

INSTANTLY COME FORTH



The phrase “instantly come forth” comes from the Buddha. He is telling everyone, find the awakensness within yourself. Activate that, allow it to rise up within you and pour forth. There is no distance and no difference between the awake one called the Buddha and all the rest of us. This awakensness is already present in all. We are invited to live that awakensness. It helps to ask, do I care more about a particular limitation or consistently choosing to be awake? Until we live full awakensness, every one of us faces this choice continuously.

One of Buddha’s teachings is: Dwell in the happiness of the present moment. It could also be translated as: Abide in the sweetness of all that is. This is what happens when we wake up. So why not choose that?

Swami Shankarananda loved to call this unconditional love. Swami said there is no resistance present in that consciousness we call unconditional love. That is the same awareness the Buddha said is available to all of us—not pushing anything away, not trying to change anything, just allowing ourselves to go so deep that we connect with eternal aliveness and awareness. We connect with infinite, supreme, pure love within ourselves.

Anytime you feel like you’re at a crossroads, or like you’re carrying a cross, look at the image of a cross. The horizontal aspect of the cross moves through time and space. That’s the aspect of ourselves that feels ups and downs, that experiences pain and pleasure, loss and gain. Equally important, we have the vertical aspect of the cross which connects us straight up to the Infinite. We’re always at the crossroads, making a choice every moment. We can identify and connect instantly with the pure awakensness and aliveness within, that aspect of ourselves that has never felt a moment of pain, that can never suffer, that only knows pure light and pure love. Know this.

We’re reminding ourselves that’s what we are forever, the eternal aspect of ourselves that connects us with infinite resourcefulness,

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inventiveness, healing possibility, allowing. That aspect of ourselves is I Am. And in Oneness, in the Supreme, there's only one I Am. There is only beingness.

That Oneness, that beingness is "I Amming" itself all over the place through all the rest of us. It's all of the bodies, all of the faces, all of the human experiences, all of the births, deaths, lifetimes. At the highest level of consciousness, there's only the one I Am. There is no beginning, no ending. There are no limits, no boundaries. It is expanded awareness that's just pure consciousness. It's bliss, ecstasy, the kingdom of heaven.

We get there by letting go of our ideas, opinions, identifications, judgments, concepts. We are given these crushing pressure points in the realm of time and space as invitations to muster forth more beingness. All the adversity, pain, and trauma that you've experienced are invitations from the Divine saying, "Meet me here at the depth of your being, at that which you are forever, at that which you would otherwise forget if life were more convenient and comfortable because you'd be distracted. Meet me here and let me ease your pain, let me clear your vision." As soon as we see we are awakens and aliveness, true realization can come forth in us. It's what we came here to be. When we connect with beingness, doing flows forth instantly with ease and grace.

Divine Grace, help me go within and lift my being to a higher level. With this prayer you are connecting with beingness, and from that comes infinite opportunity, inspiration and healing resourcefulness. Keep offering this prayer. Allow the process. Love yourself forward.

Buddha says, listen to, accept, and revere this teaching. The subtle and profound matrix of awakens is within all beings. If you take this seriously, it will instantly come forth accompanied with joy, and the manifested virtues will be beyond measure.

Thank God and God bless us all.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

FORBEARANCE



Although Krishna calls forbearance a noble quality, I must confess I hesitated spending a meditation on the idea of forbearance. I realize there is an old concept about forbearance I simply could not forbear or relate to. God wants you to forbear. Grin and bear it. That's a Puritan ethic.

Scripture gives us an idea that is very workable, but what I'd like to do is enhance the scriptural idea by giving another perspective to forbearance that I know we can all bear more joyfully. Here's a workable definition: to forbear is to be patient or self-controlled in the face of adversity.

Then I started thinking of forbearance in terms of the positive aspect: the ability to be patient under provocation. To be patient requires a certain kind of self-control. If we have self-mastery, the proof is that we are patient. Let's look at a couple of these exemplars of forbearance.

