

Brother Santoshanada
Expanding Your Awareness of God
Lake Shrine Temple
February 26, 2012

The purpose of this Temple is to find, not just to hear sermons or philosophy or words, but to realize within ourselves that God is the existence, the source, the essence of our being. And that is realized when we meditate. Meditation is always the most important part of the service. Even though, naturally, it is good to be together because we re-enforce each other in our search of God.

Brother read a letter from Mrinalini Mata to the Lake Shrine devotees thanking them for their gift at Christmastime. He said that it included deep, important points that we need to incorporate in our lives. Excerpts of the letter are as follows:

“...It is your love for God and Guru and your gratitude for Guruji’s sacred teachings that inspire your kindness.” [Brother interjected that this is always a great point to remember that we are gathered together here in divine friendship. Whatever we offer to whoever it may be, should be an outpouring of kindness and love, particularly at the Temple.]

“In dwelling on the lives of God-united souls, such as Jesus, Bhagavan Krishna and our Gurudeva, we are inspired anew to emulate their example of humility and love and to seek the Divine One in whom they found supreme fulfillment.” [Again, Brother interjected saying that it was beautifully, well explained but the Great Ones come here on earth to show us the way. They are examples to follow. They are showing us what is indeed the goal of life. Essentially, the goal of life is to find God within and to find our oneness with Him.]

“For in this world it is easy to be caught up in daily cares and pressures and the turbulent nature of the times in which we live.” [Brother interjected: “Isn’t it so? We get caught by it but we need not allow the constant flux of *maya* and it’s shifting values to rule our lives. We allow ourselves to be caught by the externalities and the false values...unrealistic values of life. We get caught up in the process and lose the divine prospect, the divine awareness, of how big is God’s movie, as Paramahansa Yogananda said...God’s show in

which we are all participating. We are identifying more with the external. We forget that which is internal in our own being. We don't have to allow that. We don't need to allow the constant influx of *maya* and its shifting values to hold our lives.]

“Through the efforts you make together to meditate deeply and to absorb Gurudeva’s teaching, you create an environment where the mind can become centered in God and in the eternal principles that brings attunement with Him.” [That is what being at the Temple is all about. To center our lives; to reorient our lives so that they move in the right direction.]

“As we follow the path of meditation and spiritual living blazed by those who have merged their consciousness in the Divine, a sense of peace and an awareness of God’s assuring presence increasingly permeate our lives.” [That’s what we want. We want to increase this awareness of a presence within us and express it in our every day lives so that we don’t become manipulated by all the external events that happen all the time in the world. It will never stop but we can go back to the right place within and to act accordingly in harmony with God’s will according to our attunement.]

“Our positive efforts are reenforced by His blessings and we begin to realize that we are the indestructible soul capable of living in this world without being intimidated by its dualities.” [Something to meditate upon. We can live in this world not caught by the dualities of life but to stay in union within. That is, of course, when we meditate and increase our awareness of the Presence and that Presence becomes manifest through us in our every day lives. In every level and aspect of our lives.]

“We can face that we can obtain the supreme goal of life; the awakening of the divine consciousness within us.” [So the whole spiritual path is written here in a nutshell.]

“You and your dear ones are remembered in my prayers that God bless your lives and guide you in reaching your worthy goals and carrying out your noble resolves in the year ahead. Above all, may His divine love and joy unfold within you as you cultivate in your heart and soul an ever deeper, more loving relationship with Him.”

*In God and Guru’s love,
and unceasing blessings,*

Mrinalini Mata

A brief period of meditation followed.

Today's subject is entitled: *Expanding Your Awareness of God*. We may say it is an unusual subject. A deeper subject than we usually have in the Temple. It is more philosophical in some way and deeper because it is asking us to expand our awareness of God. Of course, we must know God in order to expand. We cannot expand something that we do not know.

So Brother's first question was: What is God to us? What is our own concept of God? There are many concepts, many ideas, about God. There are many religions and all religions are expressing a different opinion about what God is. There are so many of that Brother explained that when he was preparing the service, he logged on to Google to find out how many religions there are in the world. There are more than we can imagine. The number of existing religions was the question he asked and the results that came up indicated over five million...precisely 5,607,000 religions...and 10,000 major religions. They were also rated by stars...some five stars, some 3 stars, some half of a star...welcome to the digital world! This is how it is now a days.

In Self-Realization Fellowship [SRF], we believe that there is only one star and that is the star of the spiritual eye, the divine star. This is the real Oscar we can win when we meditate deeply. That's the real star to which we have to orient of lives. It's the star of Self-realization. The portal, the gate, in which heaven and God's presence reveals itself.

