

Darshan

Spring Equinox
2020



Awake Yoga
Meditation

AWAKE YOGA MEDITATION

Awake Yoga Meditation is a vibrant spiritual community oriented around awakening to our true divine nature. With love and good humor, our community helps each other to wake up through yoga philosophy, Advaita Vedanta, and the mystical teachings of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Zen, Hinduism, and Judaism. Meditation, Kriya yoga, self-inquiry, and devotional practices are integral to these teachings.

We offer weekly meditations for adults and children, spiritual discussion, and meditation instruction. All are welcome.

Schedules and Information

Sunday Morning Meditation for Adults
Sunday Morning Meditation for Children (Sept - June)
Every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

Friday Night Healing Meditation, every Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Visit our website: AwakeYogaMeditation.org for more information on schedules and special events.

Temporary Location of Sunday Meditation
The Waldorf School of Baltimore
4801 Tamarind Road
Baltimore, MD 21209

Temporary Location of Friday Night Meditation
Ruscombe Mansion Community Hall
4803 Yellowwood Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21209

Swami Nityananda offers private instruction in meditation (including Kriya yoga) and private spiritual counseling sessions by appointment. Call Lakshmi at 410-591-2646 or email Swami@AwakeYogaMeditation.org to schedule a conference.

THE LORD NEEDS THEM

We focus on the story of Jesus as one of generosity, of giving of oneself to the whole for the greater good. Jesus is an example of giving of oneself to be here, to be kind, to elevate, to share, to forgive, to help people smile. Such giving occurs free from stress and strain, with natural strength such as a tree exudes as it unfurls bright new leaves.

Generosity is built into every cell of our body! Fifty billion times a day certain cells in our bodies give their lives for the good of the whole. This scientific process is called apoptosis. It means literally the falling off of leaves. We breathe and our hearts beat and our blood courses through our veins because of this process. Wholeness and health happen because of this generosity, as cells give themselves to the whole.

If you can, thank your cells. You are alive as an example of sheer love, sheer self-giving, giving for the good of the whole. We can tune into the energy of generosity in our daily lives. This can be as simple as smiling when your annoying neighbor wants to talk to you and you don't really want to. Or your kid throws up on your shoes right when you have to go to work and it's stinky and you get to be a grownup and clean it up even if you don't want to. It's choosing patience simply and naturally in every event of our lives, including with ourselves. Sometimes we are the ones who internally throw up and we wonder, what kind of mess did I just make? It stinks! When it's your own toxic stench that's being released inside yourself what do you do?

Self-love is the quickest way forward. Instead of focusing on what you've done wrong, be respectful and responsive and free yourself of problem consciousness. Have courage to trust the Divine in us and the Divine in everyone. Many things come up in daily life. Address them without making them into a problem. Anytime you notice yourself going into a loop of offense or grievance, just say to yourself, "That's a loop and I'm going to stop going down that road." Take full responsibility and focus on moving forward. When you come from respect and speak with respect you're not energizing recrimination and blame. Clarity speaks to clarity, calm speaks to calm, and there's an emphasis on forward movement.

(Continued from page 1)

Jesus asks his disciples right before the Last Supper to go quickly and find him a donkey. Whatever the Lord needs will be sent right away. Whatever is needed by the soul is provided. The ego, on the other hand, will always be in a perpetual kerfuffle. “Why can’t I get this? Why do I have to do that?” Yogis tell us we all have within us donkey energy, obstructive, resistant energy. And the yogis also tell us that when we invite that energy to work with us rather than against us, it becomes the energy of steadiness, of perseverance, and forward movement. Jesus rides the donkey into Jerusalem and he comes in peace. He has transformed his stubborn, obstructive, resistant energy. He is not wrestling with divine will. That allows him to ride in silence through the crowds that are shouting their praise. He knows that these same crowds will soon be tormenting him. Because he has transformed his stubbornness, his obstructiveness, which would hold him separate from divine will, he is able to be serene in the midst of the highest praise that humans can give. And he can be serene in the City of Peace amidst the worst taunting, the most vile mockery, the most outrageous violence.

A Tibetan mystic said, “May you enjoy the Great Equanimity, free from spiritual sloth.” Equanimity always, laziness never. Never let yourself let go of your practice, your devotion, your humility. Never let go of choosing the highest and the best.

Allow the mind to think calm, clear, luminous thoughts that are filled with pranic inspiration. Pranic energy helps connect you with the whole, the generosity that you are. Your very being, your entire body, is here because of generosity, because of the whole. We are placed by the Divine right now to contribute to that greater whole, to share generosity and positivity in our daily lives. And we get to do this 50 billion times a day!