Buddha recognized forbearance as one of the supreme virtues. One day a man, a high caste Brahmin, traveled a great distance to reach the Buddha and wanted to challenge him. After the man finished his diatribe, Buddha asked him a penetrating question "Suppose someone brought you a gift and you refused to accept it. What would you do with it?" Answered the man, "Well, I would give it back." Then Buddha said, "I do not accept your gift." The Brahmin understood and asked Buddha for forgiveness.

In relationship to our subject of forbearance, I asked my Inner Being, where did Jesus actually go that allowed him not to react to the persecutions, the torment. What made it possible for him not to react? The answer came very clearly: He kept his attention fixed on the presence of Divine Love. He focused on the Father, the Beloved dwelling in him. Love does it all.

So forbearance indeed is a spiritual quality. It's the ability to be lovingly and joyfully patient. And in doing that we are indeed accepting our divine inheritance, the divine quality called forbearance.

God bless us.

— Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri



THE POWER OF PERSONAL LOVE

As you read this, my fondest hope is that you feel in your heart of hearts that you are deeply loved, cared for, honored and treasured. Over the course of the couple of handfuls of years of being in the space of this community, I have been filled to overflowing with the generosity and kindness and graciousness and goodness of countless people here as well as by the bright, transformative, vibrant message and teachings offered. I can honestly say that I have been lifted and transported by them to a state of peace and joy that is beyond what I could have even conceived of a brief time ago.

As I perceive it, the enormity and the depth of the human welcome and warmth and caring provided an extraordinary base from which I could access a deep inner wellspring of well-being and peacefulness. That personal warmth and caring were offered fully and freely, without expectation, just because, for no reason. No one was trying to get me to be a certain way. No one was trying to get me to believe anything. No one was trying to get anything from me. I was invited to be fully me, with all my quirks and idiosyncrasies. Amazing!

I write about this now because I feel that it deserves acknowledging and honoring. As best as I can tell, at the end of the day, what matters most in this life is how we treat one another. The way that I have been loved and cared for here is a testimony to both the magnificence of all those people who gave so sweetly and completely as well as to the power of the teachings of Truth and Oneness which those beings lived and expressed so beautifully. I bow with my whole being in humility and thankfulness to all of them, to you, and to these teachings that make such a life possible and present. My prayer and my promise are to love as generously and as selflessly as I can so that others too may know deep, abiding peace and joy. May the love we offer be a refuge and a salve for all. May this sacred endeavor meet with boundless success.

— Achariya Premadas



FOREVER PRESENT

To the devotee who feels the presence of the Beloved, that Presence is as a nectar that sweetens the cup of life. As the devotee's love of God draws the Presence into awareness, the awareness of the Presence bestirs ever greater love. Thus, all proceeds in harmonious waves of unfoldment.

But the day may come when the devotee no longer feels the Presence. The heart turns dry, the hour of meditation becomes a parched and empty vigil. The heart cries out, "O God, let me feel Thy Presence once more!" The mind recollects that God is ever present, but such mind-knowledge lacks the warmth of experience and fails to satisfy.

There is a way to free oneself from the barren heart: Observe the dryness, the emptiness of not feeling the Presence, until the very not-feeling assumes a kind of reality or presence of its own. Then we can realize that the very not-feeling is also the Presence. The not-feeling is as much the Presence of God as feeling the Presence. Can one ever feel sorrow who ever feels the Presence?

— Srimati Shanti Mataji



A BLADE OF GRASS

Said a blade of grass to an autumn leaf, "You make such a noise
falling! You scatter all my winter dreams."

Said the leaf indignant, "Low-born and low-dwelling! Songless,
peevish thing! You live not in the upper air and you cannot tell the
sound of singing."

Then the autumn leaf lay down upon the earth and slept. And when
spring came she waked again — and she was a blade of grass.

