



“Which Religion do you Follow?”

by Srimati Kamala



For many people that is a difficult question to answer. Understandably. Answering with any set denomination may indicate a commitment to some behaviors or beliefs not acceptable to you. Or, your own concept of faith and belief may not coincide with the prevailing practice of what the world sees as an established religion. The term “religion” may seem to identify a static body formed in ages past: “oughts” and “ought nots” arranged by someone else quite outside the course of your life here and now.

Yet you have a concept of your spiritual life, a consciousness that is blessedly and constantly personal to you that has evolved and yet remained with you as an identity with the Real. It is a composite consciousness of Life and Love and Wisdom that you trust—closer to “you” than mother or father, spouse, child or friend. In fact, no matter how close you are to anyone you know in life it IS your identity of choice. What is it?

It is your ideal, your own evolution to become one with God. It is more accessible than any religion; in fact it is other than religion in an objectively definable sense. It is the very Soul of life, your life, and the eternal way of all beings to evolve in consciousness to God. Actually the Way of the Soul’s realization as the path to God is common to all spiritual heritages: “No one comes to the Father but through the Son.” “Only through Atman (the individual self) does one realize Brahman (the Supreme Self).”

Your ideal is not static. It has not been determined by anyone else. It is between you and God, and it always will be. Your ideal will guide your every experience in life, drawing people and events to you by its magnetic strength until you attain oneness with God. It will determine your happiness forming and reforming your character as your mind and heart grow.

What has formed your ideal? From whence has it come?

There are three areas that interact continuously to formulate your ideal, your consciousness of the Supreme. The first is collective, the development of the human mind through generations of awareness. The collective fruits

of human experience have guided the growth of human life through the ages. What one, then a few, humans have discovered you inherit in the domain of knowledge, understanding the principles of God's life, the ways of the universe unfolding. It is not necessary to learn by making the same mistakes others before you have made.

The second is from your personal experience as an embodied human life. From birth all that you perceive and grow to understand serves to shape your mind and heart. Your ancestral and cultural environments as well as your personal relations influence your awareness and desires. The triune modifications of the soul in manifestation (the gunas), your intellect (buddhi), your impressional self (ahamkara) and your mind continuously collaborate with creative and discriminative will and feeling, establishing a composite current of consciousness, an ideal, which becomes "you."

But your ideal is not shaped in life the way clay is molded by a sculptor into form. It is not the product of influences already within your history or grasp. There is a third area dramatically and sublimely available to you from your God-given human potential which is the greatest determinant and power of your ideal: That third area is not fully known to you and yet it reaches into your awareness with its cosmic resourcefulness to inspire your existence everywhere. Its latent promise is the hope and salvation of your life, your soul's abiding assurance of its immortal and infinite being. This assured fulfillment of the identity of your soul with the God of the universe is a latent realization, given by God from your first consciousness as a human being, and it is your birthright and destiny.

I say birthright not in the sense of this one life of yours, but as the entire pilgrimage of many lives in your soul's course to return to its Source and Perfection in the Oneness of God. The soul returns to God as a re-union, a state from which it cannot truly leave but will remember (re-membering itself as the Supreme One.)

"Many a time thou and I were born, O Arjuna. Thou hast forgotten, but I remember them all." Despite our seeming forgetfulness of our oneness with God, the Soul retains and generates its divine power to fulfill its destiny.

The third sublime component of our ideal is called *kundalini*. Kundalini is the ultimate resource to spiritual unfoldment awakened in the conscious process of subjective meditation. It is the unmanifest power of God, drawn to manifestation in your life through your meditative contact with the Cosmic Soul. Its fruits are subjective, leading to experience of the cosmic word of God. You are more than the product of your ancestors, your objective experience and your mental-emotional character. You draw from the vast infinitely powerful and creative unmanifest poten-



tial of your Creator. As God pours his formless Being-Intelligence-Love into all forms from Himself alone, he reveals that Cosmic Self through the enlightenment of your mind.

