

Brahmachari Martin
Peace: The Altar of Heaven
Lake Shrine Temple
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Meditation is the foundation and cornerstone of the path that Paramahansaji brought to the West. The topic of the talk today is "Peace: The Altar of Heaven." Some of you may be familiar with that program called: "Seti: The Search for Extraterrestrials Intelligence." With radio telescopes they beam out information. Someone out there gets it; they beam us back and we can start a dialogue with outer space. Well, they tried to figure out what to say; also do they speak English or what? They were trying to figure out how to communicate and religion seemed to be a very universal thing. So they decided to communicate on religion but there are many different religions. What was the one common denominator in all religions? They ran it all through the computer and came up with peace. Peace is the main thing that we are all seeking. Religion has evolved out of our deepest, deepest need and our deepest need is for peace.

When you look at our lives it's a mixture of good stuff and bad stuff...it's duality. It's either bearable or it's not bearable and that's dependent on how much peace we have. We either deal with it or it's too much depending upon that inner peace. So when we pray, in religion, we don't get answer; what we get is peace and that's more important than answers because when we have peace then when the experiences are difficult we can find out why we have them. Also, that they are not a bad thing. They are there to teach us something. They are there to strengthen something. There's a deeper, deeper reason. It's called surrender. When we have peace we have that intuitive understanding and the strength of why we need to go through something.

The wife of C. S. Lewis was an American. Her first marriage was to an abusive, alcoholic husband. It was really tough. One night she'd just had enough and was sitting on the edge of her bed weeping. Suddenly she felt a presence in her room. The presence was so real that she found she could not weep anymore. She found herself saying: "Okay! Okay! Okay! No problems! No problems! Okay!"

In Self-Realization Fellowship [SRF], we can summon that experience at will through meditation and that is what is intended...to summon that

experience of God or the soul from within us. We are calming everything down. Then we become what Jesus called: "*Be a peacemaker.*" He didn't say be a peace experienter because if we lead our lives trying to be peace experiencers, we'll have no peace. We'd be driving it away from us because peace takes work. The work is meditation and then we can be a peacemaker, not only for ourselves but to share with all other people.

Once when Br. Martin was to give this talk, "Peace: The Altar of Heaven," he was sharing with his mother that he'd be giving the Sunday talk. She asked what the topic was and he replied that it was on peace. Her response was: "What do you know about peace?" "That's your mother for you." He went on to say that he learned a lot about peace from his mom because she wasn't peaceful in the beginning of her life. She was doing all these things; she was very accomplished and always busy doing many things but she wasn't extraordinarily happy or peaceful.

When she turned ninety years old she was no longer able to do all these things and she became incredibly peaceful. She was like a little girl! It was very encouraging to Br. Martin because he thought that she didn't deserve this at all. She was not religious! It was just the real her coming out because all the worries were gone. At ninety years old she didn't have that much to worry about and she was so happy. He thought that's the real mom; that's Mom! Br. Martin thought that it was kind of cool. He reiterated that she didn't get religious; she got old.

The message of religion in SRF is that we don't have to wait until we get old to have peace, even though we will, but we can have it now. The great thing about today's world is that there is more of an interest in being happy now, rather than waiting for an afterlife. Science is advancing. There's neurology is studying this...the brain, which is a spiritual expression., They can experiment on spiritual qualities with the brain and with doing research in real time using iPhones because there's an actual iPhone application for tracking people's happiness. What they're doing is checking people during the day to find out what they're doing and what their mood is. The biggest find that they came up with was so interesting to people that as soon as it came out, about a month ago, it hit all the news organizations. The finding was that the one factor that has the biggest influence on happiness, more than anything else, is concentration. When the mind is focused, we're happy; when it's wandering, we're not. That was the bottom line. It was so overwhelming in comparison to any other findings.