And when it was autumn and her winter sleep was upon her, and
above her through all the air the leaves were falling, she muttered
to herself, "O these autumn leaves! They make such a noise! They
scatter all my winter dreams."

— *Kahlil Gibran*

CHINTAMANI

I have discovered the secret of happiness amidst all untowardness
and I offer this unto you. The source of happiness is in the realization of
godly virtues within one's own heart and in the manifestation of these
virtues to the fullest measure possible.

There are few among us who have not stumbled over the rough
stones of negative qualities and have fallen by the wayside on life's
journey. Those who have stumbled have been bruised and hurt. They
have undergone the agony of sorrow. To these especially I offer the
assistance of the power of truth and wisdom. Within the depth of your
hearts are hidden all virtues and righteousness.

Know this for certain, that the love, mercy and kindness of God
are ever-abidingly within you. Reach for these with spiritual zeal.
You will find them and they will inspire, uplift and guide you. The
supreme Creator, in his infinite beneficence, has provided us with all
that we need for our physical existence. There is no dearth of the basic
necessities of life such as light, air, water and other vital requirements
of bodily existence.

The omniscient Spirit has endowed our minds with illimitable
intelligence and reason so that we may grow more and more in the
understanding of his laws in nature and make our lives increasingly
fruitful and joyous.

But above and beyond these, the loving God has enshrined all
his attributes in our hearts so that we may realize his presence and
perfection within us and reveal his divine qualities in our thoughts,
words and deeds until the whole world becomes an abode of
harmonious existence and enduring peace.

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*



DON'T GO NUTS

I recently heard a comedian making fun of squirrels based on research showing they cannot find eighty percent of the nuts they hide. So squirrels are investing lots of time and energy on something they believe benefits them but may not.

So what is the human equivalent of gathering nuts? Where are we investing great effort? Are our efforts really paying off better than the squirrel's activity?

The overwhelming majority of our attention and efforts revolves around four thoughts, "I like" or "I don't like" followed by "I want" or "I don't want." These thoughts are birthed by one more fundamental thought, "I am a person." We are taught to believe we are a person and taught that a person finds fulfillment by gathering up certain experiences and relationships and avoiding others. Both our identity and life agenda are learned through conditioning!

Living with a personal identity, do we find that our pursuit of happiness is really more successful than our squirrel friends? Sober reflection ensures that we will never again laugh at squirrels. Additionally, consider that squirrels probably don't spend a moment grieving over their losses and failures. Can we say the same?

When yearning arises to realize the truth of our identity, a simple direct inquiry is available to help us. When "I want" and "I don't want" arise, ask, Who is the one wanting? Who does this desire matter to? Who wants to control, reject, or change the situation?

Once we see clearly the person behind the wanting, we can explore what is beyond the sense of personhood. Can you sense something within which perceives the person's ever changing wants yet itself remains unchanged and undisturbed? What is this aware presence that remains before, during, and after every thought that comes and goes? Following this inquiry can release you out of the straightjacket of imagined personhood and into the recognition of true Self. When we bring the squirrel's spirit of joyful exploration, playfulness, and unstoppable determination to this inquiry, we are sure to discover the truth and freedom of being!

— Murali

REVELATIONS OF A COSMIC TRAVELER

Divine Grace, giver of all gifts, let us accept your invitation to ride in freedom's chariot, to move with ease through all life's circumstances, seeing the eternal dance of Oneness in the midst of all we encounter. Let us hear the symphony of your Oneness, singing to us in every voice, reminding us that we are free at last, and have been free all along.

Thank God for the power of Soul revealing that finite and infinite dance together through all creation, helping us reach beyond what we can perceive with our senses to the subtle shimmering Radiance that enlivens all, that reaches beyond time and space, and in which all time and space arise and gleam and shine. We call upon sacred strength and power, which are one with humility and open-heartedness, which allow us to be present in Oneness, the sacred, hushed, holy, all-powerful Presence in action everywhere, guiding us beyond action into shining dynamic Stillness.

