

Br. Allen Glendale Temple September 1st, 2011

“Nervousness”

On How to Improve Meditation:

If you have trouble concentrating on meditation decide for 30 seconds you’ll practice Hong Sau perfectly. Decide for the next 30 seconds you won’t let your mind wander from the thought of God, from the prayer you are saying. If we keep doing this, bringing our mind back for just a short period we’ll get better and better at meditation. If we get in the habit of sitting there and letting things go we just get in the bad habit of being restless and letting things go, so get in the habit of concentrating.

Tonight’s Topic: “Nervousness”

Master Says: “Restless mind vibrating through the nerves is called nervousness.” “Nervousness appears to be a simple ailment, but in reality it is very complicated and uncomfortable. If you are nervous it is difficult to bring about healing of any disease you may have. If you are nervous you cannot concentrate or work efficiently to attain success. If you are nervous you cannot meditate deeply to acquire peace and wisdom. In fact nervousness interferes with all the normal functions of the human body and mind, upsetting the physical, mental and spiritual machinery.”

There’s a simple rule here: restlessness is the origin of nervousness, so anything that helps promote peace and calmness is us is going to help remove nervousness and anything that promotes restlessness is going to bring that nervousness so the choice is ours: what kind of activities are we going to have in our lives?

Master says: “The disturbance of mental equilibrium which results in nervous disorders is caused by continuous states of excitement or excessive stimulation of the senses.”

Master lists some of the common causes of nervousness:

indulgence in constant thoughts of the following:

fear

anger

melancholy

remorse

envy

sorrow

hatred

discontent

worry

All of these negative emotions are never free. We ALWAYS pay a price for them, even if we don't know it, so we have to guard against them.

Master says: "And lack of the necessities for normal and happy living such as right food....." We have to watch our diet, get proper exercise, fresh air, sunshine, agreeable work. Master often encouraged the devotees to exercise, to get out in the fresh air.

These threats to our calmness, that cause nervousness are, unfortunately, all around us during our lives. The negative emotions are in our environment, in the people around us, and, unfortunately, they are also within us. So we have to learn how to deal with these things and not to absorb them and let them become a part of us everytime we run into them, and even if they rise up within ourselves we have to rise above them. We have to fight these things because they cause this nervousness.

Our Guru says: "Any violent or persistent mental, emotional, or physical excitement greatly disturbs and unbalances the flow of life force throughout the sensory motor mechanism in the land of the senses."

So when we get nervous we shoot too much energy through our nerves, and it's not good for us. Master says it's like sending two thousand volts through a 120 watt bulb. And when that happens the bulb is going to blow. When we are restless we are damaging our nervous system. When a light bulb blows out we can replace the bulb, but we can't replace our nerves, so we need to guard against this. Master says "the nervous system was not made to withstand the destructive force of intense emotion or persistent negative thoughts and feelings."

So, if we're going to be calm and free of nervousness we need to learn to control our emotions. Master said, "the emotions that do most damage to the nerves are fear, worry, and anger. Constant fear affects the heart and may result in palpitations and other heart troubles. Worry and anger affect the brain as well as the rest of the body and lessen brain power and general efficiency. Fear and worry are very closely related. Worry is actually caused by fear that something we consider undesirable is going to happen; although the thing we do fear practically never does happen.....Volumes can and have been written on the subject of worry. All that can be said here is that calm analysis of the cause will usually remove it."

Those are the three big emotions to watch out for. If everyone were asked to come up with a list of the three worst emotions, everybody would come up with fear, worry and anger. We know that. We deal with them all the time. They make us miserable. They make us unhappy. They make us nervous. We all have these to some degree or another, and we will pay the price for them, so we need to deal with them.

Master does say the thing we fear practically never does happen. Haven't we all found that to be true? No matter what it is, it usually doesn't even happen, and in the worst case scenario it happens and the results we had blown so far out of proportion really weren't that big of a deal in the end. Keep that in mind.