In Self-Realization we honor and respect all religions...all of them...no matter how many stars they may or may not have. Because no matter what, God is expressing himself on many different levels of religions. Some believe that God is way, way out there somewhere like a human being watching over us with a long white beard and saying to us: "I'm always very serious. You better behave now." You know, like in the Hollywood movies. That is one way. For them God is in heaven and they will go there after they die, if they have been good girls and boys here on earth. That's what some people believe and they have a right to believe it.

Now another way, which is more like we believe in yoga philosophy and SRF is that God is not far away and as Paramahansa Yogananda said: "*He is the nearest than the nearest; dearest than the dearest; just behind the*

darkness of the closed eyes there is God's presence." When we open the spiritual eye. *"And just behind the heart beat of your hearts. Right in the spiritual center there is God's love shining ever with you."* That's where God is. So we have to go within.

If what we say in SRF, means something to you this is the path to follow because we can establish communion here and now...right now! We don't have to wait to die.

It is our minds and thoughts that are creating these fences from realizing what God is...the concept, the idea, that we hold on to. We need to gradually free ourselves from these concepts and ideas, which belong only to the mind. One of the Brothers was in India meditating...this Brother is serving here at the Lake Shrine Temple...and in meditation he reached the silent mind in which he saw everything, except the Divine Reality, which reveals Itself.

As Jesus said: *"Seek the truth and the truth will set you free."* We find the freedom; we find what we are looking for. We don't have to go to India to realize that for India has come to us in the teaching of Paramahansa Yogananda and we can apply them in our every day lives.

The teachings of yoga philosophy and SRF's teaching, come from India. They define God in three words, just like in the Western world. The expression for God is *Sat, Chit, Ananda*, ever-conscious, ever-existing and ever-new Bliss. We can experience that in meditation.

In the Western world most religions teach that God is omnipresent... meaning every where present, omniscience, all knowing, the entirety of knowledge is there, omnipotent and all powerful. And if we feel that presence, we feel the omnipresence of God. God, as it is said, is not a place in which is He is not. This is why we have this beautiful chant: *O God Beautiful...in the mountain Thou art high...in the rivers...restless...in forest Thou art green...which helps to increase the awareness of God.* It shows the omnipresence of God in everything and every time we chant this chant we create an attunement with God's omnipresence in everything.

Then, of course, knowing that we have expanded our awareness, God is no longer a philosophy, or a concept, or an idea but a living reality expressing itself throughout creation and, also, in our every day lives...at work, at home...wherever we are. If we bring in the presence of God we

realize there is something more to life than to be caught up by everything. We step back and expand our consciousness creating a new awareness and reorienting our lives in the right direction.

This is why in the Bhagavad-Gita the Lord Krishna says beautifully: *"I am the Source of everything; from Me all creation emerges."* All creation is God's creation and we are apart of it. There is not a spot where God is not!

A man, a seeker of truth, went to India to see a master, who had liberation. And he asked if he would be able to see God. The master smiled and said: "You have been seeing Him all the time -- all your life but you don't even know it. All is God's presence and you don't know it! You have created an illusory separation that must be broken. Awaken yourself to this new reality that God is present in everyone and everywhere." He realized that there was something more and just by having the blessing of a master, he had this awareness that he had not know before.

In India, God is included as part of every day life. A missionary went to India and he saw a young boy throwing rose petals on the statue of Lord Krishna and he went to him and asked: "Oh, my dear little boy, what are you doing?" "Worshiping God in the form of Lord Krishna." And the missionary said: "I will give you one apple if you can show me your God." The little boy replied: "I will give you two apples if you can show me where He is not." Different concepts, different ideas!

Master said: *"This creation has not been created to suppress God but to express God."* It is all God's expressions. We just have to awaken ourselves to this realization. This is why we meditate. Meditation expands our awareness in which we can feel more this Divine Reality. Divine Intelligence expresses itself in creation in everything. We read in the Saying of Paramahansa Yogananda in which he wrote: *"God appears to sleeps in the mineral kingdom. Matter is the finite expression of God."* Now a days, the science of quantum physics reveals more and more what we call matter is something that we cannot see but it is there. We cannot put our fingers on it but with our minds we move these things that are not explained.

