

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF RENUNCIATION

Renunciation is that great principle through which we may attain the knowledge of Self. Quite often this principle is the least understood and most opposed idea in the West. It is argued that renunciation brings about indifference to the needs and sufferings of others. Nothing could be so incorrect as to assume this idea. Vedanta teaches that to show love to another, to help him from his misery is a high manifestation of the Principle of renunciation.

Whenever we see anyone suffering, however, our attitude should not be to stand aside and let him reap what he has sown.

In Indian philosophy we are told that whenever we are able to help another, instead of expecting gratitude, we should be grateful: because we have been given an opportunity to elevate ourself.

Swami Paramananda

Realization comes through renunciation, but often the definition of renunciation makes it seem distasteful. Perhaps Gandhi's words will best explain to Western thinkers just what renunciation means in practice.

Happiness, the goal to which we are all seeking, is reached by endeavoring to make the lives of others happy, and if by renouncing the luxuries of life we can

lighten the burdens of others...surely the simplification of our wants is ~~anything~~ greatly to be desired.

Gandhi

What we must renounce is ~~the pleasures~~ of ~~the~~ senses that manifest through the body. When our desires are only ~~to feed the pleasures~~ of the senses then we lose sight of God. We must find pleasure in seeking realization of God- for this is a pleasure that is everlasting. In the end, the body is conquered by ~~deat~~ death. But the Soul continues and this is the element that we must strive to ~~nurish~~. Renounce physical wants when the only thing they have to offer is ~~pleasure~~. Those who have invested all to keep the body alive have in the end died. But what marvellous examples we find in Christ and Buddha who knew that real life comes not from the physical but from the spiritual body.

Why did these great teachers renounce?
Because they found that everything that is a combination of matter is destined to perish; and they sought something more permanent.
Swami Paramananda

The greatest religious teachers have known the Principle of Renunciation. Christ knew it, Buddha ~~knew it.~~ knew it.

Both of these great Souls valued character more than all else, and devoted all their attention to that. They renounced, or threw aside all else, knowing that everything was transitory, that character alone would live.
Swami Paramananda

*I do not mean to
of what" & "for what" that this term takes
on meaning.*

If we do ~~not~~ like the word renunciation then perhaps self sacrifice would be a better word. Certainly Christ is the living example of ~~ones~~ who chose to self sacrifice, out of love for us.

What renunciation means is that we will sacrifice our selfishness for a higher ideal- a love of the Spirit. If one argues that selfishness is an attribute to be desired then he is a fool and of little mind.

When we cling to this world of materialism, when we seek lust and vice, our character diminishes. The ~~true~~ Christian is one who loves Christ above all physical wants.

You cannot have sincere love for God in your heart and at the same time fondness for worldly enjoyments.

Swami Paramananda

What did Christ say? 'He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it' Again and again did he preach renunciation as the only way to be perfect.

Swami Vivekananda

REALIZATION THRU ACTION

Many people quite wrongly assume that Vedanta and Lord Krishna teach that the only way to realization of God is by the renunciation of all action. This is quite wrong. There are many roads to God and one of these is ~~through~~ the devotion to duty. Now this simple sounding statement is not so simply understood. Were it fully comprehended we would not always see so many people constantly striving to meet a goal that is beyond their capabilities. We must work if we are to live. This is a very practical philosophy in the West. Yet the real purpose of work is little understood and this often brings unnecessary hardships upon people. Lord Krishna taught Arjuna that " Knowledge of Brahman is superior to any sort of action." And yet at the same time Krishna implores Arjuna to ' Do his duty ' and fight his enemies. Naturally this seemed a complete contradiction to what Krishna was trying to teach Arjuna. When Arjuna confronts Krishna with this seemingly illogical statement Krishna replies:

I have already told you that, in this world, aspirants may find enlightenment by two different paths. For the contemplative is the path of

knowledge.* for the active is the path of selfless action.

Freedom from activity is never achieved by abstaining from action. Nobody can become perfect by merely ceasing to act. In fact, nobody can ever rest from his activity even for a moment.

Do your duty, always; but without attachment. That is how a man reaches the ultimate Truth; by working without anxiety about results.

It is better to do your own duty, however imperfectly, than to assume the duties of another person, however successfully. Prefer to die doing your own duty: the duty of another will bring you into great spiritual danger.

We have quoted these excerpts in length for a very good reason. The Western world is a society that is predisposed to the idea that material success is the ultimate aim and the final measurement of a man's worth as a person. Now obviously you would disagree with this ~~statement~~ because from childhood you have been taught certain values that are opposite to this conclusion. But the reality of the situation is that the West does not ~~practice its philosophy~~. Actually, the real problem with the West is that it has no philosophy of high ideals that it practices. It is bent on the road to material success and everything else is secondary. We constantly find ~~America~~ rating itself by its military strength and gross national product. By no means does America lack ~~in~~ a true philosophy.

