

Vedanta

389 MAY - JUNE 2016

What is Yoga?

Swami Brahmeshananda

How to Practise Yoga Actually?

Swami Yatiswarananda



Divine Wisdom

And what, monks, is the Middle Path, of which the Tathagata has gained enlightenment, which produces insight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvana?

This is the noble Eightfold Way: namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This, monks, is the Middle Path, of which the Tathagata has gained enlightenment, which produces insight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to higher knowledge, enlightenment, Nirvana.

1) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of pain: birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, death is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short the five groups of grasping are painful.

2) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cause of pain: the craving, which tends to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there; namely, the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

3) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of pain, the cessation without a remainder of craving, the abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

4) Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain: this is the noble Eightfold Way; namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

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Editorial

Worship of the Divine Mother-4 (Continued from the last issue)

"To realize God is the one goal of life. At last you will come to know that God alone is real and all else is illusory, and that the goal of life is the attainment of God... The vision of God is the only goal of human life".

Sri Ramakrishna worshipped God as Mother. He said that for the present age the best relationship we can establish with God is to look upon Him as one's own Mother.

There is a remarkable incident in the life of Swami Brahmanandaji.

Once, while Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) was visiting Holy Mother, a woman disciple of Sri Ramakrishna said to him: "*Rakhal, Mother wanted to know from you why a spiritual aspirant must worship the Divine Mother first.*" Maharaj answered: "*Mother has the key to the knowledge of Brahman. Unless she shows her grace and opens the door, no one can enter into the realm of Brahman.*"

Sri Ramakrishna also said emphatically that no one can realize God without the grace of the Divine Mother. From the very outset of his life Sri Ramakrishna totally surrendered himself at the feet of the Divine Mother. And out of Her infinite grace She revealed everything to Her beloved child.

Says Sri Ramakrishna: 'I wept before the Mother and prayed. "*O Mother, please reveal to me what the yogis have realized through yoga and the jnanis through discrimination.*" And the Mother has revealed everything to me. She reveals everything if the devotee cries to Her with a yearning heart. She has shown me everything that is in the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Puranas, and the Tantra.'"

'However much you may discriminate and draw logical conclusions, it would be of no avail. One must propitiate the Divine Mother, the Primal Energy, in order to obtain God's grace... One must take refuge in the Divine Mother, the Cosmic Power Itself. It is She who has bound us with the shackles

of illusion. The realization of God is possible only when those shackles are severed.'

Now the question is how to propitiate and become worthy children of the Divine Mother. Here *Shaktas* can guide us well. A *Shakta* is a follower of the teachings of *Tantras* and loves to worship God as Mother. The *Shakta* worshippers believe that God should be called Mother rather than Father.

The *Shaktas* made many contributions helping innumerable aspirants attain the Divine mother. They practised a social equality within the caste-ridden Hindu society of their day. They believed that the world is a creation of the Divine Mother, hence all men are equal before the Mother. They believe that the easiest form of spiritual practice is to worship the Divine Mother and merge their will into Her will.

One of their greatest contribution, however, is the doctrine of the *pancha tattvas*, or 'five truths.' They taught that five things are necessary in order to progress in spiritual life and attain God realization. Without them it is impossible to realize God, and attain *mukti* or liberation.

The first is *Guru tattva*. A Guru or a teacher is indispensable, and no man can progress in spiritual life without a Guru. We need to learn spiritual disciplines from a living Guru. The belief that the Guru is God Himself, and that the teacher alone can save us is the firm faith of the *Shaktas*. We can take a *mantra* or a name of God from a book, but it will not have the same power. As Swami Vivekananda said, the Guru acts like a lamp to light other lamps. That is how power is transmitted from Guru to the disciple through a *mantra*.

The second is *mantra tattva*—the principle of the mantra. What does the Guru do? He gives the disciple the holy name of his or her chosen deity, and the disciple uses that for his/her spiritual practice. In the *Tantras*, the position of special importance is assigned to *mantras*. The deity is identical with the mantra, and

the latter is the infallible means of liberation. *Mantra* literally signifies something which saves an aspirant from ignorance through reflection on it. *Mantras* form the most important item in the Tantras. The mantra is not a mere word" or symbol of expression, but is a concentrated thought of great power revealed to the Rishi (Sage) in the depths of his meditation. When a *sadhaka* repeats the Guru given mantra with faith and devotion the mantra becomes awakened (*Chaitanya*) and unites the *sadhaka* with the chosen deity.

The third is the *manasa tattva*. The devotee must make his mind pure and one-pointed. Then he should mentally identify himself with the mantra through meditation.

The fourth is *devata tattva*. The mantra is looked upon as completely identical with one's chosen deity. In the case of the Shaktas, it will be the form of the Goddess.

The fifth is the *dhyana tattva*, the principle of meditation. According to the Tantras meditation leads one to total surrender to the Divine Mother. When the *Sadhaka's* will is completely merged in the Divine will he realises his identity with the Divine and becomes liberated.

All these five *tattvas* are present during the process of initiation. Practised sincerely each *tattva* leads one to the next higher *tattva* and ultimately makes one realise God.

The Shaktas also popularised the system of worship known as *puja*. This elaborate system of rituals is not only very helpful but practically indispensable for all beginners.

And there are varieties of ways in which this worship of the Divine Mother can be performed. We will briefly discuss about *Puja* in our next editorial.

(To be continued)
Swami Dayatmananda

What is Yoga

Swami Brahmeshananda

A decade ago, yoga was the most popular fad in the East, but now more so in the West. But it is no more a fad. It has been accepted as an integral part of life of the upper and lower middle class population, not only in India, but all over the world. In the United States thousands practice it, not even knowing that it is Indian in origin. There are yoga schools, coaching and training classes, and yoga is included in the syllabus of many courses.

It is obvious that in all these cases by the word *yoga* certain physical exercises, *yogasanas* and respiratory exercises, i.e. *Pranayama*, are meant, and these are practiced for physical health, relief of mental tension and even to cure of certain diseases like hypertension, diabetes etc. While it is laudable that an ancient Indian science of healthy living has been appreciated and adopted by millions of people all over the world, it is unfortunate that the vaster, deeper and more important dimension and even the real meaning of yoga has been overlooked.

In the Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (PYS), the most authentic treatise on Yoga, yoga is defined as the control or restraint of thought waves, "*Yogah chitta-vritti- nirodhah.*" (1.2). Commenting further on this aphorism, Vyasa says that yoga is Samadhi or concentration. "*Yogah-samadhi*". This is the target, goal, set before us by Patanjali, the Father of Yoga.

Everyone is familiar with the word concentration and what it means. Says Swami Vivekananda: "Everybody's mind becomes concentrated at times. We all concentrate upon those things we love, and we love those things upon which we concentrate our minds. What mother is there that does not love the face of her homeliest child? That face is to her the most beautiful in the world. She loves it because she concentrates her mind upon it; and if everyone could concentrate his mind on that same face, everyone would love it. It would be to all the most beautiful face. We

all concentrate our minds upon those things we love. When we hear beautiful music, our minds become fastened upon it, and we cannot take them away.” (The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.VI, page 37)

“....The great trouble with such concentrations is that we do not control the mind; it controls us. Something outside of ourselves, as it were, draws the mind into it and holds it as long as it chooses. We hear melodious tones or see a beautiful painting, and the mind is held fast! We cannot take it away.”

“If I speak to you well upon a subject you like, your mind becomes concentrated upon what I am saying. I draw your mind away from yourself and hold it upon the subject in spite of yourself. Thus our attention is held, our minds are concentrated upon various things, in spite of ourselves. We cannot help it.” (Ibid.VI, page 38)

We may add a few more examples. A student must concentrate on his lessons, so must a batsman or bowler while playing cricket. One also gets engrossed while reading an interesting novel or listening to enthralling music. A typist while typing and a surgeon while doing surgery also become fully concentrated. In all these cases, thoughts other than the subject matter are kept in abeyance for that much of that period of time. All these controls of thought waves and practices of concentration can be termed “passive concentration” because they are done with the help of some or the other sensory input or are induced by love. The object or activity of concentration is outside and the input is coming to the mind through the eyes or ears.

Control of thought waves and concentration recommended by Patanjali is, however, different. One must close the eyes, sit still and concentrate the mind on a mental form, a mental word-formula or an abstract idea. There must not be any sensory inputs; no external support or help. Even an experienced surgeon or an accomplished cricketer would find this difficult. In this exercise of concentration, one part of the mind must concentrate on the object

of meditation while the other part must act as a watchdog and keep the intruding thoughts away. This is a very dynamic process and can be called “active concentration”, in which on the one hand the mind is intensely trying to attach with or concentrate upon the object of meditation, and on the other hand, it is trying to detach itself from all thoughts other than those related to the object of concentration. This active concentration is the essence of yoga. By long, uninterrupted practice with faith and dogged energy a state comes when only one type of thought wave arises, like an unbroken flow of oil being poured from one vessel into the other. This is called *dhyana*, meditation, which ultimately leads to *Samadhi*.

