

Satsang

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Ethan writes from Hollywood, California:

"We must be certain not to expect that our spiritual development will be handed to us automatically by Vasant, or even Parama Sadguru Shri Gajanan Maharaj. These people and their words have meaning only to the degree that we experience the meaning within ourselves. The process of surrender must occur within, to the Realized Guru who is 'here,' not 'over there.' The Guru will open the way for us to draw closer to Truth; He will lead us in this fashion even to the step of total surrender. But each step taken remains our own responsibility and must occur within each of us.

"A good thing to remember is to let go of these 'wantings-to-be' and instead realize what we are."

Ingrid comments on the above, as follows:

"Everyone has to make an effort for his spiritual development. We have been granted free will. We execute our free will in the right direction and follow the Fivefold Path of eternal principles of religion (Satya Dharma). By following the spiritual discipline, the pull of desires is reduced and this leaves the intellect free to operate unhampered by prejudice. Purified intellect leads to right action. Viewing it in this perspective, the spiritual development comes automatically. Grace unfolds within us and our journey to the Kingdom of Bliss is accelerated.

"Guru is one who dispels darkness (ignorance). Guru shows the way; puts us on the path. SADGURU (The Perfect Master) catches hold of our hand and takes us all along the path. PARAMA SADGURU (literally Highest among the Perfect Masters) is synonymous with AVATAR, i.e. Divine Messenger of the highest order who descends on earth to do a specific allotted task.

"If we want to 'experience the meaning within ourselves' we must practice the discipline in all sincerity. Words cannot sufficiently convey the experience since words limit the meaning. The meaning of words is unfolded to us further as the process of purification is intensified.

"The steps which Ethan mentions are taken by our free will where the mind and intellect cooperate. We perform our duty and earn the right to be recipients of Grace. The journey thus continues until the Kingdom of Bliss is unfolded within.

"We should not carry the burden of having to practice any spiritual discipline. It should become a way of life, a routine affair. We may read many books. We may think we have collected many spiritual gems. One day we have to unlearn many of the things which we have stored up through intellect. Then true simplicity is gained. You need not even take the decisions. They are already made for you when you truly surrender to the Divine. You become a more fitting instrument for His Grace and all you live for is to serve the Divine. There is never a moment of alienation."

SAPTA SHLOKI
(Seven Verses)

Verse 3 अस्पष्टं च कदा स्पष्टम्
तत्त्वज्ञानविवेचनम् ।
अन्यत्र लभ्यते किंतु
प्रमाणं परमं श्रुतेः ॥

Aspashtam cha kada spashtam
Tatwa jnyana wiwechanam
Anyatra labhyate kintu
Pramanam paramam shrutih

Purport: THAT (Almighty Power) is described, sometimes clearly, sometimes not so clearly, at various places. However, Vedas is the standard reference.

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 3 by Vasant:

Man is born in culture. Culture precedes him; culture succeeds him. Being born in it, man need not apparently learn everything by his own experience. Culture creates symbols. We associate purity with the Cross, Aum, the Star, the Triangle, the Ka'bah. Saffron robes denote renunciation and service. These symbols imprint the corresponding concepts on the mind.

Culture manifests in the mode of living. It expresses itself through institutions, ideations and values. The inherent capacity in man varies from individual to individual and hence we find infinite varieties of individuals born in the same culture.

Man is surrounded by nature and is a part of it. The climate, topography, flora and fauna, water resources, bio-organisms are part of nature in which he is born. Heredity endows him with certain capacities to react to these natural conditions.

However, the flux of man-made conditions in which he is born plays an important role in moulding his character.

Animals and humans inherit the same natural surroundings. However, unlike animals, man has the ability to effect changes in his surroundings. Man takes to farming and produces food. He digs canals for navigation; bunds the rivers for irrigation. He builds houses. He manufactures consumer goods for daily use. He invents gadgets to eliminate drudgery. He installs air-conditioners and heating systems to keep his body in comfort against the onslaught of nature. These objects constitute external aspects of culture.

Every child born in a culture has to adjust itself to these external manifestations of culture. Automobiles, jet planes, TV, mass communication media form part of external aspects of our culture. Every child has to learn about these things. This involves a quantum of mind energy. The child cannot avoid the resultant strain.

