

## NOBLE EXPANSION

In noble expansion we're inviting ourselves to wake up again and again. Every moment is an opportunity for a completely fresh start, a whole new world. When we live our lives this way, life becomes beautiful. Musicians say that music happens in the space between notes. If we can remember that, we allow ourselves to connect with the source of all creativity itself. Snap your fingers. Connect with that moment between notes, words, breaths, that moment between thoughts. That spaciousness, that vastness, is pure love. As Yo-Yo Ma, the great cellist, says with every note he plays, "Well, the next note might be a revelation." The next note might be in another universe! When he plays, you can feel the beauty and light pouring through his music. Every note and the space between the notes are like a doorway to the infinite, to all possibilities. Spaciousness is the truth, the way we allow ourselves to wake up. There's a doorway through every experience we have that leads us directly to divine love. No distance, no gap, no delay, no having to stand in line. We can be with divine love at any moment, allowing every word we speak to be fresh, to be a revelation, to be a whole new universe.

Be human. Be truthful and very steady. Invite divine love and light into whatever arises, then light will pour through your words and nothing old, stuck, or resentful can remain in your conversations or relationships. Every time you meet someone, approach them as if you're meeting them for the first time, even if you've been married to them for fifty years. Even in situations of potential conflict, if we approach always with this freshness, inviting ourselves to speak only from the heart to the heart in a way that's genuinely of service in that moment, we are able to be kind and helpful, and we will find words to share with an energy and an intention that can open to deep breakthroughs.

Wake up to remember we are energetic beings. We are made of energy, and so is absolutely everything else. Our reality is much less solid and fixed than we may have previously assumed. Incredible, dynamic inventiveness, creativity, explorations, and opportunities become possible so that our entire life becomes an adventure, a revelation, a prayer, a meditation, a discovery. We recognize that the

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tasks and the chores before us are vehicles for us to greet the Divine—even in the form of washing dishes. Then all of our actions are performed in joy and freedom and without attachment to any of the results.

We can interact freely with everyone with no attachments and no expectations. If there's anything you need to forgive, give yourself what the other person couldn't give you. If someone is mean to you, go within and give yourself kindness. This awareness gives you inner strength, stability, and security. Remember also to approach food, beverages, exercise, and sleep in ways that are balanced and help us be present, responsive, and of service. Spring is a wonderful time to work with bringing clarity and balance back into your life in terms of exercise, diet, mindfulness, and meditative practices. The energy of spring is the wind at our back in terms of transformation and unfoldment.

Keep in mind the tender green of the leaves that are now unfolding. We are all being invited to unfurl what is tender, what is most precious, vital and alive. Work with the energy of the earth and the sky and the energy of the seasons. Ask, "What is it I would love to bring visibly into the realm of time and space? More confidence, steadiness, security, kindness?" Whatever it is, bring it forth from within with ease and without grasping, and it will come forth in your interactions and habits as well.

You transform into what you focus on. Clarity, vitality, and dynamic energy is ours. Be willing to let go again and again of plans, expectations, attachments, of the past, pain, sorrow, fear, trauma. Let it go. Go to love and then from that energy of love we manifest a whole new noble universe.

Thank God and God bless us all.

— *Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*

## HUMAN LOVE IN GOD

Human love is a blessing when we remember it is part of the greater love of God.

Human love becomes a source of misery and bondage when we forget the greater love of God.

When worldly or human love deserts us, God's love is ready to take us up in its vast embrace and draw us close to its heart. That is the love that will never leave us and never gives cause for grief, disappointment or alienation.

Love all with God's love, and you will never be without love or experience being loved. Love all with God's love and your love will expand into universal love of the most sublime, profound, and ecstatic kind imaginable, a love that is ever self-revealing and self-fulfilling, a love that knows no diminution.

If you're loving your ego, then you're not loving God. If you're loving your ego, you are not loving yourself.

If you are loving God, then you are loving yourself, for your Self is God. We are all the masterpiece of God emerging from the rough marble, and all our experiences are chipping away at the marble.

I love myself enough to be free.