There are two characteristics of the mind of a yogi who practices this type of active concentration. First, he is able to concentrate on any object – it may be so small as an atom or as big as the cosmos (PYS. I, 40). This is in sharp contrast to the limitations of the mind of those who do passive concentration, which can concentrate only on the object of one’s interest. The mind of a yogi becomes like a soft lump of clay or dough which can be struck with ease on any surface and at the same time can be detached and struck on another surface with equal ease. Says Swami Vivekananda :

“You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields (Swamiji said, pointing to the meadows of the Math). You must be prepared to explain the difficult intricacies of the Shastras now, and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market.”(The Complete Works Vol. III, p 447)

Thus, the second characteristic of such a mind is that it has as much power of attachment as that of detachment. Says Swami Vivekananda:

“...we not only want this mighty power of love, this mighty power of attachment, the power of throwing our whole soul upon a single object, losing ourselves and letting ourselves be annihilated, as it were, for other souls – which is the power of the gods – but we want to be higher even

than the gods. The perfect man can put his whole soul upon that one point of love, yet he is unattached." (Ibid, II, p.4)

The Mind is compared to a lake on the surface of which thoughts arise like waves. Yoga is defined as control of these thought waves. But, what about the state of the mind-lake? This is said to be of five types—restless, dull, partially controlled, concentrated, and restrained. Just as the water of a lake could be muddy, coloured, milky, poisonous etc. or just as the soil of a land could be sandy, rocky, muddy, porous etc. so also the mind in its structure could be of the above mentioned five types. An important aim of the practice of yoga is to turn the mind lake or the soil of the mind into partially controlled, if not fully controlled.

In the intrinsically restless or dull mind, the thought waves cannot even be controlled. In the partially controlled mind, the mind can be fully controlled for some time but that concentration does not last long. Hence yogis advise that we must try, at the same time, to change the depths or the structure of the mind by certain disciplines. These are mentioned in the first two limbs of the eightfold yoga by Patanjali and are called *Yama* and *Niyama*. They are in fact moral and ethical values. Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-possessiveness constitute yama. Niyama includes internal and external purity, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures, and a spirit of surrender to God. Traditionally no one is advised to seriously practice the later limbs of yoga unless the person has, at least to some extent, practiced these values.

Thus the aim of yoga is not only to gain control over the surface of the mind but to refine and purify its depths also. A concentrated impure mind is dangerous for oneself as well as for others. Nowadays even criminal dons might practice yogic exercises in order to remain physically fit and free from mental tension! In the very beginning of his treatise on Yoga, Sage Patanjali very clearly states the goal of the practice of the control of thought

waves. When the thought waves are controlled, the Conscious Self of the yogi rests in Its real nature. This is liberation. Otherwise It (the Conscious Self of the yogi) identifies with the thought waves and suffers. (PYS I, 3-4) This state of freedom from identification is a state of superlative bliss.

In the Bhagavad Gita the word Yoga is often used to denote an exalted state of the mind. The frequent use of words like *yukta*, established, and *yogarudha* advanced in Yoga, confirms this. The Lord tells Arjuna: *“When your mind stands firm and steady in the self, then you will have attained Yoga.”* (Gita II-53).

This supreme state of realization is defined thus:

“That in which the mind restrained by the practice of concentration rests quiescent, that in which, seeing the self through the self, one rejoices in one’s own Self; that in which one knows the boundless joy beyond the reach of the senses and grasped only by the understanding; that being established in which one never departs from reality, that on gaining which one thinks there is no greater gain, and wherein established one is not moved even by the heaviest of sorrows — let that be known as Yoga, which is severance from the contact of pain.” (Gita, VI-20-23)

We can now safely conclude that physical well-being and relief from diseases is only one of the less important advantages of the practice of yoga. Far more important is to gain mastery over one’s mind—to be able to concentrate and to detach the mind at will from any subject. Further, if practiced with all its limbs, yoga transforms the character and builds a sane personality. And finally, by yoga one can achieve superlative bliss and absolute freedom.

How to Practise Yoga Actually?

Swami Yatiswarananda

[These are the notes of the class-talks given by the Swami to a group of spiritual aspirants at Wiesbaden, Germany, in December, 1933.—The Editors.]

Many people want to begin from the topmost rung of the ladder, but that cannot be done. There are no long jumps in spiritual life; neither can anything be achieved without first finding out where one really stands. High philosophical flights and wonderful metaphysical dreams do not mean realisation, and by themselves they never lead to realisation, but only to abstract and superfine speculations that have no connection at all with real or practical life. They do not change the life of persons who indulge in them in any way. We should know where we stand and then proceed from there. We must, begin as beginners and go on step by step. As an ideal, Monism may be all right for us; but when we come down to the practical aspects, we are dualists and shall remain dualists for a long time to come.

I am always amused when I hear everybody talking in high terms about the Absolute, the Principle, etc., because in our case all these are nothing but empty speculations and frothy words. They do not even mean that that particular person is fit for the Monistic path. Nobody who stands in Dualism, in whatever way this may be, is a Monist, whether Monism appeals to him or not. Very often the mind of the modern man revolts against the idea of any particular discipline. It says, "Why should we busy ourselves with that? Haven't we got enough drudgery in the world? So why should we follow practices which do not appeal to us? We want the Absolute, so what is the use of attributes, of personal forms? Let us reach the Absolute. Let us

worship the Divine 'in spirit and in truth!'" . All this, no doubt, sounds very grand and highly spiritual, but as soon as we come down to realities, we find out that it does not mean anything at all. Mostly such people are convinced dualists as far as their own actions in daily life go. To worship God 'in spirit and in truth' is all right. It is very good, but where is the beginner who can do so? This is the point. For most people it means just haziness, vagueness—hazy feeling and hazy thinking and acting in a way that has no connection at all with the Divine.

Our mind is always out to deceive us and play tricks on us. Therefore we need strict daily discipline in everything we do.

How to begin?—That is the point. How to get the necessary mental training? That is the problem before us. Different thoughts constantly keep cropping up in our minds. When we wish to make the mind calm, the mind becomes most disturbed. It revolts the very moment we try to concentrate. It suddenly takes the form of a mighty ocean in which we are in danger of being drowned. The whole surface of the mind is disturbed by mighty thought-waves, and the more we try to calm it, the mightier these become. So meditation makes us very tired in the beginning instead of soothing us and bringing us light as it should.

As in the case of a horse-trainer, who has to take great trouble to break the horse, similarly we shall have to follow a certain definite system of discipline, from which we should not deviate, to break the mind. In our spiritual discipline there must be great definiteness regarding everything. It won't do for us to put two legs in two different boats. We must learn to follow one course definitely without vacillating, to proceed step by step, if we wish to reach the goal one day.

What are the conditions for meditation?

For meditation and for all forms of spiritual practice, the first point is a steady posture (asana); usually a sitting posture. So Patanjali says, "*Any posture that is steady and pleasant.*" Squatting, no doubt, is very helpful, because the weight of the body is perfectly balanced in that posture, but it must be easy, otherwise it disturbs the mind of the person trying to attempt spiritual practices. For us, it is natural, but for many Western people it may take quite a lot of practice, and some may not even be able to do it at all. Anyway, for those who can, it is the best posture for spiritual practice.

The second most important point is continence. Without *Brahmacharya* (continence), there is no real spiritual life. When you allow the water to flow out through the rat-holes of the body by wasting it through sex and sensual desire, there will be no energy left for the higher forms of spiritual practice. No use rowing a boat while it is tightly anchored near the shore. Sri Ramakrishna said, "What we want is communion with the Divine." If there is any obstruction in the form of sexual desire or intercourse, communion is not possible. It is just like the case of the broken telegraph-wire. The electricity may be there, the operator may be there, but the communication will never reach its destination as long as the broken wire is not repaired, or as long as some obstructing non-conductor is not removed. "In heaven there is no marriage nor giving in marriage."

Our cravings of the flesh, our desires, usually stand in the way of real religion. The sham we ordinarily see in life, going to places of worship and hearing religious instruction and doing as one pleases is not true religion. This kind of thing may have proved highly profitable for the Church, but it is not Christ's teaching. The right mood is essential for all forms of spiritual practice, and without spiritual practice there can never be

anything like spiritual life. The early Christians knew this perfectly well. So did many of the great mystics of the Middle Ages. But now the whole tradition seems to be lost in the West; and that is why the West is sinking to the level of the brute. Without ethical culture, we can never come in close touch with the Divine. If, after creating a perfect void, we are able to have the right thought, well and good. Then this kind of practice is very useful. But it is very dangerous for the beginner, because he does not succeed in having the right thought after creating the void, but just falls asleep or is dominated by his subconscious mind. In the case of the beginner there is always the great danger of his falling below the threshold of consciousness.

As has been mentioned above, the mind is very much like an unruly horse which has to be broken. The horse acts in two ways: When we want to drive it, it either becomes dreadfully restive or it simply lies down and refuses to move. It does not wish to be steady. So in order to break this unruly horse of our mind a certain amount of ethical culture is necessary. So long as the thought of sex and money is allowed to dominate it, it cannot be broken.

What are the virtues to be practised in spiritual life?

First comes, as Manu says, Ahimsa or not harbouring any ill-feeling towards others whether they are good or bad. Realise these ill-feelings as they arise in the mind. With a disturbed mind it is not possible to have any form of concentration. It is not possible for us to have a concentrated mind and at the same time to cherish an evil thought against anybody. I am speaking of higher concentration.

Second comes Non-stealing. This must never be taken in the gross sense only. Anything that we wish to possess at the cost of anybody else, anything that we get by unfair means, is stealing.

