; pure love is boundless compassion. Pure love’s motive is pure love. Pure love does not withhold itself from anyone at any time and acts prudently. Pure love does not grasp after and does not hold onto. Pure love does not try to possess. Pure love is not bound to the past and creates ever anew. Pure love makes all things possible, available, and realizable. Pure love is not limited; pure love expands infinitely. Pure love knows nothing about mistakes, it just keeps loving.

Pure love is eternally available if we will but avail ourselves of it, drink deeply of the bliss-giving waters of pure love. Pure love is the elixir, the Soma of the Gods, the alchemist’s stone. Pure love transforms.

— *Acharya Premadas*

PEACE ON EARTH, PEACE IN ALL

The world clamors for peace, and there is no peace. The reason peace does not pervade the kingdoms of earth collectively is that the minds of people have neglected individually to cultivate the consciousness of peace.

Though all beings long for peace, many perceive it as the absence of conflict, confusion, or personal demands, and they perceive this state to be achieved when the world-bustle ceases to threaten their personal space. Specifically, they believe their peace will come when the present crisis is resolved, when the workday is over, when the children have gone to bed, when the dishes are done, when the family ceases to make demands, and so on.

Yet the very nature of peace consists of harmonious flow of activity. Who does not feel a soothing effect when gazing at the ocean, even though the sea consists of constant movement—waves forever advancing, currents pulsing through the depths, masses of water swelling and subsiding with the tides? Is not the life of the body characterized by muscle tone, or tension, when we are relaxed; by constant circulation of blood, even during sleep, and by a ceaseless continuum of brain cells firing so long as life resides in the body?

In the world, life abides in activity, and peace resides in life. Peace without the refreshing flow of action—inner or outer—is not peace, but stagnation, passivity, and death. Peace, therefore, is a quality of consciousness that permeates activity, not necessarily the cessation of activity. Peace must be dynamic, ever self-renewing, a bubbling fountain of joy, nourishing to the individual and to all. It must contain within itself bliss, glory, wisdom, discrimination, responsiveness, and beauty; for such is the nature of God and, as told in ages past, God is peace.

— *Srimati Shanti Mataji*



WINTER

A diamond glow of winter o'er the world:

Amid the chilly halo nigh the west

Flickers a phantom violet bloom unfurled

Dim on the twilight's breast.

Only phantasmal blooms but for an hour,

A transient beauty; then the white stars shine

Chilling the heart: I long for thee to flower,

O bud of light divine.

But never visible to sense or thought

The flower of Beauty blooms afar withdrawn;

If in our being then we know it not,

Or, knowing, it is gone.

— *George William Russell (1867–1935)*

CHINTAMANI

Bliss is the peace of soul from God. Peace is not an effect or a consequence of achievement. Peace is a reality just as life is a reality. Life is not the result but the cause that lends existence to all. Peace of God is within us. It is realized when our entire consciousness becomes immersed in the perception of infinity in the ever-expanding light of pure consciousness. Peace is a subjective reality. Peace is a gift of soul to a heart of love and devotion.

Immortality is the realization of life free from time, space and form. Immortality is cosmic life. Behind all living objects, in truth behind all that exists in the universe, there is only one life. That one life is infinite, eternal, universal and everlasting. We do not acquire immortality. We realize immortality, which is our true life, within our pure consciousness. Immortality is the life of our soul.

Our soul is the reality of individual self-consciousness. Each of us is a soul. It is the divine part of our being. It is pure, holy and godly in its essence. When our consciousness is totally liberated from objective identification and acquired concepts and impressions, we gain the inner revelation that we are a divine individual, a soul.

Realization of God is the supreme vision of inner revelation. God is real and true. He is the ultimate reality of the universe. He is directly perceived within our pure consciousness. Within the immensity of our pure consciousness God is revealed as the infinite Self-consciousness resplendent in its cosmic effulgence. One light illumines the entire realm of vision. Within that inner light soul beholds God in overflowing blissfulness until Absolute Oneness is realized.

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*

REVELATIONS OF A COSMIC TRAVELER

Blessed Lord, let me offer you my unadorned self. Let fall away all masks, all roles, all pretense. Let me live your purity, your oneness, your healing light. Let me be myself as you invite me to be, outside of all expectations that have ever been placed upon me. Let me see myself as you see me. Let me be your kind strength in action. Let me see my life and your world with your expansive vision.

