

CONTENTS

Articles Name	Page No.
1. Healing Despair	3
2. Sterling Performance For Your Eyes Only	7
3. Programme Yourself For Mind Management	9
4. Miraculous Power Of Grace Light	11
5. No Limit To Human Greed	13
6. Experience Nature To Feel That Oneness	18
7. Discover Your Identity Only To Lose It	20
8. Live Outside The Box	22
9. Keep It Simple And You'll Be Happy	26
10. Guru Granth Sahib: The Living Guru	28
11. We Are An Endless Source Of Divine Amusement	30
12. Making Music As A Spiritual Sadhana	32
13. Overcome All Troubles, Stay Truly Detached	34

Articles Name	Pages No.
14. Forgive to Get Forgiveness	36
15. Happy And You Know It?	37
16. Our Uncaring Society	40
17. Stop And Touch Deeply The Present Moment	44
18. You Can Take Charge Of Your Life	46
19. The Retired As A Rich Source Of Insight	48
20. Accept Life As It Comes	50
21. Path to Healing	53
22. Divinise Your Emotions To Experience Oneness	56
23. Guru Nanak Dev's Japuji Sahib	58
24. Give Thanks: Appreciate The Here And Now	60
25. Pingalwara Diary	62

Healing Despair

The accelerated pace of change in today's world can be overwhelming The Way to cope lies in our own hearts, says MASHUBI ROCHELL

The Times of India, October 5, 2008

Today's world is reaching a crisis point and while many of our social structures are still intact for this moment, there will come a time when major changes will need to occur in the way we are living our lives on a day to day basis. This bold statement is shared not to create alarm and fear, but rather to awaken a sense of responsibility within all of us. This awakening has already begun and most people are now aware that our current way of life is causing harm to the Earth. The question now for many of us is... what can I do? Our lives are already chockfull of challenges. Just managing the day-to-day realities of life is for many of us a full time job. The growing complexities of life that have developed from the accelerated pace of change can at times feel overwhelming. We hear news reports of natural disasters, wars, poverty, disease, environmental pollution and a seemingly endless number of new challenges... the amount of overwhelm can cause us to numb ourselves and shut ourselves off from the realities that are happening around us.

How then do we help our struggling world? What can we do? The answer to this question lies within our hearts and is much bigger and more important than we may realize. There are certain obvious things that we can do on a daily basis to conserve energy, recycle and be more environmentally conscious. Thankfully, more and more people are stepping up and creating change in their daily habits in this way. This

helps a great deal towards beginning to reverse the cycle of abuse to the Earth and lack of respect for her resources. There is a large change that needs to happen however, that is at the root of the world's problems. It is one that we all participate in unless we choose not to and this has to do with our consciousness. Consciousness ? How can that affect the world situation? You may be wondering just how changing our awareness can affect things. Isn't that in the realm of the metaphysical, for people who wear robes and chant and do strange spiritual practices? Our consciousness affects the world we live in, whether we are aware of it or not. The thoughts and energy we put into the world have an impact and our consciousness creates the actions and choices we make on a daily basis.

Just how did the world get into the state that it is in now? It all started with where our collective consciousness has been. Humanity has been involved in developing our individuality and in experiencing the world of physical reality without much attention to the larger whole of which we are a part. This was a necessary step in our evolution but now times have changed. We've gone as far as we can in developing our individuality and unique identities. Unfortunately, as we've explored our individuality, we have made choices that do not take into account the affects that our actions have on the large whole. We've chosen to use energy resources that are finite and cause pollution. We've chosen farming practices that remove essential ingredients from our food, in favour of mass production. The lack of nutrients from our food has increased health problems but our healing practices have attempted to fix the symptoms without addressing the root causes. We've chosen to pursue individual wealth that brings

prosperity to us and our families but leaves the majority of humankind suffering in poverty and starvation.

All of these challenges we now face started with a consciousness that had forgotten our essential connections to the larger whole of life. We are divine beings that entered into physical reality in order to learn and now at this crucial time in the evolution to humanity, we are beginning to learn how to reconnect with ourselves, with each other and with the Earth. We are beginning to learn that our thoughts create our reality and that what we think and feel matters as much as what we do. One of the great spiritual truths shared with us by all spiritual teachers and religions is that we are all connected. We are a part of God, who lives within us. In the same way, all others in our world are equally a part of God and are an essential part of the essential whole of life. Therefore, if we harm another, we ultimately harm ourselves. If we prevent others from receiving what they need, we limit ourselves because we are constricting the free flow of God's light and life force.

These concepts are not new but they have been mostly in the background of human consciousness, which up until this point was focused on pursuing more individualized goals. Times have changed and now the only solution that can be found to the problems of today's world is to work together and to reconnect ourselves with our divine eternal nature as souls. When we are no longer separated from the divine source of all light and love, our relationship with ourselves and with other changes. We are no longer alone, seeking to get our needs met and competing with others who all are trying to get their needs met. Instead, we go within to connect with our hearts to understand who we are and what

our purpose is for being on the Earth at this time. Each soul is present on the Earth for a reason and when we discover and fulfill that purpose, our life makes a positive contribution to the world and in the process our own needs are met and fulfilled.

When we realize that our consciousness matters and has an impact on others, we take responsibility for our thoughts as well as our actions. Are you holding a grudge towards someone in your life? With an awakened consciousness, you realize that holding on to this grudge is creating a blockage in the free flow of light and love in your life and you take steps to heal this pain you are carrying. You may not be able to let go of the pain right away but your intention to let go, rather than to hold on, opens up the energy of healing. In the larger network of human consciousness, you've just created a small pocket of light and love, which enters the atmosphere of the Earth and strengthens the love and light present in the world. This small pocket is like a candle, which lights other candles that it comes into contact with.

On the other hand, if you choose to hold on to your anger, blame, judgment and so on, the emotions you are holding on to contribute to the cloud of negative energy that is present around the Earth during this time. You feel entitled to be angry and refuse to budge. You may even act out your feelings and create disharmony or even harm to others. In this way your choice contributes to this very same energy pattern which is prevalent in so many of today's world Conflicts and wars. Anger, blame, judgment, entitlement and the unwillingness to compromise are all fed by the daily thoughts and feelings of others.

(Mashubi Rochell is a spiritual counselor based in the US)

Sterling Performance For Your Eyes Only

E-mail forward

Bob Richards, the former pole-vault champion, shares a moving story about a skinny young boy who loved football. Practice after practice, he eagerly gave everything he had. But being half the size of the other boys, he got absolutely nowhere. At all the games, this hopeful athlete sat on the bench and hardly ever got to play.

The determined young man decided to hang in their...who knows, perhaps he'd get to play when he became a senior. All through high school he never missed a practice nor game but remained a bench-warmer all four years. His faithful father was always in the stands, always with words of encouragement for him.

When the young man went to college, he decided to try out for the football team as a "walk-on". Everyone was sure he could never make the cut, but he did. The coach admitted that he kept him on the roster because he always puts his heart and soul to every practice and at the same time, provided the other members with the spirit and hustle they badly needed. The news that he had survived the cut thrilled him so much that he rushed to the nearest phone and called his father. His father shared his excitement and was sent season tickets for all the college games.

The persistent young athlete never missed practice during his four years at college, but he never got to play in a game. It was the end of his senior football season and as he trotted onto the practice field shortly before the big playoff game, the coach met him with a telegram.

The young man read the telegram and he become deathly silent. Swallowing hard, he mumbled to the coach, "My father died this morning. Is it all right if I miss practice today?" The coach put his arm gently around his shoulder and said, "Take the rest of the week off, son. And don't even

plan to come back to the game on Saturday."

Saturday arrived and the game was not going well. In the third quarter, when the team was 10 points behind, a young man quietly slipped into the empty locker room and put on his football gear. As he ran onto the sidelines, the coach and his players were astounded to see their faithful teammate back so soon. "Coach, please let me play. I've just got to play today," said the young man. There was no way the coach wanted his worst player in this close playoff game. But the young man persisted and finally feeling sorry for the kid, the coach gave in. "All right" he said. "You can go in."

Before long, the coach, the players and everyone in the stands could not believe their eyes. This little unknown, who had never played before was doing everything right. In the closing seconds of the game, this kid intercepted a pass and ran all the way for the winning touchdown.

The fans broke loose. His teammates hoisted him onto their shoulders. Such cheering you never heard. Finally, after the stands had emptied and the team had showered and left the locker room the coach came to him and said, "Kid, I can't believe it. You were fantastic! Tell me what got into you? How did you do it?"

He looked at the coach, with tears in his eyes and said, "Well, you knew my dad died but did you know that my dad was blind?" The young man swallowed hard and forced a smile, "dad came to all my games, but today was the first time he could see me play and wanted to show him I could do it!"

Like the athlete's father, God is always there cheering for us. He's always reminding us to go on. He's even offering up His hand for He knows what it best and is willing to give us what we need and not simply what we want. God has never missed a single game. What a joy to know that life is meaningful if lived for the Highest. Live for Him for he's watching us in the game of life

(The Times of India, November 10, 2008)

Programme yourself For Mind Management

Discourse: Swami Sukhabodhananda

In every difficulty there is an opportunity. Life is really a choice...to be eitherwise, not wise or otherwise.

A wise king wanted advice about what to do when he faced a real crisis in his life. He met his master. The master gave him a locket and told him to open it only when he was in difficulty. After some years he was defeated in a battle and he lost his kingdom.

He was worried and was hiding in a cave. He suddenly remembered what his master had told him. He opened the locket and there he found a note, "even this will pass" and a second note which said, "If one door closes another door opens". He gained strength from this piece of advice and after a month won his kingdom back. He went to his master and thanked him and asked a question: "Why does the door close?" "The door is always open, your mind is closed," replied the master.

There are two types of worlds we live in. The visible world and the invisible world. The outer world and the inner world. Our body is in this outer space but our mind is in another space. Just as our body gets dirty if one is in a dirty space our inner self, our mind, gets dirty if we visit dirty areas in the inner world.

If one broods over worry, dislike, anger, jealousy, then our mind is polluted. With such pollution you find the outer world a pain. The real pain is when our mind lives in negativity.

What type of world are we in? This is what one should

really be aware of. Where are we placed psychologically is what we have to watch for. One believes that the outer world is the real world and not the inner world of mind.

For example, you are very happy that you are invited to a party where celebrities are attending. Then you see them beautifully dressed. You may feel bad that you are not as rich as they are, you may feel bad that you are not a celebrity. Now tell me, what has impacted your life directly...the outer world or the inner world. The inner world, it is not? So watch that very carefully in your life.

When you don't watch the mind, what happens? A negative system is created. When you dwell on the negative, your pattern of anger, your pattern of justifying, your pattern of jealousy creates a negative system. Then the negative system takes over and you lose control of yourself.

It is as though you have installed a programme in your computer and when you open the computer, that particular programme opens up. Then you get angry with the computer. What you have to realize is that it is not the computer that is the source of the problem, it is how you have programmed it, is the problem.

Each time you are negative, watch how you have programmed yourself.

When the world outside is singing and dancing, in the morning sunrise and evening sunset, in the twinkling of the stars and the dancing wind, you feel negative and sick... for it is like mixing bread with mud. Hence don't create a negative system around you.