— Sri Swami Shankarananda



## WHOSE LIFE?

In this adventurous, endlessly expanding, ever deepening personal and collective awakening, our view of life unfolds like a blossoming flower. If we are willing, our point of view and what we once believed (or knew with absolute certainty) to be true about so many things simply and naturally dissolve away and the way we see and experience life and our place in it evolves. With the aids of meditation and selflessness, the life suffocating grip of attachment and the consciousness of “me, me, me” and “mine, mine, mine” melt away; our identity with this individuated, more limited human position is loosened and there comes into our view a wholly new sense of who we are; of what is possible for this sweet, brief time we have together in embodiment; and how we can avail ourselves of a life we truly, deeply love.

For me, at the core of such a transformation is the realization that none of this belongs to me; I do not own or possess any of it. Absolutely everything, including this life itself, is a gift that is lightly, temporarily, briefly “mine” to steward and care for and share. Any realization, insight, awakening as well or not “mine,” did not originate with me, did not come from me and yet, are here. The getting me out of the way so as to be able to partake of and abide in such a space is also a gift and a treasure not of my doing or making.

But wait, what about personal responsibility; what about me practicing meditation and selflessness? This is a realm of paradox and mystery. There are practices in life that can either lead us beyond the limited and limiting consciousness of “me and mine” and there are practices that can further entrench us. From the point of view of an “I” it appears that I am making the choice to meditate and act selflessly. Please consider, do we choose to breathe? Or, could we say that we are being breathed. Please ponder this notion of “choice,” of “whose life is it, anyway?”

—Premadas

## LAW OF CONSERVATION

Every effort that we make on the spiritual path is like a seed: every effort to live nobly, to put into practice our highest ideal, and to remember God in every circumstance. But so often we expect those seeds to bear immediate fruit, and we are disappointed in ourselves if we are not able to live the ideal perfectly at that very moment. We may consider ourselves a failure for allowing a chasm between ideal and practice. Even worse, we may feel guilty and unworthy, tormenting ourselves with recollections of past “mistakes.”

If only we could see: No seed is ever wasted, no seed-planting is ever a mistake. If we try one course of action and later repent of it, we may think of our action as a mistake. But the spiritual law is eternal: There are no mistakes. The seeds that did not bear fruit according to our expectation will nonetheless fertilize the ground for future growth. Therefore, all seeds are growth-bearing, constructive, and necessary. Can that which impels us to strive with greater determination to live the ideal ever be a “mistake”?

If we cease to judge ourselves and see everything as a necessary step in unfoldment, we free ourselves from a sense of failure and mistakenness. Why think only in terms of tangible result, growth, or manifestation? Every effort and every resolve is building a growth in consciousness, even if no growth is discernible to the mind. Every remembrance of the ideal sends forth its vibration, which reverberates eternally and is thus ours forever. Even as the scientific law decrees that matter cannot be destroyed and energy can never be lost, Krishna gave to humanity the law regarding the spiritual principle of the conservation of conscious unfoldment: In the practice of Yoga, no effort is ever lost.

— *Srimati Shanti Mataji*

## I SAID TO THIS WANTING-CREATURE INSIDE ME

I said to the wanting-creature inside me:  
What is this river you want to cross?  
There are no travelers on the river-road, and no road.  
Do you see anyone moving about on that bank, or nesting?

There is no river at all, and no boat, and no boatman.  
There is no tow rope either, and no one to pull it.  
There is no ground, no sky, no time, no bank, no ford!

And there is no body, and no mind!  
Do you believe there is some place that will make the  
soul less thirsty?  
In that great absence you will find nothing.

Be strong then, and enter into your own body;  
there you have a solid place for your feet.  
Think about it carefully!  
Don't go off somewhere else!

Kabir says this: just throw away all thoughts of  
imaginary things,  
and stand firm in that which you are.

— *Songs of Kabîr*  
Translated by Rabindranath Tagore

## THE BLESSEDNESS OF PEACE

Attainment of peace is the ultimate purpose of life. Through all our endeavor and achievement we aspire to realize peace. The realization of enduring and abiding peace is the supreme longing of our heart. But how are we to attain peace? Peace is attained when our consciousness realizes the divinity and perfection of soul. Our consciousness must gain direct perception of the godly nature of our soul if we are to attain peace.

