

Br. Allen
Satsanga
Glendale Temple
December 15, 2011

Br. Allen hoped to see everyone at the all-day Christmas meditation this year. He shared that when he first got into SRF [Self-Realization Fellowship] he didn't attend a Christmas meditations for seven years. He viewed them as torture. But he finally went and was surprised how nice and easy it was. There was something about the power of the group and the many blessings of God and the Gurus that made it so.

Tonight is a satsanga and there are only two questions.

Questions: We are often told about the necessity of daily meditation and are asked to include the various meditation techniques in our daily sadhana. I would like to know if our Guru has a daily moral sadhana for us? I would like to know how our moral and ethical actions and thoughts uplift or diminish the metaphysics of our spiritual routine. Can you please discuss how virtues, such as integrity, honesty, and moral rectitude, aka, taking right and honorable actions, are necessary ingredients to our spiritual growth? What does Master say about the importance of integrity? It seems that meditation alone is not enough if we are to achieve soul realization and to live upstanding lives and to show love and respect in all our activities and relationships.

Answer: Yes! This person is absolutely right. The spiritual path is all around growth. Everything from our emotions, our thoughts, what ever it is...everything needs to come up with us but that doesn't mean that it all has to come up at the same time. It doesn't mean that we don't meditate if we don't think we're morally strong enough or anything like that. We work at what we can and do the best we can at all times.

We can't just sit and meditate and then behave poorly the rest of the time and think we're going to find God. It does not work that way. All true religions have spiritual injunctions, right? In the Hindu religion they call it yama, niyama; in the Christian religion they call it The Ten Commandments. All true religions have these spiritual injunctions.

Master at one point said: "What is the way to know God?" He was going through a step-by-step process and discovered the first step. "We must follow those moral principles of right living that are common to all true religions. First there are the 'thou shalt nots' - don't steal, lie, kill or commit adultery or commit an evil act. Everything has a purpose and you should understand the reason behind the moral rules."

Master is encouraging us here not to just follow these rules because we're suppose to but to understand them...to understand what happens if we don't do them and why it's important to follow them. This gives us the strength to continue following them when we know the reasons and understand them. In the Kali Yuga, in past ages, when people didn't know and they just did things. But we're in an age now where we need to understand what we're doing or we're not satisfied.

Master goes on to say: "Secondly, follow the laws of rules, too. Be kind, sincere, truthful, love your fellowman, practice introspection and self-control. But in themselves the first two steps are not enough to know God. After adopting the right methods of living you must learn to quiet the body and the mind." That is where meditation starts coming in or prayer or practicing the presence.

These moral precepts are a part of the whole. There is no doubt about that. But don't focus on them alone because, again, Master says that's not enough! And there are a lot more rules we have to follow, right? How about diet? When was the last time you had a binge on junk food and then tried to meditate afterwards? It doesn't work to well, does it? The breath won't slow down; you can't concentrate. It just produces a lot of carbon in our systems so we can't meditate. There's another thing that doesn't even have anything to do with moral issues.

How about things like getting plenty of rest and exercising? Master encouraged the devotees to get plenty of exercise. He encouraged people not to watch TV all night. That's another thing that may not be a moral issue but can have a negative effects on our spiritual life and the list goes on and on.

The spiritual path is tough because there are so many things that can throw us off course, right? It is said that the spiritual path is "like a razor's edge". It is hard to walk that fine line. There are so many things that can throw us off. We have to be very careful. It is a tough battle to fight but it's a sacrifice we're going to have to make. We're going to have to give God our full attention. We have to be serious about finding God and then a lot of these things will fall into place.

Br. Allen went on to give an example of a serious athlete who worked really hard at his sport. He was constantly working on improving himself, getting in better shape and improving his skills at whatever sport he does. It's the most important thing in the world to him. We read about these athletes and we find that it's not just the sport itself they focus on. Their whole lives revolve around the sport. It's not just the skills they have. They watch their diet; they are careful to get enough rest; they watch how they spend their free time; they study on their sport. A lot of times they have visualizations...kind of like our affirmations...where they go over and over in their minds visualizing themselves being successful. When you look at the really serious athletes, they basically have no life other than their sport. They are doing that all around development. Every little facet that they work on can help lift themselves up, they do.

Now there are athletes who train really, really hard. But what if every morning they have a dozen doughnuts for breakfast? That would hurt their performance, right? That would be similar if we were athletes. Our sport is seeking God in meditation...calming our minds. When we have these little thoughts they also detract just like with the athletes when they eat those doughnuts they are also holding themselves back. That is really all that's going on here when we don't live morally the way we should or when we don't do things in the right way. That's the big problem! It definitely holds us back...the same thing that happens to the athletes. Just like the athletes, we need to watch how we are spending our free time; we need to get enough rest. It's not going to do us much good to sit and meditate if we're just sleeping, right? So we have to get enough rest.

Do you remember the last time you sat up and watched a lot of TV or surfed the Internet for four or five hours and then tried to meditate? We lose control of our minds. We don't have control of it because we've been passively involved in something and not been consciously in control. Again, those are the things that will distract us and take our attention away from God.