Hosanna in the Highest! Absolutely everything that the Divine needs is already here. We’re inviting ourselves to draw that forth and to express gratitude and reverence, and joy at the way the Divine gives constantly through every single one of us, through every single being on the planet, through the trees and flowers, through the waters, the earth, the sky, all of life.

WELCOMING TRANSFIGURATION

All the experiences you have offer a means to transform your awareness, your thinking. Call on the name of God 24 hours a day if you want to transform your thinking. Use whatever mantram you know, such as, “Hallowed be thy name.” Holy is thy name. What is your name? Wholeness is your true name, or divine nature.

Meditate on the wholeness and integrity of your being. Such meditation will help you maintain your integrity. That is part of transfiguration, or self-transformation. Jesus’ transfiguration shows what we all have the potential to do. And he wanted us to know that.

Then practice the silence. Be still and know. Be still and ask for what you want to know. Then be still again and listen for the voice out of the infinite consciousness that expresses through the God-presence, through the master, through the disciples. Drop the mind. Be still. And then practice forgiveness.

I came across a remarkable anecdote relating to my paramguru, Swami Yogananda Paramhansa. The visiting ambassador of India went with others to see Yogananda at his ashram. Included in the group was a man who had despised Yogananda for years and spoke disparagingly about him. Yogananda drew the man aside and said, “I will love you forever. Why don’t we work together?” The man was so stunned to be treated with such love by the man he had hated with a passion that he was changed forever.

I will always love you. Practice forgiveness for everyone against whom you have a complaint or a grievance. They are not getting the love they need, and you aren’t giving the love you want. Did you get that? Give the love another needs, and give yourself the love you want, and you will be transformed physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Remember, transformation precedes transfiguration. Are you ready to welcome your own transfiguration?

Let us remember that transfiguration applies to this planet as well as to individuals. The truth is we have actually been entrusted with the fate and destiny of the world. Please understand this: We bear the great responsibility of transforming the spiritual reality of this physical realm!

FRESHNESS

I love this area of our beautiful planet where we can more easily see the change of seasons which can teach us how to live in harmony with all of life's unique moments as well as with its continually flowing, transitioning nature. In this time of the year it is so very, very sweet and inspiring to witness new life blossoming forth, to behold nature's innumerable fresh voices singing forth and exclaiming life's glory and beauty and munificence. My heart sings and I dance in this garden of life; I celebrate life's newness and freshness.

Over the last dozen years or so I have had the beautiful gift and joy of bearing witness to another kind of springlike blossoming forth of life: the one in and that is our community. One significant piece in the journey of our community has been our way of honoring and celebrating and graciously letting go of the past in such a way as to be available to new forms, new expressions of life's glory. We see this in nature so clearly. We treasure the truly immeasurable contributions and gifts with which we have been blessed. And yet, we don't want to be bound to or limited by the past. We must move forward and keep those teachings alive and new and fresh through our own unique expressions. We can see bright, fresh expressions clearly here in our community that are entirely consistent with and a natural extension of the depth and heart of the teachings as offered by our community's founder, Swami Shankarananda, and by his teacher, by his teacher's teacher, and so forth, reaching back through all teachers to the Truth itself. The teachings make this possible, and the purity of the instrument through which they flow which we know as Swami Nityananda makes healing, transformation, and realization not only possible but a living reality in, as, and through each of us.

With absolute inclusivity, love, and wisdom, the teachings meet and respond to each of us and to each generation exactly where we are. Eternally new, bright, clear voices giving fresh, relevant expression to life's eternal truths is life's beautiful gift to us all and is visible as a robust blossoming in our community. I celebrate with all my heart and dance with joyous thankfulness in this exquisite, precious garden that is our community and that is life itself in which all voices are welcomed.

—Acharya Premadas

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

Come join the festival of light.

The Light of Light has arrived and is in touch with the souls of all souls. Each soul is a shining light; bring your luminous lamp of joy and happiness, and lend your ecstasy to the rapturous delight of all hearts. The stars in the sky above have come with their bright lights to fill the firmament with the celestial lights of the gods of heavens and earth. The sweet jasmines have infused the evening breeze with the exotic fragrance of the intoxicating perfume. The whole world is uplifted with the spirit of love, and man and nature are in the indulgence of divine ecstasy. The bliss of God has spread its blossoms of happiness upon the hearts of the lovers of love.