* Raja-yoga

~~Its~~ very Constitution is a hall mark of the highest ideals a nation can ~~attain~~ to. But the fact still remains that America does not practice a ~~spiritually~~ oriented philosophy. Now what Krishna tells us is that we should strive to do our work the best way we can. He isn't ~~telling~~ us to give up and not try to succeed. What he presents to us is the reason for working. What ultimately must we expect from our actions?

Generally the term Karma refers to ~~the term~~ cause and effect. In Karma-Yoga we are only concerned with the definition as it applies to work and action. Everything we do, everything we think, is action. When we work-that is action. When we think-that is action. Now often we see men who rise above all others because they have done some particular great deed. We tend to evaluate such a person by the work he has done; the greater the work and its influence on others-the greater we judge the person to be. This is a ~~poor~~ way to evaluate the greatness of a man. The real greatness of a man is marked by the very small things he does. His everyday actions are what count. Quite often we can see a man for what he really is by the way he enters a room. Who is greater: That man who donates millions of dollars to charity every

year or ^{the} policeman who everyday helps children across the busy road as they go to school; who after the school day ends they rush to him to tell him they received an A or B in some particular subject? One would have to ask what motive brought about the philanthropist and policeman's actions. Certainly this is the true ^{TEST} gauge of ~~who is the~~ greater. If a man's nature directs him to do a certain type of work then that is the work he should pursue. If one is talented in science and if he feels an urge to work in this field then he should direct his resources into this work. If another feels the urge to do farming then this person should concentrate his attentions on this type of work. One should not strive to rise above that type of work which he feels most comfortable with. His talents arise because of his Karma. His station in life is predetermined by his past deeds. If a man's talents direct him into a work that provides great material success then he should pursue this course. But if his Karma has placed him into this field then he will not feel a great drive to seek pleasure from his material success. In other words, that man is in his correct line of work when he desires no success from its product. If the rich man feels neither ^e success nor

failure in his work, and desires neither more nor less, then he is doing that work ^{which} ~~that~~ his Karma has directed him to do. To be more precise: to work without attachment is the ideal. When we are not attached to our work then we are doing that work which is best suited for us.

The man who works without selfish motive—who desires nothing for himself but to give—reaches the highest Truth. ~~If we work to reap a reward then we are working for a selfish motive.~~ We can illustrate this idea by many examples. For instance, at some time in our life most of us have experienced the teacher-student relationship and have become quite dissatisfied with teachers in general. This usually stems not so much from the course matter being taught but how it is being conveyed to the students. Now the real teacher, the Sensei, is that person whose only motive is to share his knowledge with others and desires no reward in return. This means that his teaching is without selfish motive. When he thinks, "I am a better person because I have succeeded in teaching my pupils" then the motive is a selfish one. This is what we mean by work without attachment. It is work where we personally expect nothing for ourselves. Only when we are doing that work where we feel no

7

expectations for personal reward , but rather where our only desire is in the giving and sharing, do we become aware that we are placed in the correct line of work. When we see God in everything then we must see him in the work we do. If we strive to do the best we can in our work then we are striving to work for God. How often we see a poor man raise himself up on the economic ladder, become very rich, and then only to exclaim that he is dissatisfied with his life. ~~If we are constantly seeking to make more money and seek more fame,~~ and yet we are always discontent with our life, it is because our Karma has not directed us to do this work we have chosen. Many times we see a great teacher who is loved very much by his students . He loves every moment of his life. His devotion to God is directed through his work. But sometimes pressures force him to take a different position, say a dean's position, and suddenly he no longer finds himself content with his work. ~~His talents lay where his Karma has directed.~~ He soon becomes very dissatisfied with life and is unable to work without attachment. He becomes pre-occupied with his failures and soon ceases to see God and fulfillment in his life and work. Our Karma gives us only what we deserve. Every man has his station

in life and he cannot rise above it. When he tries he becomes dissatisfied and unhappy. Thus we are in our correct place of work when we seek no other desires from it. When we have reached this level we can see God in our work and crave for nothing else. We know our occupation is the correct one when we can truly express our self. IN IT

The primary object in choosing one's vocation should be to find a field in which he is able, because of his aptitudes due to heredity, environment, previous attainments, natural tendencies and education, to express himself most perfectly.

Swami Ganeswarananda

'To work we have the right, but not to the fruits thereof. Leave the fruits alone. Why care for results? If you wish to help a man, never think what that man's attitude should be towards you. If you want to do a great deed or a good work, do not trouble to think what the results will be.

