



The Sacred Goal of Your Life

*New Year's Message
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WE HAVE ENTERED into the new year, 2021, as we have entered into many other new years. What was a new year last year has gone into the irrevocable past. Time passes on, and once time has slipped by you cannot get it back. So, it is important to reflect upon what you have gained, what lessons you have learned, and what you are striving for in your life.

What is the goal before you? If you don't have a clear view of what you want to accomplish during your lifetime, you are like a ship without a compass or a captain, a ship just drifting in the ocean. If you have developed aspiration for God-realization, you have found a direction and boarded a ship with the most excellent Captain: God.

Who Are You?

The scriptures say there are three things that are very rare and most important in this life: *manushyat-*

wam, to be born in human embodiment; *mumukshut-*
wam, to develop aspiration for God-realization; and *mahapurusha-samshrayah*, to have a spiritual guide who can inspire you and lead you on the path.

You are a soul traveling through many lives, a soul whose ultimate destiny is to have full revelation of "Who am I?" There is a subtle awareness of the eternal "I AM" that is present in everyone. However, due to ignorance, the mind projects a transient concept of "I am," an ego that is constantly changing. The eternal "I AM" is God—the Divine Self—within you.

Deep down, stepping beyond your ego, you are one with the Ocean of God. Identified with the ego, you are just a wave. What a tremendous contrast! How to become free from the wavelike identity and discover, "I am That," is the profound message of all the religions of the world.

There is an episode from the life of Buddha that gives us profound insight into the goal of life:

ONCE DURING the monsoon season, immense dark clouds gathered and poured down terrible torrents of rain, with flashes of lightning and thunder. A farmer who was feeling very prosperous because he had reaped a wonderful harvest sat comfortably with his family beside a warm fireside. Outside of his house, however, in that cold downpour of rain, everyone was shivering. Feeling quite secure and prosperous, the farmer looked through his window, and through the flashes of light saw a man seated under a tree, seeking protection from the storm.

The farmer developed a sense of superiority toward the man who was out in the cold rain. “If he had been a strong and healthy farmer,” he thought, “he would have worked hard like me to gain wealth and prosperity. Then he would have enjoyed the same type of comfortable life that I enjoy.” So, he began to ridicule the man, singing, “O clouds, bring down the torrential rains. Rain, rain, and rain! I am secure as a result of my successful harvest.”

The man seated under the tree happened to be Buddha, the Enlightened. When he heard the farmer’s song directed at ridiculing him, he remained serene. Instead of becoming upset at the insult, Buddha smiled and sang back, “O rains, come down, bring more clouds and torrential rains. O winds, blow hard, I have nothing to lose. I have harvested the best fruit from the garden of my heart. I have sowed seeds of righteousness, insight and Divine qualities. Those seeds have flourished and my harvest is the attainment of *Nirvana*, Liberation. Since I have attained *Nirvana*, I am always warmed by the great fire of Knowledge, the fire of Eternity. The whole world may enter into turmoil and be destroyed, but nothing can touch me.”

The farmer was not expecting this type of response, so he was shocked. He had heard about Buddha, the Enlightened, and it suddenly dawned upon him that he was looking at someone who was spiritually advanced. He came out of his home and fell at the Buddha’s feet. According to the story, eventually he and his family became disciples.

The contrast between a person who is simply enjoying great material wealth and a person who has attained Enlightenment is important to understand. Most people are fascinated by the project of becoming financially prosperous, making their family members happy and comfortable, sitting by the fireplace and

enjoying a wonderful chat that lasts for eternity. That “cozy” concept is fraught with illusion. This relative world can never make you truly and permanently happy and comfortable. Everything must change.

Base Your Life on Dharma

There are four basic values or goals in this life: *dharma* or righteousness (the ethical value of life); *artha* (the material value); *kama* (the vital value, or your relationship with other people in society) and *moksha* or Liberation (the spiritual value of life). In order for your life to become meaningful, *artha* and *kama* must always be based upon *dharma*, and *moksha* must be your supreme goal.

