

Sharad Sangam 2009
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WISDOM OF THE BHAGWAD GITA
-by Sw. Krishnanandji

Today I am going to share with you the growing conviction that God's grace is everything. It is the only thing dependable in this life and beyond. No more. You all have experienced it. God's grace is intended to reinforce our faith in his omnipresence.

All of you have got this piece of paper which looks like a familiar game played in childhood – snakes and ladder. This one is different – it is a spiritual snakes and ladder game. What we are seeing here is from the original which originated in India. It went to the west and came back in a different form. Look carefully, there are many things there. At the top of the page are the Devas and at the bottom of the page are the Asuras. The aim of the game is to reach the centre of the top row – Square 68 – Plane of Siva. Good qualities raise you upwards and evil tendencies pull you downwards. If read carefully, the squares represent different planes, and you move from the lower astral planes up until you reach the Plane of Truth and further on to the Plane of Siva.

What is so interesting? You think and realize that life itself is a game of snakes and ladder. We are the dice throwers and we are also the spectators. Our each thought, action and decision is like a throw of dice. We have to continuously act by force of life on earth and then observe the effects afterwards. What control do we have? - The choice of throwing the dice and then bearing the results of our actions. Generally 6, 12 or 9 on the dice gives us the power to move from place to place, to move from left to right or right to left. Then you go up and up to the Plane of Siva or lower down to the Plane of Earth. It is a beautiful game. School teachers should introduce it to their children. It will be more effective if you make it colourful. Download from www.hinduismtoday.com/resources/snakesandladders. Print it out and play it with the children.

It is a very interesting teaching device. The outcome of the throws in life is governed by karma, gunas, tamas, wandering of the mind etc. Often we take decisions not necessarily according to our likings. We are puppets in the game of dice moved by different sources. In Mahabharata also though the dice game was between Pandavas and the Kauravas, actually the game was between Yudhishtir and Shakuni. Shakuni was a Master of dice play. All the Pandavas, Kauravas and Shakuni are within us playing the game. The Shakuni within us is also a masterful at the game of dice (playing on the side of King Desire within us). The Kauravas kept on winning cunningly and eventually the Pandavas lost. Then there was the great battle and the Pandavas eventually won. Analyze how they won; what made it possible. The only answer is God's grace, Krishna's grace was with them so eventually they won. In the meantime they had to go through a lot of suffering.

How do we ensure that whatever action we do is the correct one and leads us upwards to the goal of Siva? What can guarantee that? - Only the grace of God. Another thing – the chart of snake and ladder gives us a different perspective on the whole of creation that God is playing. God is on the top, the asuras are at the bottom and all the snakes and ladders are by God, within God, all the devas and asuras are in God and He is having fun. Without the asuras, there will be no drama

and the whole drama will end. The whole plan is His, to slowly make the game of trials go up the spine to reach up to square 68. If you are in square 55 then ego can make you go all the way down and if you have true faith, (square 28) it can take you all the way up to square 59, the Plane of Truth, so close to the Plane of Siva. After reaching there if you get hit by darkness (square 63 – so close to God), then you come all the way down to square 3. You can go up and you can also slide down if you get caught by ego (maya, Shakuni strikes and you go putttt down). Just a game moved by love, keeps creation going, we have no choice in the matter. It is His game.

Read what God says about His creation and what Guruji has to say about it:

God Talks to Arjuna, Chp. 7 Vs. 4 – Vs. 12:

*bhumir apo'nalo vayuh kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahamkara itiyamme bhinna prakrtir astadha (4)*

My manifested nature (Prakriti) has an eightfold differentiation: earth, water, fire, air, ether, sensory mind (manas), intelligence (buddhi), and egoism (ahamkara).

*apareyam itas tv anyam prakrtim viddhi me param
jivabhutam mahabaho yayedam dharyate jagat (5)*

Thus My lower nature (Apara-Prakriti). But understand, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna)! That My different and higher nature (Para-Prakriti) is the jiva, the self-consciousness and life-principle, that sustains the cosmos.

*etadyonini bhutani sarvanity upadharaya
aham krtasnasya jagatah prabhavah pralayas tatha (6)*

Understand that these dual Natures of Mine, the pure and the impure Prakriti, are the womb of all beings. I am the Progenitor and also the Dissolver of the entire cosmos.

*mattah parataram nanyat kimcid asti dhanamjaya
mayi sarvam idam protam sutre manigana iva (7)*

O Arjuna! There is nothing higher than Me, or beyond Me. All things (creatures and objects) are bound to Me like a row of gems on a thread.

*raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabha 'smi sasisuryayoh
pranavah sarvavedesu sabdah khe paurusam nrsu (8)*

O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), I am the fluidity in waters; I am the radiation in the moon and the sun; I am the Aum (pranava) in all the Vedas; the sound in the ether; and the manliness in men.

*punyo gandhah prthiviyam ca tejas casmi vibhavasau
jivanam sarvabhutesu tapas casmi tapasvisu (9)*

I am the wholesome fragrance exuding from the earth; the luminescence in the fire am I; the life in all creatures, and the self-discipline in anchorites.

*bijam mam sarvabhutanam viddhi partha sanatanam
buddhir bhddhimatam asmi tejas tejasvinam aham (10)*

Know Me to be the eternal seed of all creatures, O Son of Pritha (Arjuna)! I am the understanding of the keen, the radiance of vital beings.

*balam balavatam caham kamaragavivarjitam
dharmaviruddho bhutesu kamo 'smi bharatarsabha (11)*

Among the powerful, O Best of the Bharatas (Arjuna), I am the power that is free from longings and attachment. I am that desire in men which is in keeping with dharma (righteousness).

*ye caqiva sattvika bhava rajas as tamasas ca ye
matta eveiti tan viddhi na tv aham tesu te mayi (12)*

Know thou that all manifestations of sattva (good), rajas (activity), and tamas (evil) emanate from Me. Though they are in Me, I am not in them.

He owns it all up that all sattvic, tamasic, asuri, daivi qualities all come from Him only. Though they are in Me, I am not in them. All of them are valid. But in the form of PurshottamHe is untouched. He is watching from there, how is the game going on in the world, in my life, in us.

God Talks to Arjuna, Chp 9, Vs. 7-8:

*sarvabhutani kaunteya prakrtim yanti mamikam
kalpaksaye punas tani kalpadau visrajamy aham (7)*

*prakrtim svam avastabhya visrjami punah punah
bhutagramam imam krtsnam avasam prakrter vasat (8)*

At the end of a cycle (kalpa), O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), all beings return to the unmanifested state of My Cosmic Nature (Prakriti). At the beginning of the next cycle, again I cast them forth.

By revivifying Prakriti, Mine own emanation, again and again I produce this host of creatures, all subject to the finite laws of Nature.

The law of Karma is the outcome of the throws of dice and is ruled by it. Chp. 9, Vs. 9 – 10.

*na ca mam tani karmani nibadhnanti dhanamjaya
udasinavad asinam asaktam tesu karmasu (9)*

But these activities entrammels Me not, O Winner of Wealth (Arjuna), for I remain above them, aloof and unattached.

*mayadhyaksena prakrtih suyate sacaracaram
hetunanena kaunteya jagad viparivartate (10)*

O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), it is solely My impregnating presence that causes Mother Nature to give birth to the animate and the inanimate. Because of Me (through Prakriti) the worlds revolve in alternating cycles (of creation and dissolution).

Chp. 9, Vs. 17 – 19:

*pitaham asya jagato mata dhata pitamahah
vedyam pavitram omkara rk sama yajur eva ca (17)*

Of this world I am the Father, the Mother, the Ancestor, the Preserver, the Sanctifier, the all-inclusive Object of Knowledge, the Cosmic Aum, and also the Vedic lore.

*gatir bharta prabhuh saksi nivasah saranam suhrt
prabhavah pralayah sthanam nidhanam bijam avyayam (18)*

I am the Ultimate Goal, the Upholder, the Master, the Witness, the Shelter, the Refuge, and the One Friend. I am the Origin, the Dissolution, the Foundation, the Cosmic Storehouse, and the Seed Indestructible.