Meditation, prayer, introspective contemplation, and devotion, wherein all that is related to the personal self is completely immersed in supreme love, are some of the means whereby the consciousness discovers and reveals unto itself the divinity and perfection of soul. Peace comes from soul and soul alone. Therefore, in order to attain peace, soul must be realized. Be awakened and gain the realization of your true self and you will have blessed your life with peace.

Without peace life is a disintegration from within. We long for peace, not to escape from sorrow, but because peace is the very substance and sustenance of our inner life. Only when we have realized the peace of soul within ourselves can we live in coordination and harmony with the environment that surrounds us. Approach and understand all experiences of life with the light of soul and you will abide in subjective peace under all circumstances. Together with wisdom, power, and love, God has granted peace to our soul in order that we may live by its inspiration and grace always.

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*

## REVELATIONS OF A COSMIC TRAVELER

Sanskrit has a gorgeous phrase that can be translated as “heart bowl.” Let us come into contact with our heart bowl, that sacred chalice of light, that blooming lotus that shines within us, and within all we meet. Let us allow sacred light to fill us totally, to overflow through us, to nurture every cell of our bodies, every layer of our beings. Let us share and serve all-beautiful Oneness, reaching down to the heart of Mother Earth, reaching up into the pure light of the cosmos, allowing the Infinite to share sacred energy through us in every realm where we live and move and breathe and have our being.

Oneness plays at sending itself forth in all forms, so that all forms may enjoy the delight and wonder of in turn recognizing Oneness everywhere: light dancing on the water, Divine Mother energy radiating through the trees, the smile of an infant, the tears of one who has fallen, the triumph of one who rises again. All that I see—that is I, that is mine own self, that is divine order and harmony and play. In Oneness, I exist without limitations, without possessiveness, in freedom, in glad adoration, and divine light.

Unconditional love lets us revel in eternal joy, lets us be united continually with Thee. Unconditional love frees us from all bondage, melts away all fear, severs our ties with the consciousness of limitation. Unconditional love spins us through time and space with the Lord of the Dance, bowing to us across every event in our lifetimes, bowing us into infinite Love, the radiant field of space in which all dance, all life, takes place.

—*In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri*



## FLYING SAUCERS

I remember the winter when saucer sleds became super popular in our neighborhood. Saucers are the round one-person plastic sleds that cannot be steered or controlled. You can only pray that everyone gets out of your way. My friends and I had one burning question that winter: How many people could we pile onto the tiny saucer and make it to the bottom of the hill? We were determined to find out for ourselves, so the last thing we wanted was an adult giving opinions, calculations, or safety warnings.

This approach to saucer sledding may be beautifully transferable to the sincere spiritual seeker. In spirituality, we tend to focus on getting answers to our questions rather than deeply examining the nature and origin of our questions.

In this inquiry we may ask, "How did I come to believe my question is important? Is the question sincerely important to me beyond what any teacher, teaching or scripture says is important? If I could only explore one urgent question, what would it be?"

Deeper exploration of truth begins when we pay attention to the sincere questions or impulses that bubble up from our true nature. This kind of exploration is very different from hearing about another's spiritual experiences and pursuing the beliefs and concepts we have formed about their awakening and their teaching.

Children don't read someone's doctoral dissertation on saucer sledding experiments and then debate or try to replicate those results. Children naturally and earnestly pursue their questions by looking for themselves. What will it be like if five friends and I pile onto a saucer? Can we make it to the bottom without flying off? Let's find out now! Nothing will distract a child with questions like that. Nothing can distract you when you loyally listen to the deepest questions of your heart. Follow the pure impulse to know what is true about yourself and all seeming barriers and struggle will fall away!

