

Religions teach us that we must constantly strive to be pure in heart. Christ taught that only the pure in heart shall see God. But who can attain perfection in one life time? Even a hundred years is but a fleeting moment of time. If heaven is a place of beauty and perfection then only the perfect may enter its doors. If we have only one life time in which to attain perfection then very few of us would ever see God. Only a cruel and unjust God would give his children just one chance to enter his kingdom. When a child makes a mistake we do not punish him for the remainder of his life. We try to teach him to do good and give him another chance. This is the way it is with Man. He lives his life constantly making mistakes. But because the Soul does not perish with the body he is able to correct his wrongs in another life. This is why we see such diversity in people. We see those Souls who have attained a high degree of perfection in the bodies of great men. These are people who have worked out much of their Karma. When they come to us we recognize their saintliness and admire them. Yet if we could only realize that each of us will one day attain this same greatness then what a beautiful idea reincarnation would be to us. If a

man does not believe in the continued existence of his Soul-and that what he will become in his next life will be determined by his deeds in this life-then what is to prevent him from gratifying his selfish desires by evil methods? When we understand that everything we do now will affect our future happiness we will be less inclined to act in evil ways.

No man can paint a masterpiece in one day. It takes many years of hard work to achieve such a result. Likewise, how can a single man hold pure thoughts in his mind unless he has cultivated his mind over a long period of time? No garden will blossom with beautiful flowers unless it is constantly cultivated and the weeds are pulled out. If we just cut the weeds down then they will quickly grow back again. But by pulling them out by their roots we are free of them forever..

We constantly see people who profess to be God-loving; ~~but on close examination~~ reveal themselves to be only going through the motions of devotion to God. Their Dharma is superficial and their real purpose is to make others think that they are holy men. These are people who do not really understand the real meaning of God. But we cannot condemn them for their

approach. Often when we are given a task to perform which is beyond our grasp we either lose interest in it or we pretend to know what we are doing. If we constantly strive to cultivate high ideals in this life then in our next life the truths will be easier to grasp and understand. We cannot become discouraged if something seems to be beyond our capacities. It is only a temporary situation.

We reap what we sow. Often we see people in extreme poverty and suffering. When we try to aid them through charity they seem to fall back to their original poverty. This is not always the case, but certainly it is the predominate result. No matter how hard we try to erase the evils of the world they always remain. There will always be the fortunate and unfortunate in this world. But this in no way implies that we should make our hearts callous to the sufferings of others. Quite the opposite; for when we are able to help another soul through his misery we elevate our own self; we make our hearts purer and come closer to realizing God.

There is often the mistaken idea that the Vedantic philosophy of Karma brings about feelings of indifference towards the sufferings of others.

This is a very wrong belief. The spiritual teachers such as Gandhi, Sri Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda went to great pains to help the poor, and suffering. They made themselves living examples of the importance of helping the needy. It is the mass of people who show indifference to each other. It is the same in America. The mass does not concern itself with the sufferings that go on around them. Always we see examples of such divine Souls like Martin Luther King who stoop to feed the hungry. When we realize the truth of reincarnation we will direct ourselves to act in such a manner so we never harm another being. We will realize that any evil we bring to others will be returned to us in a future life.

✓

An important point concerning reincarnation should be brought to your attention. Dramatic events, such as accidents, assassinations of great leaders, and man made biological hereditary defects, are not the result of individual Karmic forces manifesting. For instance, the assassination of a great man such as Martin Luther King was not the result of his own Karma manifesting itself. He was not paying for a wrong committed in his last life. Our Karma predisposes our minds to certain patterns of thinking and acting.

What we think, we become. We conduct our lives according to our level of spiritual awareness. But we are powerless to prevent an evil person from inflicting injury upon us. The evil doer will himself pay for his actions. Sometimes people wonder whether an infant's death means that the child is denied access to heaven because it has not had time to develop its mind. If we could understand that the death of an infant's body is not the death of its Soul the agony we feel would not be so painful.



Death ~~crept~~ in the other day and took my child from me
I loved her so - so very much - the words I cannot say
This loneliness deep inside - the tears I shed for thee
Oh blessed God - Oh God of life !
Why has she gone from me?