*tapamy aham aham varsam nigrhnamy utsrjami ca
amrtam caiva mrtyus ca sad asac caham arjuna (19)*

I bestow solar heat, O Arjuna, and give or withhold the rain. Immortality am I, and also Death; I am Being (Sat) and Non-Being (Asat).

Everything in duality is He. So what does Gita say about making choices, performing actions? The outcome of every throw of the dice will be 2, 4, 6, 7 and the outcome of that throw will be going up the ladder or down via snake. What does the Gita say?

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 3, Vs. 27 – 30:

*prakrteh kriyamanani guhaih karmani sarvasah
ahamkaravimudhatma kartaham iti manyate (27)*

All action is universally engendered by the attributes (gunas) of primordial Nature (Prakriti). A man whose Self is deluded by egoity thinks, “I am the doer.”

In reality the *Gunas* are doing everything. They influence the ego, our tendencies, karmic pattern, *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. A man with soul delusively identified with ego develops *ahamkara*. This *ahamkara* is also created by God. In *maya*, egotism makes us feel we are doing things. ‘The egotist, conceiving himself as the doer of actions, makes a tragedy out of the melodrama of life. But by deep meditation he awakens and realizes that he has been

assigned by the Cosmic Director, a specific part on the stage of contemporary life. He is then happy to enact his role, whether joyous or doleful, large or small.’

*tattvavit tu mahabaho gunakarmavibhagayoh
guna gunesu vartanta iti matva na sajjate (28)*

O Mighty-armed (Arjuna)! The knower of truth about the divisions of the gunas (attributes of Nature) and their actions – realizing it is the gunas as sense attributes that are attached to the gunas as sense objects – keeps (his Self) unattached to them.

*prakrter guansammudhah sajjante gunakarmasu
tan akrtsnavido mandan krtsnavin na vicalayet (29)*

The yogi of perfect wisdom should not bewilder the minds of men who have imperfect understanding. Deluded by the attributes of primordial Nature, the ignorant must cling to the activities engendered by those gunas.

*mayi sarvani karmani samnyasyadhyatmacetasa
nairasir nirmamo bhutva yudhyasva vigatajvarah (30)*

Relinquish all activities unto Me! Devoid of egotism and expectation, with your attention concentrated on the soul, free from feverish worry, be engaged in the battle (of activity).

Senses will be there, sense objects will be there, gunas will be there. We have no choice, but to play this game. When we go through rough times, it is the ego which is going through upheavals; not the soul. I thought what a fantastic game. Soon the ego catches on. Ego is very clever. It tries to defend itself in one way or another. When I have bad times I wonder what games ego will play. And God also plays a beautiful trick. He says: ‘**Heads you lose, Tails I win.**’ Then can you play? How long can you continue to play? When you play with a child, and you keep winning what does a child do? Child will give up after sometime. ‘I don’t even want to play with you.’ The same way, eventually after several hits and trials the soul will also give up. In the beginning the soul says, ‘I will play. I can do something. I will win over God too. I don’t admit God. I am all in all. (then you go to the plane of Hiranyakashipu). Maybe I will have what I want.’ You say that almost upto the plane of Siva.

An advanced devotee came up to Guruji. (Sw. Anandmoyeeji told this story, he was present there at the time). The devotee said with obvious pride, ‘‘Today I have completed a million kriyas.’’ That is no small thing. Guruji himself has said that one kriya = 1 year’s evolution. Guruji smiled. The devotee hoped Guruji would give him a pat on the back – ‘‘How advanced you are!’’ Instead Guruji said, ‘‘6 would have been enough.’’ When that devotee arrived he was not even reverential or courteous to Guruji, he was so casual. After the devotee left, Guruji said, ‘‘He thinks he can make it on his own. He can go upto the door, but he will not be able to enter God’s Kingdom.’’ We can get on all the way, as long as we keep on thinking we can make it on our own. What is the purpose behind all this? What is the solution? How will he get us back? Do we have any choice?

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 8, Vs. 4:

*adhibhutam ksaro bhavah prusas cadhidaivatam
adhiyajno 'ham evatra dehe dehabhrtam vara (4)*

O Supreme Among the Embodied (Arjuna)! Adhibhuta is the basis of physical existence; Adhidaiva is the basis of astral existence; and I the Spirit within the body and the cosmos am Adhiyajna (the Causal Origin, the Great Sacrificer, the Maker and Cognizer of all).

God's creation is a sacrifice on his part. He has sacrificed a part of himself to keep me and you going, feeding the cells, keeping them running. He has no choice except to keep on loving us.

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 10, Vs. 10-11:

*tesam satatayuktanam bhajatam priti-purvakam
dadami buddhi-yogam tam yena mam upayanti te (10)*

*tesam evanukampartham aham ajnanajam tamah
nasayamy atmahavastho jnanadipena bhasvata (11)*

To those thus ever attached to Me, and who worship Me with love, I impart that discriminative wisdom (buddhi yoga) by which they attain Me utterly.

From sheer compassion I, the Divine Indweller, set alight in them the radiant lamp of wisdom which banishes the darkness that is born of ignorance.

Chp. 10, Vs. 20:

*aham atma gudakesa sarvabhutasayasthitah
aham adis ca madhyam ca bhutanam anta eva ca (20)*

O Conqueror of Sleep (Arjuna)! I am the Self in the heart of all creatures: I am their Origin, Existence, and Finality.

God Himself sacrifices himself just as parents do. How much sacrifice your parents make, they want for you the best, they do not want you to be harmed, they want you to come to the spiritual path; when you do so they are freed from worries – their concern for you is part of their sadhana. From where does this love come? It is His grace which comes; it flows from parent to child, from father to child, mother to child. It is not restricted to humans alone; it can also be seen in animals. Most people don't realize how pure and unconditional this love is. There are many stories in the scriptures to demonstrate this love.

This is the true story of a couple - senior devotees who were on the path since 35 – 40 years. They had an only daughter. They didn't spare any love, all along till the daughter reached the age of 20 – 22 years. She became an engineer. They trusted her very much, gave her much freedom. The girl was also on the spiritual path, a YSS member and Guruji's grace was also there. Last year the couple got a bolt out of the blue. They were finding a match for the girl, a number of alliances they had in mind were lined up. But when the discussion starts for possibilities of marriage, she gives them a shock. She says she wants to go and marry a slum dweller – a classmate.

All of a sudden a take straight from the Slumdog Millionaire. The boy was not even from a cultured strata, he was not taught to respect people. He was not at all cultured. When the parents wanted to see his place, they found he lived in a slum where goondas (the underworld people lived). The rickshaw fellow told them “You want to go there, don’t even step there.” What upheaval the parents went through. All the astrologers had predicted that the marriage will not work out.

One day she comes and gives them a marriage certificate stating – “I have already married the boy. Now no more talk on this subject.” They couldn’t understand. As predicted by the astrologers, soon the marriage broke up. The parents had kept their hearts and doors open for the daughter. “No matter what you have done, the house is always open for you.” She came back home. This is God’s grace. A beautiful example of God’s grace coming to her through her parents and through this test the parents got pushed upwards in the game of snake and ladder.

Another beautiful story came to me through the internet. It is a video clipping of a neurosurgeon Jill Taylor.

TRANSCRIPT FOR JILL BOLTE TAYLOR'S POWERFUL STROKE OF INSIGHT

<http://dotsub.com/view/1d81f9c8-b27e-4712-8993-d7d72c889542>

I grew up to study the brain because I have a brother who has been diagnosed with a brain disorder: schizophrenia. And as a sister and later, as a scientist, I wanted to understand why is it that I can take my dreams, I can connect them to my reality, and I can make my dreams come true. What is it about my brother's brain and his schizophrenia that he cannot connect his dreams to a common and shared reality, so they instead become delusion?

So I dedicated my career to research into the severe mental illnesses. And I moved from my home state of Indiana to Boston, where I was working in the lab of Dr. Francine Benes, in the Harvard Department of Psychiatry. And in the lab, we were asking the question, "What are the biological differences between the brains of individuals who would be diagnosed as normal control, as compared with the brains of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia, schizoaffective or bipolar disorder?"

