



How to Practice Surrender to God

Attainment of absolute surrender to God is the central theme of all mystic and religious literature of the world. Christianity ever emphasizes the message of the Cross—the message of the crucifixion of the ego-self and abiding in God. Mohammedanism or Islam advocates surrender of the individual will to the Will of the Supreme. Buddhism asks its followers to surrender to the Buddha—the Enlightened, and thus by following his teachings, bring about the cessation of all sufferings.

Yogic literature likewise overflows in praise of surrender to God. Raja Yoga declares, “*Samadhi Siddhih Ishwar Pranidhanat Va*”—“Super-consciousness is attained by surrender to God...” Srimad Bhagavad Gita is also replete with the message of supreme surrender to the Divine Self. To Bhakti Yoga (the path of devotion), surrender to God is the end as well as the means of spiritual movement. In Jnana Yoga (the path of wisdom), surrender to Guru and God is the most effective means of purifying the mind.

When the mind is purified by the enquiry of “Who am I?” intuitional knowledge of the Self is acquired.

A beginner on the path of Yoga is often confused by the apparently contradictory teachings regarding self-effort and surrender to God. Should he exercise his reason and effort to promote spiritual movement, or should he simply resign to the Divine Will and be led by His Grace? Some maintain the concept that reason is the most authentic tool on the path of spiritual advancement, and therefore, self-effort is of paramount importance. Others are inclined to devotion and state that nothing is possible without the Divine Will favoring a person. To them, self-effort has no meaning or purpose; one must simply learn to surrender to the Divine Will. Yoga Vasistha, a voluminous work of Vedanta philosophy, is emphatic about the importance of self-effort, while the Narada Bhakti Sutras, a profound scripture of devotion, emphasizes the overriding importance of surrender to God.

The fact is that these two views, one upholding self-effort and the other supreme surrender, are not contradictory. The Divinity to whom you must surrender is not an external entity existing somewhere in the outer universe. It is your innermost Self. Thus, the movement in surrender simply implies a movement towards your own deeper Self.

The effort in Vedanta is directed towards gaining an insight into the deeper Self in man. You try to find the deeper and more real “You” and surrender yourself unto It. You allow the lower self to be ruled by the higher Self within. Therefore, the project of surrender to God is actually a process of Self discovery or Self-realization. As you continue to explore the wider and vaster dimensions of your inner spirit, you become one with the Self, and your ego-sense is supremely transcended by your inward vision of the Absolute.

Self-effort unfurls the sails, while surrender allows the ship to be driven by the wind. Adopting still another example, self-effort is like removing obstacles between a piece of iron and a magnet so that they are spontaneously drawn together. When the impurities of egoism and selfishness are removed, the entire personality of man is caught up in the magnetic field of Divine Grace.

For advanced aspirants there is no conflict between reason and faith, between self-effort and surrender to God. Faith is the fulfillment of a rational movement in a person. Similarly, surrender to God is the fulfillment of one’s self-effort.

By the exercise of a healthy reason, a person plans to bring about integration in his personality. With increasing integration, there is increasing awareness of being an instrument in Divine Hands. In turn, as there is increasing awareness of a Divine Power operating through a person, there is increasing surrender to the Cosmic Will. Surrender to the Divine Self is a process of increasing freedom.

Human life abounds with various acts of surrender that are sustained by reason and convic-

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tion. A child learning to swim surrenders himself to his teacher and allows the teacher to take him to deeper waters. A hospital patient surrenders his body to a surgeon's knife in order to have a tumor removed. So too, an aspirant must learn to surrender to a spiritual preceptor in order to learn the art of swimming across the ocean of the world-process, or learn to surrender to the Divine Surgeon in Guru to be freed of the tumor of the ego-sense.

Personal effort to seek *satsanga* (good association) and maintain a balanced pattern of life day by day should not be given up in the name of surrender to God. Nor should an aspirant allow the lamp of his reason to be extinguished in the name of Divine Surrender. If reason is cramped by surrender, the latter is erroneous. In the same manner, if reason obstructs one's movement in Divine Surrender then it is faulty and unhealthy. Furthermore, if surrender is demanded by force, it is not the surrender of the mystics. Surrender to God is characterized by an increasing sense of freedom, love and fullness of experience.

The following are the most important methods of achieving surrender to God:

1. Repeat the Divine Name: Adopt any Name according to your faith and religion. You may adopt, "Om," "Rama," "Krishna," "Jesus," or any mantra, such as "Om Namah Sivaya," "Om Namo Narayanaya," "Om Aim Saraswatyai Namah," and so on. Repeat the Divine Name or a mantra with deep feeling and devotion. Let the heart itself utter the Name with feeling and a melting love.

2. Promote the health of body and mind: A psycho-physical balance is important to lift the mind above the downward pull of egoism, selfishness, greed and other vices. Therefore, an aspirant must take daily recourse to Yoga exercises, *satwic* (pure) diet, and the practice of concentration and meditation.

3. Be guided by a spiritual preceptor: Learn the art of serving God in others. Be an ideal Karma Yogi. Do not live for the intensification of selfishness and egotism, but live to offer your talents and energy for the upliftment of mankind around you.

4. Do not confuse blind faith with the shining ideal of surrender to God: In this movement, blind faith is an obstacle. True faith must be developed and reason must be transformed into intuition to bring about the cessation of the ego-sense.

5. Direct self-effort towards the cultivation of the great virtues of Non-violence, Truthfulness and *Brahmacharya* (freedom from lustful inclinations and actions): As the mind becomes free from impurities, it increasingly flows towards God or the Divine Self. The stream of self-effort joins with the Ganges of faith and devotion, and dancing with the breeze of Divine Surrender, it enters into the ocean of the Divine Self.

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