

Brother Ritananda
Awakening from the Dream of Human Limitations
Lake Shrine Temple
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The topic for this morning is Awakening From the Dream of Human Limitations. Brother began with the Bible passage from St. Luke where Jesus described this world as impermanent and insecure compared to the "rock" of Spirit. Christ said: "Whosoever cometh to me and hearth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like. He is like a man who built a house and dug deep and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock. But he that hearth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

In his commentary Guruji said: "Jesus was saying that whoever comes to me in meditation in the temple of superconsciousness, forsaking the slums of matter and of gross physical sensations, will hear the silent emanations of my inner being. And if he responds to this inspiration, digging deep with the pickax of meditation, he will build his house of consciousness, not on the insecure 'earth' of passing pleasures, but on the unshakable 'rock' of intuitive knowledge. Whether he is on earth or in the after-death state, even if latent wrong tendencies spring forth and rush in upon him in a violent flood to destroy his spiritual life, his house of cosmic perception and intuitive understanding will remain unshaken. Never again will he be seized by the flood of delusion and swept into the sea of reincarnation. Never! Having once overcome all material desires, he will dwell forever in the house of blissful immortality." It is our divine birthright.

Guruji goes on to explain that Jesus was saying: "Any devotee who hears the voice of his inner perception but does not act according to the divine impulses he receives in meditation, remaining identified with the world and with the pleasures of the senses, will build his consciousness on the foundation of earthly habits. When the waters of temptations rush in upon him his house of temporary spiritual discipline and self-control will crumble and fall, and he himself will be swept away in the swirling tides of cosmic delusion."

This is reiterated in the Gita reading where Lord Krishna is emphasizing that he is a wise man who concentrates first on rediscovering, realizing, the spiritual reality hidden behind the pseudo-reality of material creation and the body.

Lord Krishna said: "The soul is uncleavable; it cannot be burnt or wilted or dried. The is soul immutable, all-permeating, calm, and immovable. It is imponderable, unmanifested, and unchangeable. Knowing this truth, therefore, you should not lament."

It is our true nature. We have no limitations as the soul. Christ said the same thing in one of his Bible passages: "Let not your heart be troubled." That is how it is when we identify and build our lives on that

rock of spiritual pursuit and spiritual consciousness.

In his commentary on the Gita passage, Gurujī said: “Every man has a soul and a body. Through the delusion, he constantly finds his soul identified with the body; thus he ascribes to himself all the bodily limitations. It is the body that can be cut, burned, wetted, dried, hurt, and moved from one place to another; it is also circumscribed by a small place, and is short-lasting. So the individual with the body thinks that he can be cut, burned, wetted, dried, hurt, moved, and subject to the final indignity of death!

“The man of Self-realization, on the other hand, knows himself to be the soul--omnipresent, eternal, ever undisturbed in the largest and the tiniest waves of vibrations.

“The paradox of delusion is possible because man, as mortal, is a mixture of the changeless soul and the changeable body. If he wants to avoid permanently all forms of misery, he must learn soul-identification. By body-identification, man has to suffer incarnation of soul-oblivion, undergoing numerous rebirths and their attendant miseries.

“You must mediate deeper and deeper until you can attain ecstatic communion with God and thus forget the limitations of the body.” That is how we build our house of consciousness upon that rock of spiritual realization.

Gurujī goes on to say: “During meditation you must not only think, but realize, that you are formless, omnipresent, omniscient spirit, far above all bodily changes.”

Brother explained that in the beginning when we're working with the techniques, when we're cultivating the ability to concentrate, we may not be able to rise above the thoughts but ultimately there is no thinking in meditation. The highest definition of meditation is union with God--no thoughts, no words, just soul communion. As powerful as the mind is, during meditation we transcend thought.

Brother said he saw on a bumper sticker that read: “Meditation is not what you think.” That is so true! The paradox is that we have a body and a mind but we are the soul and until we have that soul-realization, we are a mixture of the human and the divine but we have to make that conscious decision every day to identify, move, live and have our being, in the identification that we are the soul. We have a choice.