Thy light so glorious, shine down upon me! Thy illumination so wondrous, fill me! Thy healing grace so beautiful, bless me! Let me be your compassion, your open-heartedness, your responsiveness in action. Let me fulfill your highest vision of me. Let me be your gracious laughter and pure love shared with all. Let me enjoy and bless every moment of the Life you share with me and through me, with and through all.

Let fall away all sorrow, all grief, all cruelty, all despair. Rise into the healing grace, the uplifting light, of Oneness. Let go of disappointment and fear. Establish our awareness in the serene heart of God, tranquility of soul, absolute peace of the Divine. Allow us to be so steady in our focus on Divine Grace that we are filled up with inspiration and gladness, allowing creativity and healing to pour through us like rivers, creating an ocean of caring and kindness, an ocean that honors divinity in all.

— *In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri*

THE REAL YOU

On my daily walks, I am often passed by packs of serious cyclists. When the first cyclist in the group passes me from behind, they signal loudly to the others “walker up!” This signal alerts the column of what to expect up ahead.

From the moment we arise in the morning, we unconsciously send one powerful signal to all of life. The signal says, “I am a person and I expect to perceive everything today as a person. I expect to perceive everyone as a person just like me. I expect to have personal experiences. I intend to bring all my personal beliefs, opinions, and history along with me so I remember who I am, and so I can remind everyone else.” Unknowingly, this signal shapes all our experiences and our interpretations of life.

Let’s now backtrack to the very first instant we wake from deep sleep. In that instant, all that exists is the recognition, “I am. I am here. I exist. I am aware of myself.” That recognition is our direct experience. It is not a spiritual belief or a concept! The recognition “I am” is unmixed with any thought or feeling and it requires no effort to create or maintain.

In the very next instant of waking up, this feeling “I am” combines with a lifetime of beliefs. “I am this body and mind lying here. My name is Seymour. I am 92 years old. I have a long history of experiences and an even longer list of opinions about my life.” In that instant, the “I am” that had zero personal identity now has taken on a very real sense of being a very real person.

One way to recognize our true nature is to return to that “I am” feeling before it fuses with any belief about yourself. Simply rest in that most fundamental, tangible, immediate experience of “I am” before it adopts any concept of identity and before it mixes with any idea of a personal you. That “I am” is the real you prior to identifying with personhood. Because it is empty of personal identity and conditioning, the real you remains ever-joyful and ever-undisturbable in the midst of all the changes within its limitless nature.

— *Murali*

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS

“The reality of our existence is that divine guidance is always available. As we look back on our lives, we recognize that divine guidance has been present every step of the way. We have never operated outside of divine guidance. We’re invited to open to the support that is always present and to move lightly through whatever human experiences we’re having. If it’s loneliness, move lightly through loneliness. Don’t become attached to it; don’t identify with it. But also, if togetherness comes, don’t become attached to it or identify with it. Remember that wholeness and freedom and vastness and vitality and expansiveness are our reality forever. To rest in that, to relax in that, to allow that to support us, blesses and benefits us, blesses and benefits everyone. It also makes us a lot more fun to be with for ourselves and for everyone else!”

— *Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*



“In the world today, many people are having a spiritual awakening at the inner eye. Many people are opening up to the awareness of the divine presence, and that is cause for rejoicing. We keep hearing that the world is collapsing, the economy is falling apart, and society is disintegrating. We need to know that what is really happening is important for the healing of the nations and for the evolution of consciousness. A spiritual awakening is sweeping across the nations and through the world! A tremendous housecleaning is in progress. The result of all this transformation and change will be a return to true lovingness at a higher level than ever before known on this earth. We actually will experience what has been regarded till now as only a distant ideal of oneness. We will relate to each other as beings, not as good or bad people, rich or poor, but as souls, as divine beings of light. All the changes are preparing the way for a new era of conscious lovingness and spiritual awareness.”

— *Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri*



“With love and devotion, if *sadhana* is done, nothing is impossible.”

— *Babaji*

PRACTICING BALANCE

“Happiness is not a matter of intensity but of balance and order and rhythm and harmony.”

— *Thomas Merton*

Finding and maintaining balance in one’s life can be challenging, especially at this time of year. Life seems to be accelerating at a rapid pace. We may find ourselves frazzled and exhausted, not taking time to recharge and reenergize. How do we work full-time, exercise, eat healthy, engage in activities that enrich us, nurture our relationships, and find the time to be still within ourselves? Tending to body, mind, and spirit can itself be a full-time job!