(The Times of India, November 17, 2008)

Miraculous Power of Grace Light

Discourse: Dattatreya Siva Baba

In the earth's long history, we have never known a time when human beings experienced freedom. Embodiment has always been a constricting weight on the otherwise free spirit. Imprisoned in the body, the spirit loses knowledge of its own grandeur. Rather than identifying with its inherent divinity, the embodied spirit instead identifies with the physical body and the mind, both of which keep it in bondage.

The body, while a source of pleasure, is also a source of physical discomfort, disease, ageing and eventually death. The mind is a victim to countless thoughts and is conditioned by limiting beliefs, emotions and behaviours. Pleasures attained through the senses, although soothing, are temporary.

It's hard to deny these fundamental aspects of the human experience and even harder still to deny their impact on us collectively. Currently materialism has become the defining factor of our civilization. Material sciences, material consumption and material politics dominate the world today. Love has virtually disappeared from the human heart individually and collectively.

What is the solution? We need to embody more light. Embracing more light will allow us to evolve beyond our current limited consciousness and to recognize ourselves as unlimited spirits. Both in body and mind we have to change. The limited intelligence that we acquire through human sciences is simply going to take too long to lead us to any meaningful change or freedom. Our only real hope is to look deeper for the essential divinity within us, evolving the human body-mind to be aware of greater levels of light. Awakening compassion, love and divine intelligence on a collective scale is the only way to find permanent solutions

to our problems. This is the phenomenon of Grace Light.

Grace Light is the light of God. It is invisible to the human eye but visible to sages, prophets and messiahs of various faiths. Grace Light has incredible energy to know and do everything. Grace Light is the self-effulgent light of the Divine within us—compassionate and intelligent. Grace Light is not any physical light. It is like the explosive energy within the atom. It is an inner light more brilliant and powerful than lightening and can strike you at any time. It is the power of God.

Does Grace Light belong to a particular god or a particular religion? No, Grace Light belongs to the nameless, formless Universal God. The God of Grace Light is the same as the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American and Mayan Gods, as well as the Gods of all other religions. Each religion conceives of God through the lens of its traditions and cultures. Most traditions associate God with light. Grace Light will ignite the heart of humanity and create a global shift into love.

Once it is transmitted, Grace Light will do its work in a miraculous way. It will transform body, mind and the soul. On the physical level, there will be significant healing and enhancement of energy levels. The mind will receive greater intelligence as dormant parts of the brain awaken. Old behaviours, emotions and limiting beliefs will start to dissolve, giving you access to deeper inner wisdom. The most important impact of grace light, however, is its ability to transform the heart. The blooming of the heart will result in loving relationship with everyone you come in contact with. Heart sorrow will miraculously dissolve and there will be an enhanced enthusiasm about the world and life in general.

Dattatreya Siva Baba is from the Tamil Siddha lineage of southern India.

(The Times of India, 24 November, 2008.)

No Limit To Human Greed

The common man is at the receiving end, says

Justice P.B. Sawant (retd.)

The least that is expected of the man of the present generation is that he endeavours to create an alternative life-protecting and promoting system.

Amidst the whirlwind of globalization, liberalization and privatization, the main casualty is the man. Not that he was ever at the centre-stage after the Industrial Revolution with capitalism in the saddle. But he had still the power to resist its inhuman onslaught through unionization.

Globalization, which is the present incarnation of capitalism and its end-product, imperialism, had snuffed out even that little opposition with the national government obeying the dictates of organizations like the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO dominated by the US.

In the process, the nation has lost both its freedom of action and sovereignty. At present capitalism is in its usual systemic vortex, this time probably the biggest, on account of over-shooting by the players in the game, propelled by endemic greed. The common man, who has no part to play in the game is, of course, as usual at the receiving end and is most severely hit by it.

The need for an economic system, which is human-centric and not profit centric for the few, has been felt for long, independently of capitalism and its disastrous vicissitudes. Any national economic system should have the satisfaction of fulfilling at least the primary needs of every man/woman in society such as adequate means of livelihood, shelter, a decent environment to live and work, education, healthcare, recreational facilities and leisure.

These are the minimum basic rights of economic human rights which every individual must have if he/she is to live a life of dignity. Their content may differ from society to society but these should first be applied to meet the human rights of every citizen for societal advancement.

The fruits of development have to be distributed

equally among all till a desired level of the standard of living is attained and thereafter according to the needs of the duties to be discharged by the respective members of society.

Societal development will involve the utilization of natural resources such as land, air, water, flora, fauna and minerals. It may also involve the exploitation of non-renewable resource of the earth. Man has to exercise utmost restraint while exploiting nature, for the destruction and pollution of the environment is bound to have its repercussions on all life, plant or animal.

Man has to live in cooperation and not in confrontation with nature in his own interest. He must bridle his greed and first decide the limit of his consumption and possessions. His happiness does not depend upon his possessions but on his being in peace with his inner-self and with the outer surroundings.

The message of simple living and high thinking—the pursuit of highest things in life—is also extremely important in another vital context. The environment, which is threatened by destruction and pollution on account of consumerism deliberately propelled by capitalism and growth of population, can only be saved by keeping our needs both simple and minimal and consuming only the minimum necessary to live a healthy life.

The philosopher-historian Prof. Arnold Toynbee has recommended to the world the same ancient Indian way of life precisely on account of the impending danger to the environment and human life posed by consumerism.

When Karl Marx stated that man has to choose between “to be or to have”, he was thinking of nothing else. Mere possessions do not make a man happy. Happiness does not flow from things external. It is an inner feeling generated by being at peace with oneself. The pursuit of acquisition of unnecessary things itself deprives a person of his/her peace of mind and when such things are acquired, he/she loses whatever peace he/she has while protecting and preserving them. The population-sustainable capacity of the earth is not

yet ascertained. But it is not necessary for man to wait till the capacity is exhausted. The quantum of consumption is already increasing with the growth of population and that is destroying nature in its own way. The creation and the consumption of the necessities have to go hand in hand and for that purpose, the balance has at all time to be maintained between the hands that work and the mouths to be fed.

There has, therefore, to be planning of population to maintain the balance. However, to determine the minimum to be produced two maxima have to be fixed. The nature of items to be consumed and their maximum number and the maximum population which should inhabit this planet.

This exercise raises the question: how much consumption is enough or how much is too much? In other words, when do you call a halt to development and say “thus far and no further”? The capitalist economic system is the least satisfactory apparatus qualified to answer this question. A planned economy, where population, production and consumption are planned can guide us in the matter.

The primary economy needs of man are ascertainable. The nature of goods and services required by members and their quantum can be estimated. The mode by which they may be produced at the lowest cost in terms of resources and human labour may not be difficult to be devised even if by trial and error. The development of technology has to be in the direction of lesser expenditure of natural resources and saving them for future generations.

There is no need to save or substitute human labour except where the tasks are hazardous, unhygienic, formidable, challenging and beyond the capacity of human beings. Every member must have work to perform—manual or intellectual—for it is in work that man finds his ultimate fulfilment and salvation.

An idle man is a nuisance and menace to society. The surplus, time, energy and means available with men and women, if not occupied in a creative and fruitful endeavour, are bound to turn to the destructive, unhealthy and perverse

activities. Peace, stability and smooth functioning of society will always be in danger. There are only a few who use their surplus resources creatively and beneficially for society. This is also our historical experience. The empires have risen and fallen on account of the sloth, vices, depravities and licentiousness on the part of the affluent classes.

The capitalist system is bound to promote development in the direction of more and more efficient technology and to reduce the cost of human labour in the production and distribution of goods and services, since its aim is to increase the profit margin. It is not evolved to serve society but to serve the few capitalists to become more and more rich.

In its attempt to enrich the few, however, it has to face its periodic nemesis—recession and depression on account of the production over-running the demand. It takes a long time to revive the economy, the duration depending upon the severity of depression. But the so-called revival is called upon to meet the same fate of depression again after sometime, by the inevitable consequences of the endemic phenomenon of over-supply and under-demand.

The evils of the capitalist economy are not confined to the recurrence of the trade cycles. To ensure and expand the market, it has to encourage consumerism and produce unnecessary goods and services destroying the precious natural resources and polluting the environment. Consumerism has thus its harmful effects on the individual and society.

Conspicuous consumption, greed, covetousness the false sense of pride of possessions, the chase for the so-called riches and competitive luxuries all follow as its natural consequences, keeping the individual constantly on toe and making him restless. Society is corrupted by struggles between the individuals to outsmart the other to be “richer” by hook or by crook. No means are unfair to win the race. The aim is to reach the top of the pyramid of material “prosperity” by any means.

The entire ethical system is topsyturvy. The usual

values stand replaced by new norms based on considerations of profit and loss. Everything is measured in terms of money and its material utility. The higher values the fine arts, the elegance and aestheticism are all relegated to the background and their place is taken by superficial and pompous nothings.

Society soon becomes a cesspool of vices and of unethical, unlawful and openly defiant criminal conduct and roguery and lawlessness become the order of the day. All sections are effected by the falling standards set in motion by the dominant classes and their pattern of behavior becomes the fashion of the day. These consequences are inevitable in an acquisitive society.

The new economic system is necessary for this country as also for the humankind. It may appear to be an attempt to swim against the tide. But if humanity is to be saved from the ineluctable catastrophe of the present system, we have no alternative.

The earth is a home not only for this generation of humans and all other life, but for generations to come. Nature has bestowed man with superior intelligence to contrive to live a happy life and not to drive this planet and the life on it to their extinction.

Intelligence does not necessarily endow a being with rationality and wisdom. The present generation of human beings is not the most intelligent or most wise. That man is far from being rational is proved by his history so far.

Were it not for his lack of wisdom, we would not have had a stockpile of mas destructive weapons, global warming, acid rain, green house effect and the pollution of air, water, soil and worse, the economic system which generates them. An alternative system is, therefore, a must. The least that is expected of the man of the present generation is that he endeavours to create an alternative life-protecting and promoting system.

The writer is a former Judge, the Supreme Court of India.

(The Tribune, October 25, 2009)

Experience Nature To Feel That Oneness

Surendra Pal

Human beings have been drawing spiritual inspiration from nature. This has been going on for ages. According to Buddhist philosopher and photographer Daisaku Ikeda, the response to nature's beauty is not merely aesthetic but reflects also the ability to discern a deeper meaning and inter-connectedness in things. The photographer of nature's beauty serves as a bridge connecting the hearts of people everywhere with a language that is universal.

Osho in his discourse on 'Intuition' quotes the haiku of Basho the zen mystic and master: "When I look carefully/I see nazunia blooming/by the hedge!" Osho says that the deep meaning of it cannot be understood intellectually but only intuitively. The idea is that one can draw deep spiritual inspiration even from a simple message. By observing an ordinary flower and pondering over its beauty, one could feel inspired to try and unravel the mystery of creation. For hasn't Keats said that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty. That is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know."

To feel love and compassion for all, observe nature with totality of mind without getting affected by previously constructed images, opinions or past knowledge. Look around to observe things as if you are seeing them for the first time. Become one with the object of observation. The sun provides light and warmth irrespective of who benefits from it. Clouds, rivers, mountains and jungles follow the same example of universal love.