Abraham Lincoln was arguably our greatest president. He considered himself, as did others, to be a very homely man. Once during a debate in a presidential campaign his opponent accused him of being two-faced. President Lincoln responded: “I leave it to you, my audience, if I had two faces would I be wearing this one?”

Gurujī is coaxing, pleading with us to ask ourselves this same question every day. If we have two faces, human and divine, which one do we want to be wearing? Which one do we want to identify with? The

human one, subject to duality and it's inherent suffering, misery and pain or do we want to identify with our face, our mask, of our divine nature, which is above all duality and at one with that omnipresent, spiritual consciousness?

We all know the answer. We all want to permanently eliminate pain and suffering from our lives and live in that state of ever new conscious joy. That is the very purpose of life, the goal of life, realizing who we truly are--Self-realization.

Guruji defines Self-realization as: "Self-realization is the knowing — in body, mind, and soul — that we are one with the omnipresence of God; that we do not have to pray that it comes to us, that we are not merely near it at all times, but that God's omnipresence is our omnipresence; that we are just as much a part of Him now as we ever will be. All we have to do is improve our knowing."

That is the purpose of life. If we establish our consciousness on that rock we will free our lives from all limitations; it will free our lives from all suffering. It is good to reflect from time to time on this truth. How many know this truth that we can, by self effort, know this truth of who we truly are and transcend all mortal suffering and limitations and realize permanent ever new happiness, joy and bliss? Not too many.

Think of what a blessing it is since we're only about 400 years removed from the dark ages. Think back just a 100 years and how hard it must have been to receive this message. Travel was limited, no radio, television, Internet, twitter and so on. We are so blessed to have this now and know what represents the purpose of life.

Guruji said that most people don't succeed in life because of the lack of knowledge of the purpose of life and a lack of sustained effort. We know the purpose of life and all we have to provide is the sustained effort. We don't have to do great and grand things; we don't have to lead the masses; we don't have to build great temples; we just have to provide sustained effort. That's the power of yoga. Through self effort, step by step effort our progress is drawing us closer and closer to the realization of who we truly are and in that goal we are rising above all limitations.

Will Rogers understood this principal when he said: "Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." We have to make the effort. It is a huge blessings in this awakening age. In the dark age man's consciousness was not refined enough for these truths. Christ wasn't talking about energy in meditation and consciousness because it was too gross an age. In this age we don't have to rely just on faith and belief for us to realize who we truly are.

During meditation you must not only think, but realize that you are formless, omnipresent, omniscient, far above all bodily changes. Until we realize that we will continue to suffer from this mixture of being human and divine; suffer from limitations.

A minister was preparing a sermon when his little daughter walked in and asked: "Dad, does God tell you what to say?" He said: "Of course, honey." She said: "Then why do you scratch so much of it out?"

Until we get that soul intuition, there are limitations.

As important as faith and beliefs are, and they are, we realize the world can't give us that happiness if we haven't obtained that blissful soul-realization. Faith and belief are the bridges that help us with that middle ground, that gap. The readings from today are statements of the ultimate, personal realization of these truths. That is the rock upon which our happiness should be founded and then it can withstand all test, all trials and any temptations the world can throw at us.

The greatest way to awaken from the dream of limitations is meditation. Brother reiterated that we have to provide that sustained effort. Lahiri Mahasaya said: "The power of Kriya meditation lies in its practice." That's exactly what Roy Rogers was saying when he said that even if you're on the right road and just sit there you'll get run over.

Since we know these truths the question we need to ask ourselves is: "What are the major obstacles presented to me on a daily basis, preventing me from providing that sustained effort."

There are dozens and dozens of obstacles but today Brother said he wanted to concentrate on one very powerful one...our thoughts. Thoughts have great power and a great influence in our lives. As Gururji pointed out in the Autobiography that thoughts are power just as is electricity. The quality of thoughts that we habitually entertain greatly influence our lives and the ability to make the sustained effort because if we're harboring negative, hateful, revengeful, greedy, all these discouraging thoughts we are essentially affirming them. What we are doing then is creating samskara.