Swami Vivekananda

We must always consider the motive that prompts us to do certain works. If we look deep inside of our self and we find that we are working to achieve something for ourself then we are working for selfish motive. We must always see God in others and thus our efforts must always be to give to others and not look to what we can give ourself. If we always remember that our life is to serve God then our natural tendencies will direct us to that field where we can best serve

Him. Thus we see what is meant when we say devotion to duty is devotion to God. When we see everything in God we will direct our resources to serve him and not our self. The question may then be asked, "What must our duty to our family be, to serve them or God?" If we see our children as reflections of God then we will treat them accordingly. Our duty to our children is the same as our duty to God. Thus the father gives to his son without desire for return. ^{LOVE} What did Christ mean when he said, "It is better to give than receive"? Thus the father will see his children and wife as reflections of Brahman and not as objects .

of Knowing that his mother and father are visible representations of God, the householder always and by all possible means must please them.

Swami Vivekananda

There is a passage in the Mahanirvana Tantra which says: "If the householder dies in battle, fighting for his country or his religion, he comes to the same goal that the yogi attains through meditation," showing thereby that what is duty for one is not duty for another. At the same time, it does not say that the former duty is lowering, and the latter, elevating; each duty has its own place, and according to the circumstances in which we are placed must we perform our duties.

Swami Vivekananda

THE HARVEST FIELD OF LIFE *

As with the generation of leaves, so is life
A hollow chime rings within a silent soul
~~What~~ passes death so quietly
That silhouette on a sunset evening
Taking a moment's time to rest upon the sands of
that life it knew so fleetingly
Awakens with the roar of birth
of waves crashing down upon the rocks
Awake-awake- it's time to begin again
Leave behind your deeds
Carry with you your memories
For they alone direct your destiny.

The Sun rises-and the chimes sing and breathe
their melody
And the buds ^{so} bloom
And the leaves are green again
For music sings within a new born Soul
As with the generation of leaves, so is life.
N. Downing N. Downing

* Title from Swami Paramananda's , Reincarnation and Immortality

REINCARNATION AND KARMA

If we are to believe in a life after death then we must believe in a life before death. Some say the ~~Soul~~ Soul is created at birth and attains immortality after the body dies. But if the Soul is created then it must be subject to a finite existence. That which can be created can, in the limited sense of the word, can be destroyed. In truth, physics teaches us that nothing is ever created or destroyed. It merely is transformed into a different phase. If we say that the Soul, after it leaves the body changes into a state that is not subject to the laws of physics then it could not have resided in the body in the first place. For, by its very entering of the body it must be of a material form. If the Soul develops through life's experiences then it must have substance because that ^{WHICH} ~~which~~ is without form and substance cannot be acted upon. So, we could not develop the Soul unless it did indeed contain some real and finite form.

Now how can the Soul, which is contained within, but separate from the body, be created by the body?

If the Soul is to develop through life's experiences then the senses and preception of the body must act upon the Soul. If the body acts upon the Soul, ^{THE SOUL} ~~it~~ cannot have been created by the body for otherwise

the body would be acting upon itself. Then we ~~we~~ would be saying that it is the body that develops and not the Soul.

Now we could argue that God has placed the Soul in Man to be developed through the agent of the body. But then we would be going back to those first arguments presented regarding the finite and infinite nature of God. An infinite God, who is free from limitations, who is neither the cause nor the effect cannot create. Again, we are presented with an illustration of Maya!

Now Vedanta teaches that indeed the Soul does exist, (Do not equate the Soul with the Atman) and that this Soul is of a very very fine substance.

The soul exists in a finite sense. It exists in the world of Maya and is subject to the laws of physics.

To the Atman, the individualized soul is illusion. But to us, the you of today, the soul is a real entity and is constantly developing. Now, ~~we~~ we have remarked about before, to speak of the immortality of the soul in the normal sense is contrary to what we have defined Brahman to be. In plain language, Vedanta says that the soul, ^{IT IS} not the Atman, ^{THAT} does not continue to exist forever and ever. Now you may ask what ^{is there} proof ~~there is~~ for a soul. It is really unfair to

ask for a material proof of something that is basically spiritual. It is certain that one day Man will channel his scientific knowledge into trying to discover the existence of the soul. As you know, there has never been any great scientific exploration made into discovering the existence of souls. Who ^{would} ~~who~~ invest the ^{Resources} ~~money~~ needed for such an adventure?

As modern science explores the physic of Man he has made some wonderful discoveries. We know of the great efforts Dr. ^{Ry} ~~Ry~~ne went to in his experiments on E.S.P. Yet for so many years he tolerated ridicule and scorn because of his research. Today, studies in E.S.P. and mental teleth ~~play~~ are very common. In fact, the Soviet Union has tackled this field and have created an institute whose sole purpose is to find out what underlined the vast areas of physic phenom^e ~~ina~~. Now the great sages of India were always in the habit of making broad generalization concerning truths. They did not try to delve into the details. They were content in just knowing that the basic truth had been found. To illustrate, the basic ideas formulated by Freud on the nature of dreams and the structure of the Id, Ego, and Super Ego, had several thousand years earlier been discovered and generalized. It was for Freud ^{to} ~~who~~ filled in the necessary details.