Life dances everywhere always. Hope sings in the hum and vibration of the universe. Unity reverberates through all beings. We invite ourselves to tune into this divine harmony within and between every breath and heartbeat and moment. We align ourselves with this infinite Blessing, asking it to shine and share through us, naturally and perfectly, according to the highest good and deepest gladness.

— In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS

“Very often we start off from a feeling of limitation, from a feeling of separateness, a feeling of lack, loss, or pain, and from that, we say, *I want to reach out to wholeness*. What if we just reverse it? What if we start from wholeness? That’s the reality. That’s what we are forever. What if we start from bliss? What if we start from joy, peace, unconditional love? Start from recognizing, *my energy is vast, it’s fluid, it continues on forever*. It is limitless and so equally is the energy of everyone else on the planet. There are no borders, no boundaries in consciousness. There’s only unconditional love, shining pure awareness, joyful, blissful light. And that’s what we are.”

— *Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*



“We are travelers on the path of spiritual perfection. Whatever the difficulties, challenges, or hardships, God, as Love, is always with us. When we feel weary and weak and helpless, we have the greatest opportunity to seek guidance and strength. We are empowered to continue our journey on the path of self-liberation by keeping our mind firmly established on the ideal of Self-realization, or unconditional Bliss. Every enlightened being has taken this journey and has left markers along the path for every traveler, so that our journey may be smoother and the assurance of guidance may be unfailing. We do not so much journey from darkness to light as from light to greater light, from lesser joy to greater joy, from finite peace to infinite peace.”

— *Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri*



“This day shall be the best day of my life. Today I shall start with a new determination to dedicate my devotion forever at the feet of Omnipresence.”

— *Swami Yogananda Paramhansa*



“That life is most blessed which is dedicated to manifest the attributes and righteousness of God for the inspiration, enlightenment, happiness and peace of all.”

— *Shyamacharan Lahiri*



COMING HOME

Not long into my first service at Divine Life Church, I knew I’d found the spiritual home I’d been seeking all my life with varying degrees of attention and commitment. I wasn’t aware of the gaping hole in my heart until it was filled.

I’ve come to realize that my experience as a young teenager at summer camp in Colorado helped form the foundation of my spiritual journey. Every Sunday evening, all campers would walk in silence up the hill to “Sunday Rocks,” a rocky bluff with a view of Pike’s Peak thirty miles in the distance. After finding a spot to sit, we’d spend the first ten minutes in quiet reflection. Cabins took turns planning the inspirational, nondenominational, vespers service, which would include readings ranging from John Muir to Winnie the Pooh. As the sun slipped beneath the horizon, the mountain would deepen into shades of purple, making visible twinkling car headlights winding their way up the road to the top of the mountain.

At Sunday vespers, I often experienced a sense of peace and gratitude so strong that it moved me to tears. Even at thirteen years old, I recognized that my heart felt full in a rare and beautiful way.

It’s as if the mountains provided a secret doorway to enter into communion with the Divine. But I didn’t appreciate then that I was experiencing the pure, loving embrace of Divine Grace. After six weeks at camp, it was hard to readjust to life at home. I didn’t understand why leaving camp caused me such pain. I couldn’t explain how I felt untethered, disconnected from something that had nourished my soul, nor did I have the insight to know that we are never truly disconnected from Divine Grace.

Over the years, before finding this community, I’d had fleeting experiences that brought me back to that feeling of oneness, of connectedness. But it wasn’t until I first ventured into Divine Life Church, and my heart responded with joy and gladness to the teachings of Vedanta, that I realized what it meant to come home. It’s ironic that being home involves a journey—a life-long practice to keep turning again and again and again to Divine Grace within ourselves, to the love that is ever-present, all accepting. Oneness itself. May we all cherish and support one another on this journey home.