So we were essentially mapping the microcircuitry of the brain: which cells are communicating with which cells, with which chemicals, and then in what quantities of those chemicals? So there was a lot of meaning in my life because I was performing this type of research during the day. But then in the evenings and on the weekends, I traveled as an advocate for NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. But on the morning of December 10, 1996, I woke up to discover that I had a brain disorder of my own. A blood vessel exploded in the left half of my brain. And in the course of four hours, I watched my brain completely deteriorate in its ability to process all information. On the morning of the hemorrhage, I could not walk, talk, read, write or recall any of my life. I essentially became an infant in a woman's body.

If you've ever seen a human brain, it's obvious that the two hemispheres are completely separate from one another. And I have brought for you a real human brain. So this is a real human brain.

This is the front of the brain, the back of brain with the spinal cord hanging down, and this is how it would be positioned inside of my head. And when you look at the brain, it's obvious that the two cerebral cortices are completely separate from one another. For those of you who understand computers, our right hemisphere functions like a parallel processor, while our left hemisphere functions like a serial processor. The two hemispheres do communicate with one another through the corpus collosum, which is made up of some 300 million axonal fibers. But other than that, the two hemispheres are completely separate. Because they process information differently, each of our hemispheres think about different things, they care about different things, and, dare I say, they have very different personalities.

Excuse me. Thank you. It's been a joy. (Assistant: It has been.)

Our right hemisphere is all about this present moment. It's all about "right here, right now." Our right hemisphere, it thinks in pictures and it learns kinesthetically through the movement of our bodies. Information, in the form of energy, streams in simultaneously through all of our sensory systems and then it explodes into this enormous collage of what this present moment looks like, what this present moment smells like and tastes like, what it feels like and what it sounds like. I am an energy-being connected to the energy all around me through the consciousness of my right hemisphere. We are energy-beings connected to one another through the consciousness of our right hemispheres as one human family. And right here, right now, we are brothers and sisters on this planet, here to make the world a better place. And in this moment we are perfect, we are whole and we are beautiful.

My left hemisphere -- our left hemisphere -- is a very different place. Our left hemisphere thinks linearly and methodically. Our left hemisphere is all about the past and it's all about the future. Our left hemisphere is designed to take that enormous collage of the present moment and start picking out details, details and more details about those details. It then categorizes and organizes all that information, associates it with everything in the past we've ever learned, and projects into the future all of our possibilities. And our left hemisphere thinks in language. It's that ongoing brain chatter that connects me and my internal world to my external world. It's that little voice that says to me, "Hey, you gotta remember to pick up bananas on your way home. I need them in the morning."

It's that calculating intelligence that reminds me when I have to do my laundry. But perhaps most important, it's that little voice that says to me, "I am. I am." And as soon as my left hemisphere says to me "I am," I become separate. I become a single solid individual, separate from the energy flow around me and separate from you. And this was the portion of my brain that I lost on the morning of my stroke.

On the morning of the stroke, I woke up to a pounding pain behind my left eye. And it was the kind of pain -- caustic pain -- that you get when you bite into ice cream. And it just gripped me -- and then it released me. And then it just gripped me -- and then it released me. And it was

very unusual for me to ever experience any kind of pain, so I thought, OK, I'll just start my normal routine.

So I got up and I jumped onto my cardio glider, which is a full-body, full-exercise machine. And I'm jamming away on this thing, and I'm realizing that my hands look like primitive claws grasping onto the bar. And I thought, "That's very peculiar." And I looked down at my body and I thought, "Whoa, I'm a weird-looking thing." And it was as though my consciousness had shifted away from my normal perception of reality, where I'm the person on the machine having the experience, to some esoteric space where I'm witnessing myself having this experience.

And it was all very peculiar, and my headache was just getting worse. So I get off the machine, and I'm walking across my living room floor, and I realize that everything inside of my body has slowed way down. And every step is very rigid and very deliberate. There's no fluidity to my pace, and there's this constriction in my area of perceptions, so I'm just focused on internal systems. And I'm standing in my bathroom getting ready to step into the shower, and I could actually hear the dialogue inside of my body. I heard a little voice saying, "OK. You muscles, you gotta contract. You muscles, you relax."

And then I lost my balance, and I'm propped up against the wall. And I look down at my arm and I realize that I can no longer define the boundaries of my body. I can't define where I begin and where I end, because the atoms and the molecules of my arm blended with the atoms and molecules of the wall. And all I could detect was this energy -- energy.

And I'm asking myself, "What is wrong with me? What is going on?" And in that moment, my brain chatter -- my left hemisphere brain chatter -- went totally silent. Just like someone took a remote control and pushed the mute button. Total silence. And at first I was shocked to find myself inside of a silent mind. But then I was immediately captivated by the magnificence of the energy around me. And because I could no longer identify the boundaries of my body, I felt enormous and expansive. I felt at one with all the energy that was, and it was beautiful there.

Then all of a sudden my left hemisphere comes back online, and it says to me, "Hey! We got a problem! We got a problem! We gotta get some help." And I'm going, "Ahh! I got a problem. I got a problem." So it's like, "OK. OK. I got a problem."

But then I immediately drifted right back out into the consciousness -- and I affectionately refer to this space as La La Land. But it was beautiful there. Imagine what it would be like to be totally disconnected from your brain chatter that connects you to the external world.

So here I am in this space, and my job -- and any stress related to my job -- it was gone. And I felt lighter in my body. And imagine: all of the relationships in the external world and any stressors related to any of those -- they were gone. And I felt this sense of peacefulness. And imagine what it would feel like to lose 37 years of emotional baggage! (Laughter) Oh! I felt euphoria. Euphoria. It was beautiful.

And then, again, my left hemisphere comes online and it says, "Hey! You've got to pay attention. We've got to get help." And I'm thinking, "I got to get help. I gotta focus." So I get out of the shower and I mechanically dress and I'm walking around my apartment, and I'm thinking, "I gotta get to work. I gotta get to work Can I drive? Can I drive?"

And in that moment my right arm went totally paralyzed by my side. Then I realized, "Oh my gosh! I'm having a stroke! I'm having a stroke!"

And the next thing my brain says to me is, "Wow! This is so cool." (Laughter) "This is so cool! How many brain scientists have the opportunity to study their own brain from the inside out?" (Laughter)

And then it crosses my mind: "But I'm a very busy woman!" (Laughter) "I don't have time for a stroke!"

So I'm like, "OK, I can't stop the stroke from happening, so I'll do this for a week or two, and then I'll get back to my routine. OK. So I gotta call help. I gotta call work." I couldn't remember the number at work, so I remembered, in my office I had a business card with my number on it. So I go into my business room, I pull out a three-inch stack of business cards. And I'm looking at the card on top and even though I could see clearly in my mind's eye what my business card looked like, I couldn't tell if this was my card or not because all I could see were pixels. And the pixels of the words blended with the pixels of the background and the pixels of the symbols, and I just couldn't tell. And then I would wait for what I call a wave of clarity. And in that moment, I would be able to reattach to normal reality and I could tell that's not the card ... that's not the card ... that's not the card. It took me 45 minutes to get one inch down inside of that stack of cards. In the meantime, for 45 minutes, the hemorrhage is getting bigger in my left hemisphere. I do not understand numbers. I do not understand the telephone, but it's the only plan I have. So I take the phone pad and I put it right here. I take the business card, I put it right here, and I'm matching the shape of the squiggles on the card to the shape of the squiggles on the phone pad. But then I would drift back out into La La Land, and not remember when I came back if I'd already dialed those numbers. So I had to wield my paralyzed arm like a stump and cover the numbers as I went along and pushed them, so that as I would come back to normal reality, I'd be able to tell, "Yes, I've already dialed that number."

Eventually, the whole number gets dialed and I'm listening to the phone, and my colleague picks up the phone and he says to me, "Woo woo woo woo." (Laughter) And I think to myself, "Oh my gosh, he sounds like a Golden Retriever!"