Even the basic theories of relativity were known to the ancient sages. But again, they made only the broadest generalizations concerning them. It took the great mind of Einstein to fill in the details. There really has not been a truly original thought conceived in a thousand years. Only details have been discovered. Now let us apply these ideas to understanding the substance of the soul.

In speaking of the soul it is necessary to redefine certain terms to prevent confusion. Remember, the ego is the conscious element in Man. It is the individualized self. Now the soul is an entity of extremely fine substance. We can think of it as a very fine form of energy. This substance dwells in the body of a man. It occupies position and is subject to external stimuli. Since this soul is in the form of matter-energy it is subject to the laws of the physical world. It is very important that one grasp this point. The soul is dependent upon its surroundings and receives stimuli from the ego. The ego, of course, is acted upon by its surroundings; it is the thinker, the perciever and actor. As the ego develops it directly influences the soul. Thus the soul is an accumulator of the ego's experiences. This condition continues to exist while the soul resides in the

body. At death the ego, since it is a part of the body, dies. It ~~no~~ longer exists. It is this fact ^{WHICH} ~~that~~ so frightens people that they turn to the idea of an immortal soul ^{WHICH} ~~that~~ continues to live after death. No one has ever really experienced death, not in the real sense. People have died but they themselves have not experienced this event. This may seem a little puzzling at first but if you consider that one must be consciously aware in order to perceive and experience then we can understand that no one is ever aware that he is dead.

Now upon death of the body, the soul leaves ^{THE} ~~being~~ and continues in another state-- a free state where it does not contain the gross body form. Up to this point there is really little argument with the major religions concerning the soul. But now we are faced with the question: "What happens to the soul after it has left the body?" Some say it attains immortality, that it continues in this free state forever. But we maintain that this is not possible because since the soul is of substance it ~~must~~ be subject to the laws of physics. If it became immortal it would have the characteristics of the Supreme Deity and this we hold is contradictory to the first arguments presented concerning the real nature of God (Brahman). If the soul has any existence

it must be finite and consequently come to an end. Now Vedanta holds that the soul is directly influenced by Karma. Karma is a physical law of the universe that has its application and influence on living beings. Karma determines how long the soul continues in the "free state". We spoke of the soul as being a very fine substance that is almost undetectable. Now, the greater the Karmic force on the soul, the denser will be the soul. As Karma decreases the soul becomes finer and finer in its quality. When the soul becomes completely free of Karma then the soul no longer exists. The soul, in a sense, has become so very fine that it no longer has any form. Let us use the analogy of gas enclosed in a finite volume. From chemistry, you know that if a quantity of gas is enclosed in a small volume it will have a definite density per unit volume. Now if we make the enclosure very very large the gas molecules disperse equally throughout the volume and the density per unit volume decreases. We have the same amount of gas but now it is very finely diffused. Consider what would happen if the vessel were made infinitely large. Then this same quantity of gas would again disperse and shall delve into the molecules of water in case of water.

through ~~the infinite~~ container. But to speak of its density within this new enclosure would be meaningless. Thus the soul has gone from the gross form, where it was under Karmic forces, to the finest form possible.

Nothing has been added or subtracted from the universe. Only the density within any given region of the universe ~~has~~^{is} changed.

Now it is this state of total dispersion of the soul substance in the universe that is the Atman. The Atman is the true Self and the true Self is that which is free from ~~Karma~~. Free the soul of Karmic forces and only the Atman remains. And what is this Atman that remains? It is Brahman-~~th~~at which is everywhere and everything, uninfluenced by Karma, free of Maya.

THE PERSONAL MEANING OF REINCARNATION AND KARMA

We have discussed reincarnation in its abstract sense in some detail. However, if we do not explore the personal meaning of reincarnation then it will have little influence on us. People generally have mixed feelings concerning reincarnation. Some seem to feel that the concept poses a threat to their own distinct individuality. They say, "I cannot accept the thought that my soul will be in another person's body." What these people fail to do is discriminate between the functions of the body and the Soul. The body in itself has no real identity. It is the Soul that distinguishes one man from another. His body is merely an agent, a carrier, and nothing more. When the body wears out it is discarded for a new one. We bury the body but not the Soul. If our Soul is a part of this body then we would bury it too. But few people are willing to accept the thought that all existence ends with the death of the body. We cling to the idea that we can never die and yet we constantly see people dying every day. One cannot himself really conceive of death because his true Self never dies. It is eternal and this is why people cannot visualize their existence ending. When our clothes become worn out we discard them for new ones; and the body is nothing but a garment to be discarded when worn out.