



SONG OF LIFE

Life has speech and is never silent. It is...a...song.

Learn from it that you are part of the harmony.. learn the laws of the harmony. In time you will have passed beyond the need of a human teacher...for the light of the Spirit will illuminate every object in nature. In the stone...in the mountain...in the plant...in the tempest...in the sunshine...in the stars...in all things high or low...will you perceive that great throbbing intelligent life of which you are a part...and from them...you will hear...notes of the great song of life...all is one...all is one!"

The above excerpt was taken from "Yogi Philosophy and Oriental Occultism" by Yogi Ramacharaka

I believe that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. It is also stated that 'joy' and 'sorrow' is relative. Some find joy in 'marriage' and children, while others find it in solitude. Some search for 'happiness' in 'wealth', while others in the renunciation of it. Take a peep into my mind if you care to, and 'see' life the way I perceive it... and maybe, just maybe we shall dance together to the beat of 'My Song of Life'.

Shakun Narain

To Be

We spend all our time yearning for the past, or regretting what is already history.

Or we waste our time dreaming dreams, instead of doing something about it.

Or we live, worrying about future events, which in all probability are not going to happen.

I was reading the other day:

Most people find it hard to live their life in Present Simple,
They prefer Past Complicated,
Or Future Depressive.

Enlightened Minds urge us to live in the present moment.

I believe that living in the Present moment is equivalent to "To Be".

As Shakespeare says: "To Be or not to Be, That is the Question.?"

What is "To Be?"

'To Be' is to lay aside all concepts, conditionings, egos, attachments and all Belief Systems.

'To Be' is to put aside all that is not required at this moment.

'To Be' is to sit quietly, this moment, without any expectation.

We have become what our thoughts are. We believe that we will cease to be without them.

But if we were to lay them aside for awhile. And not ponder on our doctrines and value systems.

We would 'BE'

If you are eating - Eat!

If you are walking - Walk!

If you are praying - Pray!

Do not think! Feel!

A reader has asked me:

"Could you kindly tell me the importance of silence for a bhakta? Is being silent equal to, better than or not as good as doing smaran or chintan or any other type of Navdha bhakti?"

I think that the importance of silence for a bhakta is not better or worse. It just is another form of discipline.

I personally believe that remaining silent, or as it is called in our philosophy, doing 'Maun vrat' is totally 'To Be'.

A true Bhakta will just Be, no matter whether he does 'Simran' Chintan or any other type of Navdha Bhakti.

A Reader has sent me the following observation:

Why were saints, saints?

*Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful,
patient when it was difficult to be patient;
and because they pushed on when they wanted to stand still,
and kept silent when they wanted to talk,
and were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable.
That was all.*

It was quite simple and always will be.

Thought on Trust

Someone has asked, "How do I win back the trust of someone, after I have spoken badly about him, without intending to?"

I believe that the only way to earn back the trust, after having apologized and explained, is by continuing to love. Generally, a lot of patience is required in such cases.

There should be three gatekeepers to speech. Before one speaks, one should ask oneself:

- 1) Is it true?*
- 2) Is it necessary?*
- 3) Is it compassionate?*

There is so much heart-ache one would save oneself if one were to follow these simple rules. However we are human, and while the party, sometimes takes long to forgive, let us be more generous with ourselves, by forgiving ourselves and promising , that we will not commit the same mistake again.

On Doubts and Loneliness

I have been listening to the katha (discourse) of Shri Morari Babu beamed live on TV.

He spoke of doubt: 'Sandeh' Sandeh literally means doubt. All search starts with a doubt expressed, but that doubt must come from a sincere wish to learn, not to argue for the sake of proving oneself to be knowledgeable and superior. A lot of Hindu Scriptures are a dialogue between disciple and Master. Can you think of one such Scripture? You are right! The Bhagvad Geeta. Anyway, to come back to Shri Morari Babu and his discourse.

He said:

Sandeh naheen to Vichaar naheen

Vichaar naheen to Vivek naheen

Vivek naheen to Satya naheen

Satya naheen to Parmeshwar naheen.

Which I would translate thus:

Doubt leads to thoughts

Thoughts lead to the power to discriminate (between right and wrong)

The power (to be able) to discriminate leads to Truth Truth leads to God.

I received an email from a friend which made sense. Sending you excerpts:

It stated that the deepest fear we have is the fear of being alone... The source of the fear is our original separation from God... We try to escape this fear by having someone in our life who we believe will be here for us ...unfortunately it does not work for long... We are forced to face our limiting beliefs, our judgments and our control patterns... From a place of Presence, we can enter into relationship, but when we do, we make Presence the foundation of our being together. True companionship, and the opportunity to express love, caring and kindness become the real value of relationship...