And so I say to him -- clear in my mind, I say to him: "This is Jill! I need help!" And what comes out of my voice is, "Woo woo woo woo woo." I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh, I sound like a Golden Retriever." So I couldn't know -- I didn't know that I couldn't speak or understand language until I tried. So he recognizes that I need help and he gets me help.

And a little while later, I am riding in an ambulance from one hospital across Boston to [Massachusetts] General Hospital And I curl up into a little fetal ball. And just like a balloon

with the last bit of air, just, just right out of the balloon, I just felt my energy lift and just -- I felt my spirit surrender.

And in that moment, I knew that I was no longer the choreographer of my life. And either the doctors rescue my body and give me a second chance at life, or this was perhaps my moment of transition.

When I woke later that afternoon, I was shocked to discover that I was still alive. When I felt my spirit surrender, I said goodbye to my life. And my mind was now suspended between two very opposite planes of reality. Stimulation coming in through my sensory systems felt like pure pain. Light burned my brain like wildfire, and sounds were so loud and chaotic that I could not pick a voice out from the background noise, and I just wanted to escape. Because I could not identify the position of my body in space, I felt enormous and expansive, like a genie just liberated from her bottle. And my spirit soared free, like a great whale gliding through the sea of silent euphoria. Nirvana. I found Nirvana. And I remember thinking, there's no way I would ever be able to squeeze the enormousness of myself back inside this tiny little body.

But then I realized, "But I'm still alive! I'm still alive, and I have found Nirvana. And if I have found Nirvana and I'm still alive, then everyone who is alive can find Nirvana." And I pictured a world filled with beautiful, peaceful, compassionate, loving people who knew that they could come to this space at any time. And that they could purposely choose to step to the right of their left hemispheres and find this peace. And then I realized what a tremendous gift this experience could be, what a stroke of insight this could be, to how we live our lives. And it motivated me to recover.

Two and a half weeks after the hemorrhage, the surgeons went in and they removed a blood clot the size of a golf ball that was pushing on my language centers. Here I am with my mama, who is a true angel in my life. It took me eight years to completely recover.

So who are we? We are the life force power of the universe, with manual dexterity and two cognitive minds. And we have the power to choose, moment by moment, who and how we want to be in the world. Right here, right now, I can step into the consciousness of my right hemisphere, where we are. I am the life-force power of the universe. I am the life-force power of the 50 trillion beautiful molecular geniuses that make up my form, at one with all that is. Or, I can choose to step into the consciousness of my left hemisphere, where I become a single individual, a solid. Separate from the flow, separate from you. I am Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor: intellectual, neuroanatomist. These are the "we" inside of me. Which would you choose? Which do you choose? And when? I believe that the more time we spend choosing to run the deep inner-peace circuitry of our right hemispheres, the more peace we will project into the world, and the more peaceful our planet will be. And I thought that was an idea worth spreading.

ARE BRAINS WIRED FOR ENLIGHTENMENT?

-Hinduism Today July-Aug-Sept 2009 edition

A stroke shut down half of a brain scientist's brain. Cornered in the other half, she plunged into a samadhi-like state of love, bliss and insight

In 1996, Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, then 37, was immersed in a successful career at Harvard and a long history of brain research. She was a neuroanatomist with a passionate drive. Her brother suffers from schizophrenia, and she dedicated her life to the study of brain disorders, trying to understand why he, unlike her, could not share the common perception of the world that most people call "reality."

Dr. Taylor's research focused on investigating the chemicals that cells use to communicate with other cells. Her team tried to identify the biological differences between the brains of individuals diagnosed as normal and the brains of those diagnosed with schizophrenia, schizoaffective or similar disorders.

To identify what makes brains different, one needs, well, brains--specimens to dissect, compare and catalog. Those who have relatives with mental disorders and ardently hope for a cure are the ones whom the scientists seek out, because they can authorize the donation of organs when their relatives die.

In the mid-1990s, Harvard's "Brain Bank" had barely enough donations to keep research going. Wanting to help, Dr. Taylor embarked on a mission that, she says, gave her life a lot of meaning. It included the peculiar task of asking people for their brains, while politely assuring them she was not in a hurry.

Music, she learned, could break the ice. Carrying her guitar around the country on weekends, the "singing scientist" crooned compositions of her own: Oh, I am a brain banker / Banking brains is what I do / I am a brain banker / Asking for a deposit from you! // When you are heaven bound / your brain can hang around/ To help humanity find the key / to this thing we call insanity.

She led a purposeful life, successful and happy--when on the morning of December 10, 1996, an artery in her brain exploded, propelling her into unexplored inner worlds and nearly an untimely death.

A "Stroke of Insight"

Dr. Taylor describes the morning of the stroke and the approximate time of events:

"I woke up to a pounding, caustic pain behind my left eye. It was very unusual for me to experience pain, so I just started my normal routine. I got up and went on to exercise on my full-body exercise machine. When I looked at my hands grasping the handles, they seemed such primitive claws. 'That's very peculiar,' I thought. I looked down at my body to find myself to be a weird-looking creature." Dr. Taylor was not identifying with her body anymore. "My consciousness had shifted away from my normal perception of reality. I was not the person having the experience. Instead, I was witnessing myself in the third person." She continued as if it were just a passing disarray. "With my headache getting worse, I walked across my living room, realizing that my movements were rigid and very deliberate." Because her external perceptions were contracted and confused, she reached for the inside of herself. There, she was astonished at what her mind could sense. She was

no longer a single organism alone in the room. She had become an agglomerate of life. "I was momentarily privy to a precise understanding of how hard the fifty trillion cells in my brain and body were working. I heard the orders that made one muscle contract, the other one relax, working in perfect unison. I witnessed in awe as my nervous system calculated and recalculated every angle. I was each of my cells, each molecule of the thriving sea inside my skin."

On her way to take a shower, balancing her weight against the bathroom wall, Dr. Taylor realized she could no longer identify the boundaries of her body. "I could not define where I began and where I ended, because the atoms and the molecules of my arm blended with the atoms and molecules of the wall. All I could detect was pure energy everywhere."

Asking herself what was wrong, she received no answer, no thought. The question itself faded. Then the mental chatter we always hear in our minds--the verbal decision-making process, the dialogue of our thoughts--was gone. Her mind was a still lake, a vast and silent void.

Silencing the mind flow and stilling thoughts to a perfect quiescence is a common goal in meditation. Hinduism and Buddhism describe this as a spiritually desirable state. Yogis use pranayama (breathing techniques), body postures, japa (repetition of mantras) and efforts of will to gradually achieve it. In Dr. Taylor's case, her brain took her there in a flash. She thought she had lost herself somewhere along the way. Who was she, if not the voice in her head? But even though she was not thinking in verbal constructs, she was still fully aware. "I was conscious in my mind. I was fully present, and now was the only moment. At first I was shocked to find myself in a silent mind. But then, almost immediately I was captivated by the magnificence of energy around me. I felt enormous, expansive. I felt at one with all energy, and it was beautiful."

Human brains have two hemispheres, completely separate except at the corpus callosum at their base. Scientists understand that our personal identity is defined entirely in the left lobe of our brain, while the right lobe has very different functions, different thoughts, different priorities and even a different way of processing information. Dr. Taylor's left-lobe stroke was affecting the home of the ego, that which in Sanskrit is called ahamkara, "I-maker," man's finitizing principle. Without it, as she puts it, she was no longer I, but we.

The hemorrhage was drowning the neurons that civilized humans are most familiar with, those in the left hemisphere. There we store all of our opinions, rearranging them to form new ones. In our intellectualized modern life, the aggregate of our memories and opinions is a common way to define ourselves, thus its connection to the ego. The left side analyzes, ponders, categorizes and measures the immense amount of information it receives from the senses and from the right brain. It thinks in language and words, linearly chaining facts and conclusions. It remembers the past and speculates about the future. It connects humans to the external world, remembers to pick up the laundry on the way home and responds to our given name. It makes us solid individuals, separate from the whole.

