

Brother Satyananda

"How to Cultivate World Peace"

September 11, 2011

We are all one family of souls. Brother says "it sounds great; doesn't it? Does it feel that way out on the street?" (the audience laughs) "No, it doesn't quite feel that way."

And yet it is that ultimate truth: we are one family of souls. Within you is the divine light of God, the potential for cosmic expression of infinite consciousness and life. And it's awesome. It's within you. It's also within each and every one of us. It's secretive within all of animate life, so when you look at another living being there is that same spark of God's light in them that is exactly the same as in you.

And so God has done something really awesome here. He has created you both unique and equal with all. And so this is a manifestation of God's omnipresent life intelligence and love. And in this sense we can truly pronam, which is the traditional greeting from the east: My soul bows to your soul—meaning we can recognize, can cognize, become more aware of that divinity within ourselves and that same equal divinity in those around us. And in this sense we can all be a spiritual family. The more we think of each other in this way the more we will be inspired to perceive it as truth.

Brother leads the congregation in a chant: "oh life is sweet and death a dream when thy song flows through me." This is a beautiful vedic hymn our Guru composed for us. Repeating the chant over and over again allows for the repetition of the truth to become alive in our hearts. Brother recommends letting cosmic peace flow through you with each natural breath you take. When chanting OM feel that you are chanting the chant of peace and offering it to the world.

In the summer of 1950 our Guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, opened the Lake Shrine and dedicated the shrine for world peace. He said, "I dedicate this church of all religions that we may live as brothers and bring peace and prosperity to the earth." So near the end of every summer we celebrate the anniversary of our shrine dedication by our Guru as a symbol of the unity of all religions, of world peace, and of humanitarianism.

**Part of our Guru's teachings, an essential component, is scientific meditation, and so we are also planning, as part of the anniversary this year a special world peace meditation. It's coming at a very important time in world events and we'll be holding it next weekend on Saturday the 17th at 6 in the evening. Brother Satyananda will be leading the meditation, a guided meditation with peace visualizations, and we will practice radiating peace vibrations out into the world.**

Because the planned anniversary of this dedication is converging closely with 9/11, the 10th anniversary of 9/11, the Lake Shrine is drawing in a full week of peace prayers and asking everyone to participate, so this morning's lecture will include lessons learned from the tragic events and also introduce the idea

that all of us, in our meditations this week, are offering peace prayers and sending out peace vibrations, so do this in your homes on a daily basis. One of the greatest things you can do as spiritual men and women is to meditate and send out peace vibrations. They have a lasting impact and benefit.

On the first anniversary of 9/11 in 2002, Brother was the minister-in-charge of the SRF temple in Phoenix, and he made a trip to New York City to be with the people in the SRF chapel there in Manhattan, and they had a world peace meditation for anyone who could come. They had a satsanga, services and walked the streets.

Brother had asked the Phoenix Sunday school to prepare some peace flags so the little kids drew some flags. Brother said it was really sweet. They drew pictures of rainbows and doves flying and little kids dancing and laughing and they wrote messages like “we pray for your family” “we pray for New York’s finest” “we pray for everybody” and Brother took those flags with him and strung them on a string and hung them on the fence at Ground Zero and took a picture and sent it back to the proud Sunday school kids. Brother remembers one boy very seriously drew two towers smoking and he said “we will not forget”.

Brother thinks that this echoes a message of every war, conflict, memorial that’s ever been honored and dedicated—that theme of remembrance. Brother was at the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. If you’ve never been there you should go. It shows more than we assume about how evil events develop quietly and then manifest with great disaster. After you’ve gone through all of the displays and interactive features you end up in what is called the Hall of Remembrance. It’s a large space, completely undecorated, with marble floors, marble walls, smaller than the Lake Shrine Temple Sanctuary, but just as high.

Brother remembers walking in on a quiet day. He was all by himself and recalls standing by himself in this Hall of Remembrance and looking at the eternal flame that’s there against one wall. The black marble behind it has an inscription that reads “Guard your soul carefully, lest you forget”. Brother stood there alone and prayed and he cried.

What moved him to tears, the meaning that made him cry, was that we are as human beings, endowed by God with sacred divinity within us, we have a soul nature that is ascendant and sacred, but that human nature can become, temporarily, dark, twisted and evil. Because this evil is not within us but around us we can associate with it and become an expression of evil if we choose. Then that reminder, “let us not forget” that this potential is there we must guard against it. We must make wise choices, that we cultivate peace instead of war and that we may bring the best out in ourselves and the best out in society.