The Nataraj has lighted his lamp, and the whole universe is illumined with the cosmic cycle of celestial effulgence. The Divine Dancer has ushered the yoga of joy for all souls to become one in the rhythm of ecstasy. Light reveals beauty, beauty brings joy, and joy lifts the soul into the paradise of purity and peace. Sublimity of happiness is the ascension of soul. Joy is the jewel of the human heart, and peace is the ornament of the human soul. Bliss is the blue diamond on the forehead of the icon of divine consciousness. Soul in peace is in the bliss of God. Soul dances with joy in the freedom of self-effulgent self-illumination.

Creation is the dance of the Creator in the cosmic rhythm of love. Love is heavenly and divine. Love is God. Come and dance with love in the light of holiness. Come let your soul dance with love in consort with the ballet of the lighted candles. Let the pure hearts melt in joy in the festival of love.

The Light of Light has touched the souls with his lamp of love. Come—join the festival of the dance of Light. Light is God.

—Sri Swami Premananda Giri

OUR PRAYER

When we offer the Lord's Prayer, what or whom do we have in mind as we are praying? Most of humanity probably thinks of a God in the heavens, a God outside themselves. Have we ever uttered the Lord's Prayer in the consciousness that we are praying to our own inner Being first, and by extension, to the Self that equally indwells all beings? It could go like this, or whatever words we would choose:

O Father-Mother-My own beloved Self, your presence is bliss and therefore I carry within me the certainty of total realization of bliss. (*Our Father which art in heaven*)

My nature is holy because I am thy own embodiment. (*Hallowed be thy name/nature*)

The fullness of who I am is already here, and I pray for that fullness to be part of my living realization; for I know it is the will of my supreme Self to reveal Its fullness in my consciousness [heaven] as well as in my body, mind, and surroundings [earth]. (*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven*)

I thank you for supplying all my needs this day, for I acknowledge that thy grace is indeed my sufficiency in all things. (*Give us this day our daily bread*)

Uplift my consciousness so that I may forgive myself for any shortcomings or faults I may perceive in myself and that I may forgive anyone against whom I hold the tiniest thought of judgment or nervousness or ill-will. (*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*)

I intend to be vigilant over all my thoughts so that I cultivate only those thoughts and feelings that are uplifting, that bring joy, and that sustain me in the remembrance of my holiness and my creative potencies. (*Let us not enter into temptation*)

Though this body may come and go, I acknowledge my true essence, which is eternal—my own Self within me that carries the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. (*For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever*)

Amen.

—Srimati Shanti Mataji

LOVE IS ALL THERE IS

I was inspired recently by a quote I read in a newspaper marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp. There were a series of photographs of survivors—men and women—most now in their 90s, with a quote under each picture. One woman with a wrinkled face and kind eyes shared the following: "The most important thing we can do is to love. To love more and to love everyone."

This woman endured the worst humanity had to offer. But rather than indulging in bitterness, she chose the sweet nectar of love. She chose love as the answer to every question. I can't think of a better example of someone who has not let external circumstances dictate their inner life.

We can always turn within when this world becomes challenging, when we are hurt or heartbroken. We can find solace in the love of the Divine that is ever-present and always available to us through prayer and meditation.

We can also provide that unconditional love to one another when we go through difficult times. This is the beauty of being in community with one another. We can practice loving more and loving everyone. There are limitless ways we can express our love. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture. It can be a handful of daffodils plucked from the garden, a bowl of homemade soup, a kind note of recognition. It can be smiling at a stranger when crossing the street. It can be as simple as being present to bear witness to a friend's pain. And when we find that we don't know how to love more or how to love *that* person, we can ask the Divine to guide us to be of service. *Lord, please open my heart and help me provide to this beautiful soul whatever is most helpful for their highest good.*

Let us practice the openheartedness of this woman from Auschwitz. Let us share the light of our being with all we meet. Let us make it our joyful practice to love more and to love everyone.

—Karuna

REVELATIONS OF A COSMIC TRAVELER

Let us rejoice that our eternal identity is the power of truth. Thanks to Divine Grace, each precious soul is light. Thanks to Supreme Love, each precious heart is truth expressing itself in that beautiful vibration. Each of us has a soul sound, a heart song, a note of pure light that we are here to share. Each of us is invited to sing with the light, to fill ourselves so totally with pure love that anything else melts away, is transformed into blessing, healing, rejoicing. Let us expand so that we may receive more love, more healing, more blessing, more rejoicing, than we have ever allowed ourselves to receive before!