Trees provide the shade, fruits and flowers with the same unattached benevolence for all. They do not demand favours in return. The earth matures seeds into plants irrespective of who planted the seeds or who will benefit

from them. This truly is like a mother's love for her children. A mother loves all her children and is forgiving even when some are the cause of hurt.

If one learns to appreciate nature, the world will be a much better place to live in. Because through such appreciation, destructive tendencies like jealousy, envy, hatred and selfishness will be overcome. A new era of mutual love and trust will descend on earth. All differences will melt away. Most of our problems have arisen because we have stopped learning from nature.

Imagine the blissful feeling one gets when listening to the chirping of birds at dawn, observing the river flowing placidly in its course, looking at the snow-clad peaks of mountains, taking a stroll in a forest with majestically standing tall trees and looking at the moon on a full-moon night or a star-studded sky on amavasya [new moon] night.

Divine feelings generated by experiences close to nature compel one to ponder over the meaning of life and our place in the universe. This creates in us the urge to become one with the Divine to experience eternal bliss. Live with nature, love nature, protect nature, learn from nature and you will soon rise above all your narrow parochial tendencies. You will become a votary of universal love.

The main cause of discontent is because we spend too much time indoors and away from the nurturing restorative powers of nature. So, try to get back to nature in some way. Give yourself sometime in the woods, mountains, open meadows or walk barefoot on the beach. Drink in the beauty of nature as much as you can. Even if you live in the city, go and walk along the grass in a park. You will feel more complete, rejuvenated and blissful. So delight in the beauty you see around you.

(The Times of India, September 9, 2008)

Discover Your Identity Only To Lose It

Deepak Ranade

The self is a projection from the unified source of consciousness. Any attempts by the self to be enlightened are based on the premise that this projection has a unique identity. Like a bubble in the ocean. There is a fine distinction between the bubble and the surrounding water. But the bubble is within the water, it is made up of the same water. If the bubble were to make any attempt to understand itself, it would momentarily feel that it is separate with an identity of its own. But that remains only till the thin separating membrane exists. Once this assertive margin gives way, it is revealed that there has been no change in either the content or the nature of the water. It was water, and will remain water.

All creation is analogous to bubbles in the vast expanse of consciousness. Realization involves loss of this separateness from the surrounding water, a sense of just merging into the water. It is dissolution of that membrane of separateness called the ego. If this dissolution occurs during the journey of life, it would be similar to the bubble losing the differentiating membrane on the way travelling from the bottom of the sea to the top. When the mind-body organism ends (death) it would be the equivalent of the bubble reaching the surface and then just popping. This bubble has a plethora of forms and shapes. But still just a transient identification of being separate.

This feeling of separateness motivates all our attempts and endeavours to embark on the path of understanding the self. Like the bubble trying to understand itself as a separate entity when actually it is surrounded by and made up of the same water. The separateness that desires this enlightenment is the ego, the identification with the mind-body organism.

The consciousness that animates this mind-body form is the true Self.

The true Self creates a projection which has great conviction of separateness and independent existence. It is a distortion induced by the perceptive apparatus. Religious orientation and beliefs are not congenital. They are a product of conditioning.

Many cultures believe in reincarnation or rebirth. Which entity takes rebirth? The identity that each of us has in an entirely man-made nomenclature of convenience. So what would reincarnate? The identity that I have in this birth? This identity is as meaningless as trying to name the different drops of water in a flowing river and then trying to locate that specific drop which had evaporated (died) and fallen from the skies again (rebirth). Then which entity achieves that elusive Self-realization? Is it the individual, the ego or the mind? Is this elusive Self-realization just another object of desire?

A subtle ego-trip puts the individual on a pedestal because he is in pursuit of the intangible. All attempts to seek or reach God probably induce a state of moral well-being. Probably, the labourer who sweats it out in the heat and lives an ego-less existence is far more spiritual than the hymn-singing affluent person.

Any belief system that segregates cannot be a spiritual path. If we are unanimous in the belief that the Creator is one, He cannot be partial to any one clan or sect. Because that automatically disqualifies all other belief systems from reaching the ultimate truth. So science should help us redefine religion and metamorphose it from the ritualistic domain into a more all-inclusive and all-embracing state of mind, not cleaved by differences. Then we might realize that we are all just drops of water in this vast ocean of creation.

(The Times of India, September 10, 2008)

Live Outside The Box

Jump into the storm, do not stand on the sidelines, too scared to do anything about the ugliness around you, says Skye Thomas

Most of the world like to play it safe. They go to their safe jobs, come home to their safe relationships, they drive safe cars, they invest money in safe corporations, they think safe thoughts and they want nothing more than to feel safe and secure. Survival of the fittest dictates that these people live another day and therefore get to breed and would make up the majority of the population. We could say that they play it smart. But there is another kind, too. This other group lives for thrills. They don't just occasionally think outside the box, they actually prefer to live outside the box. This is a group who thrives on adventure, change and newness. They love innovative new ideas, they like to explore new things, and push the envelope beyond its capabilities. They are the visionaries who perceive something beyond where we stand today.

This group often does not feel understood nor supported by the mainstream population. They are not rebels, although they are often accused of being rebellious because they do not embrace the status quo. This group is not anti-anything. They do not define themselves by not being a member of someone else's group. They do not require group-consensus to be who they are. Young adults often think that by dressing badly or by misbehaving that they are somehow brave and different from whatever it is that they are opposing, but that is not revolutionary and different, that is just anger turned inside out. Most of the time they are not accomplishing

anything by simply making a mess of their lives. They are not making a point, they are not changing the world, they are simply behaving in a manner that causes people to shun them. That is not the group I am talking about today. This group is made up of people like Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Nikola Tesla, Susan B Anthony, Melissa Etheridge, Nelson Mandela, and countless others who do not strive to be different nor to go against the mainstream beliefs. They simply are different, they think different, they live different, and they make passionate choices to contribute something meaningful to humanity despite the fact that others oppose them. All of these people stand tall despite the chaos and anger of those surrounding them. “Why can’t you just leave well enough alone? Why do you always have to push people too far? Why can’t you just get along?”

Those who would keep things safe and comfortable become frightened and angry at these innovative new thinkers. They torment them, threaten them, mistreat them, ostracize them and create a storm of ugliness to try and stop these people from simply sharing the gifts of their hearts that they were born to share with humanity. Years later, often after they have long been dead, future generations can look back in hindsight and see their bravely as admirable. But in the moment, these people are historically treated terribly. These people are typically men and women of peace who do not go out with an angry rebellious need to stir up trouble. They fight for higher ideals because in their heart of hearts they truly believe that things could be better for mankind. They hold a vision of better things to come and they follow that vision wherever it takes them. Today there are millions

of people who would change the world with their beautiful open-minded hearts and their incredibly brilliant minds, especially the upcoming teenagers and young adults in their early twenties. They feel that there is no point in even trying because the current political and cultural environment is so against them. I would be lying if I claimed that what you see as extreme hostility towards change was not a peak right now. You are right. They do not want to change again but you are right. It is time for another change and you are the ones to help bring it. Do not be afraid of the backlash. Stand tall and do what you know in your heart is right and just for all, not just what benefits a chosen few. You know that ignorance can no longer rule the people. You know that blind obedience be no longer a viable option.

To you I say meet me in the eye of the storm and together we will steer this mess in another direction. Jump into the storm. Do not stand on the sideline too lazy and scared to do anything about all of the ugliness going on around you. Jump into the storm. Swim and fight your way to the centre of the vortex. There we will sit together in the quiet and find the solutions. Until we embrace the eye of the storm and really see what is at the root of humanity’s hatred of each other, we will never find a long-term solution that creates real peace and equality for everyone. We need to heal our planet, our bodies and the spiritual heart of our species. People say that the signs are all here and Armageddon has begun. Why save the planet if the savior is coming to take the good and holy people away to a better place? Since we are not going to be here much longer, we may as well fry it on our way out. How selfish to assume that your God will

come carry you off to heaven, therefore you do not have to care for the people and planet that are going to be left in the wake of your final choices. Who is to say that is not the ultimate test of who says and who gets to ascend to a better place? If you had to pick and choose who were truly worthy of burning in hell or going to heaven, would you pick the folks who were killing and raging war in the name of God or would you pick the people who were crying out for love, equality and to save the planet?

I stand here in the eye of the storm, turmoil and war all around me, my heart quiet and strong. The vision is very clear here. I will do my part to save the planet for the sake of those left behind. It is not for me to say who should or should not prevail. Someone will be left standing here on this planet, with this atmosphere, with this water, with this soil. For them, I say let's create a plan so that they have the best possible chance of rebuilding a new world. For love of this place with its beaches, mountains and forests that I love so much, I will hold the love of Mother Nature in my heart. You know, if the saviour comes to haul all the good guys off to a better place, I think I will volunteer to stay behind to help make this battered planet a place of beauty once more. When you are done with your religious wars and your ascensions into heaven, give the planet back to those of us who care for her and please do not come back. Embrace the eye of the storm, for the vision is very clear here.

(Skye Thomas is a spiritual writer, entrepreneur, astrologer and philosopher based in the US)

(The Times of India, 28 September, 2008.)

Keep It Simple And You'll Be Happy

Dada J P Vaswani

How many gadgets modern technology has blessed us with! Yet, they only seem to add to the stress and tension of our lives. I have seen young men and women walk down parks and green lanes with earphones completely shutting out the world of beauty around them.

Keep it simple! That is the mantra which can help you reduce stress and tension. Possessions and acquisitions may seem marvellous. But after a while, you do not own them, they own you.

A Tao story tells us of an artist who was so gifted that his fame spread all over. One day, he painted the picture of a snake. It was so lifelike that viewers seemed to hear it hiss!

The artist was so carried away by his own success and the adulation of his fans that he touched up the snake. He made its eyes glow, he outlined the fangs so that they seemed to dart at you! He could not stop: he went on and painted feet on the snake!

The expression, "Painting feet on a snake", a Chinese saying, refers to situations that are needlessly made more complicated by people who do not know when and where to stop.

When our life becomes complicated with power and possessions, we move farther and farther away from the simple joys and pleasures of life. We fail to notice the green grass and the fresh morning flowers.

We don't have time to hear birds singing or watch our little ones smiling. We drift away from the state of childlike innocence and simple joy, which is our basic nature.

Simplicity is not self-denial. It is a return to those values that matter most in life. It emphasizes spontaneity and intuition. It helps us to rediscover the feeling of wonder and

joy that we have lost as adults.

There was a wealthy businessman, who was also a sincere, simple soul. He owned an expensive jet in which he flew about from place to place. They asked him if he enjoyed his private plane. His reply was significant. He said it was certainly very convenient; but he had managed to travel without his own plane earlier; in fact, when he was young and poor, the fact that he couldn't fly did not stop him from being happy.

A famous actress was being interviewed on television. She had made a fortune that year, over a billion dollars. "Does it make you feel good?" she was asked, "Yes and no", she replied thoughtfully. "Everyone thinks it's marvellous. So many people flock around me. But I really do not know who my true friends are and who are with me only for the money and the glamour. As for my daily life, it has not changed much, except that I work harder now."

A group of young men and women were walking across a shopping mall. They were happy and relaxed; they were talking and laughing merrily. Not a care in the world did they seem to have.

There was a young girl among them, who happened to glance as the window of a jewellery store which they passed. On display was a beautiful, brilliant diamond bracelet. How it sparkled and shone! The girl's eyes opened wide. She went close to the window to inspect the price. She could not afford it.