Third: Purity. Physical as well as mental purity is absolutely necessary. Sometimes we commit the mistake of stressing only physical purity, because it is so much more difficult to achieve true mental purity. There are many who satisfy themselves by taking baths, but who do not trouble themselves to have a pure mind. It is, however, impossible to concentrate with an impure mind on higher things. So long as there is the impure thought of a woman in man or of a man in woman, real higher concentration is out of the question. There may not be any gross physical relations, but it is sex all the same, and so long as there is any form of sex, purity has not been achieved, and without purity having been achieved the higher spiritual life remains very far off.

Fourth: Sense-control. One who abandons himself to any form of sense-enjoyment cannot have any calmness or peace of mind. So he cannot do his practices well, however hard he may try. And there is this great point to note: before the aspirant takes up the practice of asana (posture), he must already have gone through the whole of this ethical culture. So highly do the teachers of spiritual life value purity and non-attachment!

Now let us sum up what we have to practise in spiritual life.

- (1) We must practise a steady posture (asana);
- (2) We must calm the mind;
- (3) We should make salutations to all the teachers of the world or to one particular teacher if this appeals to us more.

What is necessary for really calming the mind has already been told. The mind can be calmed only by good and perfectly pure thoughts – only by holy thoughts, not connected with the body or the world.

The Upanishads say, “We must worship the Lord with a calm mind. “So this calming of the mind is most important for all

aspirants. In spiritual life we should follow the footsteps of the Great Ones.

We generally find it helpful to pray not only for our own spiritual welfare but also for that of others. Pray intensely for concentration, for calmness, for singleness of purpose, and for your own spiritual welfare as well as that of all other beings, so that they too may become pure and calm and concentrated and given to the higher life.

That is why Swami Vivekananda taught, "Immediately after sitting for meditation send thoughts of love South, East, North, West, to all creatures. You will find this immensely helpful." As I said, during all our prayers we should also pray for the good of others. This sort of prayer, if done with a certain amount of concentration, brings to us in a general way a feeling of love for our fellow-beings who are struggling for the Higher Life and passing through great anguish and difficulties. The expansion of the soul is very essential for truly calming the mind and concentrating it on Divine things.

There are some people who find rhythmic breathing very helpful. Mind and breath are always interrelated and always act on each other. While doing Pranayama the proportion should be 1: 4: 2, but mere breath is not enough. If it were so, the football would be the, greatest of all Yogis of the world. Along with this breath we must have the intense thought of overwhelming purity, "Everything is purity. I myself am purity, I am purity." Give strong suggestions to your mind:

- Inhale purity, exhale purity, fill yourself with purity.
- Inhale calmness, exhale calmness, fill yourself wholly with calmness.
- Inhale peace, exhale peace, fill yourself wholly with peace.
- Inhale peace, exhale all mental disturbances.

- Inhale dispassion and renunciation, exhale all attachment, passion and desire.
- Inhale purity, exhale all that is impure in your body and your mind.
- Inhale strength, exhale all weakness and fear.

Go on giving these intense suggestions to your mind again and again before coming to your real practices.

What next? After this, the thought of the Divine must be taken up.

Where to think of the Divine? Where to have the centre of one's consciousness? The answer is either in the head or in the heart. These two centres are safe for everybody. Never should a centre below the heart be taken. Here instructions can be imparted only to individuals, because they differ from one another, but both head and heart are always safe. If we do not consciously raise the nervous current at least up the level corresponding, more or less, to the place of the physical heart, no spiritual meditation becomes possible. This conscious raising of one's nervous currents leads one beyond all sensual temptations and establishes one firmly in morals and ethical culture. For very dry and over-intellectual people, it is advisable to take the heart. For emotional people, the heart-centre is dangerous and should be avoided.

Think intensely of the particular centre and imagine it to be a centre of Divine Consciousness. Have the thought that the Divine Consciousness which is within you is also outside, part and parcel of a mighty Consciousness which is undivided and indivisible.

In the beginning you may think of it as light, but really speaking what is meant is the light of Intelligence, i.e., the Divine Light; and this Divine Light, which is in me, pervades at the

same time the whole universe and is one, and eternally indivisible. This body of ours is like a temple of Brahman; remember, each body is a temple of Brahman.

Having done all this, try to merge your consciousness in the Divine Consciousness as in the ease of the salt-dolls getting merged in the sea. You know the parable of Sri Ramakrishna. This body-consciousness stands in the way, and as soon as we try to merge it in Divine Consciousness we get the idea that the soul is not the body.

Meditations should not be focussed on the void. There should be no creating of a void in the beginner. This is very dangerous. Meditations must have some definite, positive, spiritual content. Those who find meditation on the formless too abstract should centre their feelings on some holy form. This is very effective in two ways: it leads them away from their too personal affections and aversions and, at the same time, intensifies their feelings in a good sense, makes them more definite and leads them on to the light of the spirit.

If ever any picture of any person you used to love or to hate troubles you, set a very vivid picture of the holy form you have chosen as your *Ishtam*, against that picture; and the feeling you have for your Ishtam against the feeling you have for that person; be it affection or aversion. Vivid pictures and memories must be counteracted by vivid pictures, stronger feelings by stronger and purer feelings.

There is too little attempt at sublimation. We must learn to think in terms of the soul. Never stress the body-aspect. Never think of yourself as a man or a woman. It is very necessary and very helpful to deny the body as much as possible. Sublimation is of the greatest importance. Think intensely, "I am not a man, I am not a woman. I am not even a human being." Repeat all these grand passages from *Sankara's* works. He says, "I am neither a

human being, nor a god, nor a demi-god. I am neither a *Brahmin* (Scholar), nor a *Kshatriya* (Soldier), nor a *Vaisya* (Businessman), nor a *Sudra* (Labourer). I am neither a student nor a householder nor a forest-dweller nor a monk. I am the Self, the infinite Consciousness."

"I am neither the mind nor the intellect, nor the ego, nor the mind-stuff. I am neither the senses of hearing, taste, smell, touch or sight, nor am I earth, fire or air. I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute. I am the Self, I am the Self."

"I am neither male nor female nor neuter. I am the Beneficent Being, the Light Supreme."

Just blast this rotten personality with these grand passages from Sankara by bombarding it with them at the time of meditation. It must be blasted, and if it does not go, nothing can be achieved.

Go on repeating sincerely "I am He, I am He." "I am neither the body nor the senses, neither the mind, nor the ego, neither the vital energy nor the intellect. Husband, wife, child, wealth or prosperity are free from me. I am the Witness, the Eternal Indwelling Spirit, the Being Beneficent." "I am the light of the Atman, the Light that is inside, the Light that is outside, the Light that is the inner Self. I am the Supreme Being, the Light of lights, the Light self-existent." All these ideas are always associated with *Mahadeva* (Shiva) - the Great White God of Renunciation, of Purity, of Dispassion; Who has always been the Ultimate Ideal of spiritual men in India.

"I am the Being Resplendent, and none else. I am Brahman, not subject to misery. I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute, eternally free by nature." - (Sankara).

And then there is the beautiful prayer in the Upanishads.

“May my mind become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May my soul become pure. May I be free from impurity and evil. May I realize myself as the Light Divine.”

Different Meditations on the Formless

(1) The aspirant imagines he is a fish swimming in the one undivided and eternally indivisible ocean of Existence—Knowledge—Bliss, without any obstruction whatsoever.

(2) The aspirant imagines he is a bird flying in the infinite sky without anything to stand in its way anywhere.

(3) The aspirant is like a pot fully immersed in water, water inside and outside.

(4) The aspirant is like an empty pot floating in ether, ether inside and outside.

(5) The aspirant imagines himself to be a point of self-conscious light immersed in the one indivisible Ocean of Light.

You identify yourself with the point of light, then you feel it to be part of an infinite sphere of light, and after that everything becomes just light everywhere. Nothing but light is left. Either make this point of light expand or merge it or let it move wherever it goes, because wherever it goes, there is the one Infinite light. Try to expand during the time of your meditation. Keep your body-consciousness hanging on a peg, as it were, at least for a time. Thus you raise counter-currents against all your false conceptions and feelings which lie at the root of all your troubles. All such ideas as, 'I am So-and-So, I am a husband, a wife, a child, a lover, etc.,' come from this mistaken identification with what is non-self. Really speaking, worldly love is nothing very grand. Association with others as bodies is nothing very fine. Learn to be realistic.

If one follows such a path, it is just like being a yeast-cell -which goes on dividing and dividing itself, but never becomes big. The impulse of creation remains. It is the same impulse which leads to sex and physical creation on the animal plane that leads us to the highest on the spiritual plane. The man, forgetting the real background of his manhood, goes and associates with the bubble of a woman-form, feeling himself to be a man-bubble. So bubbles merrily associate with bubbles. Yeast-cells go on dividing themselves eternally and never become big.

All these relations based on the body are bosh and nonsense. *"I have been longing for you all my life. You are the star of my life."* All nonsense! Afterwards, when all is over, when your body is satiated with enjoyment, each goes again his own way. Inwardly we all remain strangers, however hard we may try to deceive ourselves on this point. Never can our void be filled by a man-bubble or a woman-bubble, nor by any bubble-star, by anyone who has always been "my life!" All this sounds very grand and romantic, but there is no ultimate truth in it. To the child, the dolls are something very real. It loves them and caresses them and for a time feels very happy in the company of its dolls. Then, one day, it has lost all interest in them and sees them merely as absurd-looking, shabby dolls, hardly being able to understand how it could have cared for them so much. This happens to the grown-up man-child or woman-child also, sooner or later, after many lives, or in this life. But to all this awakening comes one day, and in the beginning this means terrible pain and misery.