I remember that glorious day when all the world at once
she knew
and cried the joyfull song-I Am - 'twas then the truth
I knew

This ~~was~~ the world I loved so much ~~and~~ dreamed of future
lives

When my child- my darling child would bring ^a the life
to come - springing from her the breath of joy
Another child whose life would be a small but gentle
part of me.

She was the Sun and I was the flower
and the warmth she gave to me

Was more than a hope - a cherished hope - it was the
reality.

The sorrow I feel I cannot hide
it echos in my heart.

For every time the Sun shines bright I see my blessed
child- reminding me-reminding me that for one moment,
one special moment, she was a part of me

and all that was in the love I felt so much for thee.

What can I do, what can I say, what is the remedy?
to quell this pain that suffers me to keep this agony.

But now I know-I know at last-my God my blessed God!
That beautiful part she shared with me is totally and
finally a glorious unity and oneness with Thee.

N. Downing.

Most people derive a certain pleasure in believing that there exists a life after death. Of course, strictly speaking the term "life after death" has no meaning. It is self contradictory. But obviously what we are referring to is the continued existence of the Soul after death. Now many Christians today maintain that the Soul manifests at the moment of Birth. Others claim that at the instant of conception the life of the Soul begins. If one believed that the Soul enters a man at birth then the infant before birth is nothing but an animal. After all, the distinguishing factor between man and the common animal is that he is blessed with a Soul. Then this person who maintains that Souls enter only after birth has every right to regard the fetus as merely a living organism and if, so choosing, destroy it if he finds it expedient. Whether it be one month, one day, or one second before birth, his logic must dictate that he can regard this fetus as just a living piece of matter. What, in effect, he is saying is that the rose bud possesses no beauty until it has flowered. But he is denying the rose if he denies the bud for from the bud there blooms the rose. Everything that is beautiful in the rose has always ~~been~~ been within the bud.

Are we less a human if we ~~wear~~ a heavy cloak? Is the tree less a tree when it sheds its leaves with the coming of winter? If we have any feeling that human life is something special then how can we permit ~~ourselves~~ the liberty of destroying it just because it may seem a burden at the time? Only the most selfish person would destroy that life which seeks to germinate and express its glory to the world. If the birth of an unborn child presents such a burden to its mother that she prefers to destroy him then what a total picture of pure self-centered selfishness she shows her ~~person to be~~. Only the lowest type of person is capable of such an act. We see the crudest of reptiles destroying their young to satisfy themselves. Are we to image ourselves after these lowly beasts? No amount of argument can logically support the destroying of human life before birth unless we assume that life has no meaning and human values are non-existent. If you assume the latter, then my friend your neighbor has the same right to come to your house and destroy you if his whim so directs him. If we are to believe in the teachings of Christ then all ~~human life is~~ precious. Vedanta teaches that the true Self resides in the body at all times and

is not subject to the ~~relativity~~ of time. If we
destroy the life in another then we have no right to
complain about the miseries of this world. If you
destroy the seeds of the flower then it is you who
is to blame if the sweet nectar of life is absent from
this world. The most beautiful thing in the world is
the seed of life. From it springs ~~the songs of love~~.
The new born child sings the blessed song-I AM.

To my grave I walked one night
among the terror, fear and fright
I looked beneath the ground to see
the clutter of ~~bones~~^{the} cries of agony
I then in a moment of frenzied fright
took to refuge in retreating flight
but where to go I did not know
to quell the pain within me.
So suddenly! so sudden 'twas it then I thought
to see
the truth behind this misery.
Could it be - could it be
beneath the ground there lay
the future of my destiny?
Reality - reality - does it say
to look upon it in this way.

N. Downing

CHARACTER MIRROR OF THE SOUL.

The great problem of uplifting humanity is not merely one of transplanting a person who is suffering or degraded to a place where he may live in comfort. It is a deeper problem. He must be taught first how to make the best of himself. That is much more vital than merely supplying his material needs.

Swami Paramananda

A man is what he thinks about. The direction of his mind will so direct his character. Evil thoughts precipitate evil actions. If we think evil of others then we soon become that which we criticize. It is far better for a person never to criticize another.