She caught up with her friends but she was not the happy, laughing, bubbly girl that she had been five minutes earlier. Her cheerful, buoyant attitude had been replaced by a mood of glum disappointment.

This is the worst part about wanting things. Getting them may give you momentary happiness. But not being able to get them often makes you miserable!

(The Times of India, August 2, 2008)

Guru Granth Sahib: The Living Guru

Kulbir Kaur

The concept of oneness of all creation is the focal point of the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. It advocates the unity and sanctity of all forms of life, whether high or low in the evolutionary table. Guru Nanak Says: "When I cast my look around, I see none other. He pervades all places and abides in all hearts".

The sacred 'Guru Granth Sahib', is considered as the living Guru of the Sikhs. All compositions included in it are treated as Gurbani, the Guru's own words. No distinction is made between the Guru and the Bani or word as the word. The shabad is contained in the Granth and therefore, it is the Guru. Whoever reads it attentively, listens or sings to the hymns, is believed to get into direct contact with the Guru who is regarded as incarnate in these hymns because "the Word is the Guru and the Guru is the Word".

Sikh simply means "a seeker of Truth" and the Sikh dharma, through the philosophy of the 'Guru Granth Sahib', provides a spiritual path for those who are looking to answer the eternal question, "who am I and what am I here for?" Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, had laid down the guidelines for an ideal Sikh as: Nam Japo—practise the name, Kirat karo—earn your livelihood through honest labour and Vand Chhako—share your possessions in the spirit of love and service.

Purity of mind and body, contentment, for givenness, justice and patience all go to make an ideal Sikh. The 'Guru Granth Sahib' Says, "Let Truth be the strict norm of all you think and do so that your pain and anxiety may go and all felicity come to you".

The 'Guru Granth Sahib' is a unique collection of compositions of not only the Sikh Gurus but of bhakti saints drawn from different communities. Written in Sant Bhasha,

with Gurmukhi as the script used for transcription, the holy book was prepared by Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru. The first copy was calligraphed by Bhai Gurdas. Words and phrases from Persian, Arabic, Hindi and other Indian languages have been used. These compositions, which are devotional hymns and prayers to the Supreme, contain the message of love and devotion, truth, humility, mercy, brotherhood, equality, service to others and purity of mind and soul.

All 3,384 hymns consisting of 15,575 stanzas spread over 1,430 pages, are arranged under different ragas or musical modes of the Indian classical music system as there is a strong belief that spiritual experiences can best be had through a combination of word and music, that is, Shabad-Kirtan. The Shabad-Kirtan creates an atmosphere of sanctity and establishes a link between the Almighty and the devotee.

The Gurus regard humans as the crown of creation; the body as the temple of the living God since it is through this temple that the Creator is to be realized and worshiped. Mystical experiences have been made comprehensible in images taken from household life. For instance, the lotus, which grows and blooms in muddy water but still remains unsullied, has often been used to express the idea that to realize God we need not renounce the world. There is no place for renunciation in the sacred Granth, inspiring the Sikhs to live an active worldly life, with Gurbani on their lips and hearts.

For the Sikhs, the 'Guru Granth Sahib' is the ultimate authority, spiritual as well as historical. Sikhs strive to live in response to the 'Guru Granth Sahib' the living Guru.

The writer teaches sociology at Delhi University. This is the 300th years of the conservation of the 'Guru Granth Sahib': 300 saal, Guru de naal.'

(The Times of India, October 3, 2008)

We Are An Endless Source Of Divine Amusement

Kishore Asthana

My God is a happy God. He laughs with amusement at our deeds and with indulgence at our conceits. Sometimes, perhaps, he is mildly surprised at what we can do both above and below his expectation. But he is never angry. He has no call to be. By our misdeeds we do not threaten him, we threaten ourselves and probably make him chuckle at our sense of self-importance and pomposity, as we may chuckle if a toy created by us acted peculiarly.

My God is perhaps amused that we mistake our state of mind for His, transfer our emotions to Him and even assign Him a gender and, often, a form. We give Him myriad names and treat these names, thought up by us, as being special.

He is amused that we act scared when we risk his anger in our imagination. He is perhaps also amused when we jump to defend Him, when nothing any of us can do can harm Him even one little bit.

Some might think that they speak for my God. Don't they know that they do not speak for my God? Many of them purport to do so either for personal gain in this world or in the hope of gain in the other one. Or, they are sincerely deluded into thinking that they are God's chosen ones and so they assume that they are authorized to speak on His behalf to their fellow human beings. These people are no less harmful or pointless than those who are knowingly hypocritical.

Being saved from God's so-called anger is less urgent than being saved from the self-righteous wrath of those who assume that they have the authority to speak on behalf of God. That they make such an assumption, usually, has more to do with their chosen path than with their averred

destination.

My God has no reason to be angry, sarcastic or jealous. To Him, we are like infants and no one except the impatient or immature would inflict these sentiments on infants. And God is certainly neither.

My God expects me to view His Creation with an open and questioning mind and live in it with lightness of spirit and vibrancy of feeling. Goodwill and tolerance are a part of his expectation.

He views my progress towards Him with the measure of how One I feel with all that sprang from Him. This Oneness eventually leads to its source, God. Those who touch even the edge of this Oneness, realize that humankind has no word in any language that can do it justice. All our concepts of heaven fall severely short, incomparable to its infinite nature.

There are few women and men who speak of God as He would want us to speak of Him. These rare ones have tasted this Oneness in full measure. They shine like stars in the constellation and are distinguished by the unity of their deeds. Though religions and rituals may have formed around them, these Masters are beyond religion and rituals. The smile of God is reflected in their own smile. When we are in tune with them, we can feel some of their great joy inside ourselves. And if this is what happens to us when we get only a second-hand glimpse of God, imagine how happy He must be.

Yes, my God is a happy God, with the power to do whatever he want. How can he be otherwise? So I do not fear the wrath of God. I fear only the wrath of my own conscience. For, ultimately, it is not God who will critically judge my actions. It is my own self.

(The Times of India, April 5, 2008)

Making Music As A Spiritual Sadhana

P L Bhola

Music is more than entertainment; it is also a blissful spiritual sadhana or practice. Guru Nanak and other spiritual gurus and seekers have expressed their devotion to God through singing songs, often to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

Music performed in places of worship and in private or public gatherings anywhere could be very different in content and style. However, an accomplished musician is one who loses himself in the music, becoming one with the music. This kind of self-negation or absence of ego is believed to be the mark of the truly evolved musician for whom there is no difference between the inspiration and the music.

Good music uplifts; it is a kind of spiritual sadhana. Delving deep within, the evolved musician transports listeners to another realm and the experience is like that of transforming prayer. Music is then an offering, a thanksgiving.

Through the ages, music has served as one of the portals of spiritual enlightenment. Joseph Addison said: "Music the greatest good that mortals know and all of heaven we have here below" According to eastern spiritual traditions, the soul separated from the supreme beloved pines for a reunion. The soul's agony has often been expressed in spontaneous poetry set to music. The original composers as well as devout seekers who sang those compositions lost themselves in the rhythmic expressions of love and devotion.

It was not only Sufi 'derveshs' who danced to the rhythm of music, but also saints like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Sur Das and Mira Bai who sang their hearts out to win the beloved's love. At dargahs like Ajmer Sharif, devout qawalls

soulfully seek benediction of the Gharib Nawaz. It is often through music that a saint relates his mystical experience. It is difficult to imagine expression of devotion at hallowed places like the Golden Temple without the timeless aid of music, the universal language.

The musician Tansen, one of the navratans or nine jewels in Mughal emperor Akbar's court, was so talented and popular that there are several legends and fables about his music. When he sang the raga malhar, it is said that clouds would get heavy with rain. When he sang the Deepak raga, earthen lamps would begin to glow with light.

Akbar one day expressed a desire to meet Tansen's guru and hear him sing. Tansen said to Akbar: "My guru, Swami Haridas, will not come to your court. He is not employed by you like I am. He lives in a hut in the jungle. He sings only when he feels like; so no one can command him to sing." "If he will not come, we will go to meet him," said Akbar.

When Akbar and Tansen reached Swami Haridas's home, they found him sitting outside, silent with his musical instruments beside him. Tansen requested Akbar to wait while he himself started singing after a while, he deliberately made a mistake, at which Swami Haridas said benignly, "Don't sing like this, Tansen". Then Swami Haridas began to sing, casting a magic spell all around. Akbar was in a trance, transported to a state of spiritual bliss, broken only by the cessation of the melody. The emperor left for his palace but the song haunted him throughout the journey.

Akbar asked Tansen: "Why don't you sing as well as Haridas does?" Tansen folded his hands and said, Your Lordship! Between Guru Haridas and me there is a vast difference. I sing for my king while he sings for the universe. He is a musician of a much higher court." on hearing this profound truth, Akbar fell silent.

(The Times of India, February 27, 2009)

Overcome All Troubles, Stay Truly Detached

Avatar Mehar Baba

Most of us do not seek suffering, but it comes to us as an inevitable outcome of the very manner in which we seek happiness. We tend to seek happiness through the fulfilment of our desires but such fulfilment is never an assured thing. Hence in the pursuit of desires, we are also unavoidably preparing for the suffering from non-fulfilment.

The same tree of desire bears two kinds of fruit: one sweet, which is pleasure and one bitter, which is suffering. If the tree is allowed to flourish it cannot be made to yield just one kind of fruit. Those who have bid for one kind of fruit must be ready to have the other also. Fulfilment of desires does not lead to their termination; they are submerged for awhile only to reappear with added intensity. Desire is inevitably the cause of much suffering and this is the law.

If a person experiences or visualizes the suffering that waits upon desires, his desires become mitigated. Sometimes intense suffering makes him detached from worldly life, but this detachment is often again set aside because of a fresh flood of desires. Hence detachment must be lasting if it is to pave the way for freedom from desires.

There are varying degrees of detachment and not all of them last. Sometimes a person is greatly moved by an unusually strong experience, such as seeing someone die or witnessing a burial or a cremation. Such experiences are thought-provoking and they initiate long trains of ideas about the futility and emptiness of worldly existence. But these thoughts, as well as the detachment born thereof, are short-lived. They are soon forgotten and the person resumes his attachment to the world and its allure. This temporary and passing mood of detachment is known as shamshan

vairagya—cremation or burial ground detachment.

Sometimes the mood of detachment is more lasting and not only endures for a considerable time but also seriously modifies one's general attitude towards life. This is called *tivra vairagya* or intense dispassion. Such intense dispassion usually arises from some great misfortune—such as the loss of one's own dear ones or the loss of property or reputation. Under the influence of this wave of detachment, the person renounces all worldly things.

Tivra vairagya of this type has its own spiritual value but it is also likely to disappear in the course of time or be disturbed by the onset of a recurring flood of worldly desires. The disgust for the world that a person feels in such cases is due to a powerful impression left by a misfortune and it does not endure because it is not born of understanding. It is only a severe reaction to life.

The kind of detachment that really lasts is due to the understanding of suffering and its cause. It is securely based upon the unshakeable knowledge that all things of this world are momentary and passing and that any clinging to them is bound eventually to be a source of pain.