The bad news is that people's minds wander about 47% of the time. Almost half the time we are doing something counterproductive to our own happiness even when the mind wanders on good things. Even when we're thinking about pleasant things it makes us less happy than if we're in the present moment focusing on the job at hand or whatever we're doing. Even if our job is something we like to do and the mind wanders it still brings us down. The more focused we are the less the mind is wandering and the happier we are. The finding that really jumped out at Br. Martin was that 47% of the time... "huge amount of time"...we're kind of blanked out, kind of tripping. That is interesting news because what's our usual excuse: "I can't practice the presence of God, I'm too busy." No, we're not. There are these gaps, as Daya called them, between activity; the gap between everything we're doing. The mind can always revert to God.

What it does is revert to what we want. It reverts to the one desire in our heart, whether it's God or whether it's a new car or whatever. It goes there. But we have the free time to go there. That's the point. We have the free time to go there, that's the point -- the 47%. Spanky's mind is about 47%, too, so we're about the same as our pets. We're not that much more evolved unless we are using that time to our advantage.

There is this web site where they're tracking happiness called: trackyourhappiness.org. This is where people who sign up get beeped on their iPhone. They tell them what they're doing; what their mood is and whether they are happy or not? At the end a report is generated that tells them what made them happy and how happy. It's great. It's like an introspection service. It does the introspection for us and it's even better than that because when we introspect normally at the end of the day, we may misremember things. We may put it through a filter and it's not correct. But in real time when saying, "*Where am I now? Okay, I'm doing the dishes. I'm happy,*" it's gets written down so that's real. Later we may not remember it that way. Introspection in real time.

Brother Premamoy said that his favorite method of practicing the presence of God was saying: "Master, what should I do right now? Or guide me right now." He was right in the moment instead of looking backwards. This is kind of interesting because, again, people misremember.

There is another study they did in real time. They found that people were happier at work. Before they did the analyzes they asked: “When are you most happy?” “Well, not when I’m at work. I’m happy watching TV when I’m at home.” That’s what people think and then when they were hooked up to this experiment, they found they were happier at work. So we don’t really know when we’re happy.

In England they did it a little quirkier. Their study was called “mappiness”...map and happiness...because they wanted to find out what the places were that make people happy. Again, they hooked up to a beeper. When beeped asked where they were and if they were happy. Br. Martin thinks it might be skewed since it’s done through iPhones since probably the happiest place is the Apple Store for the iPhone people. The place does play a huge role. If people put themselves in the right place, it does a lot of the right work them. For us, of course, it’s the Lake Shrine, the Temple. Often while talking to devotees, Br. Martin, hears that they didn’t want to come to church but they got up and came anyway and now they were so happy; they had no problems; it was wonderful. It is! It’s pretty wonderful!

Paramahansaji said: *“When you come here even for these few hours your mentality changes. You feel a refreshing peace. The faces of many of you who come here have become more spiritual.”* Your face changes; you look different. *“A steady stream of Divine Power will flow to you for the Great Ones sent me here. When I am gone you will realize this truth, with greater impact.”*

It is connected to this Lake Shrine. Always remember that when this Temple was dedicated a lot of years ago, although it seems like yesterday, Uma Ma came with the directors and the monks and nuns were here, too. They told us about Paramahansaji when the Lake Shrine was founded and about that time he was inching away from the work. He was spending time out in the desert meditating. When he heard of the attendance at Lake Shrine he was so happy, more so than any other time, even when he was physically giving the services at Hollywood and San Diego himself and said: *“Now they are coming to the teachings. Now they really understand what it is all about.”* He paused and said, *“I know many of you who come here will be saved through the words that I have spoken here. But you must practice these ideals in your life. If you come here for God and stick to what you receive and practice it faithfully, then you will find truth through your own Self-realization.”*

That's probably why the happiness test wouldn't work for us because when they'd beep us, we'd be meditating and our phones would be off. That is when we'd be happiest. So, we're a little different. On the "mappiness" site, they also has this thing called an hedonimeter...hedon is like happiness... hedonimeter. It is a gauge that shows, in real time, how happy the people are on the "mappiness" site as opposed to the happiness of the rest of the world. It consistently showed that the people on this website are less happy than the rest of the world. That's right and that is because the more we focus on happiness, the less happy we are. Br. Martin explained that it was like his mom. She didn't have time to be happy but she was happy. She was busy and didn't have time to focus on herself. Forget yourself. That's the quickest way to gain peace of mind. Br. Martin said to forget about what he said and not to go to that website. Don't worry if you're happy or not!