As the life-love-light of God is drawn increasingly into our minds and hearts we find that our chosen ideal serves us in many, many ways. Here I can elaborate twenty-six benefits of following an ideal of Soul, one with the Cosmic Soul. They are all endowments which become fruitful and multiply in our lives on earth and beyond.

1. Fellowship in cosmic evolution
2. Self-assurance on the path to perfection
3. Strength to bear, to overcome and to transmute limitations
4. Presence of healing
5. Inspiration of Beauty
6. Creative power of Goodness
7. Kinship with all life.
8. Knowledge of every heart's supreme desire and destiny.
9. Freedom from fear
10. Humility
11. Power of Divinity and self-unfoldment
12. Wisdom of self-mastery
13. Abiding calm
14. Clarity of countenance
15. Peaceful heart
16. Charity
17. Realization of sacredness of all life
18. Freedom from attachment, greed, envy
19. Competency in Dharma
20. Clear vocation consistent with self-unfoldment
21. Dynamic, serene mentality
22. Universally responsive heart
23. Joyousness in self-discovery
24. Infinite treasures of love
25. Infinite powers of transcendence
26. Eternal enlightenment

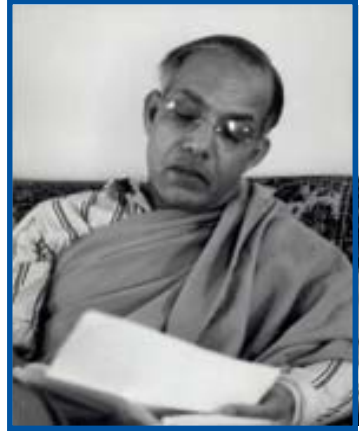
There are not words to entirely describe our ideal, but we elaborate its essential features in all we do in life, all we give, all our soul's power to put forth. Be not afraid to aspire to large ideals. They are the fuel of progress. But strive constantly! Coasting can only take one downhill. Be patient and ever vigilant. Every small step is necessary and important and there are untold digressions to steal our hearts away. Our ideal is our truest mate, our soul-companion, however. It will lead us through every obstacle and storm, darkness or sorrow into the dawn of consciousness, bliss and immortality.



Inner Peace



(The following is a radio broadcast that Swami Premananda made on December 13, 1951)



[For about two decades after 1948, Swami Premananda delivered radio broadcasts over local Washington station WASH-FM. The following is the text of a broadcast on December 13, 1951. Swami opened every broadcast with the greeting that appears in the first paragraph of the text below]

“My fellow devotees of God and truth. With adoration to God and prayer for his divine benediction and grace upon us all, I greet you in the consciousness of our spiritual oneness. I speak to you from the heart of the nation’s capital. Our subject for this evening is Inner Peace.”

Peace is the supreme desire of the human heart. All our aspirations and efforts seek their completion in peace. In peace we gain the inner assurance that we have reached the ultimate success of our endeavors and the fulfillment of our hopes. In subjective quest or in objective pursuit peace is the substantiation of absolute realization and the evidence of final achievement.

Peace is not a psychological abstraction. It is a spiritual reality. It is a reality that is more tangible than the objects of sense perception. It is discerned by the mind, felt in the heart and realized in the soul. It is creative in its potency and dynamic in its effect. It is not conditioned by objectivity. Peace is inexhaustible in its source and illimitable in its immanence.

Peace is spiritual because it has its origin in the soul. It is a constituent quality of the soul. It is a divine attribute enshrined within the soul of every individual. Peace emerges from within the soul. Like the cool water of the mountain peace comes forth from the hidden depth of the soul and fills the entire being with the serene contentment of all pervasive joy.

Peace is a spiritual force. It is uplifting and transforming. It is a great healing power. The effect of peace upon our body, mind and heart is profound and enduring. Our nervous system is the intricate channel through which we give objective expression to our thought, volition and feeling. In order

that we may be able to think with clear vision and wise comprehension, act progressively with constructive results and bring forth the tender and beneficent qualities of our emotion, our nervous system must function in serenity, harmony and vitality.