Goodness must be the basis of your life. If you forsake goodness, all your achievements eventually lead to sorrow. Always maintain righteous conduct—a lifestyle that brings you close to your own heart, close to your own conscience. When you are simple-hearted rather than complex, you receive inspiration from God within you. Your mind develops a sensitivity to recognize the difference between what is wrong and what is right.

Your inner peace depends on the way you conduct yourself with others—a lifestyle in which you do not hurt, cheat or deceive others—and do not deceive your-

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self. The qualities conducive to that life are sincerity, honesty, goodness of the heart. It can be summed up simply as “Be good, do good.”

With *dharma*, the ethical value of life, as the basis, your prosperity has a profound meaning. You can actually utilize your prosperity for spiritual advancement. Your prosperity makes you humbler and inwardly more peaceful, and you are able to utilize it for the good of others.

With material prosperity comes recognition, popularity. If *dharma* has been the basis, such popularity implies that you are in a better position to reach out to people and help them. If not, popularity becomes a basis for vanity and increased egocentricity. For the sake of power and popularity, people can become monsters. In order to gain a high position they are ready to hurt others in a most demoniac way. That type of popularity is hollow, and rather a curse. If you are living an ideal type of life, you will always be guided by the laws of ethics, the laws of righteousness.

Make Moksha Your Goal

Liberation or *Moksha* is that state in which your mind has attained Enlightenment—your mind is fully aware that the ego is not “you.” The ego and its entire web of ramifications are transcended by your mind. As you strive to attain that goal, a profound insight into the nature of ego has to be developed.

Spirituality teaches you that the ego is not entirely bad. Its behavior is a product of the three *gunas*. The *tamasic* ego, which fosters a lot of hatred and revenge, has to be curbed. The *rajasic* ego, which indulges in vanity, ostentatious actions and superficial values, also has to be controlled. However, there is an ego that allows you to love God and feel proud of developing spirituality, practicing meditation, praying and repeating mantra, following the mystic path for attaining Liberation. That is *satwic* ego. That ego actually allows itself to gradually dissolve as a result of your increasing spiritual insight.

The purified ego becomes like a crystal that does not hinder the view of eternity. The *rajasic/tamasic* ego goes on obstructing that view. If you have developed a purified ego, you continue attending to your practi-

cal realities, but God becomes the profound reality highlighted in your life. You never lose sight of the Divine Self. Even during busy times and challenging situations your “double-consciousness” allows you to enjoy inner peace.

Suppose you have a room filled with so many people and things, but in that room there is a skylight. Even though you are busy handling so many situations and circumstances around you, you also have a view that transcends all; you can always look at the sky and enjoy expansion. On the path to Enlightenment, you continue to bring order in your life, and at the same time, you begin to open a window to eternity. God within you manifests. You do not have to dissolve all the problems in order to turn to God. While you are trying to solve problems and simplify your life, you are also opening the window, transcending the ego.

If, day by day, you were able to enjoy increasing awareness of Divine Presence within you, you would find that your relationships in the world become more profound. The awareness of God within yourself enables you to truly reach out to God in others. Therefore, your patience with human beings will be immense. You will not be upset by a few abrupt words or actions.

Therefore, bringing God in your life does not rearrange things in your external reality, but it imparts a special sparkle and value to them. Therefore, turn to God. Understand that your goal in life is to attain an enlightened mind, a mind that is not fascinated by a world experienced solely by the senses. The senses perceive the world in a most superficial manner. As long as this world is so important, the mind’s desires cause you to come into embodiment again and again.

Once the mind is enlightened, it turns toward the source of all happiness—the Divine Self—and desires for the objects of the world vanish from your mind. The Bliss of Self shines before you and Divine Presence becomes overpowering. Once that happens in your life, you become a source of peace and harmony for yourself and for people around you. You contribute to the world something most unique, and at the same time you attain Liberation—you are free from the cycles of birth and death.

May the New Year open a new chapter for you, directing your mind to what is most essential, making every day of your life joyous, overflowing with the internal wealth of profound spiritual movement!