As human beings there are always two things that we are aware of: 1) that we exist; and 2) how happy we are...our mood. It's what we're tracking. We're paranoid and so worried about whether we're happy or not. "I'm happy! I'm happy! Oh, he said this to me. Oh, I hope I'm not getting into a mood. Oh, now I'm in a mood. I'll feel better. I'll feel better." It's a constant up and down. How can we have peace with brain waves like that?

For the saints the self-talk is different. Instead of, "How am I doing," the saint says, "How are you, my Lord? What can I do for you?" If their lives were graphed their brains would show a straight line because they are at peace. That is why Mother Teresa when talking about peace, kind of tossed it aside, and said, "*I don't bring people peace. I make people work.*" Jesus said, "*I bring a sorrow.*" When we meditate it's almost, sometimes, the least peaceful thing we can do. Right? Because we bring the mind back when it wanders; bring the mind back. It's like a good sign. If we're really peaceful in meditation, we have to be careful that we're not sleeping or daydreaming or not focused. "Oh, yeah, I had a wonderful meditation." "*It is intense mental activity*" is one definition that Paramahansaji gave for meditation.

A monk who came into the ashram and was overwhelmed with the whole thing asked Brother Premamoy: "When do we have time to relax in this place?" "In meditation," Brother replied. The monk said, "I was afraid you'd say that." But if we continue, that's the work..."I don't bring peace. I make people work" but if you do the work then the results come. After a while you just learn to continue and in five or ten minutes of meditation, immediately there is this great peace.

There's a book today called "Faster" that talks about the way the world is right now. Daya Ma said that whenever she would travel the main question she would get was: "How do I get peace?" People are hungry for peace and that's because that is the answer to the way things are right now.

Impatience is a virtue in America where Fast Food isn't fast enough. America's one time leisurely dinner with the family, which was a wonderful time pretty much disappeared when TV dinners were discovered. They were eaten in front of the TV and not at the table. Then there was MacDonal'd's...families would go to MacDonal'd's. Then the drive through window at MacDonal'd's because people didn't have time to go inside the store and there were numbered coded meals so no time was wasted time talking...saves energy!!!???

Carrie Fisher said: "The trouble with instant gratification is that it takes too long." A notion best expressed by comedian, Steven Wright, who was inspired by instant coffee and a microwave. It is interesting that the reason for this craziness, this faster, this manic thing, that we all have is really because we're the soul. If we weren't the soul we would probably be really happy with everything but because we are the soul, we are on this relentless search for that something we're missing.

Again, going back to brain science. It found that happiness, pleasure or whatever, doesn't come just through stimulating that area but it comes when that stimulation is unexpected. What gives us happiness and pleasure is from unexpected stimulation in life.

Br. Martin said that he remembers the best pizza he ever had was while in a train station in Venice, Italy. He said it was fantastic! It was a greasy spoon place but it was the best because he wasn't expecting anything. Later on that day, he went to a high end restaurant with devotees and it wasn't that good because he was expecting it to be "way high". We've all that that experience...the perfect cup of coffee, the perfect bottle of wine. When we get the same bottle of wine the next time, it's like what happened, that's not it! It was not the pizza, the coffee or the wine but it was the unexpectedness of it.

That's why we can't figure out life because as soon as we figure out what it is that we love to do it becomes expected; then it becomes a habit and a habit is just a weight on our soul. That's why no one is every happy. We

can't be because the only thing that is unexpected is God. *"As God is unanticipatory Ever Newness, we never tire of Him. Can we be surfeited with bliss, delightfully varied throughout eternity?"* Sri Yukteswar said. That's why it never grows old.

Joy is a little different. It's not a boring type of joy. *"That state is only found by contacting God in deep meditation,"* Paramahansaji writes. *"Through the practice of such techniques, as those given my the masters of India, the all-fulfilling joy will never grow stale. How to describe it? For ten days you were not permitted to sleep, you were forced to stay awake, and then allowed to fall asleep. That joy that you would feel at that moment compounded a million times over would not begin to express the joy that I'm speaking about."*

That kind of joy is not the opposite of unhappiness. Positive psychology is finding out that happiness is not the opposite of sadness. We can work at taking away the sadness but that does not necessarily mean people will be happy; they would probably be bored. It is another element. The correlation is not a negative one. It helps to try psychological things to square us away, to make us more integrated and to get rid of complexes but it's not the whole answer.