Dr. Taylor was cast into a very different area of her mind. With the left hemisphere offline, she was free from the clutches of the intellectual mind and experienced her right hemisphere fully. It had never been off--actually, it predominates in babies, but remains obscured throughout adult life. In the right brain, only the present exists; there is no past and no future. Information in the form of energy streams simultaneously from all senses, exploding into an enormous collage of what a moment looks, feels, tastes like. The right lobe thinks in pictures, abstractions, kinesthesia and physiological input. It is not judgmental; nor does it understand limits and separateness. It is about oneness, harmony and relating everything in a vast, intuitive understanding. Lost in that realm, Dr. Taylor was enraptured by the silence, the clarity of her consciousness and the bliss. But she could still be reached by bouts of severe pain.

Suddenly, in a spasm, her left hemisphere gathered enough resources to urge, "This is not normal. I am in danger." But that was all it said. Unable to think of what to do next, she drifted back into right-hemisphere consciousness. A pristine detachment from the world emerged in her. "All stress was gone. I felt lighter in my body. All my relationships in the external world and their pressures ceased to be. Imagine what it feels like to lose 37 years of emotional baggage! I felt peace and euphoria." And with no sense of time, her newly found freedom seemed to last forever.

Untethered, she realized her body was an extraordinary, but temporary, home. "In the wisdom of my dementia, I understood that this body was, by the magnificence of its design, a precious and fragile gift. It was clear to me that it functioned like a portal through which the energy of who I am can manifest here. I wondered how I could have spent so many years in this construct of life and never realize I was just visiting."

With effort, she dressed for work. But faced with a paralyzed arm, she finally understood the situation. "I'm having a stroke!"--immediately followed by, "Wow, this is so cool!" For a brain scientist, studying her mind from the inside was the ultimate opportunity. Conscious enough in her waning left lobe to know she needed care, she went to call for help. But between each number she dialed, her consciousness expanded into heavenly bliss and overpowering tranquility, making it laboriously challenging to remember what she was trying to do--or which number was next.

She was lost in an existence of love and expansiveness, of color and energy. She felt atoms and molecules in a dance of swirling light, connecting her to all beings. But while she waded in bliss, an intense pain gripped her body in an irreconcilable dichotomy. Dr. Taylor was enticed by the allure of surrendering to it all, and letting go of life. "A piece of me yearned to be released from captivity. Providentially, in spite of this unremitting temptation, something inside of me remained committed to orchestrating my rescue." Finally, she managed to call her workplace, reaching a colleague who recognized her voice. In the ambulance on the way to Massachusetts General Hospital, humbled by her condition, she curled up into a fetal ball. Still acutely aware, she remembers feeling "just like a balloon with the last bit of air blowing out of this vulnerable container. I felt my energy lift; I felt my spirit surrender."

At the hospital, her condition was stabilized by the medics. Waking up, she was shocked to still be alive, but remained in a state of bittersweet altered consciousness. Sensory stimulation was painfully amplified. Light burned like wildfire and sounds disintegrated into chaos; while at the same time a harmonious sea of silent peace flooded her nervous system. She was unable to worry. All she could do was to be in an eternal now.

She describes soaring as a being with no boundaries, expanding far beyond her body. "I was like a genie just liberated from her bottle. I remember thinking I would never be able to squeeze the enormosity of myself back inside this tiny little body. I was one with the vastness of the universe." Three-dimensional space and time were nonexistent. She remained in a state of pure being, of unfettered consciousness and constant bliss. Any Hindu might wonder if this was the yogi's sat-chit-ananda, "existence-consciousness-bliss."

People, she discovered, could bring good energy or take it away. She was oblivious to the meaning of words but could understand the intention behind them. In a touch, she could feel the love--or disdain--of any nurse or relative. Though mentally disabled, she was not unintelligent, only injured.

Trying to identify her state, she wondered if it was the Buddhist's nirvana. She reasoned, if she was alive and had found nirvana, then everyone else could, too. That was something worth living for. "I pictured a world filled with beautiful, peaceful, compassionate, loving people who knew they could come to this area of their minds at any time. They could purposely choose to step to the right hemisphere and find this peace. I realized what a tremendous gift this experience could be, and that motivated me to recover." After two weeks, a surgeon removed a golfball-sized blood clot from Jill's brain. It took her eight years to regain her normal faculties. It was a spectacular and rare recovery, aided by the unremitting care of her mother, Gladys Gilman, for whose persistence, love and respect in helping her heal Jill spares no praise.

A New Life

Slowly a different person emerged from the cocoon of the stroke patient Dr. Taylor had been. She had to re-learn things much like a baby. Rebuilding her mind was an enormous task, but as a mature adult, she could watch over the process and make decisions.

When we are born, both hemispheres are equal, Dr. Taylor told *Hinduism Today*. The left hemisphere begins to change rapidly as we develop an analytical intellect, while the right hemisphere stays approximately within its original frame.

When a thought or an activity is performed repeatedly, the brain readjusts neurons to form a highway on which that impulse can travel with the least expenditure of energy. Synapses, as the connection between neurons are called, line up in a chain of minimum effort and maximized performance. In our brain, connections reflect our habits and patterns. That is why familiar thoughts are so much easier to reevaluate than new concepts; that is why we can mechanically perform complex tasks such as driving or talking.

But with many of her synapses gone, Dr. Taylor was free to consciously choose to not rebuild some of her old mental bridges. She loved to now realize she was a fluid beam of energy, not an organic object. She loved to experience being one with the universe and with everything--and everyone. Most of all, she loved the deep inner peace that flooded the core of her being.

One uneasy doubt tinted her enthusiastic dedication to recovering, which she explains by quoting peace activist Marianne Williamson, "Could I rejoin the rat race without becoming a rat again?" Dr. Taylor pondered, "Could I value money without hooking into to neurological loops of lack, greed and selfishness? Could I regain my position in the world while retaining compassion and a perception of equality among all people? Frankly, I would not want to lose touch with my authentic self. What would be the price to pay to be considered normal?"

It was essential to maintain the dominance of the right brain in areas it performs better than the left. In her quest, Dr. Taylor painstakingly worked out a way to never let go of her beautiful, right-brain new world. She consciously avoided certain places in the mind where impatience, worry, criticism or unkindness live. Anytime her awareness drifted there, she consciously stepped over to her now-familiar right side, where compassion and a subjective sense of time make things very different. With new neurological pathways, she says, she began rediscovering the world with childlike curiosity and joy.

Under-used, the circuitry of her ego never regained its full influence. Still, she assiduously tends her "mind's garden," setting aside a day every week for her authentic self--a silent day of right-brain consciousness. And she also nourishes it with music, guitar-playing and stained glass art. She finds it most importantly, though, to constantly arbitrate between the two sides within. She might, for instance, inwardly address her worrying left mind, enunciating that though efforts to alert her of real danger is welcome, anxious thoughts are not needed and can stop--thank you very much!

Unexpected Fame

On the road to her recovery, Dr. Jill Taylor rebuilt her career as a scientist. She resumed lecturing even before she could understand addition and subtraction again. Though she can no longer vivisection any living creature, she became ever more fascinated with the brain. Today she works with the Indiana University School of Medicine and is a national spokesperson for the Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center.

Dr. Taylor wrote a book recounting her experiences, *A Stroke of Insight* (Viking, New York, 184 pages). It is an intimately personal tale, not a medical dissertation on recovery. The last two chapters discuss how to tap into the potential of the right brain. She nearly deleted the material from the manuscript, afraid that it sounded too much like metaphysics and too little like science, with instructions like "our desire for peace must be stronger than our attachment to the ego." Feeling brave, she decided to publish it anyway, hoping her experience will help others.

"Unfortunately, as a society, we tend to not teach our children to tend carefully to the garden of their minds. Thoughts run rampant and redundant," she explains, underlying the need for simple weeding. Because we are never taught to identify our inner conflicting opposites, we tend to think we are ourselves conflicted. "Thanks to my stroke, I have learned I have the power to stop thinking about events that have occurred in the past by consciously aligning myself with the present." It is a decision she says she has to make a thousand times a day.