The prevalent ethical code, etiquettes, festivals, the social, political and economic structures, all these are external manifestations of culture. However, the external manifestations are merely the expressions of basic values that a society clings to. Arts, architecture, literature, religion, administrative apparatus, are all expressions through which the basic values manifest in a given culture. Our ideas, aspirations, emotions, beliefs and attitudes are based on the basic values that each society places before itself. Human evolution is guided by such values and their expressions in a given society.

The manifestation of these values constantly undergoes change. The rate of change sometimes accelerates remarkably. Discoveries in physical sciences and their application give a big impetus to these changes. A towering personality sometimes comes on the scene and the values are freshly reiterated. Their outward expressions then change.

Animals go by instinct. Man is guided by intelligence which takes him beyond instincts. Man can dive into the unmanifest, superphysical, subtler worlds. Philosophy, pure science, religion and ethics represent man's journeys into the unmanifest. When man tries to share this knowledge with others he has to take recourse to symbols. Sceptre and crown indicate political power. Red light indicates danger. ∞ indicates infinity. Language is a higher form of such symbols.

Man does not achieve tranquility of mind merely by providing physical comforts for himself. His contentment is dependent on subtler realms than the physical. Physical body is the instrument through which he gratifies his desires. Man must control his environment to ensure comfort for himself. This lands him into fresher fields of technology.

He soon realizes that satisfaction of aspirations, gratification of desires do not bring about tranquility of mind. Often they lead to further strain and imbalance.

Sometimes man tries to run away from conditions that disturb him, but this rarely succeeds. Suppression or repression of desires sometimes puts him into reverse gear.

A wise person desists from spending all his time and energy over seeking material comforts. He realizes that his body and the mind are instruments and that they have to be kept in shape. These instruments have a purpose and the purpose is Self-realization. It is liberation from the chain of birth, death and rebirth. It is emancipation from the cycles of happiness and unhappiness.

Each one of us stands somewhere in the scenes described above. Hence, philosophy becomes an inevitable sport for any intelligent person. He likes to soar into the unmanifest and realize THAT which lies at the basis of creation. Man feels the need for evolving a set of principles for his day-to-day conduct. This is ethics. When he starts questioning the basis of his ethics, he sometimes soars into the sphere of religion. If he continues the search and goes through the prescribed discipline, he is certain to land into a new realm which was yet unknown to him. This is the realm of the all-pervading Spirit. This is beyond intellect. This is "Peace that passeth understanding."

During the course of his journey, man experiments with several sets of values. He makes several assumptions and tries to build his syllogisms. Sometimes he gets stuck in the cobwebs of his intellect. This gives rise to several sets of principles sometimes called philosophy.

The problem faced by mankind is simple. Despite the material abundance generated by a technological society, man is not happy. He is perhaps more miserable than his ancestors. Contentment, peace and bliss elude him more than ever. For solution of this problem, man takes to philosophy, religion and science. Perhaps the time has come to realize that a combination of these three is inevitable. Let us have a look at some of his attempts.

Materialism

Materialism states that the basic material of creation takes various forms and manifests itself in Time, Space, Causation continuum. God cannot be proved as an end-product of logical syllogisms. It is not necessary to include the hypothesis of God while trying to understand the functioning of the universe. Man is body and mind and the postulate of a soul is redundant. Life emerges at a certain point out of matter. Mind and intellect emerge out of life. There is no such thing as God's will and everything is bound by the law of cause and effect. There is no God, sitting on a throne in heaven or anywhere else, who listens to prayers or showers mercy on people. Prayers cannot take you out of misery as nobody is listening to them. Nobody listened to Jesus' prayer when He said "Let this cup pass from me."

The enlightened scientific materialist says "Love and Grace are all myths."

Let us try to eradicate poverty, disease and violence from our globe. Let there be plenty for all - health, wealth and wisdom. Rely on your intellect to do the job. Do not run after the non-existent heaven, soul or God. Seek to exert control over forces of nature and try to extract maximum pleasure from maximum objects and be a jolly good fellow."