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Buddha and Buddhism

Swami Tapasyananda

Among the founders of world religions the Buddha is one, whose historicity is unquestioned in spite of his being one of the earliest of such personages. Born in 567 B.C. (according to some 563 B.C.) he lived for about 84 years engaged in preaching and travel, and gave to the world a system of thought which looks very modern and scientific even after the lapse of about 2,500 years. His father *Suddhodana* was either a hereditary or elected ruler of the small republican clan of the *Sakyas* having their capital at *Kapilavastu*, 100 miles to the north of Benaras, on the Nepal border. The place of his birth is marked by an Ashoka pillar with an inscription commemorating the emperor Ashok's visit to the place in the 20th year of his reign, for worship at the holy spot. *Maya Devi*, the mother of *Siddhartha*, as the Buddha was known in his early life, died on the seventh day of his birth, and he was brought up by his mother's sister *Mahaprajapati*, who was also wedded to *Suddhodana*.

There are not many significant incidents connected with his early days except perhaps two. The first was the concern he showed to a swan which was wounded by a hunter's arrow and came to him for protection. The other was his falling into a trance sitting under an *Amalaki* tree. The joy and repose he got in that state he remembered long, and they remained in him as an aspiration until he recovered them after his final illumination.

Astrologers had predicted at his birth that there were chances of his becoming either an emperor or a mendicant teacher and founder of a great religion, according to the line of life he chose. To prevent the second possibility it was suggested that he should be brought up absolutely sheltered from the hard realities of life. His father, who was naturally anxious to have him as his heir, followed the advice, and the prince was accommodated in a beautiful mansion with many attendants, and was always entertained with songs, dancing and revelry. He was also married to a beautiful lady, known

variously as *Yasodhara*, *Gopa*, and *Baddakacca*, by whom he had a son named *Rahul*.

In spite of all the care and caution of *Suddhodana*, *Siddhartha* did by chance come to see the misery of the world consisting in old age, disease and death. The sight one day, of an old and decrepit man, a sick man and a dead man in turn awoke him all of a sudden to the grim tragedy of human suffering. The experience made him pause and reflect, and he felt convinced that the only thing worth doing in life was to find out whether humanity had a way of escape from this tragedy called life. A pessimistic outlook indeed! But it was needed first order to attain to true optimism, to be born of the spiritual realisation that was in store for him.

He left hearth and home to become a *Sramana* devoted to the acquisition of spiritual wisdom. The *Sramanas*, whose ranks *Siddhartha* entered, were a class of mendicant philosophers and ascetics who were the products of the peculiar intellectual and spiritual ferment that had overcome the northern parts of India in the 6th century B.C. On the one hand there were the *Brahmanas* which followed the *Vedas*, which were interpreted as exclusively devoted to rituals. The Vedic ritual, which originally took the shape of a simple fire sacrifice, had developed into elaborate and complicated *Yajnas* and *Yagas* dominated by a highly trained priesthood. The *Yajna* was equated with God, and there was nothing on earth or heaven that could not be achieved through it! Some of these rites were cruel, involving, as they did, the sacrifice of many animals. Several of the more thoughtful among the *Vedists* therefore took to philosophical and spiritual meditation, as reflected in the *Upanishads*. But the *Vedas* were for the elite while the vast population, left without much of spiritual guidance, became subject to the influence of animistic beliefs, magical rites, or polytheistic forms of worship. From among these masses as also the elite, several thoughtful people left the society to spend their life as unorthodox enquirers and ascetics, and these were the *Sramanas* who went about preaching and teaching with unfettered freedom. In the Buddhist

scriptures mention is made of about sixty-two such schools with their leaders, whose views ranged from rank materialism to highly ascetic and metaphysical doctrines. Speculation, asceticism, and meditation were the methodology of these spiritual freelancers.

Siddhartha was first attracted to ascetic practices as the best means of solving his problem, and he joined, near *Uruvella*, a sect called *Nirgranthas* noted for the severity of their disciplines. With five companions he underwent such crippling disciplines as living like cattle on grass, reducing the food little by little up to absolute starvation, living on the dung of a calf etc., until he realised after some time their utter futility. He, therefore, took again to normal ways of eating and living, and left *Uruvella* and his companions for *Rajagriha*, the capital of the *Magadha* country, where the king *Bimbisara* seems to have received him warmly. Siddhartha now sought the company of ascetics who practised meditation. Under one *Alar Kalama* he practised a meditation which took him to a state of 'nothingness', and afterwards under another ascetic named *Uddaka Ramaputta*, he learned to direct his mind to a state described as 'Consciousness nor no-consciousness'.

None of these satisfied him, and his mind was going towards the blissful state of trance which he had as a child.

He then travelled towards *Uruvella* again and sat at a spot at modern *Bodha Gaya* under a *Bo* tree for meditation, with a determination to attain to his life's aspiration. The determination of the Buddha in this respect has been immortalised by the great poet-philosopher *Aswaghosha* in *Lalitavistara* thus :

'Let my body dry up on this seat; let my bones, muscles, and skin decay. Without attaining to Illumination (Bodhi), which is difficult of achievement even through aeons, I shall not leave this seat.'

He passed through four stages of meditation until he attained to *Bodhi*. But before that there was the important experience of his confrontation with *Mara*. *Mara* is personified *Kama* or desire (*Trishna*), which according to the Buddha's teachings is the cause of re-birth and suffering. *Mara* comes from the root 'Mri' 'to die', and

therefore literally means death, *Mrityu*, which also comes from the same root. Desire therefore is death. Only after the discomfiture of Mara did he attain to *Bodhi* (awakening) and Nirvana (extinguishing), of which he said : *Ignorance was destroyed, Knowledge had arisen . . . as I sat there, earnest, strenuous, resolute.*' He was thenceforth known as the Buddha, the Awakened One.

What that state of Nirvana is, has not been adequately described, as it is ineffable. We only know that the sense of 'I', the support of self-centred life, is revealed as baseless and thereby put out, just as a lamp burning is put out. Has it a positive content? Being an ineffable state, it is indescribable. But referring to it *Sariputta*, one of the Buddha's disciples, exclaims, 'Bliss is Nirvana! Bliss is Nirvana!' Again it has been thus described : 'Just as rivers lose themselves in the great ocean, and all the waters of the air pour into it, yet the great ocean thereby knows neither increase nor diminution, so when many Arhats become extinguished in the realm of Nirvana, the Nirvana realm knows neither increase nor diminution. There water, ether, fire are not; there no candle gives light, no sun beams, no moon shines, no darkness is. And when the Enlightened One has attained to stillness, to insight, there is he free from form and formlessness, from pleasure and pain.' On attaining this state of Bliss called Nirvana, the first reaction of the Buddha was to get absorbed in it, But certain tendencies that he had cultivated in life after life pulled him back to life.

As a Bodhisattva, or Buddha in the making, he had been overcome by *Mahakaruna* (supreme compassion for mankind), and had taken the vow that he would never seek absorption in Nirvana until he had helped mankind to free itself from the life of suffering. And so in order to gain this power for world redemption, he had, as the Jataka accounts tell us, undergone numberless lives, in all of which he had sacrificed himself or his interests for the good of others. It was at the end of this discipline of perfection through self-sacrifice that he had been born as Siddhartha with the mission of world redemption. So the force of compassion for the world compelled him,

as it were, to come out of his seclusion into the broad world and inaugurate a missionary movement in Magadha and its neighbourhood, which in the centuries ahead was to have mighty repercussions in far-flung parts of the world.

Leaving Uruvella, he came to Saranath in the neighbourhood of Benaras, where he found out the five companions of his ascetic days and preached to them his first sermon, setting forth his fundamental teachings, and won them as his first converts. Thus the Buddha began his Dharma Chakra Pravartana — the setting in motion of the wheel of Dharma, and for the remaining forty years of his life, he devoted himself tirelessly to this task of preaching Dharma.

The personality and the missionary work of the Buddha had certain striking characteristics which mark him out from other great teachers, Indian and foreign. These are as follows:

(1) He always appealed to reason and never imposed any authority, not even that of himself, on others. While he was firm in his convictions, he never imposed them in a dogmatic way, but received all enquirers on their own ground, and by sweet reasonableness and gentle but irresistible persuasion brought them to his way of thinking.

(2) He accepted and preached what was more a system of psychology and ethics, than a religion as means for the attainment of a goal which he did not define.

(3) His teachings contained no dogmas except two, namely, that Nature is bound by a rigid internally determined law of cause and effect, and that this extends also to the moral realm, making each person responsible for his acts through a succession of births.

(4) He had the uniqueness of preaching a highly ethical and spiritual religion, without a soul and a God, but still based on ideas of moral responsibility and salvation.

(5) He was the first ecumenist and missionary in the world. His gospel was addressed not to a clan or a tribe or a nation, but to

the world at large, and his missionaries were exhorted to go all over the world.

(6) He refused to recognise the superiority of any one on the basis of birth, as India's caste system did, and preached his doctrine and admitted members to his monastic order without any consideration of caste or country.