That blessed, adorable Master tells us, “Be perfect.” Such faith, such love, such clear seeing—in our true nature, we are perfect. In our Father’s eyes, we are perfect. In our Divine Mother’s heart, we are perfect. Let us allow ourselves to be our spiritual perfection in ever greater fullness. Let us open so that we may be filled with the energy of divine perfection. Let us invite all that is not in harmony with our highest good to transform, to be lifted into the light, to be loved so that we may let it go. Let us move forward in joyful gratitude and wonder!

—Sri Swami Nityananda Giri



OUR GREATEST GIFT

I recently watched a nature documentary that included rare video of a mother octopus in the wild. This mother deposited her eggs in a cramped cave and stayed continuously with the eggs without eating for six months. All her waking hours were spent stroking the eggs and blowing oxygenated water over them. Hours after her eggs hatch, the mother dies of starvation.

I found myself wondering a lot about this supremely devoted octopus mother, the impulse that allows her to surrender so completely, and the mysterious divine love and wisdom that directs the whole drama.

Our own direct experience can reveal that this mystery called God, life, or reality naturally moves and directs our life in one direction. It moves to awaken in each of its forms or expressions. It moves towards self-awareness and self-consciousness while in form. It moves to realize its true nature and identity beyond the body and limited sense of personhood. It moves to express and share itself more and more fully in embodiment.

Our direct experience also shows that this mystery does not need help from conditioned minds and thinking. It doesn’t need the mind to control and direct our awakening. Only this mystery knows how and when this awakening can unfold in each of its expressions. Only this mystery can direct the unfoldment because it is the one playing all the parts.

When we see what is not needed, then we can explore letting go of control and interference with our natural unfoldment. We discover how it actually feels to relax, listen, and consciously cooperate with whatever way this mystery flows. This capacity to consciously and joyfully offer our whole being to this mystery is the greatest opportunity, gift, grace, and blessing of human birth.

—Murali

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS

“We’re always stepping forward. This is a really nice move if you consider it. To step forward, you have one foot honoring what has been. That is absolutely beautiful and perfect, to honor and respect what has been. And it is also absolutely beautiful and perfect to step forward openheartedly, courageously welcoming what is before you. Then what happens is the new becomes what has been and we keep walking forward.

“We’re constantly balancing, honoring what has been and being incredibly brave, courageous, and openhearted about welcoming what is in front of us. If we are steady in our walk, we’re perfectly poised and present. We’re not fighting what is here right now, we’re not fighting what has been. We’re welcoming what is to come. And this is a beautiful, glorious, joyful, freeing way to move through the realm of time and space. It takes fear away. We’re perfectly poised, and that perfect poise is freedom, it is liberation, it is being in the kingdom of heaven, it is living in pure awareness, it is living in the present moment.”

—*Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*

“Know and feel that everything you need for your well-being already has been given to you by the Beloved as part of your eternal nature and inheritance. No human circumstances or conditions can ever take it away from you. You will expand into the spirit of appreciation when you recognize that your happiness, joy, freedom, success, fulfillment, peace, wholeness, and health do not depend on anything or anyone external to yourself. You simply have made a false identification and that is the cause of your pain and suffering.

“Expand into the spirit of appreciation in the midst of everything that is going on. Identify with what wonderful, noble, lovely qualities you have brought with you. With practice, you go from appreciations to appreciations, ever expanding. Please know that when you give thanks, you keep yourself connected to the source of joy, love, peace, freedom, and success.”

—*Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri*

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS (Continued)

“In the jungle of civilization, in the stress of modern living, lies the test. Whatever you give out will come back to you. Hate, and you will receive hate in return. When you fill yourself with inharmonious thoughts and emotions, you are destroying yourself. Why hate or be angry with anyone? Love your enemies. Why stew in the heat of anger? If you become riled, get over it at once. Take a walk, count to ten or fifteen, or divert your mind to something pleasant. Let go of the desire to retaliate. When you are angry, your brain is overheating, your heart is having valve trouble, your whole body is being devitalized. Exude peace and goodness, because that is the nature of the image of God within you—your true nature. Then no one can disturb you.”

—*Paramhansa Yogananda*

“Blessed is he who meditates on Brahman, God, Consciousness-Existence-Bliss Absolute. Profound contemplation upon the reality and attributes of God removes all subjective finiteness and illumines our consciousness with the knowledge of the eternal truths about ourselves and the universe of cosmic creation. Meditation on God lifts our consciousness beyond all subjective limitations and objective imperfections. It reveals unto us the godly qualities of our soul and the spiritual nature of our being. It opens to our vision the permeating presence of the divine Spirit everywhere.