Lasting detachment which brings freedom from desires and attachments, is called *purna vairagya*. Desirelessness makes an individual firm like a rock. He is neither moved by pleasure nor by sorrow. He is not upset by the onslaught of opposites.

The state of complete desirelessness is latent in everyone. And when, through complete detachment, one reaches the state of wanting nothing, one taps the unfailing inner source of eternal and unfading happiness—which is not based upon the objects of the world but is sustained by self-knowledge and self-realization.

(The Times of India, February 24, 2009)

Forgive To Get Forgiveness

L.R. Sabharwal

In today's climate of terror, a story comes to mind of how two friends were walking through the desert. They had an argument and one friend slapped the other in the face. The slapped one was hurt but without saying anything, he wrote in the sand "Today my best friend slapped me in the face". They kept on walking, until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The slapped one got stuck in the mire and started drowning but his friend saved him. After he recovered from the near-drowning, he scratched on a stone "Today my best friend saved my life."

The friend, who had been slapped and saved his best friend, asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now, you wrote on a stone, why?" The other friend replied "When someone hurt us, we should write it down on the sand, where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away, but when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

Why do we do good in word or deed? Because it is a blessing to ourselves. Swami Vivekananda calls upon us to serve God in man and gives the key to blessedness in these words. "The desire to do good is a the highest power we have, if we know all the time that is a privilege to help others. It is not that the receiver is blessed, but the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy."

But don't expect thanks. Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. It is not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow men? If we were really unattached, we should escape all this vain expectation. Jesus in Mark 11.25 says: "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that God may also forgive you, your trespasses." Let us write our wounds in the sand and carve our goodwill in stone.

(The Hindustan Times, September 16, 2008)

Happy And You Know It?

Who wouldn't like to be happy? And yet, do we really know what would lead us to this elusive goal?

Are you really happy? Faced with the question, most of us would flounder and prevaricate, for how can you lay claim to absolute happiness? You can say with certainty that you are having fun; you can even say you are joyful and more or less content. But happy or satisfied with life? Well, you could always be happier.....

What is happiness? A spot of joy cannot be termed happiness. Nor can a spurt of laughter. Fun at a carnival is just that—a bit of fun, not happiness. Thrill at the sight of a beloved face is not happiness either.

Happiness is much more than these blips. It is more an enduring state of being. A comforting warmth that suffuses your entire being and is there to stay. When you are really happy, a feeling of peace and contentment pervade your being and there's a song in your heart, a spring in your step and a glow in your eyes. A happy person spreads happiness and the obverse is true as well. Have you noticed how people always welcome those who smile and laugh easily, but how they shy away from depressed souls?

A colleague, who is fond of reading quietly evenings and weekends, is disturbed by her husband's restlessness. He is perpetually moving around, calling up friends and arranging for evenings out. He seems to want to spend as much time as possible away from home and hates to be by himself. His restlessness shows a lack of satisfaction with life and a sharp urge to chase fun and happiness. On the other

hand, his wife is a person content with life and quite happy to be by herself.

Happiness is a state of mind that has less to do with changing external circumstances and more to do with your inner self. Research proves beyond doubt that the most developed countries are not necessarily the happiest. In the global happiness, survey, the USA came way down 23rd in the list of countries! So acquisition of wealth and possessions doesn't pave the way to happiness, it seems. The most successful people are not necessarily the ones whose hearts sing the loudest.

Happiness is also subjective and varies from person to person. Would you say Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, beauty queen, successful star married into Bollywood's most powerful family, is a happy woman? Opinion seems divided. While some would wonder what else could anyone want, others point out the immense pressure she must always be under. And pressure and anxiety are not conducive to a happy state of mind.

It is possible to engineer happiness for oneself. Surveys have proved that happiness quotient increases as we survey older groups. Some experts say that happiness is embedded in our genes; one survey even proves that happiness depends on geography! Did you know that the Danes are the happiest people in the world? They lead a very balanced life between work and home; most of them leave office by 4:30 pm., use an excellent transport system and send their children to wonderful schools. Danes are very happy with their government, what with 37- hour weeks, 52 weeks of maternity/paternity leave, high unemployment

benefits and absolutely safe streets. To top it, Danes take a very realistic view of life and have low expectations.

Ask people casually what makes them really happy and answers range from “a good meal” to “no cribbing” to “big money, big car and big house” to “my children calling out to me” to “movies” to “satisfying sex” to “a good spa treatment”. However, well-structured surveys have established that people are happiest when close to their loved ones, when they are in good health and when their expectations aren’t very high. This doesn’t however mean a lack of ambition, but a certain amount of detachment. All of us look for a state of equilibrium, a balanced life and for self-sufficiency.

Most happy people, say experts, consider themselves smarter, healthier and friendlier than others around—they have a high degree of self-esteem. Happy people are also more optimistic and more in control of their lives. They have better relationships with friends and family, better marriages. They seem to realize that deep, caring relationships are an important stepping stone in the pursuit of happiness.

Happy people are also better workers and find challenges at work that they like to meet. On the whole, life for a happy person ends up being a happier experience. Sounds perfect. The only problem being that the more you pursue happiness, the more it eludes you. The trick, says everyone, is to look within for that elusive goal, rather than chase it around the world.

(The Times of India, September 7, 2008)

Our Uncaring Society

Meenakshi Kumar

How can we welk on by as a person lies dying on the road? What stops us from extending a helping hand to a person in distress?

On August 21, just a few hours before the eagerly awaited iPhone was launched in the country, a young man was walking the streets of central Delhi, pleading for help. He had been stabbed seven times. Bleeding profusely, his assailants still right behind him, Manmohan Singh desperately tried to flag down cars, buses, anyone who’d help. No one stopped. Finally a passing auto-rickshaw driver took pity on Singh, taking him off the streets and straight to hospital.

Just three days before Singh’s ordeal, on Delhi’s unquiet streets, Nirmala Kadam died on a busy road in Mumbai. Hit by a taxi while crossing the road, Kadam was then run over by a bus. As she lay in a pool of blood, begging for water, the world turned a blind eye to Kadam’s distress. Even the constables who came ostensibly to help, treated her with callous neglect. She died on the way to hospital.

Singh and Kadam are not the only victims of our uncaring society. Almost every other day, on some mean street, in some madding city crowd, someone falls victim to the apathy of his fellow citizens. People refuse to help in the hour of crisis. They turn their backs or remain mute bystanders. What has happened to our sense of compassion? Did we ever have it at all.

Too much Trouble

”It’s not that people are lacking in compassion,” says sociologist Patricia Uberoi. “It’s just that they don’t want to get involved.” That’s because citizens generally fear the cops and don’t want to get embroiled in legal issues. On the streets, it’s hard to enforce the Supreme Court’s guidelines directing lay Indians never to ignore the injured and medical practitioners never to turn away victims of road accidents. Often, bureaucratic formalities engulf the Good Samaritan. Last month, Mumbai businessman Kirit Gada took the victim of a train accident to hospital. Much to his shock, he

was fined Rs.1, 200 by the police and labelled ‘drunk’ by the hospital authorities after he had an argument with a doctor over delayed assistance to the victim. Gada would now think twice before reaching out to another casualty.

“As long as accident cases involve bureaucratic hassles, nobody would like to help,” says social scientist Shiv Vishwanathan “A lot of them may be keen, but shy away from coming forward.” If it’s a criminal incident. the legal system may deter people from offering a helping hand. “People in India are the same as any-where else in the world. But it’s our system that makes them so callous. Our judicial system treats even a witness as a criminal. So why would a common man come forward to help?” asks Ved Marwah, former Delhi Police Commissioner. The infamous BMW incident (in which an industrialist’s grandson Sanjeev Nanda ran over six people in Delhi in January 1999 is a striking example—many of the witnesses in the case turned hostile in court.

WHY WE DON’T HELP

- * **People don’t want to get involved with the police.**
 - * **Those driving cars and taxis worry about the seat covers getting stained.**
 - * **Few want to ‘waste’ time by stopping to help an accident victim.**
 - * **Many feel someone else might help, so why bother at all.**
-

Many believe that Indians lack a strong sense of civic duty. “We have become comfortable in ignoring our basic duty,” says Maxwell Pereira, retired senior police officer. He argues that fear of the cops and the legal system is misplaced. The police just do their duty, he says, but it’s our sheer cursedness and attitude that prevents us from helping out. “It’s sad that when a person, is lying on the road, we prefer to look the other way. It speaks volumes about our sense of duty towards our fellow citizens.”

WE JUST DON’T CARE

At times, it’s about passing the buck—“Let somebody

else help. I’m in a rush.” Says Harman Singh Sidhu, who was once a victim of an accident and now heads Chandigarh-based NGO ArriveSAFE, Which helps people like Delhi’s unfortunate Manmohan Singh. “At least 90% cases (the NGO has helped) are those where people have refused to help the victim,” he says.

It’s an alarming statistic. But more shocking by far is the callousness of those the state pays to be Good Samaritans—ambulances, police and hospitals. Sidhu recalls seeing ambulances heedlessly whiz past accident victims. It is common enough to hear of hospitals turning casualties away.

In Delhi recently, one hospital demanded a Rs. 40,000 deposit from the person who brought in an accident victim. When the Good Samaritan refused, he was asked to take the casualty elsewhere. A scuffle ensued and the police were called in. It was revealed that the hospital had a history of denying admission to accident victims.

But it’s an incident in Kolkata which takes the cake and shows how far we can fall. When security guard Kadam Prasad Panth was taken ill on a bus, the driver stopped. Panth was brought out of the bus and made to lie on the pavement. People crowded around; no one did anything to help or offer water. Meanwhile, police from two different areas squabbled over which jurisdiction applied to panth. By the time they sorted out their differences, the old man was dead.

What explains such callousness? “The visuality to the situation forces us into becoming spectators. A complete sense of non-involvement takes over,” reasons Vishwanathan. We switch off and rush away to resume our busy lives.

But some believe it may also have something to do with our sense of social status. “The higher we are in the social pecking order, the lower we are in our compassion quotient,” says Subroto Das, founder, Lifeline Foundation. “In most cases, it’s usually the villager or the poor man on the cycle who will help. The excuse given by big car owners is that the upholstery of the car will get spoilt or that they don’t have time to waste,” he adds.

Das should know. Ten years ago, his car rammed into a tree on a highway in Gujarat. His wife and a friend in the back seat were badly injured. Though he was badly hurt too, Das managed to work his way out of the car. He spent four hours trying to flag down vehicles on the highway. It was much later that a milk-man stopped and helped Das get on a bus. Today, Das' NGO Provides an ambulance service and basic medical aid within the 'golden hour' (the hour immediately after an accident). The service covers 1,476 km of highways across Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

LIMITED COMPASSION

Natural calamities and riots often produce a crop of touching stories. During the Mumbai floods of 2005, the worst in living memory, residents famously handed out bread and water to the weary and threw open their homes to complete strangers. And yet Mumbai ignored Nirmala Kadam as she lay dying on the street.

Vishwanathan believes Indians are generous when all that's needed is food and shelter, but mean-spirited if an incident could end in a police station or court of law. Our Gandhigiri appears to stop at donating money to victims of natural disasters. But we would rather not take a casualty off the roads and to hospital. At least part of the callousness may be a habit ingrained by years of clandestine help during communal riots. As Pereira says, those who help, do it because they don't want more riots. "But in accident cases, people just don't want to help."