Freud said, "Analysis just makes you normally miserable." That's the only level we can get to because the world is normally miserable. That's the vibration and we can't get higher than the vibration is. We cannot get higher than what the vibration is that everyone shares. We can do that only by rising above that vibration into another realm. That realm is not up there or whatever; it is inside us. It is in the spine.

In a book on coping was written years ago, they found that everybody has a finite amount of coping energy each day. It's used up, like money, and around twelve or one or two o'clock everybody has used up their quota and during that time period people are the least happy because they're worn out. The energy went and the question asked was how can one replenish that coping energy. It was found that the only way to replenish the coping energy was sleep. Positive thinking helped a little bit but the main thing was sleep. Guruji said, *"Sleep is not sleep. Sleep is contact with God."* We can create that same condition in meditation because meditation is contact with God...going inside.

The passage from the “Bhagavad Gita” talks about that. It is a beautiful, beautiful passage. It talks about the rivers coming into the ocean and that that’s what happens normally. The rivers are not normally going out of the ocean. With a yogi everything is constantly entering into the soul...there is that bubbling, ever newness, never fatigued, never tired, never unhappy.

The Gita says: *“That person’s mind is full of contentment whose desires ever flow inward. That man is like a changeless ocean, which is kept brimful with constantly entering waters. He does not immediately want to practice silence. He is not a muni, one who practices silence, who bores holes of desires in his reservoir of peace and lets the waters escape.”*

Parmahansaji said that this stanza was a favorite of Sri Yukteswar. If we look at Sri Yukteswar we see a man of distinction with this amazing, amazing poise and beauty. He loved that in him. Guruji said: *“Often Sri Yukteswar would feel some new manifestation in his vast ocean of peace made possible by absorbing all rivers of material desires. Then he would express in a sonorous voice all he was feeling within. His very face shone with a great light. At those times, all spiritually sensitive men and women around him, could feel my Master’s overflowing perception of peace. I often inwardly hear him reciting this Gita verse in Sanskrit just as I used to do in years gone by. Everyone should try to become an ocean of peace by bring within him the rivers of joy from the ecstasy of God. The devotee of God is constant and changeless and his joy is like a vast deep ocean. He attracts the rivers of goodness in other souls to flow into his being, all finally commingling in the ecstasy of God.”*

Br. Martin said that years ago he was typesetting to earn money to pay off his student loans before coming into the ashram. It was a regular 9 to 5 job but the only difference was that in this particular work environment if a job came in at 4:30 or 4:45 it had to be finish it before you could go home. It meant working overtime and it dependent on someone walking through the door at the last minute. Br. Martin explained that he was working with a bunch of young kids who had parties to go to and things to do and were ready to leave at 5 o’clock. They’d be watching the door, so worried that somebody would come in.

They were probably attracting people with their desires. When someone would come in at the last minute, they’d go, “Oh, no!” Br. Martin said for him it was completely different because it meant he could pay off his student loans faster and come into the ashram. He was done with

everything. He was just taking care of this final bit of business. So working overtime with him was fine.

When someone would come in late, they'd be tearing their hair out and he'd say, "Fine, let's do it." They started getting irritated with him because he remained so calm and one time one of the guys came up to him and said: "Why are you so calm?" Br. Martin said that he congratulated himself on being a yogi because they saw how calm he was. Of course, he said that it had nothing to do with that. It was just that he didn't have an agenda after 5pm. He wanted to work and was happy with the deal.

So that's the slack, this control, the simplicity, which is a spiritual aspect, too. The happier we are in the present the sooner we find the road to inner peace. Br. Martin said he could also have been frustrated and said that he had to go home and meditate. If he'd done that, he too, would have been all frazzled. It's not activity that causes stress. It's when we are doing one thing but wanting to do something else. That is when we're stressful and that goes back to that deeper experiment. It was found that people who are stressful are doing something but are thinking of something else. When the mind is wandering it really means we're not into what we're doing. That is the opposite, the antonym, of inner peace.