—Murali

## TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS

“A very simple and powerful yogic teaching is that any meditation technique, any mantra, any teaching, is simply designed to introduce ourselves to stillness and devotion. It is an invitation to let ourselves fall in love with the quiet of our own heart, the same quiet as when fresh snowflakes fall through the clear air. We’re allowing ourselves to fall in love with that freshness, that newness, that sacredness that is always within us. To connect with the energy of devotion, think about something you love in a pure, clear, uncomplicated way. It might be a person, a pet, a place. Connect with the pure love and lightness and gladness of that energy, and invite it to fill your heart.”

— *Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*



“Desire for happiness and joy, pleasure and gladness, are normal and righteous instincts of the human heart. It must be so. Otherwise why is there so much beauty in the universe of God’s creation? Why does unbounded exaltation transport my soul to the realm of ecstasy when I behold the stars shining in the heavens above? Why do beauty of form and the harmony of music inspire a profound feeling of adoration and joy in my heart? Are not all lovely things manifestations of God’s beauty? Is not God present where beauty is manifested and harmony expressed? The joy of God is realized in all its perfection if the love of God is awakened in the heart.”

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*



“Beginning with the early dawn each day, I will radiate joy to everyone I meet. I will be mental sunshine for all who cross my path. I will burn candles of smiles in the bosoms of the joyless. Before the unfading light of my cheer, darkness will take flight.”

— *Swami Yogananda Paramhansa*



“That life is most blessed which is dedicated to manifest the attributes and righteousness of God for the inspiration, enlightenment, happiness, and peace of all.”

— *Shyamacharan Lahiri*

## LOVING LIKE A YOGI

Human relationships are fertile ground for learning to love like a yogi—unattached and unconditionally. How do we love another without attachment—be it a child, a parent, a spouse, or a friend? I found myself pondering this question on my oldest daughter’s thirtieth birthday. It seemed just moments ago when I’d rocked her in the nursery, a tiny swaddled bundle, a perfect package of purity and joy. My love for her felt as expansive as the universe. I’d wanted to protect her from every hurt, from every painful experience, from ever feeling insecure. I’d wanted her to always feel whole, perfect and loved.

But the funny thing about our children—about everyone we love—is that they have the audacity to have minds of their own, and the free will to make decisions that may make us cringe! Of course we want to safeguard the well-being of those we love, but there comes a time (often sooner than we would like) when our ability to protect them is forced to give way to the vagaries of the world we live in, or must yield to our loved one’s God-given right to choose his or her own experiences. At some point, we may realize that trying to insulate our loved ones from experiencing discomfort or hurt is not only unhelpful, but inconsistent with loving without attachment. And yet, finding the appropriate balance between responsibility and letting go can be elusive.

It helps to remember that we are all children of God, each charting our own soul’s path. Having that perspective allows us to hold those we love more lightly, acknowledging their freedom to make what we might view as poor decisions. Unconditional love requires us to be courageous enough to let go of the illusion that we can control another. It asks us to be brave enough to let go of worry. When we can release our judgments about what “should” be happening, we see that all choices—including those of our loved ones—are simply part of the journey home.

If we aspire to love like a yogi, unconditionally and without attachment, it helps to contemplate how deeply we are loved and supported by Divine Grace. To receive this love, all we have to do is open our hearts. Whether or not we choose to recognize it, Divine Grace is there, loving us in the midst of all our decisions. And we are invited to be that love for one another.

—*Karuna*

## JOY OF THE INFINITE

▪ When energy that flows through the universe is affectionate. Any form of human affection that you have ever seen, felt, expressed, or witnessed is like a tiny spark of the divine fire of infinite immortal affection. All of those human sparks of affection are designed to lead us back to the one gigantic bonfire of divine caring for all of us.

□ ▪ When anger comes at us, or negativity of any kind, don't fight it, don't get out a sword: rise above it and dance. Win by dancing, not by fighting. Win by rising above it, not by battling on the same level. That's why Dr. King says, "Darkness does not cast out darkness, only light does that. Hatred does not cast out hatred, only love does that."