Our nervous system also furnishes us with the means whereby we may receive subjective enlightenment. The region between the coccygeal center at the base of the spine and the pineal gland in the brain is the mystic path that leads to the attainment of the supreme spiritual realization. The scientific technique of inner revelation is known to the initiate. Truly our body is the temple of the mind, the shrine of the heart and the sanctuary of the soul.

A body that is nourished by inner peace is not afflicted by the negative consequences of the blighting experiences of life. It retains its equipoise, vigor and steadiness amidst all adversities.

The wholesome effect of surroundings wherein peace abounds is a fact of common experience. In the subjective environment of inner peace, mind gathers strength and functions in tranquility and all the powers of mind act in perfect concord. An indomitable courage inspires the mind that abides in the realm of inner peace and an inexplicable power of dynamic calmness stimulates it with self-assured equanimity.

Ineffable joy overfills the heart when the inner peace is attained. Abiding happiness is the fruit of inner peace. Like the entrancing fragrance of a sweet blossom all the tender qualities of love and devotion exalt with ecstasy the heart that is graced with inner peace. Peace orientates our whole nervous system to that state of poise and composure at which all our physical, mental and spiritual faculties can be manifested fully and with joy. Inner peace vitalizes the nervous system, brings tranquility of the mind and establishes joy in the heart. In peace is realized the bliss of soul.

Peace is our spiritual heritage. It is the eternal gift of God to our souls. It is our imperishable treasure. Each and all of us can attain peace because peace is permanently within us. We may be denied the material possessions. Even our senses may fail us but nothing can deprive us of our innate peace. The abundance of peace is ever present within our innermost self. We require nothing external to realize peace. Peace is self-revealing. Like the star that shines by its own light peace is self-effulgent in its bliss. We mistakenly seek peace through objective sources. It is inner peace that makes our possessions the source of happiness. All luxury of wealth and grandeur becomes dreary and barren to a heart that is devoid of inner peace. Peace is realized through subjective revelation. Peace comes from soul and it is enjoyed in the soul. We

are the eternal soul and we carry within us the fountain of everlasting peace.

Peace is the completion of joy. It is the fullness of happiness. It is bliss in its transcendental perfection. Peace is the ultimate goal of life because in it soul reveals God and life attains to its spiritual glory in oneness with the supreme Spirit.

But how can we attain peace? Wherein lies the secret of realizing this subjective happiness that exhilarates our entire being and transforms our life into joyous existence.

Peace is a spiritual reality; therefore it can be attained only by living in accordance with the laws of spirituality. There is no other way to realize peace except by the observance of the spiritual principles in our every day life. Wisdom, self-enlightenment, comprehensive knowledge of the universe around us and the liberation of consciousness unfold inner peace. Cultivation of love, kindness, sympathy, selflessness and other noble qualities within ourselves ensures abiding joy in our hearts. Charity, altruism, benevolence—these and other deeds of virtue fill our life with enduring happiness.

Peace is realized in inner stability. The root cause of unhappiness is subjective insecurity. Life must be established on a permanent foundation so that we may live in peace. And nothing can provide permanent foundation for our life except spiritual principles. Man is a spiritual being therefore spiritual principles alone can furnish him with a foundation that remains secure amidst the buffeting experiences of life. But can we find stability? Meditation and prayer constitute the way. Meditation liberates our consciousness in the infinity of the consciousness of the transcendental Spirit. Prayer unites our soul with God. Through daily meditation and prayer we gain inner stability and attain peace. I know from personal experience that by the application of spiritual principles in every expression of self-manifestation and by daily meditation and prayer inner peace can be attained. We have come from God. We live in the universe that is of God. In God is peace. Then let us live in the conscious realization of our inseparable oneness with God that our sojourn on earth may be blessed with inner peace. With the realization of blessed peace I offer this Prayer from my book entitled *Prayers of Self Realization....*

O Thou Prince of Peace
Bring peace into my heart;
Fill my heart with thy blessed peace.
When the unhappiness of the world rends me,
Come thou into my heart
And establish thy kingdom of peace within me,
O Thou Prince of Peace.
Peace, peace I want;
Thy peace I want, O Lord.
Bless me with thy peace.
My heart longs for thy peace,
But in ignorance I strive to find it
In thy world, without thee
O Thou Prince of Peace.
Dispel my ignorance
With the wisdom of thy universal presence,
And let me find thy peace in thy world with thee,
O thou Prince of Peace.

