

## Be Your Own True Friend

*(Excerpts from Satsang of Pujya Sant Shri Asaramji Bapu)*

No grandeur can match the glory of your True Self. Nobody can gauge your true glory. Just realize your True Self and you will become so great as is beyond description. Then, even if somebody offers you the status of Indra, the king of the gods, you will not feel interested. Even the opulence of Indra will appear trifle to you. Externally, you would appear like the same person, but in reality, you will encompass the heavens, including the abode of Lord Brahma, the creator.

There is no joy greater than Self-Bliss.

All the joys of the universe put together don't measure up to anything comparable to Self-Bliss.

The Brahma Vaivarta Purana contains a dictum that one should develop one's intellect. The mind should not hold the reins of the intellect and the intellect should not be subservient to the desires of the mind, which itself is governed by the senses. One should elevate oneself. Once you decide to help others, you should devote yourself wholeheartedly to altruistic pursuits. Altruism is not limited to giving somebody bread or other necessities, or money; rather it includes giving right direction to your senses, mind and intellect. And how can you help others when you are unable to help those close to you i.e. your senses? It is but an axiomatic truth that one who cannot do good to oneself, can hardly succeed in his altruistic endeavours. Therefore as long as you don't elevate your mind and intellect, steer them towards excellence, you cannot practise true altruism. As you evolve and elevate yourself, your mind and intellect follow suit as well and you become great. Then altruism becomes your very nature.

Inertia and laziness also give a kind of pleasure, but it is of a very trivial nature. It takes you to lower births those of trees, stones, insects, butterflies, etc. Sense pleasures are bound to make one wander within the confines of heaven, hell and human birth. They only make one hang in the wombs, or else lead one literally down the drain, in case the conception doesn't take place. Divine Bliss or Divine Knowledge is no doubt the Absolute Supreme. As and when the mind merges into God, the Divine peace and Divine love will automatically come to prevail.

...So exert yourself to the task of self-development. Now be your own true friend. There are four means of self-development: (1) good health (2) sublime thoughts (3) cultivating a sagacious intellect and (4) firmly establishing oneself in the Atman.

1) Good health: Everybody wants to be in the pink of health. It is equally true of the virtuous, the pleasure-seeker and the idler. But good health will belong to the one who follows the wise counsel of the Sadguru and the scriptures, and conducts himself with self-restraint and wisdom. The body becomes unwell due to lack of self-restraint, the effect of past Karma or seasonal changes.

One should adapt to the changing environment. The diet should be appropriate and in tune with the laws of Mother Nature. Keep your body and your mind fit through proper intake of milk, buttermilk, fruits, etc. together with a regimen of fasting, exercise, pranayam, etc. If the body is ill as a result of change in the season, then along with the above measures take recourse to appropriate sattvic foods and home medicines. If lack of self-restraint has led to your ill-health, carefully follow the rules and principles of Brahmacharya. Regularly read The Glory of Eternal Youth published by the Ashram, which will stand you in good stead in maintaining Brahmacharya. If the ill-health is because of the effect of past Karma, take recourse to yajnas, austerities, jap, chanting of Lord's name, charities, etc.

2) Sublime thoughts: Determinedly resolve to master your thoughts and emotions. Another way to elevate oneself is to conquer your lust, anger, avarice, delusion and ego.

A boy and a girl meet and get attracted towards each other. It is time to check oneself and divert one's mind attentively. If you are plagued by lust, visualize a corpse or a sick body. In that visualisation, remove the coating of skin that covers the body. Exercise restraint even in the matters of copulation with your own wife and adopt certain rules in this regard. If your mind is beset with avarice, practise charity. This will control your avarice and you will be saved from the sin.

Divine Bliss is the supreme experience, but to achieve that one must devote the mind to the Lord. If the mind is not inclined towards God, then in order to save yourself from vices and depravities, engage yourself in sadhana.

Lord Sri Krishna says, O Arjuna! If you are not capable of firmly establishing your mind in Me, then persevere to attain Me through the yoga of constant practice. - (The Srimad Bhagwadgita : 12.9)

Slowly but surely, as the mind engages itself in the practice of contemplation of the Lord, it will refrain from sensual attractions. If the mind is not engaged in such practice, engage it forcibly. It is sure to give you immense benefits in the future.

One cannot become a graduate in a single day or even a month. A dull student will take much more time to complete a given course of study in comparison to a bright one. Similarly a person with less affinity for sense-enjoyments needs less practice to realize God. And a person prone to falling prey to sense-enjoyments needs to engage in spiritual practices for a longer duration.