In the midst of the hubbub, living as a hermit in a cave may sound appealing. But that’s not the world we live in and the teachings of Vedanta encourage us to carry the fruits of our inner life out into the world. We are here to let our light shine—in our workplaces, at the grocery store, wherever we are.

When we are engaged in the world, we are susceptible to overextending ourselves, usually at the expense of our physical, emotional, or spiritual well-being. If we find ourselves overwhelmed, we need to remind ourselves that all things are manageable if we allow Divine Grace to work with us and through us. We may also need to adjust where we are choosing to spend our energy. If something does not feed our spirit, perhaps it’s time to let it go.

Recently, at the gym, I marveled at a middle-aged man who was standing on one leg on the flat side of a half-domed balance ball, while doing bicep curls with 30-pound dumbbells. “That was amazing,” I said when he took a break. “Years of practice,” he replied.

And so it is for finding and maintaining the right balance in life. The discomfort that results from being out of balance is a clear indicator that we need to adjust our consciousness, our commitments, or perhaps both. When we find ourselves off-kilter, we are invited to go within and ask to be shown how to come back into balance, remembering that staying steady atop the wobbly balance ball of life requires practice!

— *Karuna*

JOY OF THE INFINITE

The yogis, over many millennia, have passed down to us a beautiful realization. When we tap into the energy of devotion, we propel ourselves into the presence of Grace. We allow ourselves to melt at the feet of the Guru, the energy that leads from darkness to light. We allow twoness to melt into oneness.

To tap into the energy of devotion within ourselves, think of something you love in purity—something simple and pure like sunlight dancing on water, trees rustling in the wind, a neighbor's cat sleeping in the window, steam rising on a cup of tea, the sound of a gong calling you to meditate. Take that energy of devotion and offer it to the highest and the best within yourself. Offer it to the Divine. Allow yourself to melt from seeming separateness to pure harmony.

As you work with the mantram, and this is true of any meditation technique or mantram, know that it is a sacred and powerful tool. After you have used the tool, set it down and allow it to take you directly to silence, to stillness. That is where illumination comes as we consciously open and allow ourselves to receive, allow ourselves to be filled up from within from Divine Grace pouring down upon us always. We allow ourselves to be whole, allow ourselves to integrate.

Begin by allowing your feet to touch the earth, consciously focusing on the steadiness, the stability, the foundation of the earth and feel that same support at the base of your spine. This is your foundation. It is a wonderful support.

From the base of your spine, allow yourself to rise up through the whole length of the spine, lifting the crown of the head slightly towards the heavens, slightly lengthening the back of the neck, tucking the chin a little bit. Focus the gaze with closed eyes at the space above the eyes, in between the eyebrows, at the center of the forehead. From there, move back to the midbrain. Let your attention rest there gently, calmly, with ease and clarity.

And now, with these tips handed down by the yogis, at this place of pure consciousness, with the love and joy of our being, allowing ourselves to be open, silently repeat: *Divine Grace, illumine us.*

— *In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri*

SWAMI SHANKARANANDA'S PEARLS

- Each of us has the freedom to choose whether we follow the path of darkness, of ignorance, or the path of light, wisdom, and illumination. And by their fruits ye shall know them.
- In this adventure called life, we begin with the light of hope. As long as we keep that light burning, our life will progress magnificently. Never give up hope!
- The yogic perspective is universal, it's mystical, it's infinite; it has infinite capacities and perspectives and facets, like a precious diamond. The candle of hope represents life from the yogic standpoint. Where there's life, there's hope. And where there's hope, there's the possibility of more life manifesting. God is life.
- Remember, the candle is our life. The light it offers is to illumine the darkness for all who look upon it. When you clean out all that negative stuff from the temple of your consciousness by the light that you have available, you can welcome the Christ-consciousness, the Christ Child, in a joyous state of mind, with love in your heart.
- On Christmas Eve we light the Christ candle, which represents the Christ within us, the one we welcome, mystically, subjectively, the one we give birth to, the one we've been waiting for, the one that's been prophesied unto each of us as the remembrance of our divinity.
- I tell you, we have the grandest opportunity imaginable, the greatest gift to all of us: to deepen our spiritual awareness and connectedness with that Christ light, that God light, that spirit that is waiting to be born within us, that joy that we have been seeking for eternity.
- If you want to experience wholeness, you have to be one hundred percent with this belief, body, mind, heart, and soul: *I am whole*; because whatever word or idea you attach to I AM determines what you become. That's what powerful creators we are.
- I intend to perform all my actions in the light of God with every breath I take, to the fulfillment of the Christ within me.