If we find fault with others or if we lower ourselves to hating another human being it is because we are reflecting our own image. Selfishness comes from imperfect relative knowledge. The great Soul is he who sees beauty in the lowest of creatures, who loves the murderer, who gives his last possession to the thief..

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you

If our character is to be strong we must constantly strive to keep pure thoughts in our mind. We must never consider another being, no matter how distastful it may seem, as a person less equal than our self.

If we understand the great principle that all beings are a reflection of God then we can never hate anything.

He who realizes all beings in the Self, and the Self in all animate and inanimate objects of the universe, never hates anything or any being.

Swami Abhedananda

If we have become predisposed to certain patterns of thinking that lend themselves to selfish thoughts we can overcome this tendency by consciously learning to hold our mind on the plane of good thoughts. We develop bad habits by cultivating them. Likewise, we may reap a new harvest of life by cultivating good thoughts.

If our character is to be pure then we must seek that ~~which is~~ necessary to bring about this quality. To realize the true Self is the only way. But this realization is not easy for people to handle. Just saying that I will realize my true Self will not ~~make~~ it happen. Rather, we must be introduced to ~~the~~ certain principles ~~which~~ will guide us to attainment.

The first principle for us to realize is that we are
are one with God and abolish the foolish notion that
one with God and abolish the foolish idea that man
man is forever bound to weakness and sin.

Men are taught from childhood that they are
weak and sinners. Teach them that they are
all glorious children of immortality, even
those who are weakest in manifestation.
Swami Vivekananda

Vedanta teaches that we are not born in
sin and iniquity, but that our Atman or true
Self is sinless.
Swami Abhedananda

Now Vedanta does not say that we are free from sin.
It asserts that our true Self is sinless. When we
realize that our real Self is one with God then WE DO
not seek to do evil and sinfull things. Sin is a
relative thing. It is bound in the illusion of Maya.
The Soul acquires sin through its acts and deeds. We
are born of sin only if during our past lives we have
acquired it. The greater the sin we committ the greater
will be the Karmic forces acting on the Soul. The
pure in heart is he who is free from sin. This
illuminated soul is one with God. Christ proclaimed
in the Sermon on the Mount that there is but one
who shall see God.

Blessed are the pure in heart; for they
shall see God.

Clearly, no other is qualified for this position.
Others may reap certain rewards. ~~Theirs~~ may be

DR LUSBY asks
"What is SIN to Vedanta"
Good questions Vec 2
What is
"sin" for
Vedanta

the Kingdom of Heaven, or they may inherit the Earth, but only the illumined Soul will see God. This basic fact is what really underlines all of the Vedanta Philosophy. And are we really capable of attaining this perfect state? Vedanta says we are and should constantly strive toward this end. Christ expects the same thing of us.

~~Be ye~~ therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Now baptism is for the remission of sins. Essentially, when we are baptised we are taking a vow that we will live a life free of sin. If we break this vow then we have negated the purposes of baptism. Just immersing oneself in water is no assurance that one is now free from sin. ~~When we seek to discover~~ our true Self we perform a baptism because we vow to free ourselves of sin. We cannot attain Self Knowledge and sin at the same time. It would be self-contradictory and impossible.

The greatest curse ~~we can place upon~~ a child is to instill in him the foolish notion that he is a sinner. Just what has he sinned against and whom?

Who shall blame the blessed child
 for what he shall become?
 He knows so little-he sees so much
 his life has just begun
~~So~~ who shall curse the cherished child
 for what he has become
 Is it he or is it she
 or do we blame the child
 N. Downing

Constantly we see people enforcing upon children ^{the idea} that they are weak. This terrible thing is hammered into them every day. In school they are reminded, at home they are reminded, always they are reminded that they are weak and sinners. We force the silly notion on ^{THE CHILD} him that he must repent of his sins. He is usually too young to ^{UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF SIN.} ~~know what really is sin.~~ Rather, he gains a vague idea by observing those around him and imitating them. He acquires the sin ~~from~~ those who denounce him for "having it in the first place." Then we force the ridiculous idea on him that he must repent of ~~these~~ "acquired" sins. If he doesn't we scare him into believing that ~~there~~ there awaits ^{for} him a Devil who is going to roast him alive and keep doing it forever. Thus, we instill in him ~~the~~ belief that perfection comes out of fear. We are saying that God is an out-growth of terror and sadism. What a ~~totally~~ worthless line of direction this is. It's pure garbage. Instead of