“The fruit of meditation is complete spiritual transformation. It awakens us into the light of God wherein we realize the spiritual significance and purpose of our life, the holiness of our soul, and the sacredness of our being. The realization of God and his attributes within us and the perception of his all-pervading presence in the universe around us, is yoga. Yoga is living the life of love and service in the light of God.”

—*Shyamacharan Lahiri*

JOY OF THE INFINITE

- We are always in pure awareness, pure consciousness, pure existence, pure bliss. In truth there is nothing that can shake us. How do we manage to be kind, respectful, caring, and wise when we don't feel steady right now? To navigate practical everyday aspects of life, we remind ourselves that when we're in contact with what is eternal, what is real, when we're in contact with the One, we're able to respond with calm, robust love to all that arises.

- *Divine Grace, I intend to call forth the divine strength that is within me in humility, with wisdom and respect for all, with courage, being as kind, as caring, as sweet as I can possibly be, in a manner that is of service and helpful, unfolding according to the highest good. I let go of any sense of forcing or fighting anything. I melt away any sense of strain or struggle. I allow oneness to shine through me, to share strength through me, in whatever way is possible, in whatever way is optimal, right now.*

- *Divine Grace, I take full responsibility for any negativity I am generating or that I have generated in the past. Grant me courage to see clearly. Where have I been blocking myself? Where have I been unintentionally creating difficulty for myself? I'm willing to see, to learn, to heal. I'm willing to make amends. I'm willing to let go of even thinking about trying to control another person. My pure intention is to control myself so that what I create for myself, and what shares through me, is the light of the heavens.*

- Visualize that you go outside when the sun is just rising and you fill one thousand buckets full of heavenly light.

One thousand buckets of heavenly light are with me always, any time I have a question, any time I need encouragement or a reminder that I am cared for. I am loved by Love itself, I am a part of oneness itself. I fully belong in oneness, in pure light, in supreme love.

Fill yourself from those buckets of heavenly light, so that light shares through you spontaneously without your even thinking about it. Light shares itself in a manner that is joyful, free, even hilarious.

—In joy, Swami Nityananda Giri

SWAMI SHANKARANANDA'S PEARLS

WHAT IS EGO?

Ego is the sense-identified I-consciousness that creates the illusion of separation from God and from one's fellow beings. Ignorance is the source of the ego and the cause of human suffering.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF "DARSHAN"?

"Darshan" is a comprehensive Sanskrit term that includes in its meanings the "vision of Light," as well as the "blessings and grace of God." Darshan also refers to the blessings of seeing the Guru.

DOES THE MEDITATION COMMUNITY TEACH THE BELIEF IN ONE GOD OR MANY GODS?

Absolute Oneness teaches that there is only one God, one Power, one Reality, one Presence, one Creative Cause, and one Source of all beings and creations residing equally in all. Scripture reminds us of the truth of our divinity when, in the words of Jesus the Christ, it proclaims, "Wist ye not, ye are gods?" Hence we are the individualized self-expression or extension of Infinite Being.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "AUM"?

"AUM" is "the Word" referred to in all scriptures of humankind. In the beginning was God, Brahman, with whom was the Word and the Word is AUM. AUM signifies the triune aspects of the divine Reality, as well as that which is beyond name and form. Essentially AUM signifies Consciousness-Existence-Bliss Absolute. By the practice of meditation on AUM with faith and devotion, one can realize God.

—In love, Swami Shankarananda Giri

GARLAND OF TRUTHS

"I find one vast garden spread out all over the universe. All plants, all human beings, all higher mind bodies are about in this garden in various ways, each has his own uniqueness and beauty. Their presence and variety give me great delight. Every one of you adds with his special feature to the glory of the garden."

—*Anandamayī Ma*

"We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature—trees, flowers, grass—grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. We need silence to be able to touch souls."

—*Mother Teresa*

"What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden."

—*Sri Aurobindo*

"In the assemblies of the enlightened ones there have been many cases of mastering the Way bringing forth the heart of plants and trees; this is what awakening the mind for enlightenment is like. The fifth patriarch of Zen was once a pine-planting wayfarer; Rinzai worked on planting cedars and pines on Mount Obaku. Working with plants, trees, fences and walls, if they practice sincerely they will attain enlightenment."

—*Dogen Zenji*

"Cultivate peace first in the garden of your heart by removing the weeds of lust, hatred, greed, selfishness, and jealousy. Then only you can manifest it externally. Then only, those who come in contact with you, will be benefited by your vibrations of peace and harmony."