The fact that people can be caring sometimes and callous at other puzzles Uberoi. "It's a question that needs to be asked. How can people be so caring with family and friends, but not towards his fellow man, even if a stranger? It's almost like the need to keep oneself and one's homes clean but not your surroundings. It's a strange contradiction," she wonders.

Everyone agrees it is time the state created institutional mechanisms to ensure the good Samaritan is hailed, not harassed. Till then, we may carry on, turning our backs on civic duty.

(The Times of India, August 31, 2008)

Stop And Touch Deeply The Present Moment

Thich Nhat Hanh

If you want to live, live in the present moment. If you want the Buddha it must be in the present moment. If you want nirvana, it has to be in the present moment. The present moment is the only one when these things are available to you. Why do you continue to run? Samatha means stopping and touching deeply the present moment. The present moment contains all the wonders of life, including the blue sky, including the sunshine, the tangerine and the person who is good, be it you.

When you practise walking meditation, you practice arriving in the present moment all the time because walking meditation means to walk without any intention to arrive. There is no destination. In fact, it helps you to stop running. When we go somewhere, when we walk, we have an ideal, we have a desire to arrive. When we drive too, we have a desire to arrive. When we make a journey, only the point of arrival is considered to be of consequence. Going or moving and the moment of driving or walking is less important. That is a big mistake.

Maybe among us there is someone who has never paid attention to his heart before. Our heart is a miracle. When I go back to my heart and touch it daily with my mindfulness, I recognize that to have a heart that still functions normally is a real miracle. There are those that do not have that kind of happiness, they do not have a heart that functions normally. They are subjected to the danger of a heart attack or a stroke. And all of them desire to have a heart like ours, the heart that functions normally.

When we touch our heart with mindfulness, we see the fact that our heart works day and night non-stop in order to preserve our well-being. And that is the kind of insight

you develop when you practice mindfulness on the presence of your heart. Suddenly compassion arises. “Oh! My dear heart, you work so hard and yet I did not know how to take good care of you. I drink, I smoke, I eat in such a way that gives you a hard time!”

Enlightenment is always enlightenment about something. Let us not be abstract. I am mindful about the fact that my heart works hard and needs my support and love. I am enlightened about how to live my daily life so that my heart will have an easy time because the well-being of my heart is my whole well-being. When you smoke a cigarette with mindfulness—“Smoking I am aware that I am smoking—and if you practise mindfulness of smoking, you will stop very soon. That is called smoking meditation.

Or, when you drink your whisky in mindfulness it is called whisky meditation. I don’t say you have to stop smoking and drinking before I can give you instructions about how to meditate. Instead, I say: “Yes you can begin by smoking mindfully and drinking mindfully because I know if you really do it, you will stop smoking and drinking very soon.”

We have done damage to our body, to our feelings, perceptions and consciousness. We know there are a lot of conflicts within. There is a lot of war, a lot of pain within. And listening to the voice of the Buddha we have to go home and take care of the situation at home. And it is exactly with the image of mindfulness that you can go home without being afraid, because with the image of mindfulness we are able to embrace our pain, our sorrow. And we can survive. Embracing our pain, our sorrow we can calm them down. And if we continue, we will be able to transform them into other forms of energies.

Extract from the writer’s recent publication;

‘Under the Banyan Tree.’

(The Times of India, September 26, 2008)

You Can Take Charge Of Your Life

Discourse: Sadhguru

Whenever things don’t happen the way you want them to, there is a temptation to name it destiny. This is how you deal with failure; you are consoling yourself. Whatever situations you are living in, to be human means that you can mould situations, the way you want them. But today most people in the world are moulded by the situations in which they exist. That is simply because they exist in reaction to the situations they are placed in. So their question will be, “Why was I placed in such a situation? It is my bad luck, is it my destiny?”

Everything that you know now as “myself” is just an accumulation. Your body is just an accumulation of food. What you call “my mind” is an accumulation of impressions that you have gathered through the five senses. What you accumulate can be yours; it can never be you. What is you is yet to come into your experience; it is in an unconscious state. You are not even 100 per cent conscious of what you have accumulated. You are trying to live your life through what you have gathered, not through who you are.

You have acquired certain tendencies depending upon the type of impressions you have gathered. This can be changed. Irrespective of your current tendencies, your past experience of life, your genetics, irrespective of who your parents were, where you were born, where you grew up, if you do certain things with yourself, you can change this. You can completely rewire yourself in 24 hours time.

A century ago, many things that people believed to be destiny or God’s will, like diseases, infections and death are today in our hands because we have taken charge of certain things. What we call technology today is just this: Within

the laws of nature, everything on the outside that can be taken charge of, we will take charge of someday.

As there is an outer technology, there is an inner technology or inner engineering. Everything that this life is naturally happening to a certain law. If you know what the nature of life within you is, you can completely take charge of the way it happens. Then would you let any unpleasantness happen to you?

Unpleasantness is happening to you in the form of anger, fear, anxiety and stress because your basic faculties—your body, mind, emotions and your life energies—are doing their own thing as if they don't belong to you.

It doesn't matter who you are. Life doesn't work for you unless you do the right things. Existence is not judgmental. Good, bad, all these judgments are essentially human and socially conditioned. Every society has its own idea of what is good and bad but existence is treating all of us the same way. Whoever is receptive right now gets the bounty of life. The whole aspect of yoga is to make you receptive.

If your experience of life transcends the limitations of the physical, you become available to Grace. Suddenly you function like magic. Other people may think you are magic but you know you are just beginning to become receptive to a different dimension of life. And for everybody, this possibility is wide open. When it comes to outside realities, all of us are differently capable. What you can do, somebody else cannot do; what someone else can do, you cannot do. But when it comes to inner Possibilities, every human being is equally capable. You are not any less capable than a Buddha or a Jesus or anybody for that matter. All of us have the same inner capabilities, unfortunately never explored, never accessed.

(The Times of India, September 22, 2008)

The Retired As A Rich Source Of Insight

Seema Burman

A cricketer announces his retirement as might the CEO of a corporation. But a sanyasi? Seventy-six-year old Swami Chinmayananda was packing his belongings at the Ramakrishna Mission, Almora, as he was “retiring”, as he put it. Does a sanyasi ever retire, I asked. Laughing, he said, “A sanyasi never retires but he must get out of the way of young, energetic sanyasis! For the body is no longer agile—but he continues to be of help of society, may be even more sincerely.”

An older sanyasi has a lifetime of experience and faith, has witnessed many sorrows and miracles. Can a sanyasi be a burden to society due to his age or sickness? His prayers, goodwill and the spiritual wealth acquired are for everyone, for the entire world. A senior sanyasi is not exhausted by age or by work as other worldly people are; rather he is a treasure trove of spiritual insight.

“We leave our home, our family, only to acquire a bigger family. You have a small home to practise karma yoga while we have the entire world to practise it. All women, of any age, are ma for us. You shed tears when you see the pain of your loved ones who are few in number but we feel and care for all. No one is excluded. You celebrate Mother's Day or Father's Day once a year but for us all days are Mother's day and all days are Father's Day”, Said the Swami.

To be a sanyasi does not mean to be insensitive to the world. Swami explains. “We too, are emotional when it comes to relationships. I will have to leave my German Shepherd Baghu in Almora when shift permanently to Haridwar. The very thought is wrenching my heart because

the animal has no intellect to detach itself. But what about human beings who are attached to their loved ones?

This attachment could prove detrimental. In this very birth learn to love all and not get attached to a few. We feel so much love for humanity that we can feel your pain as deeply as you do. We don't have any grudges towards or expectations from anyone.

After a lifetime on the spiritual path I can say that the mantra to living is: Never expect but accept. Accept whatever comes your way. You have come here to win, not to lose. Why do you lose your health, your peace of mind over trivial issues?

Win as many friends as possible, overcome life's hurdles with your will power, win peoples' hearts with kindness. The more peaceful and calm one is, the more you will be drawn to a life of spiritualism. There is no need to convert people to your ideas of God, to your ideas of faith.

God is not about shaking faiths; rather God is about reaffirming faith. To reach God one must love Him, love all Creation and then there will be no question of insisting which path one should follow. Let each follow the path that she likes. Utilize each moment in loving God and His devotees.

"The best path, as Buddha declared, is the middle path. Neither starving nor overeating, neither sleeping too much nor too little, neither too much mirth nor seriousness.

You need to preserve this body, the vehicle that will take you near God. With pranayams and yoga, you acquire tranquility. The calm mind tends to focus one-pointedly when it follows the middle path. Discharge your duties lovingly."

(The Times of India, October 10, 2008)

Accept Life As It Comes

*If you take life as it is, you will understand your frustrations, grow from them and enjoy life's abundance, says **Saundra L Washington***

Those living on the highest levels of life have learned to accept life on its own terms. There are some realities about life that we must accept. This is the key to living, joyfully in communion with the heavenly while abiding here on earth. Life, no matter how we choose to look at it, is a challenge. It is the beginning of a struggle that continues until we breathe our last breath. Life is something that we did not request. None of us asked to be born. Neither did we ask to be poor or black, tall or short. We did not ask to be a part of one family as opposed to another.

Life is full of risks. There is a certain element of risk taking that is inherent in every venture we undertake; whether it is in business, or in marriage, in a profession or in athletics. We never have complete security within ourselves. For we know that every moment we live, our lives are in constant danger. A stray bullet may hit us, a car emerging out of nowhere may crush us and a slip of the foot may result in our death. So life is unpredictable. We get no warning, we are afforded no red alert and we get no second chance at life.

And we might as well face the fact that our life is a dying life. As soon as we are born, we begin to die and every day we manage to somehow survive, we have only gained another step towards our grave. Each morning when we wake up from a refreshing sleep, we have died a little during the night. As we go through the streets of the city, we are dying a little. As we go about our business on the job, we

are dying a little. In essence, we are living in the land of the dying.

It will help you to accept life on its own terms rather than struggle against it. Identify and move from the limiting and conflicting. “Either/ or,” “black or white”, “all or nothing,” illusory perception of life to an attitude that is open to all aspects of reality. We do this by accepting life on its own terms—accepting that pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness are all a natural part of the human experience.

Fighting against life’s realities and adopting a stance of negativism only creates unnecessary pain and difficulty in your life. Accepting life allows you to understand your frustrations, grow from them and experience life’s abundance.

You have heard people who make comments such as “I go with the flow. “What they are saying is this. I accept in life what I cannot change. I deal with it as it comes within the framework of my own knowledge and capabilities and spirit. When inner negatives are dissolved, our outer life will be more harmonious and fulfilled. Understanding life helps you make the unconscious conscious, to see your misguided beliefs and negativity clearly, to understand their roots and causes and most importantly—to transform them.

A complete path, it offers a practical, rational, honest and above all, gentle and self-accepting way to move from an attitude of your versus the world to one of you and the world; from you versus life to you and life. Fundamental to accepting life is to give recognition to the Supreme life-giver. Whenever we praise God or give God recognition and acknowledgement, it is for life.