A samskara is like a groove in our superconsciousness that forces us to behave in a way, even if we know truth, and want to behave differently. We've cut these negative samskara and are forced to behave in a negative way even against our will. The idea is to cut positive samskara. It is so critical to introspect, not only daily, but every minute, so that we know where thoughts are and keep them positive, loving, constructive and spiritual. Because every time we officially entertain a thought we are affirming it and affirmation are very powerful. So we want to use their power for good; use their power to make this sustained effort and rise above our human limitations. Do not entertain thoughts of failure or unworthiness or anything that is contrary to the truth that we are the soul, made in the image of God.

In The Divine Romance Gururji said: "Avoid all the wrong things you have done. They do not belong to you now. Let them be forgotten. It is the attention that creates habit in memory. As soon as you put the needle on a phonograph record it begins to play. Attention is the needle that plays the record of past actions. You should not put your attention on bad ones. Why go on suffering over the unwise actions of your past. Cast the memory from your mind and take care not to repeat those actions again."

We have the choice as to what thoughts we want to entertain. They greatly influence our ability to make that sustained effort. So it's best to entertain thoughts of success and thoughts that affirm our true nature. Otherwise, as powerful as meditation is, and there is no tool in this age that is more powerful than meditation, but if, in between our meditations, we entertain thoughts of unworthiness, failure,

pain, resentment, grief and so forth, it's like driving down the Autobahn in the top of the line BMW with the parking brake on. We're not going to make much progress.

If we're not vigilant, introspecting, analyzing, watching the thoughts we initially entertain, we're placing limitations on ourselves instead of overcoming them. Our thoughts are extremely important in helping us fulfill our goals and transcending all human limitations. As William James once said: "The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude, as dictated by the quality of thought that an individual habitually entertains."

Thoughts are very important. One very important obstacle to fulfilling this goal of life are thoughts of discouragement. He said it's HUGE! Seventy-five percent of the counseling the monastic do worldwide, whether it be at the Temples, on tour, face-to-face, deals with discouragement. It is a great obstacle and tool that maya does not hesitate to use. Brother then shared the following story to show how powerful a tool it is:

It is said that a senior devil was planning to retire and he advertised a garage sale to sell all his tools. They were all on displayed and priced on tables with white table clothes. The junior devils were there. One of them noticed in the back of the garage, hanging up against the wall, a very worn tool. He asked the senior devil: "What's the price for that?" The senior devil said: "That's not for sale." He repeatedly got questions about it and in spite of lucrative offers, he wouldn't sell it. They finally asked him why and he said: "This single tool is my most valuable tool. When all other tools fail, I can with this single tool, pry open the heart of man, get into it and do my work. This tool is discouragement. If I can succeed in making a person feel discouraged, I can make him do what I like. I have used this tool on almost every person and that is why it is so worn out. Not many people know that it belongs to me."

Brother went on to say that he thinks that we can all relate to that. Discouragement drives a wedge between us and God. It is not just a cute story but it covers an important principle. Discouragement is our great enemy; maya's most powerful weapon that prevents us from making that sustained effort. We don't have to do great and grand things. All we have to do is small things to create that sustained effort. Do not give up! It does take sustained effort to realize who we truly are and overcome our limitations.

Guruji said the same thing, so it's not just a cute story. Brother went on to give an example from the excerpt of story about a woman who had a near-death experience, how she was blessed with the power of thought and how it can influence us about discouragement. Her name was Betty Eadie. She wrote: "I realized our thoughts have the power to draw positive or negative energy around us. When you draw at length on the negative it can result in the weakening of the body's defenses, and not just the body but the mind. Negative thoughts can paralyze our will."

Betty Eadie went on to say: "This is especially true when our negative thoughts are centered on ourselves. I understood that we are at our most self-centered state when we are discouraged. Nothing can sap our natural strength and health as much as prolonged discouragement. But when we make the effort to move ourselves away from the self, away from ego and identification from human limitations

and begin to concentrate on the needs of others and concentrate on them, we begin to heal. Service is the balm to both spirit and mind.”

That is quite a statement! She realized that we are the most selfish when we are discouraged. Unselfishness is a great aid in helping us in shattering the limitations of discouragement. Any counselor worth his salt will first ask a person who comes for counseling with discouragement: “when did you last do something for someone else.” We have to get out of our own mind and stop obsessing on our failures or problems or tests because we magnify them and they seem intimidating and then it’s hopeless. But when we think of others, serve others, and look back at our problems they don’t appear as big and intimidating as we thought. They become manageable and we are able to deal with them.