However, Paramahansa Yogananda explained what it is. He speaks of lifetrans -- prana, energy -- which is a substance that vibrates but it is not physical, it is spiritual energy. If we can contact it, healing can be created inside of us. This is why prana, the life energy, the *Aum* vibration touching

someone is healing power. That is what it is. It comes from the Source. It always comes from the Source Itself and manifests as matter.

Paramahansa Yogananda while in India was in a temple between two pillars when suddenly he felt a vibration under his feet...the Divine Vibration. He felt it vibrating...it was not an earthquake...it was a spiritual vibration that came by itself vibrating under his feet, going up his legs and taking over his whole being. It was the start of a spiritual experience. It was God's vibration through matter that came and connected with him at that moment. It was a blessing from Mother Earth! Usually blessings from God come from the top down but this time it was from the bottom up. We cannot limit God in one way or another. His will is done all the time without us knowing how it works but that's the thing He experiences and we are His.

So the Master said that God lives in the minerals and He lives in the flowers. This is the evolution of God's presence more and more in creation. "*Flower,*" he said, "*are smiles of God.*" Every time we see a flower it is God smiling at us and that can be experienced if we have the right attunement. If the mind, the ego, is not obstructing His presence. The presence in us is communing with the presence in the flower, which is an expression of God.

And we say that when we eat food, we pray: "Heavenly Father, bless this food...Spirit to Spirit goes..." The Spirit in the food with divine electromagnetic currents are joining with the divinity that is within us. It is a form of awareness that can be created more and more as we practice yoga and the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda.

So from spine and brain he said God awakened Himself in the animal kingdom. We see that there is a bit of awareness in the animal kingdom. The kitty comes to you and starts to purr and somehow that's a peaceful purr. Also, with dogs and like St. Francis who was able to commune with the animal kingdom. He gave a sermon to the fish. He would talk to the birds and all the birds in the trees would surround him. He would talk to them! Brother said he didn't know what he said to them but that it was his presence. He had that vibration. He was able to contact the divine vibration which is an expression of God in the birds...communion...union.

Well, let's separate it. Only externally the form and the appearances create this delusion but when we go deeper and fix our awareness within we commune with God and all life. That's what it's all about!

There was a ferocious wolf killing the villagers in the time of St. Francis. So he went to the wolf, started talking and it began to follow him like a little dog. He had that power and awareness of God's presence. Paramahansaji said, *"Through one evolution, when God manifests Himself in one human being, then he knows that he is awake."* We know we become Self-conscious. Unfortunately, in the beginning it is more on the ego level and we do things on our own...I...I...I...me...me...me...and we create separation through the delusion of the ego, which creates separation between you and me and life and whatever else is. But when we meditate, more and more, we know this awakening and this unity of love and joy is bubbling from within and we share with others in the world.

This is how we can increase our awareness and this is what yoga is teaching. It is a path of awakening in which we realize...we know that we have awakened. We no longer act unconsciously creating problems -- nationally, psychologically, financially. We no longer take darkness for light because we are out of tune. This is why we pray: *"Lord, awaken me from darkness to light, restlessness to peace, sorrow to joy, and from death to immortality."*

That's the spiritual yoga path that the teachings of SRF offers. As Paramahansa Yogananda said: *"Yes, as human beings we are limited but as souls we are unlimited."* This is why we meditate. We have to break the barriers that we are creating by our thoughts and minds, which binds us, which limits us with all these false identifications that we are unconsciously creating all the time. We behold our own reality and we believe that's all there is. We look against a wall and we see a brick wall but we see only one brick. When we start to meditate and step back we realize there are two bricks; three bricks; five; oh, there's a big wall, infinite...miles and miles! The consciousness expands and we start to behold the truth. We know it's the truth because we no longer see only one little brick limiting ourselves with pettiness and all the things that we create...pain, problems, suffering to ourselves and to others as we act from the small way of ego consciousness.

We can take a step back and start to release all the burdens because we know there is a higher reality in which we can live our lives. We can orient our lives in that direction. So the path is to awaken ourselves more and more and realize that indeed we are made in the image of God. We should behave in that way in our every day lives as much as we possibly can.

Brother concluded with the following beautiful words of Paramahansa Yogananda who said to us: *“Think, what amazing changes would happen to man if he were to allow his soul and its qualities of intuition, omniscience, peace, bliss, and calmness to rule the kingdom of his body and mind. Just think about that. If some people have less divine realization than others, it is not because God limited His flow of grace but because most men prevent His ever present light from passing freely through them. God is equally present in everyone and everything and those who receive His light through the self created transparent purity are surely children of God. To know God we must experience Him within our own consciousness. Awake, sleep no more!”*