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Why Should We Seek God?

*Jyoti Mandram Hall, Bangalore, India,
December 31, 1967*

Why should we seek God? What is God? How can we find Him?

The first question can be answered very simply. We should seek God because we are made in His image,* and only His perfection and permanency can give us lasting happiness.

Man was given a mind and a body with five senses through which he perceives this finite world and identifies himself with it. But man is neither the body nor the mind; his nature is spirit, the immortal soul. As often as he tries to find permanent happiness through his sensory perceptions, so often his hopes, his enthusiasm, his desires, are shipwrecked on the rocks of deep frustration and disappointment. Everything in the material universe is essentially ephemeral and ever changing. That which is subject to change carries within it the seeds of disappointment. And so it is that our ship of worldly expectations sooner or later runs aground on the shoals of disillusionment. Therefore we should seek God, because He is the fountainhead of all wisdom, all love, all bliss, all contentment. God is the source of our being, the source of all life. And we are made in His image. When we will find Him, we will realize this truth.

* Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in His own image...."

If God is the goal of man, then what *is* He? Every scripture, and every great soul who has ever spoken of his experience of God, has declared certain qualities to be the nature of Spirit. Still we cannot say what God is. No man has ever been able to describe Him fully. There is a story that an image made of salt went down to the shore to measure the depths of the ocean. The moment it stepped into the water, it melted away. The image could not measure the depths, for it had become one with the sea. It is the same with man. His very being consists of those same qualities that are of Spirit. The moment his soul becomes identified with the Infinite Being, he becomes one with God, and can no longer describe what God is. But many saints have described what one experiences when he communes with Spirit.

All scriptures state that God is peace, love, wisdom, bliss. All agree that God is cosmic intelligence, omniscient and omnipresent. He is the Absolute. He is the great cosmic sound of *Aum*,* the Amen of the Christians. He is cosmic light. These are all attributes or qualities of the Infinite. And when the devotee deeply seeks Him, he begins to perceive these various manifestations of the Divine.

It is said that the first proof of God's presence within man is peace—that peace which cannot be affected by anything external. When man pins his dreams, his ideals, his hopes, and his ambitions on worldly goals, the

* *Aum*: The basis of all sounds; universal symbol-word for God. *Aum* of the Vedas became the sacred word *Hum* of the Tibetans; *Amin* of the Moslems; and *Amen* of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians. *Aum* is the all-pervading sound emanating from the Holy Ghost (Invisible Cosmic Vibration; God in His aspect of Creator); the "Word" of the Bible; the voice of creation, testifying to the Divine Presence in every atom. *Aum* may be heard through the practice of Self-Realization Fellowship methods of meditation.

peace that he feels from their accomplishment is only temporary. This world is a world of duality: life is made up of pleasure and pain, health and sickness, heat and cold, love and hate, life and death. Man's goal is to take his consciousness beyond this law of duality, this veil of *maya*,* and find the One who is present in all creation and beyond creation.

"How Can We Find God?"

The next question is: "How can we find God?" He cannot be known through the senses, nor measured by the limited twelve-inch ruler of the intellect. As often as we try to discover His bliss, love, wisdom, and joy in sensory experiences, so often are we disappointed. But when man learns by deep meditation to still his body and shut off the five senses, a sixth sense, intuition, begins to express itself. God can be known only through the sense of intuition. He *wants* us to know Him. Hence every man is endowed with intuition.

The first aim, then, is to quiet both body and mind, that the whispers of intuition may be heard. Our guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, taught us those techniques of concentration and meditation by which the body and mind can be stilled, thereby enabling us to commune directly with the Infinite. Yet how many have said to me in my travels around the world: "You are fortunate; you can do this, but I have bad luck. God does not respond to me." If God does not respond it is because the devotee does not feel sufficient yearning for Him and has

* "Cosmic illusion; literally, 'the measurer.' *Maya* is the magical power in creation by which limitations and divisions are apparently present in the Immeasurable and Inseparable."—Paramahansa Yogananda in *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

not learned how to meditate deeply. Master* told us: "When you sit for meditation you must strive to empty the mind of all physical and mental burdens and restlessness. You must forget the body, and you must forget self-will. These are vital steps that religionists of all spiritual paths must practice in order to commune with God. How can this be done? By the practice of yoga techniques of concentration."

We were trained by Guruji to have one little corner in our rooms reserved only for meditation, for the thought of God. And we were taught to throw everything else out of our minds the moment we sat quietly in that "temple." We have to do it at the time of death, do we not? In an instant all of the engagements that we think are so important in this world, the care of the body which preoccupies us so much of the time, must be forsaken when death calls us. Therefore no duty in this world is more important than our duty to God, because no duty here can be performed without the power that comes from God. So when you sit to meditate, empty the mind of all troublesome thoughts. It can be done if you learn how to concentrate.

The next point is that the devotee must develop humility. Unless and until we learn to forget ourselves, we can never fill the consciousness with the thought of God. The I, I, I-consciousness must go. We must learn and practice that humility which is spoken of in the Bhagavad Gita:†

* The nearest English equivalent to "Guru." "Master," "Guruji," and "Gurudeva" are titles by which a disciple signifies his loving respect when addressing or speaking of his guru, or spiritual teacher. "Master" in this sense describes one who has mastered himself, and is therefore qualified to lead others to self-mastery.

† Chapter XVI:2-3, Sir Edwin Arnold's translation, *The Song Celestial*.

Uprightness, heed to injure naught which lives,
 Truthfulness, slowness unto wrath, a mind
 That lightly letteth go what others prize;
 And equanimity, and charity
 Which spieth no man's faults; and tenderness
 Towards all that suffer; a contented heart,
 Fluttered by no desires; a bearing mild,
 Modest, and grave, with manhood nobly mixed,
 With patience, fortitude, and purity;
 An unvengeful spirit, never given
 To rate itself too high—such be the signs,
 O Indian Prince! of him whose feet are set
 On that fair path which leads to heavenly birth!

Humility is surrender of one's self, of heart, mind, and soul. It is surrender of the complete man at the feet of the Divine. How to practice this? Be like the devotee who follows the path of *Karma Yoga*;^{*} offer the fruits of all your actions at the feet of God. Hold always this thought: "Lord, Thou art the Doer; I am nothing. Thou art the Light that shines in the bulb; I am only the bulb."

The next step is to practice patience. When we sit for meditation we must rise above all consciousness of time. Even if we meditate only for five minutes, those five minutes must be one hundred percent concentrated upon God. The mind should not think of any thing external, but go deeper and deeper within until the waters of peace, bliss, and love divine slowly begin to well up within our consciousness.

We must also be content with small steps. Don't expect great experiences in the beginning when you meditate. Be content with the slightest glimpse of the Divine within—a sense of quiet peace deep in your consciousness.

* Union with God through right action.