Brother reiterated that we’re at our most selfish when we’re discouraged and advised us to cultivate the habit of unselfishness because it is a tool to transcend our limitations. Also, that it is a very hard lesson for most of us to learn. If we default to the ego, we go to the level of mediocrity. We go to the level of selfishness.

Brother read about a young mother who was preparing pancakes for her two sons, Johnny who was five, and Alex was three. They were bickering over who was going to get the first pancake. Mom saw this as a teachable moment and said if Jesus was here he’d say: “Let my brother have the first pancake.” Johnny turned to his brother and said: “Okay, Alex, you be Jesus.”

Unselfishness is a very hard lesson for the ego to learn but it is important for us to learn.

Paramahansa said the same thing regarding selfishness. He said: “Spiritual and material consciousness are opposite in their modes of operation. You can test yourself as to whether you are filled with material or spiritual consciousness. Your spiritual consciousness tells you that you must include in your happiness and prosperity the happiness and wellbeing of others. Material consciousness tells you that you should make a dollar anyway you can and keep it for yourself. The depression in the 1930s began out of material consciousness and selfishness. Material consciousness says to eat your apple and cookies yourself. Spiritual consciousness says divide and share with someone else.”

This is an introspective tool we can use on a daily basis. We have to consciously work on cultivating these divine qualities of the soul. They aren’t the default. We’re always being pushed away from what’s right, away from the light, toward mediocrity and selfishness and away from God. We have to swim against the stream, against the current, to make the effort to cultivate these divine qualities.

We do have problems from time to time and suffer set backs. It doesn’t matter if we’ve been on the path ten, twenty, thirty or forty years, we all go through periods of dryness where the devotion or love is not flowing freely from the soul. It’s hard to meditate or we’ve been on the path a long time and all of a sudden a habit that we thought was dead years ago suddenly rears its ugly head again. That’s okay; it happens to all of us. Don’t be discouraged. That’s maya.

Guruji said: “It doesn’t matter who you were five minutes ago. It doesn’t who you were a minute ago. All

that matters is who you are right now and who you're striving to become every moment as you move forward." We need to learn from our experiences, our failures, but let go of the guilt, let go of discouragement, let go of the gaps. We learn more from our mistakes than we do from our successes. We have to let go and not hang on to guilt, discouragement, doubts and so forth. God knows that as long as we are a mixture of this human and divine we will never be perfect. It is not possible in a world of duality where we will make mistakes and fall but that's okay as long as we pick ourselves up and assume that sustained effort again one step at a time. Never give into discouragement about our temporary setbacks or failures. God does not love us any less when we fail. God does not judge us. God loves us unconditionally at all times.

Brother shared story that illustrates this point. "Ironically" it was entitled Pancakes: "Six year old Brandon decided one Saturday morning to fix his parents pancakes. He found a big bowl, a spoon and pulled up a chair to the counter. He opened the cupboard and pulled out the heavy bag of flour canister dropping it, spilling it all over himself and the floor. He scooped up some of the flour into the bowl with his hands, mixed in most of a cup of milk and added some sugar, leaving a floury trail on the floor, which by now had been tracked on by his kitten. Brandon was covered in flour and frustrated. He wanted this to be something very good for mom and dad but it was getting very bad. He didn't know what to do next. Whether he should put it all in the oven or on the stove and he didn't know how to work the stove anyway. Suddenly he saw his kitten licking from the bowl with the eggs and as he reached to push it away he knocked the egg carton to the floor. Frantically he tried to clean up this monumental mess but slipped on the eggs getting his pajamas white and sticky. Just then he saw his dad standing in the door. Big crocodile tears welled up in Brandon's eyes. All he wanted to do was something good and he'd made a terrible mess. He was sure a scolding was coming and maybe even a spanking but his father just watched him. Then walking through the mess he picked up his crying son, hugging and loving him, getting his own pajamas white and sticky in the process."