□ ▪ The role that we are asked to play right now is a role that God, the casting director, gave you. We sit there and think, "There must be something wrong. Why am I here in this body? This is a mistake!" God is the casting director that put you here as you. That's how much you are loved. The second we realize this, life can become playful and we can become lighthearted and free in our daily lives. Whatever role we've been given to play, the question is, "How can I do this joyfully and with as much kindness as I possibly can?"

□ ▪ The Bliss is everywhere, it's everything, it's always, it's all that is. The second that we doubt, or fight, or struggle, we're contracting. That's when we're invited to make the wisest, kindest, highest choices that we possibly can. Every single choice we make allows further choices to branch out before us. If we keep choosing higher and higher choices, higher and higher choices branch out before us. We are always deciding, "Am I going to fuel and feed the monster dragon inside of me or am I going to fuel and feed the bonfire of divine love inside me?" If we choose to fuel the bonfire of divine love, we're opening up to divine possibilities. Infinite helpfulness, infinite connections, possibilities, opportunities, friendships, caring, resourcefulness, and inventiveness are always yours. What comes to you is a result of what you are tuning in to. What we focus on, our thoughts, our words, our actions, make a difference. They affect what comes to us. I invite all of us to practice this and just observe in your daily life. For one day, say only what is kind, useful, and true.

## SWAMI SHANKARANANDA'S PEARLS

- We always have God's love and guidance. Always! Know it from moment to moment with each breath you take, with everything you observe and read, with all the turbulence and dual currents of laughter and tears, of pleasure and pain, in this world.
- You are never a victim, no matter what happens in your life. We are always the choosers of our experiences. Please remember, we have the power to choose what we would want in life. Remembering that all of life is a choice helps us grow in wisdom and strength, understanding and expansiveness, and well-being.
- We are influenced by our experiences. What shapes us is how we perceive and interpret our experiences. Instead of holding on to the memories of all the painful experiences, choose to see how you can use each experience to promote your well-being.
- Would you rather use your energy for vengeance or for loving? Transform yourself! Remember what the Buddha said: An eye for an eye mentality keeps us in the state of misery. If you don't like the way your vibration feels, choose to vibrate differently.
- God says life is a choice. Life is experience. Life is self-expression. Life is about making ever-new choices, more experiences, and more desires. It's ongoing. It's not about getting it all done. It's about having fun doing it, from moment to moment.
- You and I have a million and one opportunities to express joyous appreciation throughout the day. I would encourage every one of us to come to a very powerful decision. Decide, before getting out of bed, "I choose to find as many things to appreciate today as my perception takes in from moment to moment." This allows you to take charge of how you feel, what you perceive, how you interpret it and how you incorporate it in your life.
- *O thou gentle spirit of infinite grace, we thank thee for the outpouring of thy wisdom, thy light, thy love upon us. Inspire each of us to manifest the power of gentleness in thought, word, and action. This we pray in thy loving and healing presence, even now. Amen.*

## GARLAND OF TRUTHS

“All happiness comes from awareness. The more we are conscious, the deeper the joy. Acceptance of pain, non-resistance, courage and endurance—these open deep and perennial sources of real happiness, true bliss.”

—Nisargadatta Maharaj



“If you want to be sad, no one in the world can make you happy. But if you make up your mind to be happy, no one and nothing on earth can take that happiness from you.”

—Swami Yogananda Paramhansa



“Each morning when I open my eyes I say to myself: *I, not events, have the power to make me happy or unhappy today. I can choose which it shall be. Yesterday is dead, tomorrow hasn't arrived yet. I have just one day, today, and I'm going to be happy in it.*”

—Groucho Marx



“Divine happiness, even the tiniest particle of a grain of it, never leaves one again; and when one attains to the essence of things and finds one's Self—this is supreme happiness. When it is found, nothing else remains to be found; the sense of want will not awaken anymore, and the heart's torment will be stilled forever. Do not be satisfied with fragmentary happiness, which is invariably interrupted by shocks and blows of fate; but become complete, and having attained to perfection, be YOURSELF.”

—Anandamayi Ma



“To be happy is virtue because a happy person will not create unhappiness for others. Only a happy person can be a ground for others' happiness.”

—Osho



“When I was five years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life.”

