



## Open the Windows of Your Heart

*Birthday Message by Swami Jyotirmayananda*

The central purpose of life is God-realization. Aspirants and serious students of life should develop an understanding of what is meant by this. What part does God play in our lives? People who have never experienced *satsanga* (good association), who lack spiritual sensitivity, or who are overpowered by materialistic culture think that it is rational to ask questions such as: “Is there a God?” or “What proof is there that God exists?”

Some people even believe that in the beginning God created the world, but when God saw what creation had become, He had heart failure! And therefore, now we are left in a world without

God. All of this, of course, is childish. Anyone who is sensitive and reflective knows that he is enveloped by a Mighty Presence—a Force beyond his imagination. It is a Force that is supremely compassionate to all creation. Everything that you see in creation is a manifestation of the Absolute Self.

Science has reached a higher understanding in saying that everything is energy. However, although this gives you an opportunity for further exploration, spiritual philosophy utilizes intuition. Sages do not depend upon instruments such as microscopes, telescopes or sophisticated computers or technology.

Through their intuitional knowledge, they discover that all is *Brahman* (God); the world has proceeded from God, is sustained by God and dissolves into God. This implies that everyone is rooted in the Divine Self. Without Divinity, one cannot exist. These are the central teachings of the Upanishads. Find the Knower, the Seer, and the Hearer. Reflect within yourself and discover the Source of who you are. You will be led to a staggering experience because you know so little about your Self.

Where are you when you are in deep sleep? What are you doing? How did you sustain the vital forces flowing within your body? What happened to your problems, which you could not cast aside when you were awake? How, within a moment, did nature's magic shut them all out? How were you sustained as a child when you lacked rational capacity? How did your soul navigate its way through the immensity of the universe prior to birth? How did it incarnate into a particular family? Did it consult real estate agents? Did it contact travel agencies inquiring about particular space flights to such and such a world? How does planet earth exist, floating in the vastness of the universe among innumerable planets and solar systems?

In the context of all this, consider your everyday life. Your mind has evolved complex relationships, problems and responsibilities to be performed in this practical life. However, when you reflect upon your life, you realize that it is just a tiny drop in the ocean of the universe compared to the immensity of the unknown.

However, Yoga philosophy does not ask you to become impractical, but quite the contrary. Yoga enables you to understand how to succeed in your practical life. However, it also asks you to turn your mind towards God, Who can perfect everything that you do, and give meaning to your every experience. If God is not accepted as the center and goal of all your aspirations, then there will be no meaning to your life.

There is an eastern parable about a man who goes to a market to buy a horse. While there, he is approached by a horse dealer who tells him that he has the best horse in the whole market for sale. The merchant begins listing more than 24 wonderful qualities. The customer by this time has become captivated. Just as he is about to ask to see the horse, the talkative merchant mentions that there is just one defect in the animal. The perplexed customer then asks what the defect is and the merchant replies, "The horse is dead."

People believe that prosperity lies in acquiring wealth, a good education, and recognition by society. You can observe many people pursuing these objectives with great dedication. You might, for example, have an appointment with a business leader, and walk into his office and see all the acknowledgments he has received in the form of accumulated plaques, trophies, and photographs portraying the evolution of his business career. He may boast about his financial triumphs and his surmounting tremendous obstacles in the business world.

However, if you were to try discussing the deeper meaning of life with him, you would soon come to the conclusion that he did not have the spiritual sensitivity to realize God. The revelation that he does not acknowledge God in his life is like the merchant spending twenty minutes describing the beautiful qualities of his horse, then admitting at the last minute that the horse is dead. All the good qualities generally associated with worldly success are cancelled out by one fundamental flaw—lack of aspiration for God-realization.

Despite all the good qualities you may possess, if the essential quality of love for God is lacking, then all your culture, education, fame, achievements, prosperity and disciplines mean nothing. If you have not understood that you are rooted in God and that you must return to God, you are as "dead" as the horse. Regardless of your worldly success, you will wander from one circumstance to another and one embodiment to

another, wondering what the essential meaning to your life really is!

Therefore, begin to develop the understanding that God is sustaining you every minute of the day, The moment you begin to relax in God, and trust that there is a Divine Plan, your life will become joyous. The world is described in the scriptures as a *lila* or sport. Once you relax in the experience that God is with you and that you are rooted in Him, nothing can go wrong. Nothing can uproot your foundation in the Divine Self. The Gita says that the Self cannot be cut down by weapons or burnt by fire. Neither can wind blow It away, nor can any catastrophe in the world affect It. When you have that awareness that the Divine Presence is behind everything in your daily life, even at the time of death you will know that the Divine Hand is there guiding your soul to a new embodiment.

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If your knowledge of the Self is intellectual, then consider yourself at the starting point and therefore follow the disciplines of *sadhana* to attain intuitional knowledge of the Self. The awareness that you are the Self is attained by integrating your personality.

Discipline your mind by incorporating Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, and Jnana Yoga into your life. It is important to blend selfless action, love of God, reflection, and meditation in such a way that your life becomes enriched and enlightened.

Rather than disciplining their mind and reflecting upon life, most people are constantly involved in trifling details. They complain that they didn't do something in the past that would have made their present life better. They wonder what they should do in the future. They speculate about why God has placed them in a particular situation and assert that if God had given them a better situation in life, they would have attained a worldly goal or even Self-realization.

