

VEDANTA
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Spiritual Teachings

Swami Brahmananda

The one purpose of human life is to attain devotion to God and spiritual illumination, otherwise, life is vain and meaningless. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and procreating are not the sole ends of human birth; these belong to the brutes. God is greatly manifest in the human body. Try to understand this truth.

Ah! Swamiji gave his heart's blood to build this monastery so that you young men might have the opportunity to devote your lives to God and practice spiritual disciplines. In fact, in his effort to make your life easier, he over-exerted himself and shortened his own life. What intense love he had toward all mankind!

Sri Ramakrishna was revealed to the world at large through Swamiji. Know that their words and teachings are not different. Sri Ramakrishna was too great for the average mind to grasp; it was Swami Vivekananda who made his life and teachings understandable to all.

Study Swamiji's works carefully, for unless you understand his teachings it is useless to try to understand Sri Ramakrishna. Read and study the teachings of both, and at the same time devote yourself to the practice of japam and meditation. You are young now, and these are the best years of your life. Mould your minds now; when once the mind is moulded there is nothing to fear. When you can bring the mind under control you will have achieved much. Whip it whenever it tries to run astray.

Within each one of us there is free will. This freedom of the will is in reality, the freedom of the Atman within. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "Awaken the power of that Self which is within you." After all, what is the meaning and purpose of spiritual practices and disciplines? It is to strengthen this will, the will to attain God in this very life. As the mind becomes purer, the will becomes stronger. It is downright laziness to relax this will and think that in some future time you will realize God. Think of Buddha. What determination he had! After years of searching, he finally sat himself down under a tree, determined to realize God then and there, or die in the attempt. That is what is needed.

Time Melts Away

From the Teachings of Swami Turiyananda

As sitting in thought at the feet of the holy teacher, Swami Turiyananda, these words touch the seeking soul with hope, loving correction and challenge. Hear him say:

On the relationship with God:

“When one feels oneself as body, one must consider oneself as the servant of the Lord; when one thinks of oneself as the Jiva, the individualized soul, one must consider oneself as a part of Him; and when one feels oneself as the Atman (Self), one is the same as the Lord Himself.”

On happiness:

“Man tries so strenuously to make himself happy. But there is no success or happiness unless God wills it. Happiness or freedom can be realized in two ways, by identifying oneself with God and by living in eternal self-surrender to Him. Apart from Him there is no freedom of will or happiness.”

On egotism:

“Egotism is not good; it is the seat of great danger. As wine stills the senses so egotism silences the spirit. Sri Ramakrishna often referred to the fact that water accumulates only in low areas. Thus it is that in humility the good qualities of the mind and heart become manifest. Pride is haughty and high-headed. He who is elastic and unbreakable like steel exhibits real strength. He who can live in harmony with different natures and still possess a spirit of amicable compromise, he alone is strong. Stubbornness is not strength. It is a cloak which the ego uses to cover its weaknesses. Real strength knows how to bend and yet regain its true position.

The more you strive to free yourself of egotism and become His instrument, the more you will realize peace. The more you strive to feel and know that God is the only doer, not you, the more your heart will be filled with peace.”

On passions:

“Never let pride delude you into thinking that you have gained control over the passions. For if such becomes your belief, you will soon experience their sharp aliveness. Continually pray, ‘O Lord, save me from all passions.’ Passions will last as long as the body

lasts, but through His grace they become less and less potent and demanding.”

“Continnence is essential for Divine realization. If one can maintain Brahmacharya for twenty-eight years, one will realize Bhakti, Jnana, everything. Lust is called Manasya, born in the mind. Only a hero can conquer the senses and go beyond them to the superconscious planes.”

On self-reliance or self-confidence:

“Reliance on one’s apparent self leads to ruin. To presume to be all-knowing is extremely harmful. Self-reliance or self-confidence means faith in the higher Self. To persist in remaining what one already is or in holding on to one’s preconceived opinions at any cost—such self-importance is most unprofitable.”

On worship:

“One can never be emancipated by adoring a man as man. One must look upon him as God. However much he may have attained in spiritual wisdom and dispassion, however highly endowed with spiritual powers he may be, the worship of him, the man, will not effect liberation. He must be perceived as God Himself. Without such consciousness, worship of him may serve to communicate his spiritual qualities and powers, but nothing more. If one worships a Divine Incarnation God-realization is surely granted.”

On meditation and concentration:

“There are four obstacles which often hinder concentration. 1. Laya which means that the mind is overpowered by Tamas (inertia) and falls asleep, losing consciousness. 2. Vikshipa which means that the mind is scattered on multitudes of objects. 3. Kashaya which means that the mind finds meditation distasteful, and therefore is disinclined to meditate. (Persistence must be enlisted.) 4. Rasasvada which means that the mind becomes fascinated by the vision of divine forms and refuses to ascend higher.”

On half-heartedness and surrender:

“Just see! Most frequently God is nothing more than a matter of words, a verbal expression. A little meditation, a little Japa and this is considered sufficient religion. What a life of poverty! The heart must burst with hunger for Him. Nothing but complete self-surrender to Him will satisfy such intense longing. You call Him the Inner Controller (Antaryamin), omniscient, and omnipresent, and still you waver and fear to surrender yourself to Him! ‘Thinkest thou

that thou wilt realize Mother by thy hypocritical devotion? No, no, this is not a sweet in a child's hand that thou wilt cajole it out of Her. There is no deceiving God. He sees all. If you love anything other than God and do not renounce all for Him, you cannot realize Him. . . . If one considers God to be all in all, how can one find joy in worldly things?"

On relying on God:

"None else, He alone is my all in all.' When one has this attitude, utter dependence, reliance, self-surrender, then one is on the right path. Now you are depending on earthly things, on wealth, man, and learning. Why do we not rely on God instead of our money, our relatives, our friends? But, 'O king, know that He is the treasure of those who have nothing. When nothing will intervene between you and Him, then you will realize Him. If, O man, thou wilt cross the ocean of relative existence, thou must give up desires for earthly things.'"

"The Master used to say, 'Do whatever you like after making the knowledge of oneness your own.' That is to say, know the Lord as the soul of your soul, the life of your life, the eye of your eye, and love Him.' Nought else but this is true devotion. Supreme devotion is impossible as long as the smallest desire remains in the mind. If one considers God to be all in all, how can one find joy in worldly things?"

On the place and privilege of being man:

"Eating, sleeping, fear, and sexual intercourse—these are the common features of animal and man. The special privilege of man is that he possesses the knowledge of discernment, the gift which allows him to distinguish right from wrong, to make moral judgments. The lower in the scale of evolution a man is, the greater is his pleasure in sense-objects. The higher in the evolutionary climb a man is, the greater is his joy in knowledge—a very subtle but intense joy of which those of lower growth remain ignorant and unappreciative. Just observe the multitudes. Their days are spent in sensuous delights, feasting, drinking, playing, hunting, running after women. Are they not even as beasts? If we neglect to refine and elevate our faculties, of what advantage is it to be born a man? Those whose minds have been and are being refined can never stoop to such things."