Prayer No. CXXXIX

Peace

It is sweet rest in music,
And pause in sacred art;
The silence between speaking;
It is the calm of heart.

It is beauty never seen,
And love that stands alone,
It is song that lives un-sung,
And knowledge never known.

It is death between two lives,
And lull between two storms,
The void whence rose creation,
And that where it returns.

To it the tear-drop goes,
To spread the smiling form.
It is the Goal of Life,
And Peace—its only home!

— Swami Vivekananda



Excerpts from The Religion of the Forest by Rabindranath Tagore

We stand before this great world. The truth of our life depends upon our attitude of mind towards it—an attitude which is formed by our habit of dealing with it according to the special circumstances of our surroundings and our temperaments. It guides our attempts to establish relations with the universe either by conquest or by union, either through the cultivation of power or through that of sympathy. And thus, in our realization of the truth of existence, we put our emphasis either upon the principle of dualism or upon the principle of unity.

The Indian sages have held in the *Upanishads* that the emancipation of our soul lies in its realizing the ultimate truth of unity. They said:

*Know all that moves in this moving world as enveloped by God;
and find enjoyment through renunciation, not through greed of
possession.*

The meaning of this is, that, when we know the multiplicity of things as the final truth, we try to augment ourselves by the external possession of them; but, when we know the Infinite Soul as the final truth, then through our union with it we realize the joy of our soul. Therefore it has been said of those who have attained their fulfillment,—“they enter into all things.” Their perfect relation with this world is the relation of union.

This ideal of perfection preached by the forest dwellers of ancient India runs through the heart of our classical literature (*i.e.*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*) and still dominates our mind. The legends related in our epics cluster under the forest shade bearing all through their narrative the message of the forest dwellers. Our two greatest classical dramas find their background in scenes of the forest hermitage, which are permeated by the association of these sages.

In the level tracts of India men found no barrier between their lives and the grand life that permeates the universe. The forest entered into a close living relationship with their work and leisure, with their daily necessities and

contemplations. They could not think of other surroundings as separate or inimical. So the view of the truth, which these men found, did not make manifest the difference, but rather the unity of all things. They uttered their faith in these words: "All that vibrates with life, having come out from life." When we know this world as alien to us, then its mechanical aspect takes prominence in our mind; and then we set up our machines and our methods to deal with it and make as much profit as our knowledge of its mechanism allows us to do. This view of things does not play us false, for the machine has its place in this world. And not only this material universe, but human beings also, may be used as machines and made to yield powerful results. This aspect of truth cannot be ignored; it has to be known and mastered.

The view of this world which India has taken is summed up in one compound Sanskrit word, *Sacchidananda*. The meaning is that Reality, which is essentially one, has three phases. The first is *Sat*; it is the simple fact that things are, the fact which relates us to all things through the relationship of common existence. The second is *Chit*; it is the fact that we know which relates us to all things through the relationship of knowledge. The third is *Ananda*: it is the fact that we enjoy, which unites us with all things through the relationship of love.

According to the true Indian view, our consciousness of the world, merely as the sum total of things that exist, and as governed by laws, is imperfect. But it is perfect when our consciousness realizes all things as spiritually one with it, and therefore capable of giving us joy. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realizing our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union.

Humanity, for ages, has been busy with the one great creation of spiritual life. Its best wisdom, its discipline, its literature and art, all the teachings and self-sacrifice of its noblest teachers, have been for this. But the harmony of contrary forces, which give their rhythm to all creation, has not yet been perfected by man in his civilization, and the Creator in him is baffled over and over again....And one truth of which man must be reminded is that the power which accomplishes the miracle of creation, by bringing conflicting forces into the harmony of the One, is no passion, but a love which accepts the bonds of self-control from the joy of its own immensity—a love whose sacrifice is the manifestation of its endless wealth within itself.