... to be continued.

SUNSET SUNRISE

by Victor Clarke

Agnihotra makes us realize

Without worry, grief or strife,
how much joy there is in life.

It cleanses the air; disinfects too.
And that's just the beginning of what it does do.

You breathe easier, your mind is at rest;
in a state of love and happiness.

Pollution is out on a permanent basis;
Pollution affects the mind;
the science of bioenergetics will prove to be true.
Experience it now, and you'll know what to do.

It brings about Peace, Joy and Bliss to your household.
Since Creation, Yajnya has been told.

Burnt offerings of flesh became the style.

Instead of atonement,
it was debasement.

When things really got out of hand
Descending down a Messenger would land.

Some people would follow and become liberated
Most would not heed and became spiritually emaciated.

Some folks got so carried away
with hearing the message through ignorant ears,
that they bowed down to the Messenger, but ignored His message.
Yes, vested interest took control and set itself up in a leading role.

Through dogma and religious idolatry, the priestcraft enslaved man's soul
by placing limits on God's Love.
What makes them think that they know more about life
than the Almighty Father above?

Life is Love and God is Love
His Love is infinite
His Love pervades through Life,
which is His creation.

So man took it upon himself to come up with a spiritual gimmick,
to hold his fellowman down, to control masses where armies couldn't.
To be forgiven for his sins, to enslave the minds of the masses
with shackles of intellectual rhetoric, sorcery, debased flesh and blood offerings
and empty sermons.
He called the gimmick, religious worship.

Each messenger that came
brought arrows of truth, carried in a quiver of humility,
stringing the bow of Divine Love
He took aim.

His targets were:
Destruction of evil forces
Protection and upliftment of the righteous
Reiteration of the Eternal Principles of Religion
Termination of flesh and blood offerings.

The message was simple,
adhere to the Eternal Principles as handed down at the beginning of creation
in the form of sacred knowledge in Sanskrit called the Vedas.

Practice truth for liberation from misery, pain and worldly desires.
It can only be done by purification through fire.

The Creator has a Master Plan.
Peace, Joy and Bliss throughout all the lands.

Today the message comes in pill form called the Fivefold Path.
The first aspect will keep you warm.
It is Agnihotra - purification through agency of fire.

Agnihotra is the paddle,
the Fivefold Path the raft;
to carry you over stormy seas of Karma and through gale winds of desire
safely to the shores of God's tender love and care.
Deep down inside, we all want to be there.

Daan is the next aspect, number two.
It teaches sharing of our assets;
Where? When? How? and Who?

By practicing Daan
it brings about nonattachment to the external,
and contentment to the internal.

Tapa is third; it means to heat;
burn off desires and attachments
and you've got the ego beat.

When the ego is eliminated,
you become liberated
from the jungle of Lust, Greed, Anger, Pride and Envy,
Into the Blissful Oasis of Eternal Love.

Karma is four; "Reap as you Sow"
"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."
If you do harm to others, it will be your woe.

What goes around, comes around.
In Physics, it's called cause and effect.
The fruit of your actions will come back to you;
the bad ones especially, and the good ones too
But if you're non-attached, you're free.

Everyone is the Self in you.
So when you do something to someone, it has the same effect
as if you did it to yourself.
If you reflect on your daily experiences,
you will see that it's true.
So take care in what you say, think and do.

Last is Swadhyaya; it means Self-study.

Who am I? Who am I?

Am I the body? Am I the mind?
or is it something more sublime?

Ears to hear with; eyes to see?
Can they tell us who are we?

The sense of taste? The sense of touch?
They don't tell us very much.

Whom can I see? Where can I go?
Will that answer what I want to know?

Just give up false pride,
you'll find the answer deep inside.

The Universe is yours for the asking,
so open the door to Joy everlasting.

Observe your religion, as you so desire;
but purification must come through agency of fire.

So be ye Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim or Jew,
purification through fire will make a better you.

The sun will set on those who fail to see the truth.

Because Truth is universal;
if you don't want to be part of the Truth,
then you can't be.

The sun will rise for those who see the light.

Get the Message?

Editor: Vasant V. Paranjpe

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USA

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