On desirelessness, work, and true prayer:

“However great a man may be in word and deed, there will be a day when he will have to understand and become desireless. Having attained that state he may again take up work through the will of God. Work will not tighten your bondage if it is work commanded by and executed for a Mahapurusha, a man of realization, who desires for you nothing but good and to whom you have surrendered your all. Such work becomes a key which unlocks bondage. Let your prayer be: ‘Do not give me such work to do as will make me forget Thee; and wherever Thou keepest me, may I ever remember Thee!’ ”

“Never utter such a selfish prayer as, ‘Give me this,’ ‘Do not give me that.’ Your little, selfish ego enters the activity when you do not want to do this thing or that thing. There are many folk who fear work and actually try to escape and avoid it. In so doing their bondage and selfishness become stronger and greater. Let prayer for Bhakti be your prayer. Be always alert and ready to obey His commands. And let the prayer be ever on your lips, ‘May I keep Thee in mind under all conditions! May I never fall into any company other than Thy devotees!’ ”

On the will of God:

“Everything happens by the will of God. Have not many clever persons been born in this world? What has been their end? Does not everything come into being and become destroyed by His will? This organization, this state, this nation of ours—will these last forever? No. These and all else will become degraded and perverted, then the Lord will incarnate again.”

On the question: Cannot the mind remain alert and awake of itself?

“Is it possible for that state of alertness, awareness to come automatically? You must indeed practice first. Try consciously again and again to correct yourself, then you will begin to find that your mind has become its own monitor. People want to reach and attain that state immediately. Practice, and the skill of self-discipline leads there. The impure is yourself. When you refer to ‘I’ you really mean that impure portion, the selfish ‘I.’ The more you think of God, the more He forms and grows within until at last the impure portion vanishes completely and you become Him.”

Vivekananda and His Message II

Sister Christine

After leaving Detroit, Swamiji had gone to New York, hoping that there, in the cultural metropolis of America, he might find an opening to begin the work he felt destined to do. He was soon taken up by a group of wealthy friends who loved and admired him and were attracted by his personality, but cared nothing for his message. He found himself in danger of becoming a social lion. He was fed, clothed, and housed in luxury. Again there came the cry for freedom: "Not this! Not this! I can never do my work under these conditions."

Then he thought the way might be found by living alone and teaching in classes, open to all. He asked Lansberg to find inexpensive rooms for both of them. The place which was found (64 West 33rd Street) was in a most undesirable locality, and it was hinted that the right sort of people, especially ladies, would not come to such a place, but they came,—all sorts and conditions of men and women—to these squalid rooms. They sat on chairs, and when chairs were filled, anywhere—on tables, on washstands, on the stairs. Millionaires were glad to sit on the floor, literally at his feet. No charge was made for the teaching and often there was no money to pay the rent. Then Swamiji would give a secular lecture for which he felt he could accept a fee. All that winter, he worked as he could. Often the last penny was spent. It was a precarious way of carrying on the work and sometimes it seemed as if it would come to an end.

It was at this time that some of those with means offered to finance the undertaking. But they made conditions. The "right place" must be selected and the "right people" must be attracted. This was intolerable to his free *sannyasin* spirit. Was it for this that he had renounced the world? Was it for this that he had cast aside name and fame? A little financial security was a small thing to give up. He would depend upon no human help. If the work was for him to do, ways and means would come. He refused to make a compromise with the conventional outlook and worldly methods. A letter written at this time is revealing:—

" . . . wants me to be introduced to the 'right sort of people.' The only 'right sort of people' are those whom the Lord sends—that is what I understand in my life's experience. They alone can

and will help me. As for the rest, Lord bless them in a mass and save me from them. . . . Lord, how hard it is for man to believe in Thy mercies !!! Shiva ! Shiva ! Where is the right kind? And where is the bad? It is all *He* !! In the tiger and in the lamb, in the saint and in the sinner, all *He* !! In Him I have taken my refuge, body, soul, and Atman, will He leave me now after carrying me in His arms all my life? Not a drop will be in the ocean, not a tinge in the deepest forest, not a crumb in the house of the God of wealth, if the Lord is not merciful. Streams will be in the desert and the beggar will have plenty if He wills it. He seeth the sparrows fall—are these but words, or literal, actual life?

“Truce to this ‘right sort of presentation.’ Thou art my right, Thou my wrong, my Shiva. Lord, since a child, I have taken refuge in Thee. Thou wilt be with me in the tropics or at the poles, on the tops of mountains or in the depths of oceans. My stay—my guide in life—my refuge—my friend—my teacher—and my God—my real self—Thou wilt never leave me, never. . . . My God, save Thou me forever from these weaknesses, and may I never, never seek for help from any being but Thee. If a man puts his trust in another good man, he is never betrayed. Wilt thou forsake me, Father of all good—Thou who knowest that *all* my life, I am Thy servant, and Thine alone? Wilt Thou give me over to be played upon by others or dragged down by evil? He will never leave me, I am sure.”

After this, a few earnest students took the financial responsibility for the work and there was no further difficulty. Again he wrote: “Was it ever in the history of the world that any great work was done by the rich? It is the heart and brains that do it, ever and ever, and not the purse.”

All that winter the work went on and when the season came to an end, early in the summer, this devoted group was not willing to have the teaching discontinued. One of them owned a house in Thousand Island Park on the St. Lawrence River, and a proposal was made to the teacher that they all spend the summer there. He consented, much touched by their earnestness. He wrote to one of his friends that he wanted to manufacture a few “yogis” out of the materials of the classes. He felt that his work was now really started and that those who joined him at Thousand Islands were really disciples.

In May 1895, he writes to Mrs. Ole Bull:

There are innumerable aspects of God that can be worshipped. Each religion and sect shows us a different aspect. Vedanta offers many different aspects and ideals; one to suit every temperament. We should respect all these as paths leading to God, yet we must choose our individual path and stick to it. We can't grow if our ideas and ideals are always shifting. Our devotion will grow in intensity only when we learn to think of and love one Ideal. As we practise thinking of our Chosen Ideal within our heart as the embodiment of purity, love and compassion those same qualities will grow in us.

We should realize that within the tiny cavity of the heart dwells the Infinite God who is present everywhere but is centered within our own being. The spaceless, timeless reality in which the whole universe exists is contained within ourselves. Within the center of the heart our chosen Ideal should be meditated upon, and in time He will make his presense felt.

Our present nature is outgoing and must be gradually changed and turned in the opposite direction. We can start to do this by trying to direct all our emotions toward our Chosen Ideal. If we must have hate, let it be for the things that obstruct our vision of God. Our love and desire can be turned toward Him, and we can be greedy for His vision. In this way we can learn to keep our mind more constantly in Him.