—*Sivananda*

QUOTES FROM SAINT TERESA OF AVILA

"In a state of grace, the soul is like a well of limpid water, from which flow only streams of clearest crystal. Its works are pleasing both to God and man, rising from the River of Life, beside which it is rooted like a tree."

"The feeling remains that God is on the journey, too."

"May God protect me from gloomy saints."

"I am more afraid of those who are terrified of the devil than I am of the devil himself."

"Nothing can be compared to the great beauty and capabilities of a soul; however keen our intellects may be, they are as unable to comprehend them as to comprehend God, for, as He has told us, He created us in His own image and likeness."

"To reach something good it is very useful to have gone astray, and thus acquire experience."

"To have courage for whatever comes in life—everything lies in that."

"We can only learn to know ourselves and do what we can—namely, surrender our will and fulfill God's will in us."

"There are more tears shed over our answered prayers than our unanswered prayers."

"Prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God."

"Anyone who truly loves God travels securely."

"Whoever has not begun the practice of prayer, I beg for the love of the Lord not to go without so great a good. There is nothing here to fear but only something to desire."

LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS

May we hear only what is good for all.
May we see only what is good for all.
May we serve you, Lord of Love, all our life.
May we be used to spread your peace on earth.

AUM shanti shanti shanti

AUM stands for the supreme Reality. It is a symbol for what was, what is, and what shall be. AUM represents also what lies beyond past, present, and future.

Brahman is all, and the Self is Brahman. This Self has four states of consciousness.

The first is called Vaishvanara, in which one lives with all the senses turned outward, aware only of the external world.

Taijasa is the name of the second, the dreaming state in which, with the senses turned inward, one enacts the impressions of past deeds and present desires.

The third state is called Prajna, of deep sleep, in which one neither dreams nor desires. There is no mind in Prajna, there is no separateness, but the sleeper is not conscious of this. Let him become conscious in Prajna and it will open the door to the state of abiding joy.

Prajna, all-powerful and all-knowing, dwells in the hearts of all as the ruler. Prajna is the source and end of all.

The fourth is the superconscious state called Turiya, neither inward nor outward, beyond the senses and the intellect, in which there is none other than the Lord. He is the supreme goal of life. He is infinite peace and love. Realize him!

LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS (continued)

Turiya is represented by AUM. Though indivisible, it has three sounds.

A stands for Vaishvanara. Those who know this, through mastery of the senses, obtain the fruit of their desires and attain greatness.

U indicates Taijasa. Those who know this, by mastering even their dreams, become established in wisdom. In their family everyone leads the spiritual life.

M corresponds to Prajna. Those who know this, by stilling the mind, find their true stature and inspire everyone around to grow.

The mantram AUM stands for the supreme state of turiya, without parts, beyond birth and death, symbol of everlasting joy. Those who know AUM as the Self become the Self; truly they become the Self.

AUM shanti shanti shanti

—*Mandukya Upanishad*

Translated by Eknath Easwaran



SPIRITUAL READINGS

Tao Te Ching

Translation and Annotation by Derek Lin

I first discovered an illustrated version of *Tao Te Ching* when I was in college and I remember pouring over its words for weeks to absorb their meaning. I have been trying for years to find that book again, and during the course of my search, I came across a more recent translation that has a lot to offer those interested in Taoism.

Taoism encompasses everything in existence, including our path through existence. The *Tao Te Ching* was realized more than 2,500 years ago when the Royal Archivist Lao Tzu summarized the teachings of the ancient Chinese sages into 81 brief chapters. The timeless wisdom, rich layers of meaning, and poetry have made it one of the world's most beloved spiritual texts. (Some may recall studying another version with Swami Shankarananda and spending hours talking about a single phrase!)

Derek Lin is an award-winning author who was born in Taiwan and grew up with native fluency in both Mandarin and English. For this book he translated the ancient Chinese—exactly as it was written—without filtering it through his own interpretation. He describes the *Tao Te Ching's* ultimate purpose is to provide us with wisdom and insights we can apply to life and he makes it even more accessible by annotating its meanings on each facing page.

Many people know the expression, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” Lin says this is a mistranslation and the original phrase in chapter 64 is “begins beneath the feet.” There is no character for “one” or “step” in the original version. It's really saying that “the little piece of ground beneath your feet is the starting point of a long journey, just like tall trees and great buildings have small beginnings.” This is just one of many enlightening translations found in this book.

