



Lessons of Life

It is amazing to think of the strides humanity has made in the realm of science! The moon, once beyond human reach, has now been trodden by human feet. The very barriers presented by time and space are now being surmounted. And yet, in spite of such achievements, it is more amazing that a human being is unable to cope with their own problems in daily life. Although able to uncover hidden secrets in the smallest units of matter, they have very little insight into the workings of their own mind, or even into the great potential that lies hidden within!

In spite of their amazing academic knowledge, one is unable to control their anger and restless moods. In brief, they do not know the art of experiencing true happiness and peace. And if this simple art is not known, all of one's achievements become futile, and all of one's glories become vain.

Therefore, a person should turn their attention to the essential teachings of life that have been given by Sages and Saints from the ancient past and are still being given by teachers of wisdom in more recent times. They outline

for you some simple lessons which have been practiced and promoted by great Yogis through thousands of years:

ASPIRE HIGH. If you want to hit a target with an arrow, focus on a point above the target. If you direct your attention to some point below the target, you cannot succeed. Much in the same way, if your aspirations in this world are merely for its passing pleasures, what more can you expect but a future of frustration and failure? On the other hand, if you aspire to discover the universal stream of life within yourself, to commune with Lord Jesus and Lord Krishna, to attain Self-realization, then you are bound to give a unique charm and beauty to everything you do.

BE RIGHTEOUS. Lord Krishna states in the Gita: “*Yato Dharmas Tato Jayah,*” implying, “Where there is righteousness, there is victory.” True victory in life is the attainment of mastery over the mind and senses, which leads directly to the attainment of Self-realization. This puts an end to the cycles of birth and death.

However, do not pressure others to be righteous. By your own example you will gently lead them to follow the path of righteousness. But if you become too eager to make the world righteous without allowing the roots of righteousness to enter deep within your own heart, your efforts will become hypocritical and will have negative results.

Of course, you need to gain insight into what righteousness is through the study of sacred texts such as the Gita, the Bible, and other holy scriptures. Such a study should be made under expert guidance so that you develop deep insight into the true meaning of righteousness without being burdened with the petty-minded concepts of so-called religious teachers.

BE ACTIVE. There is a striking lesson one learns from running brooks, from the sparkling

waters of murmuring rivers, the cascading shower of waterfalls. Where there is inertia, there is stagnation, ugliness, and death. But where there is constant movement and activity, there is bubbling joyousness, energy, and creativity.

Do not plan to retire from the activities of life. Rather, learn to selflessly enjoy works of various kinds throughout your life. Gain insight into the spirit of Karma Yoga and allow your life to be infused with the spirit of selflessness. Rather than thinking, “What can I do to make my life more comfortable, pleasurable and secure?” think, “What should I do to be of service to people around me? How am I to plant a garden of prosperity, peace and happiness in the hearts of others?”

When you begin to envision the joys of realizing the Self, you will no longer remain confined to the narrow limits of an ego-dominated life. Herein lies the great secret of true success and prosperity—where the vision is confined to the little self, there breeds misery and frustration, but where the vision rises beyond the little self, there blossoms the rare flowers of Divine virtues.

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BE A WITNESS. Learn the art of detachment. Detachment, when correctly understood, will not give you the idea of becoming cold and indifferent towards the problems of others. Rather, detachment will endow you with a spiritual charm to help others without becoming entangled in the mesh of problems.

Detachment is like soaring high. The higher you fly, the wider is your viewpoint of the landscape. But when you are unable to rise above the limited realities of your daily life, you are like a person who is confined to a narrow cell, unable to enjoy the expansion of nature.

Be aware of the fact that this world is a mysterious creation. Reflect upon the spirit of the Vedantic saying, “Nothing exists, nothing belongs to me.” Thus, learn to live your life like an actor playing a role on a theatrical stage.

There is, however, a note of warning. Each time you are able to lift your mind beyond the world around you through meditation and prayer, you will find the world to which you re-

turn increasingly discordant. This is only natural. As you develop increasing spiritual sensitivity through your inward vision, the world of gossip, backbiting, hypocritical sentiments, and trifling discussions that seemed so natural to you before now appears disgusting and bitter.