When you encounter adversity, turmoil, dis-sension, and misunderstanding with other people, and you feel your heart is in turmoil, you should be able to turn your mind towards God, rise above the raging waves and perceive the Divine purpose and meaning behind the unpleasantness. When you have anchored yourself to Divinity, you develop unimaginable endurance, and forbearance. The Divine plan is gradually leading your soul to the highest goal. Nothing is out of place.

This does not mean however that you accept pain without exercising any self-effort for preventing it or negating it. In fact, it implies possessing a deeper insight in which you develop greater self-effort and increasing freedom to mold your destiny in your practical life. With God as your focus within, you can change yourself beyond your current understanding. You can terminate pain and enjoy boundless bliss.

There are three planes of experiences. The plane of the senses, the plane of the mind or intellect, and the plane of intuition. For the vast majority of people, the plane of intuition has been veiled by spiritual ignorance, and one becomes involved in the plane of mind and senses rather than maintaining an awareness of Divinity. The world that is revealed to you in the plane of mind and senses is relative and most everyone feels that the sweet and bitter circumstances of life are real.

This is called *Maya*. It is not the ultimate reality, but it is similar to a dream in which you are presented with many problems. The only way that you can surmount the problems in your dream is to wake up by turning your gaze inward.

Just as everything of the past, present, and future of a dream disappears as soon as you wake up, so too you can learn to transcend the three periods of time through intuitional awakening by developing the art of stepping beyond the world of relativity. Understand that this is possible only when you calmly retire within yourself and look at the world of thoughts, feelings, and sense perceptions as a witness. Remind yourself that the world of mind and senses is fleeting; it is not the ultimate reality. Whatever you gain in the world of time and space is perishable.

All of this does not affect the Divine Reality within, much in the same way as clouds do not affect the sky. Each day, lift yourself above all of these, even for a short period of time. Thus, open the windows of your heart to God. This opening of the heart's window is known as *nivriddhi*. The secret of *nivriddhi* is understanding the art of waking up through intuitional knowledge and not becoming confined to the world of mind and senses.

According to the scriptures, when you practice reflection on God (*Brahma-vichar*) even for a short time, you have gained more merit than if you had visited all the pilgrimage centers of the world and had plunged yourself in many sacred

waters. To be able to touch God within your heart is most thrilling.

The fact that this world is an illusion (*Maya*) does not imply that you should ignore the duties of your practical life. Rather, your entire personality and the responsibilities that you fulfill in the world will reveal a new dimension to everything in your life and to all human relations as a deeper love wells up within your heart. It motivates you to explore the internal expansions of your spirit, to discover the genuine meaning of life and its ultimate fulfillment. Through your duties you are worshipping God in every action — as a student, a householder, a retired person, a renunciate (*sanyasi*), or through whatever type of life you are living.

As you discover that terrain, you allow your heart to open a window to eternity. A unique heavenly fragrance will flood your life, envelop

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your intellect, your mind and thoughts and transform your mental faculties into intuition. Thus, as you achieve that goal, your life becomes joyous, and you begin to perform your duties with greater skill and concentration. You develop the feeling that you are encompassed by the Divine Self —the Reality that surrounds you.

**I**f you do not have God in your life, endurance has no meaning. Without God, there is just selfish love. Without God, human personality is like a room that is sealed closed in such a way that the same stale air is constantly being recycled.

Without God, all your Divine potentialities remain cramped. So much time and energy are spent worrying about meaningless, trivial things—you are grieving over things that are worthless. When you are not rooted in God, when you fail to realize your Oneness with the Absolute, you waste so much mental energy and so many complications develop.

Yoga is not a world-negating philosophy. Lord Krishna taught the mystic art of life to Arjuna. Recall that at first, Arjuna cringed with a cowardly attitude and did not want to engage in the battle of life. But then he enlightened himself and recovered his courage and sense of duty. In the same manner, when you realize the Divine basis within, you live in the most majestic way possible. You will be able to unfold your Divine potentialities.

**O**nce you allow God to enter your heart, you will be ushered into a transcendental dimension where the goal of your life becomes clear and you become a benefactor of all beings. The movement towards God is not a selfish project, but rather the source of the highest culture.

Such a movement should be the goal of all educational systems. As long as that goal is not understood, humanity will linger in darkness. But if that goal is understood by even a few people, then a process leading to the richest culture is established, because one person or a group of

people moving towards God becomes a dynamic source of energy and inspiration for countless others.

**T**he spiritual movement is not just a passive belief. Spiritual upliftment is similar to the effects that an atomic bomb has on life from ground zero. The radiation from an atomic bomb penetrates even the very chromosomes of creatures and thus can radically alter their inner structure. If this is so with reference to such an explosive, think of the fallout from a spiritual explosion. When you have developed intuitional vision and your heart parallels the cadence of God's heart, you have manufactured the greatest explosion. It destroys ignorance, and its transmission is so powerful that it continues affecting aspiring souls for countless generations. Christ and Buddha discovered that explosive. And when they detonated it, the eruption was so powerful that we are still feeling the effects from its radiation today.

Understand that God is the philosophical, scientific truth and the very Essence of your being. By realizing that Divinity dwells within, you enrich yourselves and others by making your own life and the lives of people around you joyous.

*May God bless you with increasing aspiration and spiritual strength to attain the goal of life even in this very embodiment!*