And that's really what it comes down to. All these things we are talking about, whether it's moral things or diet or whatever, we end up putting our attention on the world for various reasons and taking our attention away from God. That's why we want to work on them all and help to improve ourselves in that way.

Since most of us have trouble being perfect and are not always morally correct, [Bro. Allen included himself in that statement] are we wasting our time meditating? ABSOLUTELY NOT! Meditation is the most powerful tool we have for seeking God and therefore it is also the most powerful tool we have for improving ourselves.

Don't get so caught up in the moral issues but remember God is the most important thing, okay? As we meditate and improve ourselves those other things are going to follow along, too. Definitely! That doesn't mean we don't work when we get a chance to do the morally right thing or get a chance to eat the right food or the chance to do the right thing. We're still doing that. If we fail, acknowledge it and we should tell ourselves we're going to do better next time. But let's remember the overall most important thing is God.

The person asking this question may have hoped that Master had given some guidelines on living morally; maybe that there was sort of a recipe or maybe explain how to have more integrity or live with more honesty but Br. Allen explained that he didn't find any tips on that. We hear a lot about Master and he basically had one tip and that was God. Somebody may have come saying: "I'm having a little trouble being honest because I have this little thing I do." Master would talk a little bit about it but each time Master counseled anyone, he would bring their minds back on God at the end because he knew that would solve everything.

So day-to-day, we may have these things we're dealing with; maybe we have some problems with integrity or being honest. In general Br. Allen commented that he has found that SRF people do not really have problems in that area. There is no easy way; we just have to keep on fighting those bad habits because that's all we're fighting...bad habits from previous incarnations, from this life or whatever. Realize it's like a job! It's not easy at first because it's a habit we've been living with and we just have to get in and do it. And we may fail but there is no reason to get upset about it! We just get back up and do better next time.

Master didn't need to give us any guidelines on what is right or wrong. If that were easy to do, he would have done it. Life is very complicated. We're going to run into a million different things that we have to do; there can't be a recipe. It's unimaginable to think someone would have created a list of what should

be done under the many various circumstances.

What we do have is a conscience. That's a reflection of the soul inside of us that gives us perfect guidance at all time. Anytime we do something wrong, don't we know it? Master said that our conscience is that spark of God talking to us and unerringly will direct us in the right direction. If we get good at listening to our conscience we can just analyze the situation before we do it. We don't have to wait for our conscience to say avoid that. We can ask our conscience ahead of time.

Master said that our conscience becomes silent if we don't listen to it over and over and over again. There is always that danger but once we make up our minds to do what's right, we're actually asking ourselves, and our conscience wakes right back up again. We don't need to worry about that.

Br. Allen reiterated that we need to get up again and again until we stop failing. About the time we stop failing at one thing, he guaranteed that some other flaw will rear its ugly head and that it's all just part of the battle. There is no reason to regret it or think that we have to avoid all mistakes and in that way we can be perfect. That's not the way life is.

The good thing is that every time we overcome a negative trait we grow stronger so that the next one is going to be a little easier for us to deal with...it may be a strong tendency but we have the extra strength to deal with it. Meditation is going to make us stronger than we ever imagined to help deal with all these things.

The questioner specifically asked if Master said anything of importance about integrity. Br. Allen said he did a search in all the teachings and Master never once really used that word directly as far as rules are concerned. He mentioned that Christ had perfect integrity but he didn't talk about it a lot. Maybe one of the reasons is because integrity is a combination of a lot of things. Master spoke a lot about doing the right thing; learning to behave; being kind and considerate, being loving and the list goes on and on. Integrity is really just the whole of all these parts. Simplest definition of integrity is doing the right thing. We need to look at these things but that they need to be kept in their place. They are important but the most important thing of all is our desire for God and we should put more effort into creating that desire and making it really strong.

Master said: "There must be, day and night, a consuming desire for God. The ardor of a thousand million loves must be gathered in your heart for Him and the consciousness of urgent necessity -- as a miser seeks money, as the lover longs for the beloved, as the drowning man gasps for breath -- so must you desire God. Cry for Him constantly. Am I going to find You! I want only You!"

Imagine what life would be like if we created that super desire for God. Imagine for a minute that we do something wrong or we're not sure we're doing right thing. Let's just say we do something wrong. First of all, the thought we've done something wrong would be painful and we'd want to correct it right away or we'd want to avoid it altogether because immediately it would hurt us and our path back to God would be painful. We all know what it is like when we have a super strong desire for something. We

allow nothing to get in our way. The obstacles are what we perceive when we take our eyes off the goal. All these little distractions come along only when we take our eyes off the goal...when we take our eyes off of God.

Put the effort into making God the most important desire. That's the best way to improve and to make the changes that are necessary.

Questions: Jealousy, envy, competitiveness...I find myself surrounded by these negative emotions lately. At times I feel convinced that it's not enough to be me. That other people have better and more attractive soul qualities. How can I change my mindset to really believe that I am okay just the way I am? That other people really aren't better or worse than me?