(7) He was the first to recognise that women had equal rights with men and to admit women to the monastic Order.

(8) He was always noted for his equality of treatment in dealing with all, for maintaining perfect dignity and unruffledness under criticism and insult, and for readiness to serve all, however low in the social scale.

What did he preach? It is customary for Buddhist texts to speak of his teachings in a neat formula consisting of Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Way. To describe these briefly, the four Noble Truths are :

- (1) That life, being all suffering, is to be overcome.
- (2) That the cause of suffering is ignorance.
- (3) That there is a cessation of suffering.
- (4) That the path for this consists in the Eight-fold Path.

The Eight-fold Path is stated to consist of:

- (1) Right Understanding
- (2) Right Intention
- (3) Right Speech
- (4) Right Action
- (5) Right Livelihood
- (6) Right Effort
- (7) Right Mindfulness
- (8) Right Concentration.

What the Buddha taught through this apparently simple-looking formula was a system of psychology and ethics leading to a highly abstract form of meditation, without the help of any well-defined metaphysics or theology.

First of all one has to agree with the Buddha that life is all suffering and is not worth having. If one does not, one will have to part company with him at the start itself. Life is sustained by ignorance, consisting in the illusory feeling, that there is something stable in change. This sense of permanence is the basis of desire (*Trishna*) for objects of enjoyment and sustenance of life, and thereby it leads to a succession of births and deaths causing infinite suffering.

It will be seen that the Buddha's world-view differs fundamentally from that of all the other religions in general. A God for originating and sustaining the world and life, and an imperishable substratum in man called the soul for bearing moral responsibilities are considered to be irreducible assumptions in any religion. But Buddha accepts neither, though he does not deny them too. For Buddha, the whole of Nature has always existed and is self-sustaining. It is a succession of events without a substance, rigidly self-regulated by an internal law expressing itself as an unalterable chain of cause and effect. He called it the doctrine of Dependent Origination. Just like many modern scientists, he considered God all unnecessary assumption for explaining the world of becoming and said neither 'yes' nor 'no' about Him.

In regard to man also the law of Dependent Origination holds good. Man too, like the rest of Nature, is a succession of changes without any permanent entity within him called the soul. The law of Dependent Origination expresses itself as the following chain of cause and effect : By reason of ignorance arise dispositions; by reason of dispositions, consciousness; by reason of consciousness, body-mind; by reason of body-mind, six organs; by reason of organs, contacts; by reason of contacts, sensations; by sensations, craving and grasping and becoming; by reason of becoming, birth; and by reason of birth, old age and death. By virtue of this chain of cause and effect man is experiencing repeated births and deaths, and the Buddha's message is for showing the way out. Dispelling of ignorance is the way out, and ignorance consists in the feeling that there is a permanent unchanging individual accepted as self (*Atman*)

involved in the process of the cycle of births and deaths. *Atman* means one having its *Nature* or 'own being', which undergoes no change nor depends on anything else for its being. There is no such entity either in Nature outside, nor inside the personality of man. The sense of 'I' persisting in the flow of body-mind combination must be thoroughly dissipated in both an intellectual and a spiritual sense, if re-birth is to be overcome. So long as the 'I' sense is there, the will-to-live and the desire and attachment for objects (*Trishna*) will not leave man, and continuous and unending births and deaths will be the result. For *Trishna* or Desire is *Mara* or Death itself.

The dissipation of the 'I' sense is possible because it is an illusory feeling. It can be overcome by following the eight-fold path, of which right view, right living and right concentration are the most fundamental and in fact include all the others. The right view is the proper understanding of the theory of *Nairatmya* (soullessness) — that there is only Becoming, and no Being, that there is no substance, nor soul with independence and self-identity in the constant flux that is experienced as Nature outside and as consciousness within. But an explanation of that persisting 'I' sense is necessary, as Buddhism accepts re-birth and accountability for actions (*Karma*) as a fundamental doctrine, without which it would have been no religion at all. The explanation is that change or succession of movements is not a chaotic or self-destroying process, but one of the present moment transmitting its efficiency and character into the succeeding moment. Thus there is a continuum of consciousness, a series of individual and momentary quanta of character, a regular procession of states augmenting with the efficiencies of all previous moments, but without any unchanging transmigrating entity involved. There is no ready-made soul but only soul as an efficiency or character in formation, receiving the impressions of the earlier and transmitting them with additions to the next. Rebirth is to be understood in this sense, and not as of an unchanging and pre-existing entity called the soul.

If one is convinced of this doctrine, i.e. is confirmed in the Right View (Understanding), one should practise Right Living (Livelihood), which consists in abandoning self-centredness in life. Self-abnegation expressing itself as concern for the good of others, is the essence of such living. The ideal of self-abnegation is exemplified in Buddhism through the lives of Bodhisattvas, who are Buddhas in preparation.

But Right Concentration is the essence of the doctrine, and only one who practises it sedulously can hope to be confirmed in the Right View (Understanding) and Right Living (Livelihood). The meditation that the Buddha prescribed was meant to actually eliminate the sense of unchanging self in the continuance of consciousness that constitutes the psychic life of man. This elimination is what is meant by dispelling ignorance according to the Buddha, and without that, Trishna, desire, will not subside and the round of birth and death will not cease. In the Vedanta forms of meditation also the pseudo-'I' has to be dissipated, but it is done by recognising it as a reflection of the super-'I' in the mental-continuum. But the Buddha seems to prefer a pure descriptive psychology and hesitates to enter into the realm of metaphysics and posit a super-I. Metaphysics and theology he shuns absolutely. For so long as we intellectually posit a super-I we will be thinking of it in terms of an *object*, and consequently the pseudo-I will not be dissipated and Trishna will not subside and rebirth will not stop, according to him.

The process of meditation consists in completely objectifying the psycho-physical being of man, which the Buddhist psychology describes as the five *Skandhas* – *Rupa* (material attributes), *Vedana* (feeling), *Samjna* (perception), *Samskara* (mental disposition and will), and *Vijnana* (intelligence). A mere intellectual understanding of these will be of no more use than adding one more layer to the pseudo-I. In meditation, consciousness has to go to its very depths and objectify and throw out, as it were, the flow of psycho-physical complex as foreign, without any trace of identification as the 'I' within it. If this

externalisation and denial are complete and unreserved, the pseudo-I is extinguished, and then what is, is. This is Nirvana, which means 'blowing out' as also 'cooling'. An absolute Negation implies an absolute Assertion, and so what actually happens when the pseudo 'I' perishes is that the consciousness that denies it is delinked as it were from the succession of cause and effect and becomes unconditioned and absolute.

After a thorough examination of all passages having any bearing on the topic of Nirvana, Max Muller and Childers have concluded that there is not one passage that would require that its meaning should be 'annihilation', as some interpret this attainment. The Buddha, however, never tried to describe or define Nirvana in positive language for the best of reasons that once it is posited as a state, it becomes a fact of the objective world and therefore becomes fit to be treated as a phase of Becoming. He usually remained silent on this and other metaphysical questions, saying, *'Whatsoever has not been revealed by me, let that remain unrevealed.'* And about this unrevealed aspect., the Buddha gave a hint under persistent questioning : "To discover a monk the mind of whom is thus delivered, so that he could say, *"This is the substratum of the Tathagatha"*, is impossible even for Gods, Indra, Brahma and Prajapati included. And why so? Already in the present life the Accomplished One is not to be found out, say I. And monks against me thus preaching and teaching, many ascetics and Brahmanas falsely, groundlessly, untruly, in defiance of fact bring accusation thus : "an unbeliever is this Sramana Gautama. The real entity's destruction, annihilation, dying away, is what he preaches," . . . I preach only suffering and cessation of suffering. . . , I preach annihilation of delusion. I preach the annihilation of the manifold evil things that do not pertain to salvation.' The Buddha has also stated : 'There is, O disciples, a something that is not born, nor produced, nor created, nor compounded. Where there is not, O disciples, this something that is not born . . there would be no possible exit for what is born.'

One of Buddha's disciples, Sariputta, exclaimed, '*Bliss! Bliss is Nirvana*'.

The position seems to be that the ultimate denial of an unchanging substance either in the stream of change constituting the external world or the internal world implies an ultimate assertion also. What is asserted cannot be spoken about, because it is neither subject nor object, neither Sat (existence) nor Asat (non-existence). This must be the meaning of the Buddha's absolute silence about it. About this silence, one of the early Buddhist writers has said that there are certain questions to be answered positively, certain others negatively, and still others by silence, because whatever is said will not help to clarify but will only cloud the issue.

The Vedanta also holds that ultimately silence alone is an adequate account of Atma-Brahman, but still Vedantic teachers have preferred to be metaphysical and to propound a doctrine of Brahman. In the pseudo-I they found a reflection or aspect of the Super-I. When the mental modification which constitutes the medium for the reflection of the Super-I is destroyed through illumination, the pseudo-I relapses into the Super-I. But Buddha will not give any such metaphysical account of Nirvana. He was prepared to describe the 'I' only psychologically, as an illusory or transient product of the interaction of momentary impulses, and not as the temporary reflection of a metaphysical substratum transcending the moments.