6

constantly reminding the child of his weaknesses we should emphasize^{ze} the strength that is within him. We should praise him for his positive qualities and reinforce them. We should constantly try to show him how to realize and utal^{ize} the great strength he already possesses. We should correct his weaknesses not by punishment, but through love. If he does wrong we should show him how totally opposed this is to his true character. If he is taught to believe in himself then he would by necessity be opposed to anything that nourishes his weaknesses. If the child believes in himself then he will direct his actions in such a way that he constantly improves himself and grows stronger. It is really a matter of how you see your child. If you see him as a blessed being then you will treat him in that way. You will conduct your ~~Self~~ in the same manner you would were you to be in the company of Christ. Then ~~the child~~ would by your example follow ~~your~~ teachings. Now you are probably saying that this is hog-wash, totally impractical and would not work. But why wouldn't it work? ~~It would be a~~ safe assumption^{to} to say that you have never tried this approach much less considered it. One must wonder how many people have ever considered^s their children as anything other than as ~~an~~ extension

of themselves. A selfish notion indeed is this idea. If a person cannot see his child as anything more than the biologically reproduced ^{being,} then he ought to seriously ponder what he thinks about himself.

Again let us emphasize we are not saying weaknesses do not exist. Of course they do. We all have faults. A man who is stricken with sickness, who lies in bed in pain, is fully aware that he is weak. No one need tell him that he is weak. He already knows that. What he wants is strength—to be free from his illness. We take notice of his illness only to ascertain the best approach to bringing him to health again. We constantly encourage him to get well and strong. Certainly we will falter at times, many times in fact, but this is no excuse for us to fall back on our weaknesses and resign ourselves to this state.

If we constantly strive to attain perfection then there will come a time when we will act and think only pure thoughts. We must tell the child that he is the blessed one—that he is the cherished one—that he alone can attain perfection. Instill in him that the quality of God is already in him.

This is the Vedantic answer to those who claim we are forever chained to sin and weakness. Vedanta corrects this narrow idea of sin by reminding us that

there is no such thing as sin. It is a relative thing. It is illusion, it is Maya. One man's vice is another man's virtue. One man's wealth is another man's poverty. It is illusion-it is Maya manifesting itself. Only the Atman is free from Maya. Why reinforce those agents which tie us to this power of Maya? The Atman is first to be ~~heard~~, then, ~~thought about~~, and then meditated upon. We can only do this when we discard such absurdities as sin. You are already free-the sin is illusion. Only your true Self exists. ~~Nothing~~ else matters but to realize this fact. For if we seek Brahman how can we be influenced by notions of sin? By seeking Brahman our minds would blot out all other distractions.

We must believe in the glory and purity of all ^{BEINGS} ~~souls~~.
SINCE WITHIN THEM LIES THE ATMAN.

^{-E}
~~SUPPLEMENTARY~~ REFLECTIONS

One of the greatest curses we can place upon ourself is when we start to doubt our worth as a person. When we have doubts about our value as a person and start to question whether we are important to others, we become preoccupied with feelings of inadequacy. Nothing so quickly destroys a man than to feel that he is inadequate as a person. If one looks deeply into the hearts of those suffering from various forms of mental illness I think one will always find that there stands out a clear and visible ^{common divisor} distinction. This ^{divisor} distinction is that the person feels himself to be of little worth. He not only doubts his own value- he most often believes it so. Of course many times his feelings of inadequacy are disguised and he tries to show himself to be a very strong and forthright person. But under this disguise we see a person very lonely and troubled. When the seeds of self doubt germinate we see the many forms of neurosis manifesting themselves. I ~~do not~~ believe one can find a troubled child who is not filled with feelings of self-doubt.

Often ~~sincere~~ people spend ~~many~~ years studying the various fields of mental health so that they may be equiped to analysis^{2e} and ~~diagnose~~ mental

illness. Quite often the real problem is overlooked because of its mere simplicity.