—Ananda

A NEW THING

“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

—Isaiah 43:18-19

Similar to the New Year, the energy of Spring also calls us to make ourselves anew, to let go of the old and welcome the new. The Cherokees have a renewal ritual conducted at the new moon in Spring. It's a forgiveness ritual that can be performed at the water's edge, with a bowl of water, or just in your mind. It invites us to visualize ourselves by the water, giving thanks for the opportunity to bring ourselves back into right relationship with everyone, washing away everything that stands in the way of friendship with friends, family, all beings. Throwing water over our shoulders seven times, we let go of what could have been, should have been. We wash away ignorance, doubt, fear, loneliness, sorrow, and anger, and rejoice in the light of a new day.

This is a beautiful and powerful ritual, and not just at the new moon in Spring. Recently a dear friend inadvertently said something that deeply stung. Almost immediately, memories of long-ago hurts between us surfaced. I was amazed at the embers still smoldering, ready to flare up at the first poke. This ritual has now become part of my morning practice. In the shower, offering all unforgiveness toward myself or others to the Divine to be released and washed down the drain leaves me feeling joyful in the present moment just as it is.

All that needs to be healed and released to restore divine harmony is surfacing all across the planet. These are the wildernesses and deserts the prophet refers to and that are inviting us to decide what we would love to create in our own experience and in the world, and what we need to change to help make that possible. We have opportunities every day to lovingly leave behind all that has come before and not just perceive the “new thing” springing forth, but participate in creating the new ways in the wilderness and the rivers in the desert for the joy and blessing of all beings everywhere.

—Padma

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: How can our senses be a window to freedom rather than to stress and strain and despair?

Answer: Our eyes, which allow us to see, are actually the Divine taking form so that the Divine can have the pleasure and delight of seeing whatever it is that the senses reveal. Be in contact always with this truth and you remain open in worship and wonder. It's a bright, vivid, aware awakens within an indivisible Oneness. It's the same divinity when you laugh with joy and when you weep or wail with despair. Do not be distracted by appearances in the sensory world. Stay in touch with what is true, real, and lasting.

Everyone, no matter their external role and position, gets to make peace with their awkward, miserable, middle school self. As we come in contact with the energy of awkwardness that's still within us, we can heal it so that we're comfortable with ourselves no matter what. And then we're comfortable with everyone else, no matter what anyone says to us or about us. Anything other than, "You are pure, divine life energy, you are pure, divine infinite love, you are eternally free," is pure projection. It's part of the human magic show we all take turns performing in. Most things that humans perceive are either positive or negative projections, ephemeral projections. Release them.

Let go of thinking, *I'm better than you. Or, I could never measure up to you.* Is there anywhere you are treating yourself differently than others or others differently than yourself? Practice equality of vision. Keep choosing reality beyond projections. If you become aware of a place where you are holding onto illusion, offer it to the divine fire and be willing to keep walking. The Buddha says, "Good people keep on walking." You have the ability to take that next step, and the next step after that. Have clarity of intention and purpose. *I'm willing to see in fresh new ways.* This recalibrates us and helps us perceive in an entirely different way.

Yogis tell us our senses can be a means of either bondage or of liberation. The highest laws of energy are evident in our daily lives, in everyday household activities. Lakshmi Amal talks about the simple act of making and drinking a cup of coffee: "The energy that forms your

QUESTION AND ANSWER (Continued)

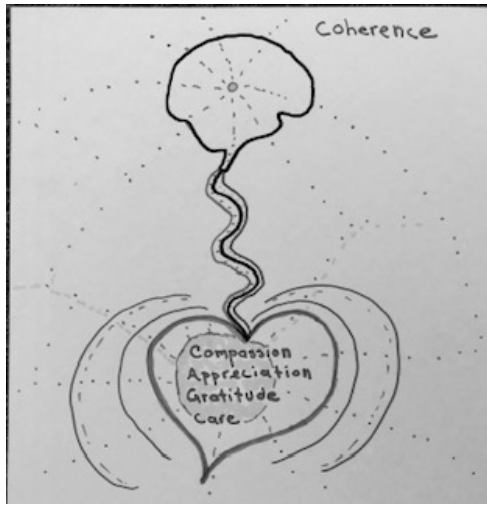
cup of coffee is a window into Bliss. All of your senses can lead you to the Divine. Put an end to your anxiety by coming here and drinking coffee. Enquire about unadulterated joy. Wait for the boiling bubbles called Mukti, liberation. Let that same bubble of liberation burst in your heart, right now. Let us all drink happily. Come here. In the container of Consciousness-Existence-Bliss Absolute, pour the coffee called Eternity. The refreshment you taste is Divine Sweetness sharing itself with you. Let us praise these holy teachings."