— *In Love, Swami Shankarananda Giri*

GARLAND OF TRUTHS

“Now will never leave. It is always here. Like a clear canvas, it awaits our painting.”

— *Swami Satchidananda*



“There is neither past nor future. There is only the present. Yesterday was the present to you when you experienced it, and tomorrow will be also the present when you experience it. Therefore, experience takes place only in the present, and beyond experience nothing exists.”

— *Ramana Maharshi*



“The foundation of reverence is this perception, that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity.”

— *Alfred North Whitehead*



“Live in the present, forget the past. Give up hopes of future.”

— *Sivananda*



“Time is in the mind, space is in the mind. The law of cause and effect is also a way of thinking. In reality all is here and now and all is one. Multiplicity and diversity are in the mind only.”

— *Nisargadatta Maharaj*



“The source of now is here.”

— *Rumi*



“The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, worry about the future, or anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly. Live each moment completely and the future will take care of itself. Fully enjoy the wonder and beauty of each moment.”

— *Paramhansa Yogananda*

QUOTES FROM SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

“The moment I have realized God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him — that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free.”

“Vedanta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error. And the greatest error, says Vedanta, is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this and that.”

“As long as we believe ourselves to be even the least different from God, fear remains with us; but when we know ourselves to be the One, fear goes; of what can we be afraid?”

“Condemn none: if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so. If you cannot, fold your hands, bless your brothers, and let them go their own way.”

“If you want to have life, you have to die every moment for it. Life and death are only different expressions of the same thing looked at from different standpoints; they are the falling and the rising of the same wave, and the two form one whole.”

“All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark.”

“Make that one idea your life; dream of it; think of it; live on that idea. Let the brain, the body, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced.”

“Be perfectly resigned, perfectly unconcerned; then alone can you do any true work. No eyes can see the real forces; we can only see the results. Put out self, forget it; just let God work, it is His business.”

“Come out into the universe of light. Everything in the universe is yours. Stretch out your arms and embrace it with love. If you ever felt you wanted to do that, you have felt God.”

WINTER WONDERLAND



— Art by Devarati

SPIRITUAL READINGS

Buddha — A Story of Enlightenment
by Deepak Chopra

This fictional story about the life of Buddha is imaginatively told with many details about life in India. It recounts the birth and childhood of Prince Siddhartha, who was not allowed to see any pain, sickness, or suffering that would discourage him from being the next king. His heart is opened when he eventually encounters these maladies, and he decides to leave his wife and baby son to become the ascetic monk Gautama. After six years trying to overcome his desires and suffering, he stops fighting and discovers his true Self. The third section provides examples of how the Buddha relieved suffering and brought peace to those who would listen.

The story is followed by an interesting epilogue that describes the four noble truths and eight-fold path, as well as the three Dharma seals, or three basic facts about Being:

1. Dukkha—Life is unsatisfactory. Pleasure in the physical world is transient. Pain inevitably follows. Therefore, nothing we experience can be deeply satisfying.
2. Anicca—Nothing is permanent. All experience is swept away in flux. Cause and effect is endless and confusing. Therefore, one can never find clarity or permanence.
3. Anatta—The separate self is unreliable and ultimately unreal. Our attempts to make the self real never end, but also never succeed. Therefore, we cling for reassurance to an illusion.

The final chapter includes questions and answers about some of the seemingly contradictory aspects of Buddhism, such as: “How am I supposed to follow someone who constantly insisted that he was no longer a person and didn’t have a self?” The book ends with the undeniable appeal of Buddhism: “You don’t have to obey a set of rules or worship God or the gods. You don’t even have to be spiritual. All you have to do is look into yourself and yearn to become clear, wake up, and be complete.”

— Ananda

BREATH OF STILLNESS

Today, let us joyfully fill ourselves with a breath of stillness.