Shishu Bhavan

The Sunday School of the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism

Our theme in Sunday School this year is “My Life Is My Message,” a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi. We interpret the meaning of this message in two ways. It refers to how others perceive the lives of great souls and our lives. Secondly, it refers to the wisdom from within that great souls and we, ourselves, have received as we practice prayer, contemplation and subjective meditation. Gandhi shared in his writings the reasons for his work, his choices, his actions, his thoughts, and his inspiration. We ask, “What events in Gandhi’s life show his message to us?” In his writings Gandhi shares how he strove for perfection. He attempted to master his feelings, and to see the divinity in himself and others. As Gandhi brought himself nearer to God, he lost his fears and his anger.

In Sunday School, we look at Gandhi’s life, Jesus’ life, Martin Luther King’s life, and the lives of other great souls, to help us answer the question, “What is my spiritual purpose in life?” We learn that our everyday life affords many opportunities to practice spiritual qualities, such as gratitude, charity, and love. The Sunday School teachers gratefully dedicate the Sunday School hour each week to the message of living the life of soul, and to the children with whom we share the message.





ABU YAZID AL-BISTAMI

(c. 874)

The authorities crucified the Sufi ancestor al-Hallaj for declaring “I am the Truth.” They were looking at the stars through the wrong end of a telescope. Hallaj let out a loud laugh and died. Any of his descendants would have done the same, especially Abu Yazid, the prince of Sufis. Does a diamond let itself be cut by glass? Does a pearl refuse to glisten when cast before swine?

“Nothing is better for a man than to be without anything, having no asceticism, no theory, no practice. When he is without everything, he is with everything.”



“For a long time I used to circumambulate the Kaaba. When I attained God, I saw the Kaaba circumambulating me.”



“I sloughed off my self as a snake sloughs off its skin. Then I looked into myself and saw that I am He.



“Anyone whose reward from God is deferred until tomorrow has not truly worshipped Him today.”



“Be in a realm where neither good nor evil exists. Both of them belong to the world of created beings; in the presence of Unity there is neither command nor prohibition.”

From: *The Enlightened Mind* by Stephen Mitchell



THE LIBRARY OF INDIA

One of the more interesting anthologies in the Library of India that draws eclectically from the world's great mystical traditions is Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945). Huxley (1894-1963) was an English novelist, essayist, and poet whose best known work is perhaps *Brave New World* (1932), which presents the nightmare of a mechanized, emotionless society of the future. Beginning in the late 1930s, Huxley took an increasing interest in Hindu philosophy and a number of his later works reflect this orientation, particularly *The Perennial Philosophy*.

In *The Perennial Philosophy* Huxley taps into the mystical realizations of the great saints and sages of the world whose enlightened perceptions he distinguishes from the speculations of professional philosophers and theologians whose writings do not generally reflect direct apprehension of the divine Reality. The Reality that Huxley seeks to identify is one that is "substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being...."

Huxley states that as the quality of one's being changes, so does the nature and amount of one's knowledge also change. It is, therefore, from the great saints and sages who have conducted trials and experiments into the deepest nature of their beings that come the most profound expressions of the divine Reality that pervades the universe and lives of human beings. The origins of this sublime wisdom may be found in rudimentary form in the traditions of primitive people and in every religion of the world.

The anthology groups its selections in some twenty-seven chapters devoted to the most significant, beautiful, and memorable insights that emerge from a study of the mystical traditions. Huxley also adds his own commentary to illustrate and connect and, where necessary, to elucidate. The very first chapter will be familiar in its title "That Art Thou." Other chapters treat such themes as personality, sanctity, and Divine incarnation; God in the world; charity; mortification, nonattachment, and right livelihood; truth; religion and temperament; Self-knowledge; grace and free will; good and evil; time and eternity; salvation, deliverance, and enlightenment; immortality and survival; silence; prayer; suffering; faith; idolatry; emotionalism; the miraculous; ritual, symbol, and sacrament; spiritual exercises; and contemplation, action, and social utility.