An irresistible wave of change swept through her life in January 2008 after she shared her journey with a select group at an event called TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design), an annual conference which uses the motto "ideas worth spreading." The presentation was so engaging that the audience of scientists, politicians and intellectuals gave her a standing ovation. It was soon posted on the Internet, where it became an instant and unexpected sensation: 250,000 people saw it within the first 24 hours (www.ted.com/talks/view/id/229).

Suddenly, Dr. Taylor became famous in a way she had never imagined. A simple airplane trip would have people approaching her to shyly express appreciation. She was invited to give an interview on Oprah, America's gateway to popular recognition, and the video of her lecture was posted on Oprah's website. Time magazine chose her as one of the 100 most influential people in the world for 2008, and The New York Times published an article on her experiences entitled "Superhighway to Bliss."

Judging by the content of those articles, most of the interest has been medical: people want to hear from a person who recovered so completely from a serious brain incident. Her story is not typical of stroke victims; left-brain injuries are more likely to lead to dysfunctions than to blissful peace. But the transcendental is too tightly woven into her narrative to be dismissed and, in her opinion, it is the core of the story's popularity. Her tale speaks of detachment, energy, transcendence, inner silence and being at one with all things, making people ask themselves, "Do I have all this inside of me, too?"

Fellow scientists did not react en masse. The spark she lit created new possibilities for research, raised skepticism and fired a wide debate. The New York Times reported that Dr. Francine M. Benes, director of the Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center, said, "When I saw her on the TED video, at first I thought, 'Oh my God, is she losing it.'" Dr. Taylor says that most colleagues are warmly supportive, or at least amiably intrigued. Opposition, she says, is rare, but can be vicious. "We scientists label things, but normally do not experience them," she told *Hinduism Today*. "In my story, I use two forbidden words, energy and consciousness. There is an idea that, if you are a serious researcher, you can never use these terms."

Current scientific consensus recognizes her experience, but not her conclusions. Research by Dr. Newman and Dr. D'Aquili (*Why God Won't Go Away*, Ballantine, NY, 2001) investigated how mystic experiences stimulate certain areas of the brain. In their experiment, Tibetan meditators and Franciscan nuns in contemplation signaled when they felt connected with God, or the Absolute. SPECT scans of that moment showed a sharp

decline in the activity of their left brain while the right hemisphere did not markedly change pace.

But Dr. Taylor's bravery lies in the assertion that rather than experiencing the "delusion" of God-consciousness, she touched real perceptions of an unexplored facet of reality, one as true as ordinary life--should we only learn to reach it.

She is not comfortable with being called a mystic. To her, she is still a scientist, but also a person who discovered infinite possibilities within herself and everyone else. Hinduism Today asked how her discovery took her to a world well mapped by India's ancient yogis and gurus. She replied unassumingly, "I don't know much. I am happy to understand that people have systems that allow them to reach these states of consciousness. I have mine, one that does it for me. But I strongly encourage people to do something that will take them to this precious place inside themselves."

Helping others reach the heights she touched is still a significant goal. In her TED lecture she recalls, "So who are we? We have the power to choose it, moment by moment. I can step into a consciousness where we are the life-force-power of the universe, and of all the 50 trillion beautiful molecules that make up my form. Or I can choose to step into a consciousness where I become a single individual--a solid, separate from the flow, separate from you. Which would you choose? And when?"

In our minds, she believes, lies the foundation for a new, better world--our microcosms transforming the macrocosm. "I believe that the more time we spend choosing the deep, inner-peace circuitry of our right hemispheres, the more peace we will project into the world--and the more peaceful our planet will be."

I thought to myself, 'My God, this has happened at such a precise time when there are a number of scans available (Brain scan, PET scan, MRI scan etc.) So much of study is going on in this field. At such a time, God gave her the experience of Samadhi. Look at her. This is very cool. How many scientists get the opportunity to study their own brains inside out? The left side of her brain does not function. The side responsible for pushing us in the past or the future during meditation. This side of the brain wasn't functioning. She didn't want to lose the function of the right side of brain to be able to function like a normal human being so she learnt to shift her consciousness from left side of brain to the right side of the brain. She wrote a book "Stroke of Insight" to try to convince the world of science on how one can consciously cultivate the habit of moving away from the left side of the brain to the right side of the brain – from where all peace, love, joy comes. In her video she ends by saying:

"So who are we? We are the life force power of the universe, with manual dexterity and two cognitive minds. And we have the power to choose, moment by moment, who and how we want to be in the world. Right here, right now, I can step into the consciousness of my right hemisphere, where we are. I am the life-force power of the universe. I am the life-force power of the 50 trillion beautiful molecular geniuses that make up my form, at one with all that is. Or, I can choose to step into the consciousness of my left hemisphere, where I become a single individual, a solid. Separate from the flow, separate from you. I am Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor: intellectual, neuroanatomist. These are the "we" inside of me. Which would you choose?"

Which do you choose? And when? I believe that the more time we spend choosing to run the deep inner-peace circuitry of our right hemispheres, the more peace we will project into the world, and the more peaceful our planet will be.”

This gives us a hope that they will include activities in our educational system to activate the right side of the brain which will teach individuals to be more loving, more peaceful, kind, compassionate to make children realize that they are naughty little bubbles of God’s grace.

Kabir has said:

Guru Kumbhar Shish Kumbh Hai

Gadi Gadi Kadhe Khot

Andar Haat Savar De

Bahar Mare Chot

A preceptor is like a potter (earthman) and a disciple is like a pot. A potter hits the pot from outside and provides every support from within.

We receive the grace of the guru with both hands. With his right hand he is caressing, blessing kissing us. But even with the left hand he can give blessings to us the way he gave to Jille Taylor by sending her a stroke. When our life is too much governed by desires, views, conceit, left side of the brain is active and we go down the ladder in the game of snakes and ladders. The snakes are the evil doers in the world. They are required to keep God’s creation going. Grace of God comes in the form of the Guru. That force which keeps on pulling us again and again to ashrams and kendras is Guru’s love. Remember the voice of Babaji pulling Lahiri Mahasaya in Ranikhet. There is also the story of Vivekananda being pulled by the voice of Ramkrishna Paramhansa. Innumerable examples are there in the lives of devotees.

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 7, Vs. 14:

dai vi hy esa gunamayi mama maya duratyaya

mam eva ye prapadyante mayam etam taranti te

It is difficult indeed to go beyond the influence of My divine cosmic hypnosis, imbued with the triple qualities. Only those who take shelter in Me (the Cosmic Hypnotizer) become free from this power of illusion.

When we surrender to him then only can we be freed. When Arjuna asked Krishna to show him His cosmic form, Krishna said:

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 11, Vs. 8:

na tu mam sakyase drastum anenaiva svacaksusa

divyam dadami te caksuh pasya me yogam aisvaram

But thou canst not see Me with mortal eyes. Therefore I give thee sight divine. Behold My supreme power of yoga!

The grace of God is the most essential thing for the experience of God. Dr. Lewis’ first meeting with Guruji in 1920 is a very beautiful story. In his very first meeting with Guruji, Dr. Lewis’ spiritual eye was opened, showing him that

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." - Mathew 6:22

Also remember how Sri Yukteswarji gave cosmic consciousness to Guruji. **Autobiography of a Yogi, Chp. 14:**

A few mornings later I made my way to Master's empty sitting room. I planned to meditate, but my laudable purpose was unshared by disobedient thoughts. They scattered like birds before the hunter.

"Mukunda!" Sri Yukteswar's voice sounded from a distant inner balcony.

I felt as rebellious as my thoughts. "Master always urges me to meditate," I muttered to myself. "He should not disturb me when he knows why I came to his room."

He summoned me again; I remained obstinately silent. The third time his tone held rebuke.

"Sir, I am meditating," I shouted protestingly.

"I know how you are meditating," my guru called out, "with your mind distributed like leaves in a storm! Come here to me."

Snubbed and exposed, I made my way sadly to his side.

"Poor boy, the mountains couldn't give what you wanted." Master spoke caressively, comfortingly. His calm gaze was unfathomable. "Your heart's desire shall be fulfilled."

And then Guruji had his first experience of the Cosmic Consciousness.