Right now, allow a breath of stillness to fill your entire body and just notice the way the breath of stillness brings ease...release...relaxation...comfort...wholeness...into the body. Notice the way the breath of stillness can gently fill any area of the body that would welcome a feeling of comfort.

Now expand the breath of stillness and notice the way it's possible to fill the heart with the breath of stillness. Notice the way the breath of stillness gives to the heart a sense of deep, inner caring for yourself, a sense of appreciation for yourself, a sense of relief, a sense of calm, a warmth and a freshness and a feeling of brightness and vitality.

Breathe the breath of stillness into the mind and notice the way the mind gains a sense of focus, a sense of clarity. Notice the way the breath of stillness imparts, with absolute ease, awareness of what is most important for you this beautiful day.

The breath of stillness allows us to notice Divine Grace is always with us, always nurturing us, always guiding us, giving us a sense of what the next step is, and allowing that next step to arise with joy from a deep, expansive feeling of freedom.

Finally, visualize that someone you care for, a spiritual teacher, a friend, someone you love, has presented you with a beautiful silk scarf, gender appropriate, perfectly your style! You wrap this beautiful silk scarf around yourself and the scarf reminds you throughout the day that the breath of stillness is always with you. The breath of stillness gives you infinite access to insight, inspiration, creativity, possibility, freshness, vitality, connectedness, wholeness, abundance, gladness, caring, forgiveness, every moment throughout this precious day.

—*Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*

THIS IS LOVE

"Thou hast not denied me thy guidance even when I refused to seek thy illumination, for thou knowest the joy of the unasked gift."

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*

Love is always present, streaming forth, sharing itself as clear guidance, bringing (at least ultimately) comfort, encouragement, peace, and joy. Bold, dramatic guidance may arrive abruptly like a blast of arctic wind. Sweet or stinging, these messages may be welcomed with joy or willfully resisted, but never ignored. Clearly in the stinging category, Swami Brahmananda once dictated a poem for a devotee that contained the line, "I have given that which is holy unto a dog." Ouch! When the transcriber questioned the harshness of that line, Brahmananda responded that the devotee was too thick-skinned to get the message any other way, and indeed, the poem delivered the jolt that awakened the devotee's spiritual understanding.

Love's guidance also appears more subtly, with gentle messages that bring to mind lyrics from a George Harrison song: "Little things that will change you forever may appear from way out of the blue... this is love." Years ago, feeling overwhelmed and discouraged at work, I took a break to try to clear my head. Walking aimlessly around a few blocks, I was startled when a small bubble floated over my left shoulder. I looked around but saw no other bubbles and no one blowing bubbles. I watched in wonder as this beautiful, iridescent bubble drifted by on the air before me. As it approached the corner of a building, I tensed, feeling sure it was about to collide with the wall and burst. When it breezily shifted direction and sailed effortlessly around the corner and out of my sight, my wonder turned to awe. The bubble hadn't burst, but its light and carefree passage completely burst my heavy mood. Its message was clear: life is light, easy, joyful, safe, and grace-filled, no matter what it may seem like at the moment. Those few moments, which might have been easily missed, have inspired and strengthened me ever since.

Love is always present. May we always be present to it, treasuring the gifts of guidance, asked for or not, that pour out to, through, and as us, for our own growth and the unfoldment and upliftment of all.

— *Padma*

Question: I still experience deep feelings of abandonment and betrayal. How can these be completely released?

Answer: Very deep issues of abandonment, betrayal, trauma, and injustice can be revealed and consciously worked with. This includes any ongoing patterns and habits that you would like to melt away. Know that you are more of service by not carrying the trauma and pain of your history.

It takes dedicated work and inner training. We are going for spiritual gold. Consciously or unconsciously, we have been practicing a personal Olympics our entire lives. In truth, in our divine nature we are always shining gold within. Until the very last moment we draw a breath we are in practice. The external physical training that Olympic athletes go through is awesome and that's what we notice first. Even more important is the way that they have mastered their brains to not be distracted. Dizziness that the brain naturally feels when a body twirls in the air does not go away. The Olympic skater athletes have learned to train their minds to surmount the feelings of dizziness. We also are training ourselves to surmount and not be distracted by anger, hatred, pain, fear, distress, disturbance—all the distractions the world can possibly send our way. Let us remind ourselves that in our divine nature we are always shining gold within. We can strive to manifest that excellence in our daily lives.