We cannot find fulfillment in the finite; only by turning our mind to the supreme treasure within can we find true peace and blessedness.

The Value of Faith

Jnanada

The importance of faith in spiritual life is often underestimated in this country. We, as a nation, are just emerging from an era of agnosticism. Coincidentally with the rise of importance and respect of science, we experienced a decline of confidence in religion. This movement reached a climax shortly after Charles Darwin's *ORIGIN OF SPECIES* and *DESCENT OF MAN* electrified the nation. For a short time it seemed that religion and science were doomed to be warring factors. Many religious groups of the time felt that this theory of evolution was a direct attack on their creeds and consequently condemned it and forbade their followers to sympathize with it. The scientists of the time were more inclined to accept the facts of a fellow scientist than the words of a priest or preacher. Large numbers of people became estranged from spiritual life over this very issue. Youth particularly subscribed to the new theories and it became fashionable to be agnostic. People grew almost ashamed to admit that they attended church or believed in God. At the same time, those who still clung to their religious beliefs grew lax in fulfilling them. Mediocrity was the theme of religion. This country was still called a Christian nation but few of its citizens followed the commandments of Christ.

Gradually, however, this movement died down. The advocates of religion discovered that science was not in itself a challenge to their creeds. The scientist in his laboratory found that there was one missing element and came to suspect that the element was God. The agnostic youth grew into a man searching for something permanent, unchanging in a world of flux and change. The nation as a whole has begun to delve into spiritual matters.

Thus today many of us are beginning to feel that science does not offer a solution to the problem of life. In our search for the answer to this problem, we have started to look to God. It was, usually, a gradual change. As we studied various philosophies, we became more and more interested in those books which dealt with spiritual matters. Finally we were forced to admit, somewhat grudgingly, that religion "had something."

However, in spite of the fact that we are commencing to see the

true value of religion, we still maintain our old prejudices against faith. We still connect it with ignorance and fanaticism. We are willing to study religion and cautiously to apply the teachings to ourselves but we are afraid, as it were, to let ourselves believe that we can reap the harvest of such activities. We tend to pride ourselves on the fact that religion with us is purely a matter of logic. We accept God because it seems logical that God exists. We try to realize Him also because our reason tells us that that is the basic goal of man. This attitude is characteristic of us to a degree that we are inclined to feel superior to the person who has faith and devotion. We say: "So and so is too emotional. He is a typical Bhakta. I could never be like that."

We do not realize how much we are denying ourselves in the non-acceptance of faith. Actually we can not accomplish a thing in spiritual life unless we have a firm foundation of faith on which to build. Without faith in God, we can not mobilize ourselves for action. Spiritual life is not child's play; it requires courage, persistent effort and the ability to concentrate. It would be impossible to apply any of these qualities to spiritual life unless we had faith in the goal.

It is, of course, easy to state the necessity of faith but it is more difficult to prescribe the ways of acquiring faith. The first step would be a complete intellectual conviction that God is and can be realized. This can be achieved by seriously reading the works of the seers and saints. The next step is a deep intellectual conviction that realizing God is more desirable than enjoying worldly pleasures. This can easily be arrived at by observing how fleeting and unsubstantial these pleasures are. A study of history will quickly persuade us that the world is indeed a "dog's curly tail"; it can never be permanently straightened out. A study of the various types of people in the world soon gives the lie to the fairy story of "And they lived happily ever after." Very few worldly people ever achieve happiness and those that do are constantly in danger of losing it by circumstances beyond their control such as the death of a husband, wife or child.

Then having been intellectually persuaded that realizing God is the only worthy goal in life, we must seek a teacher. It is the teacher who will inspire us with the faith in God. It is the teacher who gives us confidence that God can be seen not only by the saints of old but by ourselves. From him we get the courage to make our first

effort and to persevere. Thus through the teacher's grace and our own effort, we gradually obtain the faith to struggle with ever increasing vigor.

Just as the child, encouraged by its parents obtains the courage to take its first tottering step, and then another and another until it gains the strength and faith to walk and run and jump, so we encouraged by our teacher take our first step in realizing God. If we stumble and fall down, we are told that strength is not the ability to stand upright but the determination to get up again after having fallen.

So our confidence grows and, in addition to our intellectual beliefs, we attain an inner conviction that we are on the right path. Many times events will challenge this knowledge. Occasionally doubts and deep discouragement will arise, but as we struggle ahead, we come to recognize them as passing moods, mirage-like in character and are not deceived by them. Each time this happens we grow a little stronger. Each time our faith in the ideal and in the teacher grows.

Many people ask us: "Is not this blind faith? Where is there any real proof that God exists?" But we answer: "Of course it is blind faith, but it produces results. Shall I refuse to use it merely because it holds no empirical proof of God. Sri Ramakrishna told the story of the milkmaid who, giving the excuse that she had to wait for the boat, was told by the priest that if she took the name of the Lord, she could walk across the river. Several days later when asked how she managed to be on time, she told the priest that she had carried out his instructions. The priest was amazed. As she left for home, he followed her and watched her confidently stride across the water. He started to follow but she, watching him said, "If you really have confidence in the name of God, why do you gather up your robes before you step on the water?"

Faith is blind until one has realized God. Real faith can only come after one has seen God, just as the child gets real confidence only after taking his first step. Maharaj said: "Faith, intense faith! He who has acquired faith has seen God. If you have faith a penny has great value; if you have no faith, a gold piece is worth nothing. He who has no faith in God, doubts everything. He who has faith in God overcomes all doubts."

Walt Whitman on Karma Yoga II

Dorothy F. Mercer

So viewing Whitman, the contradictory paths of conduct presented in *Leaves of Grass* cease to be contradictory. As a liberated man Whitman performs the work nearest at hand, his own duty for its own sake. Any other action would be prompted by inclination, and the liberated man has no inclination; he has no desire having realized oneness. But he also, as a teacher, presents revolt against conventional conduct; as we have said, Whitman's glorified American is 'wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear'."

"I swear I am for those that have never been master'd!

For men and women whose tempers have never been master'd.

For those whom law, theories, conventions, can never master."

Not that Whitman commends wickedness and condemns conventions but that he wishes men to realize that right action is the manifestation of an absolute ethics residing in themselves is his point. Men can only be truly moral as they realize their inner voice and act in accordance with its dictates. This is the core of Whitman's ethics. And it is also the core of the ethics of *The Bhagavad Gita*.

Even though there are fundamental and profound similarities in the American's and Hindu's idea of conduct, there is a minor difference, connected with national peculiarities, which should be noted before a further discussion of similarities. The American revolts against conventional action, a result largely of the breakdown of Puritanism and the impact of the frontier, is contrary to the Hindu's adherence to traditional *dharma* which regulates to a very detailed extent his life. Part of the great Indian popularity of *The Bhagavad Gita* may be a result of Arjuna's revolt against the *dharma* of his caste; a Kshatriya refusing to fight, he was committing a sin which every Hindu, irrespective of his particular religion, could not fail to appreciate. Likewise, the self-assertion of Whitman embodying the self-reliance, the equality, the individualism, the optimism of the new America leads many critics of *Leaves of Grass* to consider the poet predominately nationalistic.