Also remember how Sw. Pranabananda went to Lahiri Mahasaya and begged him for blessings:

One evening I paid a visit to Lahiri Mahasaya and pleaded for his divine intercession. My importunities continued during the entire night.

"Angelic Guru, my spiritual anguish is such that I can no longer bear my life without meeting the Great Beloved face to face!"

"What can I do? You must meditate more profoundly."

"I am appealing to Thee, O God my Master! I see Thee materialized before me in a physical body; bless me that I may perceive Thee in Thine infinite form!"

"Lahiri Mahasaya extended his hand in a benign gesture. 'You may go now and meditate. I have interceded for you with Brahma.'³ 'Immeasurably uplifted, I returned to my home. In meditation that night, the burning Goal of my life was achieved. Now I ceaselessly enjoy the spiritual pension. Never from that day has the Blissful Creator remained hidden from my eyes behind any screen of delusion."

And even after getting Vishwaroop darshan Guruji says:

One day, however, I took a problem to Master.

"I want to know, sir—when shall I find God?"

"You have found Him."

"O no, sir, I don't think so!"

My guru was smiling. "I am sure you aren't expecting a venerable Personage, adorning a throne in some antiseptic corner of the cosmos! I see, however, that you are imagining that the possession of miraculous powers is knowledge of God. One might have the whole universe, and find the Lord elusive still! Spiritual advancement is not measured by one's outward powers, but only by the depth of his bliss in meditation.

"Ever-new Joy is God. He is inexhaustible; as you continue your meditations during the years, He will beguile you with an infinite ingenuity. Devotees like yourself who have found

the way to God never dream of exchanging Him for any other happiness; He is seductive beyond thought of competition.

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 11, Vs. 47-48:

sribhagvan uvaca

*maya prasannena tavarjunedam rupam param darsitam atmayogat
tejomayam visvam anantam adyam yan me tvadanyena na drstapurvam (47)*

*na vedayajnadyayanair na danair na ca kriyabhir na tapobhir ugraih
evamrupah sakya aham nrloke drastum tvadanyena kurupravira (48)*

The Blessed Lord said:

I have graciously exercised Mine own Yoga Power to reveal to thee, O Arjuna, and to none other! this Supreme Primeval Form of Mine, the Radiant and Infinite Cosmos!

No mortal man, save only thyself, O Great Hero of the Kurus! is able to look upon My Universal Shape – not by sacrifices or charity or works or rigorous austerity or study of the Vedas is that vision attainable.

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 11, Vs. 53-54:

*naham vedair na tapasa na danena na cejyaya
sakya evamvidho drastum drstavan asi mam yatha (53)*

*bhaktya tvananyaya sakya aham evamvidho 'rjuna
jnatum drastum ca tattvena pravestum ca paramtapa (54)*

But it is not unveiled through one's penance or scriptural lore or gift-giving or formal worship. O Scorcher of the Sense-Foes (Arjuna)! only by undivided devotion (commingling by yoga all thoughts in One Divine Perception) may I be seen as thou hast beheld Me in My Cosmic Form and recognized in reality and finally embraced in Oneness!

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 8, Vs. 5 - 6:

*antakale ca mam eva smaran muktva kalevaram
yah prayati sa madbhavam yati nasty atra samsayah (5)*

Lastly, he enters my Being who thinks only of Me at the hour of his passing, when the body is abandoned. This is truth beyond doubt.

*yam yam vapi smaran bhavam tyajaty ante kalevaram
tam tam evaiti kaunteya sada tadbhavabhavitah (6)*

O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), that thought with which a dying man leaves the body determines – through his long persistence in it – his next state of being.

Ask yourself, you and me, what gurantee will be there when we are dying that we will die with the thought of God in our consciousness? Remember your last toothache? Were we able to meditate at that time? Even Arjuna, the best of archers, the best of meditators complains in Chp. 6,

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 6, Vs. 33 - 34:

arjuna uvaca

*yo 'yam yogastvaya proktah samyena madhusudana
etasyaham na pasyami cancelatvat sthitim sthiram (33)*

Arjuna said:

O Madhusudana (Krishna), owing to my restlessness, I do not behold the permanent enduring effect of the equalizing yoga that Thou hast related to me.

*cancelam hi manah krsna pramathi balavad drdham
tasyaham nigraham manye vayor iva suduskaram (34)*

Verily, the mind is unsteady, tumultuous, powerful, obstinate! O Krishna, I consider the mind as difficult to master as the wind!

There is no gurantee. One senior sannyasini of YSS, who had looked after me like a mother said to me during the last years of her life: "Krishnananda, please pray to Hari that he should take me; the sooner the better. But when I am passing away let me be only thinking of God." No other illegitimate prayer but just this that at the time of passing you will only think of God.

There are two beautiful stories in the Bhagvatam:

The Story of Jada Bharata:

***Bharata* was truthful and honest. He took excellent care of his subjects. He performed actions only after thinking of God. He never did even the smallest action, like drinking water, without offering it to God. At all times, in all situations, Bharata never forgot God. It is said that *Bharath* (India) is named after him. After many years as monarch, Bharata handed over the kingdom to his son and went to Rishikesh where he built a hermitage for himself. Having severed all worldly attachments, he passed his days meditating on the Lord.**

One day, *Bharata* was sitting on the banks of the *Ganga* and watching the waves of the river. He reflected about the ups and downs of the waves being like the joys and sorrows in life. To him, the waves had consciousness. He felt that everything in creation had awareness and was a form of God. While he contemplated in this manner, he heard a loud roar - the roar of a lion. Meanwhile, a doe had come there to drink water. She also heard the roar, panicked and jumped into the river. She was in the final stages of pregnancy. The fear and physical stress of the situation caused her baby deer to be delivered immediately. The doe was swept away in the river's current but Bharata was able to reach out and save the baby deer. [S.B. 5:8]

Bharata cleaned the deer, took it back to his hermitage and began tending it with parental affection. Now all his time was occupied in attending to this deer. If the deer wasn't in his sight, it was in his mind. Feeding it milk, collecting grass for it, cleaning it - he wasted all his time in such activities. Bharata's attachment for the deer kept increasing and

consequently, thoughts of God decreased. He thought of the deer constantly. A few years passed in this manner. When Bharata's death came unexpectedly, he took his last breath while thinking fondly of the deer and calling it by name. [S.B. 5.8]

- Practise Remembrance of God

What is the inner meaning of this story? *Bharata* left his body at a time when he was incapable of entertaining elevating thoughts. His final thought was about the deer and so, he was born as a deer in his next life. But he was able to remember his past life and the needless attachment. "My mind, which delighted in thoughts of God, fell prey to attachment for an animal. How foolish! What a pitiable life I am leading now," he regretted. Such are the disastrous consequences of uncontrolled attachment.

The Story of Ajamil:

Ajamil was a high born Brahmin. Maya caught up with him. He lived a sinful life and had 10 children from his marriage with a sinful lady. On the advice of some kind sadhus, Ajamil named his youngest son Narayan. He was very attached to this son and kept calling out to him always: Narayan, Narayan. First you eat then I will eat, first you drink then I will drink. At the time of death when the yamdoots came to take him out of fear he began to shout, "Narayan, Narayan," and the yamdoots could not take him. Instead the angels of Narayan took him to Vaikunth. Even when he took the name of God by mistake, his next life became a good life.

In the Kathopanishada it is mentioned:

‘नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेघया न बहुना श्रुतेन। यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूँ
स्वाम्॥’

‘Nāyamātmā pravachanena labhyaha na medhayā na bahunā shrutena Yamevaisha vrunute tena labhyastayaisha ātmā vivrunute tanum svām ॥

‘O Nachiketa! This Paramatma cannot be attained through merely speeches, intelligence, scriptural study or other such endeavours. He is attained only by those on whom he showers his grace’ (Katha Upanishad 2/23).

As is mentioned in the cosmic chant: **Thou art my life, Thou art my love
Thou art the sweetness which I do seek.
...Devotee knows how sweet you are
He knows whom you let know.**

Just as Babaji cannot be recognized if it is not his wish . Unless you have His grace, only through *ananya bhakti*, you can achieve him.