— *Karuna*

JOY OF THE INFINITE

- If we carry a teacup to the ocean of bliss, a teacup full of bliss is what we'll be able to walk away with. If we carry a giant vat to the ocean of bliss, a giant vat of bliss is what we'll be able to walk away with and share. We're consciously inviting ourselves to open to receive ever more grace and blessings.
- The process of coming into the light, the process of awakening, the process of realization, the process of enlightenment, is simply letting go of what blocks our vision of the reality that is already present. The guru helps erase those blocks. The guru helps remove those blocks based upon our receptivity.
- We are always in the presence of the gurus. You can connect to any of the teachers in our line of teachers any time that you want. This is the beauty of the guru being not a person. Guru consciousness is everywhere. Given that the guru is not a person, the guru can never go anywhere. The guru is always with you. The guru is always in your heart. That's why the guru is able to quicken and activate and enliven that light within you. You can call on any of the teachers anytime and anywhere. They're already there. They're already with you. As you call, you open to the ways that they are able to assist you.
- As we enter into the light, we're opening to grace, we're opening to pure love, we're opening to effortless ease and wisdom and clarity and peace. The light comes in and actually shows us what our work is. It shows us, "Oh, that's mine to clean up."
- What we're inviting ourselves to do is go straight to love and jump right in. As we do that, we dive in to pure love, we dive in to pure light, and we will next see what is ours to heal so that we can integrate that aching part of ourselves into our wholeness. Part of this is absolute bliss and joy, and part of this is coming to terms with the deepest, shadowyest parts of the human being. The more we can connect with the highest and best in ourselves, and reach out and embrace the most dreadful aspects of ourselves from a human perspective, the more we're able to be lithesome and glad in the presence of all human existence. This means we will never walk in fear. We will only walk in love and oneness.

— In Joy, Swami Nityananda Giri

SWAMI SHANKARANANDA'S PEARLS

- Whatever you focus on determines whether you'll be successful or not successful, whether you feel well or not well, whether you feel expansive or restricted, positive or negative, optimistic or pessimistic, loving toward others or non-loving, compassionate or not compassionate.
- So long as you believe that there are two or more powers operating in your life or the universe, you will live in fear.
- It's not the truth that sets us free but realizing the truth that sets us free.
- My beloved ones, it's so simple! Once you connect with the truth that is I Am, That which Is, you have everything you could ever desire. You will not realize this inner truth unless you become very meditative and reflective and established within.
- Yielding to your highest good is a loving yielding so that the highest good will manifest, because your trust vibrates and that vibration attracts your highest good. *I lovingly yield to the very best within me knowing it responds, knowing it will guide me and sustain me, support me and always assist me.*
- Love is the only power. It's the real healing power.
- If you want to experience wholeness, you have to be one hundred percent with this belief, body, mind, heart, and soul: *I am whole*; because whatever word or idea you attach to I AM determines what you become. That's what powerful creators we are.
- If you want to experience wholeness, by the law of affinity you will draw unto yourself everything that relates to wholeness: people, literature, healers in different modalities, herbalists, acupuncturists, futurists, whatever. It's your consciousness that is drawing to you everything that will vindicate your wholeness. *I intend to express my wholeness in body, mind, heart, and soul.*

— In Love, Swami Shankarananda Giri

GARLAND OF TRUTHS

“Peace, peace upon all the earth! May all escape from the ordinary consciousness and be delivered from the attachment to material things; may they awake to the knowledge of Thy divine presence, unite themselves with Thy supreme consciousness and taste the plenitude of peace that springs from it.”

— *Sri Aurobindo*



“Compassion is open, free, and limitless, indescribable and utterly beyond comprehension. Compassion is like sunlight, awakening and bringing joy to beings. Its beauty is like a rainbow, lifting the hearts of all who see it.”

— *Tarthang Tulku*



“Make God the ruler of your heart and be completely His. Offer up your body, mind, and soul at the lotus feet of the Divine. Be convinced that the sole objective of life is to have the direct vision of God. Let not your mind be moved from the ideal by name or fame or any of the other glittering toys of life. Do not repent the past. Past mistakes have taught you some lessons. Never mind the failures. Be up and doing and strive on toward the goal.”