So this dark potential to human nature is also reflected in dark potential for remembrance, so we can remember the importance for protecting peace and respecting each other as equal citizens, or, on the flip side, the dark side of remembrance we can say let us not forget our anger. Let us not forget our desire for revenge. Let us pursue, until we have evened the score. Let us carry our anger out until it

becomes part of the next generation and plays itself out as prejudice in future generations. Remembrance has a dark side, so Brother says it's very important that we be kind to remembrance. We need to know what we want to remember if we want to have peace.

Shortly after 9/11 Brother was talking with a few International Students on a study abroad program and they were walking about the U.S. and their country and the differences, and the students were really enthusiastic about America, and, of course the malls! But everything else they liked, and then they said we wished our country was more free like America. And Brother said (to them) "specifically, what do you mean?" And they said, well, it's kind of a dark secret in our society that children are often taught in the homes to mistrust other families. Humiliations, suffered decades ago, are nurtured as grievances for generations. And children are urged to take retribution for the honor of their family. Brother remembers them saying "America is so open. We love this country and we hope Americans will respond internally."

During the 1993 Croatian Bosnian War there was a 16th century historic bridge over the Redblood river that was blown up by explosives. It was a beloved historic structure, a beautiful symbol of the city of Mostar, and, after the war was over, one of the first acts of reconstruction in that region was to pull the parts out of the river and lovingly reconstruct that bridge. It's a beautiful masterpiece of medieval architecture arching over the river, connecting the city with another portion of the town. After it was reconstructed it was dedicated by UNESCO as a world heritage site and has been a symbol of ethnic peace. Near the bridge there is a plaque that very simply says "Do not forget". It's said that the local people, on both sides of the river, that they understand the dual meaning. That is—it's a reminder either way. To either continue hating and promote war for your children, or to conserve peace.

And so today on 9/11, on Sunday, there are services being conducted in churches all over the United States with this theme as the topic. There are commemorative services being conducted at Stoney Creek in Pennsylvania, and, of course, at Ground Zero in New York City, and the theme of those events, of course, has to be remembrance. The memorial at Ground Zero opens tomorrow (9/12/2011) and a museum dedicated to the same purpose opens next year, and Bro. thinks we can assume that a major theme of that 9/11 museum is going to be remembrance.

But Brother thinks that we would agree with him that it is very important that we define how we remember and what we want to remember. We want to defend against aggression and guard against evil but the way we remember leads either to greater peace or more war.

Yesterday (9/10/2011) there was a commemorative service in Los Angeles, and it was an interfaith event held at downtown City Hall in Los Angeles, led by the mayor. Churches from all around Los Angeles were invited to participate. Self-Realization Fellowship participated and every representative of the churches took home a candle engraved with "one light, one peace, one world: September 11, 2011 Los Angeles". Participants were asked to light it and so on this Sunday morning churches all over Los Angeles are lighting a candle just like this as a symbol of remembrance (Brother holds up a clear glass candle holder so the audience can see as he lights the candle). Brother thinks it's very hopeful and beautiful because the brochure that was given at the event actually defines remembrance. "We gather to unite in common

cause and common prayer to remember the 10th anniversary of 9/11 and embrace the future in harmony.”

Brother thinks there’s good news here: that we as a nation are finding a way to slowly painfully move forward in the right way. This is very important for us as a people, as a country, and as individuals that we define remembrance and that it be a form of remembrance that leads to greater peace.

So what do the Masters have to say about all of this. Jesus, from the New Testament, was speaking with some local scholars in Jerusalem, and they were plugging him with questions and probably trying to trick him up on his philosophy to see if they could find holes in his teachings, and one of them said, “What is the greatest commandment?” to see if Jesus knew the basics, Brother guesses. And Jesus fired right back, “Love the Lord Thy God as Thy Neighbor Thyself.” And then some smart aleck scholar said, “Who is my neighbor?” Now that’s a loaded question. That’s not a spiritual scriptural interpretation, that’s a political question: “Who is my neighbor?”