Narada Bhakti Sutra, Chp. 3 Vs. 39:
mahat-sangas tu durlabho 'gamyo 'moghas ca

The company of the great souls is again difficult of attainment, is unapproachable and is infallible or unfailling in its effect.

i.e. great souls are difficult to find. Nevertheless by the grace of God such saints are met. It can only happen by the blessings of the Lord. We have been driven in search of a Guru. Guruji has come to help the world in achieving liberation. When the time is right He will unravel to us the truth. What to do until then? Surrender. Don't worry, let go. All our problems, our salvation is God's responsibility. His sadhana is also his grace, playing the snake and ladder game.

What about self effort then? What about the principle: 25 % is the effort of the disciple, 25 % is the effort of the Guru and 50 % is the grace of God. It is a wonderful formula for beginners. When we are more governed by tamas, and rajas, devotees who are *artharthis*, they have to be tempted to get going. After years and years of doing and doing, when you have come to my stage of a bald head and grey hair, you realize, you and I cannot do our 25 %. Even our 25 % is being done by his 75 %. When you realize that even my 25 %, He did; I am only in a state of illusion that I am doing; then you are in square no. 68 (Plane of Siva).

There are many verses in the Bhagwad Gita, Chp. 18 mentioning matprasada, tatprasada i.e. by God's grace only.

God Talks with Arjuna, Chp. 18,:

*sarvakarmāṇy api sādā kurvāno madvyapasrayāḥ
matprasādād avapnoti sasvatam padam avyayam (56)*

Over and above performing faithfully of one's duties, taking shelter in Me, it is by My pleasure a devotee obtains the eternal, unchangeable state.

*cetasa sarvakarmani mayi samnyasya matparah
buddhiyogam upasritya maccittah satatam bhava (57)*

Mentally dedicating all actions to Me, considering Me as the Supreme Goal, employing buddhi-yoga (union through discriminative wisdom), continuously absorb thy heart in Me.

*maccittah sarvadurgani matprasadat tarisyasi
atha cet tvam ahamkaran na srosyasi vinanksyasi (58)*

With heart absorbed in Me, and by My grace, thou shalt overcome all impediments; but if through egotism thou wilt not heed Me, thou shalt meet destruction.

*tam eva saranam gaccha sarvabhavena bharata
tatprasadat pram santim sthanam prapsyasi sasvatam (62)*

O Descendent of Bharata (Arjuna), take shelter in Him with all the eagerness of thy heart. By His grace thou shalt obtain the utmost peace and the Eternal Shelter.

*manmana bhava madbhakto madyaji mam namaskuru
mam evaisyasi satyam te pratijane priyo 'si me (65)*

Absorb thy mind in Me; become My devotee; resign all things to Me; bow down to Me. Thou art dear to Me, so in truth do I promise thee: Thou shalt attain Me!

*sarvadharmā parityajya mām ekam saraṇam vraja
aham tva sarvāpārahyaḥ maksayisyāmi mā sucah (66)*

Forsaking all other dharmas (duties), remember Me alone, I will free thee from all sins (accruing from nonperformance of those lesser duties). Do not grieve!

*arjuna uvāca
nāsto mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvatprasadaṁ mayācyuta
sthito 'smi gatasamdehah karisyē vacanam tava (73)*

Arjuna said:

My delusion is gone! I have regained memory (of my soul) through Thy grace, O Achyuta (matchless Krishna). I am firmly established; my dubiousness has vanished. I will act according to Thy word.

An extract from the last issue of the SRF magazine, (Yogoda Magazine Oct-Dec 2009), is an article:

GETTING OURSELVES OUT OF THE WAY BY THOMAS E. POWERS:

Ego reduction requires intelligence and the grace of God right from the beginning. Courage and willingness to suffer are needed, but they are not enough. You have to learn how to work along with it as the job is being done. It is a skilled operation, and the skill can only be acquired slowly, by actual experience, by trial and error.

Surrender: A Key to Overcoming Ego

What is surrender? It is a giving up of the egotistical, self-centered notion that I, just as I am, can direct and run my own life effectively and well. Surrender or abandonment is preceded by a keen appreciation that without conscious cooperation with the Higher Power I do not properly know how to eat, to sleep, to work – and most certainly I do not know how to love or pray or rejoice in life...What can be done about it? First of all, you must be alert to a certain kind of event which varies greatly from person to person but which no life is without: crises, disasters, tragedies, injuries, and illnesses. These are great aids in the process we have been considering.

When these things come you are wasting your life if you do not seize them as means to bring you to surrender at the feet of the Lord. The harder it is to take, the more powerful is the point. It is necessary to refuse the false anodynes of whining and self-pity, to reject the gall of cursing and complaint, and to gaze steadily through the darkness toward the ever present Light. But then when the scalding cup of pain or loss is drunk right down, it takes you into the Presence as nothing else can.

Suppose you are not in any difficulty. Suppose you are “doing all right” in this life. Suppose at the same time you do see the necessity for surrender to God and abandonment to His will and providence. Where do you go from there?

In conversation with That which is above you, you say something like this: “I’ve been hearing about a thing called surrender. It makes sense to me, and I want to try it. I see that

it probably would be god for me, and that it may be necessary in any event. Please make me understand it and give me the grace to do it, or being doing it.”

Then when you emerge from prayer, during the rest of that day you try to get out of the driver’s seat. Try to let God run your life, and you go along for the ride. The secret is just to remember to do it. The actual attitude and act are not so hard, but we are heavily prone to forget. Patiently and with good humor in spite of failures, make the effort to remember. Make little prayers of the grace to remember. It is simple but tricky. You cannot realize how much hangs on remembering until you try it...

In the midst of one of the worst difficulties of my life, which involved my family and my marriage, and which influenced both my physical and emotional natures so much that my mind was clouded and literally numb, I found myself reading a book called *Abandonment to Divine Providence*. It was written by Father Jean-Pierre de Caussade, a Jesuit who lived in France from 1675 to 1751. The heart of his teaching is in what he calls “the sacrament of the present moment.” It is not necessary, he says, to know the will of God in advance, but to accept it, to abandon yourself to it as it unfolds in your life from moment to moment...

Caussade’s method is a combination of “watching,” i.e., continual awareness of your own life, moment by moment, and the practice of the presence of God, i.e. unwavering attention to God’s grace and His will as they bear upon you from moment to moment – plus a patiently and diligently repeated act of abandonment to the divine providence, in the exact circumstances of your daily life, from moment to moment.

In the last issue of the *Yogoda Magazine* of July-Sept 2009 there is an article on **Creating Prosperity Consciousness** by Paramhansa Yogananda. An extract from there:

Five or six times I have parted with everything I had; but I received again direct from His hands. When God gives, He gives from His heart. He gives in abundance.

If only everyone could feel the grace of God as I have felt, they would know, as I do, that in Him they already have everything. That was my experience in Phoenix. I was deeply, deeply praying and

Meditating, because I had to meet a great need in the morning and someone had failed me. My prayer was not for money, but for freedom. I said to Divine Mother: “Why am I put to such troubles; why do I have to face such a crisis?” But I didn’t stop there. I went on meditating; and then I prayed to the Mother: “Talk to me. If You tell me to do so, I will leave everything behind and walk out of the organization, singing Thy name. I do not need anything but You. I ask nothing for myself. Test me. If You will it, I shall at this moment leave everything. In Thy Light I shall walk away.”

When Divine Mother saw that I meant what I said, this is what She replied: “I freed thee long ago; but because thou thinkest thou art not free, that is why thou art not free. Dance of life or dance of death, know that these come from Me and as such rejoice. What more dost thou want than that thou hast me?” From that day I found freedom.

If you have in your consciousness the desire to please God above all else, He will look after you.”...What more dost thou want than that thou hast me?”

I start my meditation always chanting the Guru's name for 10 min, 15 min, almost ½ an hour. I feel grace descending just like this. I get the blessings of the Guru and they seem to be saying, "We are all with you, what more do you want?" And I say, "Nothing. I have already everything in you all; just that I may ever remain surrendered at your feet." Jai Guru.