—John Lennon



## QUOTES FROM RABIA OF BASRA (c. 717-801)

“Since no one really knows anything about God, those who think they do are just troublemakers.”

“How long will you bang on the open door waiting for someone to open it?”

“In my soul there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church where I kneel.

“Prayer should bring us to an altar where no walls or names exist. Is there not a region of love where the sovereignty is illumined nothing, where ecstasy gets poured into itself and becomes lost, ere the wing is fully alive but has no mind or body? In my soul there is a temple, a shrine, a mosque, a church that dissolve, that dissolve in God.”

“I have loved Thee with two loves—  
a selfish love and a love that is worthy of Thee.  
As for the love which is selfish,  
Therein I occupy myself with Thee,  
to the exclusion of all others.  
But in the love which is worthy of Thee,  
Thou dost raise the veil that I may see Thee.  
Yet is the praise not mine in this or that,  
But the praise is to Thee in both that and this.

“Eyes are at rest, the stars are setting.  
Hushed are the stirrings of birds in their nests,  
Of monsters in the ocean.  
You are the Just who knows no change,  
The Balance that can never swerve,  
The Eternal which never passes away.  
The doors of Kings are bolted now and guarded by soldiers.  
Your Door is open to all who call upon You.  
My Lord,  
Each love is now alone with his beloved.  
And I am alone with You.”

## SPIRITUAL READINGS

*The Prophet*  
by Kahlil Gibran

There is much to be learned by rediscovering an old favorite in light of new realizations. I hadn't read *The Prophet* in decades and while the pages fell out with each turning, I became deeply impressed by how much of the author's wisdom aligns with Vedanta philosophy.

Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931) was a poet, philosopher, and artist who was born in Lebanon into a Maronite Catholic family. His mother moved them to Boston in 1895 and Gibran was educated in the United States and Beirut and studied art at the prestigious Académie Julien in Paris. Though he considered himself primarily an artist, Gibran is best known for his writing, particularly *The Prophet*, which was a nickname given to him by his friend, the poet Josephine Prescott Peabody.

Published in 1923, *The Prophet* was originally written in Arabic then translated into English, and Gibran illustrated it with his own drawings of beautiful nude figures. The story begins with the prophet Almustafa preparing to leave the city of Orphalse, where he has lived for 12 years. The people of the city beg him not to leave, but the seeress Almitra asks him instead to tell them his truths. The people ask him questions about love, marriage, children, giving, eating and drinking, buying and selling, and many other themes of human life, including death. Almustafa responds with powerful and poetic statements drawn from the author's spiritual awareness. Of Self-knowledge, he writes: Your hearts know in silence the secrets of the days and nights. But your ears thirst for the sound of your heart's knowledge. You would know in words that which you have always known in thought.

At the end of the book, Almustafa assures them of his love and promises to come again if they forget it. He also gently reminds them of their own divinity:

You are not enclosed within your bodies, nor confined to houses or fields. That which is you dwells above the mount and roves with the wind. It is not a thing that crawls into the sun for warmth or digs holes into darkness for safety, but a thing free, a spirit that envelops the earth and moves in the ether.

—Ananda



## SPRING BLESSINGS

“The blessing of life is in the consciousness of the blessing.”  
—*Hazrat Inayat Khan*

As spring returns, we welcome, rejoice, and celebrate the awakening of life that has lain dormant, patiently waiting, silently gathering strength and will to burst forth in new growth, in a profusion of color, fragrance, and beauty beyond measure. The quality of light is brighter, the songs of birds sound happier and even more musical, and the air itself feels full of hope and possibility. The fresh, invigorating, uplifting energy that delivers these beautiful gifts to the world is the energy of divine love blessing us as spring.

That spring energy is also the growing impulse for change and expansion rising up within us. Just as nature gives form to this energy, we too are agents of divine blessing, unfolding new leaves and buds of deeper awareness and understanding, extending kindness, compassion, generosity, peace, healing, and harmony through our thoughts, words, and actions.