It's pretty safe to say that a good portion of our nervousness, our restlessness comes about because of our interaction with other people. That's always the big test. Br. Allen then asked everyone a question: "Does that mean it's their fault that we're nervous?" He didn't (and doesn't) want anyone to yes to this question because it's absolutely not. What's causing the problem is our reaction. Our reaction is causing that restlessness, that nervousness and the same goes for any of the conditions in our lives. They are not the cause. It's our reaction that's the cause.

Br. Allen tells the story of his time in college. He hated research papers. Most classes that had research papers he dropped after going and finding a professor that didn't require research papers. There was no way he was going to deal with these things. Finally, there was one class that was a requirement and only one teacher taught it, so in his last year of college he finally had to do another research paper after going three years without doing one. He was nervous and fearful and had a lousy lousy semester. He remembers trying to do the paper and going to the library. There was a guy from the exact same class there and Br. Allen sat down next to him and said hi. After awhile the guy turns to him and says, "you know, I just love research papers." Br. Allen didn't say anything but to himself he said, "there's something wrong with this guy." Because Br. Allen hated this thing. He was fearful and convinced he was going to fail. Br. Allen had blown this so out of proportion. In his mind, this was a required class, and he'd probably get a really bad grade and wouldn't be able to graduate. He wasn't going to graduate or get a job. He pictured himself living on the streets. That's what went through his mind. That's what nervousness and fear does. It blows everything out of proportion.

But look at the situation: Br. Allen and the other guy were in the same class. They were faced with the same exact situation. The other guy was in heaven, as happy as he could be. He said he just loved getting in there and doing new things and the research was exciting, and Br. Allen was in his own little hell. It proves right there that it's our reaction to the situation that causes the problems. We have to take responsibility for them.

Our Guru said, "the victim of nervousness must understand his case." Master is encouraging us to introspect here. He also said, "and must reflect on those continual mistakes of thinking which are responsible for his maladjustment to life." He's telling us to take responsibility for our mistakes and no one else's. He also says, "When the nervous man admits to himself that his disease is not mysterious in its cause but the logical outcome of his own bad habits, he is already half-cured."

If we take responsibility and then look at a way to overcome it and see it as our mistake, then we're already half-cured. We're taking the right step. If we stand back and we're the poor little victim of everything that's causing our nervousness then how are we ever going to take responsibility? How are we ever going to improve? We can't change other people, and we can't always change our conditions. The only thing we can change is our reaction and how we deal with them. We've got to deal with the things we have control over. If we don't we're going to lose out. And when we're the victim Satan gets a big smile on his face because he knows he's got you. He says "I've got this one. I can create whatever conditions I want and make them unhappy because they don't take responsibility and change themselves."

Master really wants us to see this as a call to introspect and get to the root cause. Find out what's causing your nervousness whether it's through fear or worry or anger or whatever is going on and take a look at it. When we know what's causing the problem we can fix it; can't we? When we consciously really look at something and figure out what's causing it, we can fix it. We have that ability. Many of Master's articles on nervousness asks people to look at it, introspect, see what's going on here because he knew if we did we could solve our problems.

Our Guru said, "Nervousness is a malady that can be overcome by a specific medicine: calmness." In SRF we know the best way to become calm: meditate. If you take the SRF lessons and you practice them to the best of your ability you will become calm. That's the spiritual law. That's just the way it works. As long as you practice. Just reading through the lessons isn't going to do it. You have to practice.

What happens when we become calm is that our life force balances. It gets at a nice level. It balances out. Our nerves aren't getting bombarded with all this excessive energy that makes us nervous, and when we're calm, we're content. We're not running around all the time looking for some excitement and constant stimulation to keep ourselves entertained. In calmness you find a certain inner contentment, and what's happening is that we're tuning in with our souls. If we knew all the wonderful qualities of our souls, which is what we are then we'd understand much better why being calm and in tune with helps us to be more content because those qualities are getting through even if we don't feel them directly, even if we're not feeling God's bliss and going into Samadhi all the time. Those qualities are getting through to us.

That's why this key of calmness is so important. We have no idea what kind of effect it has in our lives. Even if we don't feel it, it is changing us. When we become calm and content we have no more need to look outside of ourselves for true happiness. If the average person in the world wants to be happy then they're running out for stimulation and for excitement, for a little jolt of temporary excitement that brings happiness but not for very long. And it never brings any real happiness. They have no idea what bliss is. What contentment is.