That's how God deals with us. We try to do something good in life but it turns into a mess...our marriages get sticky or we insult a friend or we can't stand our job or our health gives out. Sometimes we just stand there in tears because we can't think of anything else to do. That's when God picks us up and loves and forgives us even though some of our mess gets all over Him. The moral is: just because we all make a mess from time to time, we shouldn't stop trying to make "pancakes" for God. There is nothing that should stop us from making that sustained effort to fulfill this great purpose of life...rising above all limitations, realizing who we truly are and establishing our house of consciousness on that rock of spiritual realization.

Never fall prey to discouragement. God is ever with us. He hurts when we get discouraged and stop making the effort because He knows, He set up the laws. Pain is the prod to remembrance and when we're not making the effort those prods will come again and again. Not to hurt us but to remind us to make the effort. It hurts when that happens but He never stops loving us; He never loves us less when we fail and He is never disappointed in us. We have to just keep moving down that road to realization. Maya will tell us that we can't do it and that's why we get discouraged. Maya tell us that he or she can do it but certainly not me but that's not the message...YES, YOU CAN! You are made in the image of

God, as is Jesus, as is Buddha, as are all the Great Ones. YES, YOU CAN DO IT!

Guruji said: "Resurrect your soul from the dreams of frailty. Resurrect your soul in eternal wisdom. What is the method? It includes many things--relaxation, self-control, right diet, fortitude, an undaunted attitude of mind, regular meditation with the practice of scientific concentration and meditation principles. You may fail at first but do not acknowledge defeat. To acknowledge defeat is greater than failure. You have unlimited power and you must cultivate that great power."

Never be intimidated, just keep making the effort. One way to develop divine will is to try to do something you thought you could never do. Guruji said it's good to try something new. Remember that a lone amateur build the ark and a group of professionals built the Titanic.

We have all the tools we need to succeed. As Guruji said: "You can do it." There is no difference and that's why when it's asked what is the difference between a Buddha, an enlightened soul, and an ordinary man? The only answer is that the Buddha knows there is no difference. We, too, have to know that. We have all the tools we need. All we have to do is provide that sustained effort. Don't let our thoughts, don't let discouragement stop us from making the effort.

Brother reiterated what Guruji said: "There is no difference between you and me, except that I made the effort. Now it's your turn." That is what he's saying to us. Brother brought up Mohammed Ali, the heavyweight boxing champion of the '60s and '70s. He was a real show man. He used a shtick to sell tickets. One of his things that he'd say was: "I am the greatest, the greatest of all time." He had this bravado; he was always on when he was in public. One time while on an airplane as the flight attendant was walking up and down the aisle checking passenger before the flight took off, she noticed that his seatbelt was not fastened so she said: "Mr. Ali, would you please fasten your seatbelt." He shot back at her: "Superman doesn't need a seatbelt." She responded: "Superman doesn't need an airplane." He fastened his seatbelt.

Guruji incarnated for us to reclaim our divine birthright as immortals. After many hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of incarnations or more, having identified with this limited human consciousness, Guruji is coaxing us to wake up; to realize who we truly are. That we are made in the image of God.

Brother read the following from today's Service Reading: "Only the superman, who has learned to expand and transfer his consciousness to the Infinite, can realize creation as a dream of God; he alone can say with true knowledge that matter has no existence. Through a long series of self-disciplinary steps; through following the scientific yoga path or any other way of spiritual perfection, the God-seeker dissolves the dualities and discerns the Eternal Oneness."

Brother closed with the following by Guruji: "Salvation means freedom from the limitations that are apposed upon your soul by your body. Delusion possesses you as soon as you are in a wakeful state. Being saved means to destroy that delusion, which you have during the state of wakefulness. To be redeemed is to drop the dark veil of ignorance that covers you soul. You cannot see a lump of gold if it is covered with mud. So long as the mud of ignorance besmeared the gold soul, you cannot see it. You are

unable to think of yourself as a soul because you know only the body. The human form is the mud that hides your soul. That is why you do not know what you are. Wash away the mud, forget the body by meditation, you will know what you are. How can you be anything but perfect because you are God's child but you have to realize your divinity within you."