— *Swami Brahmananda*



“In reality, there is no new message to deliver about spirituality. ‘Everything is God, there is nothing but God.’ This is the only message. This is the single message in the Upanishads, Vedas, Bhagavad Gita and Puranas. When we say that there are 108 Upanishads, we should understand that it is actually 108 different ways of conveying the same message.”

— *Mata Amritanandamayi*

QUOTES FROM HAFIZ

“Now is the time to understand that all your ideas of right and wrong were just a child’s training wheels to be laid aside when you finally live with veracity and love.”

“Remember for just one minute of the day, it would be best to try looking upon yourself more as God does, for She knows your true royal nature.”

“Pulling out the chair beneath your mind and watching you fall upon God. What else is there for Hafiz to do that is any fun in this world!”

“Fear is the cheapest room in the house. I would like to see you living in better conditions.”

“Even after all this time, the sun never says to the earth, ‘you owe me.’ Look what happens with a love like that! It lights up the whole sky.”

“When you can make others laugh with jokes that belittle no one and your words always unite, Hafiz will vote for you to be God.”

“Oh, you who are trying to learn the marvel of love through the copy book of reason, I’m very much afraid that you will never really see the point.”

“Now is the time to know that all that you do is sacred. Now is the time for you to deeply compute the impossibility that there is anything but grace.”

“Stay close to anything that makes you glad you are alive.”

“What do sad people have in common? It seems they have all built a shrine to the past and often go there and do a strange wail and worship.”

“When all your desires are distilled, you will cast just two votes: to love more, and be happy.”

STILLNESS



— Art by Devarati

SPIRITUAL READINGS ON KINDLE

*The Holy Science**
by Swami Sri Yukteswar

Sri Yukteswar (1855-1936) was a Kriya yogi, Vedic astrologer, and educator who attained the spiritual stature of a Jnanavatar, or incarnation of wisdom. He was born as Priya Nath Karar in Seramapore, India and became a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya and the guru of Paramhansa Yogananda. As a scholar of both the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Bible, Sri Yukteswar recognized that a synthesis of the spiritual heritage of the East with the science and technology of the West would do much to alleviate the material, psychological, and spiritual suffering of the modern world. These ideas were crystallized in 1894 by an encounter with Mahavatar Babaji, the guru of Lahiri Mahasaya, who asked him to write a short book on the underlying harmony between Christian and Hindu scriptures. *The Holy Science* was published the same year.

In the introduction to *The Holy Science*, Sri Yukteswar defines the present moment in Vedic astrology as the Dwapara Yuga, the era that began in 1894 with a flowering of science and yearning for spirituality that was unseen during the previous dark ages. The book is then organized according to the four stages of the development of knowledge. The first section is the gospel, which juxtaposes the sutras with verses from the Bible.

The second chapter defines the goal of all beings to realize Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss and the third chapter discusses the method for how these three goals are realized. The final chapter reveals what has come to those who are near to realizing those ideals. In the conclusion, Sri Yukteswar acknowledges the power of love, saying “Love is God” is not merely the noblest sentiment of a poet but an aphorism of eternal truth.

— Ananda

*Available from the Kindle library

HEALING PSALMS *Commentary on Psalm 91*

All our experiences operate according to this promise, which is really a statement of truth. This promise is a law, a certainty. We create karma, and the results we attract are according to our belief. Ponder that. We're making room in the cosmos to accommodate this novel idea. We're not the slaves of karma. We are the slaves of self-delusion.

How do we learn to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, to make that our refuge? Brother Lawrence, that wonderful 17th century lay brother in a monastery in France, developed a great sense of holiness because he couldn't find the answers in books. He prayed in his own way, and asked God to guide him, a very simple devotional approach.