The later history of Buddhism would however show that by silence the Buddha could not put down the metaphysical inquisitiveness of his followers. Speculations started very soon, and ever so many schools of metaphysics developed among Buddhist thinkers. In the same way the Buddha avoided all theology, but soon after he passed away, he was placed in the seat of worship and an elaborate Buddhology was developed, with Adibuddha at the head and his three Kayas or bodies as His manifestations. Later Buddhism developed a most complicated system of deities with their worship and prayers, rituals and all forms of occult practices.

Apart from these later developments, the early Buddhism holds forth a great attraction for certain thinkers who have an in-born dislike for theology and metaphysics, but yet entertain a hankering for a system of ethical and spiritual culture. For God and soul, which are the assumptions of almost all other religions, are not brought into the Buddha's system, at least in a direct manner as in these. But the Buddha's system also has two doctrines which appear to be mere dogmatic assumptions to its critics. One is the theory of Dependent Origination, which assumes Nature to be a fact requiring no explanation and which is accepted as a self-contained and self-dependent system of cause and effect. This is the scientific view too, and science cannot thrive without this assumption. The analytic description of Nature, which the Buddha attempted and which science has achieved in much greater detail, is not an understandable explanation of Nature at all to many. Human intelligence seeks the meaning of things. To assume such a meaning even when we cannot understand it fully is not an effrontery to human dignity but a constituent necessity to its healthy functioning.

Without assuming that a self-transcending intelligence is involved in it, Nature's regularity and purposefulness, which are assumed in the law of Dependent Origination, cannot be understood at all. The assumption of a Deity immanent in Nature yet transcending it is thus a basic assumption for a spiritual world-view. An internally co-ordinated Nature as an expression of Him is in no way inconsistent with such a view. A capricious interference is not a necessary presumption of it. It has, however, to be remembered that according to the latest developments of science mere thermic agitation left to the laws of chance cannot account for the combinations of molecules needed for the development of life and intelligence. A Deity has become as much a necessity of thought as of life.

The other presumption of Buddhism is the doctrine of Karma, without which Buddhism would not have been a religion at all. To reduce the individual to a mere momentary existence and at

the same time to maintain that the load of accumulating tendencies is being carried to the point of Nirvana, seem to be incompatible ideas. The vivid perception of a totally nonexistent pseudo-I is not understandable.

The example of a point circling round rapidly and appearing to be a continuous circumference, illustrates nothing. A motionless observer outside the motion is posited here and hence there is perception of the illusory circle. In the same way, if the continuous and rapid motion of the body-mind is to be perceived or felt, there must be at least a relatively stable observation point outside the motion. Because of the extreme psychological leaning of Buddhism and its pre-supposition that Nature is a closed system requiring nothing outside it to explain it, Buddhist thinkers are reluctant to accept a metaphysical super-I as the prototype, of which the relatively stable pseudo-I is a reflection. This is the trend of thought in Vedanta, which also accepts the changefulness of body-mind phenomena, but posits within it the involvement of a relatively stable subtle body centring round a pseudo-I, which is only a reflection of a Super-I in the psychic medium or adjunct. The pseudo-I being a reflection in a psychic adjunct, it has only a relative permanency until illumination destroys the adjunct and the reflection lapses into its prototype, the Super-I, which is the unchanging witness of all the changeful phenomenon.

But how does the medium perish? It perishes only by the grace of God who is the prototype of all the pseudo-'I's or the Jivas. And His grace is bestowed on those who practise right living and right contemplation and attain to complete resignation to the Supreme Subject, transcending objective conceptions. A gospel of devotion to a Supreme Iswara will be a proper supplement to the gospel of the Buddha.

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Sri Andal - The Divine Bride

Swami Ritajananda

The rich culture and the spiritual heritage of India will lose much of their greatness if the personality of Sri Krishna is ignored. For He enters into all the aspects of Indian life. His life at Vrindaban has always been given a high place by the mystics who saw in Him nothing but the sublime relation between God and His devotees. We find that the *Bhagavata* Purana calls Him as the Lord Himself. The *Gopis* (the cowherd girls) stand as ideal specimens of devotees who seek nothing in this world but the pleasure of His company. Saints have appeared, again and again, in various parts of India, manifesting the same passion for Sri Krishna like those *Gopis*, and have reached great spiritual heights.

Most of us are familiar with the life of Sri Krishna Chaitanya of Bengal, who manifested in himself all the feelings of Sri Radha, a lovelorn Gopi, for Sri Krishna. Many centuries before him a number of *Alvar* saints of South India possessed similar divine love. Among these, there is a solitary woman—*Sri Andal*, who shines with a unique brilliance. Her dedicated life to God, even from her childhood, without a tinge of worldliness and with complete absorption in God, raises her above many other saints.

Srivilliputtur is an ancient town in South India, about fifty miles south of Madurai. There stands an important Vishnu temple. In the eighth century, this town was under the suzerainty of the *Pandya* kings, who gave special attention to the temple. About that time, there lived a Brahmin, *Vishnuchitta* by name, who spent his days in supplying flowers and *Tulasi* leaves for the worship of the Lord. Besides this, he composed numerous Tamil hymns, which he sang in the temple. His extraordinary devotion for Vishnu, well brought out the meaning of his name, viz. 'one who has Vishnu always in his mind'.

One morning, while he was busy gathering flowers, he suddenly beheld a beautiful baby-girl, lying under the *Tulasi* bushes.

Charmed by its heavenly beauty, Vishnuchitta lifted up the child and hugged it to his bosom. A devotee like him saw nothing strange in the appearance of the child, and he took it as a gift from God to brighten his lonely life; for he had neither wife nor children. He carried the child home and showered on it all his affection. The name *Goda* was given to the child, and under his loving care it grew up into a charming girl. It was noticed that even in her small games with sand-castles and dolls, Goda exhibited her special attention to the worship of the Lord in her daily life. When she was old enough to receive education, Vishnuchitta entertained her with all the incidents of Sri Krishna's life at Vrindaban, whose anecdotes fascinated her.

Little by little she began to help her father. She looked after the garden, watered the plants, plucked flowers, and also prepared beautiful garlands for the deity in the temple. While her tiny hands were engaged thus, the mind often revelled in the thought of Krishna. The picturesque narratives she had heard vividly brought before her mind's eye the scenes of *Gokula*. The mischievous boy Krishna, always teasing the Gopis, his fighting and killing numerous enemies and his enthralling flute-play captivated her completely.

She felt that she was an unfortunate girl in not having taken birth as one of the Gopis. If she had to choose a husband, it must be Krishna and He alone. For who could ever have such a rare combination of beauty, courage, intelligence, and goodness like Him? If she was a Gopi, how merrily she would have played with Him! She would have dressed herself in all finery and attracted His attention. Jewels, fine garments, and flowers would have surely made her win His love. While these thoughts were passing through her mind, she saw that the garlands were prepared. Why should she not try to work out her ideas even now? So, immediately she put on the garlands round her neck, some she used for her hair, and consulted the mirror to see how she befitted the handsome lover. Slowly this act became a daily habit with her, and every day Vishnuchitta, completely ignorant of all this, carried these garlands which were used by his daughter, to the temple.

This went on for a number of days. One day Goda thought that she should dress herself like a bride ready for marriage. So she put on all her jewels, dressed herself in the best clothes, and used all the floral wreaths to give the finishing touches. While she was thus dressed up and was standing before the mirror, absorbed in her thoughts, who should make his sudden appearance there but Vishnuchitta! Seeing all the flowers meant for the temple on the body of Goda, he was shocked. He had been training her according to orthodox religious traditions and he could not believe that his daughter would do such a sacrilegious act. She never did anything to provoke him and he had no occasion to scold her, but now how to ignore this sinful act? Profoundly moved, at last he found words to say, "Goda! What have you done? How did you dare to put on yourself these garlands meant for the Lord and Him alone? Do you not know with what care we pluck the flowers and do not even smell them, which are for His worship? My dear child! I never thought you would shock me thus. What shall I offer to Him? How shall I face His divine presence? By your silly act of vanity you have brought on me such a misery." He could say no more. Goda was violently brought back to this world. She turned round and saw her father. His words of chastisement made her see clearly her crime, how she had pained her loving father. She could give no reply and stood there mute, while tears trickled down her face.

After a while, Vishnuchitta went away. The thought that the ancient habit of supplying flowers to the Lord had to be given a break made him feel very miserable. The foolish girl had, by her desire to look beautiful, brought a rift in the peaceful tenor of his life. He went to bed. But the day's incident came again and again before him. His daughter's action was like a puzzle for which his brain sought a solution in vain. At last, when the mind became weary of the recurring thoughts, Vishnuchitta fell asleep; and he began to see a glow amidst the surrounding darkness.

Slowly the glow became a bright light and in that he saw the Lord of the temple, who asked him, "What is the matter, my son?"

You have not given the flowers today!" What could Vishnuchitta reply? To tell the facts would only reflect the faulty training he gave to his daughter. But the Lord did not wait for his reply and continued, "Evidently you have not understood who is in your house as your daughter. She is no ordinary human girl, but one who belongs to me. Bring the wreaths which she uses and they will be gladly accepted by me."

The sight vanished and Vishnuchitta woke up. Now he began to think of Goda in a new light. Slowly he remembered all the actions and games of the child which pointed out her spiritual development. He began to see clearly that she was really not an ordinary human being to enjoy the pleasures of the world, but one who had the grace of God. So he addressed her as 'Andal', the queen of the world.