Whenever we give God a spiritual applaud or standing

ovation, it is for life. God has given us life, something so tremendous, potent and marvelous that no scholar has ever been smart enough to detail its composition or understand from where it derives its sustaining energy. Life is a force so complex that it cannot be duplicated. And most amazing and thrilling of all, he has given us minds! It is through our minds, the thoughts we think with it and the impressions we store in it, that we are conscious of living. In short, your life becomes just what your mind makes it for you and just what it tells your life is.

Few people go deep enough with in their soul to realize in its entire fullness, breadth and scope the amazing gift of life that enables them to pursue a lifetime of accomplishment. What a marvelous gift. What power! God has endowed us with the power to think, to believe, to create, to imagine, to choose, to feel, to aspire. Having a wonderful sense of appreciation puts all our petty complaints and frustrations, irritants and negativity into perspective. You live on a realm beyond grudges, ingratitude, selfishness and take-for-grantedness. You enjoy and value each moment and are determined to get the best out of every second.

Don’t forget that God is a living energy to quicken, increase and guide our own energy. The infinite Power Source is a living elixir to lift up, sustain and establish our own spirit. Being negative takes the spirit out of you. What is the point of God increasing your spirit while you at the same time decrease it with negatives? If you refuse God’s gift of an abundant life, then you must do without it.

(The Times of India, September 12, 2007)

Path To Healing

With October being breast cancer month, a holistic approach against a framework of a mind-body connection may help patients cope with the disease better.

DR. UMA KRISHNASWAMY

It is common place today to meet women who have had or have encountered breast cancer in their personal lives. With some memorable exceptions, many continue to be haunted by the spectre of disease and death.

A chat with some of these women leaves one stunned by the magnitude of negative emotions they harbour: anger against the disease, god, fate, family, friends and work place, to name but a few; frustration, depression, helplessness, lack of self-esteem, a sense of social stigma and most of all, a paralyzing fear that the disease will return and that suffering will be painful and prolonged and that death will be premature.

Fighting phrases

The medical establishment, for some un-fathomable reason, portrays breast cancer as the “enemy”. “Let us kill the cancer!” some doctors say. While advising the patient to undergo a mastectomy, a doctor told one of my patients “Let me chop it off!” “Fight it!” say well meaning family members and friends. “She lost the battle against breast cancer,” people remark. Such military metaphors condition the patient to hate the disease and view one’s body as a killing field.

Does the medical profession encourage a patient with a potentially fatal heart attack to view the heart as a hateful enemy? Does a patient with a brain tumour view one’s brain as a killing field? On the contrary, these patients are actively encouraged to be calm and enhance the potential of the body to heal by healthy lifestyle changes.

Is military jargon the product of insensitivity or is it

ignorance about the biological nature of breast cancer? Is the medical profession still clinging to the archaic visualization of cancer as akin to an infection? Kill the organism producing the disease and “cure” the patient, never mind the “collateral damage”?

The evolving breast cancer paradigm incorporating concepts, such as tumour dormancy, tumour homeostasis, are holistic, giving us insights that breast cancer is not an isolated and rigidly compartmentalized event accruing in a surgically dispensable organ (the breast). There are, perhaps, subtle and as yet, unfathomed cascade of changes affecting diverse vital functions of the genetic and immune system at a systemic level.

These changes are likely to be reversible, at least up to a point and may push the patient either towards an aggressively spreading cancer or towards a state of quiescence wherein the cancer remains in tranquil balance with the individual for years together, perhaps for the individual’s life-time.

If we are to scientifically analyse the impact of this endless tide of negative emotions that course through the patient’s mind, one is filled with disquiet. It is inevitable that this will lead to profound changes in the neuro-endocrine balance within the body. This, in turn, will have a massive negative impact on both the physical and mental health of the patient.

State of mind

It is worthwhile to ponder over the mind-body connection in this context. Dr. Deepak Chopra elegantly describe: “Your body is a 3-D projection of your current state of mind. Your slightest shift of mood is picked up by every Cell, which means that you do not think with

BREAST CANCER IS NOT AN ISOLATED AND RIGIDLY COMPARTMENTALISED EVENT OCCURRING IN A SURGICALLY DISPENSABLE ORGAN.

your brain alone—all 50 trillion cells in your body actively

share your thoughts.” If 50 trillion cells are constantly thinking of disease, breast cancer is not an isolated and rigidly compartmentalized event occurring in a surgically dispensable organ and death, not to mention hatred and enmity, it is little wonder that many breast cancer patients live a living death a state of mind constantly reinforced by the health sector that places patients in a straight jacket of frequent and unwarranted tests. Tests, if truth be told, which do little to enhance the quality or quantity of a patient’s life. The scientific practice of evidence-based medicine, alas, is not lucrative!

Positive attitude

It is only the intellectually and emotionally mature women who can withstand and onslaught with her sense of emotional balance and honour intact. Indeed it is a truism that a positive frame of mind and an ability to laugh allows these women to live life fully after breast cancer.

Breast cancer has an enigmatic biology. In some women the cancer is indolent, in some it is aggressive and in yet others, it may swing in behaviour between these two ends of the spectrum. What underpins such behaviour and how it can be modified is poorly understood and is a matter of instance speculation and experimentation within the scientific community.

Till the day science offers us that wisdom, it is best if women approach breast cancer holistically against the frame work of the mind-body connection and see the reductionistic perspectives of modern medicine for what it is. A cancer is merely a dynamic and unfavourable state within the body. By accepting it’s presence with equanimity and humour, one can perhaps nudge the systemic balance to a state of healthy equilibrium through the powerful medium of the mind. Perchance this is the path to healing.

(The Hindu, October 5, 2008)

Divinise Your Emotions To Experience Oneness

Discourse : Swami Tejomayananda

Emotion is power; it is neither good nor bad. It is important to know how to use that power. First, we must learn not to create any division of positive and negative. Second, let us look upon others in the same way that we look upon ourselves. Let us not force others to be like us. Third, we must learn to ‘divinise’ our emotions.

Emotions bind us, but if divinized, they can elevate us. Attachment for objects or sense pleasures binds us. On the other hand, attachment for higher ideals or for wise people who represent those ideals, leads to spiritual fulfilment. Here, there is no bondage. The wise master loves us without attachment and also helps us realize our true self.

The desires we have can be divinized by turning them to God with prayer. Scriptures teach us to divinize all aspects of life. We are enjoined to look on our parents and teachers as God and to see the same divinity in all elders and guests. With such an attitude, we slowly change from within. The Narada Bhakti Sutra says that if we must have desire let it be desire for God. If we have to get angry then it is better to get angry with God. Express all emotions to Him, pray to Him and He will liberate you. If there is greed, transform it to greed for the name of the Lord. Instead of counting your money begin to count the name of the Lord. This is divinization of emotions. Devotional desire will uplift you.

Telling ourselves, “I should not be negative, I should be positive!” is helpful; but eventually we have to elevate our thinking to see all as our own self. Slowly rise to this level of thinking, “It is Divinity alone that is present everywhere!” feel the presence of God everywhere and rise above duality

and the pairs of opposites. Eventually it will become a way of life. There is really no question of positive or negative emotions. It is only a matter of vision and understanding. How emotions present themselves will depend upon our attitude and circumstances.

We may feel jealous of successful person, but we are never jealous of the success of our own children, even though they are someone other than us. When we see ourselves in the other person, love comes naturally. And where there is love, there is no room for violence, hatred, enmity, or jealousy. Love is a substitute for everything but there is no substitute for love. And when that love becomes divine, there is no further need to say anything! Once Mahatma Gandhi was asked, “What is God?” He answered “God is Love!” “And what is love?” He answered, “Love is God.”

It is important to understand the place of emotions in our life. But that alone is not enough. We also need to bring harmony and integration to our thoughts and emotions and actions. When we are able to see the Oneness everything becomes positive. Therefore, we must rise above the sense of duality and divinize our thoughts and actions.

Krishana devotee Mirabai said, “Earlier I was worried about how to cross this vast ocean of samsara. But by the Guru’s grace suddenly the ocean itself dried up! Now there is no worry!” In the same way, in the sea of emotions, huge waves rise and threaten to drown us, but when we divinize them we find that the same ocean is all calm and peaceful. Where there is realization of Oneness of the self, there is love and happiness.

Swami heads Chinmaya Mission worldwide.
(The Times of India, 3 November 2008.)

Guru Nanak Dev’s Japuji Sahib

Kulbir Kaur

In the Japuji Sahib Guru Nanak, the first sikh guru, asks: “How to be a man of Truth and how to break the wall of falsehood?” Japu— meaning Japna, recitation or meditation— or Japuji Sahib, the Sikh morning prayer, is the opening composition of the Guru Granth Sahib. Composed by Guru Nanak, Japji Sahib, contains a prologue called the mool mantra or the basic creed of the Sikh faith which sums up the characteristics of the Supreme Being: “There is only one God who is beyond time and beyond the circle of birth, death and rebirth. He, the Creator, is without fear and without hate. He is immortal, omniscient and omnipresent , self-existent, known by the grace of the Guru.

Guru Nanak says, in order to be a man of Truth, your actions should be pure and the precondition for spiritual success is the suppression of the ego with the discipline of morality and meditation, as well as by moulding one’s life in accordance with hukam and raza—His Will.

Understanding His hukam will rid one of ego. The Guru suggests a three-fold course for realization: Sunai or listening to the Holy Name, Maniai or conviction in the truth of the Guru’s Word and Nidhian or carrying out the Guru’s instructions in daily life. Three conditions indicate not only a code of ethics and conduct for the welfare of the individual but also include the feeling of public welfare. Even the Sikh prayer, Ardas, seeks the welfare of entire humanity, Sarbat-da-bhala, because true worship of God is service of His creation.

In the last section of Japuji Sahib, Guru Nanak mentions five stages of man, progress on the path of divinity. Man’s spiritual progress begins in Dharam-Khand, that is, the realm of duty where a man discharges his responsibilities

to himself, his family, community and country. The first requirement is purity of conduct. The next stage is Gian-Khand, the realm of knowledge where the variety and vastness of God's creation is realized. The third stage is Saram-Khand, the region of toil or the realm of spiritual effort to train body and mind to acquire an understanding of spiritual qualities. The next stage, Karam-Khand, is the region of grace. With Divine Grace, he becomes Gurmukh, inclined towards God, not towards himself.

Beyond these four regions is the region of eternal Truth, Sach-Khand, the above of the formless. The devotees, now saints, are in harmony with the Almighty. Guru Nanak compares the evolution of a devotee to the minting of a perfect coin of gold. The qualities of continence, patience, divine knowledge, wisdom, prayer, austerity and love of the Shabad or Divine Word make him a true man of God.

The message of the Japuji is universal since it simply describes the nature of the Ultimate Reality and the way to comprehend it. Meditation and recitation of Bani is always revered by the Sikhs as the Shabad.

“Shabda is my Guru and the meditating mind the disciple/By dwelling on Him I remain detached,/Nanak, God, the cherisher of the world through the ages, is my Guru.” This was Guru Nanak's reply to a yogi who asked him: “Who is your Guru? Whose disciple are you?” In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed the Sacred Granth as the Guru. For the Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib has since been the sole spiritual authority.

This is the tercentenary of the consecration of the Guru Granth Sahib as the eternal guru of the Sikhs, ‘300 saal Guru de naal’.