Deena Rathod has shared with me a Sai Mantra, which I share with you, dear Readers and specially with Ankita who had requested for it. Here it is:

Aum

Saayeeshvaraaya vidhmahe

Sathya devaaya dheemahi

Thannah sarvah prachodayaath

Roughly translated it means:

Aum,

We know Sai as Supreme Divinity Incarnate.

We meditate on this God of Truth.

May this Almighty All-in-all Personality lead us on the path of total liberation.

DEPRESSION

I hear the word 'Depression' more often than I would like to.

I am about to share a poem from my note-book of 'many years ago'

I think that the poem is by Patience Strong.

When depression knocks upon your door,

Don't open it

Shoot the bolt and turn the key,

For if you should admit

The visitor into your house

You'd very soon repent

For where he is you'll find

No hope no joy no merriment

He (Depression) has shocking manners

For he stays and stays and stays

Can't get rid of him at all

A call may last for days

For once he's in

He makes himself at home

And there's no doubt

That in the end, the only thing to do

Is kick him out

So be warned-for he's a thief

He'll steal the things you prize
Peace and sweet contentment
In his presence beauty dies
Nothing seems to be worthwhile
He'll wear you to a shred
Haunt you when you sit alone
And follow you to bed
If you feel that he's about
Lock doors and windows fast
Give yourself a job to do
Until the danger's passed
Then in time he'll tire of seeking you without success
And will leave you free to live in perfect happiness

I also like what Jug Saraiya has written on 'Depression'

'...shit happens life sucks. But that's no reason to cop out. You've got to get on with it, fight your own Kurukshetra. We are all the 'Walking Wounded'. The trick lies not in learning how not to get wounded, because you can't always call the shots. The trick lies in trying to learn how to keep walking even after having been hit...'

What is depression? Why does it strike?

Depression strikes, when life does not follow ones every command (Life is not moving the way one would like it to) and one lacks faith and acceptance to 'what is' and then 'Ego' makes matters worse...

A Reader Responds:

I was suffering from a severe kind of depression coupled with anxiety for over 5 years. It started some 6 years back almost spontaneously, when I was 27. There was no apparent reason, any particular event or any sort of addictions or social factors which I can imagine that could have triggered it. I had started thinking too much about myself, my mind and my body. Gradually, it snowballed into a huge problem. I tried some medicines but they only gave me temporary relief. Any combinations of words, however philosophical were having no lasting effect. It had become a veritable struggle between life and death. It affected my life in a big way. I was not being able to focus on my work, or meet and talk to people properly, or sleep or eat properly. I was caught in a painful catch-22 which was keeping me preoccupied twenty-

four hours with morbid thoughts even while sleeping. The more I wanted to "fix" myself the more I was feeling like an insect trapped in the cobweb.

But at some corner of my heart, I had a belief, a trust based on the grand truth which we all see but do not appreciate – the creation. The trust was that the creation should have got a meaning, a reason... there was a faint ray of hope that one day I will be fine... just like when I was a child I was perfectly fine, jovial, active... One day this "wrong knowledge" (that is Agyanta) will go away and so will my problem. "Gam Ka Kaaran Agyan Hai", (The reason for our inner suffering is lack of right knowledge), so I believed. This faint ray of hope kept me alive, if not fixed my problems like a magic wand.

Then I met this guy, who had also suffered in some way, advised me to do this (i.e. regular physical exercises). I was initially skeptical about it, but upon much persuasion I started doing it and then the miracle happened! I started jogging at least once in a day (sometimes twice, which was recommended) for 15-30 minutes and life changed forever. Life conquered the death! I knew that I had got the magic wand! I could notice changes in my attitude immediately, but there were other slow and subtle changes occurring within which were not perceivable, and within 6 months I almost sprang back to life. I was a different person altogether as a friend remarked who met after a long period of time!

I will not say that philosophical matters didn't have any effect. They also played their role in the cure process, though probably in a very subtle way not noticeable to me. They kept the hope alive, but the real "fuel" for moving forward on the road to cure was provided by the exercise.

Exercise is "the missing ingredient" in today's life which everyone needs urgently. Just 40-50 years back, i.e. one generation back (or two generations back, for the youngsters), the daily activity of an average person included- filling and carrying water from the well, grinding grains, cutting wood, digging earth, commuting long distances, washing clothes, taking care of cattle, weaving ropes and sweaters. The human body has been well-adapted to that sort of lifestyle, deviating from which has brought health concerns of various kinds.