Like an underground spring, as this pure energy pulses forward, it will necessarily push to the surface any obstructions it encounters in its path. This is not cause for alarm, but an opportunity to see what needs to be healed and released that the sparkling rainbow waterfall of all the Divine would love to share through us can flow freely and fully, manifesting in whatever ways are most of service in any moment. The Divine is waiting and ready to help us do just this in our favorite way: with ease and grace!

Often, as the earth resurrects in dazzling beauty and joy, we awaken in greater appreciation for all the ways the Divine blesses and supports us on every step of our journey. And often this humbling appreciation inspires us to expand the ways we choose to share these divine blessings for the blessing of others. Whatever forms blessing takes, the greatest blessing is to realize our oneness with the Divine, and to allow that Oneness to shine through us in loving, joyous service to all.

—*Padma*

## ENTERING INTO MEDITATION

To help us approach the divine guidance and the divine love that we receive every time we allow ourselves to become still, I invite us to come into contact with the quietness and sacredness of a divine current of energy, a divine current of life that is always present within us. Let us come into contact with the simplicity and purity of being right here in this present moment in a human body. It is an amazing gift to explore the universe, the realm of time and space, through the vehicle of a human body.

Our human body is not our enemy. Often we feel that we struggle against our body or that we are fighting our body. When we came into this birth, the Divine took form through each of us. We're allowing ourselves now to express appreciation for this incredible vehicle that the Divine has projected its own pure light into that lets it explore this world through our eyes, through our hands, through our heart. That is nothing less than a sacred miracle. Never has the Divine been separate from us.

Notice your feet, the way they contact the sacred earth, and thank them for walking you through life. Yogis describe the earth as something of a battery pack—energy always present and available to us. Connect with the battery pack of the earth and consciously allow your feet to feel supported. This is your stability; come back to it always. Allow the energy from the earth to pour through the feet up to the knees, and up the legs to the base of the spine. And this, too, is an amazing foundation, a root that connects us the same way that a tree is connected to the earth.

Just as a tree spires up from the ground into the heavens, as we move up the spine, sacred energy spirals up through us all the way to the spiritual eye, the space between the eyebrows at the ourselves to set aside distraction, pain, any bruises or heartache that we have acquired. Bless it, kiss it, set it aside. Ask the Divine to fill your heart, right now, with the freshness of pure love.

And then come back up to the spiritual eye, between the eyebrows at the center of the forehead, and move back from there a little bit into the midbrain. Divine guidance, pure knowing, is present within each of us. We're allowing ourselves to set aside center of the forehead. All of this is as beautiful and simple and natural and steady as the most glorious tree.

Now come into contact with the energy of the heart. Allow tension of divine love, sharing itself through us. We're inviting the heart to be open, fearless, and free. The heart is a natural exdistracted, to set aside despair, to let go of judgment, and asking the Divine to see purely and clearly through us.

We're connecting with these sacred intentions, opening to receive the infinite guidance, the supreme pure love that is always present within us, always available to us. If you would like to add a mantra, silently offer, "Divine Grace, illumine us."

—Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

ENTERING INTO MEDITATION (Continued)

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**Question:** How do I distinguish between the voice of ego and the voice of intuition?

**Answer:** The world gives us many invitations to stretch our ability to see through distraction. The world seems to proliferate invitations to be upset, perplexed, or confused. We're loving ourselves into the clarity of heart, into the purity of vision, so that we can discern that no matter what presents itself to us, we can stay in the stillness, in the steadiness. We have amazing adaptability, flexibility, and awareness that allows us to be conscious of why any given person might be expressing what they're expressing, and to radiantly be spacious, allowing, and gracious.

The voice of intuition knows much more than the rational mind is able to share with us. Begin tuning in, listening, and responding to this inner guidance. Your intuition will never tell you to act in a way that harms others, in an ungenerous or unkind way. Intuition will never tell you that secretly you're better or worse than everyone else. That is not the voice of the Divine.