It is not only our schedules that disturb our peace. Sometimes it's other people...like our mothers, as he'd said earlier. There is this Tibetan technique for cultivating devotion that is said to involve visualizing ones mother in the heart. It works fantastic in India and in the East but it doesn't work in America. Maybe visualize the dog instead. When we turn the letters in the word dog around it spells God! The relationships with our mothers is too complex. It's changing now with this younger generation. It is very interesting. They are closer to their families. They don't have that thing that we had with mom and dad. It's kind of neat! So maybe that doesn't apply anymore.

Br. Martin reiterated that his mother was a 100 years old when she passed on last August. All she wanted to do was get to a hundred. She was always about accomplishing things. She was! It's absolutely true and once that goal was gone...ugh! In fact, if you want longevity, pick a long to-do list and keep checking the things off but always have something left to do. His mother kind of played a trick on him at the end because she made him the survivor trustee of her trust. So he's having to do all this work.

Br. Martin's first thoughts were that it would be a quick thing, so he'd do it and he's still doing it. He is finding it terrible having to deal with this stuff...with lawyers, accountants. Amazing! He thought a couple of weeks ago that it was all going on too long and that he had to go see if he could get out of it. He Googled for trust probate lawyers in Santa Monica, got a couple of names and he picked the first one, a female. He made an appointment and his first question to her was "I don't want to do this anymore. Can I get out of it?" Her responses was: "No, you can't. Grow up and just do it. Quit whining." Br. Martin replied: "But I have this brother who's a real pain. He drives me nuts! He's really hard to deal with." She said: "Look, there was a saint once and there was a disciple of the saints who was a real troublemaker. The other disciples wanted to get rid of the troublemaker and the saint said, 'If I got rid of him, I'd have to create another one.'"

The lawyer turned out to be an SRF student! She was giving him, a minister, a service...teaching him. That's what happens. When we all come to the Temple, the ministers may say exactly what we want to hear but where to they go? They go to a lawyer or to the guy at Starbucks. Guruji will speak through them. The lawyer was saying to Br. Martin that he should do his duty, even if it disturbs his peace a little bit. If we're just seeking a peaceful, easy life we're not going to get it. We have to develop to gain control of those inner instruments to experience peace. We cannot experience peace right now the way we are. We have to develop it. It seems to be the opposite. In other words, it's not a peaceful life. It's hard; it's a battle and that's why the "Bhagavad Gita" is a crazy battle.

We cannot blame our environment. There was an interesting *satsanga* question last month that is also about lawyers. It seems to be a good learning point. The question was: "I'm entering my profession as a lawyer and find that my spiritual values from the SRF teachings are in constant conflict with my colleagues and sometimes, too, with my clients. How can I conduct my work in accord with my values and at the same time work productively within a pretty negative professional environment?" Br. Martin quipped: "Go to my lawyer, she's a devotee."

Paramahansaji answered this point in a great, fantastic way in his lecture entitled *Divine Harmony*. His first sentence reads: "*Our environment consists of both an inner world and an outer world.*" This is one of the first things to understand. When we talk about peace and talk about happiness...there's a

peace in our family...there's a peace where we live...there's a peace in circumstances...there's a noise level...we can go down the line. That's the outer. Inside it is really simple; the peace is inside. It's just a one word answer. Do we have that or do we not?

“The outside world is the one in which your world engages in action and interaction,” Guruji said. *“The world inside of you determines your happiness or unhappiness expressed in the world outside. The hand of the One who made these worlds tuned them to harmonize with each other. Harmony is their inherent nature.”* In other words, no matter what the outer is, we are supposed to have harmony between the outside and the inside.

A story of the Buddha. He was asking for alms and someone was abusing him. The disciples wanted to do something about it and the Buddha said: *“You don't accept the abuse that belongs to the giver.”* So the inner thing is so strong that it will change the outer. Even if there are problems outside the inner can transform them.