In later years he became so renowned for his profound wisdom that the priests and nuns from other monasteries and convents corresponded with him. They wanted to know, how did that happen in your life? He said, I studied all the techniques of prayer, of meditation, and observed all the rituals of the church. And all that did was lead me to utter frustration and confusion. So I abandoned all of it, and said, "God, teach me. Teach me." All we have to do is be teachable, if we want to know the truth. So that's the question, am I teachable?

That's when we become disciples, when we know we're teachable. Until then we're dilettantes. We're butterflies, here, there, and everywhere. We're window shopping. Spirituality resides in the recognition that I am totally responsible for my transformation, that it doesn't come from outside of me.

Evil is not a power; it has no divine law to support it. That is how you see through any bluff of the ego, when it suggests that there is a power separate from God operating anywhere in the universe. Just ask yourself, does it originate in God, in love, in oneness? Does it have the law of divine love behind it? And the divine love within you will instantly respond, it is not borne of me, therefore it has no power over you.

—Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri



BLESSING THE HARVEST

"To everything there is a season; and a time to every purpose under heaven...a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted."

— Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

As summer transforms into fall, seeds planted in spring ripen into the fullness of what they are and present themselves for the appreciation and nourishment of all. If we have a garden and have tended it with care, we reap the benefits of our loving attention, sometimes food for the body, always beauty for the soul.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus uses parables to describe the deeper spiritual truth underlying the commonly understood practices of sowing and reaping: Our thoughts, words, actions, and beliefs are the seeds we are constantly sowing and eventually reaping. By opening our hearts to receive and nurture the word of the Divine, even the smallest seed of that word will take root and grow, bearing fruit that benefits ourselves and others. By mindfully cultivating only the qualities we wish to see grow, and weeding out old patterns, habits, attitudes, beliefs, and grudges that no longer serve us, we make space for our highest unfoldment.

Unlike our vegetable and flower gardens, there are no time constraints for cultivating the innate seeds of our divine qualities. We awaken and water them with the precious tools and gifts of Divine Grace: the guidance of illumined teachers, our steadfast commitment to our own spiritual practice, and the loving support of community. The harvest is the manifestation of Divine Grace itself, the increased expression of love, harmony, beauty, peace, joy, kindness, compassion, wisdom, forgiveness, gentleness, and generosity in our lives and relationships.

In this and every season, let's join together, blessing, celebrating and giving thanks for this bountiful, sacred harvest, sharing its ever flowing abundance for the benefit of all.

— Padma

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q & A (Continued)

Question: I'm at my wit's end. Help!

Answer: Let us move beyond the boundaries of the mind. Is what I can understand humanly with my mind satisfying me? Is it answering my questions? Is it soothing my heart? Let's be honest. Our humanness is vulnerable. Our humanness does experience beginnings and endings. We're inviting ourselves to remember that's true, and it's also true that we can choose every day to remind ourselves that equally, unabashedly, we are divine and limitless. David says in the Psalms, if we turn our face to God, we will be filled with a river of light. That's what we are! Liquid light! Liquid light knows no pain, no fear, no sorrow, no judgment, no limitation.

Keep asking Divine Grace to continue to unfold the truth. The yogic tradition never says to take someone else's word for it. Know directly for yourself. No one else can eat our dinner for us. The same is true for this incredible, spiritual feast, the spiritual nourishment that we're given through these scriptures, teachings, meditations. We alone can nourish ourselves with this sacred information, this sacred energy. We are the ones who can say, yes, I would love to realize this truth. I would love to bring this truth to light in my own life.

As the voice of the student we ask, how do I find a way forward? The wise voice within us says, this light, this love, this unity, this kindness, this playfulness is what we are forever. When we find ourselves reaching out to another aspect of ourselves that feels like it wants to burst into tears and melt down, these teachings give us the ability to wisely, compassionately integrate the crying, screaming child aspect of ourselves into the wise, steady, light-filled aspect of ourselves. It's part of what we all experience. Lift your gaze to the light. No blame. No shame. No guilt. Look to the light and it will guide us forward.