But this self-assertion was not quite so arrogant as it seemed, inasmuch as each revolting American attested to a possession of the inner light, in accordance with which he acted. In consequence, the

dharma of *Leaves of Grass* is more profound than a conformity to national standards. Like *The Bhagavad Gita*, *Leaves of Grass* is not a book of practical ethics but of the spiritual life; it presents universal truths, not conventional paths of conduct. It strives to awaken in man through action that self which includes all action; it strives to give man that innate law of action which is the constant word in all diverse ethical codes.

"I give nothing as duties;

What others give as duties, I give as living impulses;

(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

asks Whitman.

So however different may have been the ideals of the country and age in which the two poems saw birth, fundamentally they present the same *dharma*; must present the same *dharma*, it being eternal. The manner in which work is performed, therefore, is important, not the work; as Whitman says,

"There is nothing in the whole universe that can be
more effective than a man's or woman's daily
behavior can be,

In any position, in any one of These States."

In other words, Whitman is what the Vedantin would call a *karma yogin*: his path of action is one determined by universal vision; he is his law. Like Arjuna, he has transcended both good and bad actions; but like Arjuna he, himself, lives conventionally, even though in some aspects that conventionality seems today unconventional. He "nourishes active rebellion" that men may vision eternal *Dharma*, that through revolt they may gain universal vision. For indeed, what profiteth it if a man gain the world and lose his own soul; if he be judged fair in the eyes of men and empty of substance in the eyes of God? It is a full life, an abundant life, a free life, Whitman would give his reader, such a one as in truth only the absolute could enjoy.

"Of life immense in passion, pulse, and power,

Cheerful—for freest action form'd, under the
laws divine,

The Modern Man I sing,"

chants Whitman.

But this "modern man" is universal; the "passion, pulse, and power" cosmic; individual failure and success imposters, of no conse-

quence, or, more profoundly, of all consequence; for both are manifestations of eternal *Dharma*, divine action.

“Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?

I also say it is good to fall—battles are lost in
the same spirit in which they are won.”

In spirit, action is one and therein failure and success are both without meaning. Similarly, *karma yoga* makes fate and free-will meaningless. Relatively speaking there are both. Man shapes his fate through *karma* and reincarnation; he is a free agent. On the other hand, he cannot escape the fate thus formed. But of what significance is either, universally considered? Man is the law determining Fate, and He is the Actor whose Environment is Himself whose Action is of His Essence. Since in universal action no reward is desired, no *karma* accrues. ‘Work done without desire creates no reaction and imposes no bondage’ is the argument of the Vedanta. Desire exists only when difference is acknowledged; when man realizes he is the universal self, he gains liberation from the law of *karma*. “He is free, because he knows in himself the Atman which embraces the world, and with it the totality of all desires.”

Karma’s power may, nevertheless, extend beyond man’s period of realization; the soul having gained knowledge does not immediately escape from the past effect of *karma*. Man does not make new *karma*, but he has to face the consequences of the *karma* already made because the energy that has been let loose must be dissipated. Whitman says that there is in him the “stuff of wrong-doing” which cannot stop “transpiring” from him until it must stop.

Not that Whitman welcomes the “stuff of wrong-doing”—his ‘freest action—under the laws divine’ by no means sanctions license, contrary to the evident opinion of some of his followers; “it is not only true that most people entirely misunderstand Freedom, but I sometimes think I have not yet met one person who rightly understands it. The whole Universe is absolute Law. Freedom only opens entire activity and license *under the law*,” says Whitman. He does not repudiate law, or eternal *Dharma* as the Hindu would call it, but realizes freedom within the law; he fulfills the law.

His action then becomes sacrificial, for the law is universal, not individual. Whoever does not act in this universal spirit of sacrifice “lives an unserviceable life, a sensual, sinful soul.”

“Work springs from spirit; this from the

Imperishable springs:
 Thus sacrifice the spirit holds
 Of all eternal things.
 So rolls the wheel; and he on earth
 Who does not help it roll,
 Lives an unserviceable life,
 A sensual, sinful soul."

But there is great reward attached to such sacrifice; such reward that "sacrifice" is almost a misnomer, for whoever acts in an unselfish, sacrificial manner sees himself in all action; he experiences all pain and all happiness. He does not sympathize with mankind, but actually experiences the suffering and joy of the ages.

"Feeling the pain of all the world
 And all its joy within
 Himself, as if his own, he wins
 The perfect discipline."

Of course, this is only possible if all individual desire has been obviated; so long as individual desire remains, no man may become another. Whitman, therefore, in expressing his universal pain tells us that he has eliminated personal feeling. And he does express universal pain. As he says,

"I do not ask the wounded person how he feels—I myself
 become the wounded person."

To many critics of *Leaves of Grass* this statement is a result of Whitman's sympathetic, compassionate nature. But the sympathy of Whitman is more significant than his critics suggest. The critic who said, humorously superior so he thought to the idiocy of Whitman's romancing, "He claims not only to see the whole human drama but to act in every part of it," was making a more profound statement than he was conscious of. For this is exactly what Whitman does; he sees the whole human drama and acts in every part of it. As Sanatkumara says in the Chandogya Upanishad,

"I, indeed, am below. I am above. I am to the west.
 I am to the east. I am to the south. I am to the
 north. I, indeed, am this whole world."

Like Arjuna, Whitman has ceased to act as an individual but as the universe, in a spirit of sacrifice. From this point of view any action that the self performs would necessarily be sacrificial; it would necessarily give itself, take from itself. The creation of the

world is a sacrifice, therefore; and as the self realizes its identity with the cosmic spirit, it necessarily acts in a sacrificial manner; creates out of itself, gives itself.

“I do not give lectures or a little charity;
When I give, I give myself,”

says Whitman.

On the other hand, in the process of realizing the identity of the individual and the universal spirit, oneness is not easily apparent; for the smaller individual self seems to agree with the larger self, and the one seems to be two in its action. The larger self embraces the smaller self, and the smaller self offers itself at the feet of the larger self; together they give themselves for others, for their own creation, for themselves. “What love than thine [the soul’s] and ours [his own] could wider amplify?” asks Whitman. Certainly no other love could: the self embracing the self, realizing its identity with its creation and at the same time creating or amplifying more widely itself. Certainly no “aspirations” can “outvie” those performed in this knowledge of identity. The soul “journeys forth” and with its love, which is identical with the love of the ordinary self, more “widely amplifies,” dilates, or projects ‘purity, perfection, strength.’ As Whitman implies, greater love hath no man than this love of the self for the self. And where, in such love, can sacrifice abide? Here love and work become identical; *bhakti yoga* and *karma yoga* meet. As Krishna says, “Mine is the path that men follow all around.”