But Jesus was ready for him and he shot back with a story you’re all familiar with. It’s called the story of the good Samaritan. And as Jesus tells this—remember he’s just spontaneously coming up with this story, but he’s imbedding it with all kinds of meaning—and so in this story a well-to-do man is going along on this road and he gets accosted by robbers and they beat him, take all of his possessions, even most of his clothes and they leave him for dead and they leave him for dead along the side of the road. And Jesus says two upstanding citizens come by, one well-respected sees the man lying by the side of the road and walks on the other side. And then another man comes by, a priest—Jesus uses a priest in his analogy—a priest sees the man lying on the side of the road suffering and walks on the other side of the road, and then a third man comes, a Samaritan and he comes over to the man and he kneels down and compassionately dresses his wounds and lifts him up and puts him on his donkey and carries him to the Inn nearby and leaves him with the Innkeeper and says “please nurse him back to health; here’s some money to take care of the expenses. And if the expense is more than I’ve given I’ll repay you when I stop back in next time.”

And then Jesus turns to the man who asked the question “Who is my neighbor?” and said “Which now of these three thinkest thou was a neighbor unto him that fell among thieves?” And the man had no choice. He said “Well he that showed mercy on him.” And Jesus replied, “Go and do thou likewise.”

This is an extremely clever dual message. Because it’s not only a message to be compassionate and loving and caring, but it’s also a message that in the times where Samaritans were considered to be 2nd class citizens, almost untouchables, as in India you don’t drink from their dish, you don’t eat at their home—that kind of thing. And here was a Samaritan who was a 2nd class citizen serving with compassion to somebody who may not treat him equally. And so Jesus is saying not only is a stranger your neighbor but also the one who may be discriminating against you, the one who may have prejudice. Regardless of outer appearance and roles in life there is a quality in all of us that we need to honor and that is our neighbor.

So Master goes on commenting in The Second Coming of Christ (he has a beautiful scripture where he gives the New Testament and alongside he gives the spiritual commentary on the teachings and stories of Jesus) and he says in this passage that when we commune with God in meditation, spiritual meditation on God, then we become what he calls “inspired”, inspired with the love of God, and it is that love of God that actually allows us to become truly compassionate and serve our brothers and sisters in the world.

Listen to what Paramahansa Yogananda says in his commentary on this story: “Only by fellowship with God will harmony and fellowship come on earth. When one actually perceives the divine presence in his own soul he is inspired with love for his neighbor: Jew and Christian, Muslim and Hindu in the consciousness that one’s true self and the selves of all others are equally soul reflections of the one infinitely loveable God.” And then Master shifts gears a little bit here. “Utopia and social and political agendas will have little long-lasting benefit until humanity learns the eternal science by which the followers of any religion may know God by the oneness of soul and spirit within you.” So our Master is giving us a very personal individual message and then he is expanding that out to everyone and saying what is good for you is good for all. It’s equally applicable.

So positive remembrance is important. Charitable work is vital. But how do we make humanitarianism sustainable? What our Guru is saying is that we must become truly inspired with the love of God. It’s the only thing that will make Humanitarianism and our love for our brothers and sisters sustainable. Otherwise our emotions come and go, our moods come and go. Sometimes we feel charitable; sometimes we don’t. Sometimes we’re in a good mood; sometimes we’re not. But the love of God is sustainable in this aspect where we can feel that love flowing and there is a desire to express it in our service to others.

Writing in the 1930’s our Guru gave a prescient reminder for Americans, and really people of all nations today. This is also from The Second Coming of Christ. It’s a long quote. “Nations must look after one another or they are doomed..... Prosperity often dulls the social conscience. When people concentrate on political and business selfishness for national and personal accumulation of power and luxury at the expense of others, the divine law of happiness and prosperity is broken, creating disorder and want in the family, in the nation, the world. Enduring national prosperity, depends not only upon natural resources and the initiatives of the nation’s citizens, but primarily upon the moral conduct, harmony, and spiritual living of the people. If the leaders of different nations, instead of extolling aggression and patriotic selfishness, turned the minds of their citizens toward the acquirement of inner peace, love of God and neighbor, and bliss of meditation, then material prosperity, health, and international harmony would automatically be added unto the spiritual treasures of the nations.”

Whew. That’s a lot. But Brother had to read the whole thing. Because it’s a complete package, isn’t it? He really gives it straight, and that’s what we need as individuals, as society, to be able to sustain peace and humanitarian values. We need to have first that love of God and that comes of course in our daily lives as we invoke in meditation, as we gather that peace. And then it is expressed in our family life, our work life, in our immediate environment. And Master says “From there it does not stop.” Peace

vibrations are a part of creation, part of the OM vibration, part of God. They have a sustainable power and when you energize them, through your own meditation and prayer then you become a dynamic source or channel through which that can flow.