...At the same time the food components have also changed for the worse in many cases - chocolates, tea, coffee, more oily food, fibre-less food, food with traces of fertilizer and pesticides, food containing artificial colors and preservatives etc are examples of deviation from our traditional food which comprised mainly of cereals, vegetables, fruits, milk etc.

...The essence of the exercise is that it should be done in such a way that you start panting. During panting, the blood circulation increases along with that oxygen that is carried with it, rejuvenating all cells of the body. But there is a word of caution here: people suffering from certain types of illness, for example asthma, cardiac related problems, certain bone abnormalities etc. should not do rigorous physical exercise or should consult the doctor before trying it.

The treatment should also comprise of giving love and affection, teaching yoga techniques for spiritual uplifting, counseling for removing deep-rooted misconceptions, hygiene training, nutritious diet and giving more stress on using medicines from natural sources. In the western world, people are getting more and more aware of such

an approach to healing known as holistic treatment. Though allopathy cannot be ruled out completely since it has proven to be very effective in many cases, we might need a more balanced use of allopathic medicines; holistic approach aims exactly for that.

SR

Enlightening Thoughts to increase happiness (from the Internet)

Look at the brighter side of things

Read an inspiring passage, watch a comedy, listen to relaxing uplifting music...

Pamper yourself: Buy a book, icecream...

Be where happy people are. Happiness is contagious.

Think of solutions, not problems.

Smile more often

FORGIVENESS

Someone has said that it is reasonably easy to forgive, but it is very difficult to forget! Interestingly he speaks about 'deep wounds inflicted...'

I believe that emotional wounds like physical wounds have to be initially tended to. e.g.:- A fracture hurts miserably. One has to go to the doctor and have the physical part put into plaster. After that, there is very little one can do except allow nature to take its own course. TIME HEALS.

Similarly, after one decides to forgive. One does not forget immediately. Allow time to elapse. Do not dwell too much on all that transpired. And time will do its trick. One fine morning you will wake up realizing that you have not only forgiven but forgotten.

Remember that to forget is beneficial to you also.

Thought Two

A forwarded email message that I received has adhered to my mind.

It stated that 'not forgiving' was like carrying a sack of potatoes, wherever one went. The potatoes rot and stink, but one goes on with the horrible task.

How terrible!

But we all do it!

Why?

Because one holds on to emotions of self pity and resentment.

Also one gets identified with the unhappy feelings of emotional wounds inflicted in the past. And that is not all, one keeps the process alive by compulsive thinking.

The irony is, that if one lets go of these negative feelings, one lets go of grief.

If grief leaves, a torrent of Life energy floods, and there, emotional, spiritual and physical disease cannot enter.

Easier said than done.

Arjuna told Krishna just that. That it was not easy to follow the Spiritual Truths (that Krishna taught) which lead to Enlightenment and Freedom.

Krishna answered that what is difficult, can be attained with practice and perseverance.

Sometimes one needs to forgive oneself.

Some circumstances, from the past make one feel unworthy and not deserving of forgiveness.

BREAK THAT MIND PATTERN!

I read somewhere sometime back that one needs to forgive others, oneself and Life for all that one has endured. Only then will true freedom be achieved.

'Not forgiving' is self inflicted suffering. How much longer does one need to bear it?

Say YES to whatever 'IS' now and let go of the past!

I got another email message which taught, that when someone hurts you:

“write it down in the sand, where the winds of forgiveness get in charge of erasing it away, and when something great happens, engrave it in the stone of the memory of the heart, where no wind can erase it”

If one believes people who behaved in a certain way and hurt us in the process, had a choice over their actions; also believe that one has the choice not to be unhappy over it.

If one can create ones misery, one must believe that one can also create ones joy.

OK I can hear you saying that “I can forgive, but I cannot forget.”

I believe that hurt is like a physical wound. You can medicate it, keep it clean, and covered. Nature and Time will cure it. If you scratch the wound, it will get re-infected and will take longer to heal.

Gautama Buddha says: Holding on to anger is like holding on to a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.

The Quran urges Muslims: "Be foremost in seeking forgiveness" (51:1)

Jesus spoke from the Cross: "Father, forgive them (executioners) for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)

Mahatma Gandhi: An eye for an eye leaves the world blind

Something more to think about

Overcome anger by learning to tolerate other's weaknesses. I have heard that people who inflict pain are very insecure.