As in the case of the *bhakti yogins*, the *karma yogins* cannot be judged by outer authority, for they are outer authority; as a matter of fact, they judge outer authority since they created it. And they are not only supremely independent, no tradition can act as a categorical imperative for them, but they have the power “to corroborate far and near, without any exception,” for they are all-powerful, having realized the Soul. Moreover, they have no duty to perform. Since they have gained self-sufficiency through a realization of the universal spirit, no particular action is necessary for them. As Krishna tells Arjuna,

“ . . . he who finds within the self
An all sufficient beauty,
Pure joy, contentment absolute,
Is freed from sense of duty.
“To him no action done, or left

Undone, has any worth;
 He craves no necessary boon
 From anyone on earth."

This does not mean that the man of wisdom can act as he will, but that "for him there is nothing to be toiled after or avoided because there is nothing that reaches beyond his own Self." Included in his self or soul is state law, tradition, convention. Government is the manifestation of the justice already in man, and the degree of the justice manifested can only be judged by its creator. However, its creator can make it confirm himself; that is, he has full power of creation and can manifest the full letter of the law—justice. Consequently, Whitman's ideal commonwealth is "where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority . . .," for nothing reaches beyond the sanction of the soul. It is not possible, as a result, to determine the move of the mystic; it is spontaneous, uninfluenced by external authority, determined only by his inner light.

Whitman is consistent, therefore, both in his conventional life and in his seeming revolt against authority. And likewise is *The Bhagavad Gita* in presenting revolt as a means to vision. Arjuna would not act because the external *dharmā* of his caste, the law of the state, had not been sanctioned by the judgment of his heart. Arjuna's refusal to engage in battle gave him the vision wherein he perceived that his will was at one with the universal will, that the external *dharmā* of his caste was at one with the internal *Dharma* of his heart; he became "secure . . . in the Soul" as Whitman would say. He then acted like the universe without fear or desire—morally. As Krishna told him,

" . . . make the Law your guiding law
 To fix the wrong and right.
 So do your earthly task, your mind
 Illumined by that light."

The Divine Incarnation

Barada

We find in the scriptures of India the ultimate of philosophical flight in their doctrine of oneness. We cannot conceive of anything higher than One—the Infinite.

What we sense and experience of the external world is only our reading of the Infinite. God alone is, but instead of seeing God we are identifying ourselves with our unreal natures and experience multiplicity. Our true Self which is one with God has become associated with our finite mind and senses, therefore we are reading the Infinite as matter making up various names and forms.

As long as man is so deluded, and is firmly attached to his body and senses, his mind will not allow him to sustain the attitude, "I am He," or I am one with the Infinite.

Whenever we try to conceive of God He naturally comes to our mind with form and attributes. We attach to Him the qualities of love, compassion, omnipotence and the like.

In our very nature we feel the need of a higher being to worship and pray to for help and guidance. Even those who don't feel this need ordinarily, will say that in times of great danger or stress they turn in desperation to God in whom they temporarily have faith.

The Absolute cannot be worshipped but we can worship our highest conception of the manifestation of the Absolute. In order to love and enjoy God we must worship Him as a personal being. It is as though we divide ourselves in two, and one part of us worships the other part in the form of a Personal God. It is the Infinite God which is the Self within every being that we objectify in our meditation as a Personal God.

The various conceptions of God put forth by the different religions are the highest readings of the Absolute that man can make. Behind all these conceptions exists the Impersonal Reality which is being worshipped through these forms.

God is Infinite; we cannot limit his possibilities. He who has manufactured this universe out of himself can surely manifest himself in human form if he so chooses.

Sri Ramkrishna gave a simile which makes it easier for us to understand how the Infinite can assume forms. He points out that

the ocean is a wide, almost infinite expanse of water, but in parts of this wide sea the water has congealed into ice. In the same way, the Infinite God is pervading all, but for special reasons, a portion of that Infinite Power congeals occasionally into the form of a Divine Incarnation.

The vibrations of light exist everywhere but we can see them only through a lamp. These Divine Incarnations are, as it were, the light bulbs that reveal to man the glories of God.

Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "When goodness grows weak, when evil increases, I make myself a body. In every age I come back to deliver the holy, to destroy the sin of the sinner, to establish righteousness."

It is the one and the same God who appears at different times as Christ, Buddha or Ramakrishna. He comes to give a new impetus and life to the eternal religion and teach us how to love God.

God takes on our limitations and weaknesses for a time in order to show us how they can be overcome. However, He is never limited in reality. Conscious of his divinity from birth, he is always aware of his true nature. He has taken on a covering of maya or ignorance, but is never subject to it.

The same divinity dwells in man as in the Incarnation, but it remains covered in man. We can reach that divinity in union with God, but the power that is manifest in the Incarnation can never be manifest in the ordinary soul.

The saint who has worked a lifetime to free himself from ignorance is only able to save himself, while the Incarnation is able to save many by a touch or wish.

The Avatar is unique in that he can go and come from a high state of spiritual experience at will. He has to force his mind to stay on a lower plane in order to teach. For this reason he keeps a thin layer of ego which can be called the "ego of knowledge," or the "ego of devotion." Otherwise he would not be able to retain his body.

We see in the lives of most all of the Incarnations that they practised severe austerities which the average man could not stand. They do not need this for themselves, but they do it for us, that the power of their austerity will carry us more quickly to the goal. A power is left working in the world after the descent of an Avatara, and at those times His grace may be more easily attained by those who sincerely call on Him.

"This week will be the last of my classes. I am going next Saturday with Mr. Leggett to Maine. He has a fine lake and a forest there. I shall be two or three weeks there. From thence, I go to Thousand Islands. Also I have an invitation to speak at a Parliament of Religions at Toronto, Canada, on July 18th. I shall go there from Thousand Islands and return back."

And on the 7th of June:

"I am here at last with Mr. Leggett. This is one of the most beautiful spots I ever saw. Imagine a lake surrounded with hills and covered with a huge forest, with nobody but ourselves. So lovely, so quiet, so restful. You may imagine how glad I am after the bustle of cities. It gives me a new lease of life to be here. I go into the forest alone and read my Gita and am quite happy. I shall leave this place in about ten days or so, and go to Thousand Islands. I shall meditate by the hour and day here and be all alone by myself. The very idea is ennobling."