Sometimes yogis say the world is relatively real. We have a consensus reality of time and space that we are experiencing together right now. As soon as we recognize that we are one with that Divine Radiance that is beyond time and space and that brings this reality into being, then we are consciously co-creating with the Absolute. That means we can change everything in our lives and on our planet. Structures of injustice cannot stand in the face of love. We're invited to call

on more love, more light. And we don't have to do anything other than be this radiant light and love. Don't talk about it. Live it. Be awakeness. Be light. Be love. The light actually does everything. Ask the light, How would you love to manifest divinity and glory through me? Then everything that's a match for us effortlessly flows to us. No making it fit, no fussing, no fighting, no forcing.

If we let go of our ideas of happiness, the only thing that's left is happiness itself. Our ideas of happiness very often prevent us from being happy. Work with this. *Divine Grace, show me the happiness that I am forever. Help me set aside what I think outwardly has to happen in order to experience happiness. Help me be happiness.* When we let go of proliferating our ideas about God, we're more able to just be with God. And when we are with God, there are no words. There is nothing to ask. There are no questions, no problems. It is not possible for there to be a problem when we're in the presence of the Divine.

We're inviting ourselves to listen at the deepest levels of our being, to connect with that hushed, sacred presence. When we connect with the Divine, we hear the way that Stillness, this hushed, dynamic, vibrant Stillness, is always communicating with us. And it's always awake, always watching over us, lovingly brushing a hand across our forehead, soothing us, healing our hearts of their burdens, renewing our cells, regenerating us.

Swami Yogananda said that our heart is a portable paradise. We're all walking around carrying a portable paradise. It's a reminder that if we ever feel anything other than bliss and pure love and pure light, we can hop back into that portable paradise. Get back in touch with that heart energy.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL



During a recent lesson, the children drew pictures representing the colors and feelings they associate with various divine qualities, such as love, compassion, and gratitude, and explored how it feels when we allow love to be present through all that we are feeling.

DIET AND NUTRITION: Creamy Avocado Pesto Zoodles

This recipe is Paleo, gluten free and vegan. Enjoy!
Total prep time: 35 minutes; Number of servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 2 large zucchini
- 1 large avocado
- 1 handful fresh basil
- Juice from ½ lemon
- 1 medium garlic clove
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons water
- Salt and pepper to taste

Additional optional ingredients:

chick peas; cherry tomatoes; red onion, diced; Daiya jalapeno shredded cheese; sunflower seeds (raw & sprouted); fenugreek

Directions:

- Use a spiralizer to make your zucchini noodles (zoodles), or cut thin strips with a mandoline or knife. I suggest using raw zoodles for this recipe but you can also steam them for just a few minutes so they're warm but not mushy.
- Combine avocado, basil, lemon, garlic, olive oil, water, salt and pepper in food processor until completely smooth. Add fenugreek to taste.
- Mix zoodles with pesto and then add optional ingredients.
- Serve zoodles chilled or warm.

Final note: I suggest making the pesto the same day you'll be enjoying this dish. The avocado pesto zoodles taste yummy on day two but the sauce looks a bit brown.

— Lakshmi



LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS



O Thou effulgent Reality, Thou preserver of all that comes into being, Thy perfection is hidden behind Thy divine manifestation. I am a devotee of absolute Truth; remove Thy veil for my illumination.

O Thou self-manifested cause and substance of creation, transport me beyond Thy objective form that, by Thy grace, I may behold Thy glorious Self: That absolute Self abiding in the transcendental effulgence, verily, I am He.

My consciousness has reached immortality, the illusion of death has vanished away. Aum: I remember the state of my illumined Self; I remember.

O Thou self-illumined One, remove all self-limiting concepts from our minds; guide us to the path of the Pure Self; Thou dost know the way. Unto Thee we offer our salutation, again and again.

— *Isha Upanishad*



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