Another good idea to keep us from ignorance is to keep our lives more simple. We have a tendency to complicate our lives and the more things we have in our lives the more likely something is going to go wrong.

Br. Allen tells the story of having a fish tank and one day he got some more fish and it turns out the fish had a disease, so all of his fish got the disease. He had a legitimate worry. He had a responsibility to those fish. But did he need to have the fish in the first place? (He points out that it's not wrong to have a fish tank). He's just saying as we complicate our lives these little worries become more of a probability because things are going to go wrong with whatever is in our lives.

We need to keep our lives as simple as we can. Keep an eye on desires because desires are what complicates things.

In the Bhagavad Gita, our Guru says "Do not drain dry your reservoir of peace by diverting its waters into channels of small but ever-growing desires. The true devotee desires less and less and finds more and

more in the soul a sea of contentment.” When we’re really inwardly content those desires fall away because we’re satisfied. That spark of God is all we really need for true happiness and contentment. Where there is contentment, there is calmness. We don’t have a lot of things we are looking for, or things that are bombarding us. With calmness there is no nervousness. We can’t be both. The two are incompatible. They can’t exist at the same time.

Another thing to watch out for is our moods. It’s easy to become moody, and moods are a source of nervousness because they tie us to this creation. When we’re moody we’re looking to the world for certain conditions. We’re looking to the world for our happiness. That’s the problem right there. Now we’re tied to this creation which is incapable of providing happiness. When we tie ourselves to God, we’re calm and content. Our Guru said, “to be controlled by moods is to be a part of matter.” It’s exactly the opposite of what we want in life. Our Guru also said “If you keep your mind resolved never to lose your peace you can attain Godliness. Keep a secret chamber of silence within yourself where you will not let moods, trials, battles or inharmony enter.”

We have this resolve to keep this peace and contentment no matter what. We need to live our lives this way. It’s not an easy world to live in. We have to have the resolve to keep our peace no matter what. Keep out revengefulness, hate—these negative emotions—we can’t let them rule us. Master said “In this chamber of peace God will visit you.” We need to get this calmness in our soul so God can visit us in that way because those characteristics of what we truly are then can come out in our lives.

Master has another tip for staying calm in one of his talks on nervousness. “Realization that all outward things we speak, feel, and act comes from God and that he is ever with us, inspiring and guiding us, bringing us instant freedom from nervousness.” We can live our lives this way. What if we saw God in everyone we ran into? Every condition we face is a part of God. See God as the doer. That takes the pressure off of us. We do the best we can, but we know God is working through us, so we can relax a little bit and not worry about doing something a certain way or doing it right. This is Master’s way of looking at things to help us be more calm. Seeing God as the doer will keep us calm, especially if we think of living our lives that way. It’s not all depending on us anymore. When we see ourselves as the doer we’re separating ourselves from God. It causes restlessness because without God we don’t have that calmness.

Master encourages us to see God as the doer. If God is all things there can be no other doer. Always remember that. Seeing God as the source of everything that comes to us changes our perspective a little bit too. It identifies us with God and stops a lot of those negative emotions. For example, if somebody cuts us off on the freeway, we might get mad, but if we saw that as God maybe giving us a test it might change a little bit. Br. Allen tells the story of one time when someone cut him off and he got mad. He didn’t honk but he got mad. He wasn’t happy inside. Feeling that, he learned his lesson. It changed the way he looked at things and he has a different attitude when he’s driving now. He won’t get caught off guard again—this is how we improve ourselves. That’s how we change our outlook on life to become more calm. To get rid of that nervousness.

If we see God as the source of things there's no reason for any hurt. There's no reason for anger or any other of those types of emotions that make us nervous. God has a reason for everything that happens to us.

A common cause of nervousness is expecting ourselves to be perfect and never make a mistake. It's a pretty high path here. We see a lot of perfection in our Gurus. We see a lot of perfection in God. We will find perfection when we find God. Until that time we need to be satisfied with doing our best and making that effort. Maybe we can't even always do our best, but if we try and we persevere in trying, we're treading the sure path back to God. We can not fail.