Early in June three or four were gathered at Thousand Island Park with him and the teaching began without delay. He came on Saturday, July 6, 1895. Swami Vivekananda had planned to initiate several of those already there on Monday. "I don't know you well enough yet to feel sure that you are ready for initiation," he said on Sunday afternoon. Then he added rather shyly, "I have a power which I seldom use—the power of reading the mind. If you will permit me, I should like to read your mind, as I wish to initiate you with the others tomorrow." We assented joyfully. Evidently he was satisfied with the result of the reading, for the next day, together with several others, he gave us a *mantram* and made us his disciples. Afterwards, questioned as to what he saw while he was reading our minds he told us a little. He saw that we should be faithful and that we should make progress in our spiritual life. He described something of what he saw, without giving the interpretation of every picture. In one case, scene after scene passed before his mental vision which meant that there would be extensive travel apparently in Oriental countries. He described the very houses in which we should live, the people who should surround us, the influences that would affect our lives. We questioned him about this. He told us it could be acquired by anyone. The method was simple at least in the telling. First, think of space,—vast, blue extending everywhere. In time, as one meditates upon this space intently, pictures appear. These pictures must be

interpreted. Sometimes one sees the pictures but does not know the interpretation. He saw that one of us would be indissolubly connected with India. Important as well as minor events were foretold for us nearly all of which have come to pass. In this reading the quality of the personality was revealed,—the mettle, the capacity, the character. Having passed this test, there can be no self-depreciation, no lack of faith in one's self. Every momentary doubt is replaced by a serene assurance. Has the personality not received the stamp of approval from the one being in the world . . . ?

Thousand Island Park, nine miles long and a mile or two in width, is the largest of the Thousand Islands. The steamers land at the village on the river. At that time the remainder of the island was practically a solitude. The house to which we were directed was a mile above the village. It was built upon a rock. Was that symbolic? It was two stories high in the front and three behind. A dense forest surrounded it. Here we were secluded and yet within the reach of supplies. We could walk in all directions and meet no one. Sometimes Swamiji went out only with Lansberg. Sometimes he asked one or two of us to accompany him. Occasionally the whole party went out together. As we walked, he talked, seldom of controversial subjects. The solitude, the woods seemed to recall past experiences in Indian forests, and he told us of the inner experiences during the time he wandered there.

We in our retirement seldom saw anyone except now and then someone who came for the view. The conditions were ideal for our purpose. One could not have believed that such a spot could be found in America. What great ideas were voiced there! What an atmosphere was created, what power was generated! There the Teacher reached some of his loftiest flights, there he showed us his heart and mind. We saw ideas unfold and flower. We saw the evolution of plans which grew into institutions in the years that followed. It was a blessed experience—an experience which made Miss Waldo exclaim; "What have we ever done to deserve this?" And so we all felt.

The original plan was that they should live as a community, without servants, each doing a share of the work. Nearly all of them, were unaccustomed to housework and found it uncongenial. The result was amusing, as time went on it threatened to become disastrous. Some of us who had just been reading the story of Brook

Farm felt that we saw it re-enacted before our eyes. No wonder Emerson refused to join that community of transcendentalists! His serenity was evidently bought at a price. Some could only wash dishes. One whose work was to cut the bread, groaned and all but wept whenever she attempted the task. It is curious how character is tested in these little things. Weaknesses which might have been hidden for a lifetime in ordinary intercourse, were exposed in a day of this community life. It was interesting. With Swamiji the effect was quite different. Although only one among them all was younger than himself, he seemed like a father or rather like a mother in patience and gentleness. When the tension became too great, he would say with the utmost sweetness, "Today, I shall cook for you." To this Lansberg would ejaculate in an aside, "Heaven save us!" By way of explanation he said that in New York when Swamiji cooked he, Lansberg, would tear his hair, because it meant that afterwards every dish in the house required washing. After several unhappy experiences in the community housekeeping, an outsider was engaged for help, and one or two of the more capable ones undertook certain responsibilities, and we had peace.

But once the necessary work was over and we had gathered in the class room, the atmosphere was changed. There never was a disturbing element within those walls. It seemed as if we had left the body and the bodily consciousness outside. We sat in a semicircle and waited. Which gate to the Eternal would be opened for us today? What heavenly vision should meet our eyes? There was always the thrill of adventure. The Undiscovered Country, the Sorrowless Land opened up new vistas of hope and beauty. Even so, our expectations were always exceeded. Vivekananda's flights carried us with him to supernal heights. Whatever degree of realization may or may not have come to us since, one thing we can never forget: We saw the Promised Land. We, too, were taken to the top of Pisgah and the sorrow and trials of this world have never been quite real since.

He told us the story of the beautiful garden and of one who went to look over the wall and found it so alluring that he jumped over and never returned. And after him another and another. But we had the unique fortune of having for a Teacher one who had looked over and found it no less entrancing, but out of his great compassion he returned to tell the story to those left behind and to

help them over the wall. So it went on from morning until midnight. When he saw how deep the impression was which he had made, he would say with a smile, "The cobra has bitten you. You cannot escape." Or sometimes, "I have caught you in my net. You can never get out."

Miss Dutcher, our hostess, was a conscientious little woman, a devout Methodist. How she ever came to be associated with such a group as gathered in her house that summer would have been a mystery to anyone who did not know the power of Swami Vivekananda to attract and hold sincere souls. But having once seen and heard him, what could one do but follow? Was he not the incarnation of the Divine, the Divine which lures man on until he finds himself again in his lost kingdom? But the road was hard and often terrifying to one still bound by conventions and orthodoxy in religion. All her ideals, her values of life, her concepts of religion were, it seemed to her, destroyed. In reality they were only modified. Sometimes she did not appear for two or three days. "Don't you see" Swami said, "this is not an ordinary illness? It is the reaction of the body against the chaos that is going on in her mind. She cannot bear it." The most violent attack came one day after a timid protest on her part against something he had said in the class. "The idea of duty is the midday sun of misery scorching the very soul," he had said. "Is it not our duty," she began, but got no farther. For once that great free soul broke all bounds in his rebellion against the idea that anyone should dare bind with fetters the soul of man. Miss Dutcher was not seen for some days. And so the process of education went on. It was not difficult if one's devotion to the Guru was great enough, for then, like the snake, one dropped the old and put on the new. But where the old prejudices and conventions were stronger than one's faith, it was a terrifying, almost a devastating process.

Brahmacharya

Sister Amiya

"I have received sanction from the President and Trustees of the Belur Math to initiate three of you into Brahmacharya. Other Swamis will come for the ceremony and you will be given your vows on September 22nd."

Hearing these words from Swami Prabhavananda I thought: "Well! So I am to become a nun of the Ramakrishna Order! How wonderful!" And I felt pleased.

But it did not end there. Indeed, that was the beginning, for the mind began to ask questions. "What is Brahmacharya?" Generally speaking, in the west Brahmacharya is known as the student period between the noviciate years and the final initiation into Sannyas, and associated only with the young monks of India. It seems so far removed from the west—from America!

And the mind continued to question. "What are the vows? What does one give up?", and gradually one began to realize that this was no idle step to be taken lightly. A deepening sense of responsibility began to develop, so that, by the time the day of initiation dawned, speculation had long since yielded to awe. After all, it was not for nothing that these six holy men were willing to travel thousands of miles across the country in order to be present on this occasion. They, too, had long ago taken those same vows, and they knew their significance.