Therefore, as you advance on the path of Yoga, balance your steps in such a way that, while you are able to destroy your own inner illusions, you develop understanding and tolerance towards the illusions of others. The golden rule of “Adapt and Adjust” follows as a corollary in the practice of spiritual detachment.

STEEP YOUR MIND AND HEART WITH THE NECTAR OF DEVOTION. True detachment from the world becomes possible when there is increasing attachment to the Divine Self within one’s heart. Remember the great words of the Upanishads, “All is loved for the sake of the Self. The Self within you is nectar.” All human efforts and aspirations are expressions of the inner urge to experience Supreme Bliss or the Divine Self within.

Learn to see the operations of the Divine Will in and through your life. Do not give credit to your ego when prosperity develops, but rather, recognize the glorious workings of the Divine Hand and be grateful. When affected by adversity, do not lose sight of the Source that sustains your every step. In fact, what seems adverse is nothing but prosperity in disguise. The world has been so fashioned by the Creator that everything that happens to a person has been designed for the upliftment of their soul.

Unfold the mystic vision of beholding the world filled with the glory of God. You will succeed in the development of this vision by taking recourse to *japa* (repetition of mantra). Repeat the Divine Name or any selected mantra, or even a brief prayer according to your spiritual belief, and feel the Divine presence around you. While repeating the Name, feel that you are being unfolded and encompassed by the Divine Self who

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is all-pervading and all-powerful. Just as a child enjoys a sugar candy should you enjoy the sweetness of the Divine Name.

BE A HERO. Do not seek a life of comfort. A wonderful illustration has been presented in the Mahabharata. The great warrior Bhishma, the heroic grandfather of the Pandavas and Kauravas, was laid down in the battlefield, ridden with piercing arrows. He did not die but was incapable of fighting. Some brought pillows to comfort him, but he would not accept them. Then Arjuna shot three arrows into the ground on which Bhishma rested his head. He was overjoyed to receive this pillow, for only this was suitable for a hero like him.

The message of this anecdote is that a spiritual seeker should be a constant warrior in the battle of life; he should not turn to a life of comfort and luxury, for such a movement is unheroic and cowardly. When you become too conscious of comforts for your body, dictated by the egoistic mind, you lack the strength of spiritual will that could lead you to the wondrous horizons of peace and illumination.

SEEK SATSANGA. A person who has been living in a crowded city experiences a unique delight when he travels through green fields where the atmosphere is refreshing and relaxing. Similarly, when you enter into the realm of spiritual thoughts provided by *satsanga* (positive association), you discover a unique form of happiness.

Satsanga has two aspects. Listen to the discourses of the Gita, the Upanishads and other spiritual works given by illumined personalities. When this form of active *satsanga* is not possible, take recourse to the study of scriptures or the study of works written by enlightened Sages. Allow yourself to roam through green fields, enchanting groves, and beautiful gardens of spiritual thought. Allow your life to be increasingly immersed in *satsanga*, and in turn, you will become a source of *satsanga* for others.

BRING RHYTHM AND HARMONY INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE. Begin your day with serene meditation and uplifting prayer. Practice Yoga exercises to prepare your body for the tasks of the day. Fulfill your responsibilities in a spirit of joyous detachment. At intervals, turn your mind inwards, repeating your mantra and bathing yourself in the peaceful streams of Divine Love. Cultivate Divine qualities. Adapt and adjust to people and their needs. Find some time for study and reflection, as well as service of a spiritual preceptor and listening to spiritual teachings.

When you retire to sleep, be like a swan that leaves a lake—having shaken off all water droplets, it flies into the sky. So too, soar into the Divine arms of eternity and infinity, and enjoy a deep and joyous sleep. If you can turn your daily life into a rhythmic movement towards the Self, you will be amazed to discover how thrilling this human life is, and how much there is in store for everyone who lives it fully!

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