But Goda was unaffected by the special distinction given to her. She continued to have her thoughts for Sri Krishna alone. As years passed by, her devotion to God also increased. She saw her friends going to their husbands, but why did He not come to take her? Her thoughts went back again to the Gopis. They were performing the worship of the Divine Mother *Katyayani*, for getting a suitable husband. Why should she not also do the same?

The month of *Margashirsha* (December-January) is considered to be the best of months. It is the period when the cool hours of the dawn are spent in prayers and meditation by many people. Then the worship of *Katyayani* is undertaken, which comes to a close on the full moon day. It is said that the Gopi maidens got up in the early morning, went to the riverside and had their bath, and then performed the worship. Andal thought of doing the worship mentally, considering herself as one of the Gopis, the town of Srivilliputtur as Vrindaban, and the local temple as the house of Krishna. The whole idea she has put in a charming poem, *Tiruppavai*, which she sang in the temple. Along with this she composed another piece, called *Tirumozhi*, which expresses her longing to meet her beloved Krishna.

While she was thus dwelling in the world of love for Krishna, her father found that she had reached the marriageable age. But he could not think of any young man who was suitable for her. So he thought, he might as well take her opinion in this matter. Andal, who had understood his thoughts, told him, "Father, I have already chosen my husband, who is Lord Narayana himself. If it comes to my ears that you are planning to give me in marriage to a mortal being, I shall be no more."

What a strange proposal! How could Vishnuchitta get Lord Narayana to marry his daughter? He thought that his daughter was trying to escape a married life. But still he began, 'My child, I agree to your wish. But you know Lord Narayana manifests Himself in the 108 temples dedicated to Him in the various parts of India. Of these, whom are you going to choose?' Then Andal wanted to know the characteristics of each of them. Vishnuchitta began to describe the greatness of each of them. When he began to talk of Sri Krishna of Mathura, Andal felt so full of joy that her hair stood on end. When he began to describe the Lord at Tirupati, she exhibited brightness in her face. But when she heard the glory of Sri Ranganatha, her whole body expressed joy. Now it became clear that she desired her marriage with Sri Ranganatha at Srirangam, near Tiruchirappalli.

Yet, how to arrange this marriage was still a problem for Vishnuchitta. Just at this time, the priests and other officers connected with the temple at Srirangam heard the commands of the Lord, who asked them to proceed immediately to Srivilliputtur and bring Andal there. A grand procession was soon arranged, with elephants, gaily decked horses, and fine music, and a big retinue of friends. A beautifully decked palanquin was brought for carrying Andal. On an auspicious day, the whole party slowly wended its way to Srirangam. After walking for a number of days, they at last reached the entrance of the temple of Sri Ranganatha. The people who had heard about the strange marriage assembled in large numbers within the temple. The palanquin was lowered at the entrance of the main shrine.

Andal, sitting inside the closed palanquin, constantly meditated on God. She began to feel that at last the day had come when her only desire was going to be fulfilled. So, getting down from the palanquin, she walked straight into the shrine, like a needle attracted by a magnet. The assembled people who noticed her going to the feet of the reclining image of the deity, were eagerly waiting, thinking that after a short while she would come out with the bridegroom. But, to their amazement, no such thing happened.

After a while, Vishnuchitta peeped into the shrine to see what his daughter was doing. But where was she gone? There was no trace of her anywhere. Along with others he searched for her all around, but could not find her anywhere. Poor Vishnuchitta was sorely grieved at the turn of events, for he had none else to console him but the Lord Ranganatha Himself. When he stood there before the deity, Vishnuchitta suddenly heard a voice from the inner shrine, addressing him, *'Vishnuchitta! Your daughter has been accepted by me. You need not search for her any more. Blessed indeed are you for giving your daughter in marriage to me.'* These words afforded no solace to his aching heart. For many years he had no children and, at last, Andal came to brighten his household and cheer him in his old age. All his hopes were shattered as she was taken away from him. How could he go back to his empty house? Yet he could do nothing else. The blessed girl had won the grace of God and was united with Him. What better state could he wish for her, although it made his worldly life a bit painful? So he went back to Srivilliputtur to spend the few remaining years of his life in prayer and contemplation of the Lord.

This is the narrative of the life of the illustrious woman saint Andal, according to available traditional accounts. This simple life may not have many attractive features. Nevertheless it has a great value in showing the world her one-pointed devotion. Andal is a 'rare flower' among saints. The thought of God pervaded her whole being and the limitations of mundane life only stood as a barrier between her and her Beloved. The two immortal poems in Tamil, which she has left behind, give a clear picture of her thoughts. While

one of them—the longer one describes her lovelorn state, the other shows how one can win divine grace by complete surrender at the feet of the Lord.

The poem called *Tirumozhi*, popularly known as *Nachiyar Tirumozhi* or the 'sacred utterances of our Lady', consists of 143 stanzas, generally divided into fourteen sections, according to the central idea in each.

Andal is intensely longing to meet her Lord, and so, her first thoughts are to ask the god of Love, *Manmatha*, to act as her messenger. She praises him and coaxes him to help her. Now and then she also remembers how the Gopi girls, in their childhood, called on Sri Krishna to witness their games.

O Narayana! You are with thousand names praised.

You took a human body, but what a mischievous lad you turned out!

If we are to have you as our husband,

O Lord! how much would we suffer in your hands!

We are now busy decorating our homes.

O Sridhara! Pray do not spoil our games.

This whole day, while our backs ached, we worked

To finish these charming palaces. Won't you come, Lord!

To see our homes and give us delight?

We know, you once became a baby and lay on a leaf to save the world.

Can you not have some mercy for us?

Manmatha fails as a messenger. Andal next begins to dwell more and more on the divine disport of Krishna at Vrindaban. A good number of stanzas are devoted for this purpose. Andal is left helplessly to think of Krishna, day and night, without any hope of getting him. One night she sees a strange dream which presents the very scene she desired most—her marriage with Sri Krishna. She sees all the paraphernalia of a grand wedding, fine music, and numerous friends who have come to witness the function. Sri Krishna and herself go through all the ceremonies connected with the marriage. Suddenly she wakes up and finds that the Lord, instead of actually marrying, had deceived her by his false appearance in a

dream. So she becomes all the more miserable. Just then, as if to satisfy her, the image of Vishnu, with the conch, discus, and other ornaments appears before her. The bright conch, decorating his left hand, draws her attention. 'How strange! An ordinary shell, with poor birth and parentage, raised to such a high status of remaining in his hand, and to have the good fortune of touching his lips, while she, the daughter of a great devotee like Vishnuchitta, and a girl who has no other enjoyments in this world, is never even glanced at by him.' A number of verses are addressed to the conch, asking about the Lord, whose company it has always been having. In the meanwhile, the other girls come to know about Andal's condition but cannot understand what is really undermining her health. So she feels vexed with them and says, 'Friends, You do not know what my disease is. All our talk so far is like the conversation between a deaf and a mute person who will never understand each other. I have no patience to listen to you.'

Slowly she realizes that Sri Krishna is a great lover of Nature. Then why not ask the cuckoo to be the messenger, or the clouds which merrily glide and travel over many regions? But the messengers do not help her in any way. She turns again to her friends and says, 'Dear girls! My whole being is suffering inscrutable pain from the separation from my Beloved. Will you kindly take me to Him? You say my health is not fit to undertake this arduous journey. Please have mercy on me and lead me to Vrindaban, where my Lord did so many wonderful acts. If it is not possible, try and get a robe which has contacted his body, or even a faded flower of his garland. If you cannot get these, then, even the dust on the road which had the good fortune of contacting his sacred feet will do to relieve me of this malady.'

Finally we come to the last section of the poem. This takes a new form of presentation. The love-sick girl at last sees her Beloved. What she sees is not directly mentioned but takes the form of a conversation. Each verse is a question and an answer. But still they form two sections of the same description, namely, Sri Krishna of

Vrindaban, who is none but Sri Narayana Himself, and whom Andal sees with her eyes.

While this poem Tirumozhi describes the intense love for the Lord, we read in Tiruppavai, the other famous poem of Andal, the necessary qualifications one must have to win divine grace. No worldly riches help a person in winning an approach to God. Those who are humble and are fixed in their attachment to the Lord win His grace. The innocent and the meek, who surrender themselves completely at His feet, get from Him what all they want. The Gopis of Vrindaban were able to express these characteristics, and Andal brings them out in Tiruppavai.

This poem consists of thirty stanzas, each ending with the term 'Elorembavai' for which no definite meaning can be found. This may be the reason why the whole poem gets the name Tiruppavai.

Andal takes the role of one of the Gopis and goes out in the early morning, to wake up other maidens, in order that all may go together for their bath and get ready for the Lord's worship. The first five stanzas form a sort of introduction; the second ten describe how those sleeping girls were awakened; the next five deal with awakening the household of Sri Krishna; and the last is addressed to Krishna himself. From the very beginning we find that Andal stresses the greatness of Krishna, who is Narayana Himself.

Blessed is today, the day of the full moon in the month of Margazhi. ¹

You girls! Come out, and let us go for the bath.

You belong to prosperous Gokula, and you are the dear ones of your parents.

He, the son of Nandagopa, with his sharp lance, is a fierce fighter;

And is the darling of Yashoda of beautiful eyes.

His body is like the black cloud, and the face is bright like the sun and cool like the moon.

His eyes are like lotus petals.