That September morning in 1947 dawned bright and fair. Many devotees had gathered early for the special worship preceeding the initiation, and a feeling of excitement began to grow as the hour for the ceremony grew nearer. The shrine room was filled with flowers, and the worshippers over-flowed into the eucalyptus grove outside the shrine-room, where they listened in silence to the resonant chanting of the Vedic hymns by the Swamis. Their words they could not understand, but the spirit behind them filled their hearts with quietness and peace.

The worship ended, and the seven Swamis in their *gerrua* robes passed in single file to the room which had been prepared for the ceremony. There, in the presence of their own Guru and the Swamis Akhilananda, Satprakashananda, Vividishananda, Viswananda, and

Devatmananda, the initiates repeated their vows after Swami Yatiswarananda.

What those vows were, only those who took them could know, as only those who experienced it could ever know the tremendous spiritual power which pervaded that holy occasion. All thought, all memory of the outside world was forgotten. Nothing remained but pure spirit, and as one left that room one felt that all past mistakes, all past tendencies and impressions were left behind. Only the present remained; the present and the future with its tremendous responsibilities.

It may be said that within those vows were contained all the necessary requisites for the attainment of perfection, and which, if followed, could lead but to that end. But how? How can a modern occidental possibly conform to the rules of ethical conduct and high spiritual endeavor laid down by the sages of ancient India? Superficially, it seems almost absurd, and entirely out of keeping with the modern west, but, as one looks deeper, one can readily see that neither ethics, nor morality, nor Truth have any boundary within time and place. Social customs may vary according to climate, creed and race, but the basic rules of ethical conduct are the same everywhere. The Truth taught by the sages of old is not different from the Truth that Jesus taught. Just as the moral and ethial laws of Moses still serve as the norm of human behaviour today, so do the principles of Truth and righteousness of all religions still stand, no matter how much man may distort them and try to mould them nearer to his own limited conceptions. Truth is timeless and changeless, and it is to the unfoldment and knowledge of this Truth, and the attainment of the Freedom such knowledge brings, that the initiate into Brahmacharya pledges his—or her life, heart and soul.

Notes on Zen

Aldous Huxley

"A review of *Cat's Yawn*" the thirteen numbers published from 1940 to 1941 by the Buddhist Society of America, now the First Zen Institute of America, reprinted in Facsimile with foreword, appendix, glossary and index. New York, The First Zen Institute, 124 East 65th St., 1947.)

We are accustomed in religious literature to a certain large solemnity of utterance. God is sublime; therefore the words we use about God should also be sublime. So runs the unexpressed argument in favour of the grand style. In practice, however, it happens not infrequently that sublimity of utterance is carried to self-stultifying lengths. For example, at the time of the great Irish potato famine of a century ago, a special prayer was composed for recitation in all the churches of the Anglican communion. The purpose of this prayer was to entreat the Almighty to check the ravages of the blight which was destroying the Irish potato crop. But from the outset the word "potato" presented a difficulty. Quite obviously, in the eyes of Early Victorian divines, it was too low, common and proletarian to be pronounced in a sacred place. The horribly vulgar fact of potatoes had to be concealed in the decent obscurities of periphrasis, and consequently God was requested to do something about an abstraction, sonorously called "the Succulent Tuber." The sublime had soared up into the empyrean of the ludicrous.

In similar circumstances, we may guess, a Zen Master would also have avoided the word "potato," not because it was too low for use in a religious context, but because it was too conventional and respectable. Not "Succulent Tuber," but plain, monosyllabic "spud" would have been his idea of a suitable alternative.

Sokei-an, the Zen Master who taught in New York from 1928 to the time of his death in 1945, conformed to the literary traditions of his school. When he issued a religious journal, the title he chose for it was "Cat's Yawn." This studiedly absurd and anti-pompous name is a reminder to all who may be concerned that words are radically different from the things they stand for; that hunger can be stayed only by real potatoes and not by even the loftiest verbiage about the Succulent Tuber; that Mind, by whatever name we choose to call It,

is always Itself and cannot be known except through a kind of direct action, for which words are only a preparation and an incitement.

In itself the world is a continuum; but when we think about it in terms of words, we are compelled, by the very nature of our vocabulary and syntax, to conceive of it as a something composed of separate things and distinct classes. Working upon the immediate data of reality, our consciousness fabricates the universe we actually live in. In the Hinayana scriptures craving and aversion are named as the factors making for the pluralization of Suchness, the illusion of discreteness, egoity and the autonomy of the individual. To these world distorting vices of the will the Mahayana philosophers add the intellectual vice of verbalized thinking. The universe inhabited by ordinary, unregenerate people is largely homemade—a product of our desires, our hatreds and our language. By asceticism a man can learn to see the world, not through the refracting medium of craving and aversion, but as it is in itself. (“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”) By meditation he can by-pass language—by-pass it at last so completely that his individual consciousness, deverbilized, becomes one with the unitary Consciousness of Suchness.

In meditation according to the methods of Zen, deverbilization of consciousness is achieved through the curious device of the *koan*. The *koan* is a paradoxical, even a nonsensical, proposition or question, upon which the mind is concentrated until, utterly thwarted by the impossibility of making sense out of a paralogism, it breaks through into a sudden realization that, beyond verbalized thinking, there exists another kind of awareness of another kind of reality. An example of the Zen method is supplied by Sokei-an in his brief essay, *Tathagata*. “A Chinese Zen master was giving a tea party one freezing night. . . . Kaizenji said to his disciples: “There is a certain thing. It is as black as lacquer. It supports heaven and earth. It always appears in activity, but no one can grasp it in activity. My disciples, how can you grasp it?”

He was indicating the nature of *Tatha*, metaphorically of course, just as Christian ministers explain the attributes of God. . . .

The disciples of Kaizenji did not know how to reply. Then finally one of them, Tai Shuso by name, answered: “You fail to grasp it because you try to grasp it in motion.”

He was indicating that, when he meditated in silence, Tathagata appeared within himself.

Kaizenji dismissed the tea party before it had really begun. He was displeased with the answer. If you had been his disciple, what answer would you have made so that the Master could have continued the tea party?"

My own guess is that the tea party might have been prolonged, at least for a few minutes, if Tai Shuso had answered in some such way as this: "If I cannot grasp *Tatha* in activity, then obviously I must cease to be *I*, so that *Tatha* may be able to grasp this ex-me and make it one with Itself, not merely in the immobility and silence of meditation (as happens to the Arhats), but also in activity (as happens to the Bodhisattvas, for whom Samsara and Nirvana are identical)." These, of course, are mere words; but the state described, or rather faintly hinted at, by these words would, if experienced, constitute enlightenment. And meditation upon the logically unanswerable question contained in the *koan* may suddenly take the mind beyond words to the condition of egolessness, in which *Tatha*, or Suchness, is realized in an act of unitive knowledge.