So as spiritual men and women what can we do? Brother says the answer is obvious. It's good to work outwardly for peace initiatives. It's powerfully important to inwardly strive for spiritual peace. Through meditation send peace vibrations out into the world. During his lifetime our Guru founded what he named the Worldwide Prayer Council, and this Prayer Council he conceived, was for the future to help circle the earth with peace vibrations, and so as part of the daily life in the monastic order, daily, in the morning and evening, part of the group meditation in the ashram and in the monastics individual meditations, at the end of their meditations they always send out peace vibrations, so they gather first that experience of peace within themselves and then they share it with others, and so when someone comes to Brother and says "I'm having wonderful meditations, you know the peace is so profound. What do I do with all this joy?" Brother tells them "send it out. Send it out." It's meant to be invested into the world community. It's meant to be shared and the sharing of it is actually what helps to make our world peace more sustainable.

So you walk into a meditation and you feel restless and moody and restless and we sit down and we dismiss all of that and we practice techniques given to us by our Guru—the body quiets, the heart and mind become still, and out of this stillness manifests this wonderful vibration. Everyone could feel a bit of it this morning at the beginning of the service, and as we concentrate on it the magic is that it grows. The more we concentrate, the more we build, the more we nurture the flame of peace the more that it grows. And then we walk out of the meditation and we're completely transformed. We can feel the difference. It's like "Oh, I need more of that." You are a better person and our Guru says "Not only do your actions and your words speak of peace have benefit but the vibratory power of that peace." He said "it goes beyond you. It radiates beyond you."

Why do people come to you as of late and say I'm suffering with this, and I feel like I want to talk to you, and they're total strangers. Someone in your office comes to you and sits down and says "I don't know why but I feel like you'll understand me." They have a husband. They have a wife. They have friends. Why are they talking to you? They feel safe with you. You're radiating peace vibrations. It's there. It's a part of who you are.

Master says, in speaking about the peace of meditation, "The flood of peace flows over the boundaries of your mind and moves on in infinite directions." Concentric circles we can envision in our meditations, you know? As you feel peace you are radiating peace. It is going out. It's like throwing a pebble into a lake and the circles just go out. You're sitting there like this little radiating center of peace. It goes out from your heart and others are being magnetically affected and those vibrations move on in infinite directions. God's universe is based on OM and the OM is a profound leverage of peace. We are connecting ourselves with that. It has no limitations, no boundaries.

As evidence of the effect of peace prayer and meditation on not just personal life but international

events, Brother has a story shared with him by a man doing some peace work in the Middle East. And, of course, there's no time more appropriate than for peace meditation because the Middle East is explosive. And peace prayers are desperately needed to help bring balance and harmony in that region. On this occasion there was a military blockade along the coast of Lebanon and, of course, military blockades, naval blockades have a long history in the Mediterranean and on this occasion, this man, a disciple of our Guru was a United Nations advisor to an admiral with the U.N. maritime. They were there, representing the United Nations, trying to lift the embargo that had been imposed on the coast of Lebanon and was affecting seriously the lives of people in Damascus and, of course, the coastal cities. So they negotiated with the blockade commander trying to get him just to release enough of the embargo to allow for aid to come to the people and commerce to flow.

But, according to the story, the commander would not lift the embargo at all. So the people were completely shut off from all humanitarian aid. And our friend got very desperate because the negotiations were going nowhere. He was on a ship and he went into his stateroom and he sat and meditated and prayed. He prayed, "Lord we cannot do this without you. For the sake of the families in Lebanon, for the people in cities who suffer please ease this blockade and allow normal commerce to flow." And then he said within a few hours the admiral received a call from the blockade commander simply saying, "ships not bearing arms will be allowed. The total blockade is being lifted." He said there was no negotiation, no discussion, there were no agreements. It was just a phone call. It came out of nowhere. A couple of hours after his prayer the man felt a profound peace that something positive would take place. He didn't know what. He said that's proof for him that the power of prayer worked.

The man wrote to Brother: "Brotherji I went to my room on the ship and I cried. It was God who answered my prayer. No one knows this but myself and the Masters." And now a few more, Brother jokes. The email continues "I feel very grateful to Lahiri Mahasaya, whose presence I feel very strongly in this area. You may share this story with others to increase their faith that meditation and prayer does work and has effect on International events."