“To many Western philosophers and thinkers,” Guruji said, *“review the world only through the reports of the sense. Nature appears full of strife and discord.”* That is why we feel bad because Nature is full of strife and discord but it's not inside us. If we say the world is worldly we really just gives ourselves away because we are not spiritual enough yet to see a spiritual world. A world of harmony. *“Only those who partake of the harmony within their souls, know the harmony that runs through nature.”*

1970 Br. Martin was attending USC. He said that it was a very interesting time because all these saints were going through the campus and lecturing at lunch time. There was one saint after another. It was all new and everyone was excited. India was coming to the West and we wanted things to change. It was during the time of the Vietnam War. It was like, there must be some other answer. It was all this was brand new in their environment.

Br. Martin remembered this one teacher. He was seated in the first row and watching the man very carefully, wondering what the guy was like and what it was all about. One little thing always stuck with him because as the teacher was talking there was an ambulance or police car driving down the road right next to the side building where he was speaking. It was really loud! The teacher did not stop for a second but he closed his eyes and

there was this little smile as he was hearing the sound. Br. Martin realized that he was hearing the energy of it or seeing the unity of it and therefore he wasn't bothered by it. Br. Martin realized that that was exactly what Guruji was talking about. Whoever lacks this inner harmony feels also the lack of it in the world. Whoever has this inner harmony sees its presence in the world.

Bro. Premamoy had a saying that if something bothered us and it was pointed out or if we might defend ourselves by saying we're sensitive he would respond that we are not sensitive but that we're touchy. He said this a lot and now Br. Martin sees that "it's really kind of true."

A neurologist said that there is one set of brain circuits that handle positive experiences and another set of brain circuits that handle negative things. And the ones that handle the negative things are much more sensitive than the one that handle the positive things.

The only way to improve the situation is to starve out the negative sensors and that's like a habit. We need to back off. The difficulty is that we get used to responding to the negative things, which releases endorphins and in a strange way, we like it rather than the positive. That's why we say that we want to be sensitive. We want to be sensitive to the higher emotions and that means renouncing the lower ones. Guruji said to Daya Mata that she should be tougher and she said that she didn't like tough people. Master said that it was not like that. That he wanted her to experience the higher emotions than the ups and downs of the emotions that come through the senses.

Guruji made the greatest comment about this. He's so poetic and profound at the same time. He totally summoned this whole thing up. He said:

"Murder the sensibilities and let them walk as goblins of deathless peace. He who has inner peace can abide even in the midst of outer discord."

And as if anticipating what someone would say: "But Yogananda, you don't understand because in fifty years it's going to be a whole different situation. This stuff doesn't work for that. It is too idealistic." In response Guruji gives a story that in its outrageousness puts to bed any excuses one could have regarding the legal profession or any other environmental institutions that could be considered inimical.

He wrote: *“There was a household yogi in India whose wife was a living incarnation of temper. More petulant than the wife of poor Socrates. Nothing the yogi ever did pleased or appeared right to his wife. Even the neighbors complained frequently about her tempestuous disposition. The yogi in his natural goodness, being secure in his own inner calm, patiently left her alone hoping that time would reform her. But she had no patience with him and was grimly determined to end what she considered to be his impractical spirituality.*

“Failing in all of her other devilish devices, she set about to burn all his books and consequently set fire to her house as well. At this the yogi turned to the wife and said: “Dear lady, I love you more now than ever. You have been God-sent to me. All the while you have taught me to be patient and now you have healed my last infirmity, love for and attachment to my books and my house.” So we have no excuses about any tests that happen to us. If the house hasn't burned down we're ahead of this thing.

Who or what can disturb the trained and tranquil mind of a real yogi? That's the test, you know. Do we have that inner strength that can stand the shaking of all the outward tests given us?

“Quiet the outer mental restlessness and turn the mind within. Harmonize your thoughts and desires with the all fulfilling realities you already possess in your soul. Then you will see the underlying harmony in your life and in all nature. If you harmonize your hopes and expectations with this inherent harmony, you will float through life on buoyant wings of peace. The beauty and depth of yoga lies in its bestowal of this invariable tranquility.”