Borrowing privileges from the Library of India are available to anyone for a modest lifetime membership of \$5. The Library is open from 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and 12 noon – 12:30 p.m. each Sunday. Assistance is available to readers during those times.



Kathas (Teaching Stories)

THOU ART THAT

When Svetaketu was twelve years old he was sent to a teacher, with whom he studied until he was twenty-four. After learning all the Vedas, he returned home full of conceit in the belief that he was consummately well educated, and very censorious.

His father said to him, "Svetaketu, my child, you who are so full of your learning and so censorious, have you asked for that knowledge by which we hear the unhearable, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived and know what cannot be known?"

"What is that knowledge, sir?" asked Svetaketu.

His father replied, "As by knowing one lump of clay all that is made of clay is known, the difference being only in name, but the truth being that all is clay—so, my child, is that knowledge, knowing which we know all."

"But surely these venerable teachers of mine are ignorant of this knowledge; for if they possessed it they would have imparted it to me. Do you, sir, therefore give me that knowledge."

"So be it," said the father...And he said, "Bring me a fruit of the nyagrodha tree."

"Here is one, sir."

"Break it."

"It is broken, sir."

"What do you see there?"

"Some seeds, sir, exceedingly small."

"Break one of these."

"It is broken, sir."

"What do you see there?"

"Nothing at all."



The father said, "My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there—in that very essence stands the being of the huge nyagrodha tree. In

that which is the subtle essence all that exists has its self. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou, Svetaketu, art That.”

“Pray, sir,” said the son, “tell me more.”

“Be it so, my child,” the father replied; and he said, “Place this salt in water, and come to me tomorrow morning.”

The son did as he was told.

Next morning the father said, “Bring me the salt which you put in the water.”

The son looked for it, but could not find it; for the salt, of course, had dissolved.

The father said, “Taste some of the water from the surface of the vessel. How is it?”

“Salty.”

“Taste some from the middle. How is it?”

“Salty.”

“Taste some from the bottom. How is it?”

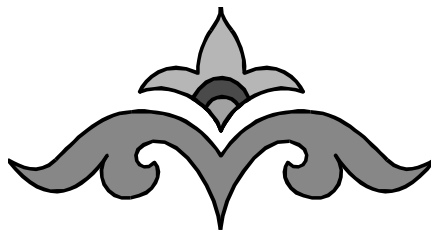
“Salty.”

The father said, “Throw the water away and then come back to me again.”

The son did so; but the salt was not lost, for salt exists forever.

Then the father said, “Here likewise in this body of yours, my son, you do not perceive the True; but there in fact it is. In that which is the subtle essence, all that exists has its self. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou, Svetaketu, art That.””

From the *Chandogya Upanishad* in A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* 3-4 (1945).



CHINTAMINI (Thought Jewels)

Flowers do not force their way with great strife.
Flowers open to perfection slowly in the sun.
Don't be in a hurry about spiritual matters,
Go step by step and be very sure....

—White Eagle

Peace is not a knowledge, peace is not a power, peace is not a happiness; yet peace is all these. Besides, peace is productive of happiness, peace inspires one with knowledge of the seen and unseen, and in peace is to be found the Divine Presence.

—Hazrat Inayat Khan

These sayings of mine are really a prayer to God,
words to lure the breath of that sweet One.
If you seek an answer from God,
how then can you fail to pray?
How can you be silent, knowing He always replies to
your "O Lord?" with "I am here."
His answer is silent but you can feel it from head to toe.

—Jelaluddin Rumi

When the righteous man searches for the nature of all things, he makes his own admirable discovery: that everything is God's grace. Every being in the world, and the world itself, manifests the blessings and generosity of God.

—Philo

There is only one thing that remains to us that cannot be taken away: to act with courage and dignity and to stick to the ideals that have given a meaning to life.

—Jawaharlal Nehru