Your intuition is always aware of the greater whole and is guiding you to act in harmony with the greater whole in a way that serves the higher good. Ask yourself, "Is this for the greater good? Is this generous or selfish? Is this possibly the voice of ego?" If you think it's the voice of ego, turn to the Divine and ask, "Divine Grace, I don't want to be led astray, so if this is the voice of ego, I give it to you. Take it from me and let me see clearly. How can I be helpful? How can I be hopeful? How can I be of service?" This will keep you clear and elevated.

## Q & A (Continued)

A sign that your intuition is speaking to you is that it is very simple; it is not complicated. The human mind, the human ego, make things vastly complicated. Therese of Lisieux reminds us, “The closer we get to God, the simpler things become.” That’s another indicator. Is this a complication or does it help simplify? If it is a voice of humility and helpfulness, being of service and integrity, then the chances go way up that it’s the voice of intuition.

It is a feature of the spiritual path that as the light comes in, all of our tendencies get magnified. All of our inspiration and generosity gets magnified. We also have the means and opportunity to magnify our selfishness and arrogance. Some say that meditation can make you arrogant. That’s not meditating—that’s ego communing, taking the guise of meditating.

True meditation will reveal to you ways in which you have caused harm to yourself and others. Go deeper and keep going; meditation creates auspicious pathways forward, and also reveals to us where we have been in disharmony with laws of unity, kindness, and calmness. We liberate and harmonize ourselves from within, breathing light and stillness and love through our depths and our heights.

Meditation brings us face to face with truth. When we are consciously in contact with reality and truth we will be more humble than ever before, rather than more arrogant, more simple, rather than more complicated. We will recognize that every human sister and brother on the planet, along with the animals, the trees and the flowers, the leaves, and the sand we walk upon, all of this is one with us.

— *Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*

FROM THE  
SUNDAY MEDITATION  
FOR CHILDREN



Engaged in a lesson about what it means to be pure in heart, the children focused on what their hearts were feeling, and explored some of the noble divine qualities enshrined in our hearts, such as love, caring, compassion, appreciation, and gratitude.

## DIET AND NUTRITION: Asian Pear Bake\*

Total cook time: 55 minutes    Total number of servings: 8

### *Ingredients:*

- 8 organic Asian pears, thinly sliced (I like to peel them, too. Mom's Organic Market usually has them in stock.)
- 1 organic lemon, juiced (about 2 tablespoons)
- 2 tablespoons organic pumpkin pie spice (cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and cloves)
- 2 tablespoons organic vanilla powder (I recommend Pippa's.)
- 1 cup almonds, chopped
- 1 cup pecans, chopped

### *Optional ingredients:*

Organic fruit—blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, or whatever you'd like to add. When adding additional fruit to the recipe, either mix everything in together with the pears or add berries to the top after letting the pears bake for 30 minutes. Be creative with topping options: I've added coconut, sunflower seeds, walnuts, and cacao nibs. Each version was unique and delicious.

### *Directions:*

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a medium bowl, combine chopped almonds, chopped pecans, and 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice. Set topping aside.
3. In a large bowl, combine pears, lemon juice, 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice and vanilla powder. Mix until well combined. Place in a 9 by 13 inch baking dish.
4. Bake for 40 minutes, or until pears are soft and bubbly.
5. Cover top with almond/pecan mixture. Bake 10-15 additional minutes until lightly browned on top.

The fresh ingredients in this delicious dessert were chosen so you can enjoy it even if you're following a sugar free, gluten free, Paleo or Vegan eating program.

\*This recipe was modified from the Apple-Cranberry Crumble recipe found in *The Autoimmune Paleo Cookbook* by Mickey Trescott, NTP.

— Lakshmi

## LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS

O Lord of Love, revealed in the scriptures,  
Who have assumed the forms of all creatures,  
Grant me wisdom to choose the path  
That can lead me to immortality.  
May my body be strong, my tongue be sweet;  
May my ears hear always the sound of OM,  
The supreme symbol of the Lord of Love,  
And may my love for him grow more and more.

O Lord of Love, may I enter into you,  
And may you reveal yourself unto me.  
The pure One masquerading as many.  
You are the refuge of all devotees.  
I am your devotee. Make me your own.

—*Taittiriya Upanishad*

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