Answer: First of all, do not focus on the negative qualities so much. They are in all of our environments some way, some how. When we're surrounded by negative emotions and negative thinking, we have two choices to either put our mind on those things, which increases their power over us or we can put our mind on something else. The latter is what Br. Allen recommended.

Meditation gives us the ability to gather our concentration and focus it something in particular. It also gives us another ability once we gain that control over our minds, we can take our minds off of something. So use that ability. These things don't matter!

We do have some control over our environment but if we're in an environment long enough it does overpower us. They say that environment is stronger than will. Master said that too. Environment is very strong and that's the way it is. When we're in a situation where there are a lot of negative things going on, hopefully, we can just step away from it. If it's part of our family or part of our acquaintances or part of our work environment then may be we can't step away from it permanently but we can step away from it for a while to gather our strength and focus to deal with the situations in a better way.

Br. Allen commented that as far as the rest of the questions goes, the self-esteem warning siren actually went off in his head during that whole question. Okay! The questioner really needs to look at his/her own self-image. Br. Allen went on to share a few tips on self-image.

We all have self-image problems at times. We all do things wrong; we all do things we don't feel good about ourselves for; it's always something like that. When that happens we should simply remind ourselves that this world is not real and that we are made in the image of God, meaning we are souls, actually sparks of God. We are a part of God! That means everybody! There are no exceptions anywhere, anyhow! There is no differentiation with some souls being better or worse than others. We are perfect sparks of God. PERIOD! That should be enough right there. WE ARE ALL PERFECT, JOYFUL, HAPPY, LOVING SPARKS OF GOD even if we can't always express it!

Our abilities, appearances, intelligence and all of our characteristics are a part of this dream. They have nothing to do with what we really are. As long as we're too caught up in our own characteristics we

basically giving our attention to the world and taking it away from God. We need to let go of that part of the world. There may be something within us that we don't like and we should work on improving but that doesn't change who we are; it is still a part of the world.

Another tip to help overcome self-esteem issues is not to focus on the negative. When we have self-esteem issues, we tend to focus on the negative things in our lives and the negative things around us and as Br. Allen suggested earlier, put the mind somewhere else. The power of mind control that we get from meditation can be used to put our minds on something or used to take our minds away from something.

Br. Allen explained that the questioner should be aware as far as negativity goes; that it will take some introspection to be sure there is no enjoyment in having low self-esteem. That is, to make sure a person doesn't enjoy feeling sorry for them self. We all can get into that now and then. When things don't go the way we want or we perceive that somebody has said something about us or mistreated us we want to wallow in that stuff. But the problem is if we do that too much it becomes a long-standing habit that is tough to uproot. When that's the case, we really need to focus on that habit and break it.

Low self-esteem is not a good thing. Imagine what it's like when we sit to meditate and we don't think we're worthy. Are we really going to feel like putting effort into meditation? Are afraid to give ourselves permission because we feel like we deserve it? Don't allow this and no matter what it takes, we must remind ourselves over and over that we are a part of God just like every other soul on this planet. Just like our Gurus, we are that same exact spark of God. We should make sure that low self-esteem does not just become a habit we like to live with regularly.

Another tip is to find some good activity to occupy the mind with. If we're having self-esteem issues or others don't like us for some reason and it's causing problems, we're not occupying our minds with healthy activity at that time. Master always kept his mind busy. He put it on God or he was creative about something that he wanted to do in his life but he always kept his mind busy. "Idle hands are the devil's workshop" and that sort of thing. If we just sit back passively, negative things can come into being and take hold of our lives. We must watch where our minds are. When we're doing something we absolutely love to do, whether it's a hobby or whatever it is, we don't have a problem with negative thoughts when we're doing that activity. Not at all! We are totally engrossed and loving our lives in that particular point in time. We need to learn to do that more consciously and not allow ourselves to entertain those negative, passive states that allow negativity to take over.

We can take that one step further as God seekers. We can fill our time and fill our minds with God and there won't be any room for negativity. That is what Master did and all the saints do. Their whole lives are involved around God and if we work at seeking God, if we just get a glimpse of God, just the smallest glimpse, we will never have a problem with low self-esteem ever again. Br. Allen guaranteed it.

For real chronic problems of low self-esteem, Br. Allen highly recommended Master's affirmations. There are many to choose from in Scientific Healing Affirmations and at the end of every Lesson. He suggested finding a very positive, self-image type affirmation and repeating it over and over and when

negative thoughts start jumping in, just power it out with that affirmation, refusing to take the mind off the positive thought. That is probably the best way to overcome chronic self-esteem issues.

Another great thing is to study Master's teachings. Just read one of his lectures in Man's Eternal Quest or read a Lesson. When we do that a lot we're occupying the mind with something positive and those negative thoughts are pushed out. "When the light of God comes in, darkness cannot exist." Those negative thoughts will be gone when the mind is busy with something positive.

Master said: "Whenever you are sitting still, without any demands on your attention, be away in your mind, using it constructively every moment. Great things are produced first in the mind. I keep mine at work all the time and put its creative thoughts into actions the moment I see an opportunity. Then the results come. Every day you should try to do something creative. Improve your destiny."