People who forgive have lower blood pressure, and therefore are less at a risk of getting strokes or heart attacks. They suffer less stress, head aches and back aches ...

Jan 2007

Am reading 'The kite runner' by Khaled Hosseini

Cannot put it down...hmmm...the truth is... that I read it at any free time that I have...
Sharing some lines that made me think...

"...Now no matter what the mullah teaches , there is only one sin, only one. And that is theft. Every other sin is a variation of theft...When you kill a man you steal a life, you steal his wife's right to a husband, rob his children of a father. When you tell a lie, you steal someone's right to the truth. When you cheat, you steal the right to fairness..."

ON SUPRESSED FEELINGS

One of my readers believes that Hinduism promotes 'masking of emotions and suppression of feelings'. She graciously asked for my opinion.

Below lies my answer.

- Do you agree?
- Do you have further to add?
- Do reply.

My answer:

As far as I have understood Hinduism; one is NOT told to mask emotions or suppress feelings, one is told to introspect. One of the methods of introspecting, is to be aware of ones thoughts as one sits in silence. Deepak Chopra states in 'How to know God': 'Since the journey to the soul happens only in awareness, if you block out awareness you impede your progress; if you pay attention, you build up momentum.'

Once one has been aware and recognised the thoughts that one is prone to have, one introspects on the utility of those thoughts. The Geeta tells us to do our best and leave the rest. One then does what one can do under the circumstances and after that refuse to waste time on the repetitious unnecessary thoughts. In the case of feelings and emotions, one studies the situation. One is made to realise that 'Life is a dream' 'Let go and Let God' i.e.. Surrender to His will (only after one has exhausted all that one need do under the circumstances)

If you have studied Bhakti or read the life stories of Bhaktas, you will notice that they never mask their emotions. But they love and emote and are sincere.

The Sahaj path or The natural Path that the Sufis follow in fact proclaims not to suppress any emotion, to the extent that onlookers may even consider them 'out of their mind' which I would interpret as being 'beyond their mind'

Let me share with you some thoughts of Swami Narayani from 'Within and Beyond'. They teach us to introspect. Once we have learned that, we are not asked to suppress our feelings, one sees the futility of over-reacting. That becomes our nature and our truth.' 'The more we can look into our feelings and recognise the glamour and illusions under which we live, the more quickly we will move forward. All emotions are tied up in desires. For or against, it is still desire. We must get down on looking at ourselves-watching the mind and learning to overcome building sandcastles in the sands of time. They crumble so quickly. We are no longer children. Let us grow into the Divine Splendour of the Almighty Power and rise above the baubles.'

My dear reader further stated that maybe the idea of Karma implied a certain acceptance of events in one's life. This sense of destiny may carry with it that Indian's should not get too emotional and should accept the negative events in their lives..

I believe:

There are two schools of thought on the above theory. One is that you have no control over your destiny and the other is that you do have a free will to a certain extent. I am of the latter opinion. I do not believe that God makes us suffer to atone for our past mistakes. I believe that our difficulties provide us with a learning and are a stepping stone to another plane of being or thought. I do tend to agree with her here that the majority of Hindus have not understood correctly the Theory of karma and hence think that it is 'spiritual' not to get too emotional or to accept the negative aspects of their lives without putting much effort to improve their condition. The above is sad but I have learned to accept that everyone has their own pace in Spiritual growth.

I also believe that such deep thoughts are so much better thrashed out in person.

However, I hope that I have been of some help.

Reader's Responses

From Hargobind

Religion does give boundaries. Society does give boundaries. However, Hinduism is not religion and is as ancient as mankind. Hinduism includes all schools of thought, maintains that all "roads" lead to God.

God is love. Love ever expands. Where there is expansion there can be no masking, rather unmasking our true individuality. Where there is expansion, how can there be suppression? Rather growth of happiness and bliss. What masks and suppresses is our ego. What needs to emerge is our true self.

From Anita

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Auntie, it is my understanding that Karma is a result of our free will choices both on this plane and the higher planes of existence. We chose our difficulties like you rightly said as a learning opportunity for spiritual growth just as we chose to make the right or wrong decisions on this earth plane while we are unaware of our choices before coming on earth. I think the reason that Indians rely so much on Karma and then become fatalistic is because we tend to put the entire onus on God whether they be good times or hard times. They drag him in the middle of their problems by saying why did you do this to me. It is easier for them to think that he is responsible for their difficulties or happiness rather than acknowledge and take responsibility themselves. And then because it becomes God's decision we must accept it stoically and not be emotional for not to do that would be disrespectful to him.