In the beginning, spiritual practices may have to be practised by force. By and by as one enters the intermediate stage, one begins to relish spiritual and devotional efforts. But the peace and bliss of samadhi is still elusive. When the practice reaches the supreme stage, samadhi and bliss are achieved effortlessly.

One day, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansas wife Sharada Devi was massaging his feet at bedtime. She asked Him, What is our relationship in your eyes? We are married. Do you consider me to be your wife? Sri Ramakrishna said, I do. Ma Sharada Devi asked, If I am your wife, how do you see me? Sri Ramakrishnas reply was amazing; Goddess Kali has come in the form of my wife and is serving me.

How wonderfully sublime Sri Ramakrishnas perspective is! How unflinchingly firm his belief is in the omnipresence of God! How supremely pious his mind is! Sri Ramakrishna himself said, One day I told my mind, Here is your wife. You should do what other husbands do. At least have a taste of it. Then as I went near my wife. I cried out involuntarily, Maa! Maa! Maa! and my eyes closed. I remained in samadhi till morning.

This is the fruit of the highest stage of practice. You have to be your own Guru. You have to be your own master. Never be lenient towards yourself. And never think twice to forgive someone. You will surely attain greatness. Even your shadow will inspire others to become great.

3) Spiritualization of the intellect: Spiritualization of the intellect means to divinise the intellect. One should set oneself the goal to attain the bliss of the Lord, the bestower of the intellect. One should constantly remind oneself of this goal. This will be a great help in self-elevation. Self-elevation is achieved through making oneself capable of imbibing Divine Bliss, of attaining God-realization.

What is spiritual development of the intellect? In the face of happiness or sorrow, contemplate, These are but transitory, whereas I am eternal. Or I belong to God and He is mine. God is Eternal. Therefore, I am eternal as well. These circumstances of sorrow and happiness are transient. Why then should I indulge in sins for the sake of transient pleasures and sorrows? Why should I be swayed by them? I belong to the eternal Supreme Self and will attain the Eternal alone. I will not be carried away by the ephemeral anymore. Such contemplation on God and your True Self will make you great. You will become a Buddhiyogi. He is infinitely superior to the best of all intellectuals. Once this state is achieved nothing else remains to be done.

One, who has established his mind in thoughts of the Supreme Brahman even for a moment, has taken a holy dip in all the places of pilgrimage, given all charity, performed all sacrifices.

4) Firmly establishing oneself in the Atman: Attain the knowledge of the True Self, the only essential Being that truly exists. The Self alone is the absolute entity and everything else, Prakriti, is non-essential. The ever changing samsara has no sara, while the True Self that brings about and experiences the changes is the real essence. And this essence, the Self, is attained in the company of Saints and by reflecting on the teachings of the scriptures. Money is not reality nor is youth. The Self that can never be separated from you is the essential Being.

I am so and so that this is Maya. But the Source from where the I arises is the absolute Reality. Lord Narayana is ever established in that Reality. That is why He is the Lord. Lord Shiva and Enlightened Saints are also established in that reality. This is why they are great. The more you are enmeshed in the transient trivialities of the world, the more insignificant you become. The more desires a man has, the smaller he is; the fewer the desires, the greater the man. If there are no desires then you are already established in the absolute Reality. It is desires that make one lustful, angry, treacherous, dishonest and worried. If you are free from desires, it is easy to attain Self-Bliss.

It is definitely possible to attain the essential reality and absolutely impossible to hold on to the pleasure derived from sense-objects. Those who strive hard to attain non-essential objects neglecting the real essence, remain discontented even after obtaining those objects of the world. Complete contentment, total satisfaction, absolute bliss lie only in that essential Being, the Atman.

The essential Being, is always blissful. Why should one neglect it and contemplate on the non-essential, I should do this... I must do that... This should be like this... I shall do it that way...

Hey! The whole world is engaged in just doing and dying. This is of no avail. You need not do anything. Just establish your mind firmly in the essence, I am That. That is all you need do; nothing else.

Whatever you do, do it with great care. If you serve diligently, your mind will become elevated. But if you do things carelessly, even if it is selfless service, your mind will not become elevated. If the mind is elevated, one becomes established in the essential Being and leads a Divine life like Lord Narayana. If the mind is distracted, it will hanker after the transient worldly objects and consequently one will be relegated to lower births of insects, butterflies, etc. It is up to us whether we pursue the real essence, the Atman, or bend towards the non-essential Prakriti, manifested in this transient world.

Bliss is the very nature of Atman. Everything exists in the essential Being. All treasures, all capabilities are an integral part of that Being. Wherever you find joy, happiness or auspiciousness, it is emanating from that essential Being. On the other hand, wherever you find misery, grief, pain and unrest, it is due to giving preference to the unreal world. The real essence is nothing but bliss...