Such a Lord is Narayana Himself, and he will surely give us the drum. ²

Come, dear maidens! Elorembavai.

Hark, you dwellers of the world! how we do the worship;

We sing the praise of the Supreme Lord, who lies in the ocean of milk.

At the break of day we finish our bath; no food do we take,

*No collyrium marks our eyes, nor flowers adorn our hair;
We do no evil deeds nor carry tales to our Lord;
We give alms as much as we can aid it is our only delight. Elorembavai.*

Such worship not only brings the favour of Krishna but also moves the rain-god. There will be plenty of rain and the fields will be full of corn. The cows will yield plenty of milk, and famine will disappear. So Andal asks all the girls to join her, as it has a twofold gain. Further, the prayer to Krishna is of very great value since it purifies one of all sins.

If we begin to worship him with flowers and meditate on his glory, our sins, past and those we may do in future, will get burnt like cotton thrown into flames.

Then we read the stanzas specially meant for awakening the sleepers. Here we find what a great poet Andal is. With picturesque details she presents before us how the other maidens react to her call, unwilling to come out of their warm beds.

The following two stanzas stand as illustrations.

O foolish girl! Everywhere the bird Anaichattan is shrieking. Do you not hear?

Or the jingling of the bangles, bracelets, and necklaces of the Gopis Busily churning curd—does it not reach your ears?

Does not the noise of the churning rouse you?

O maiden-queen! Do you not hear even our loud prayers to Narayana and Keshava?

How are you yet in bed?

Wake up, O shining lady! Elorembavai.

In the next one, we listen to the conversation between the girl, still in bed, and those outside.

'How strange, my parrot-like lady! Are you still in slumber?'

'Maidens! I am coming soon. Do not call me again and again.'

'Enough of your words. We know well of your sharp tongue.'

'Be it so, that you are of better words.'

Or even let me be so.' '

Come out quick, Mend! What else have you to do?' 'But have all come?'

*'Yes. All have arrived, and you can come out and count for yourself.
Let us all sing the praise of the brave one who killed the mighty elephant,
The strong one who destroyed the wicked, the mysterious Krishna.'*

Thus a number of stanzas describe how, one by one, the maidens and the people attached to the household of Krishna are awakened. At last they reach the very room where Krishna is asleep. After rousing him, they all join in prayer.

O Govinda! You are a person of extraordinary powers, even those who do not bow to you are conquered by you.

By singing your praise, we get not only the small drum for worship, but something more. We shall receive from you fine jewels which will be marvelled at by the whole world; Armlets for our arms, wristlets to adorn our wrists,

Ear-rings and anklets and how many more!

*Fine robes of silk shall we put on, and have delicious dishes,
Milk and rice, and sweets, dripping with ghee;*

O Lord! with Thee shall we feast.

O Govinda! You have no wants.

But we are cowherd girls

Who toil the whole day, going behind our cattle, for our livelihood.

We are ignorant people.

And what a great blessing to have you,

The Lord Himself, in our midst.

Our relationship shall not come to an end.

We are uneducated girls and know not how to address you;

If our words of love are childish, pray mind them not, and bestow your grace.

O Krishna! Please listen to the purpose which brought us here, at such an early hour and made us worship your feet.

It is unjust on your part if you do not accept our worship, we the people of your tribe.

We have come not only to beg of you the small drum,

For eternity we seek your kinship and be your servants in all our future births.

Please free us from all desires, O Lord! Elorembavai.

An attempt has been made to give the translations of some of the stanzas, all of which are in Tamil. It will be clear how a knowledge of Krishna's life is essential to follow the ideas contained in them. Andal has used this setting only to show how the devotion (of the Gopis) of complete self-surrender is the best way of winning divine grace. Sri Krishna stands for God and the sentiments of devotion addressed to him pervade the whole composition. Many centuries have rolled by, but the poems left behind by Andal keep her memory bright. Even to this day, during the month of Margazhi, in South India, in temples dedicated to Vishnu, these soul-moving verses of Andal are sung to awaken all sleeping persons and call them to the worship of the Lord.

¹ *Margazhi* is the Tamil month which falls between December and January, corresponding to Margashirsha.

² 'Drum' is a small musical instrument, to be received from Krishna. It is necessary to have the drum for worship. It may also be noted here that getting the drum signifies divine benevolence.

(Reprinted from Prabuddha Bharata, December, 1950)

One should be honest and faithful, without deception, chatter, hinting or belittling, not always ready to add gain to gain, but with the sense-doors guarded, moderate in food, a maker of peace, observant, active and strenuous in effort, a meditator, mindful, with proper conversation, steady-going, resolute and sensible, not hankering after sense pleasures, but mindful and prudent. This is the unsurpassed teaching concerning a person's proper ethical conduct.

The Buddha

Leaves from an Ashrama 53
The Way of Guru-Bhakti
Swami Vidyatmananda

I have been thinking lately about the practice of '*Guru-bhakti*' and trying to understand its whys and wherefores. Indian thought teaches that utter devotion to one's preceptor is fundamental to progress; in fact, that if the relationship of the disciple to the teacher is not one of unreserved submission and selfless reverence, the disciple cannot hope to make spiritual progress.

Is there any rational, psychological basis for this extreme doctrine? Or is the Guru-bhakti concept a kind of superstition?

Swami Vivekananda said: "Without faith, humility and veneration toward our religious teacher, there cannot be any growth of religion in us; and it is a significant fact that where this kind of relation prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men are growing." The intensity of Swamiji's devotion to his own teacher is proverbial. Sri Ramakrishna, in turn, practiced bhakti toward his Gurus. He described the correct attitude in an illustration about Sri Krishna's disciple, Arjuna. Krishna had pointed out some birds to Arjuna and identified them as pigeons. Arjuna saw that they were indeed pigeons. But a moment later Krishna said that the birds were not pigeons at all. Arjuna responded that now he could see that indeed they were not pigeons. This was not a yes-man's acquiescence. 'Such faith had Arjuna in Krishna,' was Ramakrishna's comment, 'that what Krishna said, Arjuna perceived at once to be actually true.'

Now, what such knowers of God practiced, I cannot term mere superstition. The wonder of their lives has established this tradition as spiritually efficacious.

What *is* the secret of Guru-bhakti? It is, I perceive, simply that, as a preliminary to knowing God, one *must* learn to surrender oneself, submit one's will to a visible spiritual authority, gladly, through love. One does it, of course, not for the Guru's sake, but wholly for one's own sake. But how one shrinks from submitting! Yet surely if one cannot unreservedly devote oneself to the 'God' one sees how can one hope to adore the God one cannot see?

Nor is there anything unique to Hinduism in this. The same stress is found in Christianity. Christ taught us to become as little children. Thomas à Kempis in his book '*The Imitation of Christ*' commends loving obedience toward one's religious superior in the strongest terms. And confession becomes an act of self-abnegation before God's representative.

Then why does one resist? Why does one conjure up rational reasons for remaining one's own master? Pride, vanity, self-love, shame. What must be eliminated if one is to progress spiritually? Pride, vanity, self-love, shame. How to rid oneself of such egoistic tendencies most painlessly, most positively? Practice of Guru-bhakti. The process, which can lead us to the highest result, is as simple – and as demanding – as that.

You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger.

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.

No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.

The Buddha

Programme for May - June 2016

Sunday discourses begin

at the

Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Bourne End at 4:30 pm

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May	1	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 94	Swami Dayatmananda
May	8	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 95	Swami Dayatmananda
May	15	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 96	Swami Dayatmananda
May	22	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 97	Swami Dayatmananda
May	29	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 98	Swami Dayatmananda
June	5	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 99	Swami Dayatmananda
June	12	Day Retreat	
June	19	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 100	Swami Dayatmananda
June	26	Patanjali Yoga Sutras 101	Swami Dayatmananda

Day Retreat

With Swami Dayatmananda and Swami Shivarupananda
at the Vedanta Centre, Bourne End, on 12th June
from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm

Note: Children are not allowed at the Retreat.
Please bring (vegetarian) lunch to share.

**There will be no discourses
During the months of July and August.**

'This is the noble truth of pain': Thus, monks, among doctrines unheard before, in me sight and knowledge arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, light arose.

'This noble truth of pain must be comprehended.'

'It has been comprehended.' Thus, monks, among doctrines unheard before, in me sight and knowledge arose, wisdom arose, knowledge arose, light arose.

As long as in these four noble truths my due knowledge and insight with the three sections and twelve divisions was not well purified, even so long, monks, in the world with its gods, Mara, Brahma, its beings with ascetics, brahmins, gods, and men, I had not attained the highest complete enlightenment. This I recognized.

And when, monks, in these four noble truths my due knowledge and insight with its three sections and twelve divisions was well purified, then monks ... I had attained the highest complete enlightenment. This I recognized. Knowledge arose in me, insight arose that the release of my mind is unshakable: this is my last existence; now there is no rebirth."

The Buddha

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"Sir, what is the reason, what is the cause of doing, of committing an evil deed?"

"Greed, hatred, delusion, not paying proper attention and wrongly directed thoughts — these are the causes of doing, of committing an evil deed."

"Then what, sir, is the reason, what is the cause of doing, of committing a beautiful deed?"

"Generosity, love, wisdom, paying attention and rightly directed thought — the causes of doing, of committing a beautiful deed."

The Buddha