The wind of the spirit bloweth where it listeth, and that which happens when free will collaborates with grace to achieve knowledge of Suchness cannot be theoretically foreknown, cannot be prejudged in terms of any system of theology or philosophy, cannot be expected to conform to any verbal formula. Experience is determined only by experience. In Zen literature this truth is expressed by calculatedly outrageous anecdotes about enlightened persons who make bonfires of the scriptures and even go so far as to deny that what Buddha taught deserves the name of Buddhism—for Buddhism is the unteachable, immediate experience of Suchness. A story illustrating another of the dangers of verbalization, namely its tendency to force the mind into grooves of habit, is cited in *Cat's Yawn*, together with a commentary by Sokei-an.

"One day when the monks were gathered in the Master's room, En Zenji asked Kaku this question: "Shaka and Miroku (i.e. Gotama Buddha and Maitreya, the future Buddha) are the slaves of another. Who is this other?"

Kaku answered: "*Ko Sho san, Koku Ri shi.* (Which means, 'the third sons of the Ko and Sho families, and the fourth sons of the Koku and Ri families,' a piece of nonsense signifying that the capacity to become identified with Suchness exists in every human being and that Gotama and Maitreya are what they are in virtue of being

perfectly 'the slaves' of that immanent and transcendent Buddha-Nature.)

The Master accepted his answer.

At that time Engo was the head of the monks of the temple. The Master related to him this incident. Engo said: "Pretty good, pretty good! But perhaps he hasn't yet grasped the real point. You shouldn't have given him your acknowledgment. Examine him again by a direct question."

When Kaku came into En Zenji's room the next day, the Zenji asked him the same question. Kaku replied: "I gave the answer yesterday."

The Master said: "What was your answer?"

"*Ko Sho san, Koku Ri shi,*" said Kaku.

"No, no!" the Master cried.

"Yesterday you said 'Yes.' Why do you say 'No' today?"

"It was 'Yes' yesterday; but it is 'No' today," replied the Master. On hearing these words Kaku was suddenly enlightened.

The moral of this story is that, in Sokei-an's words, "his answer fell into a pattern, a mould; he was caught by his own concept." And, having been caught, he was no longer free to become one with the freely blowing wind of Suchness. Any verbal formula—even a formula which correctly expresses the facts—can become, for the mind that takes it too seriously and idolatrously worships it as though it were the reality symbolized by the words, an obstacle in the way of immediate experience. To a Zen Buddhist the idea that a man can be saved by giving assent to the propositions contained in a creed would seem the wildest, the most unrealistic and dangerous of fancies.

Hardly less fantastic, in his eyes, would seem the idea that high feelings can lead to enlightenment, that emotional experiences, however strong and vivid, are the same as, or even remotely analogous to, the experience of Suchness. Zen, says Sokei-an, "is a religion of tranquility. It is not a religion which arouses emotion, causing tears to well from our eyes or stirring us to shout aloud the name of God. When the soul and the mind meet in a perpendicular line, so to speak, in that moment complete unity between the universe and the self will be realized." Strong emotions, however lofty, tend to emphasize and strengthen the fatal illusion of the ego, which it is the whole aim and purpose of religion to transcend. "Buddha taught

that there is no ego either in man or in dharma. The term 'dharma' in this case denotes Nature and all the manifestations of nature. There is no ego in anything. Thus what is known as 'the two kinds of non-ego' means that there is no ego in man and no ego in things.' From metaphysics Sokei-an passes to ethics. "According to his faith of non-ego," he asks, "how can we act in daily life! This is one of the great questions. The flower has no ego. In the spring it blooms, in the autumn it dies. The stream has no ego within it. The wind blows and waves appear. The river bed drops abruptly and there is a waterfall. We ourselves must really feel these things within ourselves. . . . We must realize by our own experience how this non-ego functions within us. It functions without any hindrance, without any artificiality."

This cosmic non-ego is the same as what the Chinese call Tao, or what the Christians call the indwelling Spirit, with which we must collaborate and by which we must permit ourselves moment by moment to be inspired, making ourselves docile to Suchness in an unremitting act of self-abandonment to the Order of Things, to everything that happens except Sin, which is simply the manifestation of egoity and must therefore be resisted and rejected. Tao, or non-ego, or the divine immanence manifests itself on every level from the material to the spiritual. Deprived of that physiological intelligence which governs the vegetative functions of the body and through whose agency the conscious will is translated into action, lacking the aid of what may be termed "animal grace," we could not live at all. Moreover it is a matter of experience that the more the ego's superficial consciousness interferes with the workings of this animal grace, the sicker we become and the worse we perform all acts requiring a high degree of psycho-physical coordination. The emotions connected with craving and aversion impair the normal functioning of the organs and lead, in the long run, to disease. Similar emotions and the strain which arises from the desire for success prevent us from achieving the highest proficiency not only in such complex activities as dancing, making music, playing games, doing any kind of highly skilled work, but also in such natural psycho-physical activities as seeing and hearing. Empirically it has been found that mal-functioning of the organs can be corrected, and proficiency in acts of skill increased, by inhibition of strain and negative emotions. If the conscious mind can be trained to inhibit its own

self-regarding activities, if it can be persuaded to let go and give up its straining for success, the cosmic non-ego, the Tao that is immanent in all of us, can be relied upon to do what has to be done with something like infallibility. On the level of politics and economics the most satisfactory organizations are those which are achieved through "planning for unplanning." Analogously, on the psycho-physical levels, health and maximum proficiency are achieved by using the conscious mind to plan its collaboration and its subordination to that immanent Order of Things which is beyond the scope of our personal planning and with whose workings our busy little ego can only interfere.

Animal grace precedes self-consciousness and is something which man shares with all other living beings. Spiritual grace lies beyond self-consciousness, and only rational beings are capable of co-operating with it. Self-consciousness is the indispensable means to enlightenment; at the same time it is the greatest obstacle in the way, not only of the spiritual grace which brings enlightenment, but also of the animal grace, without which our bodies cannot function efficiently or even retain their life. The Order of Things is such that no one has ever got anything for nothing. All progress has to be paid for. Precisely because he has advanced beyond the animal level to the point where, through self-consciousness, he can achieve enlightenment, man is also capable, through that same self-consciousness, of achieving physical degeneration and spiritual perdition.

All religions are true, and God can be realized through the practice of any one of them. You may tell me that other religions are full of errors and superstitions. To that I would reply, supposing they are! Every religion has errors. Every one thinks that his watch alone gives the correct time. But, I tell you, it is enough if you have devotion to God, if you yearn for Him, and feel drawn to Him. Do you not know that He is truly your Inner Guide? He sees your yearning, He knows your longing. A man has several sons. The older ones call him "Father," but the younger ones call him "Dada," while the baby indistinctly lisps "Da Da Da!" Does the father love the younger ones less? All are equally dear to him. In the same way, people call on the same God, using different names. God is one: His names are many.

—Sri Ramakrishna