You may, in human experiences, have a strong reaction where you allow yourself to be triggered and choose unkindness. Train the brain again and again and again. It's a lifetime of practice. Instead of responding to unkindness with unkindness, turn only to kindness. Write on a piece of paper, *Only kindness always*. That's why it's so beautiful and vital to let go of our expectations and our projections and to see clearly with an awakened vision. Buddha said, "When I look at all beings I see within them a matrix of awakensness, a womb of aliveness." That is pure gold.

With human eyes we often see the outside of the box, the scars, the tattoos of the skin. The body is a map of time. Look deeper. If you knew how beautiful you are, you would cry with love and gratitude. Do everything you possibly can to honor your inner beauty, that shining

gold within. It's eternal, perfect, magnificent and entirely independent of whatever you can see externally.

In exploring our mental or emotional body we encounter the layers of our consciousness where we may still hold patterns of reactivity and unconscious judgments. The triggers are often still there. A beautiful liberation is to be able to directly encounter these patterns in meditation and then consciously invite the breath to help us clear them in the mental or emotional body. If you become aware of stuck energy around your heart, any blockages, anywhere that you've been holding back from opening up your heart fully, you can breathe and allow your energy body, your breath body, to clear them. Intend to be patient and calm, very loving and caring with yourself. *Those places of trauma I've experienced that I'm still holding onto are at the level where I can gently breathe into them and ease them.* And they will evaporate, they will vanish as you do this. Any of the trauma, of the areas of injustice that you've experienced, that you've seen, that you've internalized, that you've been carrying, just keep breathing into them, allowing them to dissipate. You still have the awareness, recognizing, *I saw that. I carried it for a very, very long time.* However, you can let go of the pain. You can let go of the suffering.

We can remember to breathe consciously through the different energy layers of the body to transform ourselves, to respond when we notice a pattern which habitually turns to anger or judgment or shame or blame or hatred. We can say, "I take responsibility for that pattern. I created it and I can uncreate it." We can melt away that pattern. Remember it is a lifetime of training, a lifetime of practice. Like the Olympic athletes who train themselves not to get dizzy, we can train our brains not to get distracted. Be trained to focus only on kindness and remind one another, kindness only. Only kindness. Caring only. Only caring. Light only. Light always. It is a beautiful thing to keep company with those who love the light and honor the light and who are constantly practicing in the light. It is a lifetime of practice. So honor everyone. Everyone is on a path of shining light even though they may not know that light is all that there is. We can support and recognize the truth that appears within the hearts of all beings. Go for the gold, the shining gold within!

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri



DIET AND NUTRITION: Divinely Delicious Cilantro Pesto

Cilantro is among the most loved culinary herbs. Studies show cilantro helps rid the body of heavy metals, protects against oxidative stress, lowers blood sugar and more. All of these benefits are in addition to its amazing ability to enhance your recipe. This pesto has a long refrigeration life attributable to the oil and salt, two common natural preservatives.

Ingredients:

- One large bunch or two smaller bunches of organic cilantro, cut in half or thirds
- ½ cup organic cold pressed sesame seed oil, or other equivalent
- 1 ½ inch piece of fresh ginger (organic if you can find it) cut into slices
- 2 or 3 stalks of green scallions, cut into 2 inch pieces
- 1 to 2 teaspoons of pink salt

Directions:

Blend all ingredients in blender at high speed until fully blended to an evenly bright green and smooth texture. Adjust salt to taste.

This pesto can be used in place of butter or regular pesto. It can also be a delicious topping for grilled fish, shrimp, chicken, tofu or anything you can imagine. Other suggestions:

- *Party hors d'oeuvres:* Layer a slice of Persian cucumber, a peeled and tail-off steamed medium shrimp, and a dollop of Divinely Delicious Cilantro Pesto.
- *Salad dressing:* Mix one tablespoon of Divinely Delicious Cilantro Pesto with the juice of one freshly squeezed lime. Adjust the ratio according to taste.

May you and your whole family enjoy good health and a happy life! Namaste with pure love,

— Ruci

LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS

Before the universe was created, Brahman existed as unmanifest. Brahman brought the Lord out of itself, therefore it is called Self-existent. The Self is the source of abiding joy. Our hearts are filled with joy in seeing it enshrined in the depths of our consciousness. If it were not there, who would breathe, who would live? The Self it is who fills every heart with joy.

— *Taittiriya Upanishad*



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