The greatest moment in our life is when we start to believe in something. But often we deny our children the right to believe in themselves. This is truly a great curse we place upon them. When we deny the child the right to feel he is of value and worth he comes to feel himself a lesser person and not worthy of love. A significant cause of maladjustment in children is this lack of self-esteem. In fact, I would say it is the significant cause. Love in itself is not enough. We can heap mounds of love upon a child but if he does not come to believe that he is an influential part of the family group—even though he may feel his is loved very much—then the seed of self doubt are planted. At such a tender age they may have years to germinate. It is not enough that a child just be loved. He must feel that he is needed and that he can play an active role in molding his environment. In fact, I would venture to say that if a child is not needed, and he does not play an active role in his development, then he merely becomes an object which ^{he may feel can be} may be discarded at any time. Denying love to a child is bad—but denying the child the right to be needed results in ~~even~~ more serious consequences. " They may not love me

but I am needed and so I am of value." We may love the family pet but it does not demand to be needed. It does not demand to play an active role in determining its existence. The family pet demands affection. The child performs that need. " I am important because **I am needed.** ~~I am loved because I am needed.~~"

I stress this importance of self-esteem^{ESTEE} because I have yet to see a troubled person who was not constantly inflicted with self-doubt. It is a cruel thing to doubt ~~oneself~~. How often we hear the stress put on one's having confidence in himself. But so few times do we see this truth being instilled in our children.

I think one of the cruelest things to observe is to see a child trying to express an opinion only to be rebuffed by his parents or teachers because they either see his self assertion as a threat to themselves, of they believe it is improper for a child to speak his opinion. More often than not they ignore the child because they think his opinions are so obvious as to be trite. Is it little wonder that we find so few young people who are willing to voice their opinions on matters of importance.

We teach them from childhood that they are not important. So ~~easy~~ it becomes to lose confidence

in ourself, and yet so hard to restore it. Children are more sensitive to denial than to criticism.

When you deny them the right to believe in themselves they become the clerks of this world.

When we see our children as reflections of God we come to cherish their thoughts. We worship them and find we are in need of their opinions and love. Our need for them becomes their need for us.

~~There~~ There was a woman I once knew who was a mathematician. ~~When ever~~ she was in the presence of children she would inevitably find herself in a discussion with them. She would bring up very profound topics and ask the children for their opinions. She never attempted to teach these children in the conventional sense. She assumed that their opinions might be just as valid as hers. The only difference between her discussions with children and her colleagues was that she tended to tolerate the latter for their ignorance.

So often we tend to treat children as play things rather than as reasoning human beings. Now I am in no way implying that we should start placing heavy stress on achieving intellectual pursuits for our children. Quite the contrary. I believe that we are doing children a great injustice by constantly hammering school into them. Schools are an evil thing; they

don't teach- they train children. They destroy the child's very self confidence he must have if he is to succeed in life. He spends twelve years in school and half the energy he invests is expended in trying to regain the self-confidence he lost as a child. That child who believes in himself can gain twice as much as the one who is always trying to overcome self-doubt, and feelings of inadequacy. We have all heard statements like, "We must direct the child's talents." Let the child direct his own talents. Let him sense his own way through the forest. He will find his own path. Your only function should be to watch for those dangers that lurk in the forest. If the log is too big for him to step over you should help move it away. If one path leads to a dangerous edge, let him walk to its edge and only then step in to make sure he doesn't fall. We become strong by overcoming obstacles, not by avoiding them.

Children ~~are~~ our equals but we are always discriminating against them. We can only truly love a wife when we see her as our equal. Must it be less for our children? If we try to share his experiences as much as he tries to share ours, then two forces of love and respect come together and are greatly amplified. The sun does not teach the flower how to grow.

well put!

It gives the flower energy and warmth; and with this food does the flower through its own force spring to full bloom^{so} and color.

A++

As effective a concise statement of Vedanta as I've read. Very well done - clearly projected & ably implemented. The inclusion of the poetry adds a welcome dimension. Your work of the quarter in this course has been of the highest order.