(The Times of India, November 4, 2008)

Give Thanks: Appreciate The Here And Now

J P Vaswani

Offering thanks teaches us a valuable lesson to appreciate the here and now. Stop wishing for what-might-have-been and yearning for what-is-not and enjoy what-is-now. Focus on the present moment and experience its full wonder.

A friend who worked in Pune was transferred to Mumbai. He was so upset he had nothing but complaints about the city. “I hate the noise and the pollution,” he groaned. “This is just a concrete jungle,” he would say. “The traffic is terrible! I can't stand the mad rush of this city!”

I lost touch until he came to see me in Pune. I asked him how he was doing in Mumbai and was surprised to learn that he was back in Pune now. “That must make you happy!” I remarked. “I miss Mumbai!” he said.

“Mumbai is a vibrant city full of life! It spoils you, it changes you! If you have been in Mumbai, you just can't be happy anywhere else! I now find Pune dull and boring.” We only diminish the value of what we are and where we are, if we do not pause to be thankful for the present.

How can we appreciate the here and now? Imagine what your condition would be if you lose all that you have now. Each day, make a list of all the things—big and small—for which you are grateful. Stay conscious of them throughout the day. Help those who are less fortunate than you are and feel grateful to God for giving you the opportunity to help someone in need.

The wise ones are aware that the blessings we have received from Him are infinite. Every moment of the day, every aspect of your mind, intellect, body—all these are God's gifts to you.

The roots of this custom dates back to the Pilgrim Fathers who first arrived in America after a long and arduous

journey across the Atlantic. Here, after a difficult winter in which they lost several of their loved ones, a winter also marked by great starvation and privation, they reaped a rich harvest in the new land. The whole of America observes Thanksgiving Day as a national holiday. It is marked by church services, family reunions and sumptuous dinners.

Every day in India is a Thanksgiving Day—for we have to thank God for all that we are and all that we have, every day of our lives! We cannot, indeed, confine our thanksgiving to any single day. Ideally every day, every moment of every day should be an occasion of thanksgiving. The spirit of thanksgiving should so infuse our life that it should transform our life into and constant remembrance of His infinite mercy on us.

A man who wished to dispose of his home went to his friend in the real estate business and asked him to help him sell the house. The friend wrote out an advertisement on the basis of what he had heard and read it out to the owner. “Beautiful 50’s house with spacious garden,” he read. “Gabled roof, spacious verandahs, well-ventilated rooms and large dining, drawing rooms. Ideally suited for families with children.”

“Read that again,” said the owner. His friend obliged. “This house is not for sale”, said the man. “All my life I’ve wanted a place like the one you have just described. But I never knew I had it until I heard what you have written.”

Normally, the act of saying “Thank you” puts a certain distance between the giver and the receiver. Some people even say “thanks” automatically, without so much as looking up at the person they are giving thanks to, or even meeting her eyes.

God should not be thanked in such a superficial, mechanical way. The dynamic way of thanksgiving is to make your life an offering to the Lord. Affirm to Him that you are His and that your words, deeds and thoughts are dedicated to His glory.

(The Times of India, 27 November, 2008)

PINGALWARA DIARY

(UPTO APRIL 2016)

Services rendered by Pingalwara Institution for the service of the suffering humanity are:-

1. Homes for the Homeless

There are 1712 patients in different branches of Pingalwara now a days:-

(a) Head Office, Mata Mehtab Kaur Ward,	
Bhai Piara Singh Ward	349 Patients
(e) Manawala Complex	826 Patients
(b) Pandori Warraich Branch, Amritsar	83 Patients
(c) Jalandhar Branch	39 Patients
(d) Sangrur Branch	224 Patients
(f) Chandigarh (Palsora) Branch	94 Patients
(g) Goindwal Branch	97 Patients
	<hr/>
	Total 1712 Patients

2. Treatment facilities

(a) **Dispensary & Laboratory:-** Pingalwara has a dispensary and a laboratory for the treatment of patients. It has an annual expenditure of about Rs.90 lakhs. Medicines are also distributed free of cost to the poor and needy people.

(b) **Medical Care Staff:-** Experienced medical staff like Nurses, Pharmacists and Laboratory Technicians are available for the care of the Pingalwara residents.

(c) **Blood-Donation Camps:-** A Blood Donation Camp is organized on Bhagat Ji’s Death Anniversary every year. The blood is used for Pingalwara residents and road accident victims.

- (d) **Ambulances:-** Ambulances with basic Medical aid are available for victims of road accidents on G.T. Road, round the clock and provide facilities for taking Pingalwara patients to the hospital.
- (e) **Artificial Limb Centre:-** There is an Artificial Limb Centre at Manawala Complex, dedicated to the memory of Bhagat Ji which provides free of cost Artificial Limbs to Polio-affected and amputee cases. 7654 needy people have benefitted till April 2016.
- (f) **Physiotherapy Centre:-** A Physiotherapy Centre equipped with State-of-the-art equipment is functioning in the Manawala Complex since June 2005. On an average 80 patients are treated everyday.
- (g) **Operation Theatres:-** There is a well equipped Operation Theatre in Bhai Piara Singh Ward Amritsar for general surgery and A Micro Surgery Operation Theatre in Manawala Complex where Cochlear Implants and major operations are carried out.
- (h) **Dental, Eye, Ear & Ultrasound Centres:-** These Centres have been set up to provide these services to Pingalwara residents, sewadars and their families.

3. Education

Pingalwara Society is running five Educational Institutions for the poor and needy children.

- (a) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Manawala Complex:-** This school provides free education to 750 students from the poor and deprived sections of the society. They are provided with free books and

uniforms. Children being brought up by Pingalwara Society are also studying in this school.

- (b) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Buttar Kalan (Qadian):-** This school is dedicated to the sweet memory of Bhagatji. 446 students are getting free education under the able guidance of well qualified teachers. The school also provides financial help to students who have finished their school studies and are aspiring for higher studies.
- (c) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education, Manawala Complex:-** This school is providing Special Education to 185 Special children.
- (d) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for the Deaf:-** Bhagat Puran Singh School for Deaf Children is functional at the Manawala Complex since May 2005. The school is equipped with state-of-the-art training aid and has 150 children on its rolls.
- (e) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education, Chandigarh (Palsora):-** This school caters to the needs of Special adults of the branch.
- (f) **Vocational Centre:-** This Centre is providing free training in embroidery, stitching, craft work, making washing powder, candle making, painting, etc. Young girls from the villages of surroundings areas are the main beneficiaries.
- (g) **Computer Training:-** Computers are available in all the schools for academic and vocational training.
- (h) **Hostel facilities:-** There are separate hostels for boys and girls in Manawala Complex. Many girls are

pursuing higher studies in different colleges.

4. **Rehabilitation**

- (a) **Marriages:-** After being educated, boys and girls at Pingalwara are married to suitable partners. 37 girls and 4 boys have been married off till date.

5. **Environment Related Activities**

- (a) **Tree Plantation:-** Bhagat Puran Singh Ji was deeply concerned about the degradation of the environment. A vigorous campaign of tree plantation is started every year on Bhagat Ji's Death Anniversary. Each year 15,000 to 22,000 trees are planted in various schools, colleges, hospitals, cremation grounds and other public places. These include Amaltas, Kachnar, Behra, Champa, Arjun, Sukhchain, Chandni, Zetropa, Kari-patta were distributed to different institutions.
- (b) **Nursery:-** Pingalwara has its own Nursery where saplings of various plants and trees are prepared. Every year, the aim of nursery is to grow more than 54 different kinds of saplings every year.

6. **Social Improvement Related Activities**

- (a) **Awareness:-** Pingalwara has played an important role in spreading awareness about the evils in the society. This has been done by printing literature on religious, social and environmental issues at the Puran Printing Press Amritsar and is being distributed free of cost. It has an annual expenditure of printing and publicity is about 1 crores 50 lakhs rupees.
- (b) **Puran Printing Press:-** The Printing Press has been updated with an Offset Press.

- (c) **Museum and Documentaries:-** A Museum, and a number of documentaries have been prepared on Pingalwara activities as well as on zero budget natural farming. The C.D.s are freely available from Pingalwara.

A feature film produced by Pingalwara Society Amritsar EH JANAM TUMHARE LEKHE (Punjabi) on Rev. Bhagat Puran Singh Ji, founder Pingalwara and his struggle not only for selfless services of wounded humanity but for Environment Crisis also, will prove a beacon for the generations yet to come after us.

7. **Help to the victims of Natural Calamities**

Pingalwara makes an effort to provide succour to the victims of natural calamities like floods, earthquakes and famines. Aid was sent for the earth-quake victims in Iran, Tsunami disaster victims, Leh landslide and flood affected areas.

8. **Cremation of unclaimed dead-bodies**

Pingalwara cremates unclaimed dead bodies with full honour.

9. **Dairy Farm**

180 cows and buffalos at Manawala Complex provide fresh milk to the Pingalwara residents.

10. **Old Age Homes**

Old age homes at Sangrur and Manawala Complex of Pingalwara caters to the needs of elderly people.

11. **Projects Completed and Under Construction**

Since 1997 ambitious projects of Sangrur, Palsora at Chandigarh and Manawala Complex have been completed. In the year 2009 new buildings—

Administrative Block, Puran Printing Press, Deaf School, T.B. Ward at Manawala Complex and at Head Office and a New Administrative Block have also been completed.

In the year 2013, a new modern Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education in Manawala Complex of Pingalwara and a new Block for Pingalwara patients in Pandori Warraich Branch is under construction and is fast coming up.

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa

Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh

Dr. Inderjit Kaur,

President,

All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.),

Tehsilpura, G.T. Road, Amritsar. (Punjab).

Details of Banks For Sending Donation Through Online Cheque/Draft, Cheque & Bank Drafts may be sent in favour of : All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar. PAN No. AAATA2237R						
S. No.	Name of Account	A/C No.	Name of the Bank	IFS Code for Inland Remittance	Swift Code for Foreign Inland Remittance	
1.	FOR FOREIGN CONTRIBUTORS All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01562010002890	Oriental Bank of Commerce Sharifpura Amritsar	ORBC 0100156	ORBCINBBASR	
2.	INLAND ACCOUNT No. All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01562010003720	Oriental Bank of Commerce Sharifpura Amritsar	ORBC 0100156	
3.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	10978255668	State Bank of India Town Hall, Amritsar	SBIN0000609	SBINHBB274	
4.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	630510100026147	Bank of India City Centre, Amritsar	BKID0006305	BKIDINBBASR	
5.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	0018002100097336	Punjab National Bank Hall Bazar, Amritsar	PUNB0001800	PUNBINBBAHB	
6.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	006601012522	ICICI Bank Ltd., Lawrence Road, Amritsar.	ICIC0000066	ICICINBBFEX	
7.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01151000246510	HDFC Bank Ltd., Mall Road, ASR.	HDFC0000115	HDFCINBB	
8.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	00011000096048	Punjab & Sind Bank Hall Bazar, Amritsar	PSIB000A001	PSIBINBB017	
9.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	685010100009799	Axis Bank Ltd. City Centre Amritsar.	UTIB0000685	AXISINBB179	
10.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	13131000082013	HDFC Bank Ltd. Ghanta Ghar, Golden Temple, Asr	HDFC0001313	HDFCINBB	
11.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01010100015572	Bank of Baroda, Town Hall, Amritsar	BARBOAMRITS	BARBINBBAMR	