

**Sunday, January 29, 2012, talk by Bro. Balananda at
the Phoenix Temple by BanJai**

Brother started with a story:

Linda Birtish literally gave herself away. Linda was an outstanding teacher who felt that if she had the time, she would like to create great art and poetry. When she was 28, however, she began to get severe headaches. Her doctors discovered that she had an enormous brain tumor. They told her that her chances of surviving an operation were about 2 percent. Therefore, rather than operate immediately, they chose to wait for six months.

She knew she had great artistry in her. So during those six months she wrote and drew feverishly. All of her poetry, except one piece, was published in magazines. All of her art, except one piece, was shown and sold at some of the leading galleries.

At the end of six months, she had the operation. The night before the operation, she decided to literally give herself away. In case of her death, she wrote a "living will," in which she donated all of her body parts to those who needed them more than she would.

Unfortunately, Linda's operation was fatal. Subsequently, her eyes went to an eye bank in Bethesda, Maryland, and from there to a recipient in South Carolina. A young man, age 28, went from darkness to sight. That young man was so profoundly grateful that he wrote to the eye bank

thanking them for existing. It was only the second "thank you" that the eye bank had received after giving out in excess of 30,000 eyes!

Furthermore, he said he wanted to thank the parents of the donor. They must indeed be magnificent folks to have a child who would give away her eyes. He was given the name of the Birtish family and he decided to fly in to see them on Staten Island. He arrived unannounced and rang the doorbell. After hearing his introduction, Mrs. Birtish reached out and embraced him. She said, "Young man, if you've got nowhere to go, my husband and I would love for you to spend your weekend with us."

He stayed, and as he was looking around Linda's room, he saw that she'd read Plato. He'd read Plato in Braille. She'd read Hegel. He'd read Hegel in Braille.

The next morning Mrs. Birtish was looking at him and said, "You know, I'm sure I've seen you somewhere before, but I don't know where." All of a sudden she remembered. She ran upstairs and pulled out the last picture Linda had ever drawn. It was a portrait of her ideal man.

The picture was virtually identical to this young man who had received Linda's eyes. Then her mother read the last poem Linda had written on her deathbed. It read:

Two hearts passing in the night

*falling in love, never able
to gain each other's sight.*

The topic of today's talk is

Living "*Only Love Can Take My Place.*"

This is the secret of the universe in a nutshell, falling out of love with the world and falling in love with God.

During his time as a postulant in the ashram, Brother felt there was something missing in his life although he had everything he wanted in the ashram - a plan for his life, meditations, opportunities for service, fellowship - still something seemed to be missing. One day as he swept the stairs at Hollywood Temple he noticed a man standing at the end of the breezeway. A wrapper lay on the ground, right where Bro. Bhaktananda was walking by. Brother asked the man why he had been standing there and he said he was only waiting for Bro. Bhaktananda to walk over this wrapper which he will now always wear close to his heart. Devotion! God cannot give that to you; you must develop it yourself.

Master said:

"Without devotion you cannot have contact with God."

"Don't waste an opportunity to offer your love to Him."

"If you have devotion, you cannot fail."

"All I ask is for your love and I will do the rest."

Love for God - it seems so remote; we don't learn it. And

what is taking its place? Wrong desires that want to be appreciated - chocolate mousse (!) - those cannot bring lasting happiness. Master said, "Love of God is the only Reality." Who is teaching it? not even churches. Our Guru teaches that God is a God of love.

Our beloved Sri Daya Mata, whose birthday would have been in 2 days, said: "The only purpose of life is to prompt us to overcome the terrible delusion of separation from God, our Creator, and by the simple act of love, of devotion, of silent conversation, regain our lost divine heritage as the children of God."

"God only comes to the tear-washed heart that is continuously calling on Him...Never be ashamed of your tears, my dear ones. I've shed tons of tears for God, but I let no one know. Don't rest until you feel that love for God. If you don't feel it, cry your heart out for it."

We have to work for it, cry for it (did we shed tears for God recently?) But even without tears, we must "churn the ether" as Master advised. Brother Bhaktananda said that "significant spiritual progress occurs when you make love to God for the same length of time as you use for all the techniques." And "without Yoga you cannot have the devotion needed to find God."

So we sit down to meditate, and there must be a button on our butt that activates restless thoughts. Like wild stallions of the mind - we must trick it! Decide with all your strength that you will now do 20 perfect *Hong Sau* -

then the technique will start to work. Challenge yourself - 20 perfect *Hong Sau* breaths. Eventually, a tremendous peace will well up, expansive feelings - Master said: "If you really cry for Him, the Lord will come to you, sometime, without fail."

Ma once said that "no one is busier than I, but when I sit down to meditate I lay all my concerns, problems, decisions in one big bundle at the feet of Divine Mother and say to her - you worry about these now, Divine Mother, I only want to be with you." And invariably, when she came out of meditation, bit by bit the problems dissolved, some ideas came, some ways were found, and the work went on.

Why do we wait for so many incarnations? When we don't feel that love, there may also be interference from someone. Daya Mata was at a banquet once, and not too far from her, still in earshot sat a woman who criticized Ma and spoke in a hateful manner about her. She could hear it and it made her sad, then she thought - is my love for God so shallow that I allow this negativity to disturb my peace and love? She began sending love to that woman all during the banquet. When the event was over and people greeted her personally, that woman also came and said - I need to talk to you. Ma agreed to meet her after she had greeted all the others. The woman apologized profoundly for her nasty words and said that she was absolutely the right person to guide Master's work.

One more story of Rocky the dog... In the ashram, Br. Ken had a fairly large dog, Rocky, who adored him and was always following him around. One day Br. Ken had climbed a tree and Rocky was on the ground, straining, wanting to be with his master. So he encouraged him - come on boy, climb the ladder! Bro. Balananda thought that he wasn't seeing right. Here was a dog, starting to climb a ladder! It took a while and some slips but when Rocky was within reach Br. Ken grabbed his collar and pulled him to himself.

This is how Master pulls us up when we get close enough.

Brother closed with words from Sri Daya Mata: "Simply tell God in your own words--quietly, unheard by any other--that you love Him. Tell Him when you are sitting in silent meditation. Tell Him when you are on the busy street or at your desks: `I love You, God. I love You, my Lord.' Let this be your last thought at night before you go to sleep. Try it tonight. It is so beautiful, the greatest joy. As you are falling asleep, as your soul begins to enter the state of restfulness, let your mind softly, sweetly, quietly chant: `My Lord, my Lord, my Love, my Love, my God.' Feel what you are saying to Him.

When you awaken in the morning, let the first thought be: `Good morning, Lord. Another day. Let it be one in which I make greater effort toward that perfection which is my real nature. Let me give understanding. Let me be more calm. Let me say something kind in response to unkind words that may be said to me. Let me today try

to manifest You in my life.' When you feel sad and when you feel happy; when your body is not well and when it is strong with vigor; when things go wrong and when things go right, during all these times let there be a silent, steady flow of one thought: `My God, I love You.'"

Quotes from this and other Sunday services are on our website, Phoenixtemple.org, under *Lectures & Meditations*, Quotes.