We might expect ourselves to be perfect. Br. Allen tells the story of when he was 7 years old and in school in a math class when his teacher noticed he wasn't getting very good grades because he wasn't finishing the tests, but every answer he got on the tests was right, so the teacher started watching him. She noticed he kept erasing the numbers and trying to make them perfect the whole time he was going through the test. She finally understood and sent him with a small math test. She wanted his mom to watch over him and never let him use the eraser, ever, no matter what happens. He got A's in math for the rest of his life. He was never nervous after that. He was calm and he got over this perfection. His teacher did him a great favor. He doesn't have the perfectionist attitude he used to have.

Perfectionism can be really hard. Devotees are trying to introspect and it's real easy to fall into that trap and if we get to the place where we're not allowed to make mistakes just look at the fears that creep in. Mistakes are failures. We learn from them. We need to look at them as a good thing. Not that we're trying to make mistakes, but still when they happen they can be a good thing if we take the right attitude.

When we make an effort, no matter what, God is really pleased with us, and it may seem like a small effort on our part but in God's eyes nothing like that is small. We're trying to improve. Especially since we're trying to get back to God. No matter how small the effort we're making, for God it's huge. Anytime we're kind to other people—for God that's huge because we're expanding our consciousness. So we shouldn't be nervous about not being perfect.

Master said, "We don't always have reason to be proud of ourselves as human beings but neither should we be discouraged by our mistakes. Always look to the silver lining in every experience. Learn from your mistakes and look to God no matter what happens." Mistakes aren't such a bad thing if we learn from them.

Imagine living all time thinking of God as the doer no matter what. That's what the saints do. The saints aren't that much different from us. On the inside they're exactly the same. They connect every single aspect of their lives with God. There's absolutely no room for nervousness in their lives. None. It falls away. If we think of God that same thing will happen—that nervousness will go away.

Another thing that helps to eliminate nervousness is to think of one thing at a time. Master said, "Focus 100% on whatever you are doing." No matter how small. Master didn't differentiate between important and unimportant.

Most of the nervousness we have is because there's something in the back of our minds that is turning and it's getting some of our attention whether we know it or not, whether it's worry or anger or fear, and that's actually what's feeding that nervousness. If we focus 100 % on whatever we're doing that little thing in the back of our mind is now powerless. We can have the worst fear in the world that's making us as nervous as can be and if we focus 100% on brushing our teeth in the morning when we get up, that nervousness that fear will be completely gone. Maybe we only get a little break from it, but when we're walking out the door we can concentrate on that too.

We can really free ourselves from this nervousness, from these fears simply by concentrating 100% on whatever we are doing. It's such a simple recipe and meditation even magnifies that. If we concentrate 100% on whatever we are doing our meditations will shoot through the roof as far as how much we progress. We won't be fighting that restlessness all the time.

For a deeper study of ridding yourself of nervousness, check out the following: lesson 24, which is how to cure nervousness; "Nervousness: Cause and Cure" in *Man's Eternal Quest*; "Probing the Core of Nervousness" in *Journey to Self-Realization*.

In one of Master's talks he mentions poise, and poise is really calmness in action—we're carrying that calmness with us; we're holding onto our peace no matter what we are doing. Master said, "Poise is a beautiful quality. We should pattern our life by a triangular guide. Calmness and sweetness are the sides and happiness is the base. Every day one should remind himself, I am a prince of peace sitting on the throne of poise directing the kingdom of my activity. Whether one acts quickly or slowly, in solitude or in the busy marks of men his center should be peaceful, poised." Master encourages this because it will wipe out nervousness from our lives.

Master also said, "God is everywhere; controlling planets, galaxies, yet he is not disturbed. Though he is in this world, yet he is above this world. We must reflect his image and likeness." We, too, have to rise above this world. We're in it but not of it. Master says, "We must meditate often and hold onto the peaceful aftereffects. We must send out thoughts of love, goodwill, and harmony that wipes out the negative emotions that create that nervousness. In the temple of meditation, with the light of intuition burning on the altar there is no restlessness, no worthless striving or searching. Man is truly home at last, in a sanctuary not made with hands but with God and peace."