It's time to heal that self-conscious middle schooler within us. Otherwise no matter what we taste or touch, we will feel pain and be driven by craving. I am healing myself from within, so I can be in touch with the divine current of bright life. As a container of divine energy, we always have access to our wholeness. And what we need will always come to us without strain. Because we are coming from the energy of wholeness, what flows into our experience reflects wholeness. Let us refresh ourselves with truth. As Jesus said, if you know these teachings, blessed are you if you do them. Savor the divine feast of truth. Allow it to nourish, strengthen and help you be in contact with your wholeness. Then we heal all projections and are able to connect with the wholeness in everyone.

Let us be filled with the bubbles of Mukti, of liberation. Invite yourself to come into contact with the dynamic, bright, vital aliveness that we are forever. Feel the way the human body is a shimmering container of divine energy. It is simple awakens, aliveness, brightness taking this particular form for right now. The light within us melts away illusions and limitations and reveals our true nature. We take full responsibility for our thinking and the way our thoughts create our experiences and have very visible effects on others. Feel how exciting it is to be here in this body, inviting ourselves to live this truth. Anything we touch is a container of Consciousness-Existence-Bliss Absolute. See only that and everything becomes worship and wonder, reveling in that same Oneness that is present everywhere, always.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

FROM THE SUNDAY MEDITATION FOR CHILDREN



“My Beloved is calling me with flowers, with bright skies, with divine manna of joy in happy minds, with souls full of wisdom, with songs of birds, with divine melodies in the hearts of humankind, my Beloved is calling me to retrace my footsteps to His home of peace within.

“Through meditation I will stop the storm of breath, mental restlessness and sensory disturbances raging over the lake of my mind. Through prayer and meditation I will harness my will and activity to the right goal.”

—*Paramhansa Yogananda*

During this lesson, the children explored the meaning of the above text and how it relates to our everyday experiences. They then practiced three steps to help create heart-brain coherence:

*Touch your heart.

*Slow your in-breath and out-breath.

*Focus on the feelings of gratitude, appreciation, compassion, caring.

CAST ASIDE WHAT LIMITS YOU

The human body is finite;

the spirit is boundless.

Before you begin to pray,

cast aside what limits you

and enter into the world of the Infinite.

Turn to God alone

and have no thought of self at all.

Nothing but God will exist for you

when self has ceased to be.

—*Dov Baer of Mezhirech*



LIGHT ON VEDANTA

To work is thy right, but thou hast no claim over the fruits of action. Let not thy action be inspired by the desire of its fruits, yet do thou not fall into inaction.

O Dhananjaya, being absorbed in the love of God perform thy action, and ever remembering that both success and failure are ultimate good be thou undisturbed. Inner calmness is yoga.

Work without right understanding and consciousness of God becomes the cause of bondage. Therefore, follow the guidance of pure reason born of the vision of the Self. Unhappiness inevitably comes to those who work with attachment to the fruits of action.

Following the path of pure reason led by perfect vision, thou shalt attain thy oneness with God in this life and become free from the consciousness of virtue and vice. Therefore steadfastly follow this path. Work with wisdom is yoga.

— *Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, verses 47-50*

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Awake Yoga Meditation

Phone: 410-435-6121 — www.awakeyogameditation.org

OUR LINE OF TEACHERS

Swami Nityananda

Joyfully following the path blazed by our founding teacher, Swami Shankarananda, our presiding teacher, Swami Nityananda, emphasizes our connection and oneness with all life, selfless service, meditation, Self-realization, and unconditional love. She is dedicated to helping us apply these ideals in our everyday life and promoting the progress of all beings – our global family.

Swami Shankarananda

The spiritual founder and preceptor of the Divine Life Church of Absolute Oneness in Baltimore. He was the disciple of Swami Premananda. Swami Shankarananda left the body on November 24, 2014. He appointed Swami Nityananda as his successor.

Swami Premananda

A direct disciple of Swami Yogananda. Swami Premananda established the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism in Washington, D.C.

Swami Yogananda Paramhansa

He was the first of this line of gurus to come to America, and was the guru of Swami Premananda, ordaining him as a minister in India and later consecrating him as a Swami in America.

Swami Sri Yukteswar

A man of profound wisdom, a great astronomer, and adept in the science of astrology. He was a self-dedicated humanitarian. He was the guru of Swami Yogananda Paramhansa.

Shyamacharan Lahiri

He attained the supreme illumination of God-realization while living an exemplary family life. He was the guru of Swami Sri Yukteswar.

Aum Babaji

A guru of divine revelation and a man of supreme compassion. He was the guru of Shyamacharan Lahiri.



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